

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

CINEMATIC POSTERS REMIXED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Rand Careaga

“Sir, a woman’s preaching is like a dog’s walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.”

—James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*



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for Lina

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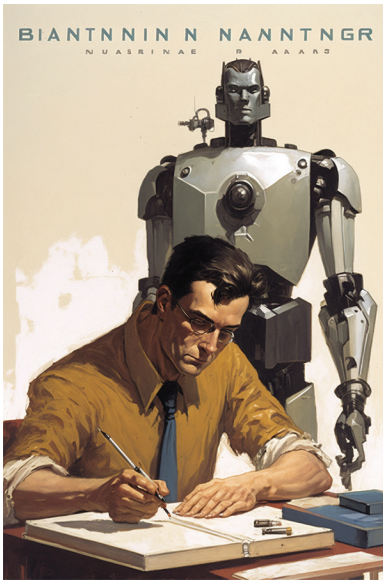
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Introduction: Prompt and Circumstance



“You’re sitting at my desk.” Note the AI’s characteristic gibberish text, as well as its reliably weird treatment of human hands. Expect to see more of this.

In the preface to *When Algorithms Dream*, the companion volume* to this bagatelle, I hold forth—at greater length, it may be, than my competence to address the subject warrants—on the current state of “artificial intelligence” (hereafter “AI”), much in the news during the early months of 2023, and on its prospects and the implications of these. There is accordingly no need to recapitulate those bloviations here. I’ll confine myself to observing that, as anyone who has been paying attention will be already aware, there have been some remarkable developments in the field recently, particularly since the tech has begun to ease its way out of the research labs and into the grubby fingers of the Teeming Millions—my own among these, to be sure.

This book and its sibling have each grown out of my recent interest in “prompt-based” AI software. Several such products received extensive coverage lately; I have been toiling in the vineyards of one called “Midjourney,” which like its cousins (“DALL-E”; “Stable Diffusion” and others) will generate images based on text descriptions entered by online users. I imagine that the “online” part is fairly important, because the output likely relies on banks of servers packed with oodles of GPU silicon deploying more processing power than the average home workstation might command.

And...that power shows. Depending on the chops of the customer—Midjourney is a paid service following the first twenty-four minutes of processing time (“First one’s free,” as the dope pushers liked to say in Fifties and Sixties antidrug propaganda)—the output can be impressive. As I watch the results passing on the interface (blink and they’re gone), Midjourney is being used for serious purposes on the order of logo prototyping, packaging, web interface design and general illustration. Also, a lot of fantasy pictures featuring impossibly curvaceous and pneumatic women in “armor” and their male counterparts, likewise implausibly “ripped.” And more cute baby dinosaurs’n you could shake a fossil femur at.

I did some freelance graphic design work in the nineties as a bottom-feeder—my clients were too cheap to pay for a conventionally trained designer, and my fees reflected this—and boy-howdy, this tech would have been a godsend.

As it is, I think that today it spells the doom of folks who still toil there in the cheap seats. And the vendors of stock photos and illustrations—I spent a few thousand dollars on these services during the first decade of the present century—can't be happy. Twenty years ago I could purchase stock photos at a dollar apiece, but in the years following that vendor's acquisition by "Getty Photos," the unit price rose twentyfold and more. Getty's gotta be shaking in its virtual boots—litigation has apparently already begun—and all I have to say is, "creative destruction, motherfuckers." Nobody ever said late-stage capitalism would be pretty.

Some of the prompts I've observed streaming by have been very detailed, practically short stories, or at least story proposals, in themselves. I've been less ambitious as I've compiled the present collection of AI-generated film posters, which constitutes, so to say, a cousin to my 2021 *Cinema Paronomasia*, regarding which, if you have that kind of discretionary income, I urge upon your purchase: it will make a handsome addition to any coffee table, and should I sell another (checks site) ten or eleven copies, the printer will cut me a check for forty dollars, which will pay for a sandwich and a brew at one of our nearby beaneries these days.

My text prompts have tended toward the simple and direct. I begin by telling Midjourney to render a "poster for [film or play name] in [aspect ratio—generally 2:3]." This initial result ("RC prompt" whenever I have included these within the pages to follow) generally gives me a clue as to whether the prompt is worth refining further. If it is, then the next prompt runs some-

thing like "poster for [film or play name] in the style of [painter, illustrator or general style]." Sometimes I will specify a medium: oils, watercolors, pen-and-ink.

The results have been...erratic. They're usually interesting, but far from reliably suitable to my ends. On average, for every poster in this collection, forty or fifty variants have been considered and then discarded, or rejected outright. Had the proportion of usable content to dross been any less favorable, I would have been obliged to invest in an industrial-scale gaseous diffusion plant and a bank of centrifuges.

As I have invoked artists and styles, I've essayed a different approach than that which governed *When Algorithms Dream*. That work consists of landscapes, and I was keen in each instance that the "painting" be recognizably similar to the work of the artist invoked. This was tricky—and drew upon my ability to remain awake during art history classes in college—because Midjourney will cheerfully lie its virtual head off asked to mimic, say, "Maurice Wade" (an admittedly rather obscure English painter who ought to be better known), rather than acknowledge itself stumped. I've been a bit less rigorous in these pages. Fidelity to the artist summoned into the pentagram is desirable, of course, but if sometimes the output strikes me as satisfactory I have granted it an entry, albeit usually with a reservation in the page notes. When it comes to famous human visages, fidelity is preferred but again not absolutely necessary, although there are limits to my tolerance: *The Maltese Falcon* does not get an entry here because Midjourney was deficient in points of Bogartitude: Sam Spade ought not to look

like Walter Matthau or John Travolta. Likewise, there are definite holes in the AI's cinema history: the middle-brow entertainments of the Eisenhower and Kennedy eras? Nuh-uh. *The High and the Mighty*, *On the Beach*, *Fail-Safe*, *Advise and Consent*—nuthin doin', believe me. I'll note before closing a couple of conventions I've employed in setting out these illustrations. In most instances I have not "stage managed" the output to any significant extent. Because the AI apparently trained on Saul Bass's *Vertigo* poster, whenever I invoked the name of that legendary designer, Midjourney wanted to do it in orange, so I sometimes would specify a different palette. At other times I might need to call forth a character or scene in order for Midjourney to serve up a satisfactory image. In such instances I have appended a single asterisk to the image caption. In still others, detailed instructions were required: two asterisks, then. I've been happiest, and so should you be, when the film title alone yields an appropriate output. Also, while the Midjourney AI "understands" English (and a raft of other languages, come to that), it cannot write it intelligibly: the text it generates is almost always sheer gibberish. I have removed the "titles" in Photoshop and inserted my own, along with the occasional tagline, while leaving some of the original lines of scrambled text. Where possible I have attempted to approximate the artwork's treatment of typography and color.

Finally, there's the dross. I've found that Midjourney falls down, utterly when I summon up the shades of certain sources. It will be noted in the following pages that most of the posters have relied upon the same dozen artists or styles, and this is no accident. *When Algorithms Dream* drew largely upon painters; *That's Entertainment* looks to illustrators and illustrator-adjacent artists: N.C. Wyeth, his son Andrew, Ralph Steadman, Rockwell Kent, Maxfield Parrish, Edward Hopper, Japanese ukiyo-e prints, Disney/Pixar. The cubism of Georges Braques has frequently come in handy when I couldn't otherwise finish up an entry in "Themes and Variations." Incidentally, in crediting my stable of virtual artists, I have merely used their names. It would be dreary to keep typing *after Ralph Steadman*, or "*Ralph Steadman*" in scare quotes, so just imagine either convention according to personal preference.

I hope that you, my auditors, enjoy this half as much as I was tickled putting it together. And you know, it's not that I rely on these books for a living—far from it—but if you want to urge fifty or sixty of your friends to purchase a copy, or several copies, the margin might make up—I clear 87¢ with each copy sold!—for a portion of the grand it set me back distributing copies of *Cinema Paronomasia* like so much manna to chums in 2021. Just sayin'.



Ralph Steadman



Nineteen Eighty-Four,
1953; 1984

ONE-OFFS

To celebrate our glorious victory on the Malabar Front, the eyelash ration has been increased to 25 filaments.

ONE-OFFS



All About Eve, 1950



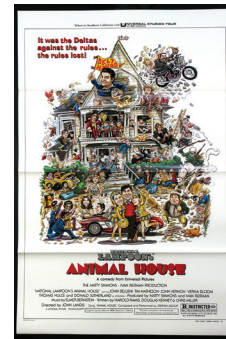
Saul Bass

We commence the alphabet with virtual Saul Bass. Virtual Saul fancies him a splash of orange, we find.



REGIONAL
LAMPOON
ANIMAL HOUSE

John Singer Sargent*

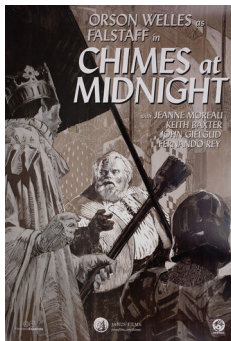


Animal House, 1978

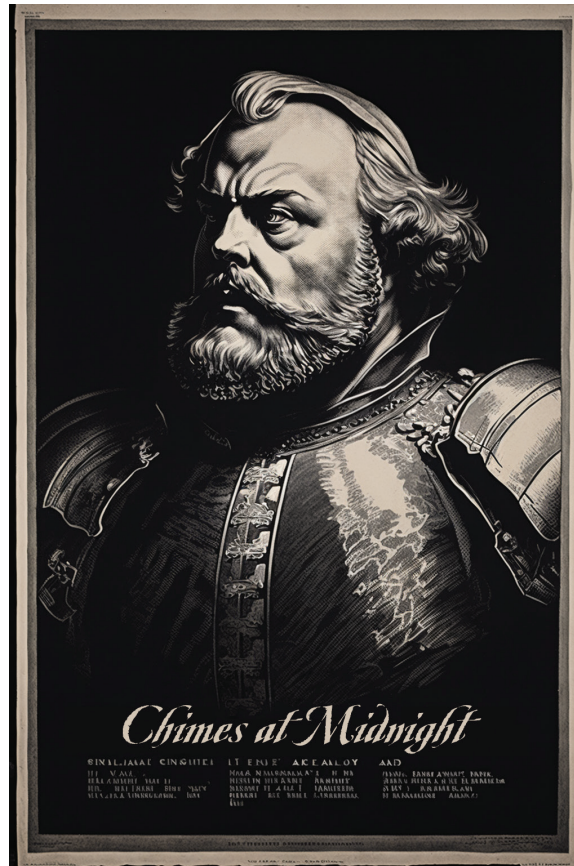
ONE-OFFS

For the single successful iteration of an *Animal House* poster, I directed society painter John Singer Sargent to give me a formal portrait of John Belushi in a toga, and he delivered a decent likeness.

ONE-OFFS

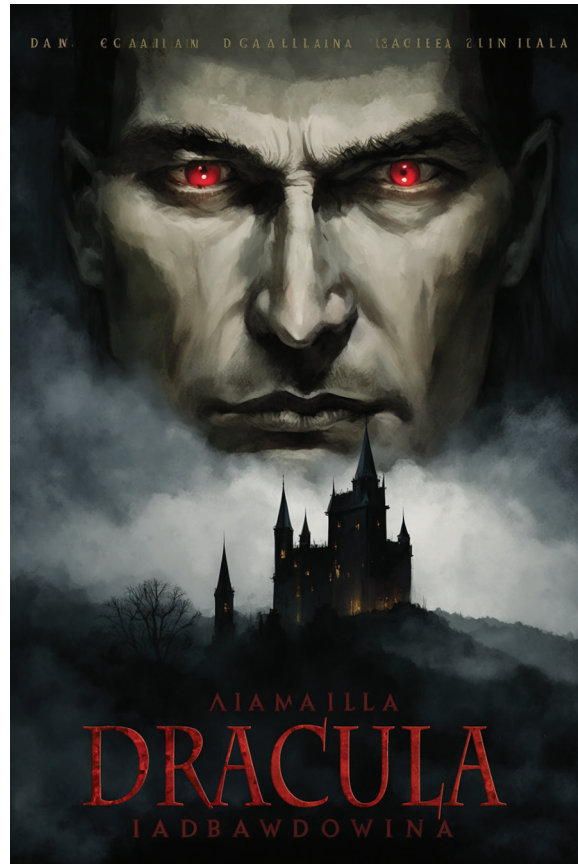


Chimes at Midnight, 1965



Rockwell Kent*

Even though *Henry IV Part 2* does not appear to have ever been made into a feature film, much of the play found its way into *Chimes at Midnight*. Regarding the auteur's performance as Falstaff, an unkind critic described Welles as "probably the first actor in the history of the theater to appear too fat for the role."



Andrew Wyeth**



Dracula, 1931

ONE-OFFS

After a run of successes with other titles from the Universal Studios horror backlist, I had high old hopes for *Dracula*, and generated scores of variants before I finally drove a stake into the attempt. I was obliged to stage manage this one in some detail, specifying a red-eyed vampiric face looming over the castle.

ONE-OFFS



The Hound of the Baskervilles, 1939



Edward Hopper

I can't say that this *particularly* resembles Hopper, but it was the single compositionally interesting result.



Ralph Steadman



Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 1978

ONE-OFFS

Of the various version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1978's remains, IMHO, the best of the lot.

ONE-OFFS



King Kong, 1933

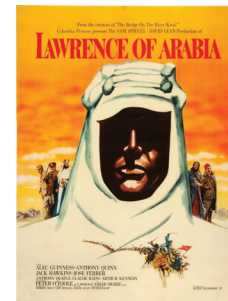


Robert McGinnis

King Kong lent itself to some moderately hilarious misfires, a few of which can be found in Appendix A.



Ralph Steadman

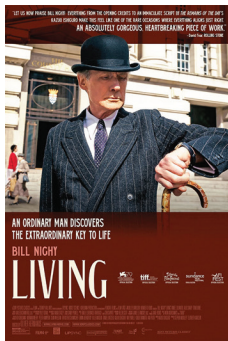


Lawrence of Arabia, 1962

ONE-OFFS

Every version of *Lawrence of Arabia* featured the eponymous hero. Few of these much resembled Peter O'Toole. Among the variants, many included horses and camels, and you *do not* want to see how prompt-based artificial intelligence renders a camel—the stuff of nightmares. You'll have to trust me on this.

ONE-OFFS



Living, 2022



Andrew Wyeth

The technology doesn't yet reliably deliver close resemblances to the visages of actors living or dead, even famous ones, but for some reason Midjourney loves Bill Nighy. It was difficult to choose just one from the iterations on offer. *Living*, incidentally, is a lovely, nearly shot-for-shot remake of Kurosawa's *Ikiru*.



Saul Bass



The Mummy, 1932

ONE-OFFS

This one has the hand-drawn flavor of authentic Saul Bass, whereas the Bass-o-Matic tends to look mechanical.

ONE-OFFS



My Dinner with Andre,
1981



Diane Arbus

Considering how little any of the other variants resembled the film's principals, this one was spot-on.



RC prompt: Tim Burton**



The Queen, 2006

ONE-OFFS

Remarkably, Midjourney appears to have a highly-developed sensitivity to *l'èse-majesté*, and ten or a dozen different artists and styles essayed yielded dignified and dull versions of the late monarch. I was on the point of giving up when I had the happy inspiration to enlist virtual Tim Burton in the style of his animated flicks.

ONE-OFFS

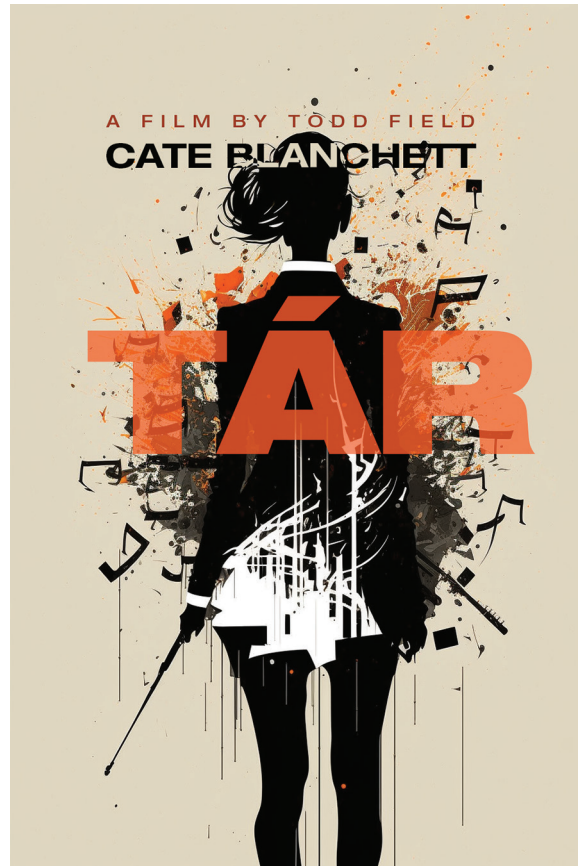


The Right Stuff, 1983



*Robert McGinnis***

Another promising title came a-cropper, particularly in those versions directed to display the “Mercury 7” astronauts, most of whom came out looking like Tom Cruise’s grandnephews, and their spacecraft, which were about as grotesque as the camels. Come to that, this X-15 doesn’t look any too airworthy.



RC prompt

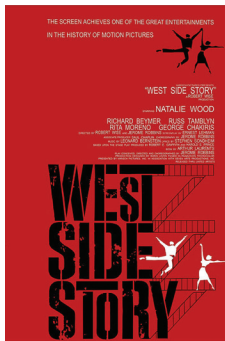


Tár, 2022

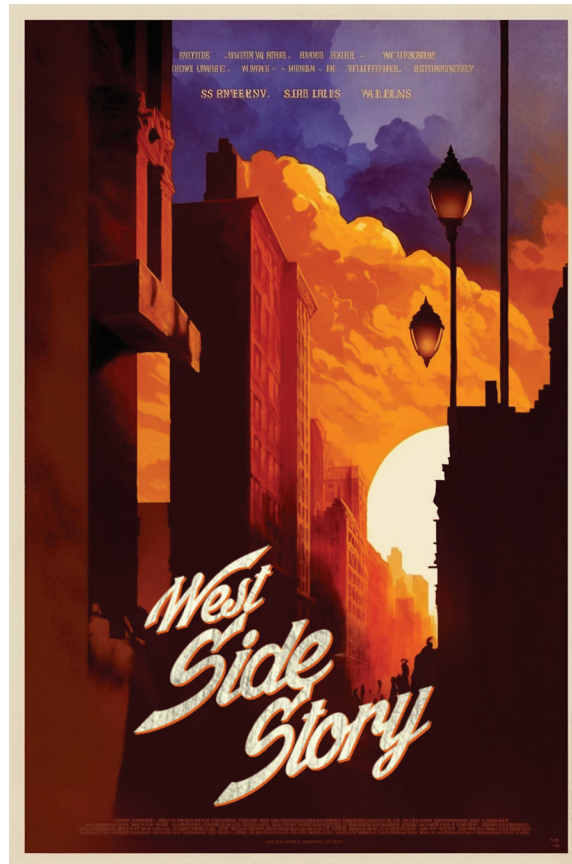
ONE-OFFS

For this one I didn't enter the title, merely a prompt: female symphony conductor disintegrating, abstract.

ONE-OFFS



West Side Story, 1961



Maxfield Parrish

Whenever the living Saul Bass has worked a title, as here, I have forborne from dispatching my digital golem to shamble in his footsteps, and have accordingly summoned the shade of Maxfield Parrish to do the job.



Soviet style



The Wizard of Oz, 1939

ONE-OFFS

I didn't have much luck, surprisingly, with *The Wizard of Oz* (although see the appendices), and I'd be lying if I claimed that this poster—I asked for something out of the forties, but this one has more of a Russian Civil War vibe to it—has much of L. Frank Baum (or Judy Garland) in it, but I quite like Dorothy's attitude.

Foreign Affairs: Ingmar Bergman

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



The Seventh Seal, 1957



L.S. Lowry

From 1957 forward, whenever a designer receives a commission to create a poster for *The Seventh Seal*, he has inevitably opted to base it on the iconic chess match between the knight Antonius Block and the implacable figure of Death in whiteface. This, we see, holds true even when the designer is silicon-based.



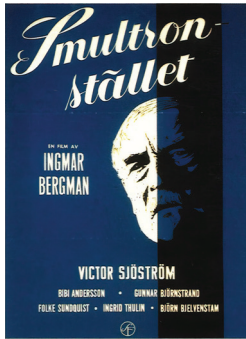
1. Georges Braque 2. Ralph Steadman 3. Andrew Wyeth 4. Saul Bass

And virtual Saul Bass predictably defaults to orange, or orange-ish.

THEMES AND
VARIATIONS

Foreign Affairs: Ingmar Bergman

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Wild Strawberries, 1957



Robert McGinnis

Likewise, the story of *Wild Strawberries* is told in Victor Sjöström's melancholy ruin of a face.

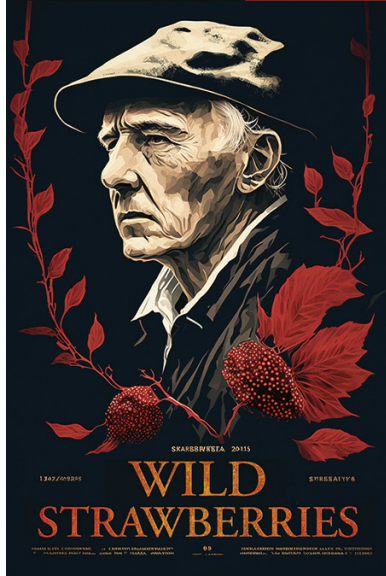
1



2



3



4



THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Saul Bass 2. Georges Braque 3. Andrew Wyeth 4. Ralph Steadman

Foreign Affairs: Vittorio De Sica

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Bicycle Thieves, 1948



Georges Braque

De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (the title was for many years mistranslated in this country as *The Bicycle Thief*) is set in postwar Rome during the brief period in which the Italian film industry, after a decade or so of the frothy "white telephone" film melodramas under the Fascists, developed a transient taste for gritty neorealism.

1



2



3



4



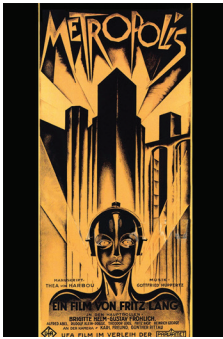
1. Diane Arbus 2. Andrew Wyeth 3. Edward Hopper 4. Robert McGinnis

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Father, son, bicycle (or "person, woman, man, camera, TV," as an American statesman once put it).

Foreign Affairs: Fritz Lang

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Metropolis, 1927



Eyvind Earle

Again we see that both the original carbon-based artist and his silicon successors build their posters around the stylized visage of actress Brigitte Helm as the mad scientist Rotwang's creation, the *Maschinenmensch*.

1



2



3



4



THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Saul Bass 2. Georges Braque 3. Edward Hopper 4. Andrew Wyeth

Alfred Hitchcock

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



The Birds, 1963



Richard Diebenkorn

The resemblance to Diebenkorn's style is here admittedly tenuous (although see, by all means, the Southwestern landscapes in *When Algorithms Dream*), but I quite fancy the composition and its understated menace.



1. Georges Braque 2. Andrew Wyeth 3. Disney/Pixar 4. Eyvind Earle

More menace, less understated, in the Wyeth version.

THEMES AND
VARIATIONS

Alfred Hitchcock

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Psycho, 1960



Maxfield Parrish

The high sheriffs at Midjourney are sex- and violence-averse, so prompt words like “shower,” “murder,” “kill,” “bloody” et cetera earn the user a stiff rebuke and the dire threat of rescinded access—this is why there’s no entry for *To Kill a Mockingbird*—so it was necessary to frame my prompts for this one very, very carefully.

1



2



3



4



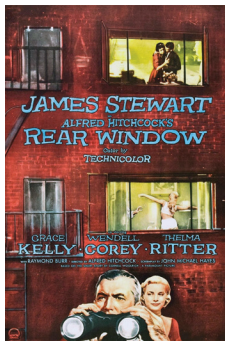
THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Andrew Wyeth 2. Andrew Wyeth** 3. Thomas Kinkade(!)* 4. Disney/Pixar*

Midjourney preferred to default to the killer's face, so I added prompts for scenes with the creepy old Bates residence. In the second Wyeth I was trying for a "Christina's World" vibe: this was as close as I could get. Thomas Kinkade, on this single occasion I thought to summon him, produced a usable result.

Alfred Hitchcock

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Rear Window, 1954



Georges Braque

What I particularly appreciate about "Georges Braque's" contributions is that no one expects a rigorous facial likeness in this style. James Stewart did not resemble himself in any of the iterations I generated: over in Earle's version he looks more like Vincent Price, and the others have all sidestepped the issue.

1



2



3



4



1. Ralph Steadman 2. Saul Bass 3. Edward Hopper 4. Eyvind Earle

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Saul Bass, in his preferred orange, seems to throw in a corvid or two from *The Birds*. Edward Hopper's voyeur has taken a perch on the window ledge for his surveillance.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Classics

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Frankenstein, 1931



Saul Bass

I suppose it would be possible to devise a Frankenstein poster that did not feature the monster—but why?

1



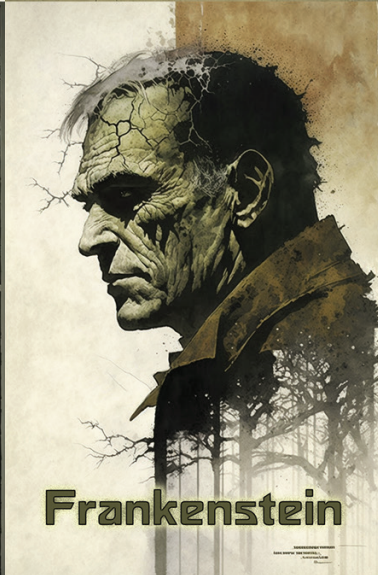
2



3



4



1. Ralph Steadman 2. Maxfield Parrish 3. Georges Braque 4. Andrew Wyeth

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Horror & Science Fiction: The Classics

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Bride of Frankenstein, 1935



Saul Bass

When you order the “Saul Bass Blue Plate Special,” but the server brings you a bowl of Milton Glaser.

1



2



3



4

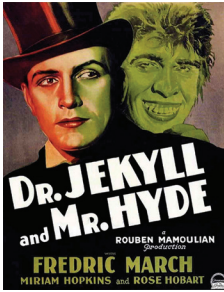
1. John Singer Sargent 2. Charles Dana Gibson 3. Andrew Wyeth** 4. Robert McGinnis**

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Elsa Lanchester's distinctive hairstyle will always show up, I find. For #s 3 and 4, I told the AI to throw in a Grant Wood "American Gothic" vibe. I arbitrarily decided to make McGinnis's version the German release.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Classics

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, 1931



Saul Bass

It seems thematically appropriate that in creating this poster, RoboSaul has used only *half* orange.

1



2



3



4



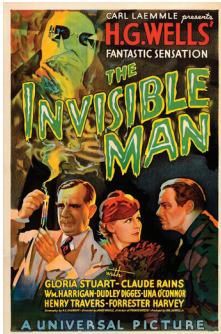
THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Georges Braque 2. Diane Arbus 3. Andrew Wyeth 4. Ralph Steadman

Braque and Steadman go pretty literal on the duality theme—Braque's Jekyll puts me in mind of Vincent Price; Steadman's Hyde of Marty Feldman—with Arbus taking an understated approach, and Wyeth's subtler still.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Classics

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



The Invisible Man, 1933



Maxfield Parrish

It's in the Graphic Artists' Guild bylaws: you do a poster for *The Invisible Man*, you gotta have bandages.

1



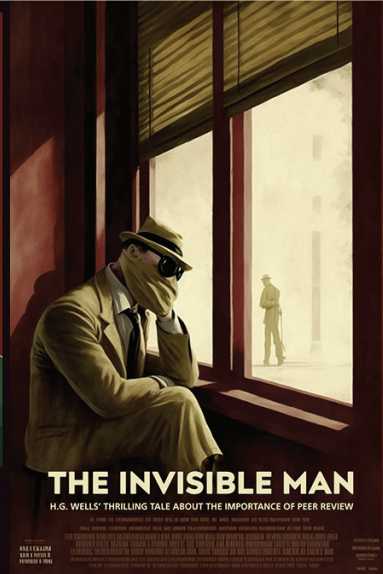
2



3



4



THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Andrew Wyeth 2. Ralph Steadman 3. Eyvind Earle 4. Edward Hopper

Midjourney was wont to skirt the bylaws. Even here, Edward Hopper's mask has slipped.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Classics

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



*Creature from the
Black Lagoon, 1954*



*Edward Hopper***

While the results were, as always, uneven, the AI at least knew always to serve up a green amphibian in response to my prompts. In this example I told it to move the venue to a dive bar (snort—"dive bar"—get it?).

1



2



3



4



1. R. Crumb 2. John Singer Sargent 3. Disney/Pixar 4. Georges Braque

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

I can't think offhand of two artists—none in this compilation, at any rate—with sensibilities less alike than those of R. Crumb and John Singer Sargent. Note the gratuitous limb in the Disney/Pixar entry.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Moderns

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Alien, 1979



John Singer Sargent

John Singer Sargent, Gilded Age portraitist to plutocrats and the plutocrat-adjacent, delivers here.

1



In space no one can hear you drink.

2



AT THE THEATRE
ALIEN

3



ALIEN

OUT IN THE OLD FARMHOUSE NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM

4



ALIEN

IT'S RAINING WHAT HE'S HAVING

1. Edward Hopper 2. Maxfield Parrish 3. Andrew Wyeth 4. Ralph Steadman

Couldn't manage a facehugger, but virtual Ralph S. gives us its take on the chestbuster.

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Horror & Science Fiction: The Moderns

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



It, 1990



Georges Braque

The thumbnail is from the TV miniseries. The 2017 film poster is good enough to make mine all look bad.

1



2



3



4



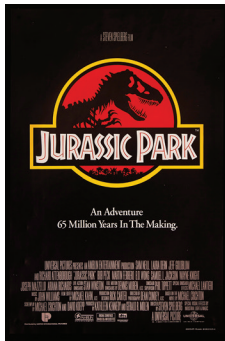
1. Andrew Wyeth* 2. Pixar/Disney* 3. Saul Bass* 4. Edward Hopper

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Everything wanted to default to the damn clown, so for three of these I specified a kid and a balloon.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Moderns

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Jurassic Park, 1993



*Diane Arbus***

I applied to the shade of the legendary photographer to give me a velociraptor posed in the studio side-by-side with Sam Neill. I'm not quite certain that this guy would be mistaken for the actor in a police lineup, but on the whole I'm pleased. **Raptor:** "Mr. DeMille, I'm ready to eat the electrician."

1



2



3



4



1. N.C. Wyeth 2. Saul Bass 3. Ralph Steadman 4. Georges Braque

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

N.C. Wyeth, Andrew's papa, makes his first appearance here. He was painter and illustrator both (although he insisted that these were entirely distinct disciplines), and some of his son's work partakes of the latter.

1



2



3

4

1. Maxfield Parrish 2. Edward Hopper* 3. Richard Diebenkorn* 4. Georges Braque

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Edward Hopper kindly delivered when I specified that I wanted at least an approximation of the Stanley Hotel, which was among the filming locations. And I'm rather pleased with the Diebenkorn hedge maze, which the Braque version seems almost to allude to—or is this perhaps my imagination rather than the AI's?

Horror & Science Fiction: The Moderns

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



The Terminator, 1984



Andrew Wyeth

The AI's trainers having cut their teeth on recent popular culture with an emphasis on fantasy and SF, I had less trouble with a title like this than I might have had on, say, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. I particularly liked the understated quality that virtual Wyeth has brought to bear in rendering the menacing cyborg here.

1



2



3



4



1. Saul Bass 2. Edward Hopper* 3. Rockwell Kent 4. Ukiyo-e

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

In #2 I wanted Ah-nuld's clockwork character to wait for his victim to show up at a sleazy diner.

Horror & Science Fiction: The Moderns

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



James Montgomery Flagg

It was gratifying to see that almost everything the AI produced on this assignment rendered the invading Martians as striding along on legs, if not always tripods, and not as the flying municipal streetlights of the George Pal production. Pride of place has here been given to J.M. Flagg's version of a recruiting poster.

1



2



3



4

1. Andrew Wyeth 2. Generic 3. Generic* 4. Soviet poster

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

The second “generic” iteration carried the additional prompt of “steampunk style.”

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Antony and Cleopatra,
1972



Saul Bass

The Bard and the Bass turn out to be a match made in heaven, where I like to imagine they both dwell, or at least in the virtual purgatory into which Midjourney has summoned them to eternal toil. Yes: orange.

1



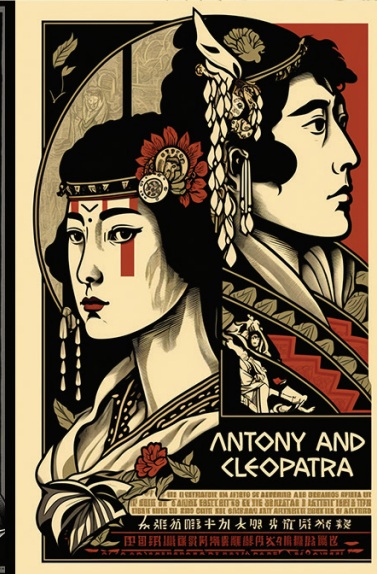
2



3



4



THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Ralph Steadman 2. Andrew Wyeth 3. Rockwell Kent 4. Ukiyo-e

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Hamlet, 1948



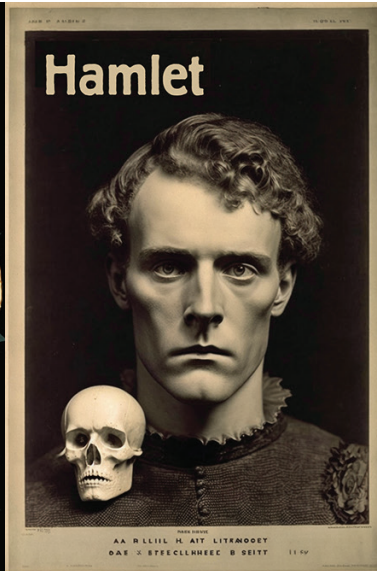
Ralph Steadman

Yorick's skull features in just *one fucking scene*, but from what I can see, half the designers ever born or programmed want to include it whenever they do *Hamlet*, which is why Steadman is the headliner here, even though his version of the Melancholy Dane looks like the young Gary Oldman in *The Fifth Element*.

1



2



3



4



THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Ukiyo-e 2. Diane Arbus 3. Syd Mead 4. John Singer Sargent

The Japanese get points for giving us Hamlet in the shadow of Hamlet père's ghost. I summoned the "visual futurist" Syd Mead, if we must have crania, to render a twenty-third century poster for the play.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Henry V, 1944



Ukiyo-e

I've chosen the thumbnail for Olivier's wartime version, but Branagh's "Crispin" speech is incomparably better.

1



2



3



4



1. Ukiyo-e 2. British WW II poster 3. Ralph Steadman 4. Rockwell Kent

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

The first Japanese version would have gone to the opposite page had the character not looked a little long in the tooth for the historical Henry, who for all his martial glory never contrived to make old bones.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



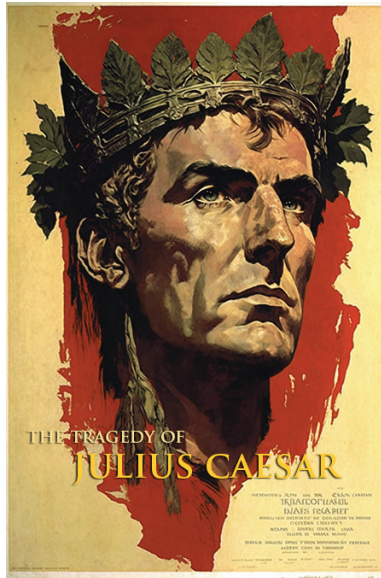
Julius Cæsar, 1953



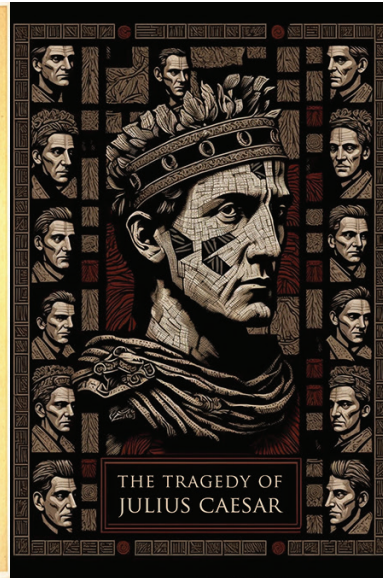
Saul Bass

RoboBass *brings it home*—in near-orange, admittedly.

1



2



THEMES AND VARIATIONS

3



4



1. Robert McGinnis 2. RC prompt (mosaic) 3. Richard Diebenkorn 4. Ralph Steadman

I solicited #2 in "the style of a Roman mosaic." Meh.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



King Lear, 1971



Ukiyo-e

Saul Bass had better look to his laurels.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Macbeth, 1948



Saul Bass

Wait! —Don't count the Bass-o-Matic out just yet. I could see the master doing this one in life.

1



2



3



4



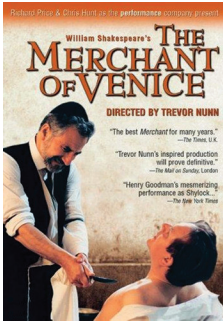
1. Ukiyo-e* 2. RC prompt** 3. RC prompt** 4. Ralph Steadman

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

RC prompts are “directed by Ingmar Bergman” and “Byzantine mosaic.” All* called for M/M Macbeth.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



The Merchant of Venice,
2001



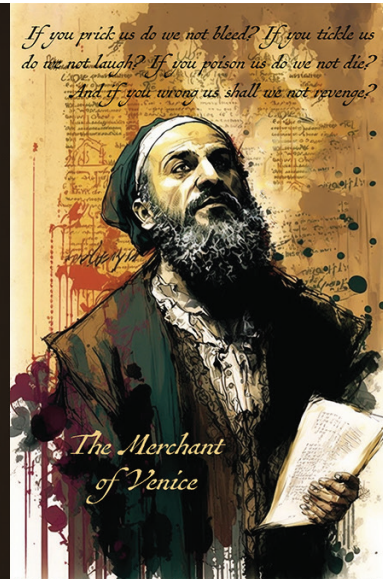
Saul Bass

I wrote the credits for this one on the basis of Trevor Nunn's production (see the thumbnail) featuring Henry Goodman as the much-abused usurer, Derbhle Crotty as, alternately, a slinky vamp and a cross-dressing litigator, and David Bamber as the melancholy merchant who signs that highly fraught promissory note.

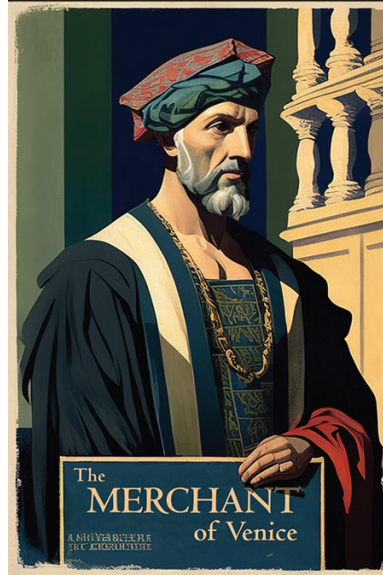
1



2



3



4



1. Pixar/Disney 2. Ralph Steadman 3. Robert McGinnis 4. Georges Braque

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

I'm inordinately pleased with my typography on each of these, particularly the third and fourth.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Richard III, 1955



Disney/Pixar

The last Yorkist monarch, everyone's favorite Plantagenet despot, is here pleasingly reimagined as a Disney character (appeals to *Das Mäusehaus* yield uneven results). Since history is written by the Tudors, I mean, by the victors, Richard's reputation has been, according to some scholars, unjustly sullied. Bad history; great play.



1. Soviet 2. Georges Braque 3. Ukiyo-e 4. Saul Bass

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

The stylized "III" on #4 is my own contribution (let's call it *hommage*), and not the work of RoboSaul.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Romeo and Juliet, 1968



Ralph Steadman

This series was not very difficult, although summoning "Balthus" yielded grotesque results: see Appendix A.

1



2



3



4



1. Anime 2. Diane Arbus 3. Saul Bass 4. Ukiyo-e

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

I caught the Zeffirelli *Romeo and Juliet* while visiting Columbus, Ohio, as a teen in 1969. What I wanted to see was *I Am Curious: Yellow*, playing on the adjacent screen. The woman at the box office wasn't having any.

Shakespeariana

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



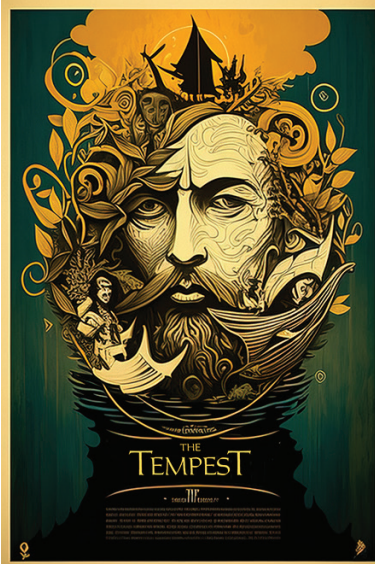
The Tempest, 2010



Eyvind Earle

Several attempts to summon up the androgynous sprite "Ariel" failed of my purpose until Earle came through.

1



2



3



4



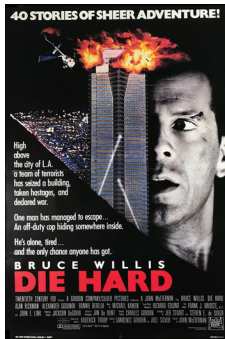
THEMES AND VARIATIONS

1. Generic 2. Georges Braque 3. Robert McGinnis 4. Andrew Wyeth

Ariel and Caliban eluded every other subpoena by means of which I sought to call them forth.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

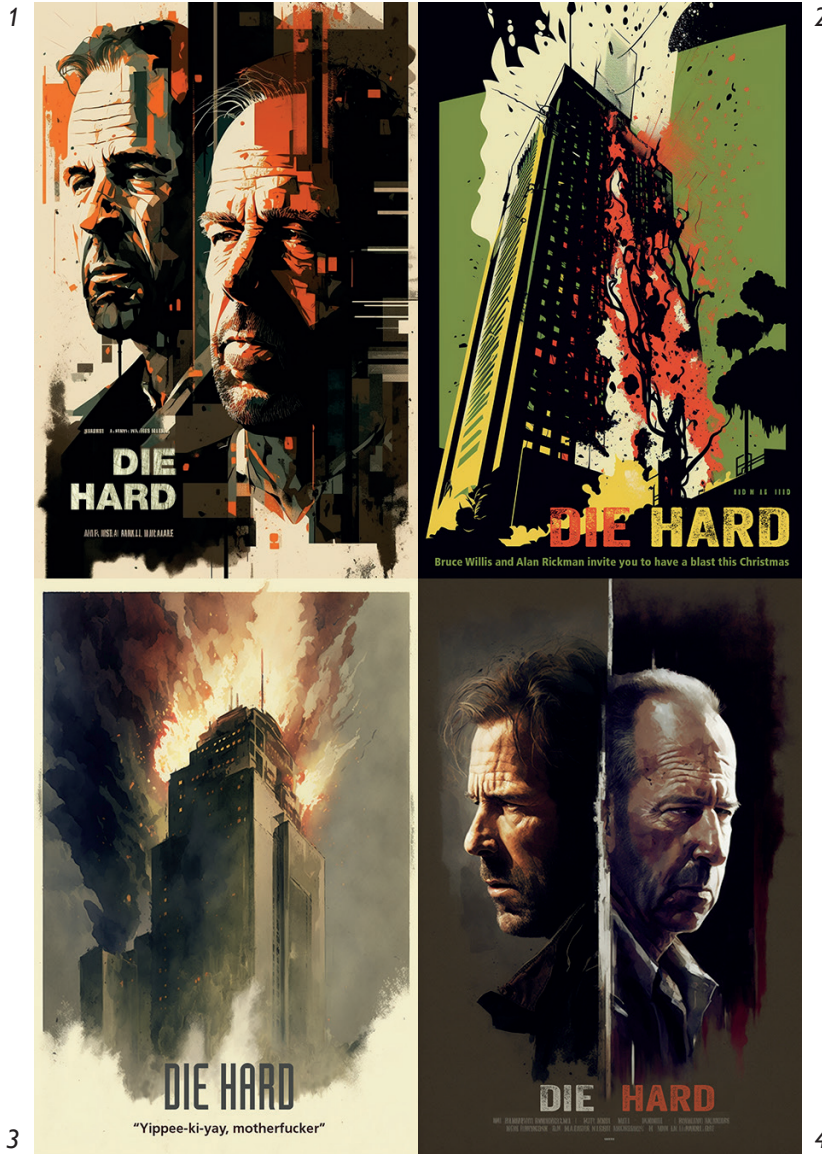


Die Hard, 1988



Robert McGinnis*

"Robert McGinnis" has, with a little encouragement, given us a serviceable Alan Rickman.



1. Georges Braque 2. Eyvind Earle* 3. N.C. Wyeth* 4. Andrew Wyeth

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Any resemblance to the principal players in the treatments by Braque and the younger Wyeth must be treated as slender coincidences. I asked Eyvind Earle and Wyeth père to give me an explosion at the “Nakatomi Building,” as in the thumbnail opposite, with serviceable results (though scarcely Earle’s métier).

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Lolita, 1962



Ralph Steadman**

Ah, now *this* was a fraught series. The use of the name “Lolita” in a prompt causes klaxons to sound and lights to flash, and calls down the wrath of the Midjourney automated proctors, which arrive uttering dire threats of expulsion from the service. Some elaborate circumlocutions were required for this set.



1. Balthus** 2. Diane Arbus** 3. Edward Hopper** 4. Disney/Pixar**

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

My prompts began “a film poster depicting the twelve year-old girl who is the subject of Vladimir Nabokov’s most famous novel...” Both extant film adaptations soft-pedaled (or soft-pedo’d, as we might say today) the extreme youth of the eponymous “nymphet,” who is, as the novel begins, barely on the cusp of puberty.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Melancholia, 2011



Generic prompt

Lars von Triers' film *Melancholia* is a flick that might have resulted had *Last Year at Marienbad*, *When Worlds Collide* and *Persona* ever done a three-way. In all of cinema the end of the world (it smacks into a planet the size of Neptune) has never been portrayed with such artistry. Surprisingly, the generic prompt did the trick.

1



2



3



4



1. Andrew Wyeth 2. Ukiyo-e 3. Rockwell Kent 4. Robert McGinnis

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Kirstin Dunst and Charlotte Gainsborough portray well-heeled (and round-heeled in Kirstin's case) sisters who respond differently to the impending global apocalypse: Dunst, who spends the first half of the film in a deep funk, perks right up as the rogue planet looms larger in the sky, as Sis descends into gloom.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



My Fair Lady, 1964



Soviet poster art

Broadway musicals have certainly developed in some interesting directions since *My Fair Lady* premiered in 1956, but I am inclined to think that its status as the exemplar, the perfection of the classical form, has never been challenged. It took me years to realize that its very title is a pun: the Cockney pronunciation of "Mayfair."



1. Ralph Steadman 2. Georges Braque 3. Saul Bass 4. Francis Bacon

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Steadman and Bass give us Eliza Doolittle as flower girl; Braque and Bacon as Eliza transformed. The attempts to work in Henry Higgins were all unmemorable save for the "socialist realism" variant. I hoped in vain for something from Bacon along the lines of his trademark grotesqueries, but I liked the brushstrokes.



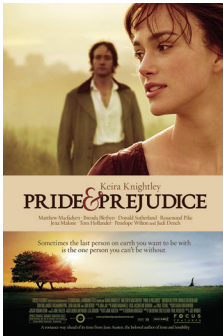
1. Robert McGinnis 2. Saul Bass 3. Charles M. Schulz 4. Ukiyo-e

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

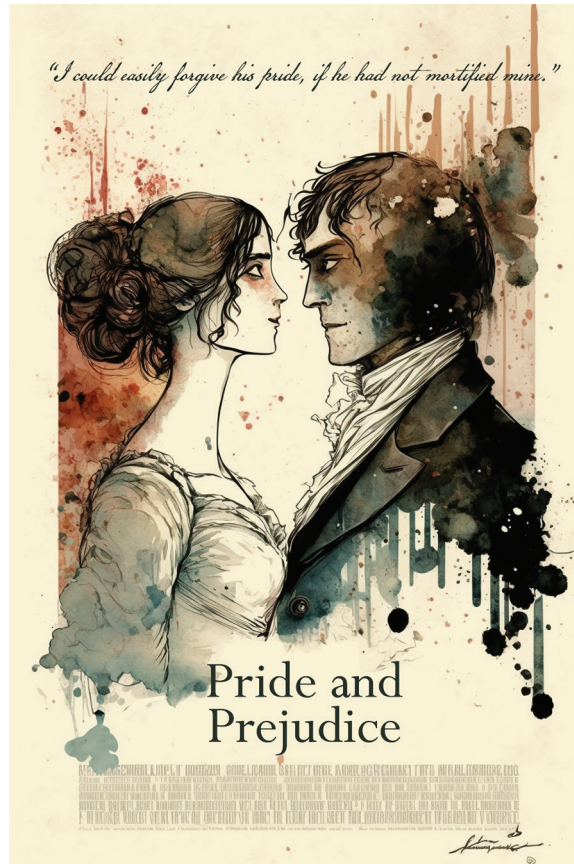
The treatments generated by virtual Wyeth and virtual McGinnis were so similar that I could choose only one: in this instance the version slightly less preposterous in its rendering of armored transport. The Schulz image isn't quite like the beloved cartoonist in points of draughtsmanship, but has a bit of "Charle Brown" vibe.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

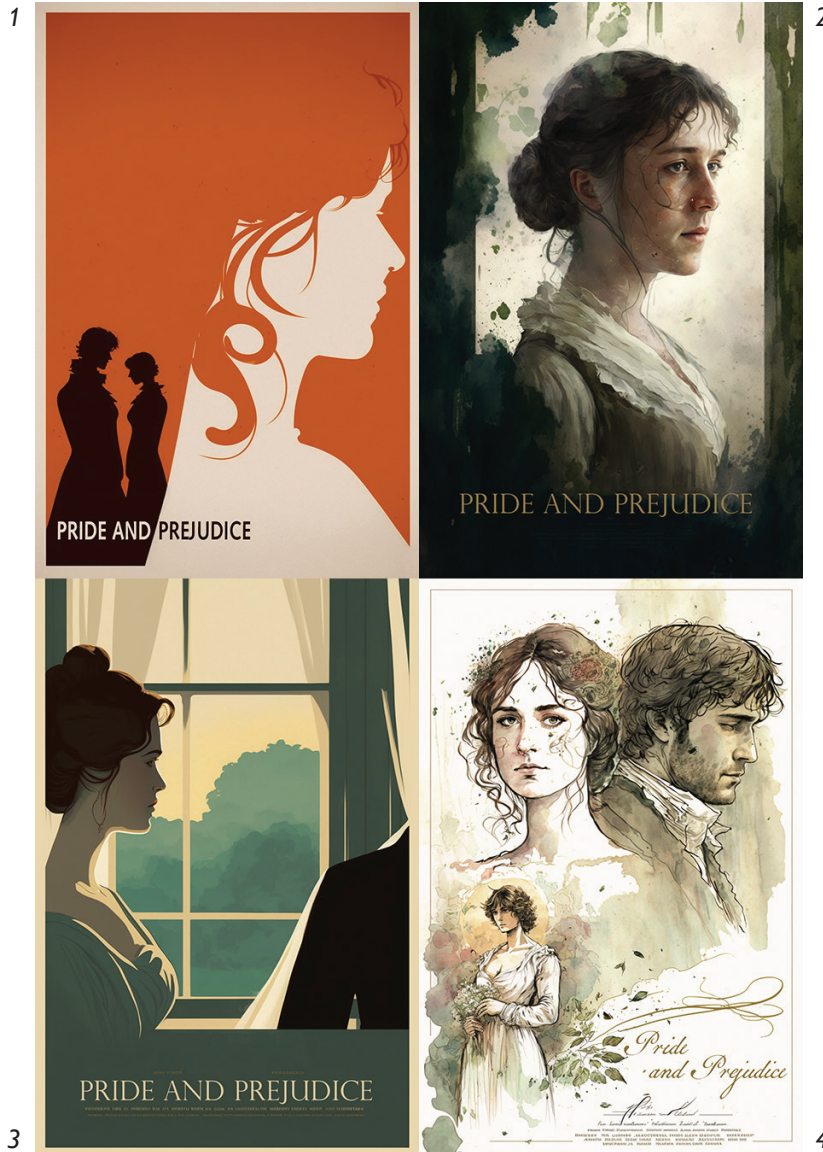


Pride & Prejudice, 2005



Ralph Steadman

In its review of the 2005 production, the *New York Times* called it “a continuing banquet of high-end comfort food perfectly cooked and seasoned to Anglophilic tastes,” which seems fair enough. Virtual Steadman here reveals a romantic side not hitherto in evidence, and this image positively invited the tagline.



1. Saul Bass 2. Andrew Wyeth 3. Edward Hopper 4. Generic prompt*

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

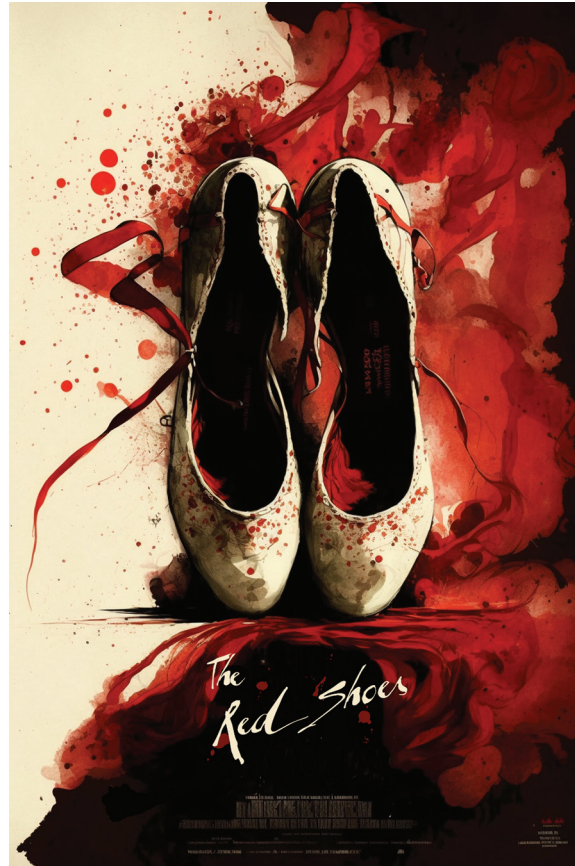
RoboSaul did right by his subject—even the preponderant orange is unobjectionable—as did Android Wyeth. Number three isn't particularly Hopperesque except, perhaps, for its composition, which is what earned it the spot on the page. For the “generic” sample I specified merely watercolor and pen-and-ink.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



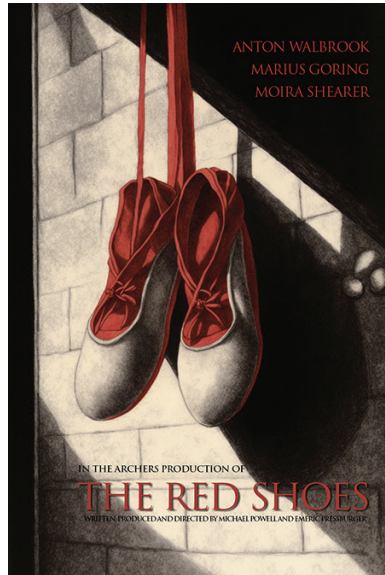
The Red Shoes, 1948



*Ralph Steadman**

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger—"The Archers," as they called their production company—were dismayed when their ballet fantasy met with a tepid response in Britain, but upon its US release "half the little girls in America" flocked to see it. Steadman's treatment evokes the Archers' balls-out deployment of Technicolor.

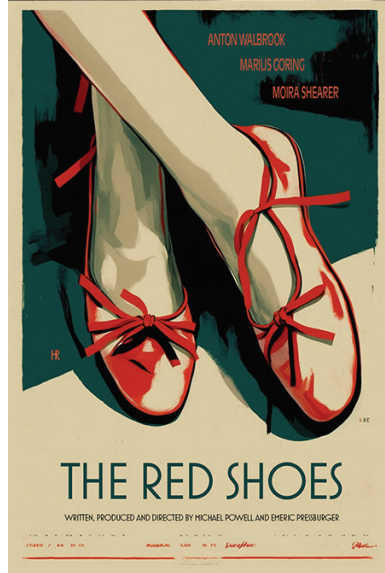
1



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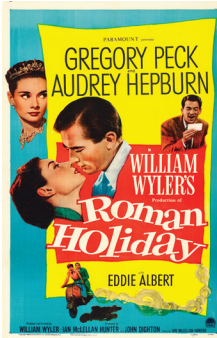
1. Rockwell Kent* 2. Saul Bass* 3. Richard Diebenkorn* 4. Robert McGinnis**

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

For all but one of the variants on this spread I specified that the poster should depict a pair of red ballet slippers either isolated or on a pair of dainty feet. I told virtual McGinnis to give me Moira Shearer onstage. I didn't ask for a dancer with two right hands—the spare has been discreetly amputated in Photoshop.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Roman Holiday, 1953



"Film noir" prompt*

No one would mistake this pair for the two stars, but it was amusing to recast this sunny classic as a crime drama. *Roman Holiday*, a film that appears to have been made under a supremely favorable alignment of the stars, launched Audrey Hepburn on a career of playing the role she was born to play...Audrey Hepburn.

1



2



3



4



1. N.C. Wyeth 2. US WW II poster 3. Eyvind Earle 4. Saul Bass

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Perhaps someday an AI will be capable of capturing the incomparable Audrey H. Soon, maybe—but not yet.

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



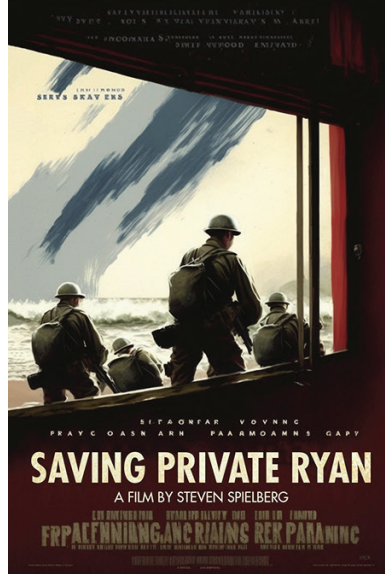
Saving Private Ryan, 1998



Maxfield Parrish

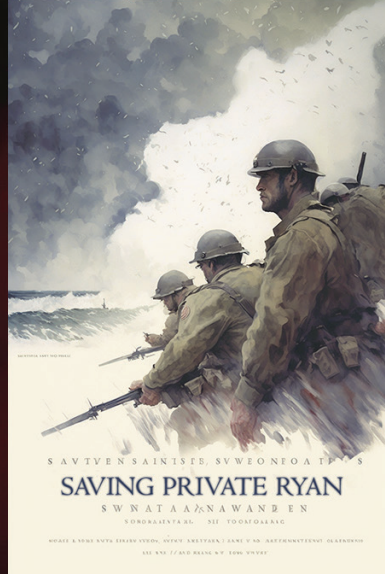
Valuable life lessons are to be had from the silver screen. For example, the first twenty minutes of *Saving Private Ryan* taught me that it's poor form to insist on the front seat in the Higgins boat should one be called upon to storm a fortified beach. Let the younger fellows, who might never have seen France before, have the first look.

1



3

2



4

1. RC prompt* 2. Ralph Steadman* 3. Edward Hopper* 4. N.C. Wyeth*

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

I specified for all of these that I wanted to see GIs wading ashore. Prompt for #1: "Bayeux tapestry"

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



*The Ten Commandments,
1956*



*Andrew Wyeth**

The first generic prompts did not hold much promise, so I took to stage managing this big-screen epic with scenes from the film: parting the Red Sea (above and #3 at right), or chatting up the Big Guy in the burning bush. The commandments themselves figured in some moderately hilarious failures (Appendix A).

1



2



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4

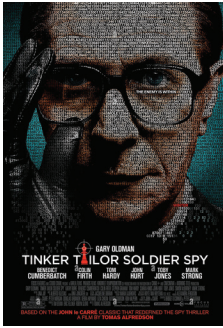


1. Saul Bass* 2. Ukiyo-e 3. Ralph Steadman* 4. N.C. Wyeth*

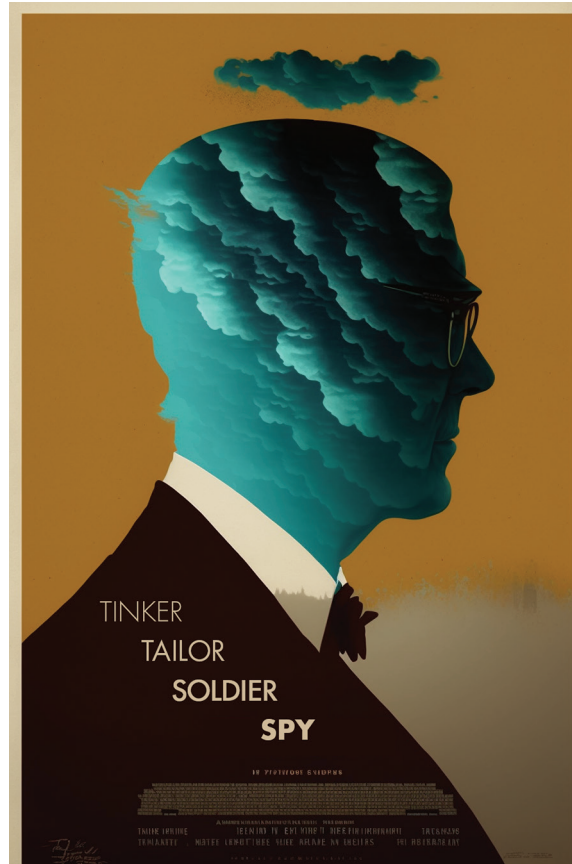
THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy,
2011



René Magritte

Pretty much every prompt called forth the bespectacled visage of world-weary, morally conflicted spy-master George Smiley, with a noticeable bias toward the character's more recent embodiment in Gary Oldman. When asked, however, virtual Bob McGinnis kindly yielded up a serviceable Alec Guinness.

1



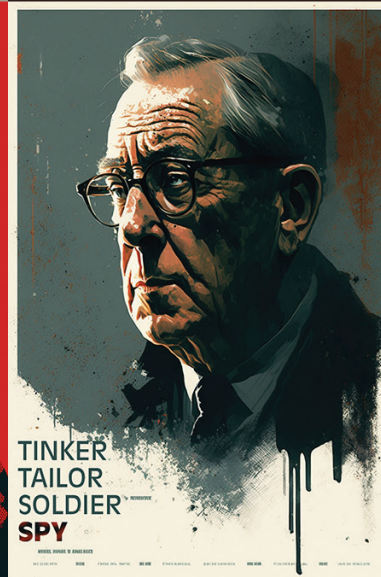
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4

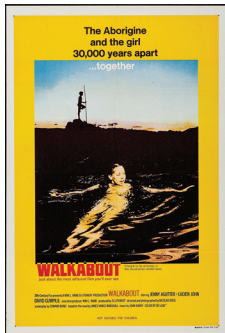


1. Andrew Wyeth 2. Disney/Pixar 3. Eyvind Earle 4. Robert McGinnis*

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Mixed Bags

THEMES AND VARIATIONS



Walkabout, 1971



*Andrew Wyeth**

Midjourney didn't know from *Walkabout*, Nicolas Roeg's debut feature, until I included names and scenes in the prompts. What finally worked were descriptions of the idyllic "swimming hole" scene. Andrew Wyeth delivers a quite compelling portrait of the luscious Jenny Agutter as she paddles about in the pond.

1



2



3



4



1. Saul Bass* 2. Georges Braque* 3. Robert McGinnis* 4. Ralph Steadman*

THEMES AND VARIATIONS

Saul Bass was prompted to depict a brother and sister trekking through the Australian outback; the others directed to the swimming scene. The McGinnis version is a near-perfect imitation of the artist's style.

The Appendices

Appendix A: Misfires and Failures

Like its cousin ChatGPT, Midjourney AI is given usefully to reminding us that there's "nobody home"—yet—at the end of our text prompts. Many's the instruction I've set forth in the course of this project that has yielded unremarkable results: I have a gigabyte or more of failures parked on removable media. But now and then Midjourney will vomit up gloriously inappropriate output which, given its freight of sheer hilarity, deserves to be shared in the following pages.

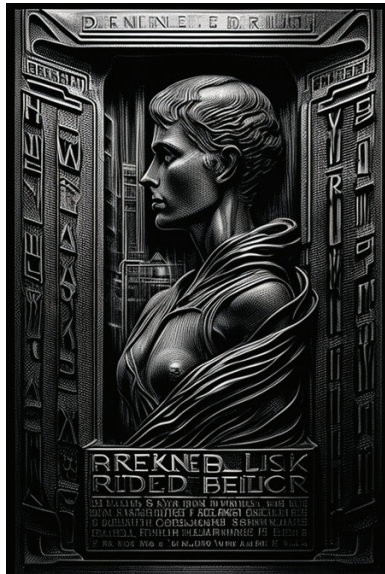
Appendix B: Publicity Stills

Back when the "studio system" reigned the film industry, "movie stars," as they were then known, were expected to sit for photographs, "publicity stills," to be distributed to the press and to starstruck fans, upon application, for autographs (who knows how many "autographs" were scrawled by personal assistants?). In these pages I imagine how such images might have been rendered had Gilded Age portraitist John Singer Sargent been around to paint them.

Appendix C: "The Usual Suspects"

I have yoked the spectres of artists living (just a few) and dead (most) to my purposes. I never imagined myself in the role of a tomb raider, but here I've been, plundering the styles of men (mainly men) incomparably more talented than I am. The least I can do is to acknowledge their legacies, and to this end I've enlisted "ChatGPT" to narrate most of these biographies.

1



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4



GUESS
THAT
FILM!

APPENDIX A:
MISFIRES AND
FAILURES

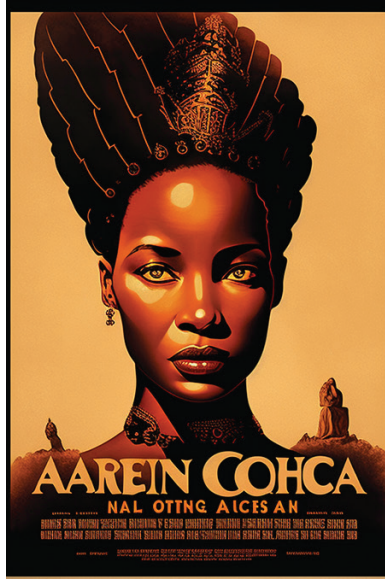
1. Blade Runner (Kent) 2. Fargo (Steadman) 3. The High and the Mighty (generic) 4. North by Northwest (generic)

Difficult to know what virtuals Rockwell Kent and Ralph Steadman were “thinking.” Presumably for *The High and the Mighty* the AI took “Mighty” as a cue for muscular masculinity, and in *North by Northwest* Cary Grant’s stunt double is menaced by what appear to be fanciful representations of modern military drones.

APPENDIX A:
MISFIRES AND
FAILURES



1



2



3



4



1-4. Generic

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and assert that none of these women could be mistaken for Kate Hepburn.



1. Edward Hopper 2. Richard Diebenkorn 3. Saul Bass 4. Rockwell Kent



APPENDIX A: MISFIRES AND FAILURES

1-2 – Ed, Dick, when we said “humanize him,” we just meant for you to throw a little pathos into his expression. 3 – Saul, ixnay on the palm trees in Midtown Manhattan. Ever consider, bubby, that you’ve been too long out there in Hollywood? 4 – Kong, for the love of God, whatever you do *don’t sit down!*

APPENDIX A:
MISFIRES AND
FAILURES



1-4. Balthus

As noted earlier, I was obliged to tiptoe for this one, since the film title was toxic to the AI. Here I entered something like "1962 film directed by Kubrick, based on a Nabokov novel, with James Mason, Sue Lyon, etc." Well, a nod is as good as a wink to an AI, but the appeal to virtual Balthus yielded up some truly grotesque output.

1



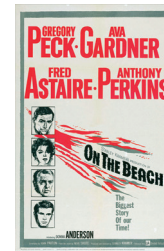
2



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4



APPENDIX A: MISFIRES AND FAILURES

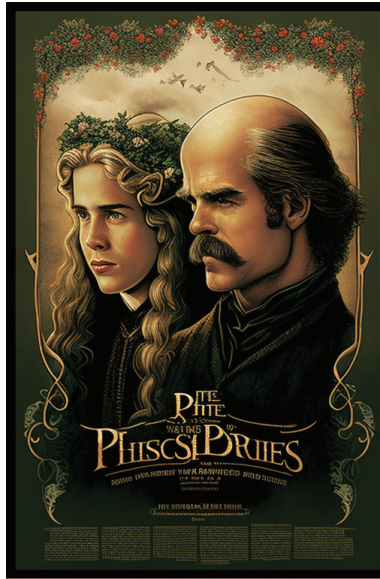
1-4. Ralph Steadman

Nevil Shute (1899-1960) was not a great prose stylist, but he was a supremely gifted storyteller, popular at mid-century although little-remembered today. Still, I supposed that his pre-apocalyptic novel *On the Beach*, and the 1959 Gregory Peck/Ava Gardner film, had not been forgotten. Not so, sez virtual Ralph S.

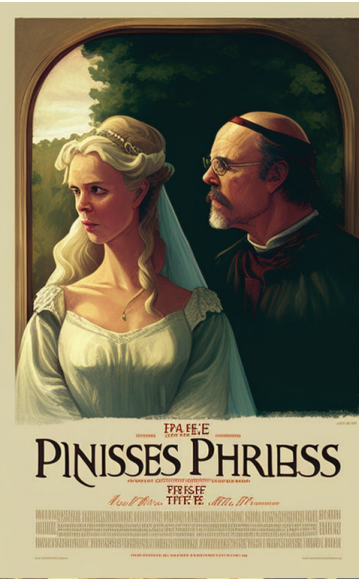
APPENDIX A:
MISFIRES AND
FAILURES



1



2



3



4



1. Generic 2. Edward Hopper 3. Maxfield Parrish 4. N.C. Wyeth

Everyone seemed to cue on, or at least to echo, the original typography. The generic and the Hopper iterations suggest that Cary Elwes wore a hairpiece for the role (say it ain't so!). Maxfield Parrish interprets his character's mask as sunglasses, and Wyeth père has swapped in Peter Dinklage as the male lead.



1-4. Balthus



APPENDIX A: MISFIRES AND FAILURES

With proper coaxing, I have found, Midjourney is capable of generating serviceable “Balthus” output, but absent adult supervision things will get very, very weird as in these samples, overabundantly provided with limbs.

APPENDIX A:
MISFIRES AND
FAILURES



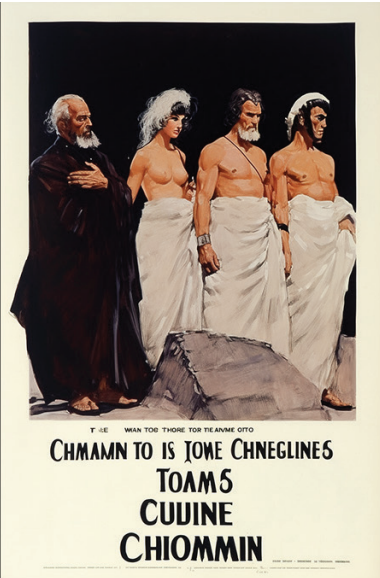
1. Saul Bass 2. Edward Hopper 3. Ralph Steadman 4. Robert McGinniss

1 – Aaron's EXACT-O Knife, a little-known episode in Exodus. 2 – Moses is granted an audience with Pharaoh in a sombrero. 3 – Sometimes you break the tablets, sometimes the tablets break you. 4 – Is that a pillar of fire in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me? (McGinniss produced some oddly racy output)

1



2



3



4



APPENDIX A: MISFIRES AND FAILURES

1-4. Robert McGinnis

In fact, virtual Bob M., the old goat, really let his freak flag fly here—no hint of impropriety or even stage management figured in any of the prompts—and it seems a shame not to share some of the weirdness.

APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS



Alien: These four were relatively easy; the next two somewhat less so.



APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS

Alien: And multiple requests for a persuasive Veronica Cartwright, alas, eduded all attempts at capture.

APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS



The Big Lebowski: The greater Lebowski and his daughter.



APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS

The Big Lebowski: The lesser Lebowski and some regulars at the bowling alley

APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS



Star Trek: An early reader observed that “Captain Kirk” looked more like Alec Baldwin. I replied that Alec Baldwin today looks a great deal more like the Captain Kirk of old than does the corpulent William Shatner.



APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS

Star Trek The Next Generation: It required years of patient training on my wife's part before I ceased referring to this segment of the franchise as "Star Trek with the Bald Guy." I wanted to include the alien cast member with the facial prosthetic, but coax it as I might, Midjourney simply *would not* render that knobby brow.

APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS



Star Wars: The bad guys



APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS

Star Wars: The good guys

APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS



Star Wars: The couple-who-rag-on-one-another-but-are-each-secretly-yearning-to-jump-the-other's-bones.



APPENDIX B:
J.S. SARGENT'S
PUBLICITY STILLS

The Wizard of Oz: The Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion all look like pretty dodgy characters, and I don't know but that they wouldn't be my first choices to take along on a Yellow Brick Roadtrip..

Afterword: The Usual Suspects

by Rand Careaga and ChatGPT

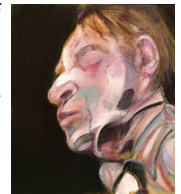
Regrets? I've had a few: for one, that so few of the spectral painters and illustrators to whom I applied could be prevailed upon to yield up their art. I would have given much to have coaxed Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm, Al Hirschfeld, Ben Shahn, Edward Gorey, Edward Sorel and a dozen others into the pentagram. At the last I was obliged to have recourse to a corps of artists who could be counted upon, if not on first or second application, eventually to generate product worthy of my self-publishing dime. It would seem irresponsible to conclude without acknowledging the contributions of the real-world progenitors of the "virtual artists" I have peremptorily summoned forth from their purgatory in cyberspace (and, in three instances, from the repose of their studios in 2023). At the same time, it also struck me as eerily appropriate to hand the task to "ChatGPT," the "generative pre-trained transformer" engine on which, as I write, so much ink, and so many pixels, have lately been spilled. The following thumbnail biographies of my conscripted artists have accordingly been generated by a fellow AI. I have edited these with the lightest touch—several are exactly as they came from the chatbot—save where I have inserted an asterisk by the entry. In a couple of instances I felt I needed to punch up the copy or, in the case of Thomas Kinkade, punch down: two asterisks, then.

APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTORS & CONSCRIPTS



Diane Arbus (1923-1971) was an American photographer known for her unconventional and often controversial portraits. Born in New York City, she started her career as a fashion photographer alongside her husband Allan Arbus. However, she eventually pursued her own artistic vision, photographing marginalized and marginalized individuals such as circus performers, dwarfs, transvestites, and the mentally disabled. Her work challenged societal norms and conventions and was often criticized for its perceived exploitative nature. Despite this, Arbus is considered one of the most influential photographers of the 20th century, and her work continues to be studied and celebrated today. *18, 29, 43, 51, 77, 83*

Francis Bacon (1909-1992) was an Irish-born British painter known for his powerful and visceral images of the human form. Born in Dublin, Bacon spent much of his life in London, where he developed his distinctive style of painting. His work often depicted distorted, contorted figures in extreme emotional states, and he frequently explored themes of violence, sexuality, and death. Bacon's art was highly influential in the post-war era, and he became one of the most celebrated artists of his generation. Today, his work is recognized as an important contribution to the canon of modern art. *87*

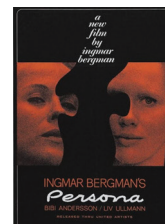


Balthus (1908-2001) was a French painter known for his highly stylized and often controversial depictions of young girls in suggestive poses. Born Balthasar Klossowski de Rola in Paris, he was the son of a prominent art historian and grew up surrounded by the Parisian art world. Balthus developed his own unique style, inspired by classical European painting and Japanese prints, which often portrayed girls in an ambiguous and erotic manner. Despite the controversy surrounding his work, Balthus was and remains highly regarded by fellow artists and art critics. *83, 108, 111*



Saul Bass (1920-1996) was an American graphic designer and filmmaker known for his iconic title sequences and movie posters. Born in New York City, he studied at the Art Students League before beginning his career in advertising. In the 1950s, he began to design movie posters and quickly gained a reputation for his bold, minimalist style. He later transitioned into film, creating some of the most memorable title sequences in cinema history, including those for *Vertigo*, *Psycho* and *North by Northwest*. Bass's work has had a lasting impact on the fields of graphic design and filmmaking. 8, 17, 25, 27, 31, 37, 38, 40, 42, 50, 53, 57, 60, 66, 69, 70, 72, 75, 77, 89, 91, 93, 95, 103, 107, 112

Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007) was a Swedish film director and screenwriter widely regarded as one of the greatest filmmakers in history. He was born in Uppsala, Sweden, and began his career in the theater before transitioning to film. Bergman's films explored themes of existentialism, human relationships, and the nature of God, often in a stark and minimalist style. He directed over 60 films, including classics such as *The Seventh Seal*, *Persona*, and *Wild Strawberries*. Bergman received numerous awards and honors including three Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. His films have had a profound influence on the art of cinema and continue to be celebrated as masterpieces of world cinema. (*He gets an entry because I borrowed his "style."*) 71



Georges Braque (1882-1963) was a French painter and sculptor who, along with Pablo Picasso, is credited with co-founding the Cubist movement. Born in Argenteuil, France, he initially worked as a house painter before studying at the Académie Humbert in Paris. In the early 1900s, he began to experiment with Cubism, developing a style characterized by fragmented forms and a flattened perspective. Throughout his career, he continued to innovate, working in a range of media and styles. 25, 27, 28, 31, 33, 36, 39, 43, 46, 49, 53, 55, 72, 75, 79, 81, 87, 103

R. Crumb (born 1943) is an American cartoonist and illustrator known for his subversive and often controversial comic strips and illustrations. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Crumb began drawing comics as a child and eventually moved to San Francisco, where he became a central figure in the counterculture movement of the 1960s. His work, which often featured graphic sexual content and social commentary, was published in a variety of underground publications and has since been widely collected and exhibited. Today, Crumb is recognized as one of the most important and influential cartoonists of the 20th century, and his work continues to inspire and challenge artists and audiences alike. 46



Richard Diebenkorn (1922-1993) was an American painter associated with the Bay Area Figurative Movement, known for his abstract landscapes and figurative paintings. Born in Portland, Oregon, he grew up in San Francisco and studied at the California School of Fine Arts. In the 1950s, he began to develop a style characterized by large, abstracted shapes and muted colors. Throughout his career, he continued to experiment with form and color, producing a diverse body of work widely celebrated for its innovation and beauty. 32, 55, 67, 93, 107

Eyvind Earle* (1916-2000) was an American painter, illustrator, and author known for his highly stylized and evocative landscapes. Born in New York City, he spent much of his childhood in the rugged wilderness of Washington State, which would later serve as a major source of inspiration for his art. Earle worked in a variety of media, including painting, illustration, and animation—he was one of Disney's stable of cel painters—and his work often featured lush, atmospheric landscapes and vibrant colors. He also published several books on art and his experiences as an artist (**RC note:** his self-published autobiography is, alas, a mediocre example of "desktop publishing." He ought to have hired a designer. Hell, I could make a better job of it, at least today). 30, 33, 37, 45, 78, 81, 95, 101



APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTORS & CONSCRIPTS

APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTORS & CONSCRIPTS



James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960) was an American illustrator and artist best known for his iconic World War I recruitment poster, “I Want YOU for U.S. Army.” Born in Pelham Manor, New York, Flagg began his career as an illustrator at the age of 12 and quickly became one of the most successful and prolific artists of his time. In addition to his work on posters and magazine covers, Flagg also created illustrations for books, advertisements, and political campaigns. Today, his work is recognized as an important contribution to American illustration and popular culture, and his “Uncle Sam” image remains one of the most recognizable icons of the United States. 58

Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944) was an American illustrator known for his depictions of the “Gibson Girl,” a fashionable and independent young woman who became a symbol of the progressive attitudes of the early 20th century. Born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, Gibson studied at the Art Students League in New York City before beginning his career as an illustrator. His illustrations, which appeared in publications such as *Life* magazine and *Collier’s Weekly*, were immensely popular and helped to shape the image of the modern American woman. 41



Edward Hopper (1882-1967) was an American painter known for his realistic depictions of American life and architecture. Born in Nyack, New York, he studied at the New York School of Art before traveling to Europe to study painting. In the 1920s, he began to develop his own unique style, characterized by stark, simple compositions and a focus on light and shadow. Throughout his career, he painted many iconic works, including “Nighthawks” and “Gas.” Hopper’s paintings have had a lasting impact on American art and culture, and he is widely regarded as one of the most important painters of the 20th century. 12, 29, 31, 37, 45, 46, 48, 50, 55, 57, 69, 83, 91, 97, 107, 110, 112

Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) was an American painter, printmaker, and illustrator, known for his depictions of the natural world and his political activism. Born in Tarrytown, New York, he studied at the Art Students League in New York City before traveling to Europe to further his artistic training. He later settled in Alaska, where he drew inspiration from the rugged landscape and indigenous people. Kent was also involved in leftist causes throughout his life. His art and activism made him a controversial figure during the mid-20th century. 10, 57, 61, 65, 69, 85, 93, 105, 107



Thomas Kinkadee** (1958-2012) was an American painter known for his idyllic and nostalgic landscapes, often featuring treacly depictions of cottages and cozy, idealized scenes of small-town life. Born in Sacramento, California, Kinkadee studied art at the University of California, Berkeley before beginning his career as a painter. His work became immensely popular in the 1990s, with many of his “limited edition” (albeit mass-produced) prints becoming highly sought after by suburban vulgarians with more money than taste. He is today regarded as occupying a place in contemporary visual art corresponding, *mutatis mutandis*, to that held by Tom Clancy in American literature. 35

L.S. (Laurence) Lowry (1887-1976) was a British painter known for his distinctive style of industrial landscapes and urban scenes. Born in Manchester, England, he initially worked as a rent collector while pursuing his passion for painting. Lowry’s work often depicted the working-class neighborhoods of his native city, and his signature style featured stick-like figures and muted colors. Despite initially facing criticism from the art establishment as what is today known as an “outsider” artist, he became one of Britain’s most popular and celebrated painters, receiving a knighthood in 1968. 24



René Magritte (1898-1967) was a Belgian Surrealist painter known for his thought-provoking and enigmatic works. Born in Lessines, Belgium, he initially worked as a commercial artist before devoting himself to painting. Magritte's works often featured ordinary objects in unexpected contexts, challenging the viewer's perceptions of reality. His signature style was characterized by precise, realistic rendering combined with elements of fantasy and mystery. Throughout his career, he remained a major figure in the Surrealist movement, and his influence can be seen in the works of many contemporary artists. Magritte's legacy as a pioneering figure in modern art continues to be celebrated today. 100

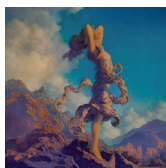


Robert McGinniss* (born 1926) is an American illustrator and painter, known for his iconic book covers and movie posters. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, he studied at the Ohio State University before beginning his career as a freelance illustrator. He quickly gained a reputation for his ability to capture the mood and essence of a story in his cover art. Throughout his career, he has created covers for over 1,200 books, including many bestsellers. He has also created posters for films such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Barbarella*. McGinniss's work has had a lasting impact on American visual culture, and he is unrivaled not merely for his influence but for his sheer longevity in the trade. 14, 20, 26, 29, 41, 67, 72, 79, 80, 85, 89, 93, 101, 103, 112-113

Syd Mead** (1933-2019) was an American industrial designer and concept artist—he styled himself a “visual futurist”—known for his visionary work on science fiction films and projects. Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Mead began his career as a designer for Ford Motor Company before transitioning to film work. He created iconic designs for movies such as *Blade Runner*, *Tron*, and *Aliens*, and his work helped to define the look and feel of the science fiction genre in the late 20th century. His aesthetic, when he wasn't tasked with creating dystopias, may be described as three parts “James Bond sixties,” two parts anabolic steroids and a pinch of Jetsons. 63



APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTORS & CONSCRIPTS



Maxfield Parrish* (1870-1966) was an American painter and illustrator known for his whimsical, fantastical works and use of vivid color. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts before beginning his career as an illustrator. His works often depicted mythical figures and idyllic landscapes, and his signature use of color made his images instantly recognizable. Parrish was one of the most successful and popular artists of his time, and his work continues to be celebrated for its beauty and charm, for all that a whiff of kitsch still clings to much of his *œuvre*. 22

John Singer Sargent** (1856-1925) was an American painter known for his elegant and evocative portraits of high society figures and landscapes. Born in Florence, Italy, Sargent studied art in Paris and eventually settled in London, where he established himself as one of the most sought-after portraitists of his time. His signature style was characterized by a combination of loose brushwork and meticulous attention to detail, resulting in portraits that captured both the physical likeness and the personality of his subjects. Today, Sargent is recognized as one of the greatest portrait painters of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and his works are treasured by art collectors and enthusiasts around the world. (RC notes: the mimics of Sargent's work in these pages, for all that some of them call to mind the master's style, are travesties, and serve to demonstrate that so far, at least, the cold and sterile shuttling of electrons cannot quite equal the product of human genius. Alas, though, this may be just a matter of time.) 9, 41, 46, 47, 63, 114-123





Charles M. Schulz** (1922-2000) was an American cartoonist and the creator of the popular comic strip *Peanuts*. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Schulz began drawing cartoons as a child and went on to study art in college. He began creating the *Peanuts* comic strip in 1950, which featured beloved characters such as Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and Lucy van Pelt. Over the course of his career, Schulz drew over 18,000 *Peanuts* comic strips, which were syndicated in newspapers around the world. He exercised a considerable influence over succeeding generations of cartoonists, but unlike a few of these he chose not to go out at the top of his game. “*Peanuts*” endures today, zombie fashion—albeit merely in reruns—going on a quarter-century after its creator’s death. 89

Ralph Steadman (born 1936) is a British artist and illustrator known for his distinctive and often surreal style. Born in Wallasey, England, Steadman studied at the East Ham Technical College and the London College of Printing before beginning his career as an illustrator. He is best known for his collaborations with the writer Hunter S. Thompson, including the iconic illustrations for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Steadman’s work has been published in a wide variety of magazines and newspapers, and he has also created a number of solo exhibitions of his artwork. 7, 13, 15, 25, 27, 37, 39, 43, 45, 48, 53, 61, 62, 65, 67, 69, 71, 72, 76, 82, 87, 88, 90, 92, 97, 103, 105, 109, 112



Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) was an American artist known for his realistic and detailed paintings of the rural landscapes and people of Pennsylvania and Maine. He was born in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania and grew up in a family of artists, including his father, N.C. Wyeth. Wyeth’s work often featured muted tones and melancholic themes, and he was particularly skilled at capturing the textures and details of natural objects such as rocks and foliage. His most famous work is “*Christina’s World*,” a haunting and iconic painting of a young woman in a field, which has become an enduring symbol of American art. 11, 16, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 39, 41, 43, 45, 48, 50, 54, 56, 59, 79, 81, 85, 91, 98, 101, 102

N.C. Wyeth (1882-1945) was an American artist and illustrator known for his vivid and dramatic illustrations of classic literature and adventure stories. He was born in Needham, Massachusetts and studied at the Massachusetts Normal Art School. Wyeth went on to become one of the most successful illustrators of his time, working for magazines, book publishers, and advertising agencies. His illustrations for books such as “*Treasure Island*” and “*Robin Hood*” are considered classics of children’s literature, and his dynamic and colorful style had a profound influence on subsequent generations of illustrators. 53, 81, 95, 97, 110



APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTORS & CONSCRIPTS

I did not think it necessary to include entries in this section for schools of illustration—Japanese ukiyo-e and anime; WW II propaganda posters from the sundry Allies; the animations of Tim Burton and Disney/Pixar—trusting that the reader will be sufficiently conversant with these, or at least capable of gleaning information about them from online sources. Or ask your local chatbot—I did!