

Modern Magazine Design

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Cover of the Saturday Evening Post, illustrated by Norman Rockwell, September 1961. In this

self-conscious celebration of the magazine's new look, design consultant Herb Lubalin is shown reworking

the logotype — part of a modern format with which he took the magazine into a new decade.

CASEY STENGEL
HIS OWN STORY



PLUS: KENNEDY'S
"REPORT CARD" By STEWART ALSOP

POST

The Saturday Evening

Sept. 16, 1961 20¢



Norman
Rockwell

William Owen

Modern Magazine Design



Wm. C. Brown Publishers

This edition published in the U.S.A. in 1992 by Wm. C. Brown Publishers 2460 Kerper Blvd. Dubuque, Iowa 52001 U.S.A.

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ISBN 0-697-14791-6

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This book was produced by Laurence King Ltd, London

Picture research by Lucy Bullivant
Designed by Esterson Lackersteen
Printed and bound in Singapore by Toppan Printing Co. Ltd

Front cover
Background picture: photograph Phil Sayer
Top inset: cover of the Russian constructivist magazine *Novy Lef* designed by Alexander Rodchenko, 1928 (courtesy David King Collection, London)

Second inset: photomontaged cover for *Harper's Bazaar* by Herbert Bayer, art directed by Alexey Brodovitch, 1940 (courtesy The Hearst Corporation © 1940)
Third inset: cover of *i-D* designed by Carol Thompson and Eamonn McCabe, art directed by Terry Jones, 1985 (courtesy *i-D Magazine*, London)

Bottom inset: cover of *Metropolis*, art directed by Helene Silverman, 1987 (courtesy Bellerophon Publications Inc., New York)

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to Rick Poyner, with whom I started this project, and to Simon Esterson, with whom I finished it. Both offered encouragement, good advice, source material, and made suggestions and corrections at the proof stage. Simon's assistance with picture selection was invaluable. The other major contributors were Lucy Bullivant, for diligent picture research and constant support; Jane Havell, my editor at Laurence King; photographer John Barlow, and Luke Hayman at Esterson Lackersteen. Ken Garland, David King and Lorraine Wild made further corrections to and comments on sections of the text. Any inaccuracies or omissions are of course mine, and not theirs.

I would also like to thank the many designers who generously gave of their time and knowledge in interviews: Walter Allner, Walter Bernard, Derek Birdsall, Roger Black, Neville Brody, Rod Clarke, Clive Crook, David Driver, Ken Garland, Malcolm Garrett, Milton Glaser, F. H. K. Henrion, David Hillman, Will Hopkins, Alex Isley, Terry Jones, Willem Kars, David King, Mike Lackersteen, Kathy McCoy, Pearce Marchbank, Regis Pagniez, Roland Schenk, Helene Silverman, David Sterling, Derek Ungless, Rudy Vanderlans, Max Whitby,

Henry Wolf, Tom Wolsey, Frank Zachary and Lloyd Ziff.

For their assistance in supplying or obtaining picture material I would like to thank David King/David King Collection; Ken Garland; Pearce Marchbank; Lorraine Wild; David Bishop at Richard Booth Books, Hay-on-Wye, and Derek Ungless (for political support). In addition, grateful thanks for picture material are due to Stephen Male; Otto Storch; Bill Cadge; Paul Rand; Paul Davis; Alan Pipes; Killian Jordan at WBMG; Jacques Koeweiden and Paul Postma; Wallace Grevatt; Hans-Georg Pospischil; Wolfgang Behnken; Lies Ross and Rob Schroder; the Multimedia Corporation; Roger Black; Henry Wolf; Frank Zachary; Dugald Stermer; R. Roger Remington of the Department of Graphic Design, Rochester Institute of Technology, New York; Ko Sliggers; Terry Jones; Melissa Tardiff and Colin Osman. Helpful advice was provided by Daniel Forte at The Art Directors' Club, New York, and Bride Whelan, Society of Publication Designers, New York.
William Owen
London, 1991

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Preface

This book is a history, together with an analysis of contemporary magazine design: two parts which have as a single theme the development of magazine design from the latter part of the industrial revolution to the present day.

That the design of this ubiquitous print medium has been given no systematic history or critique is something of an anomaly, to say the least. The poster has one concise design history, the newspaper at least two, and the book too many to count. Therefore this work can at least atone for a sin of omission. The magazine constitutes a lively and fascinating part of our intellectual existence, and has played a crucial role in moulding the social and cultural forms of the twentieth century. Yet despite the important part that magazines have played as laboratories of experiment, especially in the development of modern design principles and visual expression, the technical, journalistic and artistic evolution of magazine design has received only the marginal treatment that general graphic design histories can provide. The aim of this book is to re-address the balance if it can, for the purposes that are outlined below.

Where historical and contemporary material is included within the same publication it is inevitable that comparisons will be made: some care is required in doing this. Editorial context, commercial circumstance and methods of production have changed considerably. Thirty and forty years ago art directors suffered severe technical restrictions, struggling with inferior inks, paper and print methods, and, if we are to believe

what we are told, they also enjoyed a relatively greater editorial freedom. Advertising knew its place, which was at either side of the editorial well; editors not publishers controlled the content; and readers had quite different expectations. Magazines also fulfilled some of the roles that have since been assumed by television. What was useful then is not necessarily useful now, and almost certainly not in the same form. It would, therefore, be foolhardy to view both the immediate post-war period and contemporary magazine design from an identical critical viewpoint, just as it is useless and reactionary to bemoan the loss of an heroic age which quite probably never existed in the way we perceive it today.

The "great age" of magazine design – a commonly accepted proposition – ran from around 1945 to 1968, and it hangs like a necklace of retribution around the heads of subsequent generations. This was the period in which magazine design matured after a short adolescence lasting little more than fifty years – the time since the introduction of photography to pictorial magazines. It should not, however, be viewed as the summit of achievement. Nevertheless, and regardless of circumstance, much of contemporary magazine design has been disparaged for its lack of a comparable simplicity and intensity, for its absence of wit, for its fussiness; for being alternatively unadventurous, undramatic or overwrought; and divorced from the great design tradition established in the mid-century. At a symposium on magazine design organized by the

American Institute of Graphic Arts in 1985, a roll-call of the great names of the past vented their feelings: "Magazines today are timid. They have no self-confidence" (Cipe Pineles); "Something happened to the magazine in the Sixties; it was the loss of potency" (Milton Glaser); "Today the advertising departments run magazines, but once there was a kind of congressional immunity for editors" (Henry Wolf); "I feel like an old fuddy-duddy talking this way, but nevertheless, there were once basic aesthetic standards for magazine design that do not exist today" (Will Hopkins).¹

Given the poverty of commercial magazine publishing in the 1970s, and – probably – a lack of awareness of developments in the independent press in Europe, these viewpoints are at least understandable, but that does not make them right. The old guard's criticisms are sometimes deserved, sometimes not. There is today a greater depth of technical competence, if not always of talent. Equally, there is undoubtedly a strong argument that an important heritage has been discarded, often involuntarily. Magazine design, however changed, must be informed by its past.

There have been two jarring dislocations to the forward march of graphic design this century which have combined to interrupt continuity and shatter the confident optimism of the modern movement: first fascist repression; more recently the upsurge of revivalism and eclecticism in the 1960s and 1970s. Both these amnesiac events were followed by periods of ignorance and a subsequent upsurge of naive if unfettered creativity.

Many of the discoveries of visual science had been lost and the wastage of invention in magazine design, because its documentation is so sporadic, was particularly flagrant. As a result, too often young designers are forced to rediscover that "the world is round, like an orange". Continuity and tradition are essential even if they exist only to be demolished. An essential component of the creative process is deracination. Creativity consists of observing, learning and changing existing methods to adapt to new circumstances – a spiral pattern of subtly changed repetitions. It is a struggle between subconscious ideas and intellectual analysis, and between the conventional and the unconventional. It is, however, impossible to struggle in a historical vacuum. Push against nothing and you fall.

This is also an apposite time for reappraisal. Today, in all the arts, we have reached a moment of dissolution and uncertainty. There is no dominant philosophy of design and, if we take magazine design as our paradigm, a characteristically fragmented selection of pragmatic, revivalist, expressionistic, neo-modernist, unstructured and deconstructed approaches emerges. The narrow technocratic pursuit of efficiency has been largely superseded, too often by mere ostentation, sometimes by beneficent inquiry. There is a discernable shift from rational to sensual cognition, an apparent will to test the bounds of perception with a more complex array of words, images, signs and symbols which attack the instinctive rather than the logical mind.

In the hiatus between the breakdown of old belief systems and old technologies and the foundation of the new, in a time when the influx of influences and ideas is too great to be assimilated and acted upon with any consistency, such diversity is inevitable and not to be decried, as long as this aesthetic energy has graphic intelligence and is applied to political and social purpose.

A successful search for new forms which apply to different production methods and unfamiliar contexts requires experiment and a degree of indulgence, and has to be viewed from a short critical distance. This is why, in the second section of this book dealing with contemporary design, the perspective is altered. There is a much looser interpretation of the cardinal points of functionalist design – that is, of what is appropriate, simple, ordered – except where a problem-solving approach is evidently essential to lucid communication and as long as there is some purpose to invention.

And so the second part of this book is called “New magazine design”. What is so new about it? The answer is: at the moment, there is no more than a hint of the new. Because only revolutionary situations create revolutionary ideas it is not surprising that in thirty or forty years we have seen only a gradual evolution in magazine design or graphic design *per se*. However, there has at least been a technical revolution. We are now well down a path that will lead to radical change in the commercial and technical environment in which magazine publishing operates. Start-up costs,

even in large publishing houses, have been reduced massively by desktop publishing and this will have a profound effect on the scope and spread of magazine editorial. New markets will open up for new kinds of magazine, which will require new design structures. The same technology has given designers an unprecedented control over the production process, which has already led to a corresponding richness and variety of visual expression. And there are more fundamental changes approaching, which will have an effect in some ways comparable to the design revolution – the New Typography – which began in the first decade of this century and which was itself ignited by the advent of the new technologies of photography, lithography and industrial-scale printing. That is, the addition of digital distribution to digital composition – the substitution for paper of electronic media.

The paper magazine will not be replaced – it is far too convenient. But it will be supplemented by the electronic magazine, the first experimental examples of which have already been produced. Electronic distribution brings with it the opportunity to create entirely new typographic systems, new information structures, and new syntheses of text and image. For the first time, it introduces qualities of animation and interaction to typography. It also raises problematic questions about the mutability of data and information. These are issues which affect all graphic media but are of particular interest to magazines which have structures so amenable to the new “hypermedia”. This is a

digression born of enthusiasm. The subject is addressed more fully in the last chapter.

There are four riders to add to this introduction. Firstly, the text has an unfortunate but inevitable bias towards the Western design tradition. American design is observed closely, for the obvious reason that the great power and resources of American magazine publishing have created a corresponding strength in design. The remaining emphasis is largely on Western Europe and in particular Britain, where the author lives and works and therefore has a wealth of information on which to draw. The important Russian contribution is examined only up until 1941 and post-war developments in Eastern Europe are also omitted; this is due to lack of information rather than inclination; and the same problem, exacerbated by distance and language difficulties, applies to South America, Africa and Asia. Examples of Japanese design are included in the contemporary design section.

Secondly, there is the question of how the term "magazine" is defined. Rather than become entangled in an etymological debate which is in any case dealt with in "Journalism and art" (pages 126–157), it is only necessary at this point to say that, as a general rule, weekly reviews printed on newsprint, or adopting a "news" format (i.e. a hierarchy of separated stories on a single page) are excluded, as are illustrated comics on the one hand and "learned" journals on the other.

Thirdly, there is a limit to what can be achieved by photographic reproduction. The images in the

book can provide only a two-dimensional representation of covers and spreads, whereas magazines have other important properties of touch and texture, size and weight. The paper is an essential component of the design, as is the quality of the print and the contrasts and consistency of the ink. The priorities of layout are subject to the physical size of the page, but this factor cannot be truly represented by a scaled-down reproduction. More importantly, magazines have a sequential structure to which a single page or spread can do no justice. So, if they can, readers are strongly advised to find the originals.

And finally, throughout this book its subject is treated seriously, which might imply that magazines are an essential – not ephemeral – element of human existence and vital to the sustenance of life. Well, they are – if not in such a profound way as books – and they certainly are to the people who depend on them for their jobs and careers. But while magazines inform they are primarily an entertainment, and when they inform they should also intrigue. Magazine design might be an excruciatingly painful process and the source of much wailing and gnashing of teeth in editorial offices, but the way a page was designed never broke a reputation or changed the world. This is what gives the magazine designer such considerable leeway to experiment, to learn and develop, and to indulge a sense of humour. The ephemeral nature of magazines is their strength – there is no better place to make mistakes.

London, Summer 1990

Part one

A history of magazine design

Prologue: a new synthesis

The magazine has no true antecedent in pre-industrial printing. It is an invention of the industrial revolution, and as such it has matured in a relationship of mutual dependence with the modern movement in graphic design. The history of magazine design is one of a struggle to relinquish traditional book and newspaper typography and create a new synthesis of text and pictures.

The social conditions and technical processes required for the production of modern mass-circula-

tion magazines existed only from the last decade of the nineteenth century. As the bastard offspring of the book and newspaper, upstart brother to the literary journal and poor cousin to the poster, the magazine lacked a unique visual format; as a consequence it became an ideal medium for graphic exploration. This was a new type of information source applicable to the requirements of a highly structured but rapidly changing society. In the machine age, the age of mass education and mass politics, of specialization,

In the early 20th century magazines assumed new importance as a pictorial and written medium of communication, extending to all classes of society. Two peasants (right), in 1929, study the Soviet anti-religious magazine *Bez Bozhnik*.



it was necessary that the picture acquire equality with the word.

The modern magazine grew directly out of the invention of photographic reproduction and the automation of printing. The new technologies were assimilated through experiment in original forms of typography and spatial composition, and so contemporary magazine design evolved largely according to the new aesthetic developed in Germany, Russia and the Netherlands immediately after the First World War. In the mid-1930s the creative centre moved to New York. The modern format of integrated elements – in which visual and textual components were amplified through combination – was refined and applied commercially to popular magazines in the giant publishing conglomerates of the United States.

While magazine design remained a craft activity it was inevitable that composition would take on traditional, bookish forms. Few of the graphic characteristics individual to magazines were established before 1900. The magazine was distinguished from the book only by its flimsy cover; the headline resembled a chapter heading; the arrangement of type was symmetrical; text was wrapped from top to bottom in single or double columns in the bookish manner; and illustrations were placed over a full page opposite the text, or united with it only insofar as type was carried in a dog-leg around the picture. Most of these traits persevered well into the new century and today, in technical and literary journal publishing, they remain stubbornly, if sometimes appropriately, intact.

The impact of the new printing methods, of photography and photomechanical reproduction, was at first restricted to the production, print and distribution

cycles. Publishers utilized the new technology to increase circulation, respond faster to events and incorporate illustration, but presentation and layout were largely unaffected. The traditional decorative and symmetrical style persisted as long as page make-up remained the prerogative of journalists and craft printers. Design, except in the matter of covers, was not recognized as a separate activity.

The division of labour was narrowed over a considerable period of time, beginning with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Aubrey Beardsley was described as “art editor” of *The Yellow Book* (a periodical) in 1894.¹ One of the earliest uses of the title in America was in *The Burr McIntosh Monthly* of 1908,² and the illustrator John Sloan was *de facto* art editor (unpaid) of the radical New York monthly *The Masses* from its launch in 1911. The great American typographer Will Bradley, better known for his work for the American Type Founders’ Chap-Book, was from 1907 art editor of *Collier’s* and, from 1910 to 1915, of five magazines in the Hearst organization – *Good Housekeeping*, *Metropolitan*, *Success*, *Pearson’s* and *National Post*.³ His systematic styling of *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1916 anticipated the innovations of Dr M. F. Agha at Condé Nast by fifteen years – Bradley broke the conventions of the illustrated magazine by treating the double-page spread as a single unit.

Bradley, who from 1920 to 1930 was typographic supervisor of all Hearst publications, was the exception that proves the rule. The use of the term “art editor” and the existence of such a position was a rarity until the late 1920s when the first commercial art directors overturned craft conservatism and brought a modern sensibility to magazine design.

Illustrated magazines and the photographic revolution

The earliest "magazines" were literary or political journals published exclusively for the rich, and priced too high for broader circulation. The industrial revolution widened the social horizon. In Europe, the creation of an educated middle class and a small layer of skilled workers encouraged the invention of a new type of magazine distributed by the railway networks. Cheap weekly periodicals "devoted to wholesome popular instruction, blended with original amusing matter",⁴ surfaced from 1832 in England with circulations of up to 100,000. They broadcast a patronizing morality and specialized in utilitarian miscellanies of fact, and quite naturally soon fell from favour with their readers.

The first sustained wave of popular magazine publishing was provided by the illustrated news weeklies. Their success coincided with the rise of the European

popular democratic movements, and with technical advances in print and pre-press which made their production possible: paper manufacture was mechanized; all-iron lever presses improved efficiency and speed; and type composition was partially automated. Together, these developments allowed more resources to be devoted to illustration, which remained a time-consuming hand-worked process.

The prototype was the *Illustrated London News*, founded (or perhaps more accurately, invented) in 1842 by Herbert Ingram in association with topographical draftsman Ebenezer Landells, the man behind *Punch*. The illustrated magazines provided a novel, rapid and above all vivid weekly news service in a period of political upheaval. They were started in many European cities: *L'Illustration* in Paris and *Die Illustrierte Zeitung* in Leipzig both in 1843; *Fliegende*

McClure's
August 1916
designer unknown

The McClure's format represents a transitional stage, with evidence of the development of a distinct magazine typography. The type hierarchy incorporated headline, byline and introduction, usually centred at the top of the page but in this example sandwiched asymmetrically between picture and gutter. The picture arrangement, however, is eccentric and ill-defined.

McCLURE'S for AUGUST

The Business of Being a Lady

by Anna Steese Richardson

THE real thing in McClure's for June is Mrs. Anna Steese Richardson's article, on many of which she has been writing for some time. It is a very interesting and timely study of the business of being a lady, and it is one of the best things we have seen in any magazine. It is a study of the business of being a lady, and it is one of the best things we have seen in any magazine. It is a study of the business of being a lady, and it is one of the best things we have seen in any magazine.




McCLURE'S for AUGUST

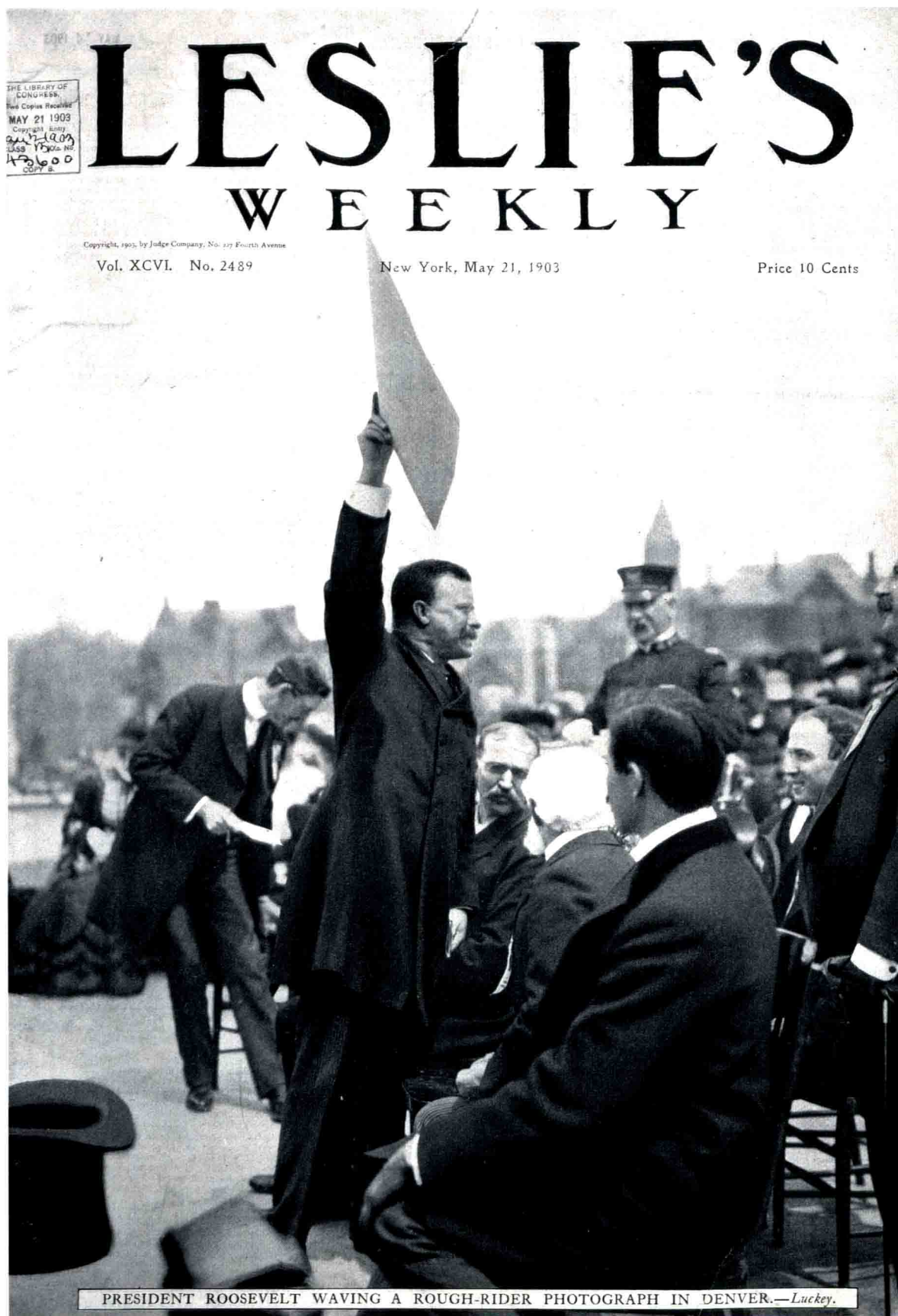



Leslie's Weekly

21 May 1903

designer unknown

The utilitarian simplicity of this cover, with a single bleed photograph over which logotype, fudge and caption are superimposed, marks a profound change in cover design, away from the norm of engraved illustration surmounted by ornate titlepiece.



PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT WAVING A ROUGH-RIDER PHOTOGRAPH IN DENVER.—Luckey.

Cosmopolitan

August 1913

designer unknown

By 1913 *Cosmopolitan* had already developed an understanding of graphic unity, illustrated by this montage of right-facing silhouettes arranged, over a diamond-shaped vignette, across the spread. The differential scale provides depth and the cut-out pictures are integrated with text by extraordinarily elaborate, staggered typesetting. Three years later Will Bradley's styling took the process further by taking single pictures across the binding.

Blatter in 1844 and *Kladderadatsch* in 1848, also in Germany; the Spanish *La Ilustracion* was first published in 1849, and in the 1850s Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper's Weekly* appeared in the USA. These were the forerunners of *Life*, *Paris Match* and *Picture Post*, with the essential difference that the printed word retained its primacy in a typographical format borrowed from the newspapers of the day.

The 16-page *Illustrated London News* was produced only by the expedient of concentrating groups of four or more engravers on separate portions of each wooden block.⁵ The process was extremely expensive and time-consuming and in 1848, the year of revolutions, the magazine was priced at sixpence, or about half the day-wage of a labourer; fifty years later the use of multiple illustrations was commonplace. Whereas at the beginning of the nineteenth century a wooden block took between a day and a month to cut, depending on its size; one hundred years later a photographic halftone could be prepared in hours and by 1890 magazines such as *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Harper's* and *Leslie's* were making extensive use of photography. Moreover, magazines were universally affordable; the average cover price had dropped to threepence in Britain and to ten cents in the USA.

The photographic revolution was enforced against

the will and without the understanding of many magazine editors of the time. From the invention of the daguerreotype onwards, a battle ensued between photography and illustration in which, intriguingly, each took on the characteristics of the other. Craftsmen wrought such miracles of cross-hatched toning that illustrations achieved a quality of realism rarely superseded by early photography, and the photographic facsimiles printed in magazines were so heavily touched up as to resemble drawings. Much of the photography published in the weeklies was treated as illustration. Inexplicably, to the modern eye, the dynamism of photography was emasculated by encasing pictures in a decorative frame.

Photography was first used in magazines to reproduce illustration, to transfer drawings to the sensitized surface of a woodblock in a mechanized engraving process. In 1872 zincography was invented, which created wholly new design opportunities by combining photography and line engraving so that pictures could be sized up or down to fit by the printer.⁶ A variety of screenless techniques were used throughout the 1850s and 1860s, but any magazine attempting to reproduce photographic images faced the difficulty that screenless photoglyph prints required special paper and a separate press for printing the image; it was therefore impossible to produce both images and text on a single press using ordinary paper.



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A Lady of Comedy

comedy roles with Mr. Drew, I had a brief experience with "The Rangers," a play by Augustus Thomas, and a good-sized experience as leading lady with Francis Wilson in "When Knights were Bold."

"With Mr. Drew I have played in "Jack Straw," "Smith," "Inconstant George," "A Single Man," and "The Perpetrated Husband"—quite a sufficient variety to keep even at a distance for the time being, I can assure you.

"They say my little madcap Michelle in "Inconstant George" was just the opposite of my real self," continues Miss Holand, in her demurely sincere manner, "but that there was a whole lot of me in Miss Hazekine, she of the simple faith and true love deferred, in "A Single Man." Maybe that is the way others see me. For my own part, this Kallida means more to me than both the other roles put together. Not that I imagine I am expressing myself in playing her—no simulation actress wants



Kallida, the actress' opponent girl, with an artistic temperament under imperfect control.

to do that sort of thing. What I mean is that Kallida is to me an actual, live woman, fascinating just because she is different. And at the same time I incline to be personally in sympathy and accord with her views—on the woman question, which he expresses in this character study, and in the whole play."

"In other words, then, you are an anti-suffragist?"

"I suppose I am. Of course I realize that the woman movement is running up its own red flag, whether we believe in it or not. I approve of work and a free hold for women, but not brutalization. Just suppose the militants should win out, and women get the vote and the upper hand generally. Why, there would have to be a new man to fit in with the new woman. And I don't think men are changing. Do you?"



A "TOT" actress, a little player-child of the golden-haired and blue-eyed type such as the "Home Magazine" page of the family newspaper loves to portray by the three-color process, Miss Vivian Martin was never

"I was born in sunny Michigan. As far back as I can remember, my mother was never opposed to my going on the stage—rather the contrary. Bless her heart!"

"I may as well tell you, I was NOT educated in a convent."

allowed to grow up, professionally, until Charles Frohman decreed that she should be a Maple Adams in miniature, playing Peter Pan in some important provincial circuits which Miss Adams has not yet gotten around to.

"This is not the paradox that it seems on the face of it. For, while Peter Pan is the symbol of the eternal "Lid," it requires a mature artist, and even then some more, to put Peter over the footlights.

Miss Martin, although hardly yet out of her teens as the actual count of years goes, is in other respects the mature artist with a full decade of professional experience behind her.

She started with Mansfield in "Cyrano de Bergerac," and during the past season has been seen in the pulchre line and cry of an up-to-date Broadway farce called "Stop Thief!"

The interval between these two engagements affords a diversified chapter of contemporary stage history, which the young comedienne sketches for us autobiographically, in her vivacious way:

In fact, I was in danger of not being educated at all, except for home teaching. If my mother had not retired me from the theater for a couple of years and sent me to school.

"And I was a little school girl with a past I can