



THE LAST MONITOR
Issue 5

Edited by the Barcelona-based curatorial office Latitudes, and freely distributed from a micro-newsroom at the New Museum for ten weeks, 'The Last Post', 'The Last Gazette', 'The Last Register', etc., are hybrid weekly tabloids that are building incrementally into a surrogate catalogue for 'The Last Newspaper' at the New Museum, New York, 6 October 2010 – 9 January 2011. Latitudes and the volunteer news-team encourage

you to pitch in with your suggestions for contributions.
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PRINTER: Linco Printing, Long Island, New York
PRINT RUN: 1,000
CONTACT: newspaper@LTADS.org
This project is made possible

in part with support provided by the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad, SEACEX and the Spanish Government.
COVER: Gustav Metzger, *Eichmann and the Angel*, 2005 (detail). Installation view at Cubitt Gallery, London. Image courtesy of Cubitt, London © 2005 Gustav Metzger.
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POPE.L • METZGER • CHARLESWORTH • VON SCHLEGELL

THE LAST MONITOR

ISSUE No.5

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2010

NEW MUSEUM, 235 BOWERY, NEW YORK, NY 10002 USA

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"GIMMICKY" • "IMPROMPTU" • "GESTURAL" • "APOCALYPTIC"

EATING THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Janine Armin calls ‘The Last Newspaper’ artist William Pope.L



On a Saturday afternoon last month at the New Museum, I fought for space in the elevator alongside eight people who sported Obama masks and oversized pajamas with velvety red dots on their posteriors. It was a tight fit, mostly because of the masked figures’ awkward positions, including lying prostrate on the floor and leaning face-first against a wall. They wouldn’t budge for the bemused passengers who tried to squeeze between them. The hefty stack of *Wall Street Journal* papers that each of them carried was one excuse for sluggishness. A better one was that this was all part of the elaborate choreography for William Pope.L’s restaging of his performance *Eating the Wall Street Journal*.

Known for his acerbic commentary on race relations – and a fetish for political masks – Pope.L originally performed the piece in 2000 at a Chelsea gallery in which he sat ten feet above a toilet and spat newspaper chewed up with ketchup and milk into the bowl beneath. This time the mock Obamas moved through the museum slothfully, shifting their bodies to accommodate the strain of the three-hour walk through. As they crumpled up bits of newspaper and discarded them onto the floor, their slow obstructive movements gave viewers no choice but to engage with them.

Pope.L’s work is always engaging, and could be compared to Adrian Piper’s *Catalysis* performances of the early 1970s in which she drew attention to difference by wearing smelly clothes on New York’s streets and riding the subway with a towel stuffed in her mouth. Practicing in a variety of media, including drawing, painting, and film, Pope.L is most recognized for performances like the durational feat *The Great White Way* (2001) during which he crawled the length of Manhattan, and the mobile performance vehicle *The Black Factory* (2000–2005) which took up issues and gathered objects related to blackness.

On the morning of his flight to the FIAC art fair in Paris, the “Friendliest Black Artist in America” lived up to his self-proclaimed title in taking the time to talk about his work and the newspaper over the phone from his home in Chicago.

Janine Armin: Thinking back to the inception of *Eating the Wall Street Journal* at the time of the dot-com crash, I was wondering how your new configuration relates to the current tenor of the *Journal*?

William Pope.L: When I started to reenact a piece that I’d done whatever number of years ago with the mask of the current president, I knew that the association to his current tasks – the primary ones being fiscal – that would come into play. But it’s more about dead time. Dead time is a liminal kind of place between sleeping and being

awake. It’s a time for meditation, it’s also a time of horrors, the kinds of things people think of before they go to sleep. I wanted to create a work that lives in that place, between an attachment to real things and real concerns but at the same time concerned with letting those things go, maybe even forgiving them, maybe even denying them. Because in sleep you can deny anything.

JA: I think that really came across in this piece, especially in encountering the figures in the elevator who wouldn’t move for the passengers. There was also a participatory dimension, people were willing to get right up close to the masks.

WP.L: The uniform for work has a different sense of time to the uniform for sleep. The different time of day you wear it suggests a different feel to how we look at the character. I have been using vinyl-type masks for a while. Much of that work was done in Europe, and usually with political figures. There were a whole set of performances I did with Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney. With Cheney, it was at a certain time in his life – a fall from grace, or vacation, however you decide to see it, from office.

JA: The thing that strikes me over and over about your work is that it’s so entertaining, while being so pointed. Like your *ATM Piece* (1997) where you attached yourself to a sausage linked to the door of a Chase Manhattan Bank. Extrapolating that onto what’s happening in the world

of information, and specifically that of the newspaper, how do you think the idea of entertainment, without losing the integrity of information, can be incorporated into the way news is delivered? The general go-to model is gossip, which doesn’t always crack out the most valuable information.

WP.L: Probably something new is being created, and we’re in a transition. I’m in Chicago right now, and I’m living in Woodlawn on the border of Hyde Park. Now Hyde Park used to be predominantly black. Even when the University of Chicago was here. And there’s always been this enmity between black folk and the university. Apparently when the black community was here it was very self-sufficient. But after the civil rights movement, and black people could go and shop at the larger stores downtown, it changed.

They have gardens here. Some people just have grass and concrete. It’s almost like the countryside, it’s weird. A lot of black people are hanging out in these areas, people who have not been pushed out by gentrification. So I don’t know. I think the newspaper is about being outdoors. It’s about the street. I think maybe culture is going indoors. Or when we do go outdoors we go to national parks! We don’t think about outdoors as the city anymore. We might just be in a transition. A bridge between A-time and B-time. You don’t really know, theoretically – I think it’s an interesting time,

even if it’s kind of unmoored.

JA: There are a certain number of theorists these days talking about the airport as the metaphorical and literal home. We’re stultified by this perpetual state of transport, not really involved in the external world, just in this moment of transport. But there has got to be a breaking point, where it shifts into that next new thing.

WP.L: Because a lot of people aren’t involved in that. You see people who are disenfranchised from the university, and all they do all day is stand on one corner and sell Blue Square, which I still haven’t figured out what it is. Very sci-fi though. I asked one woman what it was, and she sort of smiled and said, “cigarette”. The odd thing is you’ll go from where I live, and this is two or three blocks from the university, the conjunction where black folk congregate. And you’ll have one person on each corner selling the same Blue Square shit I guess. This is one stop shopping. I’m not sure of, like you were saying, this sort of era of being in transport constantly.

JA: I think the idea is that what surrounds the airport is the slum. Which is to say that there’s this immobility that drives people into poverty, and an immobility that drives people in the other direction too.

WP.L: Another kind of poverty?

JA: Both completely impoverished in different ways. It’s a very dramatic account and there’s a continuum. I’m

wondering what’s going to happen next.

WP.L: I’m a believer that no matter what we’re doing, maybe it’s just because I’ve been lucky to get certain things in life, no matter what we describe ourselves as, the scary thing for most people is losing their health. No matter how they explain what they think they are. That really informs their behavior. I think newspapers are a loss for a lot of people. [*The Last Newspaper* co-curator] Benjamin Godsill is focusing less on a tone, he’s more focusing on an apparatus.

JA: And how disparate that apparatus is. Different nations are represented, at least in this show, that expose the alternate ways in which newspapers make information accessible, and which information they choose to make available. That in turn informs how artists choose to subvert information, which is quite interesting. The reviews have been skeptical of this, it’s definitely focusing on the superstructures. One last question: What are you working on in Paris?

WP.L: It’s an art fair so, I don’t know if you work on art fairs. I’m only kidding. I’m doing another version of *Cusp*, this is one with a very large big rock, it has an automatic release system so that the liquid in a cup that the performer holds, will be released from this rock.

JA: That sounds super interesting. I hope you’re documenting and all of that.

WP.L: No never! □



Photos: Benoit Pailley. Courtesy New Museum

TODAY AND YESTERDAY

Gustav Metzger was born in 1926 into a Jewish-Polish family in Germany, and was evacuated to England as Nazi persecution intensified in 1939. His practice has incorporated newspaper-related events and exhibitions since the 1960s, writes Sophie O’Brien, curator of an exhibition of the artist’s work presented last year at the Serpentine Gallery in London.



ABOVE Gustav Metzger, *Eichmann and the Angel* (2005), Installation view, Cubitt, London. Industrial conveyor belt, wall of newspapers and color print. Courtesy Cubitt, London © 2005 Gustav Metzger.

RIGHT Gustav Metzger, *MASS MEDIA: Today and Yesterday* (2009), Installation view, Serpentine Gallery, London. Newspapers, tables, magnetic paint and magnets. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery © 2009 Gustav Metzger. Photo © Jerry Hardman-Jones.

With Gustav Metzger’s use of archival images and media photographs in his *Historic Photographs* series in the 1990s, the artist returned his focus to the newspaper as a readymade form through which he could critique contemporary society. For Metzger, newspapers are a strong symbol of the real; they are containers that hold historical moments, traumatic events and the recording of births, deaths, science and politics. As an existing form that in some way reflects a total picture of society, he has always felt that “newspapers come as close as anything”.

His *Eichmann and the Angel* installation of 2005 was a room containing a wall of newspapers, a conveyor belt, a study area and a glass booth, which made oblique reference to the bullet-proof enclosure built for Adolf Eichmann’s infamous trial of 1961. Next to the conveyor belt, a reproduction of Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* (1920) hung on the wall. Connecting the philosophers Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt to Eichmann, Metzger constructed an implicit conversation between the three on the ideas of death, entrapment and the role of the witness in cataclysmic events.

In a *Studio International* article of 1972, Metzger described his work as being “aimed at changing society”, and seeking “to alter the habitual usage of the gallery or museum, and the expectations that visitors bring to these institutions”. He has, over many years, collected an archive of newspapers, which he views as an important library. Last year, in the *Decades: 1959 – 2009* exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, London, these formed a sculptural element in the installation *MASS MEDIA: Today and Yesterday* (2009), a participatory work where viewers were asked to select images and articles relating to three topics: the environment, extinction and the way we live now. The individual was given the power to edit the news, and to create a dialogue on these subjects with other, unknown, visitors.

Metzger has stated simply that newspapers are documents that must be used. Of his relationship to this printed format, he has said in conversation with Clive Phillpot that, “at the centre of all my work with newspapers [is the aim] to extract and to analyse and to contradict... we must build up archives and keep learning, understanding”. □



PICTURE AGENT: OUR SINGULAR PICTURE AGENCY

JORDAN WOLFSON, ARTIST

I don’t have AIDS, or at least I don’t think I have AIDS. I’m not sure it’s ok to say “AIDS is a funny thing”, but it would be OK to say “AIDS means something else than it did in the 80s, at least to me, someone who was a child in the 1980s”. My knowledge of AIDS was mostly informed through public school health classes and the television. A close friend of my father had AIDS. I remember meeting him. We went up to his apartment and he offered me some fruit and water. That’s all I remember, and I think I only remember because my mother told me later that he had died. But now looking back I remember his boyfriend, an Asian man who I met on the street with my parents when I was ten. I recall thinking he was very beautiful, dressed in Gap blue jeans and white tee shirt neatly tucked in. He was with a man, not the man that died – but this man could also of had AIDS. It was an incredibly sunny day in the fall, or maybe it was spring.

Ok, ok, yeah. I know AIDS isn’t all about homosexuals. I remember also hearing about someone who I went to high school with catching AIDS from shooting heroin. His name “is” Adam – I’m assuming he is still alive! Adam was fat, so fat that in winter he didn’t need a jacket because the fat on his body kept him warm. A group of us would hang out in the suburban town center, smoking cigarettes and listening to music played off a CD boom box. I remember one night it was freezing. We were huddled outside waiting for Adam’s mother to pick us up to give us rides. Adam was dressed only in a black tee shirt and jeans with his hair dyed green. I remember him as ugly. When Adam saw how cold I was he wrapped his arms around me to keep me warm. I looked up at him. There was nothing gay about any of this. See I get it.

LEFT General Idea, *AIDS Sculpture* (1989). Paradeplatz, Zurich, 2010.

THE NEXT NEWSPAPER: ‘The San Francisco Panorama’



What was it?
The San Francisco Panorama was the 33rd installment of the literary publication *McSweeney’s Quarterly*. Produced in 2009, it was a one-off 320 page experiment, a “celebration of print”, and according to Ward Bushee, editor of *The San Francisco Chronicle*, “it may be the biggest, most creative and famously bylined edition of a newspaper ever printed”. The newspaper featured various forms of established and unprecedented journalism – both literary and artistic.

Who was involved?
McSweeney’s founder, the writer David Eggers, and a full-time staff of five. Many freelance journalists and artists, as well as an impressive array of contributors, including Robert Porterfield, Andrew Sean Greer, George Sanders, Stephen King, Junot Diaz, with artwork by Chris Ware, Dan Clowes, Art Spiegelman, and many more.

Why a newspaper?
“Besides a long running affection for print, with many friends laid off and worried for the future of journalism, a timely response seemed necessary that could serve as a prototype for the 21st century newspaper.” Eggers

stated that the aim was to re-think the medium of the newspaper and to utilize dormant practices. “It is our unorthodox belief that the Web and the newspaper can coexist, but that physical forms of the written word need to offer a clear and different experience”, he wrote. The main aim of the paper was “to remind people of how wonderful and lovely a medium print can be, and is; and how essential to the craft of journalism readers’ support of print is”.

What were some examples of its innovations?
It stressed a return to first-rate writing, reportage, and design, while also allowing for freedom of content, length, style, and representation. *McSweeney’s* also tapped a collaborative approach, working with non-profit groups and experienced reporters for the main features. Finally, great freedom of visual and written expression was given a chance to “use

the hell out of the medium”.

What were the stats?
A 112-page broadsheet printed in full color throughout and including a 32-page news section, 24 pages of arts, 24 pages of sports, 16 pages of comics, and a 16-page food section. A 112-page magazine; a 96-page books section; pull-out posters. A 25,000 print run. Limited copies were available at \$5 from newsstands on December 8th 2009 and following that it was \$16 online and in stores. Writers were paid between \$200 and \$1000 per article.

What kind of responses did it receive?
The editors admitted its impracticalities. “We don’t pretend to have the solutions, we’re just asking a few questions”, they stated, “the newspaper is not meant to be the paradigm, but rather a source of inspiration – an open source, a catalogue of possibilities, and not copyrighted”. Critics pointed to the basic deviations, for example, its lack of word limits, reliance on outside collaborators, funding coming from outside sources, and its poor breaking news coverage. It did, however, receive much critical acclaim as a literary experiment. Celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain described it as “a beast, a magnificent venture, and an object of beauty ... Must. Have. More.”

What future did its editors see for newspapers?
“We love newspapers, and we think they still have a vibrant role to play in our society.” With newspapers in a period of adjustment, *The San Francisco Panorama* set itself apart from the web, marking the importance of ambitious writing and publishing, and revived the concept of creating a beautiful, thorough, newspaper-product. “Give (people) something to pay for, and they’ll pay for it.” □

By Irina Chernyakova

Fit to Print

Maybe it's time for *New York Times* chairman and publisher Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. to stop jet-setting the world, giving conferences on the future of digital journalism, and start paying more attention to the digital divide. Namely, smaller communities within the U.S. who don't have access to digital news platforms. A September 9th article in *The Atlantic* quoted Sulzberger as saying, "We will stop printing the *New York Times* sometime in the future, date TBD." The details as to when, remain vague. As they should.

Obviously anyone who runs one of the largest newspapers in the world probably knows the day-in and day-out procedures for sustainable business models for journalism better than any lowly blogger/filmmaker such as myself. However, you would figure that someone of his power would first be concerned with the digital divide that the U.S. (and many other nations for that matter) faces now and within the foreseeable future.

On a recent trip to Libby, Montana, I had the fortunate opportunity to meet with several residents who are all too familiar with media attention. Libby Montana is a small town in the northwestern part of the state and has a total population of 2921 residents. Over the past twenty-five years it has been plagued with asbestos contamination which has killed over 200 people and sickened several more. In 1999 it was a newspaper reporter, Andrew Schneider of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (Seattle P.I.) who broke the investigation into the asbestos contamination.

Schneider's deep investigative

The 'New York Times' publisher recently stated that "We will stop printing the New York Times sometime in the future, date TBD". Adam Chadwick, who is shooting the documentary 'Fit to Print', reports on the looming digital divide.

work was followed by television news hot on the breaking coverage produced in the *Seattle P.I.* and major television outlets such as CNN and CBS ran a series of watered-down national television stories which never produced any investigative reporting to the level of the *P.I.* – Schneider was the investigative reporter on this story. He had the time, resources and backing of a serious newspaper. Last year the *Seattle P.I.* shut down its print edition. Schneider, along with many others at the paper, lost his job.

Why do I bring this up when discussing the need for print to survive, not just now, but within the foreseeable future? Because digital records don't hold the same weight as print. While there is a definite need for the 24-hour micro-scoop news culture online, documents and work into probing investigations can easily become lost or discarded.

I sat down with several local residents of Libby who mentioned how they only get their news from the print editions. Particularly from large papers like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and what once was the *Seattle P.I.* Gordon Sullivan, a longtime Libby resident who owns a local bookstore called Cabinet Books & Music mentioned to me, "Not only does the vast majority of Libby get its news from printed newspapers, many people in this town still don't have access to either computers or the internet". As a go-to person for Andrew Schneider's investigations into the area, I asked Sullivan how he personally followed Andrew's series of stories. "Print", he told me.

Sullivan has also been inter-

viewed by national television news networks regarding the story as well. Two days before I interviewed him, CBS News was in town to do a segment on the Libby Asbestos crisis. "They asked me, with a straight face, 'is there hope for Libby?'" Sullivan mentioned. "That's the difference between newspaper reporting and what you get in digital media. Filler questions versus hard-to-do investigative work."

Over the course of filming the *Film to Print* documentary we have met with several investigative reporters working in newspaper and television news who back this point up. "Print not only gives an article the attention it deserves, it also provides a tangible record of that event", mentions Columbia journalism professor Andie Tucher. Investigative reporter Jeff Leen of the *Washington Post* mentioned, "Despite all the information we can now access online, there is still that need for record keeping. Even if Google was available in the 1980s when I was investigating [the Medellín cartel], I still needed to actually see Pablo Escobar's signature on those documents".

The need for print editions of the newspaper are vital. For someone like Sulzberger to come out with a blanket statement such as "We will stop printing the *New York Times* sometime in the future", is insane. Scale back perhaps. Once an established business model is set in place. Reduce print circulation maybe. But don't kill the medium. Communities and readers who can't afford an iPad, Kindle or even an internet connection depend on the printed paper to stay informed. □

100 YEARS AGO...

'The Bisbee Daily Review' (Bisbee, Arizona) 1901–1971, November 3, 1910.



Image: The Library of Congress / Arizona State Library



MEDIA HABITS: MARK VON SCHLEGELL

The science fiction novelist and art essayist eschews this column's usual sections (Newspapers, Magazines, Online, Television, Radio, Books) and instead takes an "anecdotal approach".

I am an English-speaker living in Cologne, Germany, where newspaper culture is apparently thriving. In my daily café every morning patrons and loyalists fight over an array of papers. Here I can attempt to practice my German. The papers delineate spectra of class and politics. Towards the right, the white and crisp elegance of 'The FAZ' (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) makes the *Wall Street Journal* look like a porta-potty roll. In the

center the weekly *Die Zeit* bulges with dated but charming cold war style analysis and self-contained magazines. Just to the left, the proudly intellectual 'Feuilleton' section of the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* might unfold philosophical essays on the freedom of the will, revisionist views of Homer, full-spread reviews of contemporary art or interviews with Christoph Schlingensief. Still farther to the left, the cheaply-printed, purportedly socialist *Die Tageszeitung* ('The Taz') thumbs its nose to such cultural pretensions. For sports, I can flip over the local tabloids. Half-naked German women under muck-raking headlines that are often themselves local news? Yes. I avoid *Der Spiegel*.

I have not yet bought books over the internet. I have two unread Jack Vance titles saved. In the meantime there's a small shop by the Rhine called 'English

Books and Tea'. Here I always find used and new titles of refreshing randomness, from Petronius to Terry Southern – and often enough Highsmith, Wodehouse and Stout, authors beloved by the international jet set of yore. Happily, the young English proprietor is a devotee of science fiction, fantasy and English folk music of the 1970s. It was here some years ago on a visit I picked up a Jack Vance book (*Rhialto the Marvellous*) thereby sparking the rise of the great comet of my current reading life. I now borrow and return books to a basement of undisclosed location in Berlin where the Vance shelf is in constant mysterious flux.

I very rarely buy new books because they are so expensive. For art books and magazines I can browse Walter Koenig's three and a half floors at ease. For the new Iain M. Banks or for classics I can go to the English sections in

one of the four-story *buchladen*, always teaming with customers. Otherwise I go to Klaus Bittner's renowned bookshop near my home, and its vividly-slender English shelf. Here my wife invested an enormous sum in the English version of Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, whose last section is set partially in Cologne. Readers will remember a character named Bittner in Bolaño's version of that city as the first, somewhat villainous publisher of Benno von Archimboldi. It happened I was reading *2666* in the café when Herr Bittner was there as well. I showed him the book (it was not yet out in German). He said it was the greatest novel of the 21st century. I mentioned the character named Bittner. He grinned, unreadably. "Of course. It is me. Bolaño often visited the store." He returned to the 'Feuilleton' section of what I believe was 'The FAZ'. □



Installation view of Sarah Charlesworth, *Movie-Television-News-History*, June 21, 1979 (1979). 27 black-and-white prints. Courtesy the artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, New York. Photo: Latitudes

WHO FRAMED SARAH CHARLESWORTH?

Romanian writer and curator Marcel Janco on the artist's modern history

The work of Sarah Charlesworth reminds me of a Platonic solid. Her work can be considered a link between two decades: the Conceptual art of the 1970s, in which the *idea* came before anything else, and the 'Pictures' generation of the 1980s, which marked the beginning of the artistic appropriation of *images* – from consumer society, advertising and from the press. *Idea* and *image* – terms that are so familiar to those who deal with visual art – are also perfectly suitable for a discourse around the Platonic solid and Plato's philosophy. With a quite acrobatic conceptual twist, Charlesworth has been able to embrace ideas and images and make them solid.

In fact if we analyze a work like *Buddha of Immeasurable Light* (1987) from the series 'Objects of Desire' we understand that Charlesworth was not only preoccupied with the image – the idea – featured in the work, respectively a Buddha and a circular window, but also with the support, the vehicle of these images (Body and Soul, if you like). Indeed, according to the artist this work addresses the "framing of material desire" through a technique that employs Cibachrome together with inlaid matching lacquer frames put together as a diptych (duality comes again). Furthermore, it is interesting to consider how versatile the noun and verb 'frame' is for the English language (and note that in 2008 *Nouns and Verbs* are titles of recent works by Charlesworth from the series 'Modern History').

Like the Platonic solid, 'to frame' is a quite multifaceted function, which can mean putting a picture into a frame as well as putting

someone into suspicion, revealing a possible crime. Most interestingly, 'to frame' means putting something into a context, to build up a discourse around a topic.

The curators of *The Last Newspaper* have included a work from Charlesworth's series 'Modern History', which she started in 1977. Through these works the artist has shown us her fascination with the power of the press. Through the simple act of deleting all text from the front page of newspapers she has unveiled the hierarchies through which different kinds of daily publications address the same fact (a total eclipse, for example) or how gender or politics are embodied throughout the same newspaper over a specific timeframe (for example pages of the *Herald Tribune* during the first Gulf War in 1991).

Yet what is most important to me, and the reason why I wrote this text, is the legacy of Sarah Charlesworth. Perhaps the work on view is not the easiest example to testify how powerful her influence has been over a generation of emerging artists such as Annette Kelm, Liz Deschenes, Eileen Quinlan, Anne Collier, Sara VanDerBeek and Elad Lassry. But after my short praise I hope it will be more apparent, especially if you hear Lassry saying "I think of the pictures I make as wandering sculptures". Or if you consider the fact that in 2008 VanDerBeek curated a show at Guild & Greyshkul entitled *The Human Face is a Monument* in which Charlesworth's installation *Figure Drawing* (1988) was presented together for the first time. □

PAPER-WEIGHT CHAMPION

Inveterate collector Harley Spiller – who recently completed a masters thesis, ‘On Newsstands Now! A History of Paperweights and Newsstand Advertising’ – weighs up the ‘pisapapeles’, ‘Papierbeschwere’, and 鎮紙 of the world.

READERS’ LIVES

Newsstand paperweights – the usually cast-iron weights that saw their heyday in the 1950s on newsstands across the world – bear the insignia of newspapers and magazines like the *New York Times*, *Toronto Star*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek*. The Mortimer Spiller Company, Inc., my parents’ advertising and sales promotion business, manufactured and sold these weights from the late 1940s through the mid 1980s. A century of their concerted collecting and documentation efforts has resulted in an archive of 151 unique international newsstand weights, plus the original carved mahogany prototypes, news-dealer aprons and caps, business correspondence, photographs, almost 1,000 news clippings, and more.

Advertising and the media have always been linked. The nation’s first mass-market newspapers and magazines arrived in the 1890s and 1900s, their very existence made possible by advertising fees collected from large corporations and retailers. The first weights to hold down newspapers may have been well-worn horseshoes, which were readily available at the onset of the 20th century, about the time automobiles started replacing horses. Paperweights forged expressly for newsstand use started appearing shortly thereafter, and by mid-century they were a fixture on the urban scene.

In the 1950s and 1960s, some of the thousands of weights Spiller was making were shipped overseas by *Life*, *Time*, and the *Herald Tribune*. These weights were deployed on the handful of major newsstands that sold international publications in London, Paris, and other European capitals. Of the 45 total weights my father collected overseas, from the 1970s until 2005, there are 37 in languages other than English.

The weights Spiller collected on Barcelona’s Las Ramblas, where throngs of people go to shop, sit in public, people-watch,

and while away the time, run the gamut from a rudimentary and well-used bent-steel ingot with its painted name *La Visión*, almost completely obliterated, to gorgeous heavily lacquered enamel and polished metal specimens from periodicals like *ABC* and *El Mundo*.

One of the heaviest weights in the collection is a 3¼ pound (1.5 kg) metal and plastic rectangle for the German weekly newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, its colors reminiscent of Germany’s national flag. Less sophisticated weights made from blocks of wood in countries like Thailand and Venezuela reflect these nations’ less-industrialized position in the world, yet the *New York Times* has also used wooden weights, and other American publications, such as *The National* and *BackStage* have found it cost-effective to produce low-end particle board models.

In the late 20th century people in the United States bought, according to Thomas C. Leonard, “less than half as many newspapers per capita than the Japanese, the Finns, and the Swedes; the British and the Germans also were better customers”. According to the United Nations Development

Programme’s 2009 Human Development Report, these six nationalities have the same 99% adult literacy rate, but New York City, perhaps because it is a great city for walking, seems to have the most newsstands and weights per capita in the world. Literacy is but one crucial factor in the sale of print media. Three other important factors in the prominence of newsstands and weights are a well-established culture of media advertising; locations within swarming transportation hubs where people have time to kill, or near heavily trafficked pedestrian areas (or in the case of Los Angeles, near slow-moving traffic jams); and a lively competition among an abundant array of publications. Despite the fact that Cubans are voracious consumers of news and boast an adult literacy tied for first in the world at 99.8 per cent for example, politics on *La Isla* are such that news dealers are few and far between. One scantily stocked Havana news shanty opens on Sunday mornings only. Its lines are long, its newspapers are much in demand.

In Japan, newspapers and magazines are commonly sold at train stations and other relatively wind-free indoor

or semi-sheltered locations. Publications are ordinarily kept in pristine condition until they are handed over to the customer. Outdoor newsstands are uncommon but some Japanese dealers put their publications in outdoor wire racks especially designed to obviate the need for weights.

The paperweight for *The China Press* (which goes by the name ‘Overseas Chinese Newspaper’ in Chinese) claims its “rich content” can “heal the homesickness of overseas Chinese” by allowing readers to “contact the feeling” of the mainland. No matter where they are published or distributed, newspapers and magazines provide a link to their land of origin.

Back in Manhattan, for many years, the place to find print journalism from near and far was Hotalings, also known as the Out of Town Newspaper Agency. Hotalings was often the only link between people in New York and their lands of birth. For many others it was the best place to look for jobs and news from outside Gotham. Its huge selection meant customers could find everything from *Pravda* to *Paris Match* to *Polish Engineering*. Founded in 1905, Hotalings newsstands were located over the years in various

parts of Times Square, from teeming street corners to the former New York Times Building to a tourist information kiosk on Broadway and 46th Street. New York City’s ever-shifting demographics have long been paralleled by Hotalings’ clientele. “We don’t get the crowds from the theater district anymore. People don’t roam in Times Square like they used to. It used to be mostly Western Europeans or people interested in Europe,” said Arthur Hotaling, the founder’s grandson, in 1988. “Now we get a lot more people from Latin America and the third world.” Despite efforts in the 1990s to spruce up the store and expand its offerings, the 105-year-old business is today a wholesale-only operation.

The pageantry of print media is in flux. Single-copy sales are down and impulse purchases are more sporadic. Will newspapers and magazines go the way of buggy whips and coin-operated telephones? No one knows, but one thing’s certain – the cast-iron cameos known as newsstand paperweights will last a long time. □
Submit your story by emailing ‘The Last Monitor’: newspaper@LTTDS.org



All images courtesy Harley Spiller. Photos: Micki Spiller.

HERALDING THE GIZMO

Max Andrews on Danish artist Kirstine Roepstorff’s series ‘Where the world wander – the Road to Excelsior’.



From the series ‘Where the world wander – the Road to Excelsior’ (2006). Courtesy the artist and Peres Projects, Berlin.

Where the world wander – the Road to Excelsior’ (2006) is a series of a dozen collages that each take a lead page of the *Herald Tribune* newspaper as its starting point. In forcing the front page of a paper to be a background – a cover’s visual grammar is specifically

designed to grab – Roepstorff provokes open intertextual conflict with content that can never entirely be her own. An insurgence of foreign images, visual cover-ups and uprisings occur while headlines declare “Israeli troops oust settlers from Gaza”, “After coup, Thailand left in a

dangerous...” or “Cheney calls Iraq insurgency ‘difficult’”. The stakes are high. What’s new and what is news? Naturally, Roepstorff’s choice of the *Herald Tribune* is not insignificant. As its ‘International’ prefix suggests, its reach is global. A pioneer of air distribution in the

1920s and satellite page transmission in the 1980s, the newspaper is now read in over 180 countries and printed at 33 locations, with many local-language affiliations and syndications. It’s in its ambitions towards being a de-centered, unbiased digest of daily current affairs that I suspect lies its appeal as a background for Roepstorff’s collaging. However counter-intuitive this might at first seem aesthetically, it’s the approximation of a ‘neutral’ political backdrop that makes the case. Neither polemical nor defamatory, Roepstorff’s practice has long been concerned with stages of negotiation or states of compromise. The *Tribune* is also inextricably linked with mobility and transit, being commonly found in business hotels and airports (indeed, one of the newspapers is stamped ‘belongs to the Novia Lounge’ having been purloined from a Copenhagen terminal business lounge).

Amid the partially dismembered pages of ‘The Road to Excelsior’ (recall how newspapers are often referred to as ‘press organs’) are repeated photocopies of a group of four men wandering from left to right across an empty beach, and a truck overloaded with people that makes its way in the opposite direction: mobility and transit of a different kind. These graphic iceberg-tips of global human migration and displacement thread the series together because of their persistency in this context – a newspaper would normally avoid running the same photograph more than once – and the telling fact that, such is the frequency and omnipresence of the phenomena of movement and transition that they evoke, here amongst the ‘real’ news they are seemingly un-newsworthy. These are images that exist on a different, spectral register: neither a ‘story’ nor consumable as an event, the world’s wanderers, refugees and economic migrants are here present in a state of interminable immanence (as ‘excelsior’ of the title suggests, ever higher, ever onwards). It is as if the series were a Stations of the Cross stuck on ‘shuffle-all’ – a repeated blend of burden-carrying, condemnation, falling down, and death. Yet like science-fiction, news is to Roepstorff’s ‘news fiction’ –

something to be reordered, extended and speculated upon in order to generate new meaning – both as a form of futurology and soothsaying.

An additional refrain: clusters of pears appear throughout the pages, as if just ready for picking, and perhaps companioned by what appear to be burs or star-like plant cases, as nature’s technologies for seed – or data – dispersal. Prompted by another, later Roepstorff series titles, ‘Community of Pears’ (2007), we might read the repeated motif of these fruit-laden branches as an allegorical placeholder. They encapsulate a trajectory of ‘hanging out’ in growth, maturity and ripening – then presumably juicy consumption or mouldering decay – that brims with unexploited metaphorical potential. Where the apple boasts a hearty pre-inscribed symbolic life (from Edenic trespass to pie-baked American wholesomeness) the pear is ripe for Roepstorff’s casting as another member of this scriptless news-fiction dramatis personae.

In recent years, and with the relentless functionality of the Web as a news aggregator pressing hard, the front page of many ‘dead tree edition’ newspapers have increasingly realigned themselves as multivalent portals to content rather than presenting monologic leaders. And as convenience, portability and the lure of full-color digital printing have trumped the implied seriousness of the large broadsheet format, many non-tabloid papers have downsized their page format to handier proportions, or to mid-way ‘Berliner’ format. Correspondingly, along with the increasingly stochastic reality of the world which it reports, the newspaper page itself is in a state of rapid transition and fragmentation.

Despite the *Tribune*’s resolutely leaden gothic masthead and broadsheet format – the unwavering stuffiness of its design is part and parcel of its appeal to authoritative neutrality I imagine – it witnesses some of these changes in information handling. Thus foil, photocopies and papers intervene in and override not only first-hand reportage and journalism, but a tagged-and-flagged fabric of thumbnailed section trails,

email addresses and weblinks, ticker-like stock market reports and navigational devices – not to forget the pre-eminent tracking embedment, the UPC barcode – that evidence the front page composting its status as a simple artifact or product, and evolving here with Roepstorff’s amplification towards an object-state that Bruce Sterling has characterized as a ‘gizmo’. Gizmos being “highly unstable, user-alterable, baroque multi-featured objects ... the remote adjunct interfaces for a larger, fully-coded communication system”.

Roepstorff invites acculturation of an already-fully-booked informational jamboree where more is on offer than can possibly be used. (Despite the fact that now all advertising on these pages – the front page is prime real estate for any publication – has been expunged.) Collage

thereby becomes a tool that navigates the risks and opportunities presented by the constant and unquenchable attention that news and such interfaces would seem to demand. Hence ‘The Road to Excelsior’ is shot through with incidents that point to equity and decision-making: a sleek circus performer character deftly balances balls (pasted-in in this news context, she might wryly evoke Fox News’s spurious slogan ‘Fair and balanced’!), and a round sign that indicates a fork in the road ahead. What do we sacrifice when we chose to use one article rather than another? Is it any longer possible to be unperturbed by news? And more importantly, “Who Decides?”, as Roepstorff’s practice has asked repeatedly. □

A version of this text was originally published in ‘Fleur du Mal’ (DADDY No. 3), 2007

READERS’ LIVES

My name is Marc D’Andre and I’m a newspaper addict

I guess the point when I realized I had an addiction was when two three-foot-high stacks of newspapers toppled over onto me. I was behind on reading and I would not, or could not, throw them away. I was determined to read them at some point (which I eventually did, sort of) but I’ll get to that later. It had begun innocently enough, picking up the *LA Times* in my early twenties. Then I added *USA Today*, more as a refresher – nothing too serious in there. Then it got a bit more serious. In my late twenties, I added the *New York Times*. It got to the point where I would have to buy these papers every day without fail, and read through them cover to cover (minus the sports). I now have to allot a certain amount of time to reading these things every day. I guess it takes about two hours, sometimes on Sunday it can take a bit longer (the *New York Times* can be very dense on Sunday). Obviously this can get in the way sometimes and occasionally I will avoid going out or doing certain things if it is getting late and I haven’t read anything yet. I am probably starting to sound like a serious obsessive, but I just enjoy the whole process so much. I pretty much feel like a weirdo, no one in my age range (I am 39) seems to read newspapers anymore. The first thing I will do in the morning is go to one of the few remaining newsstands in Los Angeles (at least near where I live) and pick my papers up.

This is my routine. Monday: *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *New York Times*. Tuesday: the same

three plus the *Wall Street Journal* (I like the new health section on Tuesday, but I’m sure they will get rid of it soon). Wednesday/Thursday/Friday: the basic three. Saturday: *LA Times*, *NY Times*, *Wall Street Journal* Weekend Edition (much better than the weekday paper, less conservative although Peggy Noonan writes in it, which is never a good thing, but it does have a good arts and entertainment section) and the *Financial Times* Weekend Edition (a little elitist, the ‘How To Spend It’ magazine is insufferable, but the arts and books sections are pretty decent). Sunday: *LA Times*, *NY Times*. I also subscribe to Newspaper Direct, a website on which I can look at the print editions of the *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and some others when I have the time.

I guess it is a bit obsessive. But I love reading the damn things. I love the feeling of the paper, though I do have to wash my hands about fifteen times a day to wash the ink off. For a short time, I fell behind and had probably 150 newspapers stacked in my apartment. After they fell on me, I vowed to never get behind again, no matter what. So the bottom line: does this make me smarter? Well a little bit, but it’s definitely overkill. I don’t retain everything I read, but at the end of the day I still feel good that I have read everything. So hey, maybe I am addicted, but I guess we are all addicted to something, right? □

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