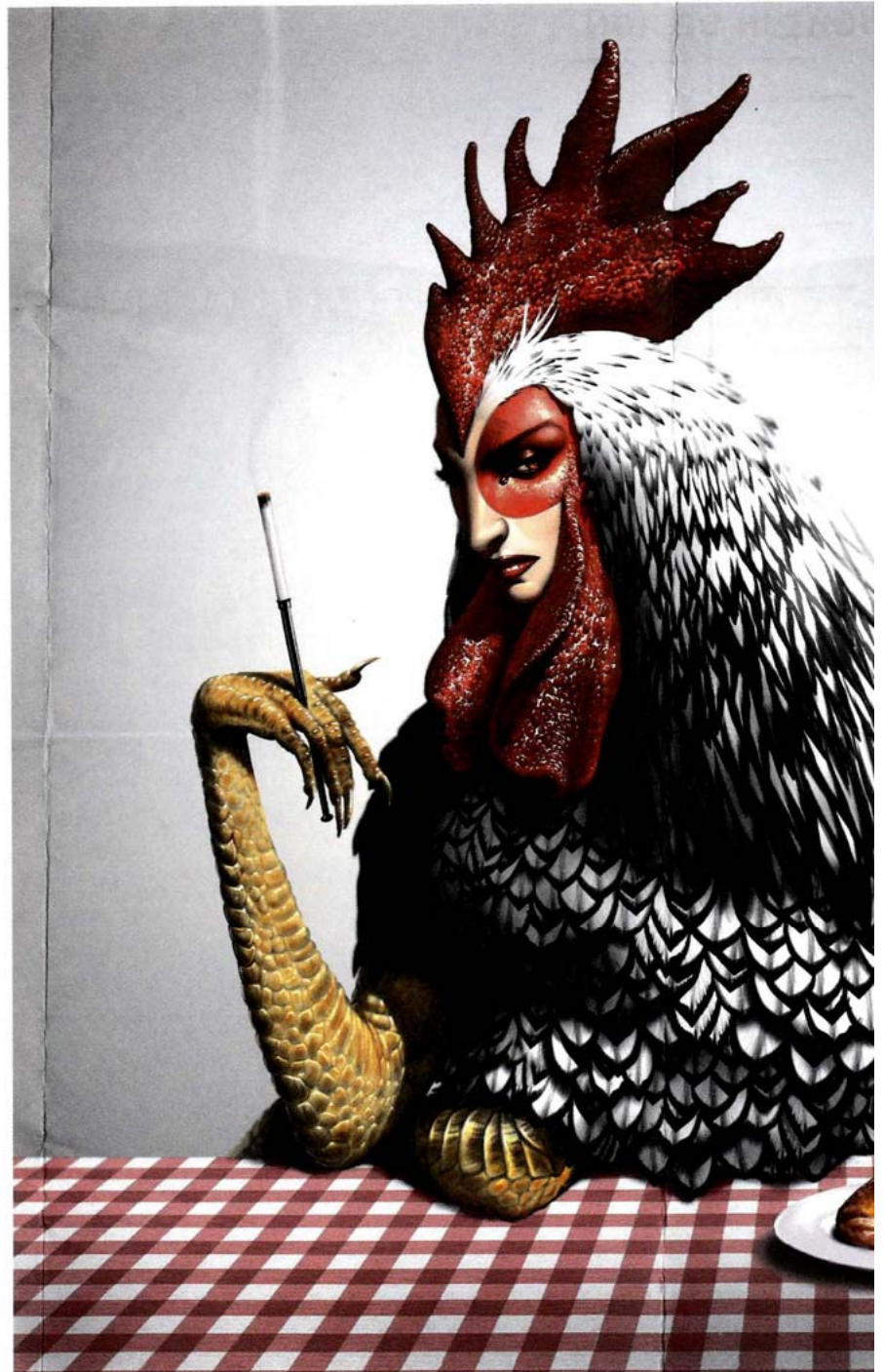


HERR MUELLER 2006



REILLY 2004



Ars longa, illustrata brevis

By Fiona Sibley

This is a handy volume for designers and art directors, joining Taschen's many beautifully presented and affordable reference tomes, showcasing 150 illustrators from across the globe. With contributions from Seymour Chwast, Brian Cairns, Tokyo's Kacchi and Bangalore's Varshesh Joshi to name a few, you get the picture that this is a multicultural selection, and hence a book of very beautiful, diverse signatures. This new, second edition of *Illustration Now* follows rather hotly on the heels of its predecessor in 2005, causing you to wonder if this is either: a) a healthy discipline that invites energetic reassessment; b) a faddy, trend-obsessed fashion discipline that demands regular re-summarising; or c) just an astute wheeze on the part of the publishers. It's probably partly all of these, and this book would easily sink into the ranks of the unremarkable were it not for the lively critical banter between the designer/academic Steven Heller and German-born illustrator Christoph Niemann which is served up as the book's introduction. They chew through the art-historical merits of illustration, its role as visual communication, not just entertainment, and attempt to pinpoint the intellectual weight of this craft. It's always fun to see Heller exercising his brain, and this is no exception. 'You work in a state of transient immediacy,' he says, not unkindly. Retorts Niemann: 'If you compare the entire field of illustration with Van Gogh, Max Beckmann and Gerhard Richter, of course we're dead meat.'