

PAST IMPERFECT...

BATA

MAISON BORDEAUX

THE SWEDISH WAY

STOCKHOLM TRÈS CHIC

CORBIS

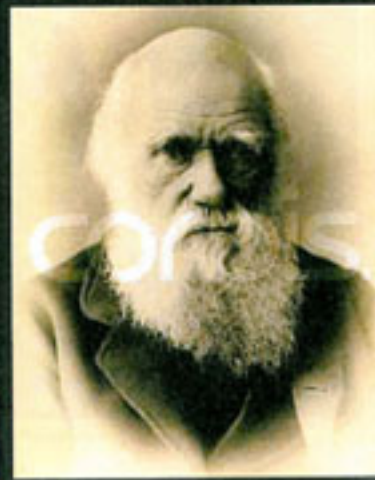
Will Bradley

GREED

MCTEAGUE

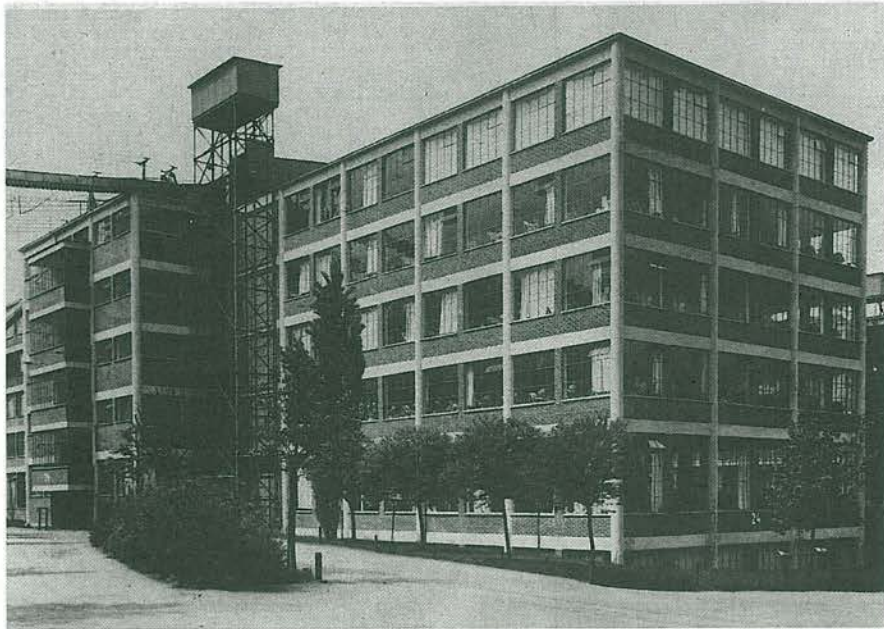
CASCO ISSUES N°9

PAST IMPERFECT





BATA (FLADT) poster, 1961, design: Herbert Lubin



Factory buildings in Zlín, between 1929 and 1930

BATA

Tomas Bata founded the Bata shoe factory in 1894, and developed Zlín, where the factory was situated, from a small town into the third important center of Czechoslovakia. The architecture built to house the workers, including the factories, public buildings and family houses was based on social ideas of Tomas Bata, who drew a lot of inspiration from the United States. He also introduced the Bata system, organizing operations in autonomous workshops with employee profit sharing, where each one in the company is an

entrepreneur. THE BATA SCHOOL OF WORK was founded, to provide rigorous education and practical training to future Bata managers. Bata himself kept a close view over his employees; an elevator, attached at the outside of the factory building was home to his office, and he could pop up on unexpected moments to see how everyone was doing.

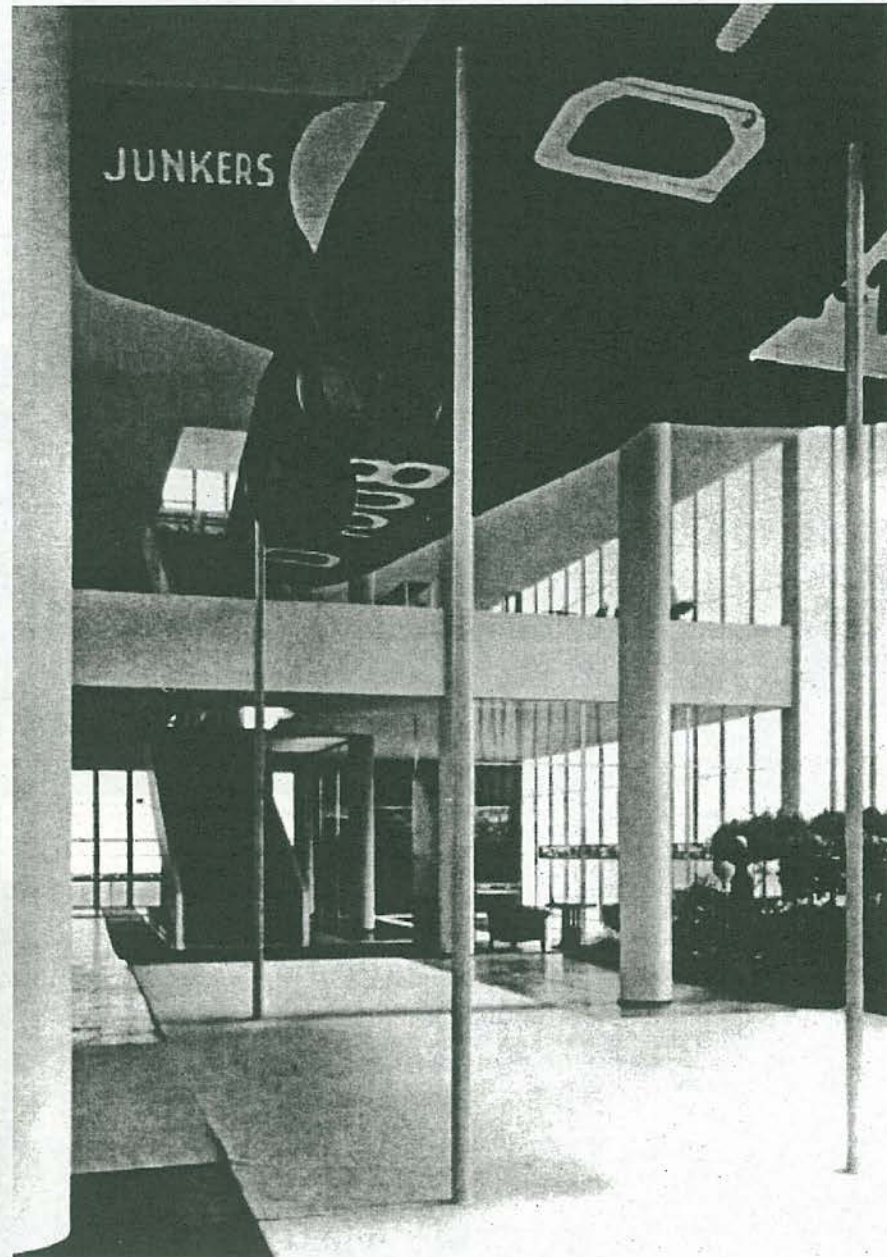
Bata died in a plane crash in 1932. His own company built him a monument where the damaged plane was attached to the ceiling as a silent witness. After the 1948 political changes, Zlín was renamed Gottwaldow

and the Bata firm became Svít. The plane was taken down, and the monument was converted into an office building. After 1989, the monument was re-established, but without the plane; today it functions as an exhibition space.

images: from BATA ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM, 1910-1950; Vladimír Slapeta

MAISON À BORDEAUX

[...] The house has been built for a wealthy publisher, his family, their guests, and some cars. The publisher was paralysed from the waist down after a car crash: a rubber-



Memorial to Tomas Bata, Zlín, 1932



burning, steel-twisting, bone-splintering, marrow-leaking, nerve-splitting car crash. The design is, among other things a monumental accommodation to this fact. In no way does the architecture attempt to glaze over the minutiae of everyday life with architectural elegance and solemnity, as so often happens in villa-design. What actually happened is that (the architect of *Maison à Bordeaux*, ed.) Rem Koolhaas feverishly imagined architectural potential in this particular family life. He saw the limp lower body of the husband, being supported by a whole arsenal of trusses, carts, belts, diapers as architecture. He extrapolated this in a single huge heavy-duty contraption that provides the man with a way of moving through the house. Subsequently, this contraption was made into the house's organizational core ('A machine was its heart')¹ going up, going down, going up, down, up. [...] In a way the family life has become architecture, it becomes strangely inclusive: a design equivalent of MTV's soap *verité* *THE REAL WORLD*. [...] After this house the world can no longer be censored before being let into the architecture: no more radical-chic caricatures of life to be translated into formally inventive masterpieces. [...] Here is an architecture that has more to do with, for example, steel spiders, broken bodies and

children's bed rooms than with its own vocabulary of form or with a parallel universe of imminent hypermodernization. We eagerly ask Rem Koolhaas: ARE YOU A HUMANIST? 1. Office for Metropolitan Architecture / Rem Koolhaas, *MAISON À BORDEAUX*, OMA Rotterdam 1997 From: *TOO BLESSED TO BE DEPRESSED*, CRIMSON ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS 1994–2000, Published by O10 publishers, Rotterdam 2002

THE SWEDISH WAY

The expression 'the Swedish Model' is rather well known. Even though this 'commonly used expression' is lacking a univocal definition it generally stresses the indication of the Swedish middle way between capitalism and socialism. The political concept of 'The People Home'—introduced in the 1910s described as the provision of welfare for everybody by reducing social and economic differences in society—became the Swedish label for the welfare state since the Social Democrats acceded to the government in 1932 and formed Swedish politics for more than a quarter of a century.

Even though industrialization came rather late to Sweden, there was a pre-modern proto-industry developed in the 18th century, notably small ironworks within a paternalistic system which regulated not only production amounts, but also housing, and which tradi-

tion partly formed the soil out of which the Swedish model grew. Industrialization therefore in the Swedish context was a goal, uniting different political interests: a stable economical development as well as raising the economic standard for everybody. Moreover, a society with this degree of consensus would also be plannable; and so the great metaphor of society as a building site was underpinned.

from: *THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SWEDISH MODEL*, by Björn Lin. *Arkitektur* 4, 1997

STOCKHOLM TRÈS CHIC

'The Swedish Model was stretched to include high-performance operations, without traditional restrictions. The wholesale renewal of central Stockholm, meant to create "an up-to-date city", began to attract the attention of a world who had seen operations on a similar scale only where destruction through war had made them necessary.'¹

STOCKHOLM TRÈS CHIC is 'a fashionable guide to the capital of Sweden, by Björn Borg'. In this clothing campaign booklet, models wearing Björn Borg are set against the background of 'modern Stockholm'. The spot of each photograph is accompanied by a footnote in the form of a documentary photograph of the same spot before the great renewal, an operation

08 TURNING-POINT AT MALMSKILLNADSGATAN



Now it does.



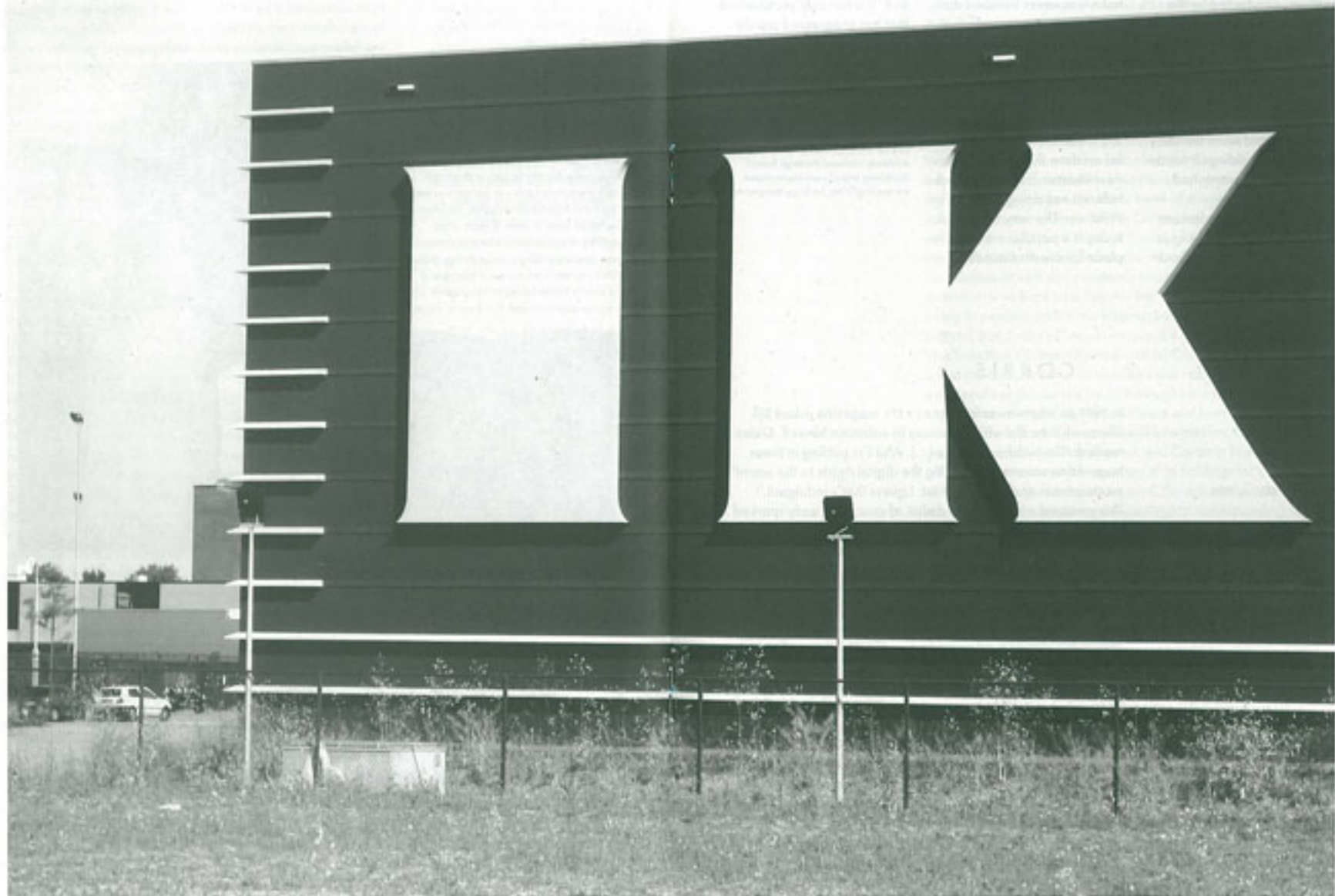
This didn't work.



Demolishing the past.



Gave strength to the future.



that was conducted by the Swedish politician and governor Hjalmar Mehr, 'one of the truly great visionaries', according to the booklet. In the 1970s, the transformation of the town district was almost complete, and more than fifty blocks with buildings from the 17th century onwards had disappeared.

In the Björn Borg fashion guide a plan of Stockholm is depicted, stating that 'Stock-

holm was never bombed during the war. It only looks that way thanks to Hjalmar Mehr and his crew'. Other statements in the catalogue mention 'Old fashioned values rapidly transformed...' (caption old situation) '...into palaces for modern thinking' (caption new situation); or 'Lazy Stockholmers not doing anything in 1938' vs. 'The very same spot today is a popular meeting place for creative minds',

and 'It is not only architecture that has progressed rapidly. The weather is also much nicer nowadays.'

1. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SWEDISH MODEL, by Björn Lin. *Architektur* 4, 1997
see: STOCKHOLM TRÈS CHIC, A FASHIONABLE GUIDE TO THE CAPITAL OF SWEDEN, for Björn Borg, 2000. see also: THE DANGER OF MODERNISM by Kersti Bergren, Architect, National Heritage Board, Stockholm http://www.international.icomos.org/20th_heritage/bergren.htm

CORBIS

In 1994 an interviewer from *PLAYBOY* magazine asked Bill Gates what he did with his money to entertain himself. Gates replied: 'I'm building a house [...]. And I'm putting in these huge video screens and buying the digital rights to the world's masterpieces and all sorts of art. I guess that's indulgent.'¹ This personal indulgence had also, of course, already sparked a business idea. The dystopian video-wall nightmare of the suburban society of control projected into the future in Ray Bradbury's *FAHRENHEIT 451* was rethought as the hi-tech equivalent of the eighteenth century landowner's collection of oils, and Gates saw himself as a pioneer for a coming generation of affluent homemakers who would take out timeshare ownership in digital art reproductions for the flatscreens hanging above their anachronistic fireplaces. In part due to the no-show of takers for this new lifestyle vision, Corbis, the company he founded in 1989 to Hoover up the rights to digital images of 'the world's masterpieces', has yet to turn a profit, but its venture into copyright control has been rapid and remorseless. Quickly moving beyond digital repro rights for famous artworks, Corbis has acquired vast libraries of stock photography of every kind and branched out into photojournalism and press agency work to the point where it now controls a bank of over 70 million images, second only to the Getty archive. Chairman and—take a moment to think about what this actually means—sole shareholder: William Henry Gates III.

1. *PLAYBOY* #473, July 1994

Gates is well known as a powerful art collector, buying key early American paintings at prices so far above accepted market levels—in some cases three or four times higher—that he is able to pry them away from longstanding collections; art professionals in America's Pacific North-West joke that when Gates and his fellow Seattle-based technology billionaires hit late middle-age and start thinking about their legacies, the Seattle Art Museum will suddenly be catapulted into the first rank of international cultural institutions. But Gates' collection of actual, physical paintings is limited, and directed by his idiosyncratic personal taste. His digital art collection, on the other hand—the works whose digital images he, as sole shareholder in Corbis, either owns outright or collects the royalties on through licensing deals with, for example, the National Gallery in London, the Hermitage or the Warhol Foundation—is vast and constantly expanding. Corbis' image collection is so big it's far beyond the ability of any one human being to sensibly view it in a lifetime, but business world rumors suggest that Gates will never recoup the money he invested. One idea that has been floated—not by Corbis, of course—is that the company should face facts and reconstitute itself as a non-profit organization, transforming from a machine for the exploitation of digital rights into library and foundation that facilitates access to its vast store of visual information. Gates could certainly bear the financial burden, and Corbis in fact already offers favorable access to a portion of its holdings for educational and charitable use. On a deeper level, though, such a move would run counter to the fundamental ideological understanding of digital rights that Microsoft was built on.



Stewart Brand

At the 1984 Hackers' Conference that its organiser, the former Merry Prankster and founder of the Whole Earth Catalog Stewart Brand famously said that 'Information wants to be free.' He went on to add: 'Information wants to be free, but usually not for very long. Information wants to explore, always. Smart marketers quietly follow.' It was a prescient and precise description of the economic consequences of the digital medium in the internet age, but it was also a first-class piece of rhetorical trickery—as if information was somehow in control, rather than people and the laws they make—that skirted over the fundamental question of how or why information acquires a market value.

It was in 1976, at a time when the West Coast hacker culture was still in its heroic phase and free exchange of hardware, never mind software, was standard operating procedure, that Bill Gates wrote his infamous *OPEN LETTER TO HOBBYISTS*. Published in the *HOME BREW COMPUTER CLUB NEWSLETTER*,



1976 (Age 21) Bill Gates gives opening address at The First World Altair Computer Convention, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

² THE HOMEBREW COMPUTER CLUB NEWSLETTER, 1976, Volume 2, Issue 1.

Gates' missive set out the case against copying commercial software in general and his new company Micro-Soft's \$500 implementation of the BASIC programming language for the Altair 8080—which had been copied and freely distributed on rolls of paper tape among members of the Club in the Bay Area of northern California—in particular. When you share commercial software, he wrote, 'the thing you do is theft.' After all, 'Who can afford to do professional work for nothing? What hobbyist can put 3 man-years into programming, finding all bugs, documenting his product and distribute for free?'²

It was a turning point, the first real sign that the countercultural origins of the personal computer revolution would be co-opted as the motor for 'the largest legal accumulation of wealth in history'. Looking back, the letter has a double irony. First, Gates and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen learnt almost everything they knew about programming, the many existing implementations of BASIC including one written by members of the Homebrew Club, and the Altair operating system either from freely shared resources or from code and documentation they stole and copied from the trash at Computer Center Corporation where they both worked. Second, the question of who can afford to do professional work for nothing has been emphatically answered by the free/open source software movement, Linux, Perl, Mozilla Firefox, Open Office and countless other open standards and open source initiatives that underlie academic computing research, offer alternatives to the Windows hegemony for the western home user, are more or less essential in the economies of developing countries, and have become basic standards for the very infrastructure of the internet.

What is at stake in Corbis' giant digital rights holdings is another manifestation of this ongoing battle, but it is also something else. Brewster Kahle puts his finger right on it when he says that the most important question facing the digital world right now is not open source, but open content; the possibility of what amounts to a concerted attack on the latest form of corporate property rights. Kahle is the man behind the INTERNET ARCHIVE, an insanely ambitious and fantastic non-profit undertaking to not only archive the World Wide Web as it develops, which it does 24 hours a day, but to make as much information of all kinds as possible available online, for free, forever, in a contemporary version of the legendary library of Alexandria currently stored on the massive hard drives of two thousand computers. To this end he invites anybody to submit anything to the archive for online preservation, and oversees an ongoing

-2-

February 3, 1976

An Open Letter to Hobbyists

To me, the most critical thing in the hobby market right now is the lack of good software courses, books and software itself. Without good software and an owner who understands programming, a hobby computer is wasted. Will quality software be written for the hobby market?

Almost a year ago, Paul Allen and myself, expecting the hobby market to expand, hired Monte Davidoff and developed Altair BASIC. Though the initial work took only two months, the three of us have spent most of the last year documenting, improving and adding features to BASIC. Now we have 4K, 8K, EXTENDED, ROM and DISK BASIC. The value of the computer time we have used exceeds \$40,000.

The feedback we have gotten from the hundreds of people who say they are using BASIC has all been positive. Two surprising things are apparent, however. 1) Most of these "users" never bought BASIC (less than 10% of all Altair owners have bought BASIC), and 2) The amount of royalties we have received from sales to hobbyists makes the time spent of Altair BASIC worth less than \$2 an hour.

Why is this? As the majority of hobbyists must be aware, most of you steal your software. Hardware must be paid for, but software is something to share. Who cares if the people who worked on it get paid?

Is this fair? One thing you don't do by stealing software is get back at MITS for some problem you may have had. MITS doesn't make money selling software. The royalty paid to us, the manual, the tape and the overhead make it a break-even operation. One thing you do do is prevent good software from being written. Who can afford to do professional work for nothing? What hobbyist can put 3-man years into programming, finding all bugs, documenting his product and distribute for free? The fact is, no one besides us has invested a lot of money in hobby software. We have written 6800 BASIC, and are writing 8080 APL and 6800 APL, but there is very little incentive to make this software available to hobbyists. Most directly, the thing you do is theft.

What about the guys who re-sell Altair BASIC, aren't they making money on hobby software? Yes, but those who have been reported to us may lose in the end. They are the ones who give hobbyists a bad name, and should be kicked out of any club meeting they show up at.

I would appreciate letters from any one who wants to pay up, or has a suggestion or comment. Just write me at 1180 Alvarado SE, #114, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87108. Nothing would please me more than being able to hire ten programmers and deluge the hobby market with good software.

Bill Gates
Bill Gates
General Partner, Micro-Soft

project to digitize vast amounts of public domain literature, imagery, film and music that is already branching out from its West Coast US beginnings (the Archive donated a copy of the entire web to the Library of Congress in 1997) to set up international offshoots for Arabic and Asian culture. This doesn't mean simply picking up dusty, forgotten stuff that has slipped through the copyright net. Kahle is an evangelist for open content, and his organization actively pursues artists, writers, filmmakers and musicians for permission to freely distribute their work; the Prelinger archive of US newsreels, educational and scientific film is already online, as are 25 thousand live rock concerts from bands at every level of fame.

Another development in internet standards that will ultimately challenge the viability of centralized image libraries is the resource description framework, the RDF. Online image databases like FLICKR have already adopted the idea of image tags, descriptive information attached to files that allows them to be dynamically categorised in many different ways. The RDF provides a standard for this kind of approach to be applied across the whole of the web, for every kind of file and for data within files, so that future search engines will be able to treat the entire internet as a library catalogued with finer and more massively cross-referenced categories than the Dewey Decimal System on acid.

Seen from this perspective, Corbis is a vast private collection set against the far larger and far less controllable public museum of the net. As the net swiftly becomes the primary medium for the dissemination of images, at least in technological societies, and as in this situation publishing is the same thing as giving away, an archive like Corbis is no longer a store of magic commodities that can be endlessly sold without ever depleting but a finite, if huge, supply of images that will inevitably leak into the public domain, in fact if not in law. Of course, those who make their money from digital rights exploitation count on increasing legal protection, but the argument of Gates's 'Open Letter'—that copying takes revenue away from those who produced the original—is useless to defend the annexation of the majority of 'the world's masterpieces' because their creators are long dead. When it comes to living, working image-makers, the situation is more complex. Nobody would deny that somebody who produces work that society wants or needs should be entitled to some kind of reasonable recognition or recompense for that work, and if there's an ethical case to be made for digital rights management then this is where it should surely

begin. Unfortunately, Corbis' record on this point is close to disastrous, with two high-profile cases bringing the wider ideology into focus.

Corbis bought a French photo agency, Sygma, in 1999, in the optimistic expectation that they had also acquired the rights to all of Sygma's images. Unlike in the US, however, and much to Corbis' surprise, under French copyright law rights to the images remained with the photographers. Shredding Gates' 1976 argument of 'the thing you do is theft', Corbis attempted to rewrite the photographers' employment conditions so that their work would belong to the agency, and as a side-effect deprived them of any job security and social benefits their agency membership had supplied. The conflict led to a strike and a sit-in by the photojournalists and was ultimately resolved with an uneasy compromise that opened the door to the near-certainty that the next generation of Sygma photojournalists will be casualised workers.

The second case concerned Californian muralist Susan Cervantes. Corbis was selling, and taking a percentage on, images of Cervantes' work depicting farm-workers' political struggles in the south-western US. The photographer in this case was credited and presumably paid, but the artist had not even been asked for the most basic permission. With the backing of US Union of Farm-workers, Cervantes raised a court case and Corbis eventually settled in secret before the final verdict was reached.

The pursuit of the unsustainable future of a digital rights lockdown that privileges corporate interests over those of the original image-makers and attempts to annex as much as possible of our historical visual culture would be monolithic, outdated and misguided as a business strategy for any long-standing image archive, ethical questions aside. As the recent project of one individual it's more than indulgent, it's bizarre. Through the agency of his incredible wealth Gates' personal ideology, and his part-time hobby of digital art-collecting (he spends less than two working weeks a year on Corbis), have been translated into the second-largest real-world conglomeration of digital image copyright holdings. It's a warped vanity project of monstrous proportions that, whatever its underlying psychological motivation, also serves to create an unprecedented concentration of interest—the world's number one supplier of operating systems and browser technology with its number two owner of image rights. For all that Gates' legacy in the world of digital art collecting looks like a hypertrophic version

of the eighteenth century colonial collection, a monument and mausoleum created by the confluence of certain social and political conditions, it is also, in its own right, a force for the preservation of those conditions. He only overlooked one thing. Right click, save image as. Thanks Bill.

Will Bradley

GREED



GREED (1924), a film by Erich von Stroheim, was considered a masterpiece. First consisting of 47 reels of film, it was cut to 42, then 24, then 18 and finally 10 reels — which is two and a quarter hours, one quarter of its original length. The film is of mythical proportions, but the project was considered to be an impossible undertaking both for the maker and the viewer. GREED is based on Frank Norris' novel MCTEAGUE*. Von Stroheim, whose career moved from acting to directing, initially wanted to film each and every page of the book, from cover to cover. He took a very radical position in both concept and execution. According to his statements,

he regarded the film as an act, a gesture, an idea, more than a material object. The outcome was that nobody saw the film. And though he is surrounded by a mythical image as the all-powerful director and fanatical perfectionist, Von Stroheim remained perpetually out of reach. He 'disappeared'.
 adapted freely from: Jonathan Rosenbaum, GREED, pp. 10-13, published by BFI, London, 1993

Great—

That's what everyone said who attended the opening last night. And as for the critics—well—did you read the papers this morning? By all means see

ERICH VON STROHEIM'S

Greed

* MCTEAGUE

McTeague is imbued with Darwinism and naturalism; naturalism developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in response to realism, which was considered to be not sufficiently scientific. When art aims to reproduce life in a 1:1 manner, does it become an impossible mission? When art and life stick together with no breathing space in between, as absolute clones held together with a vacuum seal, does this mean that life itself disappears along with art?

A full version of MCTEAGUE can be found on: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/mod-eng/public/NorMcTe>

Thursday—"Greed"

Seats now on sale
 All reserved

Many people consider the first showing of Erich Von Stroheim's "Greed," from Frank Norris' "McTeague" the most important motion picture premiere in history. Thursday Evening at 8:30.

An unprecedented advance
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THEATRE DISTRICT MANAGER
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"Greed" is a Metro-Goldwyn Picture

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