

SUMMARY OF PAPERS

By Kerstin Thomas

In analysing Lester Beall's posters for the US government between 1937–1941, *Michael Golec* demonstrates the twofold character of facts in art and design appearing even when they are applied to guarantee distinct messages. Commissioned by governmental agencies to develop a series of posters to increase the electrification of rural farms, Beall introduces pictograms in his first series to represent electrification as “facts of the future.” Their simple forms facilitate the travelling of facts without loss of their integrity. The same holds true for the use of photographic images for the second campaign of 1939. Following the revaluation of photography as a means for the documentation of social reality, as represented by the FSA photographers under the guidance of Roy Stryker, the medium served here as the authentication of facts. Golec contends, that by reducing the complexity of the photographic images in order to create a pictorial integrity within and across his posters, despite the use of a seemingly documentary medium, Beall reinforces the ambivalent factual character of the pictures. Paradoxically, by heightening the communicative character of the design and hence stressing the idea of facts as integral realities outside of artworks, Beall's posters reveal the ambiguous character of pictorial facts creating their own specific qualities. Golec concludes that facts in works of art and design have a twofold character resulting from their belonging to different spaces, which although meant to accomplish and address different facts, inevitably travel, overlap and bleed into each other. Thus these facts refer to or represent reality and, simultaneously, are a thing made (*factum*) that presents and evidences its own pictorial reality.

Rachel Wells turns to the examination of three recent artistic practices, which integrate facts in their work not as an antagonistic other but as a constitutive element to their efficacy and ethics. She argues, that in introducing news, factual actions, or objects with traces of factual events, Alfredo Jaar, Jeremy Deller and Martin Creed use facts in order to retract from the position of art as an expression of artistic freedom and subjectivity and thus as the opposite of fact. Instead, she states that by introducing the factual these artists emphasize, each in their own way, the instability of given epistemological and ethical frameworks. Far from being a mere relativist pose, Wells understands this denial of a stable subjectivist position as a reconfigured sense of “decision” – perhaps in the sense of Nancy's articulation of a “decision of existence” – that lets the factual take precedence over control in and of the artwork as a heightened form of responsiveness and responsibility. Whereas Jaar uses the factual to engage overt political action, Deller presents facts that avoid taking an overtly critical perspective forcing the viewer to think about political events. In contrast, Creed seeks an interpretation of the past, which would avoid the responsibility of taking a position. Whereas David Hume stated famously that reasoning