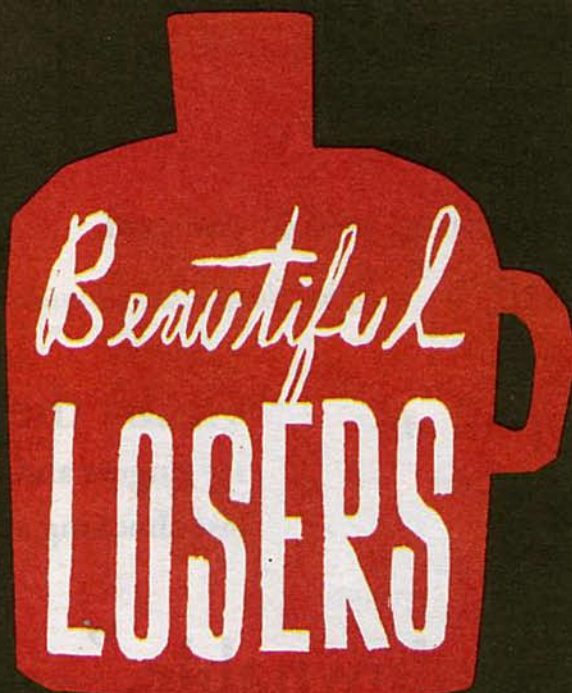


Book Review

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Featuring **WALTER KIRN**
ON THE LIVES OF ALLEN GINSBERG

JOHN WATERS
HOW TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
SAVED MY LIFE

MEGHAN O'ROURKE
WHATSOEVER HAPPENED TO THE
LITERARY AVANT-GARDE?

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Up Front

THE many facets of Steven Heller are dizzying to contemplate. In addition to serving as the Book Review's longtime art director, from 1977 to just over a month ago (he is currently on sabbatical from the newspaper), he has been a vital presence in the New York art world. He founded the M.F.A. "Designer as Author" program at the School of Visual Arts, sits on the design and architecture acquisitions committee of the Museum of Modern Art and won the American Institute of Graphic Arts Medal for Lifetime Achievement in 1999. He has also written or edited more than 100 books and is now completing a new one on the graphic campaigns of the 20th century's dictatorships.

This week yet another side of Heller is on display in his review (on Page 18) of the new memoir by Al Goldstein, the flamboyant editor of *Screw* magazine who was a fixture on the Manhattan scene in the 1960s and beyond. Heller revisits those years with an insider's knowledge: he was *Screw*'s first art director, at the ripe age of 17. It was a formative experience, he writes, not least because Goldstein gave him "the freedom and encouragement" to learn the craft he later honed at the Book Review.

The Editors



On the Web

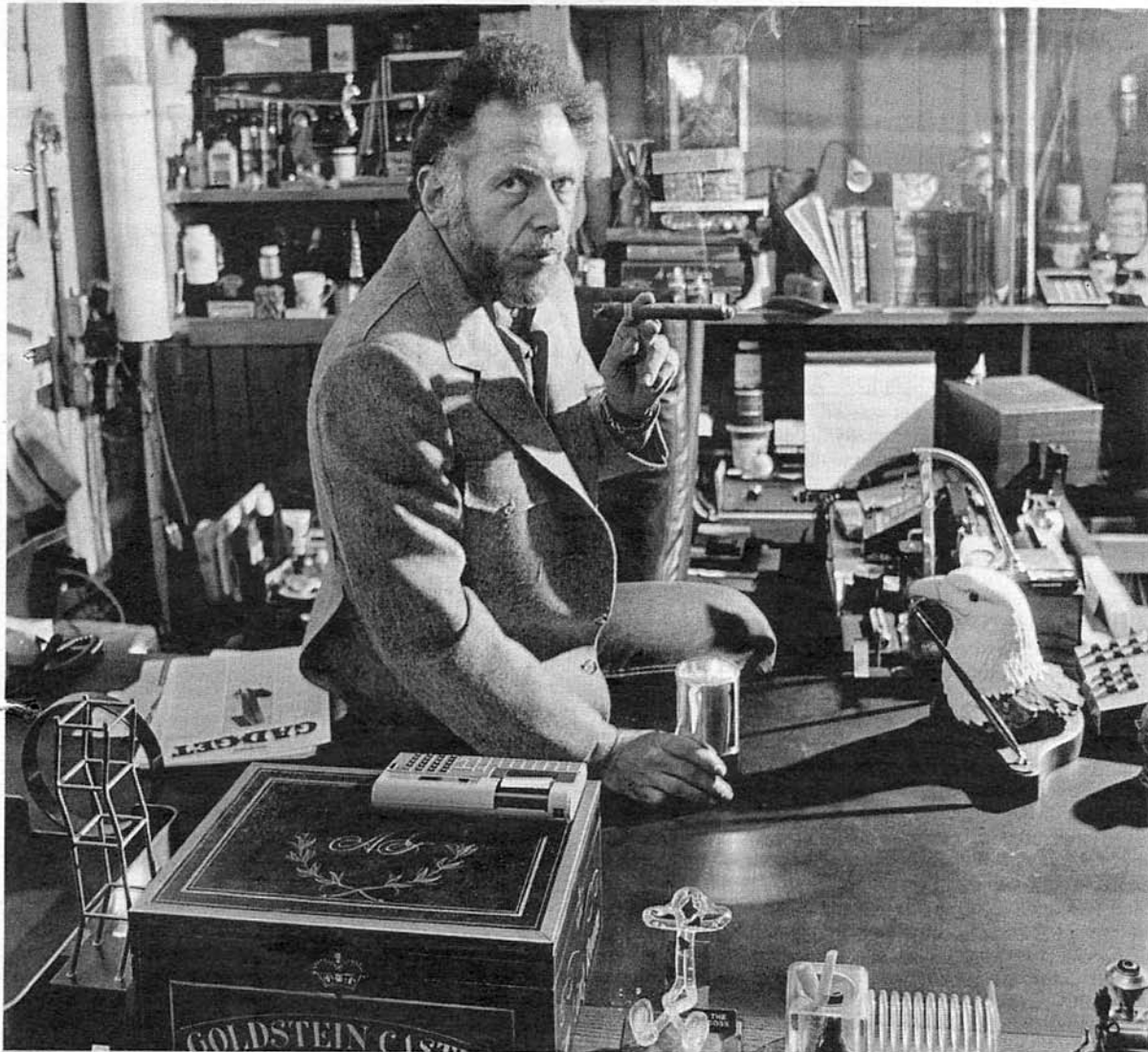
Podcast: Scheduled to appear this week are John Waters on Tennessee Williams; Steven Heller on Al Goldstein; Rachel Donadio on literary feuds; and Dwight Garner, senior editor, with best-seller news. Sam Tanenhaus, the editor of the Book Review, is the host.

First Chapters: Excerpts from "Postcards From Ed," edited by David Petersen; "Dirty Blonde: The Diaries of Courtney Love," edited by Ava Stander; and other books.

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Eddie Hausner/The New York Times

"Pornographers usually kept a low profile, but not Goldstein." The man in the Screw magazine offices, 1981.

My Dirty Life and Times

I, GOLDSTEIN

My Screwed Life.

By Al Goldstein and Josh Alan Friedman.
Illustrated. 271 pp. Thunder's Mouth Press.
\$26.95.

By STEVEN HELLER

At age 17 I was the first art director of Screw, the infamous underground "sex review" that grew out of the 1960s sexual revolution, co-founded by the notorious Al Goldstein. For the better part of my subsequent 39-year career (32 of them at The New York Times), in accordance with my grandmother's deathbed wish, I've tried to distance myself publicly from this dubious past. Although, in truth, I have used any flimsy excuse to tell my war stories from the porno trenches.

However, when the Book Review editors, who had heard these tales countless times, asked me to review "I, Goldstein: My Screwed Life," I initially declined. Reason 1: Goldstein had been my friend, and a cardinal rule at the Book Review is never to review anyone you

know well — friend or foe. Reason 2: I was convinced my wayward teenage exploits would be embarrassingly dredged up throughout the book, since I was not only present at Screw's inception and other best-forgotten events, but also had quit the magazine tearfully after fighting with Goldstein about an inane logo he wanted me to use. I had then co-founded a short-lived competitor, The New York Review of Sex (and Politics). It folded after 20 issues, prompting our distributor to claim I was the only person in New York who could make a sex paper fail. A few years later, I returned for a two-year stint at Screw (the health benefits were quite generous), at which time it achieved a surprisingly high circulation and peak media attention — no doubt the result of my inventive art direction. After leaving Screw for The Times in 1974, I was subpoenaed as a hostile prosecution witness at Goldstein's federal obscenity trial in Wichita, Kan., though my defiant testimony did not help the gov-

Steven Heller is the former art director of the Book Review.

ernment's case. (Goldstein was acquitted.)

Needless to say, I read "I, Goldstein" closely to see how I was treated, and found to my utter bewilderment I was mentioned only twice, both times in the same short paragraph, along with two other art directors who also later moved to The Times. "Heller was so young," Goldstein writes, "that, during one of our busts, he was thrown in juvenile lockup." Actually, I was busted not at Screw but at The New York Review of Sex. And I wasn't sent to juvenile lockup, but placed in the adult lockup with the prostitutes.

Moreover, Goldstein says not a word about my groundbreaking typography for Screw, nor about my designs for other Goldstein publications: Mobster Times, Gadget, Smut, Smut From the Past and Gay. There is also nothing about how I hired the best illustrators from Time, Newsweek and The Times, knowing they would give the publication some legitimacy. Nor any hint that I once asked Salvador Dalí to design an entire issue (he considered it for two weeks and then demurred, saying the fee was too low). There is even a photograph I believe I should be in — I vividly recall the shoot and everyone in it — but I'm not. I'm guessing I wasn't airbrushed out, but rather that the published picture was taken when, for a split second, I left the room.

Well, that was the final insult! Realizing my credibility would forever be challenged at the Book Review office, I accepted this assignment — if only to set the record straight.

Yet aside from the humiliation of being all but erased from the story, given my firsthand knowledge of everything from the founding (I was there when Screw was conceived, during a meeting at The New York Free Press) to the birth of Goldstein's son (I was outside the delivery room), I can attest that the record is set forth faithfully, for the most part, and also entertainingly. And I believe this ribald, at times insightful and illuminating autobiography, written with Josh Alan Friedman, is overdue. In fact, Goldstein's life and legacy actually deserve even fuller analysis to truly establish what, besides dirty words and deeds, he has contributed to American pop culture, and in particular to the cause of free sexual speech.

While Goldstein, over the years, has been vilified, satirized and marginalized, he has also been one of America's more complex and interesting outlaws. His brushes with the law on First Amendment issues are legendary and significant. Even though he never had a case tried before the Supreme Court, he deserves at least the same cinematic treatment as Larry Flynt, the publisher of Hustler — a magazine Goldstein inadvertently sponsored, in his telling, since Flynt repeatedly "poached my editors over the years." (Then again, "I have always considered my employees to be like Kleenex — meant to be used and discarded.") Flynt had his Hollywood moment: after winning a free-speech case before the Supreme Court, which stemmed from a legal altercation with Jerry Falwell, and getting shot and paralyzed by a would-be assassin, he earned himself a critically acclaimed 1996 biopic directed by Milos Forman. That same year Goldstein, who has consistently played second fiddle to lesser outlaws, was the subject of a mediocre documentary, "Screwed: Al Goldstein's Kingdom of Porn."