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phrase "the dominant group's," then we have the basis of an explanation.

Since the Progressive Era the capitalist class has been politically divided over the issue of state intervention in the economy. A liberal wing, usually associated with the larger, more established corporations and banks, has supported certain kinds of state intervention, while the conservative wing, associated with smaller and/or newer business interests, have favored *laissez-faire* economics. This split played a role in the establishment of state regulation of business in the 1900-20 period and the creation of significant social programs coupled with government efforts to tame the business cycle beginning in the period 1933-48. As the state role in the economy changed, economic theory eventually changed with it, as Keynesian theories both informed and justified state intervention.

### Changing winds.

In the late '60s and early '70s, popular pressure led to the expansion and improvement of social programs such as Social Security, aid to education and health programs. And over the clear opposition of big business, government regulation of occupational safety and health and the environment were established. But the economic winds were changing, as the U.S. economy (along with the other capitalist economies) entered a crisis in the '70s that grew more severe as the decade proceeded. This led the liberal wing of capital to shift ground. Social programs and regulation of business previously seen as necessary to stabilize capitalism were now viewed as having expanded excessively, undermining the growth and competitiveness of U.S. business. The effect on politics was immediate. The last years of the Carter administration were marked by deregulation and cutbacks in social programs. The Reagan administration greatly accelerated this movement, but the basic direction began earlier.

The effect on academic economics was no less dramatic. With the capitalist class united around the need to cut social programs and regulations, the economics profession rapidly moved to the right. It was partly a matter of research funding: the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and other right-wing foundations began to pour money into economics research that would prove the "right" things. The ultimate source of such funds is not just John Birch-type small capitalists; the top officials of Chase Manhattan Bank, General Motors and General Electric have raised funds for AEI in recent years.

But money was not the whole story. When united, the capitalist class has enormous power to create a national mood or direction, particularly through the mass media. As the national mood reflected in the media shifted against government intervention in the economy, the economics profession shifted with it.

The new conservative economics did not just respond to and reflect the new politics; it has played a key role in promoting it. It is difficult to justify a program of transferring income from poor to rich and undermining the massively popular environmental and job safety laws. But the new conservative economics, and the traditional price-auction model from which it derives, offer a

powerful rationale for that program. This theory vigorously argues that state intervention in the economy does not accomplish the good things it is supposed to accomplish. All it does is hamstring the economy, which makes everyone suffer. This must be so, because the unfettered free market always produces the best possible outcome. Thus, individual workers will switch from unsafe to safe jobs, compelling the optimum amount of job safety. Voluntary private savings for old age (IRAs) are superior to the compulsory Social Security system. And so on.

According to this rationale, the re-emergence of a seemingly archaic and outdated "free market" economic theory makes sense. It re-emerged not for the reasons of form cited by Thurow (easy mathematization and an air of certainty) but for reasons of substance. It is ideally suited to justify the current political program of big business. But the free market theory is ultimately in conflict with the world view and experience of the larger corporations and banks. They operate in a world of markets controlled by private monopoly power and state intervention. While true believers would like to actually go back to the small, non-interventionist state of the 19th century, corporate thinkers understand that that would be a prescription for disaster—capitalism needs an interventionist state for stability and survival. Although big corporate money has promoted the resurgence of free market economic theory, there has been a continuing tension between the right-wing economics ideologues around the Reagan administration (David Stockman, Representative Jack Kemp) and the more traditional corporate types (Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, Vice-President George Bush).

It is likely that the political winds will soon change again. The Reagan administration has succeeded in cutting back social programs and regulation of business. But the conservative economic program has not solved, nor can it solve, the economic crisis. It appears that the solution will lie in another extension of the state's economic role, this time involving direct state guidance of markets to facilitate profit-making and enable U.S. business to compete against the more highly planned economies of Japan and Western Europe. Known as "industrial policy," this strategy seems to be the wave of the future. If this proves correct, conservative economics will soon be found wanting, and a resurgence of neo-Keynesian interventionist thought seems likely. The right-wing economic ideologues, so puffed up of late with money and praise by the powers that be, may soon be deflated and relegated to the fringe of modern economic thought once more.

Should this scenario emerge, Lester Thurow is well positioned to assume a leading role as economic guru of a renewed liberal interventionism. His previous book, *Zero Sum Society*, advanced an industrial policy. His latest book clears the field for such a policy by showing the claim that unregulated markets work best is based on an outmoded and implausible theory, thus slaying the free market dragon now barring the path to industrial policy.

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# ART <> ENTERTAINMENT

## GRAPHICS

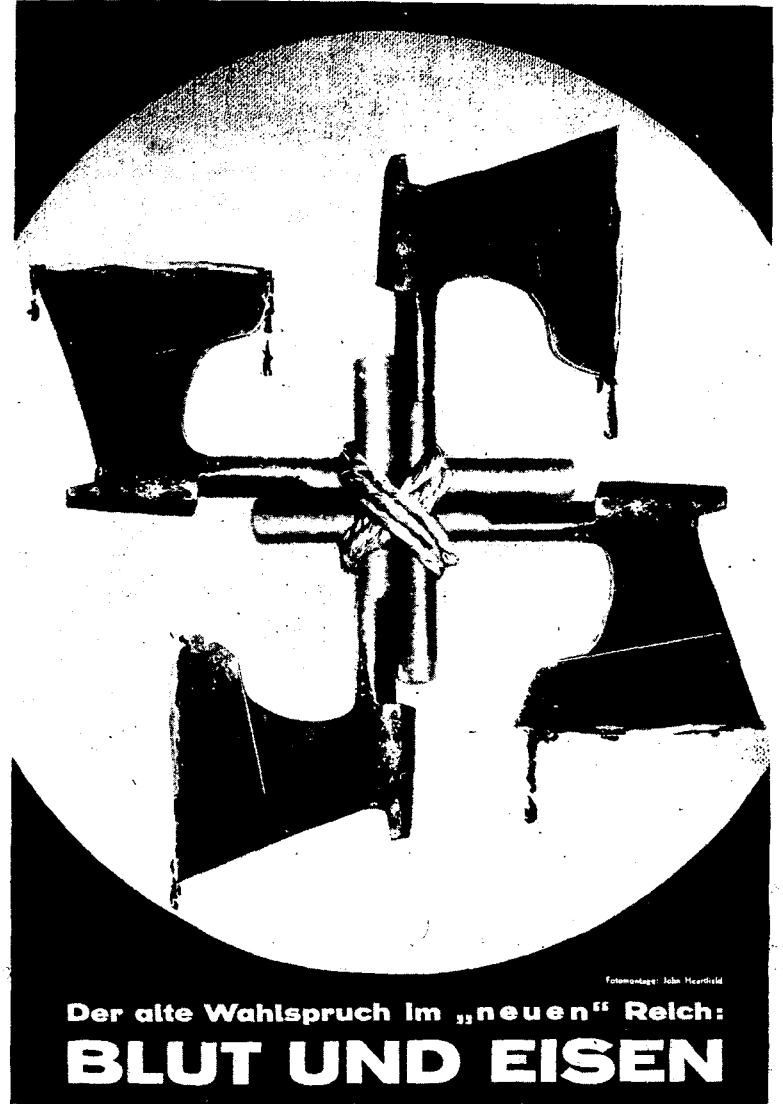
# Heartfield: The art of photo-persuasion

By Miles DeCoster

When Helmut Herzfeld changed his name to John Heartfield in reaction to the rising nationalist sentiment in Weimar Germany, he embarked on a career in which person, politics and art were to be inseparable. The exhibition of his graphic work at the Peace Museum in Chicago shows both the political relevance of his work to the climate of oppression that accompanied the rise of Nazism in the '30s as well as the aesthetic significance of his technical innovations in the use of typography and photography. Heartfield was a pioneer in the use of photomontage as an artistic device and as a means to integrate current imagery with overtly political messages.

While experimentation in styles, mediums and techniques was widespread in Europe and Russia in the '10s, '20s and '30s (i.e. cubism, constructivism, suprematism, surrealism, dada, etc.), Heartfield did not confine his work to the traditional outlets for art or limit his audience to an educated elite. He chose rather to publish his work: as posters plastered on the kiosks in German cities, and in periodicals that reached a wide and diverse audience—primarily in AIZ (*Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung/Workers' Illustrated Paper*). Between 1930 and 1938 he contributed more than 200 pieces to AIZ dealing with political and social issues of the day. In the mid-'30s, AIZ reached more than 500,000 readers, and many of the covers were reprinted as posters.

While the origins of photo-



montage are subject to debate, there is little disagreement that John Heartfield and his Russian contemporaries Alexander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky were its masters. It is no accident that they all used it as a vehicle for political persuasion as well as artistic statement. Photomontage was a technique ideally suited for commentary on current events

AIZ, March 8, 1934.

because the artist could integrate news photos familiar to a wide audience with other photographs, drawings and text. It thus retained the veracity of the news photograph while allowing for manipulation and symbolic modification.

The juxtaposition of image and text was also a key element in Heartfield's covers and posters. Just as the meaning of photos taken from the popular press and Nazi propaganda were altered, so too were headlines, quotations and slogans lifted and their meaning slyly perverted. For an AIZ cover (December, 1935) headlined "Hurrah, the butter is gone" Heartfield created a montage of a family eating various pieces of machinery—the family dog is under the table chewing on a large bolt while the baby nibbles on a hatchet. The wallpaper is decorated with swastikas and a "Hindenberg pillow" (the General, not the zeppelin) rests on the sofa. At the bottom of the cover is a quote from Goering: "Iron has always made a country strong; butter and lard have at most made the people fat."

In other AIZ covers the relationship between the National Socialists and the German industrialists who financed them is made explicit. An October '32 cover headlined "The Meaning of the Hitler Salute" shows Hitler with his hand up in "salute" receiving money from a much larger man behind him. The subtitle reads in part: "Millions

AIZ cover, April 12, 1934.



stand behind me," a slogan Hitler used in his push for power, here altered by the image to suggest that it is millions of marks, not people, that stand behind him. In another cover smoke-stacks—a Nazi symbol for economic recovery—are juxtaposed with smoking cannon barrels. The text reads: "Prospects for the death business."

Heartfield considered the printed piece as the end product of his work, not the montages themselves—the assembling of which was often done by assistants. The type, an integral part of the work, was not added until positive slides were made for transfer to copper photogravure printing plates. He had no interest in producing commodities for art collectors (though, ironically, this is what the "original" covers and posters have become). He was, however, active in the Berlin Dada movement along with his frequent collaborator George Grosz and his printed work was included in their exhibitions. The Berlin Dadaists were more blatantly political than their Zurich and Paris counterparts; in 1918 Heartfield and Grosz both joined the Communist Party, along with Zurich transplant Richard Huelsenbeck and Heartfield's brother Wieland Herzfelde.

#### Relevant opposition.

While the particular content of Heartfield's work during the Nazi period is no longer current, the oppositions symbolized are strikingly relevant. The dove impaled on a bayonet in front of the League of Nations building was a powerful symbol in 1932, but by removing the building and adding the caption "Never Again!" a still powerful poster for world peace was created in 1960.

Heartfield moved to England just prior to WWII where he continued his opposition to the Nazis (though he was briefly interned there with other "enemy aliens" when the war broke out). In 1950 he returned to East Germany where he worked for the German Theater, the Berlin Ensemble and other cultural organizations. While he was much admired for his anti-fascist work and honored with major shows in the USSR, China, East and West Germany, his opposition to the Cold War and the nuclear buildup as well as his avant garde aesthetics prevented him from being a significant proponent of the new German socialist state. He died in Berlin in 1968.

The exhibition at Chicago's Peace Museum, curated by Viktoria Hertling, includes a number of original AIZ covers, larger reprints of Heartfield's covers, as well as posters and book covers done during and after the war. The show runs through August 21 and plans are being made for the exhibition to travel. The growth of the peace movement in the last several years has created a renewed interest in art that embodies political commitment, be it that of Heartfield, Grosz, Rodchenko and El Lissitzky or the Bread and Puppet theater. The Peace Museum is a testament to that interest. ■



Robert McPhee/Thorpe

## MOVIES

# Beefcake, but with no cake

By Pat Aufderheide

*Breathless*, the American remake of Godard's classic, is supposed to make you feel hot. It might do that. It might just make you feel sad, though. Not only are the characters lost and lonely, gliding on the slick surface of plasticland in Los Angeles' consumer paradise, the movie is too. It is gorgeous without being beautiful, frenetic instead of energetic, hollow inside its fashion-model shape.

But it is fascinating. Director-screenwriter Jim McBride (*David Holzman's Diary*, *Glen and Randy*) and co-screenwriter L.M. Kit Carson cared passionately about making *Breathless*—it's not a lowest-common-denominator movie. With its postpunk aesthetic, it is as troubling as the characters are troubled.

Of course, that's not why most people are going to it. They're going for the ultimate tease—the camera peeking down almost (oh really almost *there*) to Richard Gere's genitalia. It is garnering fame as a beefcake movie—a *Newsweek* cover makes Richard Gere the exemplar of a certifiable trend. French actress Valerie Kaprisky makes a perfect complement to this pelvis-twitching, randomly randy male sex idol: a pale, passive, fresh but mysteriously controlled female sexual force. (The fact that they both have magnificent bodies might as well go without saying; so does every model on the shampoo ads. Do they grow them in special tanks out there in the land of sun these days?)

You might think this movie is so retrograde as to put it in some kind of forefront. Bad boy (a cop killer, a thief, a gambler, a chiseler, a moocher) lures good girl (student, property owner and respecter of laws) into the downward spiral of his flight from the forces of order. They savor forbidden love and doomed passion before the future catches up to them. As befits the tradition, the

woman precipitates disaster.

The story is a devoted, even slavish, remake of the original *Breathless*, down to throwaway details and mimicry of the names—Godard's Michel Poiccard has become Monica Poiccard. It also glosses a long American movie tradition of doomed romantic marginal characters in films like *You Only Live Once* and *Bonnie and Clyde*. Ever referential, the film at one point has the principals make love on red velvet in the back of a movie theater where *Gun Crazy* is playing.

#### The new angle.

There is a new angle here, though—a postmodern stylization to the story's retelling. The familiar, slender plot thread becomes a clothesline on which to hang a gallery's worth of poses. The production design, by Richard Sylbert—a star production designer and the man who gave *Reds* its look—is as arch as the elaborate artificiality of the characters' mannerisms. Their constant sexual flaunting, especially the rambunctious Gere, should be crude, even pornographic. But this version of *Breathless* makes it into a different kind of cheap. These kids are lost in a decaying civilization; they seem less to rebel against it than to succumb blindly, to buy the promise instead of the reality—the picture of the cake instead of the cake.

So where is the cake? This kind of story set up could provoke you to ask that question. That's what Godard managed to do in the original—heightening your sense of discontent and displacement. His shocking use of jumpcuts, improvised handheld camera work, incorporation of accident into the narrative, and deliberately old-fashioned movie techniques like the iris-out—all calling attention to the fact that you were watching a film, a story told by a restlessly critical storyteller—did leave you breathless.

This movie goes to the opposite extreme, using the ultimate in movie retrofashion to create lush

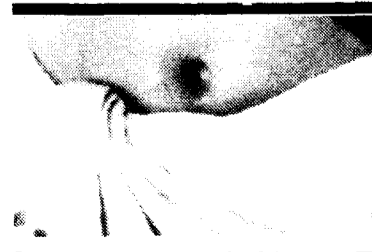
painterly designs, immersing both actors and viewers in a world of color, sound and affect. The cumulative effect is something like having eaten too much pizza.

The new *Breathless* makes style a fetish in itself, not a tool of expression. This is pop art without populist energy. The dialog is heavily pretentious poetry of alienation. (She: "What do you want from me?" He: "Everything." "That's too much." "Well, what do you want from me?" "Something." "That's not enough.") The color schemes are so meticulously worked out that her fingernail polish perfectly matches the telephone she picks up. Symbols are overstated with a vengeance. Take, for instance,



Carol McCullough

**These kids are lost in a decaying civilization. They succumb and not rebel—buy the promise and not the reality.**



#### The ultimate tease

the little plastic heart necklace that he gives her, which lights up when she's happy with him and gets broken when she decides to abandon him. There is also Jesse's (Gere) pathetic identification with Jerry Lee Lewis, whose manic style labels him "the Killer" (Jesse has earned that title the hard way). The characters walk through a world of billboards and murals (many of them in L.A.'s Venice), their lives and concerns no more substantial than the image of Botticelli's Venus on rollerskates that appears on a wall in one scene.

Like in *Blade Runner*, the power of production design to assert mood can be striking. Sylbert makes bold use of unnatural color and neon light, for instance. The harsh red-and-blue night world *a la* Las Vegas has its counterpart in the daytime colors of turquoise and pink, which are no more refreshing than jangling night shades. The music plays with you, too, building from ominous ostinatos to a submerging soundboard sound.

The whole production has a hip appeal, and even a romantic poignancy. In this world of percussive fantasy and narcissistic striving, Jesse is the last of a dying breed, the old-fashioned romantic. His hero is the Silver Surfer, a comic book superhero who selflessly stays on Earth to bring human beings to an awareness of the power of love. But the coming generation knows that's too corny for words. "The Silver Surfer's a jerk," says a little kid at the comic book stand. "Only a jerk would stay when he could go." (Get it? Jesse too should go, without waiting to convince Monica to come along.)

But the totalizing production design shrinks the characters down to the size of the landscape, to the flat billboards they parade in front of. They move through a world of advertisements, and they are advertisements for themselves. Worse—their advertisements for themselves are themselves. So even their passion has a mechanical quality, a matching up of mannequins.

When it crossed the sea, *Breathless* also made a leap from one end of the film continuum—Godard's version was crude, highly personal, improvised, irascible—to the other, becoming glossy, engulfing, anonymous. They're two very different kinds of loneliness. Godard once said about making *Breathless*, "What I wanted was to take a conventional story and remake, but differently, everything the cinema had done. I also wanted to give the feeling that the techniques of filmmaking had just been discovered or experienced for the first time." In this version, the many-layered references to pop art derived from exhausted conventions points instead to a finished and jaded sensual universe.

Well, it's dispiriting. That's why it is hard to get really turned on or really indignant over the cheesecake-beefcake stuff. This isn't passion on the critical edge of commercial culture. The vitality of sexual assertion in the face of convention is nowhere in sight. Sex too has become, in *Breathless*, a glossy pose—fit for a *Vanity Fair* ad, a Helmut Newton backdrop, a *Newsweek* cover. ■