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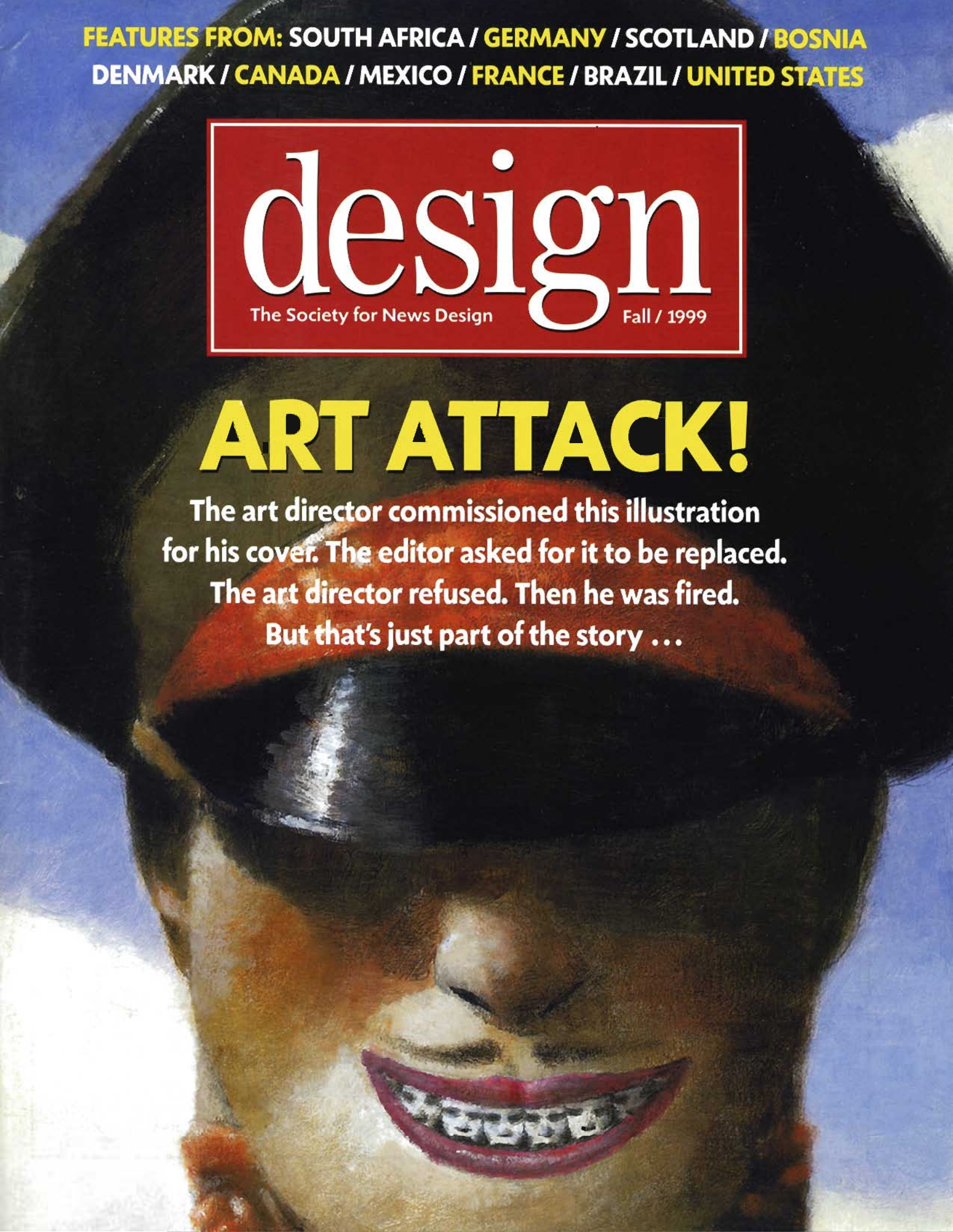
Fall / 1999

ART ATTACK!

The art director commissioned this illustration for his cover. The editor asked for it to be replaced.

The art director refused. Then he was fired.

But that's just part of the story ...



Sniper Kills Abortion Doctor in His Home

AMHERST, N.Y., Oct. 24 (AP) — Days after American and Canadian authorities warned doctors who performed abortions to be on the alert for sniper attacks, a doctor was killed by a bullet fired into his home on Friday night, the police said. Dr. Barnett Slepian, 51, who

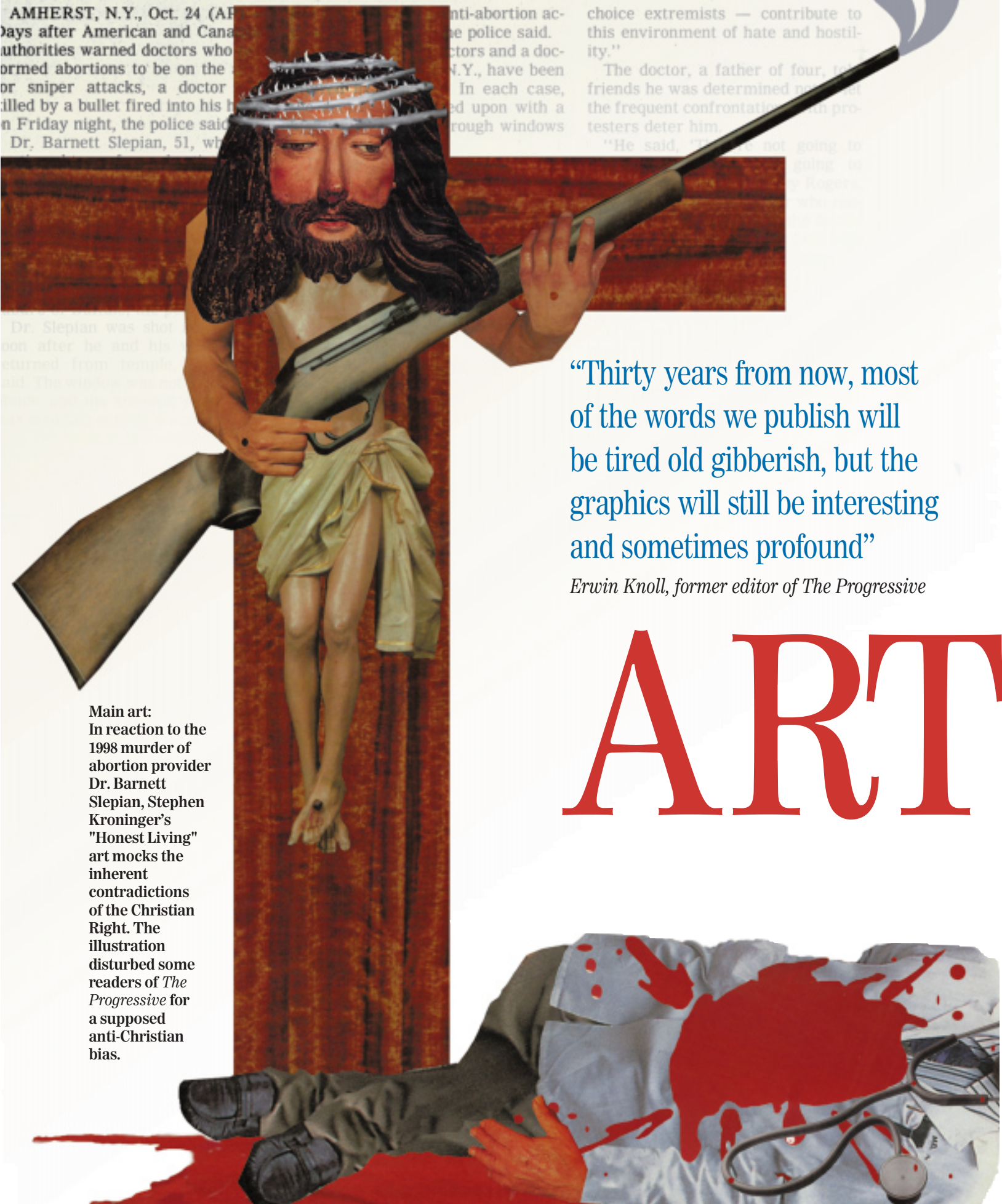
anti-abortion activists and police said. Slepian and a doctor in New York, have been killed. In each case, the doctor was shot upon with a rifle through windows

choice extremists — contribute to this environment of hate and hostility."

The doctor, a father of four, told friends he was determined not to let the frequent confrontations with protesters deter him.

"He said, 'This is not going to go on for long. I'm going to go to Rogers, who says

Dr. Slepian was shot soon after he and his wife returned from temple and the window was



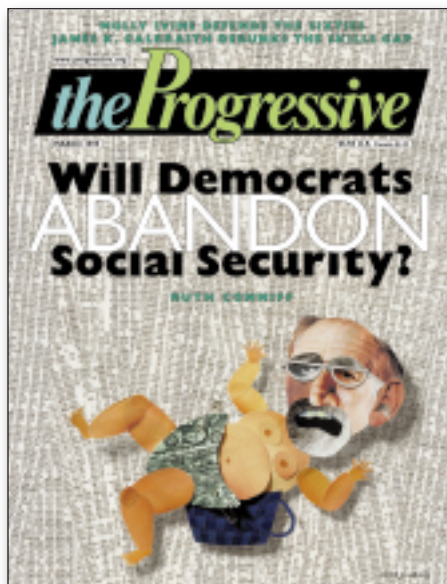
“Thirty years from now, most of the words we publish will be tired old gibberish, but the graphics will still be interesting and sometimes profound”

Erwin Knoll, former editor of The Progressive

Main art:
In reaction to the 1998 murder of abortion provider Dr. Barnett Slepian, Stephen Kroninger's "Honest Living" art mocks the inherent contradictions of the Christian Right. The illustration disturbed some readers of *The Progressive* for a supposed anti-Christian bias.

ART

“We’ve essentially had the same look for the past 18 years — a look that is overwhelmingly bleak and dark and macabre and oppressive and... dreary to the point of deadening” *Matthew Rothschild, editor of The Progressive*



Cover art by Sue Coe (left), David McLimans (center) and Brad Holland (right). Flynn refused to kill Holland's cover art and was fired for it.

ATTACK!

By BILL LUEDERS

Matthew Rothschild calls Patrick Flynn “an incredibly hard worker and a talented professional.” It’s not surprising that Rothschild, editor of *The Progressive*, one of the oldest and best-known liberal magazines in north America, would say this about his magazine’s longtime art director, whose contributions have brought critical acclaim. What’s odd is that he’s saying it in the course of explaining why Flynn has been fired.

Flynn, 46, is getting the boot 18 years after he was hired and four-and-a-half years after Rothschild succeeded Erwin Knoll as editor of the Madison-based political monthly. It represents Rothschild’s boldest move yet to put his stamp on *The Progressive*, which this January celebrated its 90th birthday.

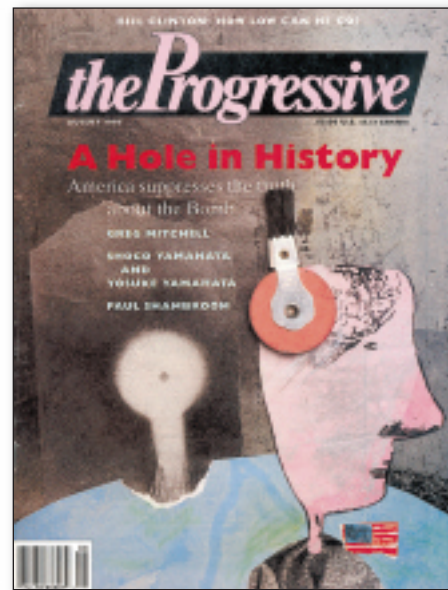
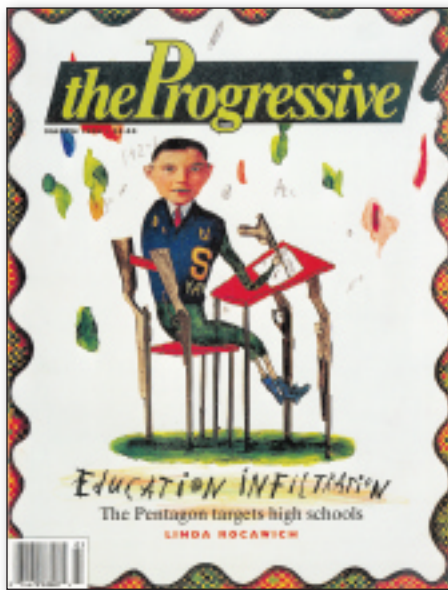
“For a long time, I’ve wanted the magazine to have a new look,” says Rothschild. “We’ve essentially had the same look for the past 18 years — a look that is overwhelmingly bleak and dark and macabre

and oppressive and... dreary to the point of deadening.”

Yet the end of Flynn’s reign as art director is being bemoaned by world-renowned artists and others. “*The Progressive* has become virtually the last bastion for consistently committed political art,” writes Art Spiegelman, creator of *Maus*. “It’s a proud and important tradition.” Other letters of support have come from artist Sue Coe and Steven Heller, art director of *The New York Times Book Review*.

Flynn, who will remain at the magazine

“What it really boils down to is representation. the world and its nasty troubles, even detailing that the art should not deliver that message”



Cover art by Lawrence Carroll (left), Henrik Drescher (center), and Frances Jetter (right). Carroll's depiction of the evidence of Death Squad activity in Los Angeles led to cancelled subscriptions and protests from the authors.

until after a new art director is hired, has this to say: “What it really boils down to is representation. Rothschild will continue to write about the world and its nasty troubles, even detailing the gore and violence, but he insists that the art not deliver that message.” Flynn sees the dispute as “an argument about the integrity of *The Progressive* and whether or not it can maintain a visual representation responsive to its content and still find a place on the coffee table next to *Cigar Aficionado* and *Martha Stewart's Living*.”

Tensions between Rothschild and Flynn came to a head over the cover illustration for the magazine's May, 1999 issue. Flynn tapped Brad Holland to illustrate a pair of stories about Chilean despot Augusto Pinochet. Holland, whose work has graced the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The New Yorker*, drew a representation of Pinochet with blood-red lips and ghostlike faces for teeth.

Rothschild considers the image grotesque. Others call it brilliant.

“It is lovely and intelligent. It says the truth,” raves Walter Hamady, a UW-Madison emeritus professor of art, in a letter to

Rothschild. “*The Progressive* has had a longstanding policy of publishing the truth, as unpopular and frightening as it is.”

Hamady hails Holland as “one of the top ten illustrators in the entire world” and asks, “[W]hy the hell does his art show up on the cover of a dinky little liberal magazine publishing in Madison, Wisconsin? Think about it.”

The relationship between a publication's words and its art is complicated and often contentious. Art has more immediacy and greater license to push the envelope. Its goal is to grab attention, to draw readers into the words on the page. Sometimes, for better or worse, it does more than that.

In wooing Flynn from *The New York Times* in 1981, Knoll made a major concession, as he explained in an interview in 1992, two years before his death: “One reason Patrick came to *The Progressive*, and I understood it from the beginning, is that he wanted artistic control of the magazine, and the only time I get in the way of that is when I feel a piece of art is doing violence to our politics.”

Readers would sometimes complain about the heaviness of the art. “Erwin would respond, ‘Hey, that’s Patrick’s department,’” recalls Teri Terry, Knoll’s former secretary.

Knoll felt that Flynn and the artists he brought into the magazine were “contributing to a higher standard of visual imagery in journalism” and that the magazine’s look was perhaps its strongest asset: “Thirty years from now, most of the words we publish will be tired old gibberish, but the graphics will still be interesting and sometimes profound.”

“Erwin liked the art more than I did,” reflects Rothschild, adding that it “simplified [Knoll’s] life” not to get enmeshed in controversies over art. But Rothschild agreed with Flynn’s critics, including contributors who felt the art “detracted from what they had to say.”

In December 1997, Flynn was instructed to lighten up. Rothschild says the changes were few and fleeting; Flynn says he did not receive clear direction. Underlying the conflict was a philosophical divide. “As art director and a strong advocate for art’s political voice,” Flynn wrote in a letter to

Rothschild will continue to write about the gore and violence, but he insists

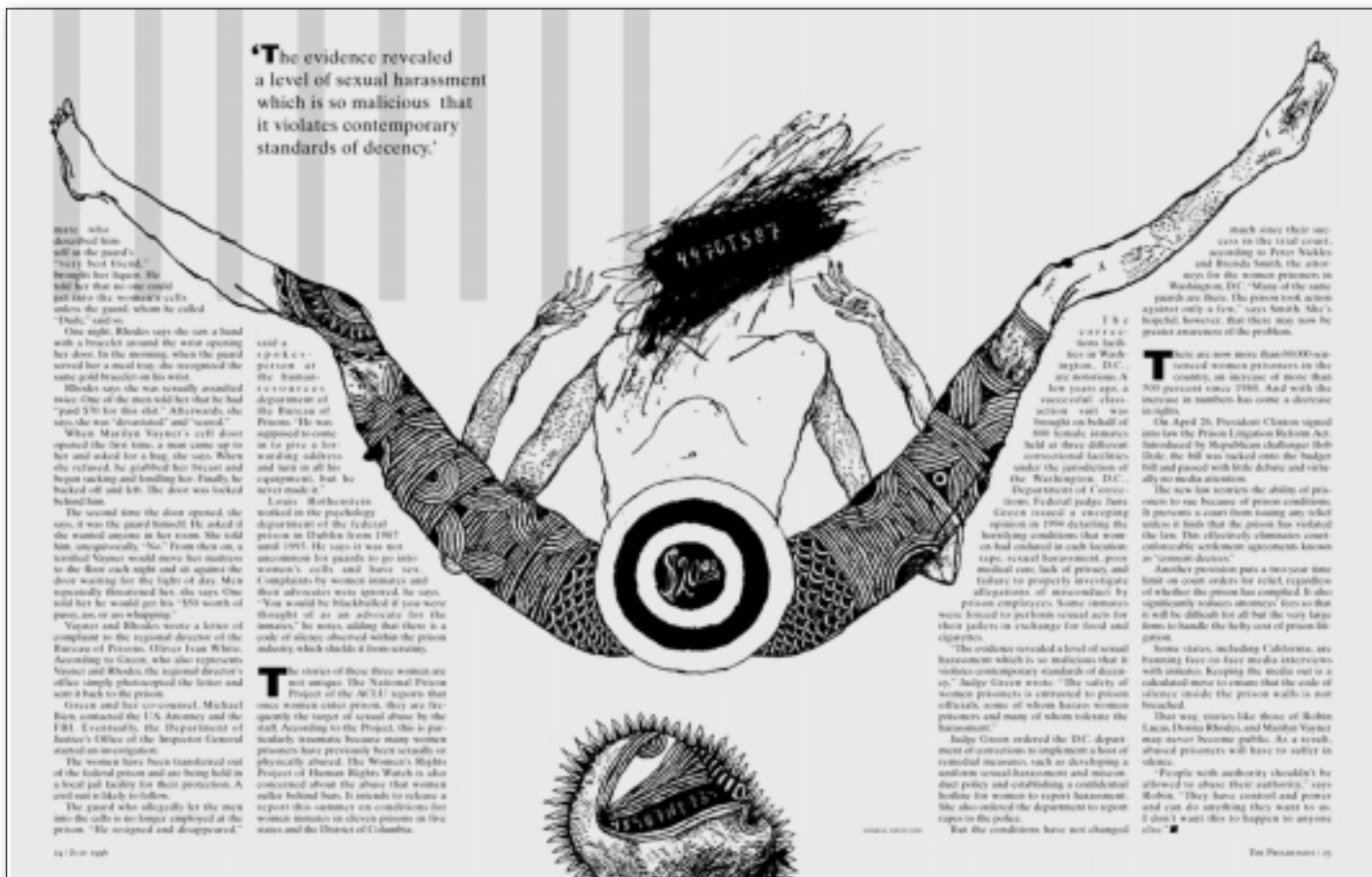
— Patrick Flynn, fired art director



Cover art by Chris Mullen (left), Ralph Steadman (center) and Philip Burke (right). Burke's illustration acknowledging Bradley's stature was problematic in that it covered *The Progressive* logo.



Before and after editorial meddling ... art by Mark Wagner, for *The Progressive's* 1999 calendar illuminates a poem about the voice of black consciousness.



The evidence revealed a level of sexual harassment which is so malicious that it violates contemporary standards of decency.

mate, who described himself as the guard's "sexy best friend," brought her liquor. He told her that no one could get into the woman's cell unless the guard, whom he called "Hank," called.

One night, Rhoads says she saw a hand with a bracelet around the wrist opening her door. In the morning, when the guard served her a meal tray, she recognized the same gold bracelet on his wrist.

Rhoads says she was sexually assaulted twice. One of the men told her that he had "paid" for her sex act. "It was not," she says, she was "discriminated" and "slandered."

When Matthew Vinyard's cell door opened the first time, a man came up to her and asked for a bag, she says. When she refused, he grabbed her breast and began racking and fondling her. Finally, he backed off and left. The door was locked behind him.

The second time the door opened, she says, it was the guard himself. He asked if she wanted someone in her room. She told him, unhesitatingly, "No." From then on, a terrified Vinyard would move her mattress to the floor each night and sit against the door waiting for the light of day. Men repeatedly threatened her, she says. One told her he would go to her "100 words of pain, six or eight whippings."

Vinyard and Rhoads wrote a letter of complaint to the regional director of the Bureau of Prisons, Oliver Fran White. According to Rhoads, who also represents Vinyard and Rhoads, the regional director's office simply photocopied the letter and sent it back to the prison.

Green and her co-counsel, Michael Barn, contacted the U.S. Attorney and the FBI. Eventually, the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General issued an investigation.

The women have been transferred out of the federal prison and are being held in a local jail facility for their prosecution. A trial date is likely to follow.

The guard who allegedly let the men into the cells is no longer employed at the prison. "He resigned and disappeared."

and a prison at the Bureau of Prisons. He was supposed to come in to give a few working orders and then in all his equipment, but he never made it."

Letter. Rothschild worked in the psychology department of the federal prison in Dublin from 1987 until 1993. He says it was not uncommon for guards to go into women's cells and have sex. Complaints by women inmates and their advocates were ignored, he says. "You would be blackballed if you were thought of as an advocate for the inmates," he notes, adding that there is a code of silence observed within the prison industry, which shields it from scrutiny.

The stories of these three women are not unique. The National Prison Project of the ACLU reports that one woman after prison, they are frequently the target of sexual abuse by the staff. According to the Project, this is particularly true because many women prisoners have previously been sexually or physically abused. The Women's Rights Project of Human Rights Watch is also concerned about the abuse that women suffer behind bars. It intends to release a report this summer on conditions that women inmates in eleven prisons in five states and the District of Columbia.

The

convictions

in Washington, D.C., are common. A few years ago, a successful class-action suit was brought on behalf of 500 female inmates held at three different correctional facilities under the jurisdiction of the Washington, D.C., Department of Corrections. Federal judge Paul Green issued a sweeping opinion in 1990 dictating the working conditions that were to be included in each location: rape, sexual harassment, poor medical care, lack of privacy, and failure to properly investigate allegations of misconduct by prison employees. Some inmates were forced to perform sexual acts for their jailers in exchange for food and cigarettes.

The evidence revealed a level of sexual harassment which is so malicious that it violates contemporary standards of decency," Judge Green wrote. "The safety of women prisoners is entrusted to prison officials, some of whom harass women prisoners and many of whom tolerate the harassment."

Judge Green ordered the D.C. department of corrections to implement a host of remedial measures, such as developing a uniform sexual-harassment and misconduct policy and establishing a confidential hotline for women to report harassment. She also ordered the department to report rapes to the police.

But the conditions have not changed

much since their success in the trial court, according to Peter Ninkler and Rhonda Smith, the attorneys for the women prisoners in Washington, D.C. "Many of the same guards are there. The prison took action against only a few," says Smith. She's hopeful, however, that there may now be greater awareness of the problem.

There are now more than 100,000 incarcerated women prisoners in the country, an increase of more than 300 percent since 1980. And with the increase in numbers has come a decrease in rights.

The new law restricts the ability of prisoners to sue because of prison conditions. It prevents a court from issuing any relief unless it finds that the prison has violated the law. This effectively eliminates court-enforceable settlement agreements known as "consent decrees."

Another provision puts a one-year time limit on court orders for relief, regardless of whether the prison has complied. It also significantly reduces attorneys' fees so that it will be difficult for all but the very large firms to handle the hefty cost of prison litigation.

Some states, including California, are limiting face-to-face media interviews with inmates. Keeping the media out is a calculated move to ensure that the code of silence inside the prison walls is not breached.

That was stories like those of Rhonda Lucas, Donna Rhoads, and Matthew Vinyard may never become public. As a result, abused prisoners will have to suffer in silence.

"People with authority shouldn't be allowed to abuse their authority," says Rhoads. "They have control and power and can do anything they want to and I don't want this to happen to anyone else."

But the conditions have not changed

◆

The Progressive 139

Henrik Drescher's art illustrates sexual abuse and rape of woman prisoners by male inmates in collusion with prison officials. Despite Flynn's protests, the art was unanimously rejected by the editors and publisher and was never printed.

the magazine's board of directors, "I have resisted Matthew's impulses to diminish the power of art."

When Rothschild asked that Holland's illustration be pulled, Flynn refused, suggesting that he be fired instead. Rothschild says he hesitated to take this course of action until after Flynn rejected a probationary period to work on changing the look of the magazine, insisting on "carte blanche" regarding artistic decisions.

"At that point," says Rothschild, "it became clear to me that we had irreconcilable differences."

That may be, but Jodi Vander Molen, the magazine's business secretary, still thinks Flynn's firing is a huge loss for the magazine: "I've always considered Matt and Patrick to have equal authority in their respective areas. I think Patrick earned the carte blanche authority that Erwin gave him. Our art always had something to say."

As editor, Rothschild has worked long and hard to increase *The Progressive's* popularity. He's brought more humor into the magazine, and more investigative reporting, including stories that have clinched national awards. He has broad-

ened coverage of electoral politics, primarily through the contributions of John Nichols of Madison's *Capital Times*. Two world-class columnists, Barbara Ehrenreich and Howard Zinn, have just been added to the lineup. Says Rothschild, "It's a very exciting time for the magazine, editorially."

But even after an unusually successful subscription drive, the magazine's paid circulation still hovers around the 30,000 mark. In contrast, *The Nation* and *The New Republic* both have paid circulations of about 95,000, *Mother Jones* has 130,000, and *The National Review* has 155,000.

Rothschild says *The Progressive's* fiscal woes, while not as serious as in 1989, when "we were very close to the edge," are a source of acute concern. The magazine has an annual budget of about \$1.3 million, most of which comes from subscriptions and donations from subscribers. Advertising, the lifeblood of most publications, accounts for just 7%.

Recently, *The Progressive* discontinued its public access television show as well as "Second Opinion," a weekly radio interview program syndicated to about 80 stations in the U.S. and Canada. It's closing

its Washington office, meaning Washington editor Ruth Conniff must work from her D.C. apartment. An open staff position is being absorbed internally, and the magazine's 11 full-time and three part-time staffers have been warned of possible layoffs. Especially at risk is the Progressive Media Project, a grant-funded offshoot that generates op-ed pieces for the mainstream press. "We've tried to cut without sacrificing the editorial quality of the magazine," says Rothschild. Publisher Joy Wallin sounds the same note: "We've been cutting, cutting, cutting."

The Progressive is now conducting a national search for a new art director. Although the advertised salary of \$30,000 is considerably less than what Flynn made after nearly two decades on the job, Rothschild says the firing is unrelated to the magazine's financial woes: "I would have gladly kept Patrick with a new look for the magazine."

Bill Lueders is news editor of Isthmus, the Madison alternative weekly. He is also the author of An Enemy Of The State, The Life of Erwin Knoll (Common Courage Press, \$17.95).