



21. Cover, October 1967. Doll: Austin Fox. *Playboy* covers were not just cheesecake pictures.
 22. Paul not only commissioned illustration but scoured the galleries for applicable work, such as this sculpture by Jack Gregory.
 24. "Slapstick," 1976. Artist: Brad Holland. Paul gave license to artists to develop distinct visual personalities.
 25, 26. "A Good Egg," 1961, and "Chaplin," 1960, show that *Playboy* articles were not only about sex. Paul's layouts routinely pushed the conventions of publication design.

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"*Playboy* could have been soft porno, but he gave it a sense of intellectualism. It was bright, sharp, and sparky, just right for the audience."

During the 30 years of Paul's tenure, *Playboy* grew into a major entertainment empire, of which the magazine was only one part. But the ever-constricting corporate bottom line was beginning to infringe on his creative work and prompted his decision to retire in 1983. "I wanted to leave the magazine two or three years before I actually did," Paul says. "I'd gotten to the point where there was nothing more that I would be allowed to push." Hefner, on hearing of Paul's retirement plans, asked what he could do to keep him. Paul recalls, "I told him I couldn't stand *Playboy's* TV ads, and to appease me he let me do ads." Paul found this "interesting" for a while, but points out that, "as far as the magazine was concerned, I was not that connected with it anymore." Nonetheless, Hefner insists, "The editorial concept and design of the magazine, even though it has evolved since the '70s, continues to be defined by Arthur Paul."

Paul now devotes himself to painting and has had several gallery shows. He has become something of a controversial figure. When he was asked to speak about his design at the AIGA Conference in Chicago in 1991, a few attendees protested on the grounds that *Playboy* created negative stereotypes and false notions of beauty, and that Paul was complicit as its art director. But Paul's legacy is more than just a sex-exploitative bunny; he helped create a forum that demolished artistic and cultural boundaries. In so doing, he transformed magazine illustration.

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 Steven Heller's most recent book is *Sex Appeal: The Art of Allure in Graphic Design and Advertising* (Allworth Press). He is coauthor of the forthcoming *Wedding Bell Blues: America's Romance with Holy Matrimony* (Chronicle Books).



Hugh Hefner (left) and Art Paul in the early 1950s.

Photo: Mike Shea



*the chronicle of a man and his genius*

By CHARLES BEAUMONT