

# UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT McCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."  
—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

# UNDERSTANDING COMICS



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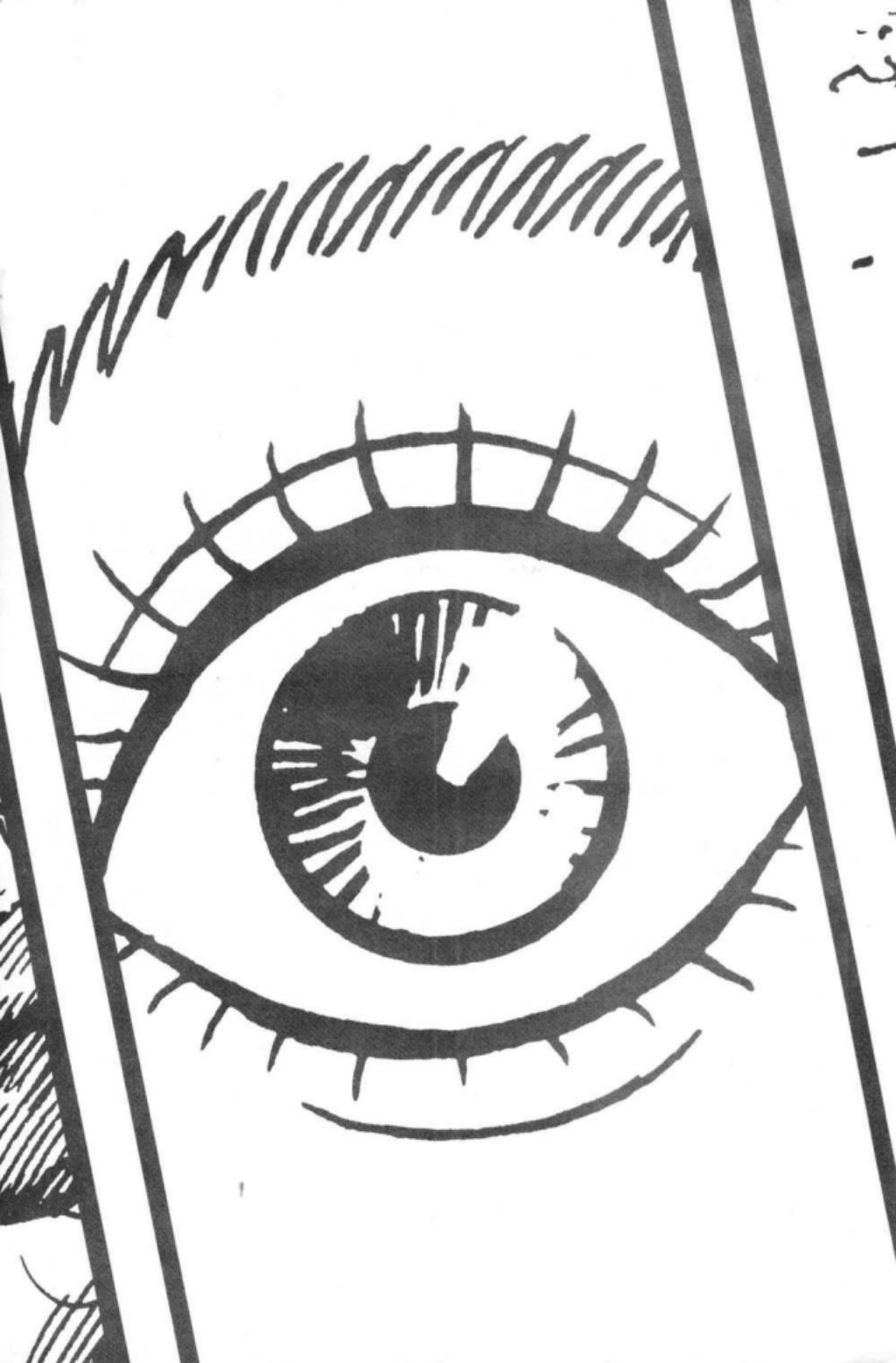
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The book you're about to read took 15 months to produce and many of the ideas it contains had been on the back-burner for over nine years, so acknowledging all of those who have helped in its development may be next to impossible. Furthermore, since its initial publication in the comics industry, I've received tremendous support from hundreds of fellow travelers in all corners of the publishing world. My apologies to anyone who is not listed below and should have been.

My deepest gratitude to Steve Bissette, Kurt Busiek, Neil Gaiman, Larry Marder and Ivy Ratafia who all reviewed my original draft in detail and offered many valuable critiques. Their contribution to the project cannot be overstated. I was also fortunate to receive detailed analysis from the talented Jennifer Lee and beyond-the-call-of-duty proofreading and good advice from Bob Lappan. Special thanks are also due to the magnificent (and magnanimous) Will Eisner who offered many words of encouragement and excellent advice in the project's later stages. Will Eisner's work has been an inspiration to me, and to thousands of artists, for many years. Eisner's COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART was the first book to examine the art-form of comics. Here's the second. I couldn't have done it without you, Will. Thanks.

I'm deeply indebted to all of the friends and family who offered their thoughts on the manuscript as it was being prepared. Among this long list are Holly Ratafia, Alice Harrigan, Carol Ratafia, Barry Deutsch, Kip Manley, Amy Sacks, Caroline Woolf, Clarence Cummins, Karl Zimmerman, Catherine Bell, Adam Philips and the legendary Dewan Brothers, Ted and Brian.

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Thank you to the legion of journalists in print, radio and television who have been able to talk about this book without quoting sound effects from the old Batman TV show; especially Calvin Reid and the whole gang at PW.

Early influences on the ideas in this book are harder to trace, but no less important. Kurt Busiek introduced me to comics long ago and was my best guide for many years. Eclipse Editor-in-Chief cat yronwode helped shape my critical faculties over seven years on ZOT! and is one of the very few people in comics who really understood where I was coming from. Art Spiegelman, like Eisner, offered me a role-model for serious inquiry into comics as an art-form and, in his short comics-essay "Cracking Jokes," clarified comics' potential for non-fiction and made this book a possibility. Other important early influences include Syracuse professor Larry Bakke, Richard Howell and Carol Kalish.

My thanks to all the fine people at Tundra Publishing, Kitchen Sink Press and HarperCollins.

Without Kevin Eastman this book might have never seen the light of day. Thank you, Kevin.

Without Ian Ballantine, you wouldn't be holding it in your hands today. Thank you, Ian.

And without you, Ivy, it wouldn't have been much fun. I love you madly. Let's take tomorrow off.



Scott McCloud



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# INTRODUCTION

MY OLD PAL MATT FEAZELL CALLED THE OTHER DAY.

SO, SCOTT, WHAT'S YOUR NEXT PROJECT GOING TO BE NOW THAT YOU'VE FINISHED "ZOT"?



WELL, IT'S A BIT HARD TO DESCRIBE, MATT. IT'S SORT OF A COMIC BOOK ABOUT COMICS!

YOU MEAN LIKE A HISTORY?



NOT EXACTLY, NO... ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME HISTORY IN IT... IT'S MORE AN EXAMINATION OF THE ART-FORM OF COMICS, WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF, HOW IT WORKS.

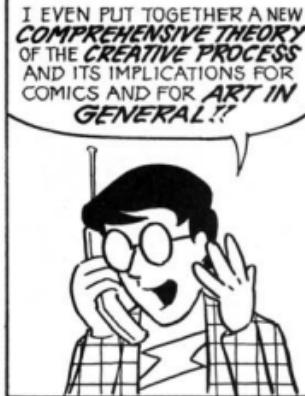


YOU KNOW, HOW DO WE DEFINE COMICS, WHAT ARE THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF COMICS, HOW DOES THE MIND PROCESS THE LANGUAGE OF COMICS--THAT SORT OF THING.

I HAVE A CHAPTER ON CLOSURE--ALL ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN THE PANELS, THERE'S ONE ON HOW TIME FLOWS THROUGH COMICS, ANOTHER ONE ON THE INTERACTION OF WORDS AND PICTURES AND STORYTELLING.



I EVEN PUT TOGETHER A NEW COMPREHENSIVE THEORY OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR COMICS AND FOR ART IN GENERAL!!



OH.

AREN'T YOU KIND OF YOUNG TO BE DOING THAT SORT OF THING?



# **UNDERSTANDING COMICS**

# CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.



WHEN I WAS A  
LITTLE KID  
I KNEW  
**EXACTLY**  
WHAT COMICS  
WERE.



**COMICS** WERE THOSE  
BRIGHT, COLORFUL  
MAGAZINES FILLED  
WITH **BAD ART,**  
**STUPID STORIES**  
AND **GUYS IN**  
**TIGHTS.**

I READ **REAL**  
BOOKS, NATURALLY.  
I WAS MUCH TOO  
**OLD FOR**  
**COMICS!**

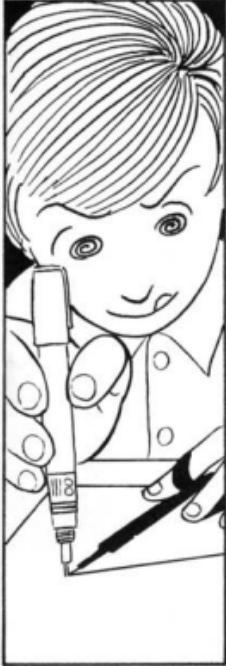


BUT WHEN I WAS IN 8TH GRADE, A  
FRIEND OF MINE (WHO WAS A LOT  
SMARTER THAN I WAS) CONVINCED  
ME TO GIVE COMICS ANOTHER LOOK  
AND LENT ME HIS COLLECTION.

SOON, I WAS **HOOKED!**



IN LESS THAN A  
YEAR, I BECAME  
**TOTALLY  
OBSESSED**  
WITH COMICS!  
I DECIDED TO  
BECOME A COMICS  
ARTIST IN 10TH  
GRADE AND BEGAN  
TO PRACTICE,  
PRACTICE,  
PRACTICE!



I FELT THAT  
THERE WAS SOMETHING  
LURKING IN COMICS...  
SOMETHING THAT HAD  
NEVER BEEN DONE.



SURE, I REALIZED  
THAT COMIC BOOKS  
WERE USUALLY  
CRUDE, POORLY-DRAWN,  
SEMILITERATE,  
CHEAP, DISPOSABLE  
KIDDIE FARE--

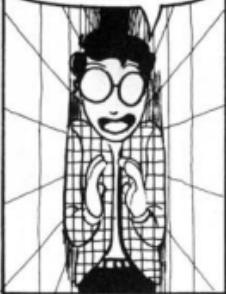


--BUT--

BUT WHENEVER I  
TRIED TO EXPLAIN  
MY FEELING, I  
FAILED MISERABLY.



IF PEOPLE FAILED TO  
**UNDERSTAND**  
COMICS, IT WAS  
BECAUSE THEY  
DEFINED WHAT  
COMICS COULD BE  
**TOO NARROWLY!**



A PROPER  
DEFINITION, IF  
WE COULD FIND  
ONE, MIGHT GIVE  
LIE TO THE  
STEREOTYPES--

--AND SHOW THAT  
THE POTENTIAL  
OF COMICS IS  
LIMITLESS AND  
EXCITING!



THIS IS  
WHERE OUR  
JOURNEY  
**BEGINS.**





--WHILE NOT BEING SO BROAD AS TO INCLUDE ANYTHING WHICH IS CLEARLY NOT COMICS.



"COMICS" IS THE WORD WORTH DEFINING, AS IT REFERS TO THE MEDIUM ITSELF, NOT A SPECIFIC OBJECT AS "COMIC BOOK" OR "COMIC STRIP" DO.

WE CAN ALL VISUALIZE A COMIC.



BUT WHAT--  
--IS--  
--COMICS?

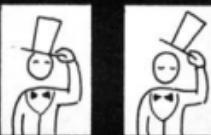


MASTER COMICS ARTIST WILL EISNER USES THE TERM **SEQUENTIAL ART** WHEN DESCRIBING COMICS.

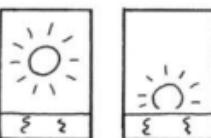
HOWEVER, WHEN PART OF A SEQUENCE, EVEN A SEQUENCE OF ONLY TWO, THE ART OF THE IMAGE IS TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING MORE: **THE ART OF COMICS!**

TAKEN INDIVIDUALLY, THE PICTURES BELOW ARE MERELY THAT--PICTURES.

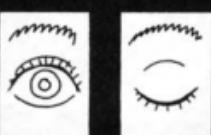
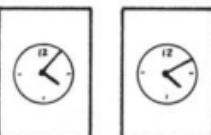
NOTICE THAT THIS DEFINITION IS STRICTLY NEUTRAL ON MATTERS OF STYLE, QUALITY OR SUBJECT MATTER.



MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN ON THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF COMIC ART; ON PARTICULAR ARTISTS, PARTICULAR TITLES, PARTICULAR TRENDS...



BUT TO **DEFINE** COMICS, WE MUST FIRST DO A LITTLE **AESTHETIC SURGERY** AND SEPARATE FORM FROM CONTENT!



THE ARTFORM--THE MEDIUM--KNOWN AS COMICS IS A VESSEL WHICH CAN HOLD ANY NUMBER OF IDEAS AND IMAGES.



THE "CONTENT" OF THOSE IMAGES AND IDEAS IS, OF COURSE, UP TO CREATORS, AND WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT TASTES.



=GLUG=  
=GLUG=



--FOR THE MESSENGER.



AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER VIRTUALLY ALL THE GREAT MEDIA HAVE RECEIVED CRITICAL EXAMINATION, IN AND OF THEMSELVES.



BUT FOR COMICS, THIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN RARE.\*

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN HELP RECTIFY THE SITUATION.



\*EISNER'S OWN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.

EISNER'S TERM SEEMS LIKE A GOOD PLACE TO START.

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN EXPAND IT TO A PROPER DICTIONARY-STYLE DEFINITION.

ANY IDEAS?

SEQUENTIAL ART

THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF ART. HOW ABOUT SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE SPECIFIC?

OKAY.

SEQUENTIAL ART

HOW'S THIS?

SEQUENTIAL VISUAL ART

HEY, WHAT ABOUT ANIMATION?!

BEG PARDON?

ISN'T ANIMATED FILM JUST VISUAL ART IN SEQUENCE?

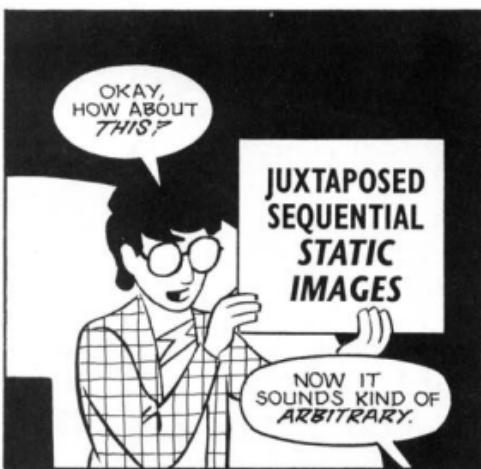
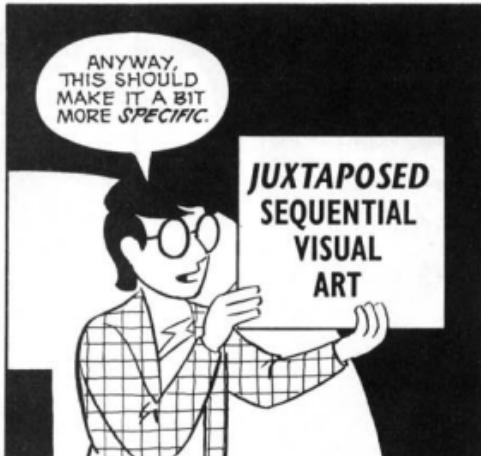
HMM... GOOD POINT.

I GUESS THE BASIC DIFFERENCE IS THAT ANIMATION IS SEQUENTIAL IN TIME BUT NOT SPATIALLY JUXTAPOSED\* AS COMICS ARE.

EACH SUCCESSIVE FRAME OF A MOVIE IS PROJECTED ON EXACTLY THE SAME SPACE -- THE SCREEN -- WHILE EACH FRAME OF COMICS MUST OCCUPY A DIFFERENT SPACE.

SPACE DOES FOR COMICS WHAT TIME DOES FOR FILM!

\*JUXTAPOSED = ADJACENT, SIDE-BY-SIDE. GREAT ART SCHOOL WORD.



OKAY,  
HOW  
DOES  
**THIS**  
SOUND?

## JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

WHAT  
ABOUT  
**BATMAN**?!  
SHOULDN'T  
IT HAVE  
**BATMAN**  
IN IT?

JUXTAPOSED  
PICTORIAL  
AND OTHER  
IMAGES IN  
DELIBERATE  
SEQUENCE

WHO LET  
**HIM** IN?

NO, I MEAN IT!  
AND WHAT ABOUT  
THE X-MEN AND--  
OW! HEY! HEY!  
LET GO OF ME!  
HEY!

R  
A  
I  
D  
S

WE'LL JUST **TYPE**  
IT UP, ADD A LITTLE  
BIT ON THE **USES**  
OF COMICS, AND--

tap  
tap  
tap  
tap

THERE!

adv.  
**com-ics** (kom'iks)n. plural in form,  
used with a singular verb. **1.**  
Juxtaposed pictorial and other  
images in deliberate sequence,  
intended to convey information  
and/or to produce an aesthetic  
response in the viewer.

**2.** Superheroes in bright colorful  
costumes, fighting decisively  
villains who want to conquer the  
world, in violent sensational pulse-  
pounding action sequences! **3.**  
Cute, cuddly bunnies, mice and  
talepeddy bears, dancing to bed fro.  
Hippity-Hop, Hippity-Hop. **4.**  
Corruptor of our Nation's youth.  
**com-ing** (kum'ing) adj.

I ADMIT, THIS  
ISN'T THE SORT  
OF THING THAT  
COMES UP A LOT  
IN CASUAL  
CONVERSATION--

--AND  
IN **MOST** CASES,  
THIS IS THE **ONLY**  
DEFINITION WE'RE  
LIKELY TO  
**NEED**.

BUT,  
WITH A **SPECIFIC**  
DEFINITION  
UNDER OUR  
BELTS--

--PERHAPS  
WE CAN SHED  
SOME **NEW** LIGHT  
ON THE **HISTORY**  
OF COMICS.

MOST BOOKS **ABOUT**  
COMICS BEGIN  
SHORTLY BEFORE  
THE TURN OF THE  
CENTURY, BUT I  
THINK WE CAN  
VENTURE A BIT  
FARTHER THAN  
THAT.

**SEQUENTIAL  
ART**

1880 1890 1900 1910

1500

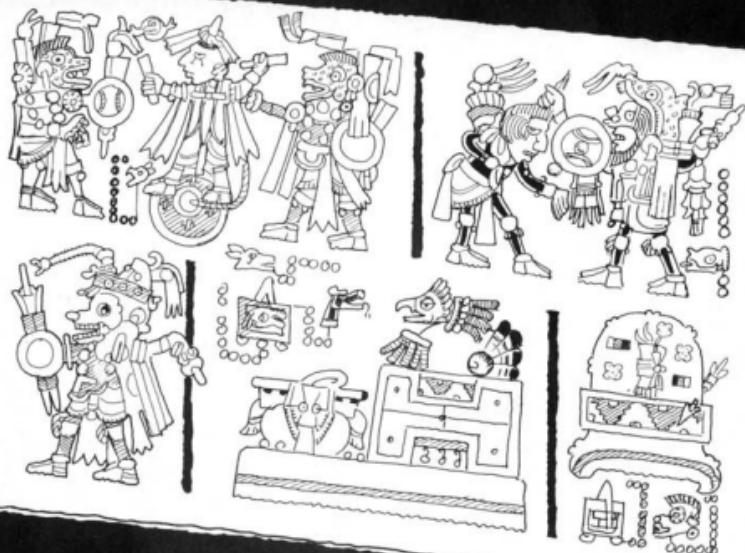
1600

1700

1800

1900

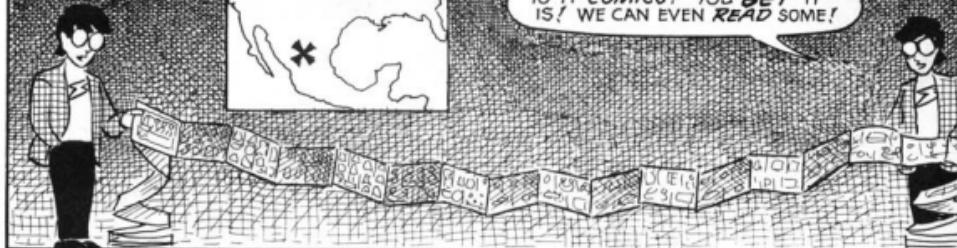
ACTUALLY,  
A **LOT**  
FARTHER!



HERE'S  
JUST A PIECE OF THE  
EPIC STORY CONTAINED  
IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN  
PICTURE MANUSCRIPT  
"DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS  
AROUND 1519.

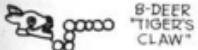
THIS 36-FOOT LONG,  
BRIGHTLY-COLORED, PAINTED  
SCREENFOLD TELLS OF THE GREAT  
MILITARY AND POLITICAL HERO  
8-DEER "TIGER'S-CLAW."\*\*

IS IT COMICS? YOU BET IT  
IS! WE CAN EVEN READ SOME!



\* OR "OCELOT'S CLAW" DEPENDING ON WHOSE BOOK YOU READ.  
THIS SEQUENCE IS BASED ON A READING BY MEXICAN HISTORIAN  
AND ARCHAEOLOGIST ALFONSO CASO.

FIRST, WE SEPARATE WORDS FROM PICTURES.



(A NAME)



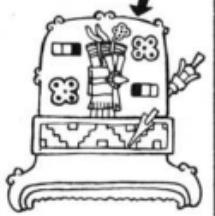
(A DATE)



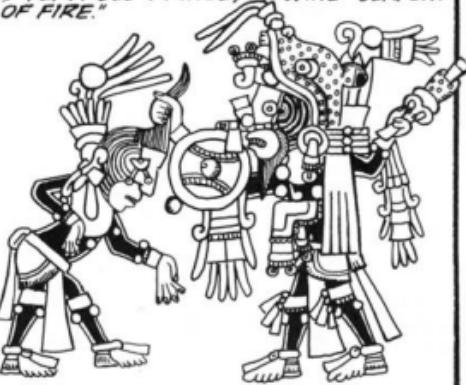
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

THEN REVERSE IT AND STRAIGHTEN IT OUT (THE ORIGINAL READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT AND ZIGZAGGED.) AND BEGIN:

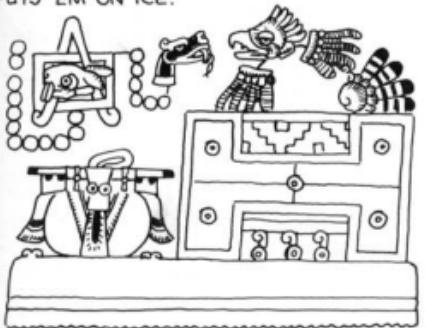
THE YEAR: 1049 AD  
THE DATE: MAY 3<sup>rd</sup>  
THE PLACE: HERE!



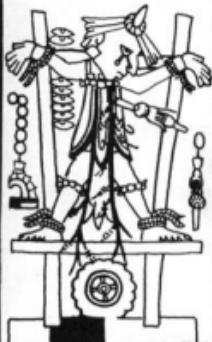
OUR HERO, 8-DEER "TIGER'S CLAW", CONQUERS THE PLACE AND CAPTURES THE 9-YEAR-OLD PRINCE, 4-WIND "SERPENT OF FIRE."



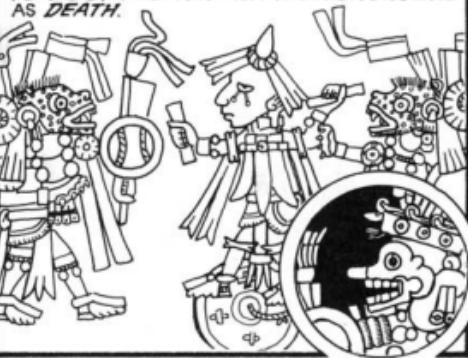
8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING" AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND PUTS 'EM ON ICE.



8-DEER KILLS THE OTHER PRINCE,  
6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES"  
EIGHT DAYS LATER.



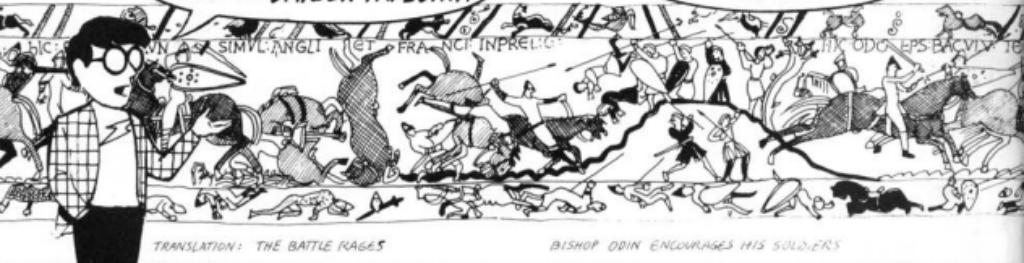
THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 8-DEER AND (PROBABLY) HIS BROTHER, DISGUISED AS TIGERS, ENGAGE IN SACRIFICIAL GLADIATORIAL COMBAT WITH THE PRINCE, 10-DOG, AND ANOTHER WARRIOR DISGUISED AS DEATH.



\*WE KNOW THE YEAR; I'M JUST GUESSING AT THE DATE REPRESENTED BY "12 MONKEY"

HUNDREDS OF YEARS  
BEFORE CORTÉS BEGAN COLLECTING  
COMICS, FRANCE PRODUCED THE  
STRIKINGLY SIMILAR WORK WE  
CALL THE **BAYEUX TAPESTRY**.

THIS 230 FOOT LONG  
TAPESTRY DETAILS THE  
NORMAN CONQUEST OF  
ENGLAND, BEGINNING  
IN 1066.



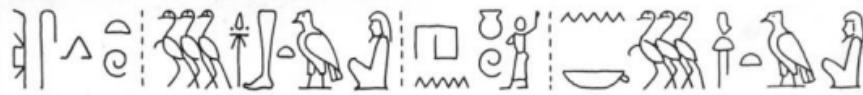
FAR FROM DISQUALIFYING  
THESE AS COMICS, I THINK  
MODERN COMIC BOOK ARTISTS  
SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF THE  
POSSIBILITIES OF SUCH WHOLE  
PAGE COMPOSITIONS AND  
HOW FEW ARTISTS HAVE  
MADE GOOD USE OF THEM  
SINCE!

WHICH  
ONE IS THE  
PRINCE?

PERENNIAL EXCEPTION WILL FISHER.



FINDING  
COMICS BEYOND  
OUR OWN  
MILLENNIUM  
IS A BIT  
TRICKIER.



JUXTAPOSED  
PICTORIAL  
AND OTHER  
IMAGES IN  
DELIBERATE  
SEQUENCE  
?

AT FIRST GLANCE,  
EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS  
WOULD SEEM TO FIT  
OUR DEFINITION  
PERFECTLY.

BUT MUCH  
DEPENDS ON OUR USE  
OF THE WORD  
"PICTORIAL."

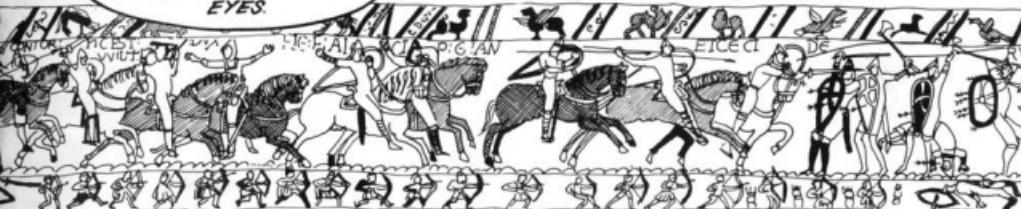
I'M  
USING IT  
TO INDICATE  
AT LEAST SOME  
RESEMBLANCE  
TO THE SUBJECT.  
BUT THESE GLYPHS  
REPRESENT ONLY  
SOUNDS, NOT  
UNLIKE OUR  
ALPHABET.

= "baiu"

= "nek"

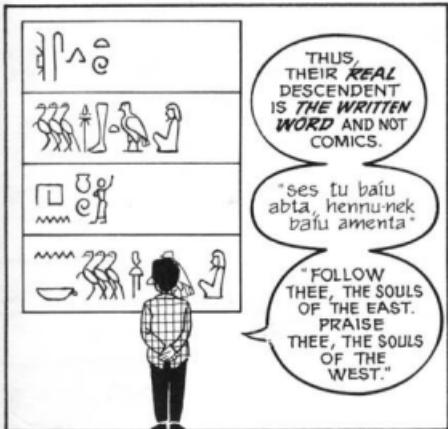
READING LEFT TO RIGHT  
WE SEE THE EVENTS OF THE  
CONQUEST, IN DELIBERATE  
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER  
UNFOLD BEFORE OUR VERY  
EYES.

AS WITH THE MEXICAN CODEX,  
THERE ARE NO PANEL BORDERS PER SE,  
BUT THERE ARE CLEAR DIVISIONS OF SCENE  
BY SUBJECT MATTER.



DUKE WILLIAM REMOVES HIS HELMET TO RALLY HIS SOLDIERS

HAROLD'S ARMY IS CUT TO PIECES

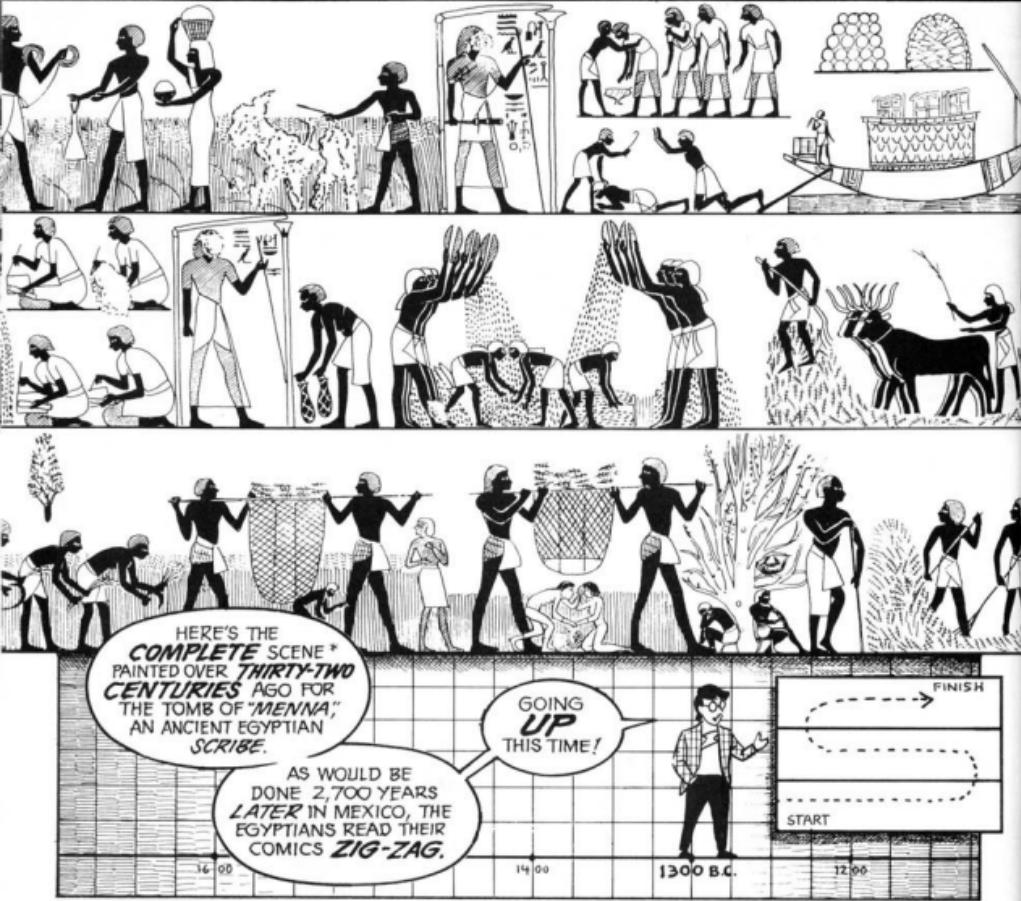


I HAD BEEN TRYING TO FIND SEQUENCE IN EGYPTIAN PAINTINGS FOR YEARS WHEN I BEGAN THIS BOOK AND WAS READY TO CALL IT QUITs --

--UNTIL I DISCOVERED THAT THE BOOKS I HAD BEEN USING AS REFERENCE--

--HAD ONLY BEEN SHOWING ME PART OF THE PICTURE!





\* MORE NEARLY COMPLETE, ANYWAY.

STARTING AT THE  
**LOWER LEFT**, WE  
SEE THREE WORKERS  
REAPING WHEAT  
WITH THEIR SICKLES--



-- THEN CARRYING IT IN **BASKETS** TO A **THRESHING** LOCATION.  
(IN THE BACKGROUND TWO GIRLS FIGHT OVER BITS OF WHEAT  
LEFT BEHIND, AS TWO WORKERS SIT UNDER A TREE, ONE SLEEPING,  
ONE PLAYING THE **FLUTE**!)



PAINTING TRACED FOR BLACK  
AND WHITE REPRODUCTION.

THE SHEAVES ARE  
THEN RAKED OUT  
INTO A THICK  
CARPET OF WHEAT.



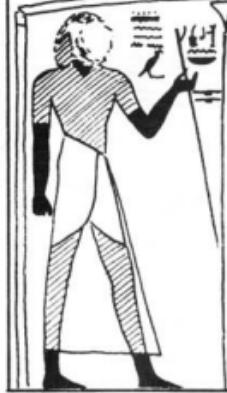
THEN OXEN TREAD  
KERNELS OUT OF  
THE HUSKS.



NEXT, PEASANTS  
SEPARATE THE WHEAT  
FROM THE CHAFF.



OLD MENNA HIMSELF  
LOOKS ON--\*



-- AS LOYAL SCRIBES  
RECORD THE YIELD  
ON THEIR TABLETS.



NOW AN OFFICIAL  
USES A MEASURING  
ROPE TO SURVEY  
THE LAND AND  
DECIDE HOW MUCH  
WHEAT IS OWED IN  
TAXES.



AND AS MENNA WATCHES, FARMERS  
LATE IN PAYING THEIR TAXES ARE BEATEN.



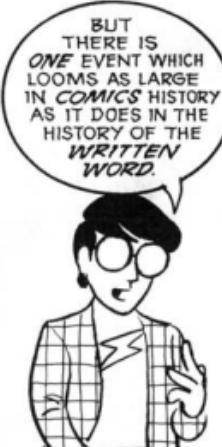
I'LL GLADLY  
ADMIT THAT I  
HAVE NO IDEA  
WHERE OR WHEN  
COMICS ORIGINATED.  
LET OTHERS  
WRESTLE WITH  
THAT ONE.



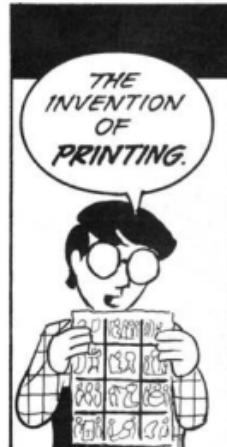
I'VE ONLY SCRATCHED  
THE SURFACE IN  
THIS CHAPTER...  
TRAJAN'S COLUMN,  
GREEK PAINTING,  
JAPANESE SCROLLS...  
ALL THESE HAVE BEEN  
SUGGESTED AND ALL  
SHOULD BE EXPLORED.



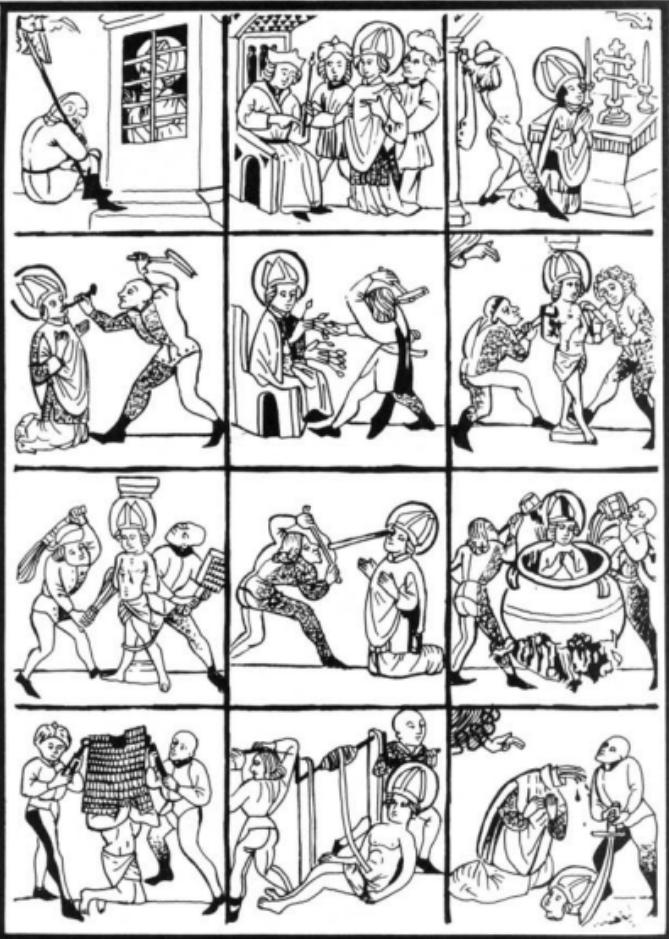
BUT  
THERE IS  
ONE EVENT WHICH  
LOOMS AS LARGE  
IN COMICS HISTORY  
AS IT DOES IN THE  
HISTORY OF THE  
WRITTEN WORD.



THE  
INVENTION  
OF  
PRINTING.



\* FACE GOUGED OUT BY FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LEADERS



WITH THE INVENTION OF PRINTING\*, THE ART-FORM WHICH HAD BEEN A DIVERSION OF THE RICH AND POWERFUL NOW COULD BE ENJOYED BY EVERYONE!

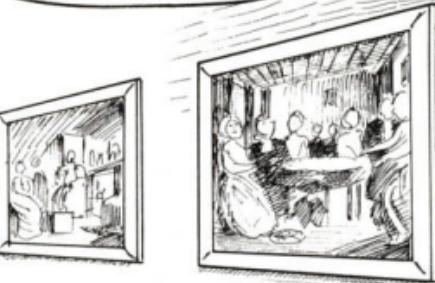


POPULAR TASTES HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH IN FIVE CENTURIES. CHECK OUT "THE TORTURES OF SAINT ERASMUS," CIRCA 1460. WORD HAS IT THIS GUY WAS A VERY POPULAR CHARACTER.



HOGARTH'S STORIES WERE FIRST EXHIBITED AS A SERIES OF PAINTINGS AND LATER SOLD AS A PORTFOLIO OF ENGRAVINGS.

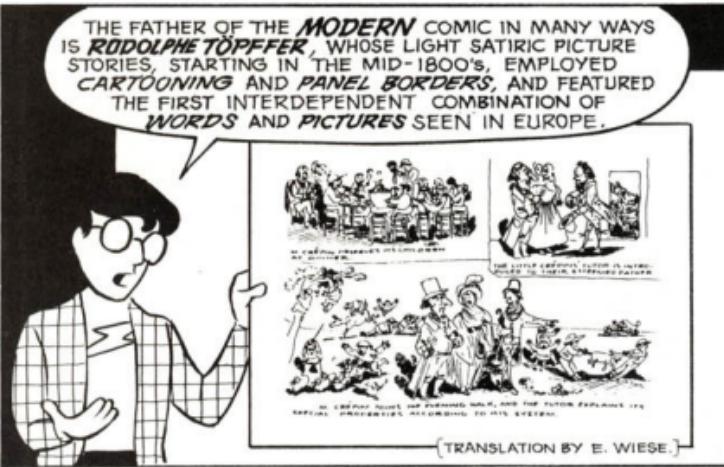
BOTH THE PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS WERE DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED SIDE-BY-SIDE --IN SEQUENCE!



"A HARLOT'S PROGRESS" AND ITS SEQUEL "A RAKE'S PROGRESS" PROVED SO POPULAR, NEW COPYRIGHT LAWS WERE CREATED TO PROTECT THIS NEW FORM.



THE FATHER OF THE MODERN COMIC IN MANY WAYS IS RODOLPHE TÖPFFER, WHOSE LIGHT SATIRIC PICTURE STORIES, STARTING IN THE MID-1800'S, EMPLOYED CARTOONING AND PANEL BORDERS, AND FEATURED THE FIRST INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATION OF WORDS AND PICTURES SEEN IN EUROPE.



UNFORTUNATELY, TÖPFFER HIMSELF FAILED TO GRASP AT FIRST THE FULL POTENTIAL OF HIS INVENTION, SEEING IT AS A MERE DIVERSION, A SIMPLE HOBBY...



"IF FOR THE FUTURE, HE [TÖPFFER] WOULD CHOOSE A LESS FRIVOLOUS SUBJECT AND RESTRICT HIMSELF A LITTLE, HE WOULD PRODUCE THINGS BEYOND ALL CONCEPTION."

-Goethe



EVEN SO, TÖPFFER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF COMICS IS CONSIDERABLE, IF ONLY FOR HIS REALIZATION THAT HE WHO WAS NEITHER ARTIST NOR WRITER--

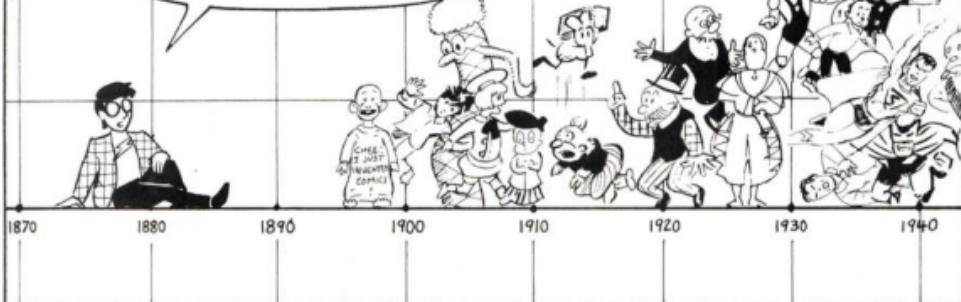


-- HAD CREATED AND MASTERED A FORM WHICH WAS AT ONCE BOTH AND NEITHER.



A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.

BRITISH CARICATURE MAGAZINES  
KEPT THE TRADITIONS ALIVE AND AS  
THE 20TH CENTURY DREW NEAR, THE COMICS  
WE CALL COMICS BEGAN TO APPEAR AND  
EVENTUALLY TO THRIVE IN A STEADY  
STREAM OF WAKING DREAMS THAT  
HAS YET TO ABATE.



BUT EVEN IN  
**THIS** CENTURY,  
OUR DEFINITION CAN  
HELP TO ILLUMINATE  
THE WORKS OF SOME  
UNSUNG HEROES.



JUXTAPOSED  
PICTORIAL  
AND OTHER  
IMAGES IN  
DELIBERATE  
SEQUENCE

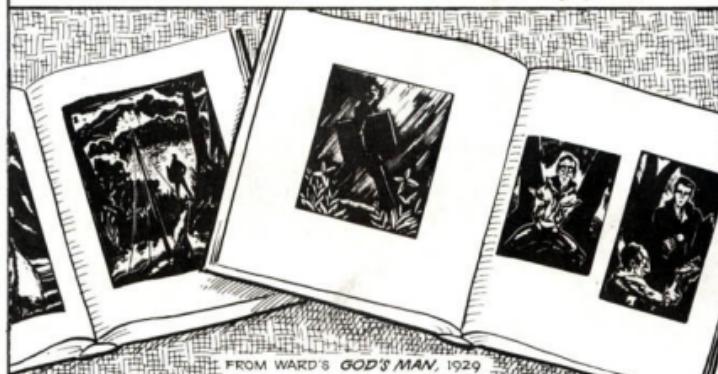
SOME OF THE MOST INSPIRED AND INNOVATIVE COMICS  
OF OUR CENTURY HAVE NEVER RECEIVED RECOGNITION **AS** COMICS,  
NOT SO MUCH **IN SPITE** OF THEIR SUPERIOR QUALITIES  
**AS BECAUSE** OF THEM.



AND SO, COMICS'  
LOW SELF-ESTEEM IS  
SELF-PERPETUATING.  
THE HISTORICAL  
PERSPECTIVE  
NECESSARY TO  
COUNTERACT COMICS'  
NEGATIVE IMAGE IS  
OBSCURED **BY** THAT  
NEGATIVITY.



WOODCUT ARTIST LYND WARD IS ONE SUCH MISSING LINK.  
WARD'S SILENT "WOODCUT NOVELS" ARE POWERFUL MODERN FABLES, NOW  
PRAISED BY COMICS ARTISTS, BUT SELDOM RECOGNIZED **AS** COMICS.





ARTISTS LIKE WARD AND BELGIAN FRANS MASEREEL SAID MUCH THROUGH THEIR WOODCUTS ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF COMICS, BUT FEW IN THE COMICS COMMUNITY OF THE DAY COULD GET THE MESSAGE.

THEIR DEFINITION OF COMICS, THEN AS NOW, WAS SIMPLY TOO NARROW TO INCLUDE SUCH WORK.



FROM FRANK MASEREEL'S *PASSIONATE JOURNEY*, 1919.

QUITE A DIFFERENT CASE IS MAX ERNST'S SURREAL "COLLAGE NOVEL," *A WEEK OF KINDNESS*.



THIS 182 PLATE SEQUENCE OF COLLAGES IS WIDELY CONSIDERED A MASTERPIECE OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ART, BUT NO ART HISTORY TEACHER WOULD DREAM OF CALLING IT "COMICS!"

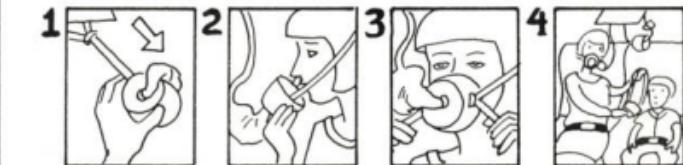
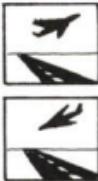
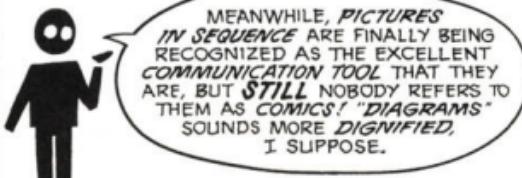
YET, DESPITE THE LACK OF A CONVENTIONAL STORY, THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE CENTRAL ROLE WHICH SEQUENCE PLAYS IN THE WORK. ERNST DOESN'T WANT YOU TO BROWSE THE THING, HE WANTS YOU TO READ IT!



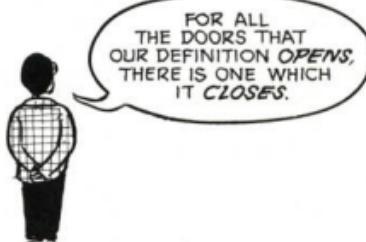
IF WE DON'T EXCLUDE  
PHOTOGRAPHY FROM  
OUR DEFINITION, THEN  
HALF OF AMERICA  
HAS BEEN IN COMICS  
AT ONE TIME OR  
ANOTHER.



IN SOME COUNTRIES,  
PHOTO-COMICS ARE, IN  
FACT, QUITE POPULAR.



**com-ics** (kom'iks) n. plural in form, used with a singular verb. **1.** Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.



SINGLE  
PANELS LIKE  
THIS ONE ARE  
OFTEN LUMPED  
IN WITH COMICS,  
YET THERE'S NO  
SUCH THING AS  
A SEQUENCE  
OF **ONE!**



SUCH SINGLE PANELS  
MIGHT BE CLASSIFIED  
AS "**COMIC ART**"  
IN THE SENSE THAT  
THEY DERIVE PART  
OF THEIR **VISUAL VOCABULARY**  
FROM COMICS--



BUT I SAY THEY'RE  
NO MORE COMICS  
THAN THIS STILL OF  
HUMPHREY BOGART  
IS FILM!



THEY ARE  
CARTOONS,  
AS AM I.  
AND THERE IS A  
LONG-STANDING  
RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
COMICS AND  
CARTOONS.



--BUT THEY ARE NOT  
THE SAME THING! ONE IS AN  
APPROACH TO PICTURE-MAKING-- A  
STYLE, IF YOU LIKE-- WHILE THE OTHER  
IS A MEDIUM WHICH OFTEN EMPLOYS  
THAT APPROACH.



THIS SAME SINGLE  
PANEL MIGHT ALSO  
BE LABELLED COMICS  
FOR ITS JUXTAPOSITION  
OF WORDS AND  
PICTURES.



A GREAT MAJORITY OF MODERN COMICS  
DO FEATURE WORDS AND PICTURES IN  
COMBINATION AND IT'S A SUBJECT WORTHY OF  
STUDY, BUT WHEN USED AS A DEFINITION  
FOR COMICS, I'VE FOUND IT TO BE A LITTLE  
TOO RESTRICTIVE FOR MY TASTE.



OF COURSE, IF  
ANYONE WANTS TO  
WRITE A BOOK  
TAKING THE OPPOSITE  
VIEW, YOU CAN BET  
I'LL BE THE FIRST IN  
LINE TO BUY A  
COPY!



IF COMICS'  
SPECTACULARLY VARIED  
PAST IS ANY INDICATION,  
COMICS' FUTURE WILL BE  
VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO  
PREDICT USING THE  
STANDARDS OF THE  
PRESENT.

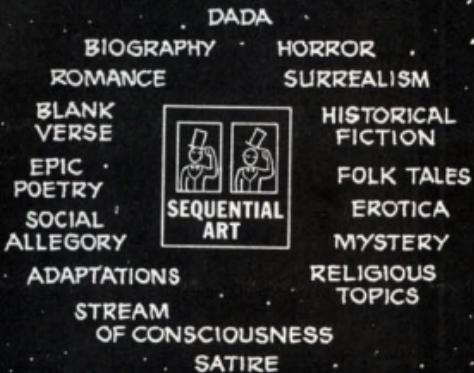


BUT OUR  
DEFINITION  
CAN OFFER US  
SOME CLUES.

1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040

AND THIS TIME,  
THE SECRET IS NOT IN  
WHAT THE DEFINITION  
SAYS BUT IN WHAT IT  
DOESN'T SAY!





FOR EXAMPLE, OUR DEFINITION SAYS NOTHING ABOUT **SUPERHEROES** OR **FUNNY ANIMALS**, NOTHING ABOUT **FANTASY/SCIENCE-FICTION** OR **READER AGE**.



NO **GENRES** ARE LISTED IN OUR DEFINITION, NO TYPES OF **SUBJECT MATTER**, NO **STYLES** OF PROSE OR POETRY.

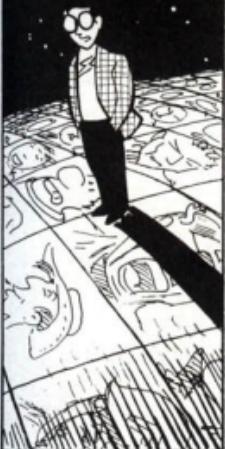


THOSE OF YOU WHO  
MAKE COMICS FOR  
A LIVING -- OR  
WOULD LIKE TO,  
SOMEDAY -- PROBABLY  
KNOW THAT KEEPING  
UP WITH ALL THE  
**ADVANCES** IN  
TODAY'S COMICS IS  
A **FULL-TIME**  
**JOB.**

HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY TRY  
TO **UNDERSTAND** THE WORLD  
OF COMICS AROUND US, A **PART** OF  
THAT WORLD WILL ALWAYS LIE  
IN SHADOW -- A **MYSTERY.**

THERE ARE  
SO MANY COMICS  
IN PRINT TODAY  
THAT IT WOULD TAKE  
AN **ARMY** OF READERS  
TO STUDY THEM  
ALL.

I'LL DO MY **BEST**  
IN THE FOLLOWING  
CHAPTERS TO **SHED**  
**LIGHT** ON THAT  
UNSEEN SIDE, BUT  
AS WE FOCUS ON  
THE WORLD OF  
COMICS **AS IT IS**,  
IT SHOULD BE KEPT  
IN MIND AT **ALL**  
TIMES THAT THIS  
WORLD IS ONLY  
**ONE** --



OUR  
ATTEMPTS TO  
**DEFINE**  
COMICS ARE AN  
**ON-GOING**  
**PROCESS**  
WHICH WON'T  
END ANYTIME  
SOON.

A **NEW** GENERATION  
WILL NO DOUBT **REJECT**  
WHATEVER THIS ONE  
FINALLY DECIDES TO  
ACCEPT AND TRY  
ONCE MORE TO  
**RE-INVENT**  
COMICS.

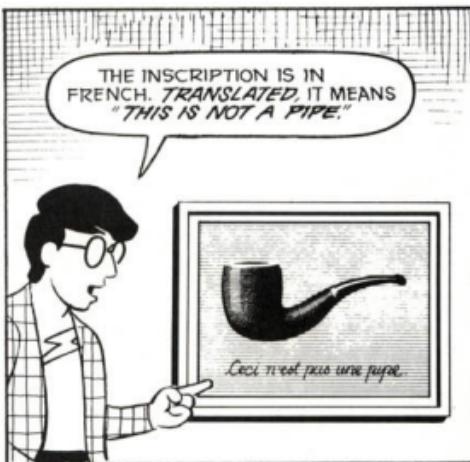
AND  
SO THEY  
SHOULD.

HERE'S  
TO THE  
**GREAT**  
**DEBATE!**



## CHAPTER TWO

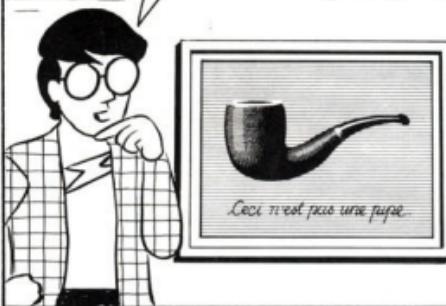
### THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



WELL, ACTUALLY, THAT'S  
WRONG. THIS IS **NOT** A  
PAINTING OF A PIPE, THIS IS  
A **DRAWING** OF A PAINTING  
OF A PIPE.



NOPE. WRONG AGAIN.  
IT'S A **PRINTED COPY** OF A  
DRAWING OF A PAINTING  
OF A PIPE.



TEN  
COPIES,  
ACTUALLY.

SIX, IF YOU  
FOLD THE PAGES  
BACK.



DO YOU  
HEAR WHAT I'M  
SAYING?

IF YOU DO, HAVE YOUR  
EARS CHECKED, BECAUSE  
NO ONE SAID A WORD.





THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



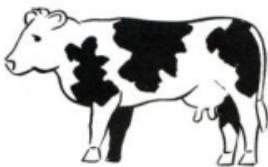
THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT  
A LEAF



THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE.



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.

# SPLAT!

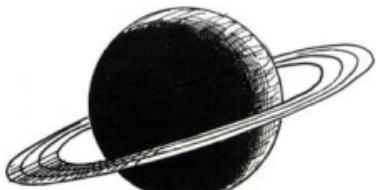
THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



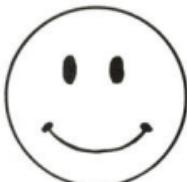
THIS IS NOT FOOD.



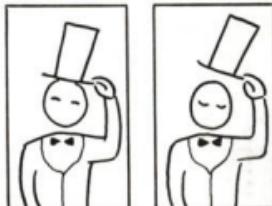
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



THIS IS NOT A  
COMPANY.



THIS IS NOT A  
FACE.



THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE  
MOMENTS.

NOW, THE WORD  
ICON MEANS  
MANY THINGS.

THIS  
IS  
PAPER



FOR THE PURPOSES OF  
THIS CHAPTER, I'M USING THE  
WORD "ICON" TO MEAN ANY  
IMAGE USED TO REPRESENT A  
PERSON, PLACE, THING OR  
IDEA.

# ICON

THAT'S A BIT BROADER  
THAN THE DEFINITION  
IN MY DICTIONARY,  
BUT IT'S THE CLOSEST  
THING TO WHAT I  
NEED HERE.

"SYMBOL" IS A  
BIT TOO LOADED  
FOR ME.



THE SORTS OF  
IMAGES WE  
USUALLY CALL  
SYMBOLS ARE  
ONE CATEGORY  
OF ICON,  
HOWEVER.



THESE ARE THE  
IMAGES WE USE TO  
REPRESENT CONCEPTS,  
IDEAS AND  
PHILOSOPHIES.



THEN THERE  
ARE THE ICONS  
OF LANGUAGE,  
SCIENCE AND  
COMMUNICATION.

A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4
?	:	!	*
田	木	雨	石
+	=	×	÷
\$	%	©	£
♩	♪	♫	♩
↖	↑	≡	∞
Ω	Φ	↔	↖
□□	○○	○○	□□

ICONS  
OF THE  
PRACTICAL  
REALM.



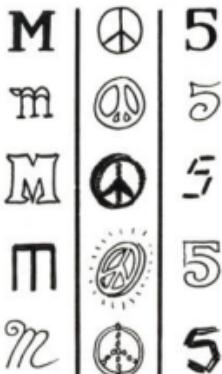
AND FINALLY, THE ICONS WE CALL PICTURES:  
IMAGES DESIGNED TO ACTUALLY RESEMBLE  
THEIR SUBJECTS.



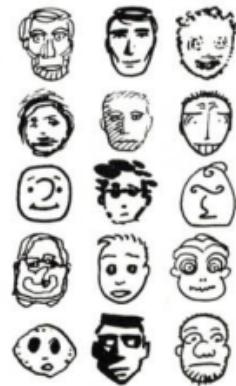
BUT  
AS RESEMBLANCE  
VARIES, SO DOES THE  
LEVEL OF ICONIC  
CONTENT.

OR TO PUT IT  
SOMEWHAT CLUMSILY,  
SOME PICTURES ARE  
JUST MORE ICONIC  
THAN OTHERS.

**IN THE NON-PICTORIAL ICONS, MEANING IS FIXED AND ABSOLUTE. THEIR APPEARANCE DOESN'T AFFECT THEIR MEANING BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT INVISIBLE IDEAS.**



**IN PICTURES, HOWEVER, MEANING IS FLUID AND VARIABLE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE. THEY DIFFER FROM "REAL-LIFE" APPEARANCE TO VARYING DEGREES.**



**WORDS ARE TOTALLY ABSTRACT ICONS. THAT IS, THEY BEAR NO RESEMBLANCE AT ALL TO THE REAL McCoy.**



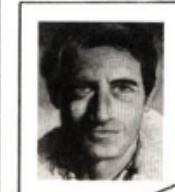
**BUT IN PICTURES THE LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION VARIES. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE PREVIOUS PANEL SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS AS TO ALMOST TRICK THE EYE!**



**OTHERS, LIKE YOURS TRULY, ARE QUITE A BIT MORE ABSTRACT AND, IN FACT, ARE VERY MUCH UNLIKE ANY HUMAN FACE YOU'VE EVER SEEN!**



**LET'S SEE IF WE CAN PUT THESE PICTORIAL ICONS IN SOME SORT OF ORDER.**

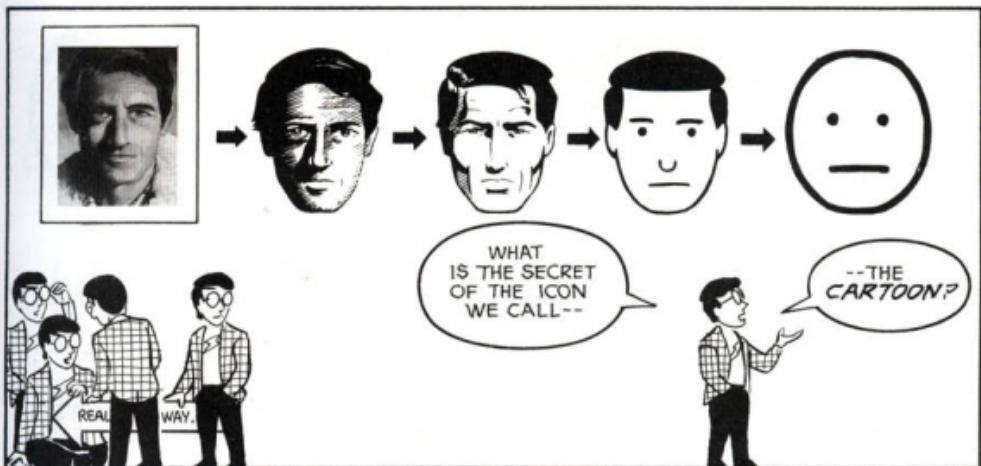
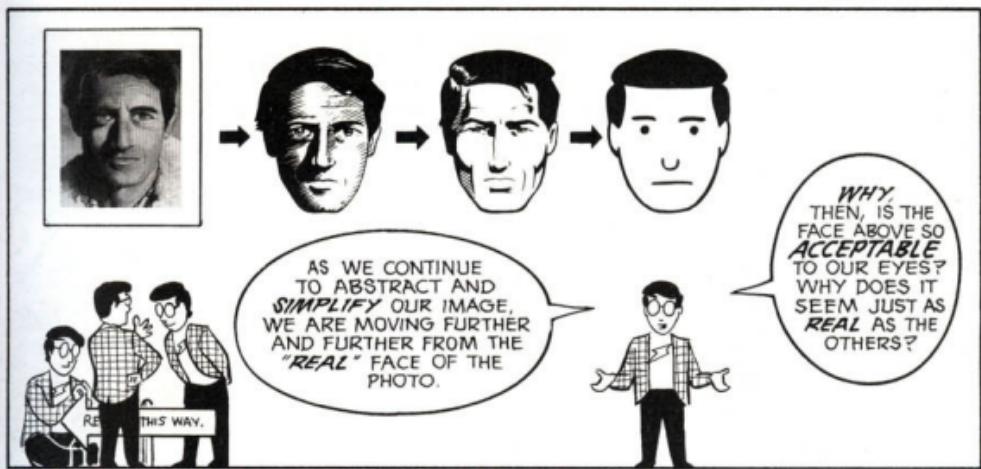
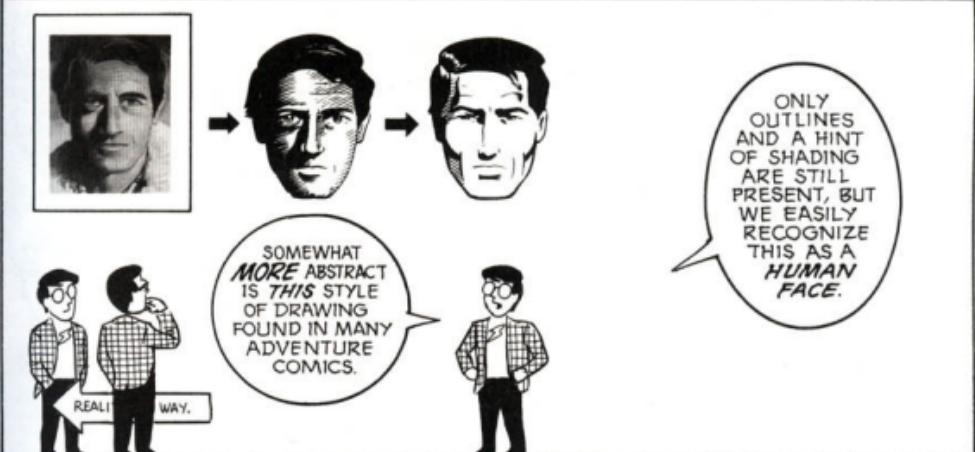


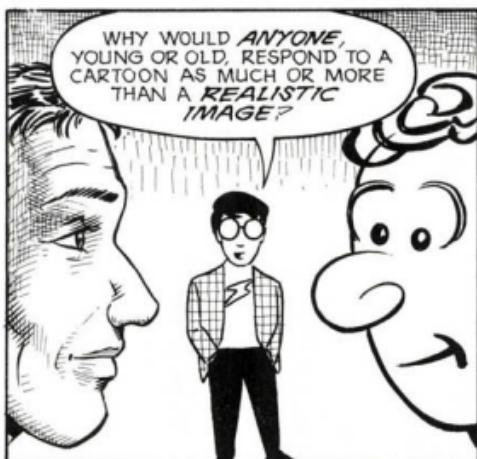
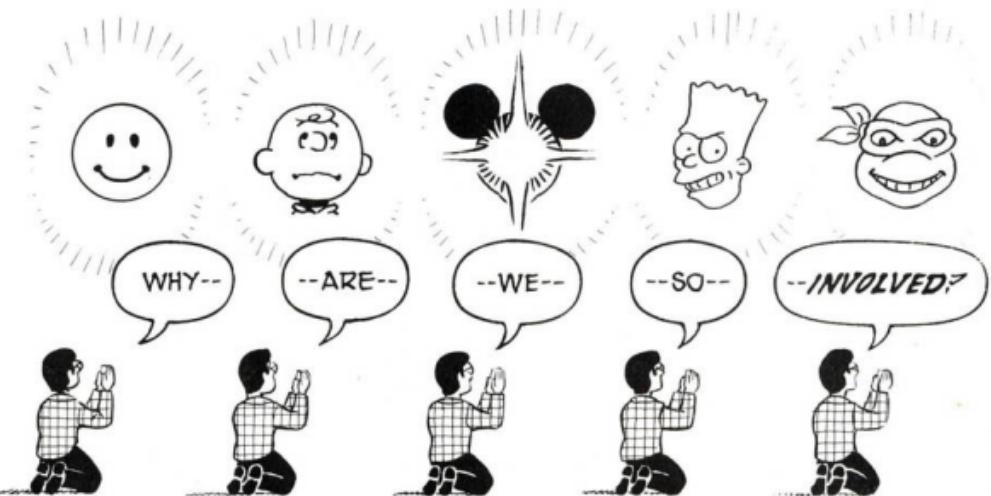
**THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM ACTUAL FACES--THEY'RE SMALLER, FLATTER, LESS DETAILED. THEY DON'T MOVE. THEY LACK COLOR--BUT AS PICTORIAL ICONS GO, THEY ARE PRETTY "REALISTIC."**



**COMMON WISDOM HOLDS THAT THE PHOTOGRAPH AND THE REALISTIC PICTURE ARE THE ICONS THAT MOST RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS.**







**DEFINING THE CARTOON** WOULD TAKE UP AS MUCH SPACE AS DEFINING COMICS, BUT FOR NOW, I'M GOING TO EXAMINE CARTOONING AS A FORM OF **AMPLIFICATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION**.



FILM CRITICS WILL SOMETIMES DESCRIBE A *LIVE-ACTION* FILM AS A "CARTOON" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRIPPED-DOWN INTENSITY OF A SIMPLE STORY OR VISUAL STYLE.

THOUGH THE TERM IS OFTEN USED DISPARAGINGLY, IT CAN BE EQUAL WELL APPLIED TO MANY TIME-TESTED CLASSICS. SIMPLIFYING CHARACTERS AND IMAGES TOWARD A PURPOSE CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR STORYTELLING IN ANY MEDIUM.

THE ABILITY OF CARTOONS TO *FOCUS* OUR ATTENTION ON AN IDEA IS, I THINK, AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR SPECIAL POWER, BOTH IN COMICS AND IN DRAWING GENERALLY.



ONE

A FEW

THOUSANDS

MILLIONS

(NEARLY) ALL



ANOTHER IS THE *UNIVERSALITY* OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOONY A FACE IS, FOR INSTANCE, THE MORE PEOPLE IT COULD BE SAID TO DESCRIBE.

BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE--WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.



WHAT

ARE YOU



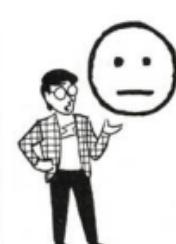
REALLY

SEEING?

THE FACT THAT YOUR MIND IS *CAPABLE* OF TAKING A CIRCLE, TWO DOTS AND A LINE AND TURNING THEM INTO A *FACE* IS NOTHING SHORT OF INCREDIBLE!

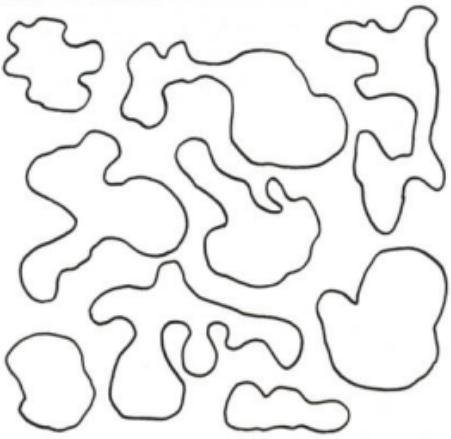


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!



ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE CLOSED CURVES. BUT OTHERWISE CAN BE AS WEIRD AND IRREGULAR AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

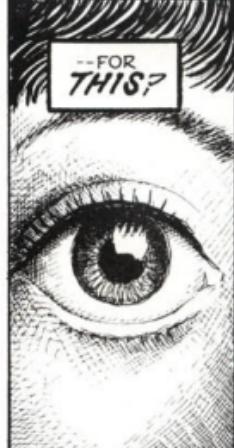
LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS.



NOW -- YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THOSE SHAPES CAN BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.



YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE THIS--



WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



WE SEE  
OURSELVES  
IN  
EVERYTHING.



WE  
ASSIGN  
IDENTITIES  
AND EMOTIONS  
WHERE NONE  
EXIST.



AND WE  
MAKE THE  
WORLD OVER  
IN OUR  
IMAGE.





THINK  
OF YOUR  
FACE AS A  
MASK.



THAT'S  
WHAT IT IS,  
AFTER ALL.



A MASK.



FACING  
OUTWARD.



WORN FROM  
THE DAY YOU  
WERE BORN.



SLAVE TO  
YOUR EVERY  
MENTAL  
COMMAND.



SEEN BY  
EVERYONE  
YOU MEET.



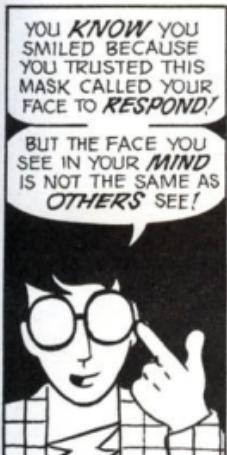
BUT  
NEVER  
BY YOU.



OPEN  
ITS EYES  
NOW.



JUST  
THINK IT.  
THE MASK  
WILL  
OBEY.



EACH ONE ALSO SUSTAINS A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER OWN FACE, BUT THIS MIND-PICTURE IS NOT NEARLY SO VIVID; JUST A SKETCHY ARRANGEMENT... A SENSE OF SHAPE... A SENSE OF GENERAL PLACEMENT.

SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AND AS BASIC--



--THUS, WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PHOTO OR REALISTIC DRAWING OF A FACE--



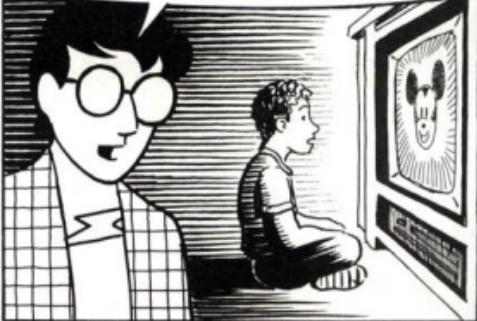
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF ANOTHER.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE CARTOON--

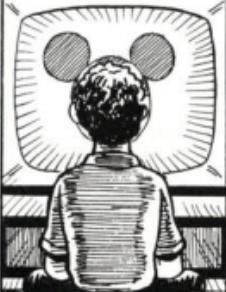


--YOU SEE YOURSELF.

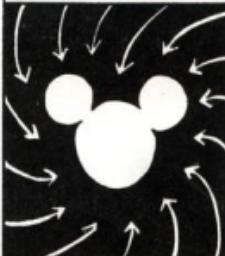
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH CARTOONS, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY AND THE CHILDLIKE FEATURES OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



THE CARTOON IS A VACUUM INTO WHICH OUR IDENTITY AND AWARENESS ARE PULLED...



...AN EMPTY SHELL THAT WE INHABIT WHICH ENABLES US TO TRAVEL IN ANOTHER REALM.



WE DON'T JUST OBSERVE THE CARTOON, WE BECOME IT!

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO DRAW MYSELF IN SUCH A SIMPLE STYLE.



WOULD YOU HAVE LISTENED TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE THIS??



I DOUBT IT! YOU  
WOULD HAVE BEEN  
FAR TOO AWARE OF  
THE MESSENGER  
TO FULLY RECEIVE  
THE MESSAGE!

APART FROM WHAT  
LITTLE I TOLD YOU  
ABOUT MYSELF IN  
CHAPTER ONE, I'M  
PRACTICALLY A  
BLANK SLATE!

IT WOULD NEVER EVEN  
OCCUR TO YOU TO  
WONDER WHAT MY  
POLITICS ARE, OR  
WHAT I HAD FOR  
LUNCH OR WHERE I  
GOT THIS SILLY  
OUTFIT!

I'M JUST  
A LITTLE VOICE  
INSIDE YOUR  
HEAD.  
A CONCEPT.



YOU GIVE ME LIFE  
BY READING THIS  
BOOK AND BY  
"FILLING UP"  
THIS VERY ICONIC  
(CARTOONY) FORM.

WHO I AM IS  
IRRELEVANT. I'M  
JUST A LITTLE  
PIECE OF YOU.

BUT IF WHO I AM  
MATTERS LESS,  
MAYBE WHAT I SAY  
WILL MATTER  
MORE.

THAT'S  
THE THEORY,  
ANYWAY.



SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY DISCUSSED FACES, BUT THE PHENOMENON OF NON-VISUAL SELF-AWARENESS CAN, TO A LESSER DEGREE, STILL APPLY TO OUR WHOLE BODIES. AFTER ALL, DO WE NEED TO SEE OUR HANDS TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING?

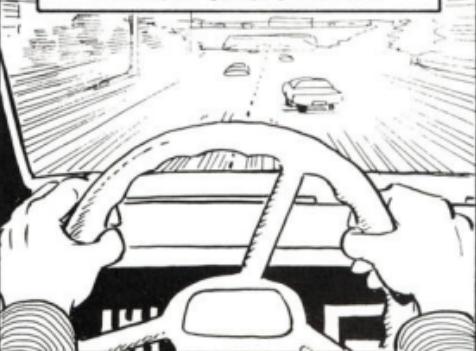
THERE'S  
MORE,  
TOO!



THE LATE GREAT MARSHALL MELUHAN OBSERVED A SIMILAR FORM OF NON-VISUAL AWARENESS WHEN PEOPLE INTERACT WITH INANIMATE OBJECTS.



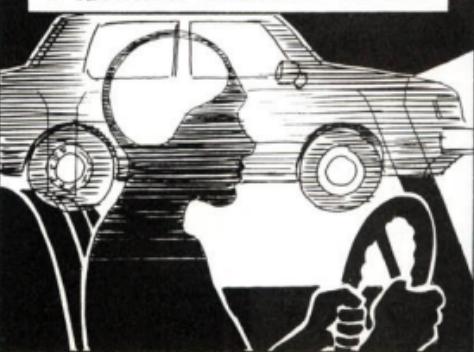
WHEN DRIVING, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR FIVE SENSES REPORT.



THE WHOLE CAR--NOT JUST THE PARTS WE CAN SEE, FEEL AND HEAR--IS VERY MUCH ON OUR MINDS AT ALL TIMES.



THE VEHICLE BECOMES AN EXTENSION OF OUR BODY. IT ABSORBS OUR SENSE OF IDENTITY. WE BECOME THE CAR.



IF ONE CAR HITS ANOTHER, THE DRIVER OF THE VEHICLE BEING STRUCK IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO SAY:



THAN "HE HIT MY CAR!"

OR "HIS CAR HIT MY CAR", FOR THAT MATTER.

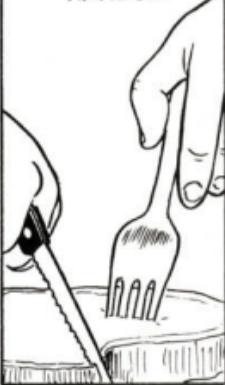
OUR IDENTITIES AND AWARENESS ARE INVESTED IN MANY INANIMATE OBJECTS EVERY DAY. OUR CLOTHES, FOR EXAMPLE, CAN TRIGGER NUMEROUS TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE WAY OTHERS SEE US AND IN THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES.



OUR ABILITY TO  
**EXTEND** OUR  
IDENTITIES INTO  
INANIMATE OBJECTS  
CAN CAUSE PIECES  
OF WOOD TO  
BECOME  
LEGS...



PIECES OF METAL  
TO BECOME  
HANDS...



PIECES OF PLASTIC  
TO BECOME  
EARS...



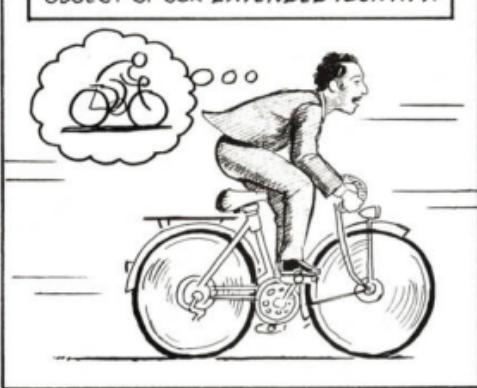
PIECES OF GLASS  
TO BECOME  
EYES.



AND IN EVERY CASE,  
OUR CONSTANT  
AWARENESS OF **SELF**--



-- FLOWS **OUTWARD** TO INCLUDE THE  
OBJECT OF OUR EXTENDED IDENTITY.



AND JUST AS OUR  
AWARENESS OF OUR  
BIOLOGICAL SELVES  
ARE **SIMPLIFIED**  
**CONCEPTUALIZED**  
**IMAGES**--



-- SO TOO IS OUR AWARENESS OF **THESE**  
EXTENSIONS GREATLY **SIMPLIFIED**.



ALL THE THINGS WE  
**EXPERIENCE** IN LIFE  
CAN BE SEPARATED INTO  
**TWO REALMS**, THE  
**REALM OF THE**  
**CONCEPT**--

-- AND  
THE REALM  
OF THE  
**SENSES**.



OUR IDENTITIES BELONG PERMANENTLY TO THE CONCEPTUAL WORLD. THEY CAN'T BE SEEN, HEARD, SMELLED, TOUCHED OR TASTED. THEY'RE MERELY IDEAS. AND EVERYTHING ELSE--AT THE START--BELONGS TO THE SENSUAL WORLD, THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF US.



GRADUALLY WE REACH BEYOND OURSELVES.



WE ENCOUNTER THE SIGHT, SMELL, TOUCH, TASTE AND SOUND OF OUR OWN BODIES.



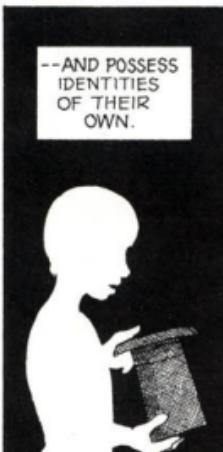
AND OF THE WORLD AROUND US.



AND SOON WE DISCOVER THAT OBJECTS OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD CAN ALSO CROSS OVER--



--AND POSSESS IDENTITIES OF THEIR OWN.



OR, AS OUR EXTENSIONS--



--BEGIN TO GLOW--



--WITH THE LIFE--



--WE LEND  
TO THEM.



BY DE-EMPHASIZING THE **APPEARANCE**  
OF THE **PHYSICAL WORLD** IN FAVOR OF  
THE **IDEA** OF FORM, THE CARTOON  
PLACES ITSELF IN THE WORLD OF **CONCEPTS**.



THROUGH TRADITIONAL  
REALISM, THE COMICS  
ARTIST CAN PORTRAY  
THE WORLD  
WITHOUT--



--AND THROUGH  
THE CARTOON,  
THE WORLD  
**WITHIN**.



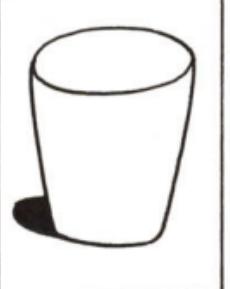
WHEN  
CARTOONS  
ARE USED  
**THROUGHOUT**  
A STORY, THE  
**WORLD** OF  
THAT STORY  
MAY SEEM TO  
**PULSE WITH**  
**LIFE**.



INANIMATE OBJECTS  
MAY SEEM TO POSSESS  
**SEPARATE IDENTITIES**  
SO THAT IF ONE  
**JUMPED UP AND**  
**STARTED SINGING**  
IT WOULDN'T FEEL  
OUT OF PLACE.



BUT IN EMPHASIZING  
THE **CONCEPTS** OF  
OBJECTS OVER THEIR  
**PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**,  
MUCH HAS TO BE  
**OMITTED**.



IF AN ARTIST  
WANTS TO PORTRAY  
THE BEAUTY AND  
COMPLEXITY OF THE  
**PHYSICAL**  
**WORLD**--



--REALISM OF  
**SOME SORT** IS  
GOING TO PLAY A  
PART.



WHEN DRAWING THE FACE AND FIGURE, NEARLY ALL COMICS ARTISTS APPLY AT LEAST SOME SMALL MEASURE OF CARTOONING. EVEN THE MORE REALISTIC ADVENTURE ARTISTS--



--ARE A FAR CRY FROM PHOTO-REALISTS!



STORYTELLERS IN ALL MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT--

--IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE AUDIENCE IDENTIFIES WITH A STORY'S CHARACTERS.



AND SINCE VIEWER-IDENTIFICATION IS A SPECIALTY OF CARTOONING, CARTOONS HAVE HISTORICALLY HELD AN ADVANTAGE IN BREAKING INTO WORLD POPULAR CULTURE.



ON THE OTHER HAND, NO ONE EXPECTS AUDIENCES TO IDENTIFY WITH BRICK WALLS OR LANDSCAPES AND INDEED, BACKGROUNDS TEND TO BE SLIGHTLY MORE REALISTIC.



IN SOME COMICS, THIS SPLIT IS FAR MORE PRONOUNCED. THE BELGIAN "CLEAR-LINE" STYLE OF HERGÉ'S TINTIN COMBINES VERY ICONIC CHARACTERS WITH UNUSUALLY REALISTIC BACKGROUNDS.



THIS COMBINATION ALLOWS READERS TO **MASK** THEMSELVES IN A CHARACTER AND SAFELY ENTER A SENSUALLY STIMULATING WORLD.



ONE SET OF LINES TO **SEE**. ANOTHER SET OF LINES TO **BE**.



IN THE WORLD OF **ANIMATION**, WHERE THE EFFECT HAPPENS TO BE A PRACTICAL **NECESSITY**, DISNEY HAS USED IT WITH IMPRESSIVE RESULTS FOR OVER **50 YEARS!**



IN **EUROPE** IT CAN BE FOUND IN MANY POPULAR COMICS, FROM **ASTERIX** TO **TINTIN** TO WORKS OF **JACQUES TARDI**.



IN **AMERICAN** COMICS, THE EFFECT IS USED FAR LESS **OFTEN**, ALTHOUGH IT HAS CREEP UP IN THE WORKS OF ARTISTS AS DIVERSE AS **CARL BARKS**, **JAIME HERNANDEZ** AND IN THE TEAM OF **DAVE SIM** AND **GERHARD**.



CEREBUS © DAVE SIM.

IN **JAPAN**, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE MASKING EFFECT WAS, FOR A TIME, VIRTUALLY A **NATIONAL STYLE!**



THANKS TO THE **SEMINAL INFLUENCE** OF COMICS CREATOR **OSAMU TEZUKA**, JAPANESE COMICS HAVE A LONG, RICH HISTORY OF ICONIC CHARACTERS.



BUT, IN RECENT DECADES JAPANESE FANS ALSO DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR **FLASHY, PHOTO-REALISTIC ART**.



THE RESULTANT HYBRID STYLES HAD TREMENDOUS ICONIC RANGE, FROM EXTREMELY CARTOONY CHARACTERS TO NEAR-PHOTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUNDS.



FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE MOST CHARACTERS WERE DESIGNED SIMPLY, TO ASSIST IN READER-IDENTIFICATION-



--OTHER CHARACTERS WERE DRAWN MORE REALISTICALLY IN ORDER TO OBJECTIFY THEM, EMPHASIZING THEIR "OTHERNESS" FROM THE READER.



BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



A PROP LIKE THIS SWORD MIGHT BE VERY CARTOONY IN ONE SEQUENCE--



SOON, SOME OF THEM REALIZED THAT THE OBJECTIFYING POWER OF REALISTIC ARTS COULD BE PUT TO OTHER USES.

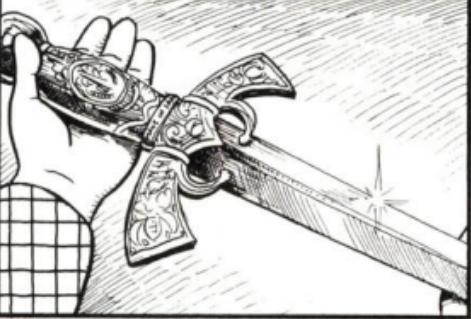


--DUE TO THE "LIFE" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY CARTOON IDENTITY!



BUT I NOTICE SOME MYSTERIOUS WRITING CARVED ON THE SWORD'S HILT.

IN JAPANESE COMICS, THE SWORD MIGHT NOW BECOME VERY REALISTIC, NOT ONLY TO SHOW US THE DETAILS, BUT TO MAKE US AWARE OF THE SWORD AS AN OBJECT, SOMETHING WITH WEIGHT, TEXTURE AND PHYSICAL COMPLEXITY.



IN THIS AND IN OTHER WAYS, COMICS IN JAPAN HAVE EVOLVED VERY DIFFERENTLY FROM THOSE IN THE WEST.



WE'LL RETURN TO THESE DIFFERENCES SEVERAL TIMES DURING THIS BOOK.

I LIKE THE MASKING EFFECT, PERSONALLY, BUT IT'S JUST ONE OF MANY POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO COMICS ART.

MANY OF MY FAVORITE ARTISTS USE IT VERY RARELY.

STILL, I HOPE THE JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE ON CARTOONING HELPS DEMONSTRATE THAT ONE'S CHOICE OF STYLES CAN HAVE CONSEQUENCES FAR BEYOND THE MERE "LOOK" OF A STORY.

SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



AS I WRITE THIS, IN 1992, AMERICAN AUDIENCES ARE JUST BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT A SIMPLE *STYLE* DOESN'T NECESSITATE SIMPLE *STORY*.



THE PLATONIC IDEAL OF THE CARTOON MAY SEEM TO OMIT MUCH OF THE AMBIGUITY AND COMPLEX CHARACTERIZATION WHICH ARE THE HALLMARKS OF MODERN LITERATURE, LEAVING THEM SUITABLE ONLY FOR CHILDREN.



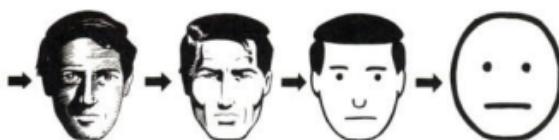
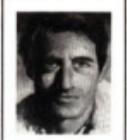
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.



AND LIKE THE ATOM, GREAT POWER IS LOCKED IN THESE FEW SIMPLE LINES.

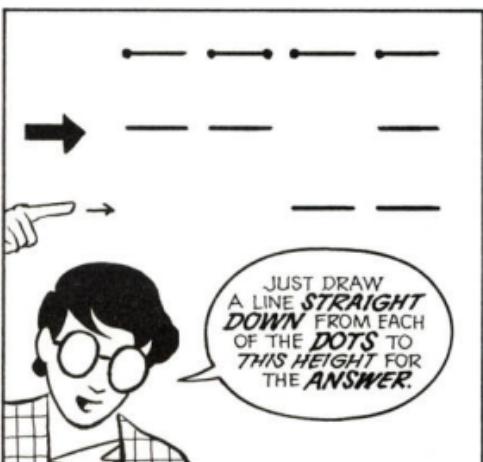
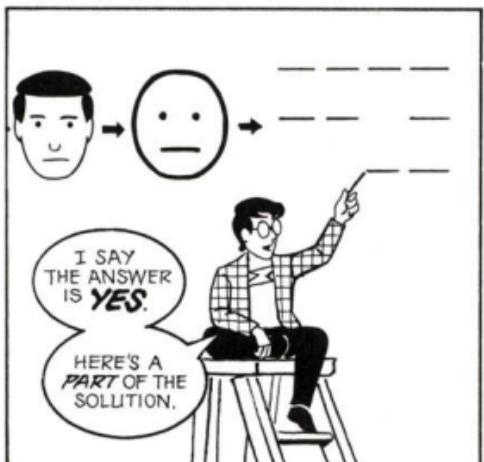
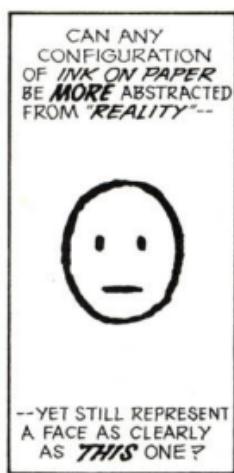
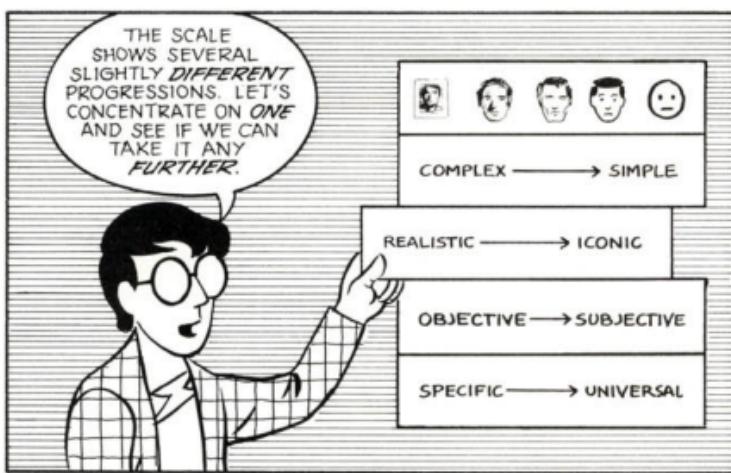
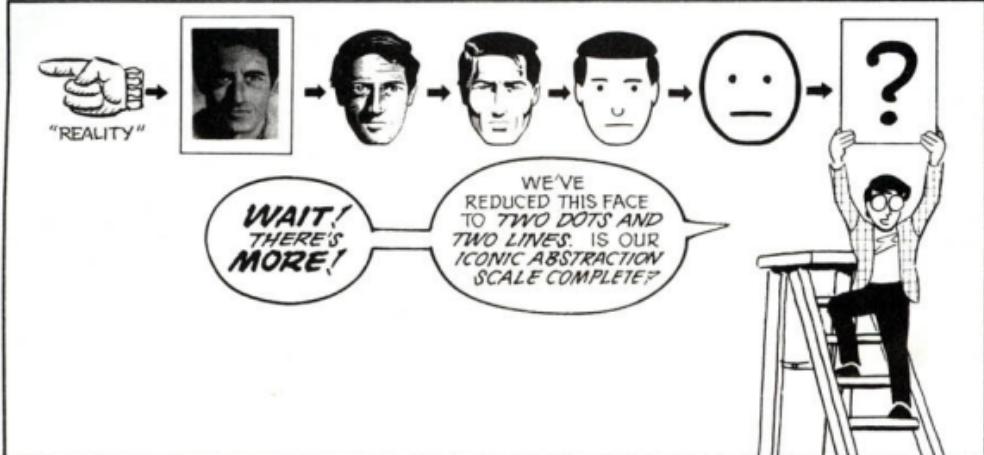


RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.



THERE'S A LOT MORE TO CARTOONS THAN MEETS THE EYE!





BOOK MOUTH PAPER GLAS  
AGE PAINTS INK PENCIL  
BALL CAP  
AIR  
T-SHIRT  
HEAD  
PIPE  
ICON MASK  
EXTENSION  
AR  
IDENTITY  
RETENTION  
DEAL  
ICE  
FOR  
DENTED  
BRUS  
JACK  
IT  
PENCIL  
EET  
DR  
SKRE  
K  
D  
9

MEANING RETAINED.

JR. SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO  
IDENCY TO MAKE SMALL CRACK  
BUT

RESEMBLANCE GONE.



B  
INTRAL  
D SINATRA DURING THE WAR, BUT  
WHY IS CHOCOLATE CHIP SO POPU  
METAL BOLTS AND OTHER SUBST  
IVING A GRAY PLYMOUTH RELIA  
NEW FRIEND UNDERNEATH MY PI  
TITLED THE STORY OF MARGERIN  
D MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A HAT  
SET OF IN  
S UNDER THE  
SPRINT  
FOR JUST PE  
ENSURE  
IF ARE A  
INT TO DRINK  
IN A TIN  
IF YOU AREN  
INT WHERE  
LARRY ST  
WORKED ON A  
R. MARBER  
ORE IS LATHE AS YOUNGER T  
R. GOD AND COUNTRY TO DIE IN A  
I KNOW A  
J HAVE TO  
PROOF HE  
S HE'S LEITER  
S THE  
S GOD. STEVE WILLIS TOO. THEY

WORDS--

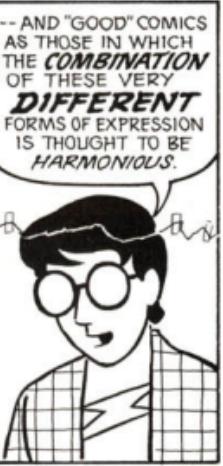
--ARE THE ULTIMATE ABSTRACTION.

EMOT  
UTIN  
KOD  
PO  
LU  
TH  
HZ  
POL  
APP  
NHOS  
GEORGE GARRET  
NOT DOING  
RINGS  
IGEST  
DITE  
URVE  
RACK  
KCEG  
ABY H  
DM AND  
DOUG WOOD  
GATES OF  
LITTLE BE  
BUSI  
THO  
UT  
KI

MOST AMERICAN COMICS, NOTABLY  
COMIC BOOKS, HAVE  
LONG EMPHASIZED THE  
**DIFFERENCES**  
BETWEEN WORDS  
AND PICTURES.



WRITING  
AND DRAWING  
ARE SEEN AS  
**SEPARATE DISCIPLINES,**  
WRITERS AND  
ARTISTS AS  
**SEPARATE BREEDS--**



-- AND "GOOD" COMICS  
AS THOSE IN WHICH  
THE **COMBINATION**  
OF THESE VERY  
**DIFFERENT**  
FORMS OF EXPRESSION  
IS THOUGHT TO BE  
HARMONIOUS.



BUT  
JUST HOW  
"DIFFERENT"  
**ARE**  
THEY  
?



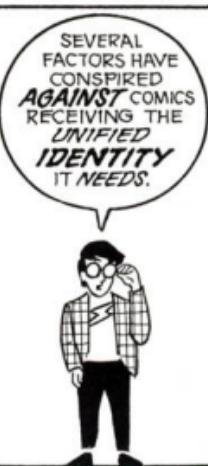
WORDS, PICTURES AND  
OTHER ICONS ARE THE  
**VOCABULARY**  
OF THE LANGUAGE CALLED  
**COMICS.**



A SINGLE  
UNIFIED  
**LANGUAGE**  
DESERVES A  
SINGLE, UNIFIED  
**VOCABULARY.**



WITHOUT IT, COMICS  
WILL CONTINUE  
TO LIMP ALONG  
AS THE "BASTARD  
CHILD" OF  
WORDS AND  
PICTURES.



SEVERAL  
FACTORS HAVE  
CONSPIRED  
**AGAINST** COMICS  
RECEIVING THE  
**UNIFIED  
IDENTITY**  
IT NEEDS.



AND AMONG  
THEM LIE  
SOME OF  
OUR VERY  
**BEST**  
INSTINCTS.

BOTH ARTIST AND WRITER BEGIN, HANDS JOINED ACROSS THE GAP, WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO MAKE COMICS OF "QUALITY".



# FACE

THE ARTIST KNOWS THAT THIS MEANS MORE THAN JUST STICK-FIGURES AND CRUDE CARTOONS. HE SETS OFF IN SEARCH OF A HIGHER ART.



THE WRITER KNOWS THAT THIS MEANS MORE THAN JUST OOF! POW! BLAM! AND ONE-A-DAY GAGS. SHE SETS OFF IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING DEEPER.



IN MUSEUMS AND IN LIBRARIES, THE ARTIST FINDS WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR. HE STUDIES THE TECHNIQUES OF THE GREAT MASTERS OF WESTERN ART. HE PRACTICES NIGHT AND DAY.



SHE TOO FINDS WHAT SHE'S LOOKING FOR, IN THE GREAT MASTERS OF WESTERN LITERATURE. SHE READS AND WRITES CONSTANTLY. SHE SEARCHES FOR A VOICE UNIQUELY HER'S.



FINALLY, THEY'RE READY. BOTH HAVE MASTERED THEIR ARTS. HIS BRUSHSTROKE IS NEARLY INVISIBLE IN ITS SUBTLETY, THE FIGURES PURE MICHAELANGELO. HER DESCRIPTIONS ARE DAZZLING. THE WORDS FLOW TOGETHER LIKE A SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET.

THEY'RE READY TO JOIN HANDS ONCE MORE AND CREATE A COMICS MASTERPIECE.



# FACE

TWO EYES,  
ONE NOSE,  
ONE MOUTH.

The youth's  
prodigious  
so gaga'd  
on now...

PICTURES ARE **RECEIVED**  
INFORMATION. WE NEED NO  
FORMAL EDUCATION TO "GET THE  
MESSAGE." THE MESSAGE IS  
INSTANTANEOUS.



WRITING IS **PERCEIVED**  
INFORMATION. IT TAKES TIME  
AND SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE TO  
DECODE THE ABSTRACT SYMBOLS  
OF LANGUAGE.



RECEIVED . . .

FACE

TWO EYES,  
ONE NOSE,  
ONE MOUTH.

*They youth is  
prolly always  
so gizl on now...*

PERCEIVED

WHEN PICTURES  
ARE MORE ABSTRACTED  
FROM "REALITY" THEY  
REQUIRE GREATER LEVELS  
OF PERCEPTION,  
**MORE LIKE  
WORDS.**



WHEN WORDS  
ARE BOLDER, MORE DIRECT,  
THEY REQUIRE **LOWER LEVELS**  
OF PERCEPTION AND ARE  
RECEIVED **FASTER,**  
**MORE LIKE  
PICTURES.**

OUR NEED FOR A  
**LANGUAGE**  
OF COMICS SENDS US  
TOWARD THE CENTER  
WHERE WORDS AND  
PICTURES ARE LIKE  
TWO SIDES OF ONE  
COIN!



BUT OUR NEED FOR  
**SOPHISTICATION**  
IN COMICS SEEMS  
TO LEAD US  
**OUTWARD**, WHERE  
WORDS AND PICTURES  
ARE MOST **SEPARATE**.



BOTH ARE **WORTHY  
ASPIRATIONS.**  
BOTH STEM FROM A  
LOVE OF COMICS AND  
A DEVOTION TO ITS  
FUTURE.

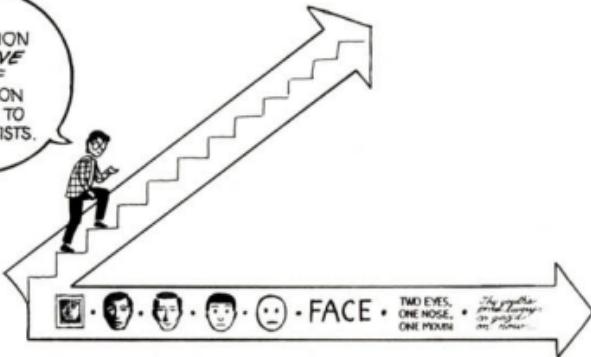
CAN THEY BE  
RECONCILED?



I SAY THE ANSWER  
IS **YES**, BUT SINCE  
THE REASONS BELONG  
IN A **DIFFERENT  
CHAPTER**, WE'LL  
HAVE TO COME BACK  
TO THIS **LATER**.



ICONIC  
ABSTRACTION  
IS ONLY ONE  
FORM OF  
ABSTRACTION  
AVAILABLE TO  
COMICS ARTISTS.



USUALLY THE WORD  
"ABSTRACTION" REFERS TO THE  
NON-ICONIC VARIETY, WHERE  
NO ATTEMPT IS MADE TO CLING  
TO RESEMBLANCE OR MEANING.



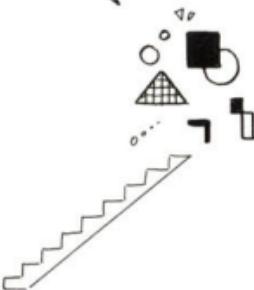
THE TYPE OF  
ART WHICH OFTEN  
PROMPTS THE QUESTION:  
"WHAT DOES IT  
MEAN?"



EARNING  
THE REPLY  
"IT MEANS'  
WHAT IT  
IS!"

IN  
THIS  
CASE--

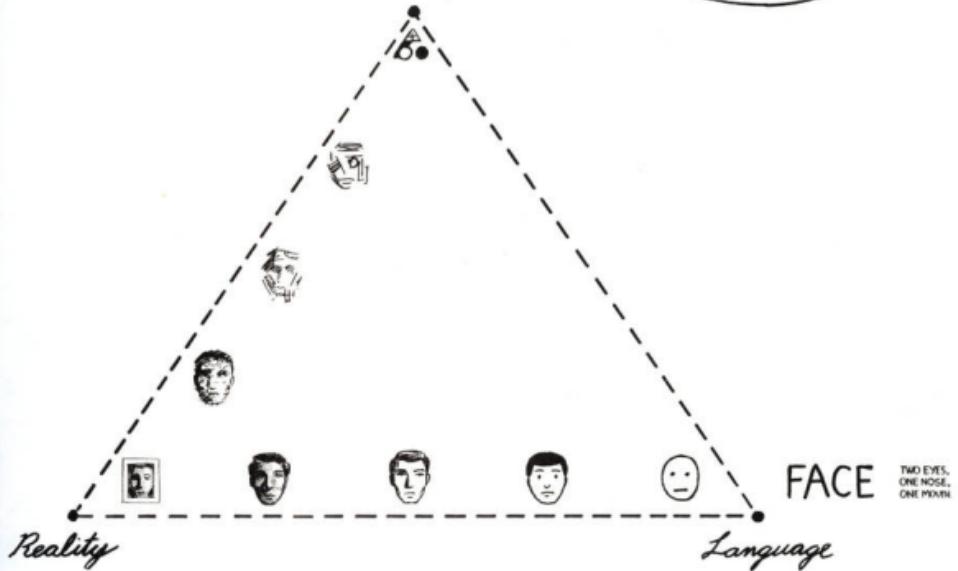
--INK  
ON  
PAPER.



THIS IS  
THE REALM OF THE  
**ART OBJECT**, THE  
**PICTURE PLANE**, WHERE  
SHAPES, LINES AND  
COLORS CAN BE  
**THEMSELVES** AND  
NOT PRETEND  
OTHERWISE.

### The Picture Plane

BELOW ME,  
THE AREA DESCRIBED  
BY THESE 3 VERTICES--  
"REALITY," LANGUAGE AND  
THE PICTURE PLANE--  
REPRESENTS THE TOTAL  
**PICTORIAL VOCABULARY**  
OF COMICS OR OF ANY  
OF THE VISUAL  
ARTS.



MOST COMICS ART  
LIES NEAR THE  
BOTTOM--THAT IS,  
ALONG THE **ICONIC**  
**ABSTRACTION** SIDE  
WHERE EVERY LINE  
HAS A **MEANING**.

NEAR THE LINE, BUT  
NOT NECESSARILY  
**ON IT!** FOR EVEN  
THE MOST **STRAIGHT-**  
**FORWARD** LITTLE  
CARTOON CHARACTER  
HAS A **'MEANINGLESS'**  
LINE OR TWO!



WATCH THAT NOSE!



IF WE INCORPORATE  
LANGUAGE AND  
OTHER ICONS **INTO**  
THE CHART, WE CAN  
BEGIN TO BUILD A  
COMPREHENSIVE  
**MAP**--



--OF THE  
**UNIVERSE**  
**CALLED**  
**COMICS.**



1. MARY FLEENER at her most abstract. 2. MARISCALLO, S. 3. DAVE McKEAN employing one of the many styles found in his series CAGES. 4. MARC HEMPEL's GREGORY. 5. MARK BEYER. 6. LARRY MARANO's TALES FROM THE BEAUBOARD. "Resembling" is over used (hence all the way to the right), Marder's beans walk the line from design to meaning. 7. SAUL STERNBERG's VAMPIRE VAULT. 8. HOWARD THE LUPINIAN. 9. LORENZO MATTOXI IN FIRES (c Editions Albin Michel S.A.) combines deeply impressionistic lighting with iconic forms and strong, design-oriented composition. In fact, it's the best comic book I've ever seen. 10. JIM KOMINSKY-CRUMB. 11. PETER BAGGE's Chuckie-Boy from NEUT STUFF. Compare to 39. 12. KRISTINE KYRTTIE. 13. REA IRVIN. THE SMYTHES & CO. 14. RON GORDON-SMITH. WILLIS' Morty. 15. PHIL YEH's THE UNICORN. 16. JERRY MORIARTY's "Jack Survives". Based closely on real world light and shadow, but decisively more rough than Sternberg. Some of them are found in 8, 16, 19, 20 and 34. 17. JEFF WONG's art for Scott Russo's JAZZ. 18. ROLY STARK's expressivistic RAIN. 19. SPAIN's TRAILBLAZERS. 20. FRANK MILLER's THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. Batman © D.C. Comics. Batman created by Bob Kane. 21. WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS's Wolverine MacAlister from JOURNEY. 22. DON SIMPSON'S MEGATRON MAN. Beginning from a realistic anatomical base, Simpson distorts and exaggerates M.M.'s features to the brink of abstraction. 23. MICHAEL CHERKAS from SILENT INVASION. © Cherkas and Hancock. 24. RICK GEARY. 25. PETER KUPER. 26. STEPHEN TRIBEAU's DOOMSDAY CITY. 27. LYNDIA BARRY. 28. SAMPEI SHIRATO. 29. CHARLES BURNS'S BIG BABY. 29 1/2. (Whoops) CLIFF STONEWELL. The character pictured here (from POLLY SWANSON'S POLLY SWANSON) is not to be, but Sterett's art, like Fleener's often heads upward toward the wildy abstract. P.A.H.P. is © Newspaper Features Syndicate, Inc. 30. STEPHEN RABIGER'S GROUSE. 31. THE WANDERER. A bit more rounded, but with a strong gestural quality that always reminds us of the hand that holds the pen (also true of 14, 28, 31, 41). 31. ROBERTA GREGORY's PERVERSE. 32. JEFF WONG's KARATE. 33. MAZZUCCHIELLI from BATMAN: YEAR ONE. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 33. JOSE MUÑOZ from "Mister Conrad, Mister Muñoz". © Muñoz and Sampayo. 34. CAROL WILSON'S Eye.

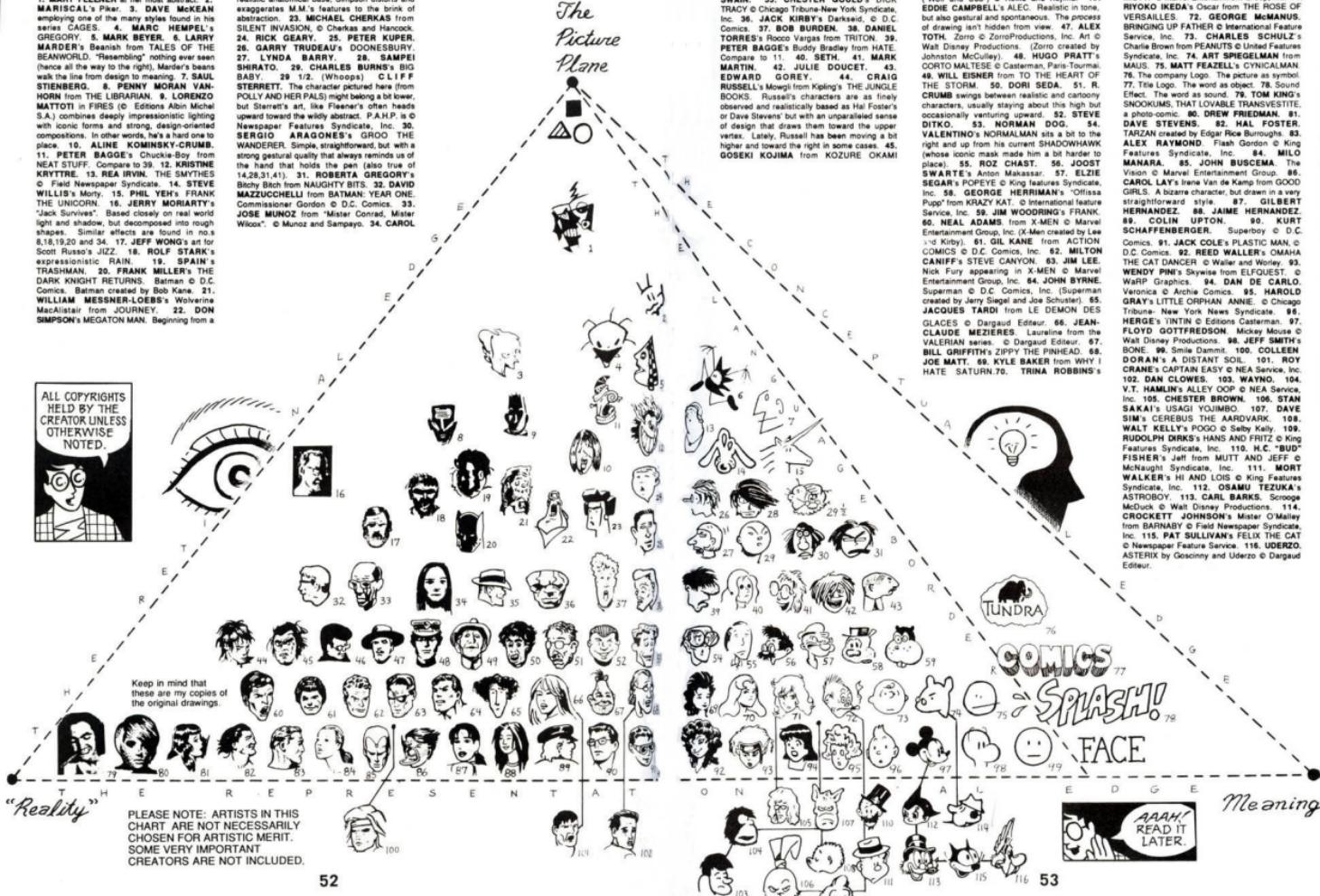
ALL COPYRIGHTS HELD BY THE CREATOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.



Keep in mind that these are my copies of the original drawings.

PLEASE NOTE: ARTISTS IN THIS CHART ARE NOT NECESSARILY CHOSEN FOR ARTISTIC MERIT. SOME VERY IMPORTANT CREATORS ARE NOT INCLUDED.

## The Picture Plane



SWAIN. 35. CHESTER GOULD'S DICK TRACY © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate, Inc. 36. JACK KIRBY's Darkseed. © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's Roico Vargas from TRITON. 39. ERIC BAGGIE's Bullock Bayou. 40. LE COMPAGNIE. 40 1/2. SETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCET. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's Mouth from KELING'S THE JUNGLE. 45. RICHARD STURGEON. 46. The characters are usually drawn as they are first observed and realistically based as Hal Foster's or Dave Stevens' but with an unparalleled sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Lateley, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 46. GOSEKI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI (Will and Cup) © Kojima and Kojima. 46. EDDIE CAMPBELL'S ALEC. Realistic in tone, but also gestural and spontaneous. The process of drawing isn't hidden from view. 47. ALEX TOTH. Zorba © Zorba Productions, Inc. © Art © Zorba. 48. CHARLES SCHULZ's PEANUTS © United Feature Syndicate, Inc. 49. JOHNSTON McCULLLEY. 49. HUGO PRATT'S CORTE MALTESE © Casteman, Paris-Tourmal. 50. WILL EISNER FROM TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. 51. RICHARD RODGERS. 51. R. CRUMB's beings are realistic and non-human characters, usually staying about this high but occasionally venturing upward. 52. STEVE DITKO. 53. NORBERT DOOG. 54. HALFTIME © Bill Watterson. 55. Bill Watterson's strip up from his current SHADOWER (whose iconic mask made him a bit harder to place). 56. ROX CHAST. 56. JOOST SWARTZEL. Antje Makasari. 57. ELZIE COLEMAN'S Popeye © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 58. GEORGE HERMAN's "Offiss Pupp" from KRAYZ KAT. © International feature Service, Inc. 59. JIM WOODRING'S FRANK. 60. NEAL ADAMS from METAL MEN. 61. MICHAEL TURNER's X-MEN (created by Lee and Kirby). 61. GIL KANE from ACTION COMICS © D.C. Comics, Inc. 62. MILTON CANIFF'S CASTLE CANYON. 63. RICHARD RICK FAY appears in KISS © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics, Inc. (Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster). 65. JACQUES TARDY. LE DEMON DES GOUTTES © Dargaud Editeur. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES' Laurine from the VALERIAN series. © Dargaud Editeur. 67. BILL GRIFFITH'S ZIPPI THE PINHEAD. 68. JOE MATT. 69. KYLE BAKER from WHY I HATE SATURN. 70. TRINA ROBBINS' TUNDRA.

71. GENE COLAN'S ORPHAN ANNIE. 72. HAROLD GRAY'S LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE. © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate. 73. MERGE. © INT'L C Edition. 74. GLOW. © FLOYD GOTTLIEB. Mickey Mouse © Walt Disney Productions. 75. JEFF SMITH'S BONE. © Smith's Bone © 1991. 76. COLLEEN HARRINGTON'S DISTANT SOLAR. 77. JEFF CRANEY's CAPTAIN EASY © NEA Service, Inc. 78. DAN CLOWES. 79. WAYNO. 104. V.T. HAMLIN'S ALLEY OOP © NEA Service, Inc. 105. CLOTHESLINE © CLOTHESLINE. 106. STAN LAKA'S USAGI YO-KAI. 107. DAVID SIM'S CEREBUS THE AARDVARK. 108. WALT KELLY'S POOG © Selby Kelly. 109. RUDOLPH DRINKS'S HANS AND FRITZ © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 110. R.C. SCHMITZ'S PAPER. 111. JEFF MCKEEAN'S PAPER. 112. MORT WALKER'S HI AND LOIS © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 112. OSAMU TEZUKA's ASTRO BOY. 113. GARY SADLER'S Scrooge McDuck © Walt Disney Productions. 114. CROCKETT & JOHNSON's MISTER O'Malley from BARNABY © Field Newspaper Syndicate, Inc. 115. PAUL SULLIVAN'S FELIX THE CAT © International Feature Service. 116. UDERZO, ASTERIX © Goscinny and Uderzo © Dargaud Editeur.

MISTY © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 71. RIYOKO IKEDA's Oscar from THE ROSE OF VERSAILLES. 72. GEORGE McMANUS. BRINGING UP FATHER © International Feature Service, Inc. 73. CHARLES SCHULZ'S PEANUTS © United Feature Syndicate, Inc. 74. ART SPIEGELMAN's Maus. 75. MATT FEATZELL's CYNICALMAN. 76. The company Logo. The picture as symbol. 77. JOHN KELLY'S LOGO. The Heart of the Effect. This would count as 79. TOM KING's SKOOBINS, THAT LOVABLE TRANSVESTITE, a photo-comic. 80. DREW FRIEDMAN. 81. ARZANIAN © Arzarian © Roger Burrows. 82. ALEX RAYMOND. Flash Gordon © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 84. MILO MANARA. 91. JOHN BUSCEMA. 92. GREGORY LAY's last comic from KAMIKAZE © OGDON GIRLS. A bizarre character, but drawn in a very straightforward style. 87. GILBERT HERNANDEZ'S JAJA. 88. KURT SCHAFFENBERGER. Superboy © D.C. Comics. 91. JACK COLE'S PLASTIC MAN. © D.C. Comics. 92. REED WALLER'S OHAMA THE CAT CANNIBER © Waller and Worley. 93. RON PERLMAN'S EDWARD © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 94. DAN DE CARLO. WarP Graphix. 94. DAN DE CARLO, Veronica & Archie Comics. 95. HAROLD GRAY'S LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE. © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate. 96. MERGE. © INT'L C Edition. 97. GLOW. © FLOYD GOTTLIEB. Mickey Mouse © Walt Disney Productions. 98. JEFF SMITH'S BONE. © Smith's Bone © 1991. 99. COLLEEN HARRINGTON'S DISTANT SOLAR. 101. JEFF CRANEY'S CAPTAIN EASY © NEA Service, Inc. 102. DAN CLOWES. 103. WAYNO. 104. V.T. HAMLIN'S ALLEY OOP © NEA Service, Inc. 105. CLOTHESLINE © CLOTHESLINE. 106. STAN LAKA'S USAGI YO-KAI. 107. DAVID SIM'S CEREBUS THE AARDVARK. 108. WALT KELLY'S POOG © Selby Kelly. 109. RUDOLPH DRINKS'S HANS AND FRITZ © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 110. R.C. SCHMITZ'S PAPER. 111. JEFF MCKEEAN'S PAPER. 112. MORT WALKER'S HI AND LOIS © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 112. OSAMU TEZUKA's ASTRO BOY. 113. GARY SADLER'S Scrooge McDuck © Walt Disney Productions. 114. CROCKETT & JOHNSON's MISTER O'Malley from BARNABY © Field Newspaper Syndicate, Inc. 115. PAUL SULLIVAN'S FELIX THE CAT © International Feature Service. 116. UDERZO, ASTERIX © Goscinny and Uderzo © Dargaud Editeur.



MOST OF THE PRECEDING EXAMPLES WERE PLACED ON OUR CHART BASED ON THE DRAWING STYLES USED ON SPECIFIC CHARACTERS.

EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A RANGE OF STYLES, THOUGH, AND MANY OCCUPY SEVERAL PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.

SOME, LIKE MATT FEAZELL'S CYNICALMAN, KEEP TO ONE AREA CONSISTENTLY.



THE AMAZING CYNICALMAN IN JUST SAY NO CARTOONS

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

No...  
MICROWAVE ME NOW

No...  
WINE

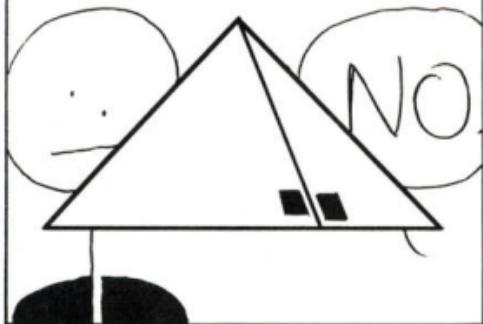
WINE  
WINE  
WINE

No...  
MICROWAVE ME NOW

No...  
WINE

WELL, MAYBE  
TINA

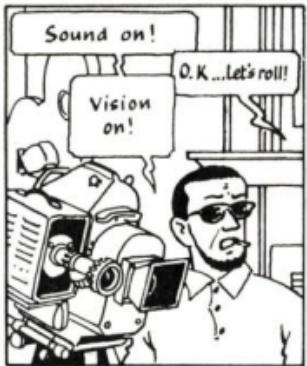
THE COMBINATION OF EXTREMELY ICONIC CHARACTERS AND ENVIRONMENTS, MIXED WITH SIMPLE, DIRECT LANGUAGE AND A SOUND EFFECT OR TWO WOULD GIVE US A SHAPE SOMETHING LIKE THIS:



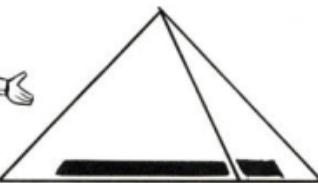
BUT OTHERS RANGE CONSIDERABLY FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER



WE'VE ALREADY DISCUSSED THE RANGE OF HERGÉ AND OTHERS WHO CONTRAST ICONIC CHARACTERS WITH REALISTIC BACKGROUNDS.



HERGÉ STRETCHES NEARLY FROM LEFT TO RIGHT-- FROM REALISM TO CARTOONING-- BUT VENTURES VERY LITTLE INTO THE UPPER WORLD OF NON-ICONIC ABSTRACTION.



MARY FLEENER, ON THE OTHER HAND, VARIES ONLY SLIGHTLY IN HER LEVEL OF ICONIC CONTENT, WHILE THE LEVEL OF NON-ICONIC ABSTRACTION GOES NEARLY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM!

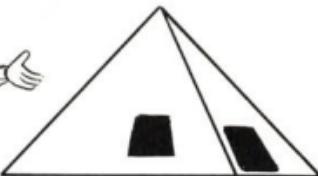


ART © MARY FLEENER.

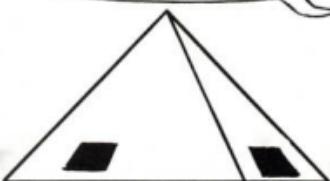


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)  
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

IN THE MID-SIXTIES, JACK KIRBY, ALONG WITH STAN LEE, STAKED OUT A MIDDLE GROUND OF ICONIC FORMS WITH A SENSE OF THE REAL ABOUT THEM, BOLSTERED BY A POWERFUL DESIGN SENSE.



TODAY, MANY AMERICAN MAINSTREAM COMICS STILL FOLLOW KIRBY'S LEAD FOR STORYTELLING, BUT THE DESIRE FOR MORE REALISTIC ART AND MORE ELABORATE SCRIPTS HAS PUSHED ART AND STORY FURTHER APART IN MANY CASES.



A FIGHT STARTED ON HIS DOORSTEP, HE PUT A STOP TO IT. FAR AS ANYONE KNOWS, ALL THE SURVIVORS ARE PRETTY MUCH OKAY.

WAY YOU TALK, NICHOLAS. FOLKS EXPECT HIM TO START NUKNIN' MAMA RUSSIA ANY MOMENT.

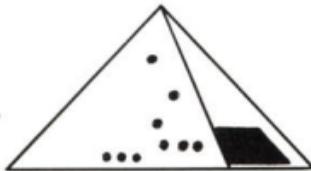


ART: JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS (FACSIMILE)  
SCRIPT: CHRIS CLAREMONT.

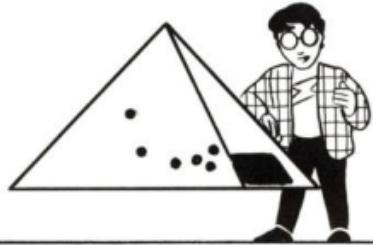
ART FROM COLOR PANELS TRACED FOR REPRODUCTION.  
© MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.



IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES,  
MOST OF THE COUNTERCULTURE OF  
INDEPENDENT CREATORS, WORKING MOSTLY  
IN BLACK AND WHITE, STAYED TO THE **RIGHT**  
OF MAINSTREAM COMICS ART WHILE  
COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF  
WRITING STYLES.



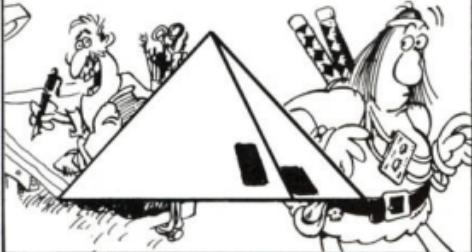
THIS FOLLOWS THE LEAD OF  
THE POST-KURTZMAN GENERATION  
OF **UNDERGROUND** CARTOONISTS WHO  
USED CARTOONY STYLES TO PORTRAY  
ADULT THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER.



IRONIC THAT THE  
TWO BASTIONS OF  
**CARTOONY** ART ARE  
**UNDERGROUND** AND  
**CHILDREN'S** COMICS!



SOME ARTISTS, SUCH AS THE  
IRREPRESSIBLE **SERGIO ARAGONES**,  
STAKED THEIR CLAIM ON A PARTICULAR  
AREA LONG AGO AND HAVE BEEN  
QUITE HAPPY SINCE.



OTHERS, SUCH AS **DAVE MCKEAN**,  
ARE FOREVER ON THE MOVE,  
EXPERIMENTING, TAKING CHANCES,  
NEVER SATISFIED.



WHEN AN ARTIST IS DRAWN TO ONE END OF THE CHART OR ANOTHER, THAT ARTIST MAY BE REVEALING SOMETHING ABOUT HIS OR HER STRONGEST VALUES AND LOYALTIES IN ART.



THOSE WHO APPROACH THE LOWER LEFT, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE PROBABLY ATTRACTED BY A SENSE OF THE BEAUTY OF NATURE.



THOSE AT THE TOP BY THE BEAUTY OF ART.



AND THOSE ON THE RIGHT BY THE BEAUTY OF IDEAS.



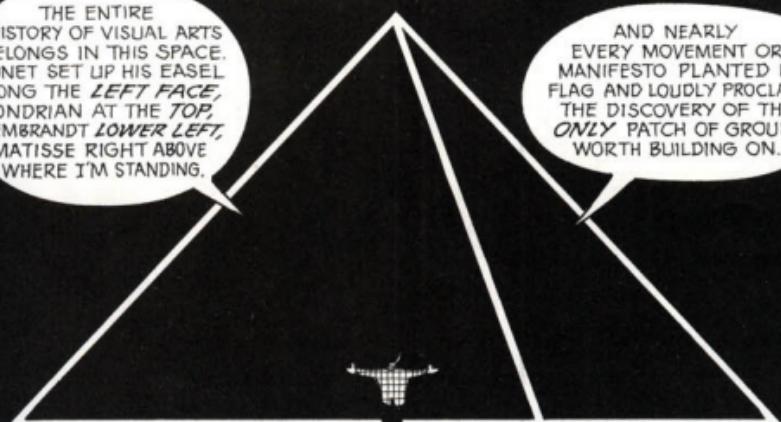
FOR COMICS TO MATURE AS A MEDIUM, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S INNERMOST NEEDS AND IDEAS.

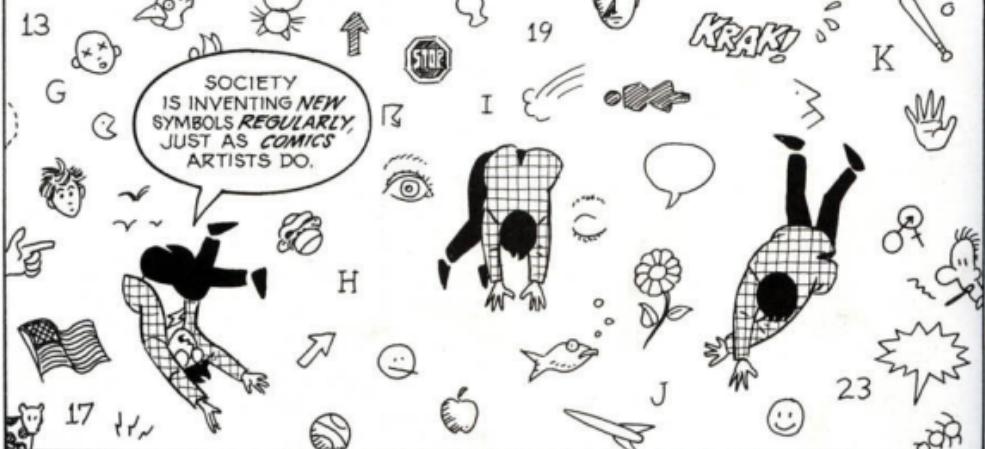


BUT EACH ARTIST HAS DIFFERENT INNER NEEDS, DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW, DIFFERENT PASSIONS, AND SO NEEDS TO FIND DIFFERENT FORMS OF EXPRESSION.\*

THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF VISUAL ARTS BELONGS IN THIS SPACE. MONET SET UP HIS EASEL ALONG THE LEFT FACE, MONDRIAN AT THE TOP, REMBRANDT LOWER LEFT, MATISSE RIGHT ABOVE WHERE I'M STANDING.

AND NEARLY EVERY MOVEMENT OR MANIFESTO PLANTED ITS FLAG AND LOUDLY PROCLAIMED THE DISCOVERY OF THE ONLY PATCH OF GROUND WORTH BUILDING ON.





ICONS  
DEMAND OUR  
PARTICIPATION  
TO MAKE THEM  
WORK.

THERE IS NO LIFE HERE  
EXCEPT THAT WHICH YOU  
GIVE TO IT.

IT'S YOUR JOB TO  
CREATE AND RECREATE  
ME MOMENT BY  
MOMENT, NOT JUST  
THE CARTOONIST'S.

IT'S BEEN OVER TWENTY YEARS SINCE  
MELLIHAN FIRST OBSERVED THAT THOSE PEOPLE  
GROWING UP IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY  
DIDN'T WANT **GOALS** SO MUCH AS THEY  
WANTED **ROLES!** AND THAT'S WHAT VISUAL  
ICONOGRAPHY IS ALL ABOUT.

AS IT HAPPENS, ONLY  
TWO POPULAR MEDIA  
WERE IDENTIFIED BY  
MELLIHAN AS "COOL"  
MEDIA -- THAT IS,  
MEDIA WHICH  
COMMAND AUDIENCE  
INVOLVEMENT THROUGH  
ICONIC FORMS.



ONE OF THEM,  
**TELEVISION**,  
HAS REACHED INTO  
THE LIVES OF EVERY  
HUMAN BEING ON  
EARTH--

--AND FOR BETTER  
OR WORSE, ALTERED  
THE COURSE OF  
HUMAN AFFAIRS  
FROM HERE 'TIL  
DOOMSDAY.

THE FATE  
OF THE  
OTHER ONE,  
**COMICS**--

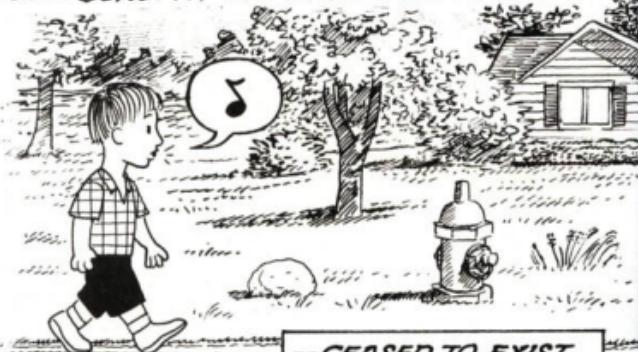


-- IS  
ANYONE'S  
GUESS.

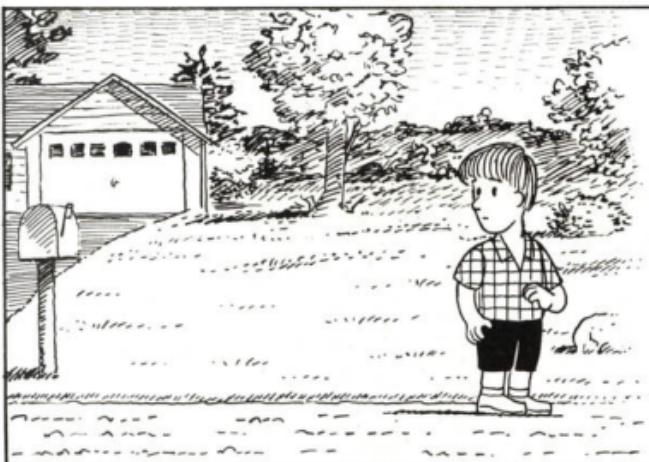
## CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

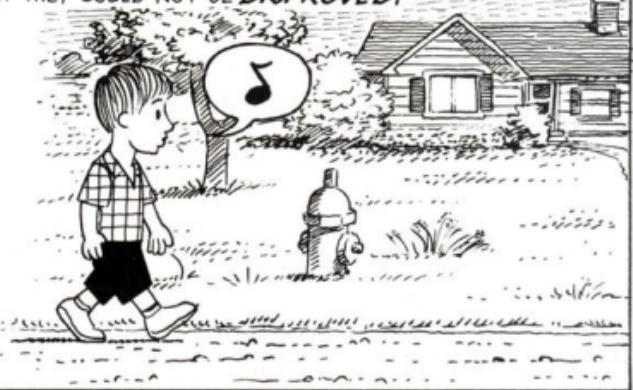
WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, I HAD A RECURRENT *DAYDREAM* THAT THE *WHOLE WORLD* WAS JUST A *SHOW* PUT ON FOR MY *BENEFIT*, THAT UNLESS I WAS PRESENT TO *SEE* THINGS, THEY JUST--



CEASED TO EXIST.



**LATER** IN LIFE, I FOUND OTHERS WHO HAD **SIMILAR** DAYDREAMS AS CHILDREN.  
NONE OF US EVER REALLY **BELIEVED** THESE THEORIES, BUT WE HAD ALL BEEN  
FASCINATED BY THE FACT THAT THEY COULD NOT BE **DISPROVED**!



EVEN **TODAY**, AS I WRITE AND DRAW THIS PANEL, I HAVE **NO GUARANTEE** THAT ANYTHING EXISTS OUTSIDE OF WHAT MY FIVE SENSES **REPORT** TO ME.\*



I'VE NEVER BEEN TO MOROCCO, BUT I TAKE IT ON FAITH THAT THERE **IS** A MOROCCO!



I'VE NEVER SEEN THE EARTH FROM SPACE FIRSTHAND, YET I TRUST THAT THE EARTH IS **ROUND**.



I'VE NEVER BEEN IN THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET, YET I ASSUME IT HAS AN INTERIOR. THAT IT ISN'T JUST SOME BIG MOVIE SET!



IN THIS PANEL YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE MY LEGS, YET YOU **ASSUME** THAT THEY'RE THERE.



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NOT!



\* NOT TO SAY OUR SENSES ARE ANY KIND OF GUARANTEE!

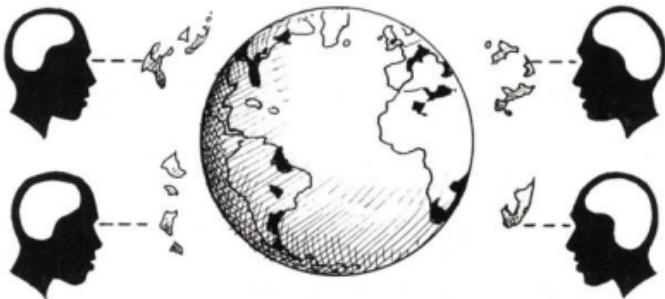
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A **WHOLE** THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR **SENSES**.

YET OUR SENSES CAN ONLY REVEAL A WORLD THAT IS **FRAGMENTED** AND **INCOMPLETE**.



EVEN THE MOST **WIDELY TRAVELED MIND** CAN ONLY SEE SO MUCH OF THE WORLD IN THE COURSE OF A LIFE.

OUR PERCEPTION OF "REALITY" IS AN ACT OF **FAITH**, BASED ON MERE **FRAGMENTS**.



AS INFANTS, WE'RE UNABLE TO COMMIT THAT ACT OF FAITH. IF WE CAN'T SEE IT, HEAR IT, SMELL IT, TASTE IT OR TOUCH IT, IT ISN'T THERE!

THE GAME "**PEEK-A-BOO**" PLAYS ON THIS IDEA. GRADUALLY, WE ALL LEARN THAT EVEN THOUGH THE **SIGHT** OF MOMMY COMES AND GOES, MOMMY REMAINS.



THIS PHENOMENON OF OBSERVING THE PARTS BUT PERCEIVING THE WHOLE HAS A NAME.

IT'S CALLED **CLOSURE**.



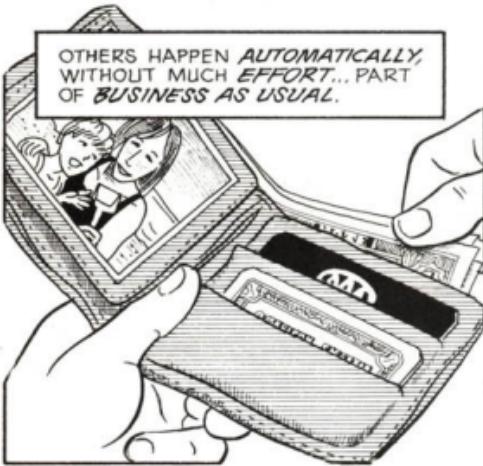
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS INCOMPLETE BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE.



SOME FORMS OF CLOSURE ARE DELIBERATE INVENTIONS OF STORYTELLERS TO PRODUCE SUSPENSE OR TO CHALLENGE AUDIENCES.



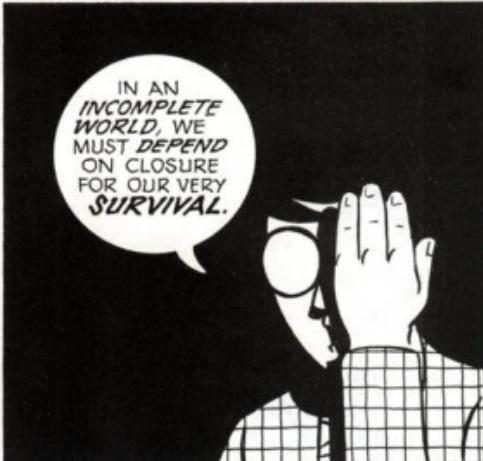
OTHERS HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY, WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT... PART OF BUSINESS AS USUAL.



IN RECOGNIZING AND RELATING TO OTHER PEOPLE, WE ALL DEPEND HEAVILY ON OUR LEARNED ABILITY OF CLOSURE.



IN AN INCOMPLETE WORLD, WE MUST DEPEND ON CLOSURE FOR OUR VERY SURVIVAL.



CLOSURE CAN TAKE  
MANY FORMS. SOME  
SIMPLE, SOME COMPLEX.



CLOSURE  
CLOSURE  
CL S RE  
CLOSURE

SOMETIMES, A MERE SHAPE OR  
OUTLINE IS ENOUGH TO  
TRIGGER CLOSURE.

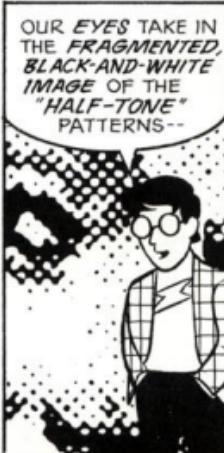


THE MENTAL PROCESS DESCRIBED  
IN CHAPTER TWO WHEREBY  
THESE LINES BECOME A FACE  
COULD BE CONSIDERED CLOSURE.



EVERY TIME WE SEE  
A PHOTOGRAPH  
REPRODUCED IN A  
NEWSPAPER OR  
MAGAZINE, WE  
COMMIT CLOSURE.

OUR EYES TAKE IN  
THE FRAGMENTED,  
BLACK-AND-WHITE  
IMAGE OF THE  
"HALF-TONE"  
PATTERNS--



--AND  
OUR MINDS  
TRANSFORM IT  
INTO THE  
"REALITY"--



--OF THE  
PHOTOGRAPH!



IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA, CLOSURE IS CONSTANT, EVEN OVERPOWERING!

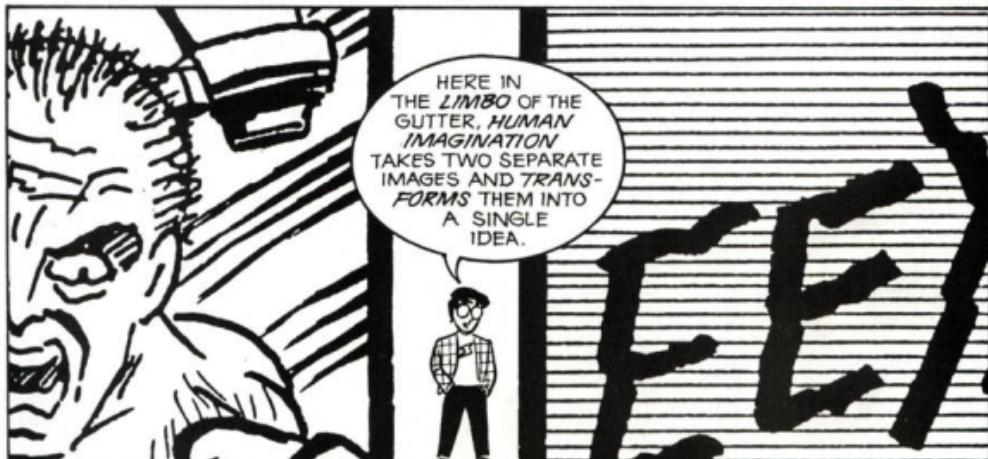
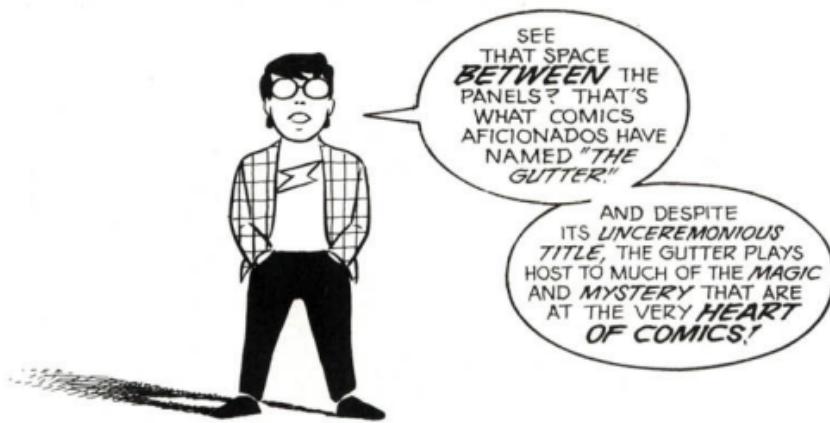
IN FILM, CLOSURE TAKES PLACE CONTINUOUSLY--TWENTY-FOUR TIMES PER SECOND, IN FACT--AS OUR MINDS, AIDED BY THE PERSISTENCE OF VISION, TRANSFORM A SERIES OF STILL PICTURES INTO A STORY OF CONTINUOUS MOTION.

A MEDIUM REQUIRING EVEN MORE CLOSURE IS TELEVISION, WHICH, IN REALITY, IS JUST A SINGLE POINT OF LIGHT, RACING ACROSS THE SCREEN SO FAST THAT IT'S DESCRIBED MY FACE HUNDREDS OF TIMES BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN SWALLOW THAT CORN CHIP!!\*

BETWEEN SUCH AUTOMATIC ELECTRONIC CLOSURE AND THE SIMPLER CLOSURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE--

--THERE LIES A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION WHICH USES CLOSURE LIKE NO OTHER...

...A MEDIUM WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS A WILLING AND CONSCIOUS COLLABORATOR AND CLOSURE IS THE AGENT OF CHANGE, TIME AND MOTION.



NOTHING  
IS SEEN BETWEEN  
THE TWO PANELS,  
BUT EXPERIENCE  
TELLS YOU SOMETHING  
MUST BE THERE!



COMICS PANELS **FRACTURE** BOTH **TIME** AND **SPACE**, OFFERING A **JAGGED, STACCATO RHYTHM** OF UNCONNECTED MOMENTS.

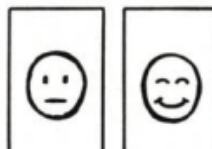


BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO **CONNECT** THESE MOMENTS  
AND MENTALLY CONSTRUCT A **CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY**.

IF VISUAL  
ICONOGRAPHY IS  
THE VOCABULARY OF  
COMICS, CLOSURE IS  
ITS GRAMMAR.

AND SINCE OUR  
DEFINITION OF  
COMICS HINGES ON  
THE ARRANGEMENT  
OF ELEMENTS--

-- THEN, IN A  
VERY REAL SENSE,  
**COMICS IS  
CLOSURE!**



CLOSURE



THE CLOSURE OF  
ELECTRONIC MEDIA  
IS CONTINUOUS, LARGELY  
INVOLUNTARY AND  
VIRTUALLY  
IMPERCEPTIBLE.

BUT CLOSURE IN COMICS IS  
FAR FROM CONTINUOUS AND  
ANYTHING BUT INVOLUNTARY!



NOW YOU DIE!!

NO!  
NO!



EVERY  
ACT COMMITTED  
TO PAPER BY THE  
COMICS ARTIST IS  
AIDED AND ABETTED  
BY A SILENT  
ACCOMPlice.



AN EQUAL  
PARTNER  
IN CRIME  
KNOWN AS  
THE  
READER.

I MAY HAVE DRAWN AN AXE BEING  
RAISED IN THIS EXAMPLE, BUT I'M  
NOT THE ONE WHO LET IT DROP  
OR DECIDED HOW HARD THE BLOW,  
OR WHO SCREAMED, OR WHY.

ALL OF YOU  
PARTICIPATED  
IN THE MURDER.  
ALL OF YOU HELD  
THE AXE AND  
CHOSE YOUR SPOT.



THAT, DEAR READER, WAS YOUR  
SPECIAL CRIME, EACH OF YOU  
COMMITTING IT IN YOUR OWN STYLE.



TO KILL A MAN  
BETWEEN PANELS  
IS TO CONDEMN  
HIM TO A  
THOUSAND DEATHS.



**PARTICIPATION**  
IS A POWERFUL FORCE  
IN ANY MEDIUM.  
FILMMAKERS LONG AGO  
REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE  
OF ALLOWING VIEWERS  
TO USE THEIR  
IMAGINATIONS.



BUT WHILE FILM MAKES  
USE OF AUDIENCES' IMAGINATIONS  
FOR OCCASIONAL EFFECTS,  
**COMICS** MUST USE IT  
FAR MORE OFTEN!



FROM THE TOSSING OF A BASEBALL  
TO THE DEATH OF A PLANET, THE  
READER'S DELIBERATE, VOLUNTARY  
CLOSURE IS COMICS' PRIMARY MEANS  
OF SIMULATING TIME AND MOTION.



CLOSURE  
IN COMICS FOSTERS  
AN INTIMACY SURPASSED  
ONLY BY THE WRITTEN  
WORD, A SILENT, SECRET  
CONTRACT BETWEEN  
CREATOR AND  
AUDIENCE.

HOW THE CREATOR  
HONORS THAT CONTRACT  
IS A MATTER OF BOTH  
ART AND CRAFT.



LET'S  
TAKE A LOOK  
AT THE  
**CRAFT.**



MOST  
**PANEL-TO-PANEL**  
TRANSITIONS IN COMICS  
CAN BE PLACED IN ONE  
OF SEVERAL DISTINCT  
CATEGORIES. THE FIRST  
CATEGORY-- WHICH WE'LL  
CALL **MOMENT-TO  
MOMENT**-- REQUIRES  
VERY LITTLE  
CLOSURE.



1.



NEXT  
ARE THOSE  
TRANSITIONS  
FEATURING A SINGLE  
SUBJECT IN DISTINCT  
**ACTION-TO-ACTION**  
PROGRESSIONS.



2.



THE NEXT TYPE TAKES US FROM SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT WHILE STAYING WITHIN A SCENE OR IDEA. NOTE THE DEGREE OF READER INVOLVEMENT NECESSARY TO RENDER THESE TRANSITIONS MEANINGFUL.



3.



DEDUCTIVE REASONING IS OFTEN REQUIRED IN READING COMICS SUCH AS IN THESE SCENE-TO-SCENE TRANSITIONS, WHICH TRANSPORT US ACROSS SIGNIFICANT DISTANCES OF TIME AND SPACE.



4.



A FIFTH TYPE OF TRANSITION, WHICH WE'LL CALL **ASPECT-TO-ASPECT**, BYPASSES TIME FOR THE MOST PART AND SETS A WANDERING EYE ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF A PLACE, IDEA OR MOOD.



5.



AND FINALLY, THERE'S THE **NON-SEQUITUR**, WHICH OFFERS NO LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PANELS WHATSOEVER!



6.



THIS LAST CATEGORY SUGGESTS AN INTERESTING QUESTION: IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ANY SEQUENCE OF PANELS TO BE TOTALLY UNRELATED TO EACH OTHER?



PERSONALLY, I DON'T THINK SO.

NO MATTER HOW DISSIMILAR ONE IMAGE MAY BE TO ANOTHER, THERE IS A KIND OF--



--ALCHEMY AT WORK IN THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS WHICH CAN HELP US FIND MEANING OR RESONANCE IN EVEN THE MOST JARRING OF COMBINATIONS.



SUCH TRANSITIONS MAY NOT MAKE "SENSE" IN ANY TRADITIONAL WAY, BUT STILL A RELATIONSHIP OF SOME SORT WILL INEVITABLY DEVELOP.



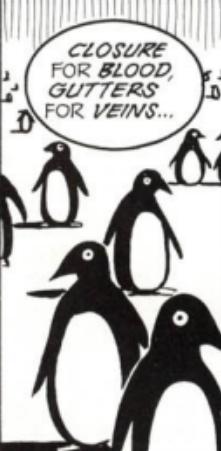
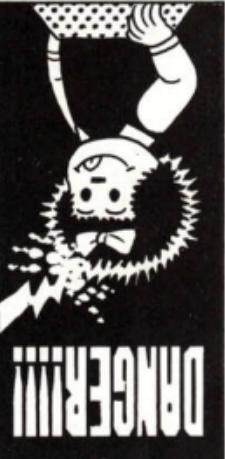
BY CREATING A SEQUENCE WITH TWO OR MORE IMAGES, WE ARE ENDOWING THEM WITH A SINGLE--



--OVERRIDING IDENTITY, AND FORCING THE VIEWER TO CONSIDER THEM AS A WHOLE.



HOWEVER DIFFERENT THEY HAD BEEN, THEY NOW BELONG TO A SINGLE ORGANISM.





**1.**  
MOMENT-  
TO-  
MOMENT



**2.**  
ACTION-  
TO-  
ACTION



**3.**  
SUBJECT-  
TO-  
SUBJECT



**4.**  
SCENE-  
TO-  
SCENE



**5.**  
ASPECT-  
TO-  
ASPECT



**6.**  
NON-  
SEQUITUR

# 1.

MOMENT-  
TO-  
MOMENT

# 2.

ACTION-  
TO-  
ACTION

# 3.

SUBJECT-  
TO-  
SUBJECT

# 4.

SCENE-  
TO-  
SCENE

# 5.

ASPECT-  
TO-  
ASPECT

# 6.

NON-  
SEQUITUR

THIS SORT OF  
CATEGORIZATION  
IS AN INEXACT SCIENCE  
AT BEST, BUT BY USING  
OUR TRANSITION SCALE  
AS A TOOL --

-- WE  
CAN BEGIN  
TO UNRavel SOME  
OF THE MYSTERIES  
SURROUNDING THE  
**INVISIBLE ART  
OF COMICS  
STORYTELLING!**



MOST MAINSTREAM  
COMICS IN AMERICA  
EMPLOY STORYTELLING  
TECHNIQUES FIRST  
INTRODUCED BY  
**JACK KIRBY**, SO  
LET'S START BY  
EXAMINING THIS  
LEE-KIRBY COMIC  
FROM 1966.



ALTOGETHER, I COUNT  
**NINETY-FIVE**  
PANEL-TO-PANEL  
TRANSITIONS.  
LET'S SEE HOW  
THEY BREAK DOWN  
PROPORTIONATELY.



MO  
COM

BY FAR, THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF  
TRANSITION IN KIRBY'S ART IS **ACTION-  
TO-ACTION**. I COUNT **SIXTY-TWO** OF  
THEM IN THIS STORY-- ABOUT **SIXTY-  
FIVE PERCENT** OF THE TOTAL NUMBER.



[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

**SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT** TRANSITIONS  
ACCOUNT FOR AN ADDITIONAL **NINETEEN--**  
ABOUT **TWENTY PERCENT** OF THE TOTAL NUMBER.

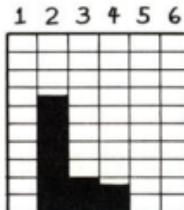


AND SINCE ALL  
OF THE REMAINING  
TRANSITIONS ARE FROM  
**SCENE-TO-SCENE**,  
WE HAVE THE  
FOLLOWING  
BREAKDOWN.



1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

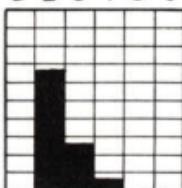
AS A **BAR GRAPH**  
IT WOULD LOOK  
SOMETHING LIKE  
THIS.



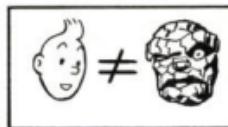
THIS EMPHASIS ON  
**ACTION-TO-ACTION**  
STORYTELLING SUITS  
MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS  
ABOUT KIRBY, BUT  
IS HE **UNIQUE**  
IN THIS RESPECT?

APPARENTLY NOT! HERE'S A GRAPH OF  
PANEL TRANSITIONS IN HERGÉ'S **TINTIN**  
AND THE PROPORTION ARE VERY  
SIMILAR TO KIRBY'S

1 2 3 4 5 6



NOW, HERGÉ'S AND  
KIRBY'S STYLES  
ARE **NOT** SIMILAR!  
IN FACT, THEY'RE  
RADICALLY  
DIFFERENT!!

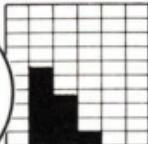


IS THERE SOME KIND  
OF UNIVERSAL  
PROPORTION AT  
WORK HERE, OR  
IS THERE ANOTHER  
COMMON LINK?  
MAYBE A SIMILARITY  
OF GENRES?



A RANDOM  
SAMPLING OF  
VARIOUS AMERICAN  
COMICS SHOWS THIS  
SAME PROPORTION  
PRETTY  
CONSISTENTLY.

X-MEN #1



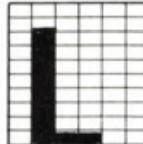
CLAREMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



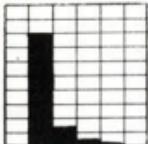
DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



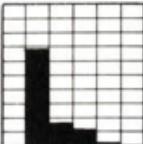
GREGORY

FRANK IN THE RIVER



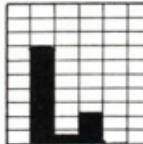
WOODRUFF

A CONTRACT WITH GOD



EISNER

MAUS



SPIEGELMAN

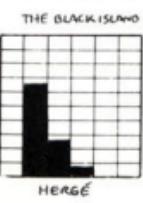
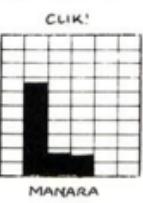
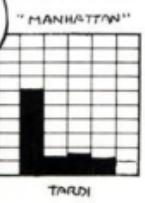
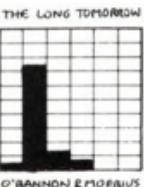
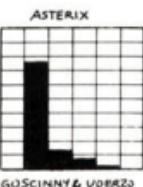
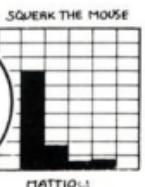
DONALD DUCK



BARKS

A SURVEY OF WELL-KNOWN EUROPEAN ARTISTS YIELDS SIMILAR, IF NOT QUITE AS UNIFORM, RESULTS.

WHAT CAN WE DEDUCE FROM THIS?



2



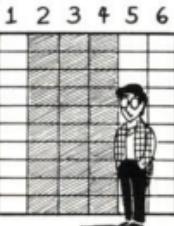
ARE THESE THREE TYPES OF TRANSITIONS ALL ANYONE SHOULD EVER NEED TO TELL A STORY IN COMICS?

3

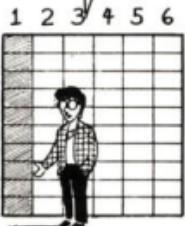
4

IF WE CHOOSE TO SEE STORIES AS CONNECTED SERIES OF EVENTS, THEN THE PREDOMINANCE OF TYPES 2-4 ARE EASILY EXPLAINED.

TYPES 2-4 SHOW THINGS HAPPENING IN CONCISE, EFFICIENT WAYS.



TYPE 1 SHOWS ACTIONS LIKE TYPE 2, BUT IT TENDS TO REQUIRE SEVERAL PANELS TO DO WHAT TYPE 2 DOES IN TWO--



1.

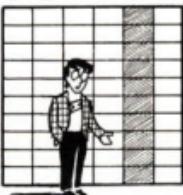


2.

-- WHILE IN THE FIFTH TYPE, BY DEFINITION, NOTHING "HAPPENS" AT ALL!



1 2 3 4 5 6



AND, OF COURSE, NON-SEQUITURS ARE UNCONCERNED WITH EVENTS OR ANY NARRATIVE PURPOSES OF ANY SORT.

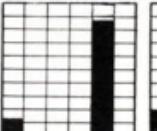
1 2 3 4 5 6



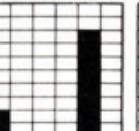
SOME EXPERIMENTAL COMICS, LIKE THOSE OF ART SPIEGELMAN'S EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A FULL RANGE OF TRANSITIONS--

-- THOUGH GENERALLY IN THE SERVICE OF EQUALLY RADICAL STORIES AND SUBJECTS.

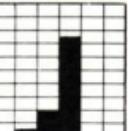
STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



"DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE"



INTRODUCTION



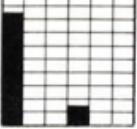
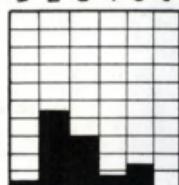
"MAUS" (ORIGINAL)

BUT BEFORE WE CONCLUDE THAT TYPES 2-4 HAVE A MONOPOLY ON STRAIGHTFORWARD STORYTELLING, LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT OSAMU TEZUKA FROM JAPAN.

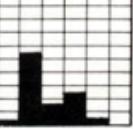


TEZUKA IS A FAR CRY FROM THE EARLY SPIEGELMAN. HIS STORYTELLING IS CLEAR AND STRAIGHTFORWARD. BUT LOOK AT HOW HE CHARTS!

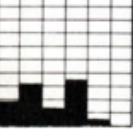
1 2 3 4 5 6



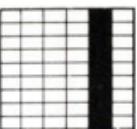
"SKINLESS PERKINS"



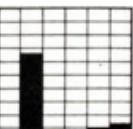
"PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET"



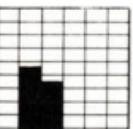
"CRACKING JOKES"



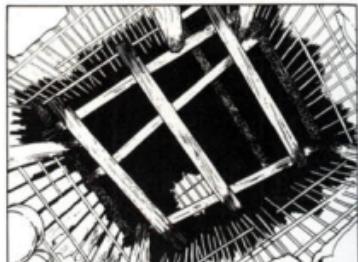
FRONT AND BACK COVERS



"ACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE"



"REAL DREAM" 1975



JUST WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

ACTION-  
TO-ACTION  
TRANSITIONS  
STILL DOMINATE  
IN TEZUKA'S  
WORK, BUT TO  
A LESSER  
DEGREE.

CLIK!

3

IN FACT, SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT TRANSITIONS ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY AS MANY AS ACTION.



1



HERE ALSO WE SEE OUR FIRST EXAMPLES OF MOMENT-TO-MOMENT TRANSITIONS.

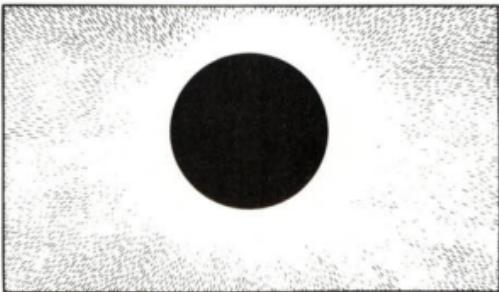


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR FOUR PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGE.



5

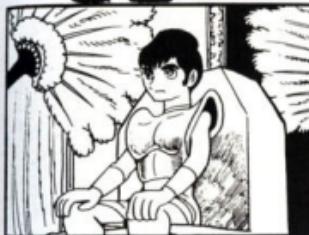
BUT, MOST STRIKING OF ALL IS THE SUBSTANTIAL PRESENCE OF THE FIFTH TYPE OF TRANSITION, A TYPE RARELY SEEN IN THE WEST.



**ASPECT-TO-ASPECT**  
TRANSITIONS HAVE BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF JAPANESE MAINSTREAM COMICS ALMOST FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.



MOST OFTEN USED TO ESTABLISH A MOOD OR A SENSE OF PLACE, TIME SEEMS TO STAND STILL IN THESE QUIET, CONTEMPLATIVE COMBINATIONS.



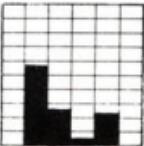
EVEN SEQUENCE WHILE STILL AN ISSUE, SEEMS FAR LESS IMPORTANT HERE THAN IN OTHER TRANSITIONS.



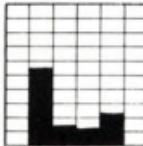
RATHER THAN ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SEPARATE MOMENTS, THE READER HERE MUST ASSEMBLE A SINGLE MOMENT USING SCATTERED FRAGMENTS.



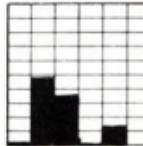
IN EXAMINING  
SEVERAL JAPANESE ARTISTS,  
WE FIND SIMILAR  
PROPORTIONS TO TEZUKA'S,  
INCLUDING A HIGH INCIDENCE  
OF THE FIFTH TYPE.



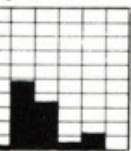
750 RIDER  
(石井いさみ?)



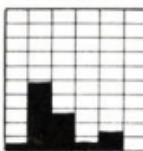
FATHER & SON  
HAYASI & OSIMA



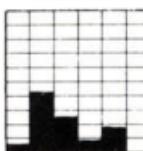
WOLF & CUB  
KOIKE & KOJIMA



AKIRA  
KATSUHIRO OTOMO

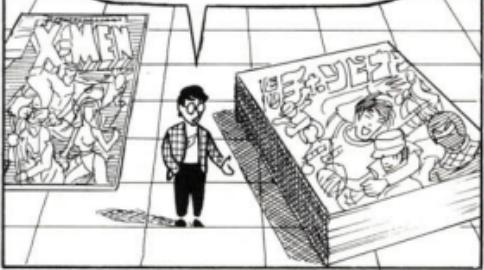


CYBORG 009  
SHOTARO ISHIMORI



PHOENIX  
OSAMU TEZUKA

LENGTH MAY BE ONE OF  
THE FACTORS AT WORK HERE. MOST  
JAPANESE COMICS FIRST APPEAR IN  
ENORMOUS ANTHOLOGY TITLES WHERE  
THE PRESSURE ISN'T AS GREAT ON  
ANY ONE INSTALMENT TO SHOW  
A LOT "HAPPENING."



WHEN INDIVIDUAL FEATURES ARE  
COLLECTED, THEY MAY RUN FOR  
THOUSANDS OF PAGES.



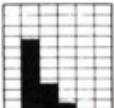
AS SUCH,  
DOZENS OF PANELS  
CAN BE DEVOTED  
TO PORTRAYING  
SLOW CINEMATIC  
MOVEMENT OR TO  
SETTING A MOOD.



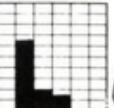
BUT I DON'T THINK  
LONGER STORIES ARE  
THE ONLY FACTOR,  
OR EVEN THE MOST  
IMPORTANT ONE.



I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING A  
BIT MORE FUNDAMENTAL TO THIS  
PARTICULAR EAST/WEST SPLIT.



HERGÉ



KIRBY



TEZUKA



TRADITIONAL  
WESTERN ART  
AND LITERATURE  
DON'T WANDER MUCH.  
ON THE WHOLE, WE'RE  
A PRETTY  
GOAL-ORIENTED  
CULTURE.

BUT, IN THE EAST,  
THERE'S A RICH  
TRADITION OF CYCLICAL  
AND LABYRINTHINE  
WORKS OF ART.

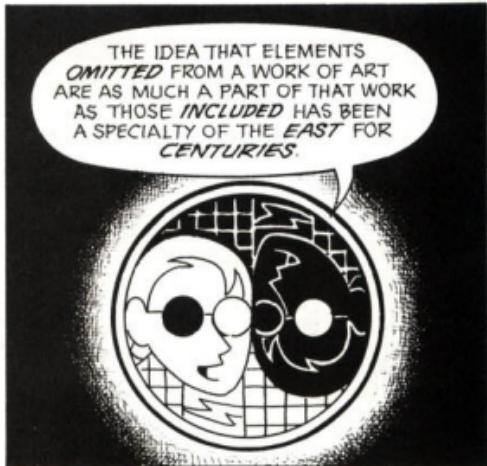


JAPANESE COMICS  
MAY BE HEIRS TO  
THIS TRADITION, IN  
THE WAY THEY SO  
OFTEN EMPHASIZE  
**BEING THERE OVER  
GETTING THERE**.

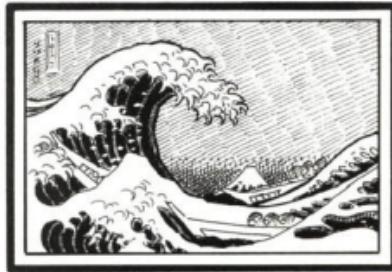
THROUGH THESE AND  
OTHER STORYTELLING  
TECHNIQUES, THE  
JAPANESE OFFER A  
VISION OF COMICS  
VERY DIFFERENT  
FROM OUR OWN.

FOR  
IN JAPAN  
MORE THAN  
ANYWHERE  
ELSE, COMICS  
IS AN ART--





IN THE GRAPHIC ARTS THIS HAS MEANT A GREATER FOCUS ON **FIGURE/GROUND** RELATIONSHIPS AND "NEGATIVE SPACE."



"THE GREAT WAVE OFF KANAGAWA" BY HOKUSAI (c.1829)  
(TURN THIS PICTURE UPSIDE DOWN TO SEE THE OTHER WAVE OF NEGATIVE SPACE....NATURE'S YIN AND YANG.)

IN MUSIC TOO, WHILE THE WESTERN CLASSICAL TRADITION WAS EMPHASIZING THE **CONTINUOUS, CONNECTED** WORLDS OF MELODY AND HARMONY, EASTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC WAS EQUALLY CONCERNED WITH THE ROLE OF **SILENCE!**



WEST



EAST

IN THE LAST **CENTURY OR TWO**, AS **WESTERN** CULTURAL INFLUENCES SWEPT THE **EAST**, SO TOO HAVE **EASTERN** AND **AFRICAN** IDEAS OF **FRAGMENTATION** AND **RHYTHM** SWEPT THE **WEST**.



FROM DEBUSSY TO STRAVINSKY TO COUNT BASIE, WESTERN MUSIC HAS GRADUALLY INCORPORATED A STRONG AWARENESS OF THE POWER OF **FRAGMENTATION** AND **INTERVALS**.





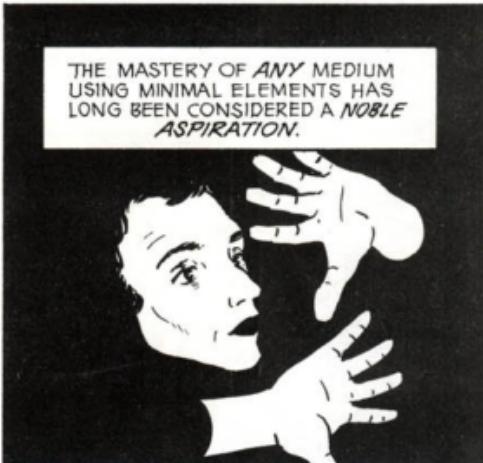
THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS IN WESTERN ART UPON THE PRIMACY OF FOREGROUND SUBJECTS AND CONTINUOUSNESS OF TONES GAVE WAY TO FRAGMENTATION AND A NEW AWARENESS OF THE PICTURE PLANE.



FACSIMILE  
OF 'FIGURE'  
BY PABLO PICASSO  
1948



'ANSWER: "THE BIG N"  
(SEE PAGE 216)



IN THE VISUAL ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.



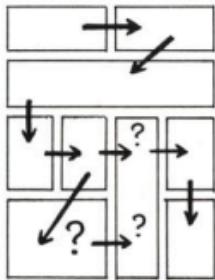
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\*"BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



**WE ASSUME AS READERS THAT WE WILL KNOW WHAT ORDER TO READ PANELS IN, BUT THE BUSINESS OF ARRANGING THOSE PANELS IS ACTUALLY QUITE COMPLEX.**

SO COMPLEX, IN FACT, THAT EVEN SEASONED PROS WILL SOMETIMES BLOW IT.



AS CLOSURE **BETWEEN** PANELS BECOMES MORE INTENSE, READER INTERPRETATION BECOMES FAR MORE **ELASTIC**.



AND **MANAGING** IT BECOMES MORE COMPLICATED FOR THE **CREATOR**.

SOME ARTISTS CAN BE DELIBERATELY AMBIGUOUS, OF COURSE, AND OFFER US NO STRICT INTERPRETATION TO GO ON.



CLOSURE CAN BE A POWERFUL FORCE **WITHIN** PANELS AS WELL AS **BETWEEN** THEM, WHEN ARTISTS CHOOSE TO SHOW ONLY A SMALL **PIECE** OF THE PICTURE.



COMICS CAN BE MADENINGLY VAGUE ABOUT WHAT IT SHOWS US.



BY SHOWING LITTLE OR NOTHING OF A GIVEN SCENE--



--AND OFFERING ONLY CLUES TO THE READER--



--THE ARTIST CAN TRIGGER ANY NUMBER OF IMAGES IN THE READER'S IMAGINATION.



READERS FACED  
WITH PANELS LIKE THESE  
WILL HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY  
DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS.

CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!

BY CONSTRUCTING WHOLE  
IMAGES BASED ON THESE  
FRAGMENTS, READERS ARE  
PERFORMING CLOSURE,  
JUST AS --

# WHOOSH!

= Split Split =

?

Ding! Ding!

UH-- JUST AS  
READERS COMPLETE  
AN ACTION OR  
IDEA **BETWEEN--**

OW!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

AHEM! I SAY,  
JUST AS READERS  
COMPLETE --

-- AN  
ACTION OR--  
OW! OW!

STOP THAT!

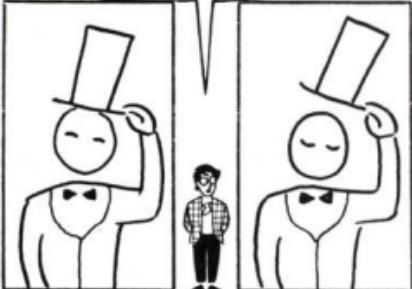
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

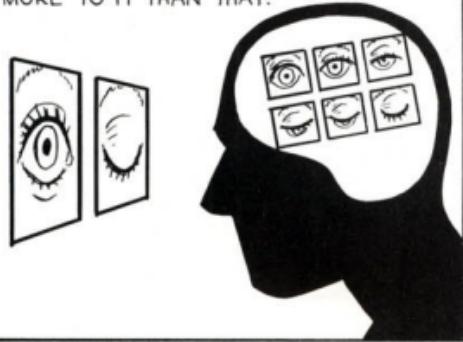
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES  
WITHIN EACH PANEL, IT'S THE  
POWER OF CLOSURE **BETWEEN**  
PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST  
INTERESTING.



THERE'S SOMETHING  
STRANGE AND WONDERFUL  
THAT HAPPENS IN THIS  
BLANK RIBBON OF  
PAPER.

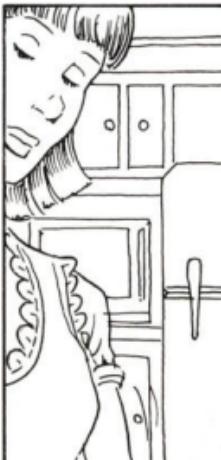
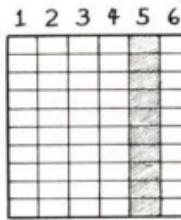


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS  
THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF  
*IN-BETWEENER* -- FILLING IN THE GAPS  
BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR*  
MIGHT-- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL  
MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT  
THE **FIFTH** TYPE OF TRANSITION,  
THE ONE SO POPULAR  
IN JAPAN.

HERE'S  
A FOUR-PANEL  
ESTABLISHING  
SHOT OF AN  
OLD-FASHIONED  
KITCHEN SCENE.



NOW, MOST OF YOU SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE **PERCEIVING** THAT YOU'RE IN A KITCHEN FROM THOSE FOUR PANELS ALONE.



WITH A **HIGH DEGREE OF CLOSURE**, YOUR MIND IS TAKING FOUR PICTURE FRAGMENTS AND CONSTRUCTING AN ENTIRE SCENE OUT OF THOSE FRAGMENTS.



BUT THE SCENE YOUR MIND CONSTRUCTS FROM THOSE **FOUR PANELS** IS A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE FROM THE SCENE CONSTRUCTED FROM OUR TRADITIONAL **ONE-PANEL ESTABLISHING SHOT!**



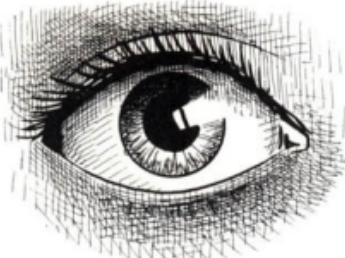
LOOK AGAIN. YOU'VE BEEN IN KITCHENS BEFORE, YOU KNOW WHAT A POT ON THE BOIL SOUNDS LIKE; DO YOU ONLY HEAR IT IN THAT FIRST PANEL?



AND WHAT ABOUT THE **CHOPPING** SOUND? DOES THAT ONLY LAST A **PANEL** OR DOES IT **PERSIST**? CAN YOU **SMELL** THIS KITCHEN? FEEL IT? TASTE IT?



COMICS IS A **MONO-SENSORY** MEDIUM. IT RELIES ON ONLY ONE OF THE SENSES TO CONVEY A WORLD OF EXPERIENCE.



BUT WHAT OF THE OTHER **FOUR?**

WE REPRESENT SOUND THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS WORD BALLOONS.



WE REPRESENT SIGHT THROUGH PICTURES SUCH AS THIS.

BUT ALL IN ALL, IT IS AN EXCLUSIVELY VISUAL REPRESENTATION.



WITHIN THESE PANELS, WE CAN ONLY CONVEY INFORMATION VISUALLY.



BUT BETWEEN PANELS, NONE OF OUR SENSES ARE REQUIRED AT ALL.



WHICH IS WHY **ALL** OF OUR SENSES ARE ENGAGED!



SEVERAL TIMES  
ON EVERY PAGE  
THE READER IS  
RELEASED--LIKE A  
TRAPEEZE ARTIST--  
INTO THE OPEN AIR  
OF IMAGINATION...

...THEN CAUGHT  
BY THE OUTSTRETCHED  
ARMS OF THE EVER-  
PRESENT NEXT  
PANEL!

CAUGHT **QUICKLY**  
SO AS NOT TO LET  
THE READER FALL  
INTO CONFUSION  
OR BOREDOM.

BUT IS IT POSSIBLE  
THAT CLOSURE CAN  
BE SO MANAGED IN  
SOME CASES--



SINCE CARTOONS ALREADY EXIST AS CONCEPTS FOR THE READER, THEY TEND TO FLOW EASILY THROUGH THE CONCEPTUAL TERRITORY *BETWEEN PANELS*.



IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER *SEAMLESSLY*.

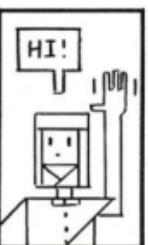
BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



AND SO, WHAT SEEMED LIKE A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF MOMENTS IN THE LAST EXAMPLE, HERE LOOKS A LITTLE MORE LIKE A SERIES OF **STILL PICTURES**...



SIMILARLY, I THINK WHEN COMICS ART VEERS CLOSER TO CONCERN'S OF THE **PICTURE PLANE**, CLOSURE CAN BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, THOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.



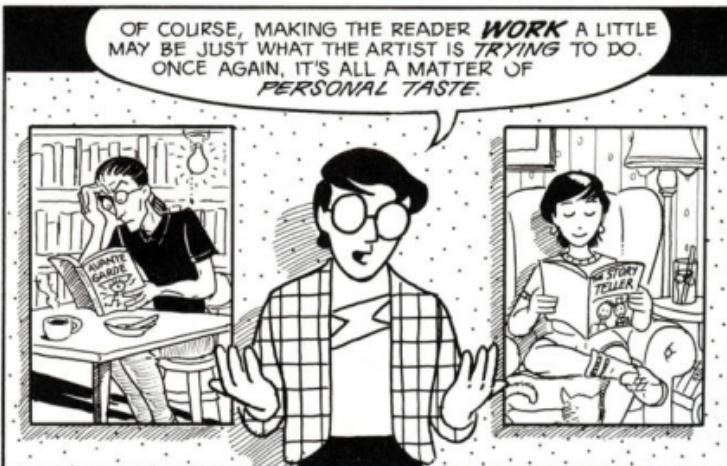
A GOOD RULE OF THUMB IS THAT IF READERS ARE PARTICULARLY **AWARE** OF THE ART IN A GIVEN STORY--

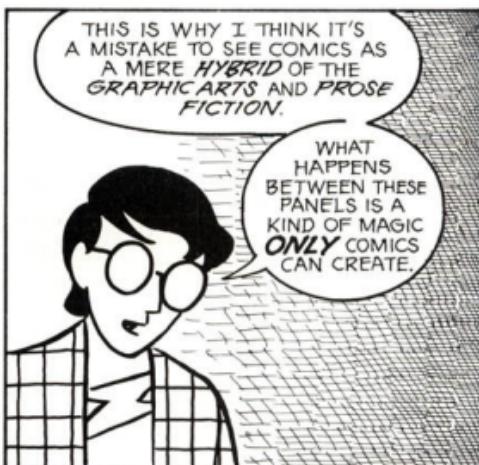
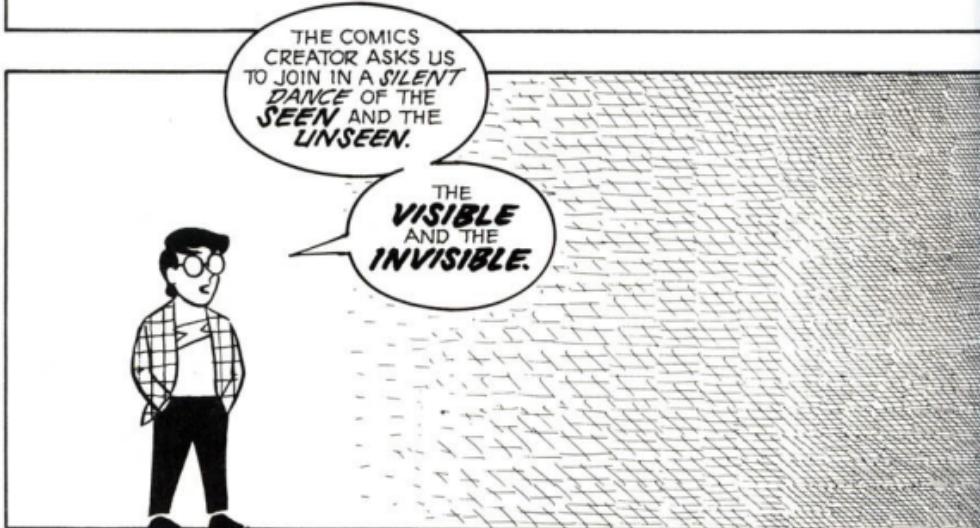
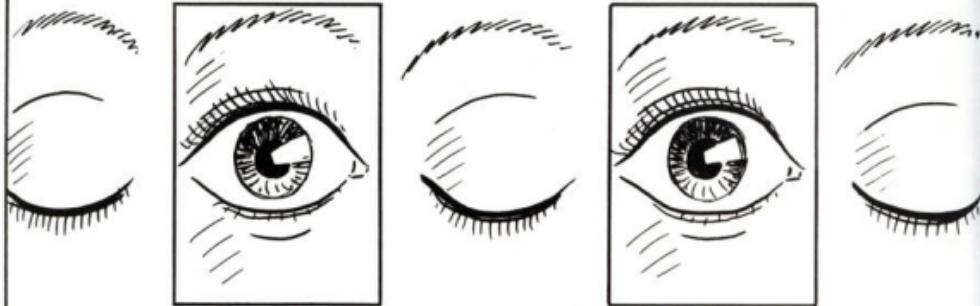


NOW IT'S THE **UNIFYING PROPERTIES** OF DESIGN THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A **WHOLE**, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE **PANELS**.

--THEN CLOSURE IS PROBABLY NOT HAPPENING WITHOUT SOME EFFORT.

OF COURSE, MAKING THE READER **WORK** A LITTLE MAY BE JUST WHAT THE ARTIST IS **TRYING** TO DO. ONCE AGAIN, IT'S ALL A MATTER OF **PERSONAL TASTE**.







ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOU AND HOPE THAT THEY'RE CORRECT--



--JUST AS WE ALL ASSUME, EVERY DAY THAT THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN MEETS THE EYE.



ALL I ASK OF YOU IS A LITTLE FAITH--

--AND A WORLD OF IMAGINATION.

# CHAPTER FOUR

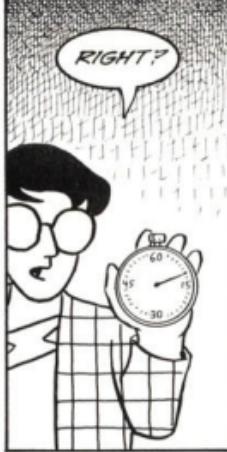
## TIME FRAMES.

SO! LET'S SEE:  
EACH PANEL OF A  
COMIC SHOWS A  
**SINGLE MOMENT**  
IN TIME.

AND **BETWEEN**  
THOSE FROZEN  
MOMENTS--BETWEEN  
THE PANELS--OUR  
MINDS FILL IN THE  
**INTERVENING MOMENTS**,  
CREATING THE ILLUSION  
OF TIME AND MOTION.

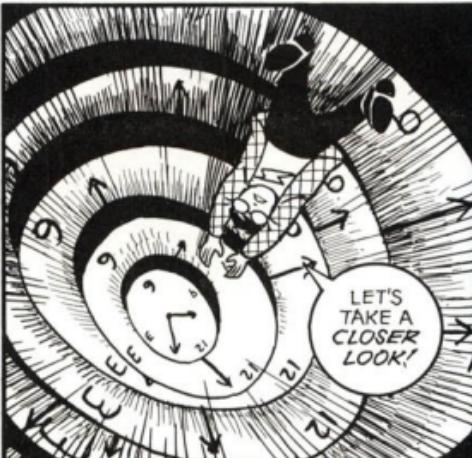
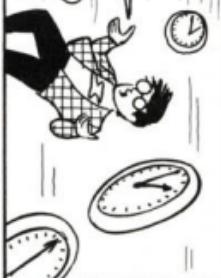


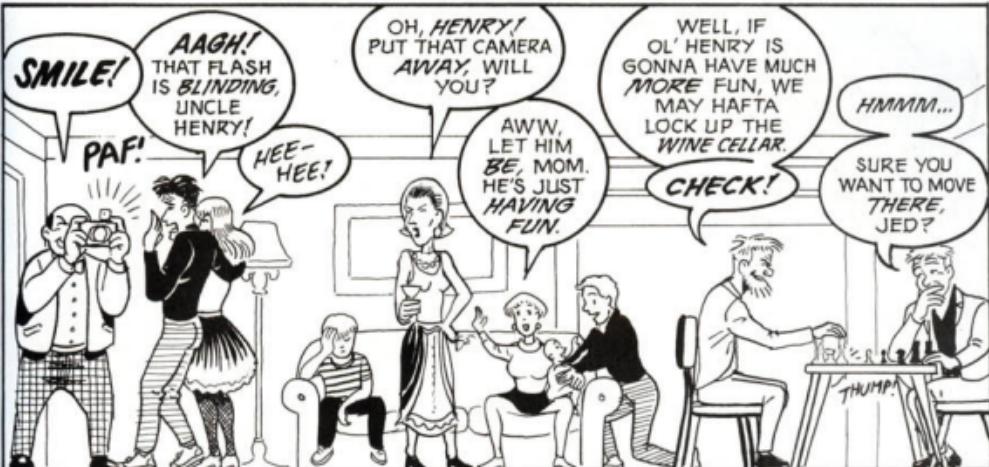
LIKE A LINE DRAWN  
BETWEEN TWO POINTS.



NAAH!  
OF COURSE  
NOT!

TIME IN COMICS  
IS INFINITELY  
WEIRDER THAN  
THAT!





JUST AS PICTURES AND THE INTERVALS **BETWEEN** THEM CREATE THE ILLUSION OF TIME THROUGH CLOSURE, WORDS INTRODUCE TIME BY REPRESENTING THAT WHICH CAN ONLY EXIST **IN** TIME -- **SOUND**.





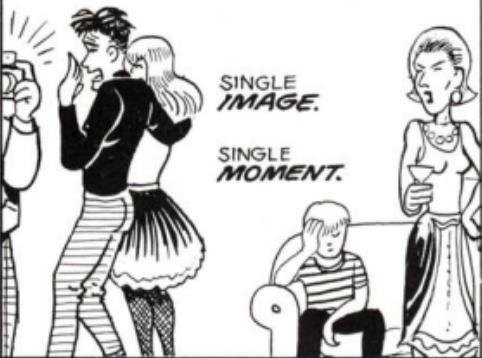
BUT HOW COULD THIS BE ANYTHING BUT A SINGLE MOMENT? OUR EYES HAVE BEEN WELL-TRAINED BY THE PHOTOGRAPH AND BY REPRESENTATIONAL ART TO SEE ANY SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE AS A SINGLE INSTANT IN TIME.



--THOSE FIGURES, FACES AND WORDS ARE MATCHED IN TIME AS WELL.



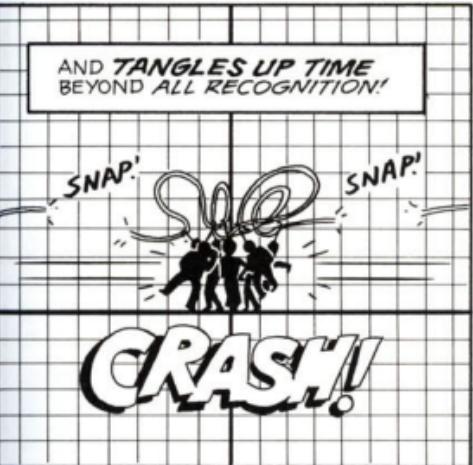
THE PROPERTIES OF THE SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE, MEANWHILE, TEND TO MATCH EACH FIGURE WITH EVERY OTHER FIGURE.



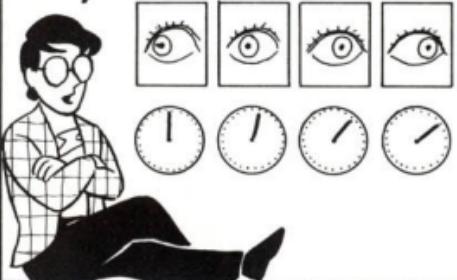
PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING LEFT TO RIGHT, THIS PUTS ALL THE IMAGES ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



AND TANGLES UP TIME BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!



PERHAPS WE'VE BEEN TOO CONDITIONED BY PHOTOGRAPHY TO PERCEIVE SINGLE IMAGES AS SINGLE MOMENTS. AFTER ALL, IT DOES TAKE AN EYE TIME TO MOVE ACROSS SCENES IN REAL LIFE!



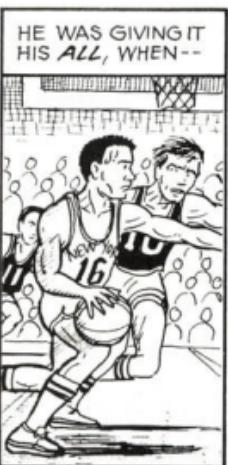
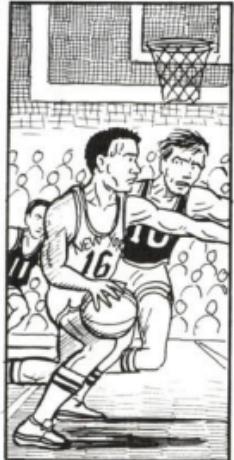
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL "READ" THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT TIME SLOT.



IN SOME RESPECTS THIS PANEL BY ITSELF ACTUALLY FITS OUR DEFINITION OF COMICS! ALL IT NEEDS IS A FEW GUTTERS THROWN IN TO CLARIFY THE SEQUENCE.



ONE PANEL, OPERATING AS SEVERAL PANELS.



THESE ICONS WE CALL PANELS OR "FRAMES" HAVE NO **FIXED** OR **ABSOLUTE MEANING**, LIKE THE ICONS OF **LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION**.



NOR IS THEIR MEANING AS **FLUID** AND **MALLEABLE** AS THE SORTS OF ICONS WE CALL **PICTURES**.



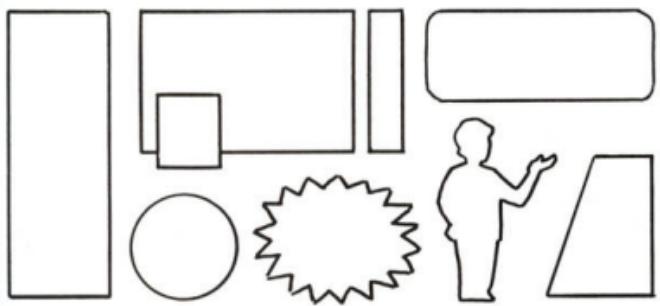
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



THE **DURATIONS** OF THAT TIME AND THE **DIMENSIONS** OF THAT SPACE ARE DEFINED MORE BY THE **CONTENTS** OF THE PANEL THAN BY THE PANEL ITSELF.\*



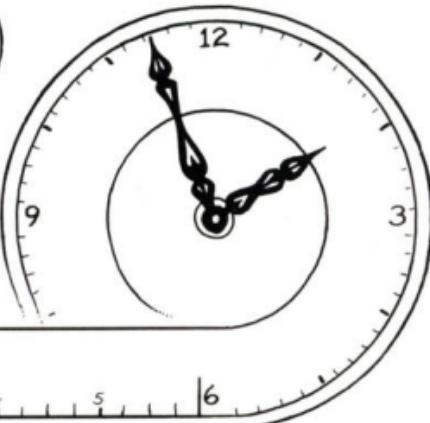
PANEL SHAPES VARY CONSIDERABLY THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "MEANINGS" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY CAN AFFECT THE READING EXPERIENCE.



WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AS **DEPICTED** IN COMICS AND TIME AS **PERCEIVED** BY THE READER.



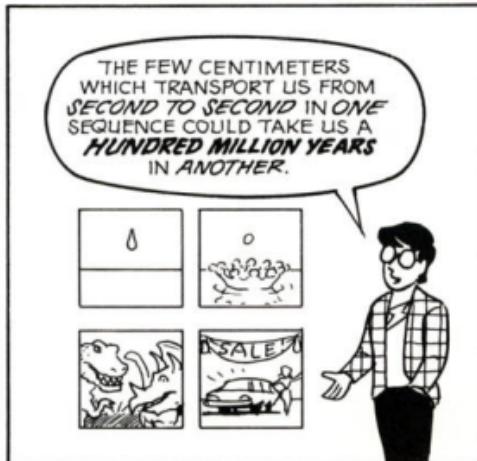
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS  
WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE  
TIME SPATIALLY, FOR IN THE WORLD  
OF COMICS, TIME AND SPACE  
ARE ONE AND THE SAME.



THE PROBLEM  
IS THERE'S NO  
CONVERSION  
CHART!

THE FEW CENTIMETERS  
WHICH TRANSPORT US FROM  
SECOND TO SECOND IN ONE  
SEQUENCE COULD TAKE US A  
**HUNDRED MILLION YEARS**  
IN ANOTHER.

SO, AS READERS,  
WE'RE LEFT WITH ONLY  
A VAGUE SENSE  
THAT AS OUR EYES  
ARE MOVING THROUGH  
**SPACE**, THEY'RE ALSO  
MOVING THROUGH  
**TIME**--WE JUST  
DON'T KNOW BY  
**HOW MUCH!**



IN MOST CASES IT'S NOT HARD TO  
MAKE AN EDUCATED GUESS AS TO THE  
DURATION OF A GIVEN SEQUENCE, SO  
LONG AS THE ELEMENTS OF THAT  
SEQUENCE ARE FAMILIAR TO US.



FROM A LIFETIME  
OF CONVERSATIONS,  
WE CAN BE SURE  
THAT A "PAUSE"  
PANEL LIKE THIS  
LASTS FOR NO MORE  
THAN SEVERAL  
SECONDS.



BUT IF THE CREATOR OF THIS SCENE WANTED TO LENGTHEN THAT PAUSE, HOW COULD HE OR SHE DO SO? ONE OBVIOUS SOLUTION WOULD BE TO ADD MORE PANELS, BUT IS THAT THE ONLY WAY?



IS THERE ANY WAY TO MAKE A SINGLE SILENT PANEL LIKE THIS ONE SEEM LONGER? HOW ABOUT WIDENING THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS? ANY DIFFERENCE?



WE'VE SEEN HOW TIME CAN BE CONTROLLED THROUGH THE CONTENT OF PANELS, THE NUMBER OF PANELS AND CLOSURE BETWEEN PANELS, BUT THERE'S STILL ONE MORE.



AS UNLIKELY AS IT SOUNDS, THE PANEL SHAPE CAN ACTUALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR PERCEPTION OF TIME. EVEN THOUGH THIS LONG PANEL HAS THE SAME BASIC "MEANING" AS ITS SHORTER VERSIONS, STILL IT HAS THE FEELING OF GREATER LENGTH!





EVER NOTICED HOW THE WORDS "SHORT" OR "LONG" CAN REFER EITHER TO THE **FIRST** DIMENSION OR TO THE **FOURTH?**

IN A MEDIUM WHERE TIME AND SPACE **MERGE** SO COMPLETELY, THE DISTINCTION OFTEN **VANISHES!**



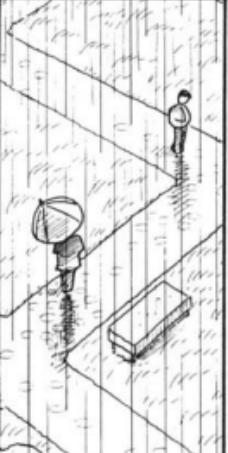
AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE CLASSIC RECTANGLE IS USED MOST OFTEN.



MOST OF US ARE SO USED TO THE STANDARD **RECTANGULAR** FORMAT THAT A "**BORDERLESS**" PANEL SUCH AS THIS CAN TAKE ON A **TIMELESS QUALITY**.



WHEN THE **CONTENT** OF A SILENT PANEL OFFERS NO CLUES AS TO ITS **DURATION**, IT CAN ALSO PRODUCE A SENSE OF **TIMELESSNESS**.



BECAUSE OF ITS **UNRESOLVED NATURE**, SUCH A PANEL MAY **LINGER** IN THE READER'S MIND.

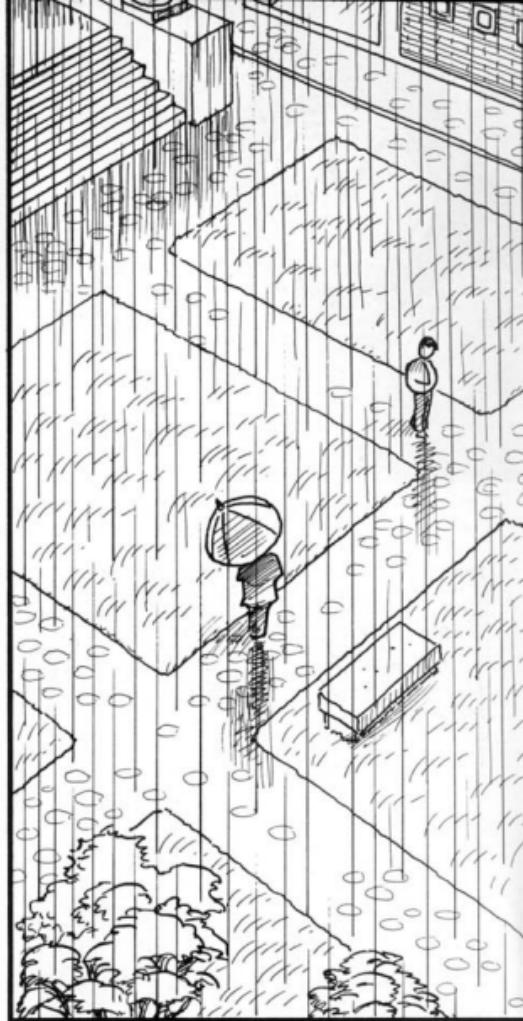


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH FOLLOW IT.



WHEN "BLEEDS" ARE USED -- I.E., WHEN A PANEL RUNS OFF THE EDGE OF THE PAGE -- THIS EFFECT IS COMPOUNDED.

TIME IS NO LONGER CONTAINED BY THE FAMILIAR ICON OF THE CLOSED PANEL, BUT INSTEAD HEMORRHAGES AND ESCAPES INTO TIMELESS SPACE.



SUCH IMAGES CAN SET THE MOOD OR A SENSE OF PLACE FOR WHOLE SCENES THROUGH THEIR LINGERING TIMELESS PRESENCE.



ONCE AGAIN, THIS IS A TECHNIQUE USED MOST OFTEN IN JAPAN AND ONLY RECENTLY ADOPTED HERE IN THE WEST.



IN COMICS,  
AS IN FILM,  
TELEVISION AND  
"REAL LIFE,"  
IT IS ALWAYS  
**NOW.**

THIS  
PANEL AND  
THIS PANEL  
**ALONE**  
REPRESENTS THE  
**PRESENT.**

ANY PANEL  
BEFORE THIS--  
THAT LAST ONE,  
FOR INSTANCE--  
REPRESENTS THE  
**PAST.**

LIKewise, ALL  
PANELS STILL TO  
COME--THIS **NEXT**  
PANEL, FOR INSTANCE--  
REPRESENT THE  
**FUTURE.**

BUT **UNLIKE**  
OTHER MEDIA, IN  
COMICS, THE PAST  
IS MORE THAN JUST  
MEMORIES FOR  
THE AUDIENCE AND  
THE FUTURE IS  
MORE THAN JUST  
POSSIBILITIES!

BOTH  
PAST AND  
FUTURE ARE  
REAL AND  
VISIBLE AND  
**ALL  
AROUND US!**

WHEREVER YOUR  
EYES ARE FOCUSED,  
THAT'S **NOW**. BUT  
AT THE SAME TIME  
YOUR EYES TAKE IN  
THE SURROUNDING  
LANDSCAPE OF  
PAST AND FUTURE!

LIKE A STORM FRONT, THE EYE MOVES  
OVER THE COMICS PAGE, PUSHING THE  
WARM, HIGH-PRESSURE **FUTURE** AHEAD  
OF IT, LEAVING THE COOL, LOW-PRESSURE  
**PAST** IN ITS WAKE.



WHEREVER  
THE EYE HITS  
LAND, WE EXPECT  
IT TO BEGIN  
MOVING  
**FORWARD.**

BUT  
EYES, LIKE  
STORMS, CAN  
CHANGE  
DIRECTION!



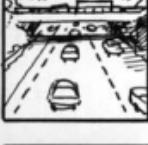
YET WE SELDOM DO CHANGE DIRECTION, EXCEPT TO RE-READ OR REVIEW PASSAGES. IT'S LEFT-TO-RIGHT, UP-TO-DOWN, PAGE AFTER PAGE.



THE IDEA THAT THE READER MIGHT CHOOSE A DIRECTION IS STILL CONSIDERED EXOTIC.



THIS MAY, IN PART, BE THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER MEDIA LIKE FILM AND TELEVISION WHERE VIEWER CHOICE HAS NOT GENERALLY BEEN FEASIBLE.



CONDITIONED AS WE ARE TO READ LEFT-TO-RIGHT AND UP-TO-DOWN, A MISCHIEVOUS CARTOONIST CAN PLAY ANY NUMBER OF TRICKS ON US.





FOR NOW, THESE QUESTIONS ARE THE TERRITORY OF GAMES AND STRANGE LITTLE EXPERIMENTS.

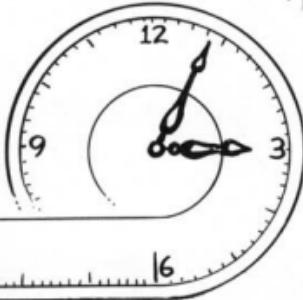
BUT VIEWER PARTICIPATION IS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AN ENORMOUS ISSUE IN OTHER MEDIA.

HOW COMICS ADDRESSES THIS ISSUE--OR FAILS TO--COULD PLAY A CRUCIAL PART IN DEFINING THE ROLE OF COMICS IN THE NEW CENTURY.

TIME WILL TELL.



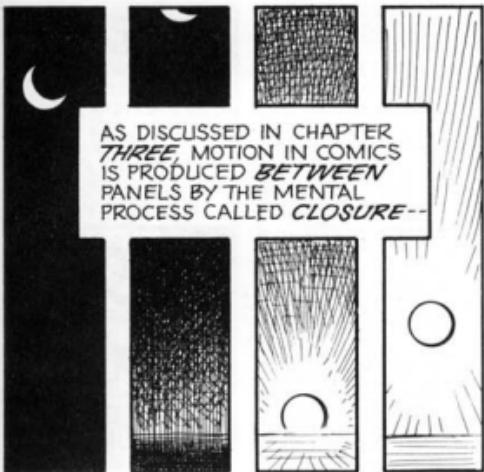
AS MENTIONED EARLIER,  
TIME AND SPACE IN THE WORLD OF  
COMICS ARE CLOSELY LINKED.



AS A RESULT,  
SO TOO ARE THE  
ISSUES OF TIME  
AND MOTION.



AS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER  
THREE, MOTION IN COMICS  
IS PRODUCED *BETWEEN*  
PANELS BY THE MENTAL  
PROCESS CALLED *CLOSURE*—



--USUALLY  
BY TRANSITION  
TYPES ONE  
TWO... BUT LET'S  
NOT GET INTO  
**THAT** AGAIN!

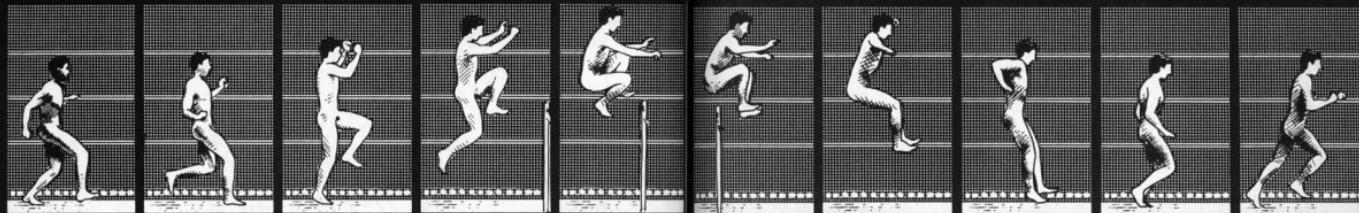


DESPITE COMICS' THREE THOUSAND  
YEAR HISTORY, IT WASN'T UNTIL  
TÖPFER'S MID-1800'S DOODLINGS  
THAT SPECIFIC MOTIONS WERE  
PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-  
FAMILIAR PANEL-TO-PANEL FORM.



WITHIN  
A FEW YEARS,  
HOWEVER,  
MOTION WAS A  
**HOT TOPIC**  
INDEED!





COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO CAPTURE MOTION THROUGH SCIENCE!

BY 1880, INVENTORS THE WORLD OVER KNEW THAT 'MOVING PICTURES' WERE JUST AROUND THE CORNER. EVERYONE WANTED TO BE FIRST!

MY STROBOSCOPE IS SUPERIOR IN EVERY WAY TO THE OBSOLETE ZOOTROPE!

BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE WILL SHOW YOU!

HA! CHILD'S PLAY! THEY ARE BUT MERE TOYS NEXT TO THE AWESOME PHANTASMATROPE!

FRAUDS ALL! MY ZOOPIRAXINOSCOPE WILL--

EVENTUALLY THOMAS EDISON FILED THE FIRST PATENT ON A PROCESS USING STRIPS OF CLEAR PLASTIC PHOTOS AND FILM WAS OFF AND RUNNING!

IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A WORLD--

--FILLED WITH MOTION--

--THEN BE PREPARED TO PAINT MOTION!

DUCHAMP, MORE CONCERNED WITH THE IDEA OF MOTION THAN THE SENSATION, WOULD EVENTUALLY REDUCE SUCH CONCEPTS AS MOTION TO A SINGLE LINE.

AS THE MOVING PICTURE BEGAN ITS SPECTACULAR RISE, A FEW OF THE MORE RADICAL PAINTERS OF THE DAY EXPLORED THE IDEA THAT MOTION COULD BE DEPICTED BY A SINGLE IMAGE ON CANVAS.

**THE FUTURISTS** IN ITALY AND **MARCEL DUCHAMP** IN FRANCE BEGAN THE SYSTEMATIC DECOMPOSITION OF MOVING IMAGES IN A STATIC MEDIUM.



Girl Running on a Balcony  
by Balla



Nude Descending a Staircase #2  
by Duchamp

IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!

DUCHAMP SOON MOVED ON, THE FUTURISTS DISBANDED AND FINE ARTISTS GENERALLY LOST INTEREST IN THIS OTHER TYPE OF 'MOVING PICTURE.'

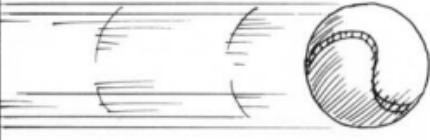
BUT THROUGHOUT THIS SAME PERIOD ANOTHER MEDIUM, LESS CONSPICUOUSLY, HAD BEEN INVESTIGATING THIS SAME AREA.

I'M SURE YOU CAN ALL GUESS WHICH MEDIUM I MEAN!





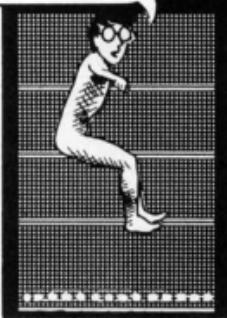
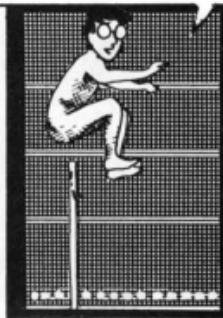
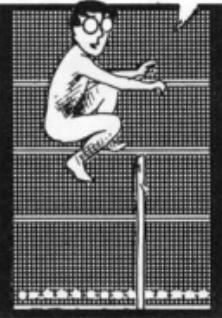
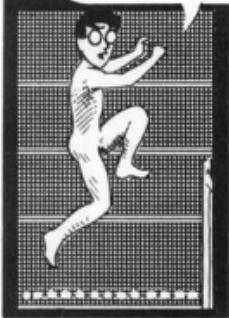
FROM ITS **EARLIEST DAYS**, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A **STATIC MEDIUM**.



HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE **TIME STANDS STILL?**



THOUGH SEQUENTIAL ART SURVIVED FOR MANY CENTURIES **WITHOUT** DEPICTING MOTION, ONCE THE GENIE WAS OUT OF THE BOTTLE IT WAS PERHAPS **INEVITABLE** THAT MORE AND MORE EFFICIENT MEANS WOULD BE SOUGHT. AT FIRST, THIS SEARCH CENTERED ON **MULTIPLE IMAGES IN SEQUENCE**.



BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A **SPAN** OF TIME THROUGH SOUND--



IN THE BEGINNING, MOTION LINES--OR "ZIP-RIBBONS" AS SOME CALL THEM--WERE WILD, MESSY, ALMOST **DESPERATE** ATTEMPTS TO REPRESENT THE PATHS OF MOVING OBJECTS THROUGH SPACE.



"POPEYE" AND "BRASCO THE MONK" © KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.

OVER THE YEARS, THESE LINES BECAME MORE REFINED AND STYLIZED, EVEN **DIAGRAMMATIC**.



EVENTUALLY, IN THE HANDS OF HEROIC FANTASY ARTISTS LIKE **BILL EVERETT** AND **JACK KIRBY**--



--THOSE SAME LINES BECAME **SO** STYLIZED AS TO ALMOST HAVE A **LIFE** AND **PHYSICAL PRESENCE ALL THEIR OWN!**





IN THIS APPROACH, BOTH THE *MOVING OBJECT* AND THE *BACKGROUND* ARE DRAWN IN A *CLEAR, ARTICULATED* STYLE, AND THE *PATH* OF MOTION IS IMPOSED *OVER* THE SCENE.

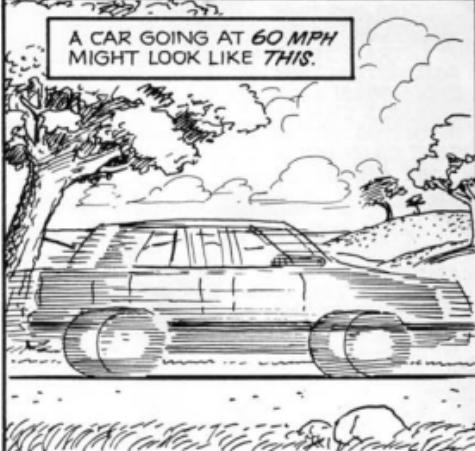


\* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRISTEN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

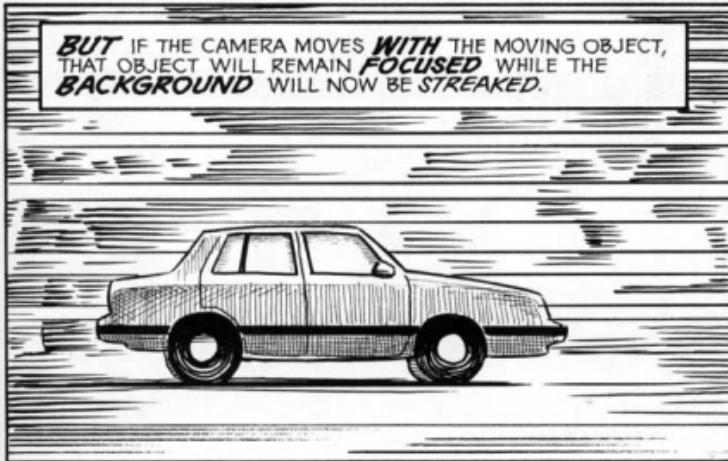
COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*,  
WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A  
CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO  
FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE,  
AN INTERESTING BLURRING EFFECT OCCURS.



A CAR GOING AT 60 MPH  
MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS.



**BUT** IF THE CAMERA MOVES **WITH** THE MOVING OBJECT,  
THAT OBJECT WILL REMAIN **FOCUSED** WHILE THE  
**BACKGROUND** WILL NOW BE STREAKED.



**AMERICAN** COMICS  
ARTISTS TOOK  
LITTLE OR NO INTEREST  
IN THIS KIND OF  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
TRICKERY.



AND IN **EUROPE**  
WHERE MOTION  
LINES WERE USED  
ONLY SPARINGLY,  
IT WAS LIKEWISE  
IGNORED.



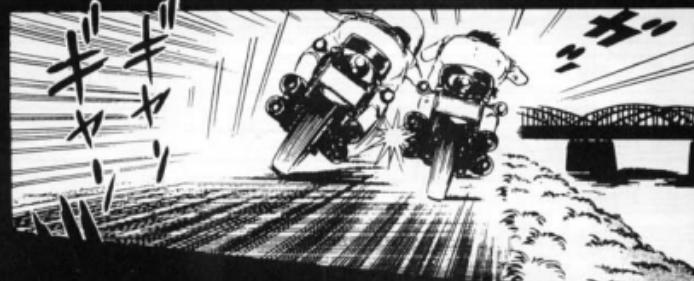
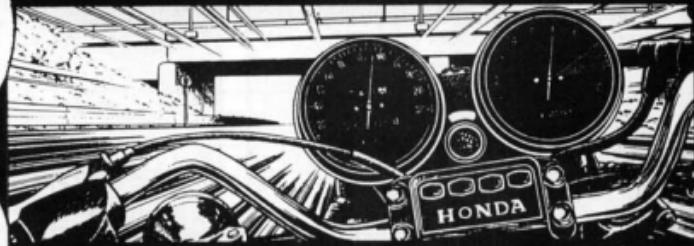
BUT IN **JAPAN**, ONCE  
AGAIN, A VERY DIFFERENT  
COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED  
THIS VERY DIFFERENT  
CONCEPT OF MOTION AS  
**THEIR OWN!**



"SUBJECTIVE MOTION," AS I CALL IT, OPERATES ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IF OBSERVING A MOVING OBJECT CAN BE INVOLVING, BEING THAT OBJECT SHOULD BE MORE SO.

JAPANESE ARTISTS, STARTING IN THE LATE 60'S, BEGAN PUTTING THEIR READERS "IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT" WITH PANELS LIKE THESE.

AND STARTING IN THE MID-EIGHTIES, A FEW AMERICAN ARTISTS BEGAN TO ADOPT THE EFFECT IN THEIR OWN WORK, UNTIL BY THE EARLY NINETIES IT HAS BECOME FAIRLY COMMON.

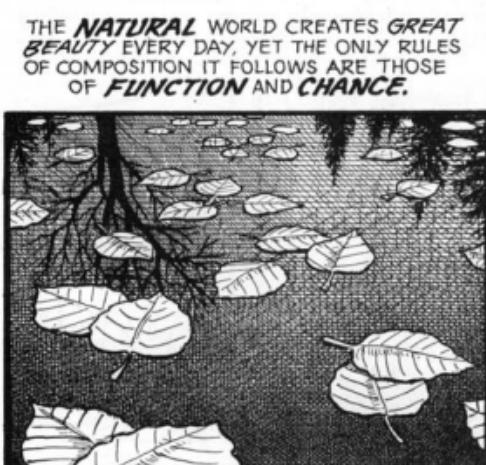


©石井いさみ?

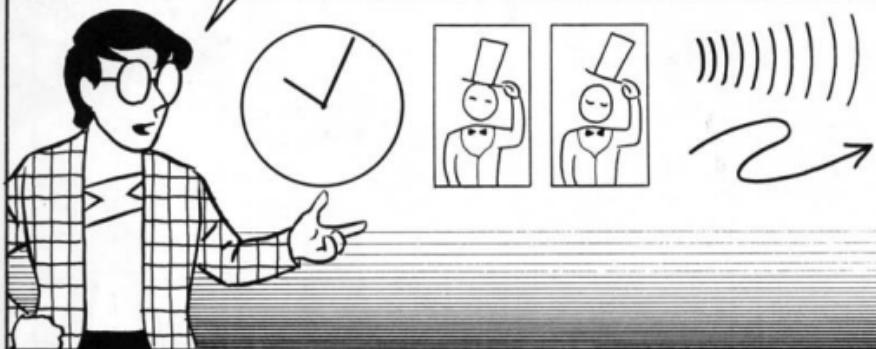


ARE THESE THE ONLY WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A SINGLE PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.





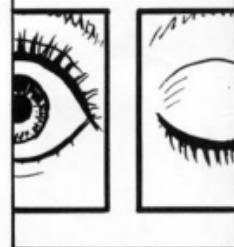
AS WE'VE SEEN, THE INTERACTION OF TIME AND COMICS GENERALLY LEADS US TO ONE OF TWO SUBJECTS:  
**SOUND OR MOTION.**



SOUND BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS: WORD BALLOONS AND SOUND EFFECTS.

BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE DURATION OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF SOUND ITSELF AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF ACTION AND REACTION.

MOTION ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS. THE FIRST TYPE--PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE--WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN CHAPTER.



THE OTHER TYPE--MOTION WITHIN PANELS--CAN BE FURTHER DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT STYLES. I'VE COVERED THE ONES I KNOW, BUT THERE MAY BE MANY OTHERS. TIME WILL TELL.



THE WORKINGS OF TIME IN COMICS SHOULD BE AS SIMPLE AS--



I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT  
WHAT MAKES COMICS "TICK" FOR  
YEARS AND I'M STILL AMAZED  
BY THE STRANGENESS OF IT ALL.

SNAP! SNAK SNAP!

CRASH!

BUT  
NO MATTER HOW  
BIZARRE THE  
WORKINGS OF TIME  
IN COMICS IS--

--THE FACE  
IT PRESENTS TO  
THE READER--



--IS ONE  
OF SIMPLE  
NORMALITY.

CLAK



OR THE  
ILLUSION OF IT,  
ANYWAY.

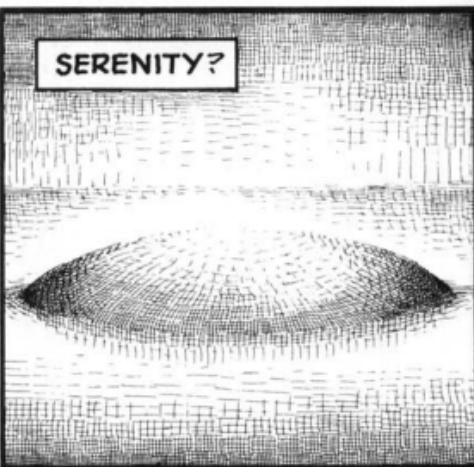
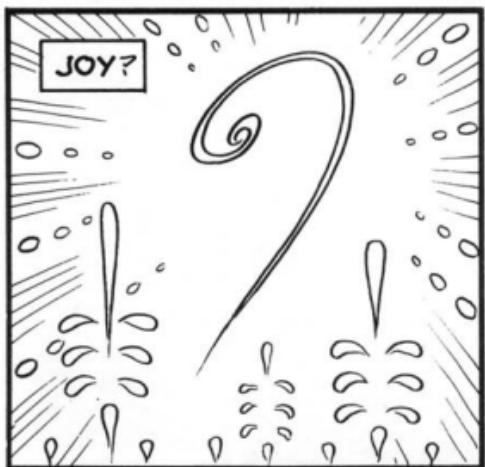


ALL  
DEPENDS ON  
YOUR FRAME  
OF MIND.

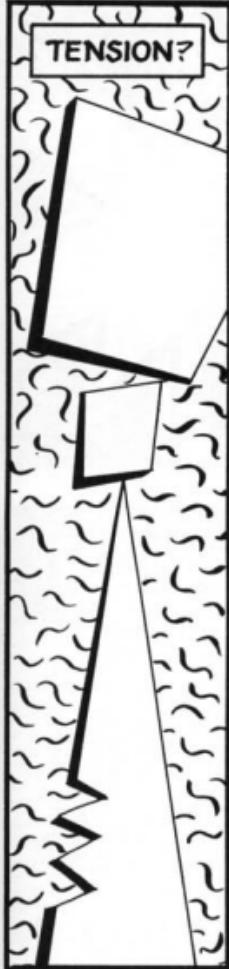


## CHAPTER FIVE

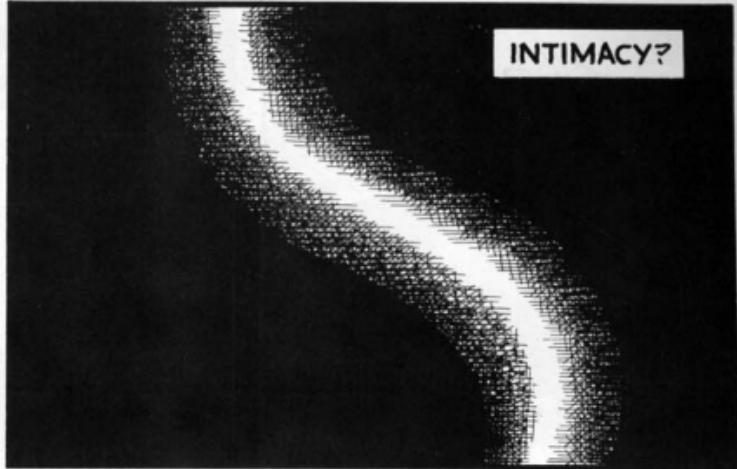
LIVING IN LINE.



TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?



PRIDE?



ANXIETY?



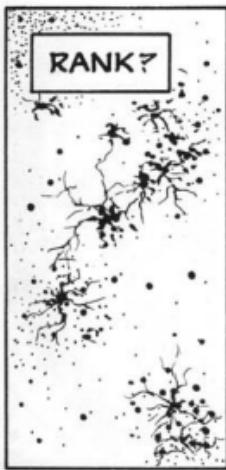
CAN **ONE**  
SENSE SPEAK FOR  
ALL **FIVE?**



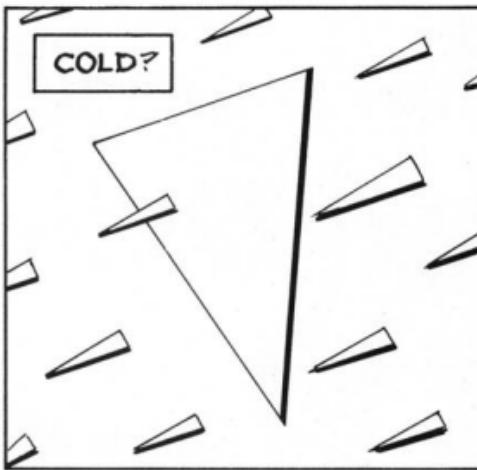
LOUD?



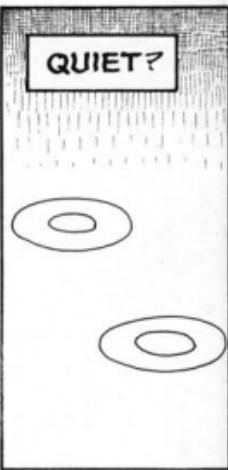
RANK?



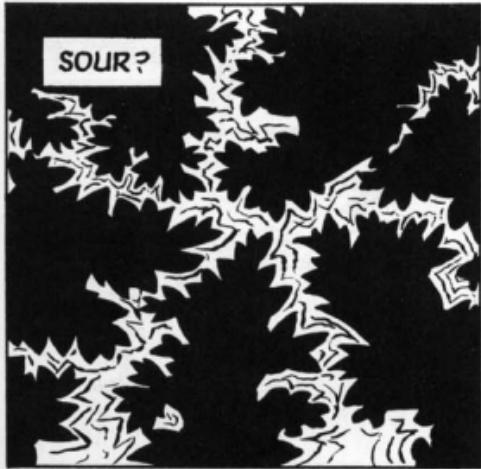
COLD?



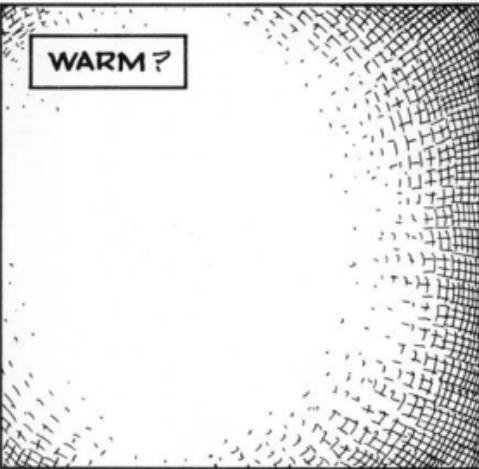
QUIET?



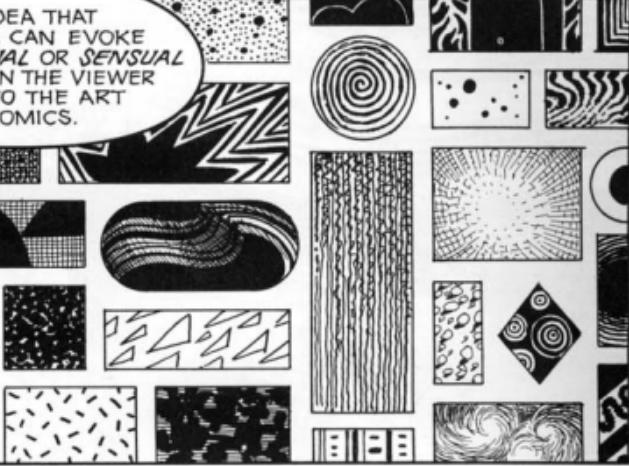
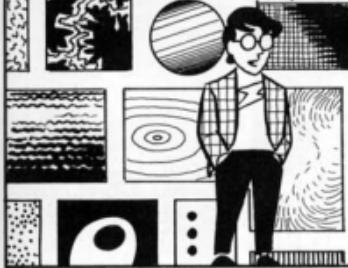
SOUR?



WARM?



THE IDEA THAT  
A PICTURE CAN EVOKE  
AN EMOTIONAL OR SENSUAL  
RESPONSE IN THE VIEWER  
IS VITAL TO THE ART  
OF COMICS.

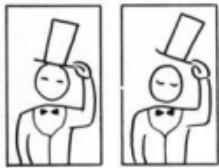


SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS.

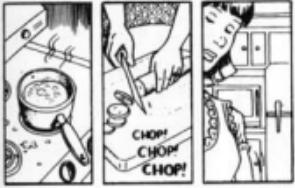
IN CHAPTERS **THREE** AND **FOUR**  
WE INVESTIGATED THE VARIOUS WAYS  
TIME AND MOTION COULD BE PORTRAYED,  
BOTH **BETWEEN** PANELS, THROUGH  
**CLOSURE**--

--AND  
WITHIN A  
**SINGLE**  
PANEL OR  
IMAGE.

THE INVISIBLE  
WORLD OF SENSES  
AND EMOTIONS  
CAN **ALSO** BE  
PORTRAYED EITHER  
**BETWEEN** OR  
**WITHIN** PANELS.



WE'VE  
TOUCHED UPON THE  
FORMER CATEGORY  
IN CHAPTER THREE,  
BUT WHAT ABOUT  
THE LATTER?



HOW CAN A  
**SINGLE IMAGE**  
REPRESENT THE  
SENSES AND  
EMOTIONS AND  
HOW DOES THIS  
IDEA APPLY TO  
**COMICS**?



ONCE AGAIN WE  
CAN TURN TO THE  
WORLD OF "FINE  
ARTS" FOR  
SOME IDEAS.





IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES, SOMETHING KIND OF SCARY WAS GOING ON...

NO SOONER HAD THE IMPRESSIONISTS FINALLY CONVINCED THEIR PEERS THAT THE WORLD THEY SAW WAS THE WORLD AS IT IS TRULY SEEN --

-- THAN ANOTHER UNSEEN WORLD BEGAN TO MAKE ITSELF VISIBLE.



IN THE WORKS OF EDWARD MUNCH AND VINCENT VAN GOGH, THE OBJECTIVE STUDY OF LIGHT SO PRIZED BY THE IMPRESSIONIST MAINSTREAM WAS BEING ABANDONED IN FAVOR OF A NEW, FRIGHTENINGLY SUBJECTIVE APPROACH



EXPRESSIONISM, AS IT CAME TO BE CALLED, DIDN'T START AS A SCIENTIFIC ART, BUT RATHER AS AN HONEST EXPRESSION OF THE INTERNAL TURMOIL THESE ARTISTS JUST COULD NOT REPRESS.



THE SCIENCE OF IT WASN'T FAR BEHIND THOUGH!



AS THE NEW CENTURY GOT UNDER WAY, COOLER HEADS SUCH AS WASSILY KANDINSKY TOOK GREAT INTEREST IN THE POWER OF LINE, SHAPE AND COLOR TO SUGGEST THE INNER STATE OF THE ARTIST **AND** TO PROVOKE THE **FIVE SENSES.**



ANGRY REDS...  
PLACID BLUES...  
ANXIOUS TEXTURES...  
LOUD SHAPES...  
QUIET LINES...  
COLD GREENS...

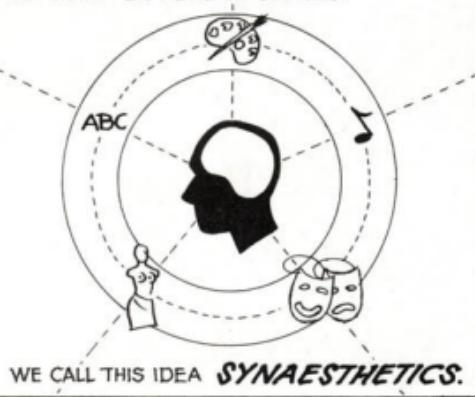
THESE WERE  
STRANGE IDEAS  
IN 1912!



KANDINSKY AND HIS PEERS WERE SEARCHING FOR AN ART THAT MIGHT SOMEHOW **UNITE THE SENSES**--



-- AND IN DOING SO, UNITE THE DIFFERENT ARTFORMS WHICH APPEALED TO THOSE DIFFERENT SENSES.



WE CALL THIS IDEA **SYNAESTHETICS.**

NOT SURPRISING, THEN, THAT SIMILAR IDEAS WERE EXPRESSED BY CREATORS IN OTHER FIELDS SUCH AS RICHARD WAGNER AND THE FRENCH POET BAUDELAIRE.



"Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it *makes* visible."

- PAUL KLEE  
PAINTER,  
TEACHER,  
CARTOONIST.



ART HISTORIANS HAVE GENERALLY HELD THAT WHILE PAINTERS, MUSICIANS AND POETS HAVE GRAPPLED WITH SUCH IDEAS, PRACTITIONERS OF THE "LOW" ART OF COMICS HAVE REMAINED BLISSFULLY IGNORANT OF THEM.

BUT  
HAVE  
THEY?



IN SURVEYING A **CENTURY** OF COMICS, ONE FINDS CREATORS LIKE THE UNDERGROUND'S **RORY HAYES**, WHO ARE BLATANTLY EXPRESSIONISTIC, BUT SUCH ARTISTS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.



MOST HAVE WORKED IN A FAIRLY **STRAIGHTFORWARD** STYLE. ICONIC, MAYBE, BUT NOT FILLED WITH THE EXPRESSIVE LINES OF A MUNCH OR THE COLORS OF A VAN GOGH.



CAN WE SAY, THEREFORE, THAT ONE OF THESE TWO CREATORS IS EXPRESSING MOOD AND EMOTION AND THE OTHER IS **NOT?** OR DOES THE DIFFERENCE LIE IN **WHAT** IS BEING EXPRESSED?



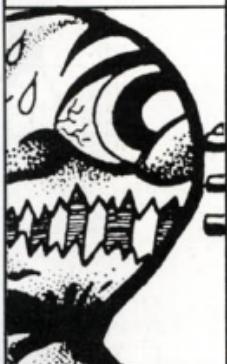
PEANUTS



CHARLES SCHULZ



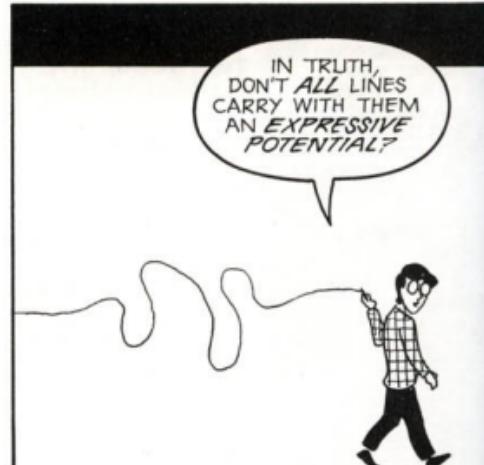
IF THESE LINES ARE EXPRESSIVE OF FEAR, ANXIETY AND MADNESS--



--THEN COULDN'T THESE LINES BE SAID TO PORTRAY CALM, REASON AND INTROSPECTION?



IN TRUTH, DON'T ALL LINES CARRY WITH THEM AN EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL?



BY DIRECTION  
ALONE, A LINE  
MAY GO FROM  
PASSIVE AND  
TIMELESS--

--TO  
PROUD  
AND  
STRONG--

--TO  
DYNAMIC  
AND  
CHANGING!'

BY ITS  
SHAPE, IT  
CAN BE  
UNWELCOMING  
AND SEVERE--

--OR  
WARM  
AND GENTLE--

--OR  
RATIONAL  
AND  
CONSERVATIVE.

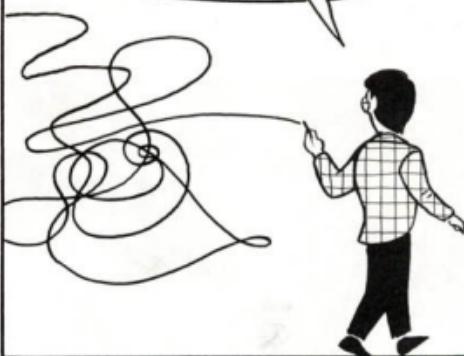
BY ITS  
CHARACTER  
IT MAY SEEM  
SAVAGE AND  
DEADLY--

--OR WEAK  
AND UNSTABLE--

--OR HONEST  
AND DIRECT.



THE MOST BLAND "EXPRESSIONLESS"  
LINES ON EARTH CAN'T HELP BUT  
CHARACTERIZE THEIR SUBJECT  
IN SOME WAY.



AND WHILE FEW  
COMIC ARTISTS MAY  
CONSIDER THEMSELVES  
*EXPRESSIONISTS*,  
THAT DOESN'T MEAN  
THAT THEY CAN'T TELL  
*ONE LINE FROM  
ANOTHER!*



**IN DICK TRACY** FOR EXAMPLE, CHESTER GOULD USED **BOLD LINES, OBSTUSE ANGLES AND HEAVY BLACKS** TO SUGGEST THE MOOD OF A **GRIM, DEADLY WORLD OF ADULTS**--



-- WHILE THE GENTLE CURVES AND OPEN LINES OF CARL BARKS' **UNCLE SCROOGE** CONVEY A FEELING OF WHIMSY, YOUTH AND INNOCENCE.



**IN R. CRUMB'S WORLD,** THE CURVES OF INNOCENCE ARE **BETRAYED** BY THE NEUROTIC QUILL-LINES OF MODERN ADULTHOOD, AND LEFT PAINFULLY OUT OF PLACE--



-- WHILE IN KRYSTINE KRYTIRE'S ART, THE CURVES OF CHILDHOOD AND THE MAD LINES OF A MUNCH CREATE A CRAZY TODDLER LOOK.



IN THE MID-1960S WHEN THE AVERAGE MARVEL READER WAS PRE-ADOLESCENT, POPULAR INKERS USED DYNAMIC BUT FRIENDLY LINES A LA KIRBY/SINNOTT.



BUT WHEN MARVEL'S READER BASE GREW INTO THE ANXIETIES OF ADOLESCENCE, THE HOSTILE, JAGGED LINES OF A ROB LIEFELD STRUCK A MORE RESPONSIVE CHORD.



FOR DECADES OF COLOR COMIC BOOKS, THE SIGNATURE STYLES OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS LIKE NICK CARDY HAVE INFUSED PERSONAL EXPRESSION INTO EVERY STORY--



-- WHILE JULES FEIFFER'S UNEVEN LINES DID BATTLE WITH THEMSELVES IN A PANTOMIME OF THE INNER STRUGGLES OF MODERN LIFE.



IN JOSE MUÑOZ'S WORK, DENSE PUDDLES OF INK AND FRAYING LINENWORK COMBINE TO EVOKE A WORLD OF DEPRAVITY AND MORBID DECAY--



-- WHILE JOOST SWARTE'S CRISP ELEGANT LINES AND JAZZY DESIGNS SPEAK OF COOL SOPHISITIATION AND IRONY.



IN SPIEGELMAN'S "PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET," DELIBERATELY EXPRESSIONISTIC LINES DEPICT A TRUE-LIFE HORROR STORY.



AND IN EISNER'S MODERN WORK A FULL RANGE OF LINE STYLES CAPTURE A FULL RANGE OF MOODS AND EMOTIONS.



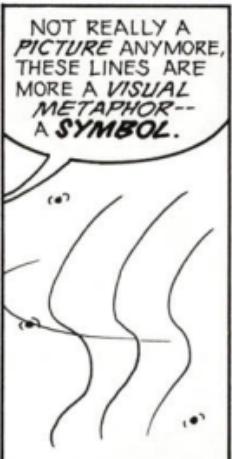
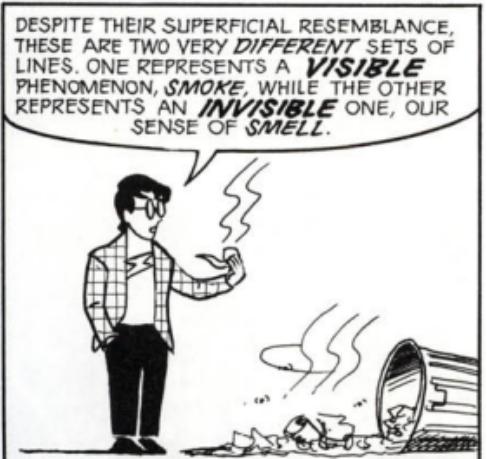


NOW,  
IF PICTURES  
CAN, THROUGH  
THEIR RENDERING,  
REPRESENT  
**INVISIBLE**  
CONCERNS SUCH  
AS *EMOTIONS*  
AND THE  
*OTHER  
SENSES*--

--THEN THE  
DISTINCTION  
BETWEEN  
PICTURES AND  
OTHER TYPES OF  
ICONS LIKE  
LANGUAGE WHICH  
**SPECIALIZE**  
IN THE INVISIBLE  
MAY SEEM A  
BIT BLURRY.

IN FACT, WHAT  
WE'RE SEEING IN  
THE *LIVING LINES*  
OF THESE PICTURES  
IS THE PRIMORDIAL  
STUFF FROM WHICH  
A FORMALIZED  
LANGUAGE CAN  
**EVOLVE!**

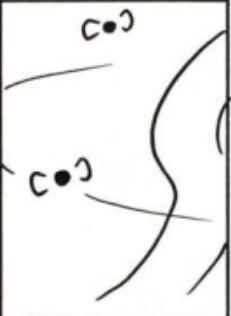




TAKEN OUT OF THEIR ORIGINAL CONTEXT,  
THEY CAN NOW BE APPLIED ANYWHERE  
AND THE READER WILL INSTANTLY KNOW  
WHAT THEY MEAN.



EVEN THE FLIES  
HAVE OVER THE YEARS  
BEEN APPROACHING  
THE ABSTRACT STATUS  
OF LINGUISTIC  
SYMBOLS.



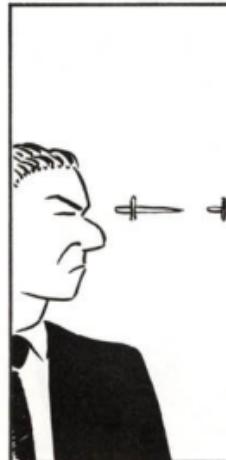
WHENEVER AN ARTIST  
INVENTS A NEW WAY  
TO REPRESENT THE  
INVISIBLE, THERE IS  
ALWAYS A CHANCE  
THAT IT WILL BE  
PICKED UP BY  
OTHER ARTISTS.



IF ENOUGH ARTISTS  
BEGIN USING THE  
SYMBOL, IT WILL  
ENTER THE LANGUAGE  
FOR GOOD--

--AS MANY  
HAVE THROUGH  
THE YEARS.





BUT WHEN SUCH IMAGES BEGIN TO DRIFT OUT OF THEIR VISUAL CONTEXT--



SUMERIANS IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA GOT THINGS ROLLING OVER 5,000 YEARS AGO WHEN A NEED WAS FOUND TO RECORD CERTAIN COMMODITIES.

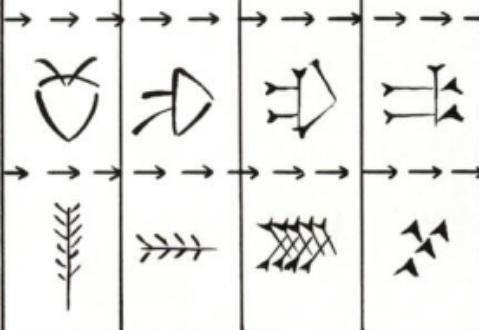


OX



GRAIN

THESE FIRST SYMBOLS -- CARTOONS, REALLY -- GRADUALLY EVOLVED AWAY FROM ANY RESEMBLANCE TO THEIR SUBJECT, TOWARD THE HIGHLY ABSTRACTED FORMS OF MODERN LANGUAGES...



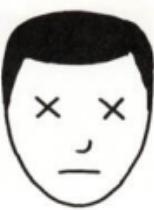
...AND EVENTUALLY TO OUR TOTALLY ABSTRACT SOUND-BASED SYSTEM.



THE LONGER ANY FORM OF ART OR COMMUNICATION EXISTS, THE MORE SYMBOLS IT ACCUMULATES.



THE MODERN COMIC IS A YOUNG LANGUAGE, BUT IT ALREADY HAS AN IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF RECOGNIZABLE SYMBOLS.



AND THIS VISUAL VOCABULARY HAS AN UNLIMITED POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH.



WITHIN A GIVEN CULTURE THESE SYMBOLS WILL QUICKLY SPREAD UNTIL EVERYBODY KNOWS THEM AT A GLANCE.



BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LANGUAGE EVOLVES IN MORE THAN ONE DISTINCT CULTURE AT A TIME?



THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT MORE THAN ONE SET OF SYMBOLS WILL EVOLVE!

SO IT WAS, ONCE AGAIN, IN JAPAN WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED FOR YEARS IN RELATIVE ISOLATION FROM THEIR WESTERN COUSINS.



ANGER



DEMENTIA



SLEEP

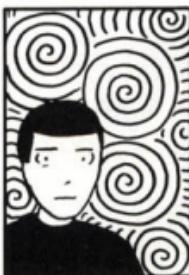


LUST

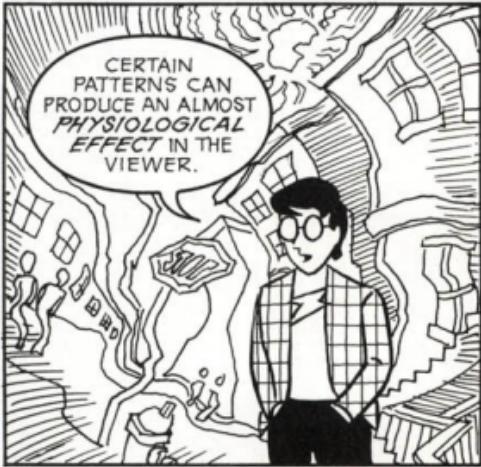
**BACKGROUNDS** CAN BE ANOTHER VALUABLE TOOL FOR INDICATING **INVISIBLE IDEAS**... PARTICULARLY THE WORLD OF **EMOTIONS**.



EVEN WHEN THERE IS LITTLE OR NO DISTORTION OF THE **CHARACTERS** IN A GIVEN SCENE, A DISTORTED OR EXPRESSIONISTIC **BACKGROUND** WILL USUALLY AFFECT OUR "READING" OF CHARACTERS' INNER STATES.



CERTAIN PATTERNS CAN PRODUCE AN ALMOST PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT IN THE VIEWER.



BUT FOR SOME REASON, READERS WILL ASCRIBE THOSE FEELINGS, NOT TO THEMSELVES, BUT TO THE CHARACTERS THEY IDENTIFY WITH.

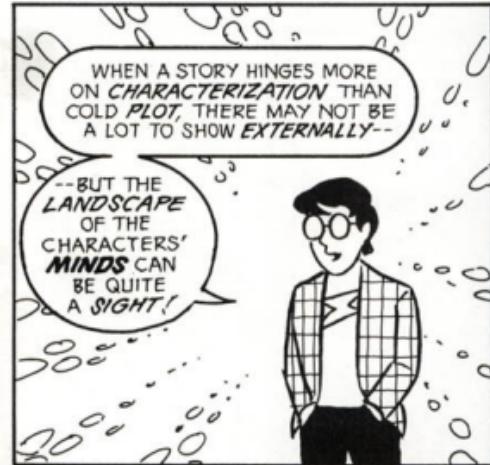


SUCH INTERNAL EFFECTS ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT INTERNAL MATTERS.



WHEN A STORY HINGES MORE ON **CHARACTERIZATION** THAN COLD PLOT, THERE MAY NOT BE A LOT TO SHOW EXTERNALLY--

--BUT THE LANDSCAPE OF THE CHARACTERS' MINDS CAN BE QUITE A SIGHT!



THIS PRINCIPLE IS EVIDENT IN MANY EUROPEAN COLOR COMICS AND IN JAPANESE ROMANCE COMICS WHERE EXPRESSIONISTIC EFFECTS HAVE BEEN DEVISED FOR ALMOST ANY EMOTION IMAGINABLE!



SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

EXPRESSIONISM AND SYNAESTHETICS ARE DISTORTIVE BY THEIR NATURE. IF STRONG ENOUGH, THEIR EFFECTS CAN OBSCURE THEIR SUBJECTS.



BUT A LACK OF CLARITY CAN ALSO FOSTER GREATER PARTICIPATION BY THE READER AND A SENSE OF INVOLVEMENT WHICH MANY WRITERS AND ARTISTS PREFER.



CREATORS WHO USE THESE EFFECTS MAY NEED TO CLARIFY WHAT IS BEING SHOWN, HOWEVER.



EITHER THROUGH THE CONTENT OF SURROUNDING SCENES OR, OF COURSE, THROUGH WORDS.



BY FAR,  
THE MOST WIDELY-USED,  
MOST COMPLEX AND MOST  
VERSATILE OF COMICS' MANY  
SYNAESTHETIC ICONS IS THE  
EVER-PRESENT, EVER-POPULAR  
**WORD BALLOON!**



OVER THE YEARS,  
COMICS CREATORS  
HAVE STRUGGLED WITH  
DOZENS OF VARIATIONS  
IN THEIR DESPERATE  
ATTEMPTS \* TO DEPICT  
SOUND IN A STRICTLY  
VISUAL MEDIUM.



VARIATIONS IN BALLOON SHAPE ARE **MANY** AND  
NEW ONES ARE BEING INVENTED EVERY DAY.



WHILE *INSIDE* THOSE BALLOONS, SYMBOLS  
ARE CONSTANTLY BEING APPROPRIATED  
OR EVEN *INVENTED* TO COVER THE  
*NON-VERBAL*.



EVEN THE VARIATIONS OF LETTERING STYLES, BOTH IN AND OUT OF  
BALLOONS, SPEAK OF AN *ONGOING STRUGGLE* TO CAPTURE THE  
VERY ESSENCE OF SOUND.



OF COURSE WORDS THEMSELVES, MORE THAN ALL THE OTHER VISUAL SYMBOLS, HAVE THE POWER TO COMPLETELY DESCRIBE THE INVISIBLE REALM OF SENSES AND EMOTIONS.

WORDS CAN TAKE EVEN SEEMINGLY NEUTRAL IMAGES AND INVEST THEM WITH A WEALTH OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES.



I SAT BY THE OPEN WINDOW, HOPING TO CATCH A WHIFF OF THE OLD CHARCOAL GRILLS. FROM NEXT DOOR CAME THE OTHERWORLDLY HUM OF TELEVISION. THE OLD CLOCK STRUCK A LAZY EIGHT.

AS NOTED, PICTURES CAN INDUCE STRONG FEELINGS IN THE READER, BUT THEY CAN ALSO LACK THE SPECIFICITY OF WORDS.



WORDS, ON THE OTHER HAND, OFFER THAT SPECIFICITY, BUT CAN LACK THE IMMEDIATE EMOTIONAL CHARGE OF PICTURES, RELYING INSTEAD ON A GRADUAL CUMULATIVE EFFECT.

TOGETHER, OF COURSE, WORDS AND PICTURES CAN WORK MIRACLES.

BUT WE'LL GET TO THAT IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.



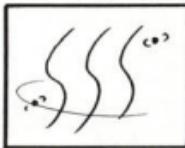
PERHAPS  
IT'S TOO MUCH TO  
ASK OF **ONE SENSE**  
THAT IT BE  
RESPONSIBLE FOR  
CONVEYING SUCH A  
**WIDE WORLD** OF  
EXPERIENCES.



BUT WE MAKE  
THAT PROCESS WORK  
BY BRINGING THE FULL  
POWER OF OUR **OWN**  
EXPERIENCES TO BEAR  
ON THE WORLD OUR  
EYES REPORT.



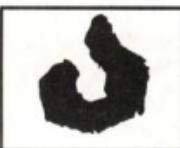
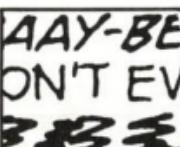
IN THIS  
CHAPTER, WE'VE  
DEALT WITH THE  
**INVISIBLE** WORLDS  
OF **SENSES** AND  
EMOTIONS. BUT IN  
FACT **ALL** ASPECTS  
OF COMICS SHOW IT  
TO BE AN **ART OF**  
**THE INVISIBLE**.



WHAT YOU  
**SEE** IS SELDOM  
WHAT YOU **GET** IF  
ALL YOU'RE SEEING  
(SEEING EVEN NOW)  
IS JUST **INK**  
AND **PAPER**.



IN THE  
END, WHAT  
YOU **GET** IS  
WHAT YOU  
**GIVE.**



## CHAPTER SIX

SHOW AND TELL.

WHAT CAN YOU  
**TELL** US ABOUT  
YOUR ROBOT,  
TOMMY?



THIS  
IS MY  
ROBOT.

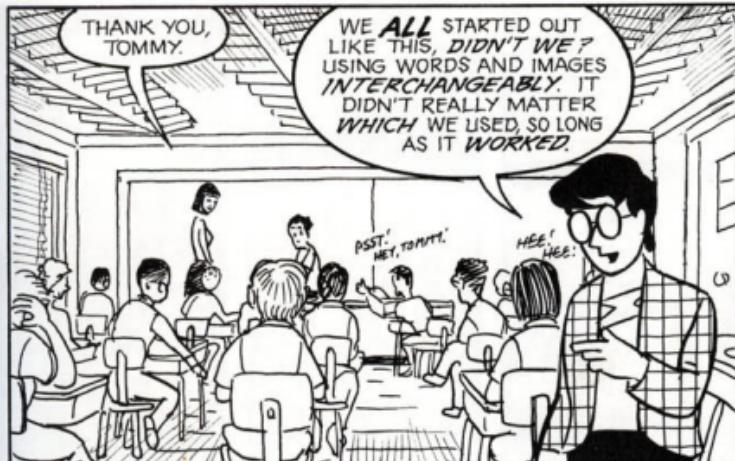


WELL,  
UH... I LIKE  
IT 'CAUSE...  
'CAUSE, UH...

IT'S  
GOT ONE OF  
**THESE**  
THINGS.

WHAT IS  
**THAT**,  
TOMMY?





TRADITIONAL THINKING HAS LONG HELD THAT TRULY **GREAT**  
WORKS OF ART AND LITERATURE ARE ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN THE  
TWO ARE KEPT AT ARM'S LENGTH.



WORDS AND PICTURES **TOGETHER** ARE CONSIDERED, AT BEST,  
A DIVERSION FOR THE MASSES, AT WORST A PRODUCT OF  
CRASS COMMERCIALISM.

Greetings from Hobo



AS CHILDREN, OUR FIRST BOOKS HAD PICTURES GALORE AND VERY FEW WORDS BECAUSE THAT WAS "EASIER."



THEN, AS WE GREW, WE WERE EXPECTED TO GRADUATE TO BOOKS WITH MUCH MORE TEXT AND ONLY OCCASIONAL PICTURES --



-- AND FINALLY TO ARRIVE AT "REAL" BOOKS -- THOSE WITH NO PICTURES AT ALL.



OR PERHAPS, AS IS SADLY THE CASE THESE DAYS, TO NO BOOKS AT ALL.



MEANWHILE, WORDS AND **MOVING**  
PICTURES HAVE HALF THE WORLD  
IN THRALL TO THEIR CHARMs,  
BUT MUST STRUGGLE TO MAKE  
**THEIR** POTENTIAL UNDERSTOOD.



WORDS AND PICTURES ARE  
AS POPULAR AS EVER, BUT THIS  
WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE  
COMBINATION IS SOMEHOW **BASE**  
OR **SIMPLISTIC** HAS BECOME A  
**SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY.**



THE  
ROOTS  
OF  
THIS ATTITUDE  
RUN PRETTY  
DEEP.



AS NEAR AS WE CAN  
TELL, PICTURES **PREDATE** THE  
WRITTEN WORD BY A **LARGE**  
**MARGIN**. HERE ARE SOME BIG  
HITS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE  
OF CAVE PAINTING, ABOUT  
15,000 YEARS AGO.

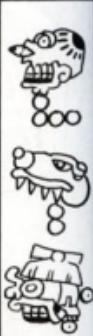
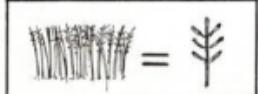
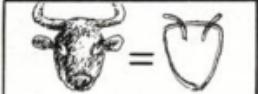


SOME OF THIS ART SHOWS  
CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO  
DETAIL, VERY MUCH CONCERNED  
WITH PICTORIAL **REPRESENTATION**.

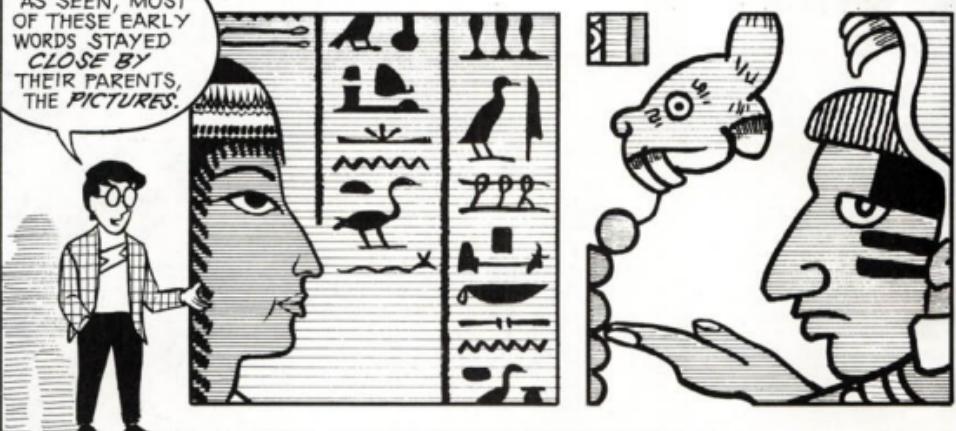


BUT OTHERS WERE VERY **ICONIC**,  
ACTING AS **SYMBOLS** RATHER THAN  
PICTURES -- MORE LIKE A  
**PRIMITIVE LANGUAGE!**





AS SEEN, MOST OF THESE EARLY WORDS STAYED CLOSE BY THEIR PARENTS, THE PICTURES.



IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG, THOUGH--  
RELATIVELY SPEAKING--  
BEFORE ANCIENT WRITING STARTED  
TO BECOME MORE ABSTRACT.



SOME WRITTEN LANGUAGES SURVIVE TO THIS DAY, BEARING TRACES OF THEIR ANCIENT PICTORIAL HERITAGE.



BUT, IN TIME, MOST  
MODERN WRITING WOULD  
COME TO REPRESENT SOUND  
**ONLY** AND LOSE ANY  
LINGERING RESEMBLANCE  
TO THE VISIBLE WORLD.



ברוך אתה ייְהוָה נִמְלֵה בָּרוּךְ

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WITH  
THE INVENTION  
OF PRINTING, THE  
WRITTEN WORD TOOK  
A GREAT LEAP  
FORWARD

--AND  
ALL OF  
HUMANITY  
WITH IT.

BUT WHERE HAD  
THE PICTURES ALL  
GONE?

WORDS AND  
PICTURES DID STILL  
COEXIST AT THIS  
STAGE IN WESTERN  
CIVILIZATION."

BUT THOSE  
INSTANCES WERE  
BECOMING THE  
EXCEPTION,  
NOT THE  
RULE.

da lat into carman  
velatam iamo e  
dale la  
dam  
ath:  
ma  
om et iauan th...  
Domo filij gromet: ascruet: e  
cupbat et  
mogorma. filij autem ian: tisa  
et charis cethini e  
cham: chus et n...  
tana-  
an. filij autem ch... et euila  
sabatha et regnia et se bethaca. Por-  
ro filij regnia-saba et badan. Chus au-  
tem genuit neu... Et ceptit esse po-  
tens in terra. Nam vero genuit lu-  
dim et a... labim et nephtu-  
im: pher... et chassluim de  
qui... et philistim et capthu-  
rim. Iudaean quo... genuit fridom  
et magenitum l... un: ethicum quoq;  
et leonum et amorem et gegeleum  
nequin; et arachenum et asineum ara-  
dium quoq; et samareum et emathe-  
um. filij sem: elam et assur. Et arfa-  
zad. et lud et aram. filij arani: bus et





THE WRITTEN WORD  
WAS BECOMING  
MORE SPECIALIZED,  
MORE ABSTRACT,  
MORE ELABORATE--

dhalum  
 ach zara sanma meza.  
 han sobal sehan ana dib  
 a. filij  
 proz ar  
 obal ar  
 i-onan  
 ton: aba  
 i ane  
 filij diso  
 n: chau  
 iach  
 reg  
 q:a  
 ala

pare abram: ihe et abra  
 uten ab  
 ce gne  
 is in  
 ehet  
 ualla  
 iac  
 dmo. hui hund ay ilma  
 uen credure  
 inubine  
 uos gewirz zauram ic  
 tadian rboer et sur. 19  
 m. sala et dad air. filij au  
 m et latulung et boomin  
 tadian. cephe et cphre - et  
 et iidea. 11 medo bij filij  
 etaur ouff abe alam uia  
 mit alhje aur et et. suj et  
 que iebus eton more. si  
 roman humor

-- AND  
LESS AND  
LESS LIKE  
PICTURES.

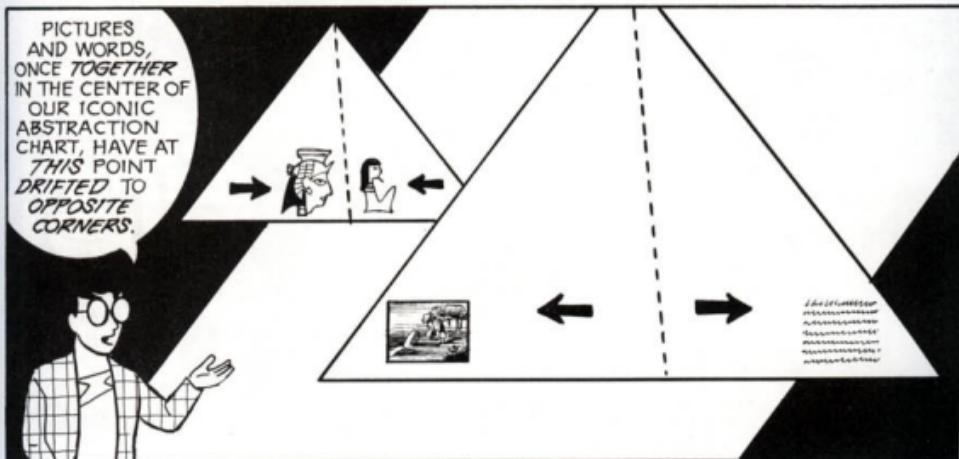
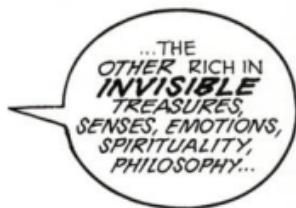
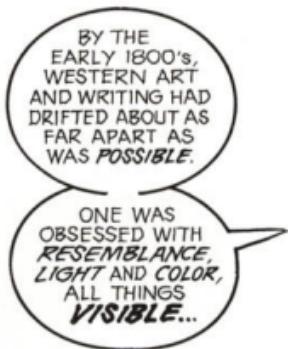
PICTURES, MEANWHILE, BEGAN TO GROW IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION: LESS ABSTRACT OR SYMBOLIC, MORE REPRESENTATIONAL AND SPECIFIC.



FACSIMILE DETAILS OF PORTRAITS BY DÜRER  
(1519) REMBRANDT (1660) DAVID (1788) AND INGRES  
(1810-15).

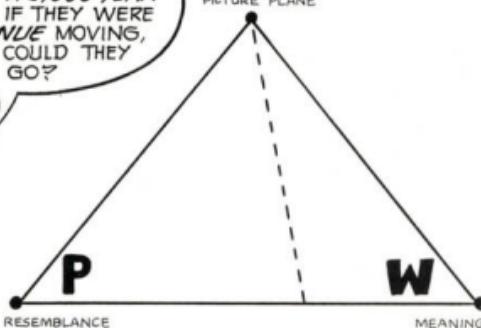
1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
 What leaf fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?



IN A WAY, PICTURES AND WORDS HAD REACHED THE END OF A 5,000 YEAR JOURNEY. IF THEY WERE TO CONTINUE MOVING, WHERE COULD THEY GO?

PICTURE PLANE



FOR PICTURES, THERE WAS ONLY UP!



IMPRESSIONISM SENT WESTERN ART TOWARD THE ABSTRACT VERTEX, BUT IN A WAY THAT CLUNG TO WHAT THE EYE SAW.

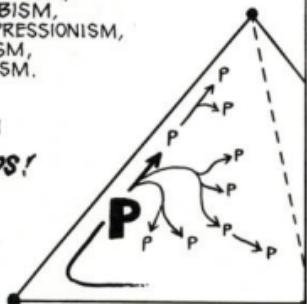


IMPRESSIONISM, WHILE IT COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS THE FIRST MODERN MOVEMENT, WAS MORE A CULMINATION OF THE OLD, THE ULTIMATE STUDY OF LIGHT AND COLOR.

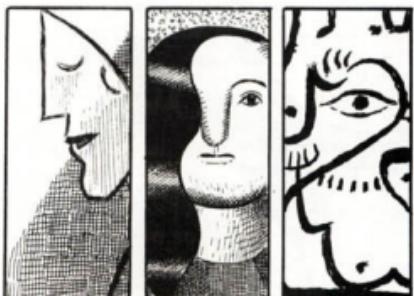


SOON AFTER CAME THE EXPLOSION! EXPRESSIONISM, FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM, FAUVISM, CUBISM, ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, NEO-PLASTICISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM.

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT BACKWARDS!



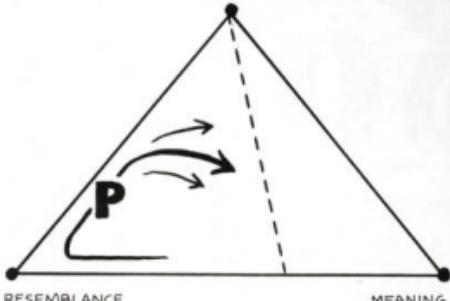
STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. ABSTRACTION, BOTH ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC MADE A SPECTACULAR COMEBACK!



SOME ARTISTS HEADED UPWARD  
TO THE SUMMIT OF THE PICTURE  
PLANE, WANTING NEITHER  
RESEMBLANCE NOR EXTERNAL  
"MEANING."

MONDRIAN A LA McCLOUD.

BUT THE MAIN THRUST WAS A RETURN  
TO MEANING IN ART, AWAY FROM  
RESEMBLANCE, BACK TO THE REALM OF  
IDEAS.



MEANWHILE, THE WRITTEN WORD WAS  
ALSO CHANGING. POETRY BEGAN  
TURNING AWAY FROM THE ELLUSIVE,  
TWICE-ABSTRACTED LANGUAGE OF OLD  
TOWARD A MORE DIRECT, EVEN  
COLLOQUIAL, STYLE.

John Keats 1819  
*Ode on a Grecian Urn*

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities, or mortals, or of both,  
In Temp's or dates of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens laugh?

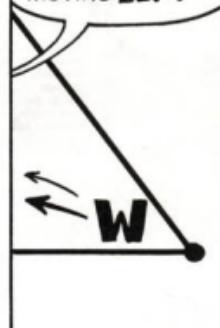
Walt Whitman 1890  
Facing West from California's Shores

Facing west, from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking  
what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the  
house of maternity, the  
land of migrations, look afar  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the  
circle almost circled:  
For starting westward from Hindustan,  
from the vales of Kashmere, From Asia,  
from the north, from the God, the sage,  
and the hero, From the south, from the  
flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,  
Long having wandered since, round the  
earth having wandered,  
Now I face home again,  
very pleased and joyous;  
(But where is what I started for,  
so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

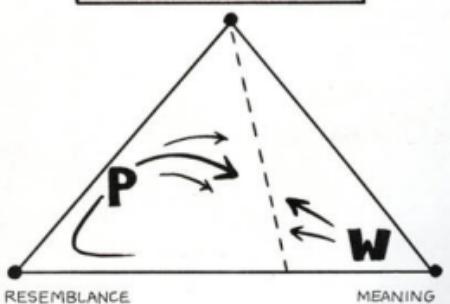
IN PROSE,  
LANGUAGE WAS  
BECOMING EVEN MORE  
DIRECT, CONVEYING  
MEANING SIMPLY  
AND QUICKLY,  
MORE LIKE  
PICTURES.



"MEANING" WAS  
NOT ABANDONED  
BY ANY MEANS,  
BUT AUTHORS  
WERE DEFINITELY  
MOVING LEFT--



-- AND HEADED FOR  
A COLLISION!



H'atre ~~des~~ MICHEL  
40 Rue Des  
mathurins

# S O I R E

JUillet 1923

# D U C O U R

nde semaine  
prolongée  
au 7 juillet



C A N I S E !

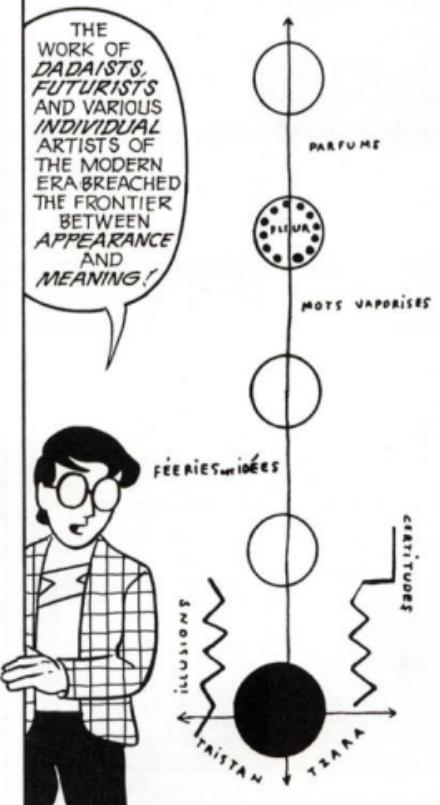
le place de loge ..... 30 Fr.  
le cabinet d'orchestre ..... 20 Fr.  
le cabinet de balcon ..... 15 Fr.  
le rang ..... 12 Fr.  
le balcon ..... 10 Fr.

DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY  
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

par  
FRANCIS PICABIA

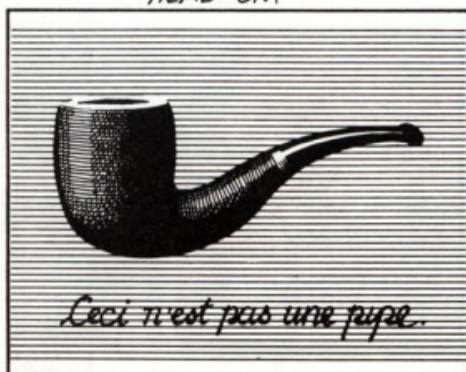
THE WORK OF DADAISTS, FUTURISTS AND VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS OF THE MODERN ERA BREACHED THE FRONTIER BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND MEANING!

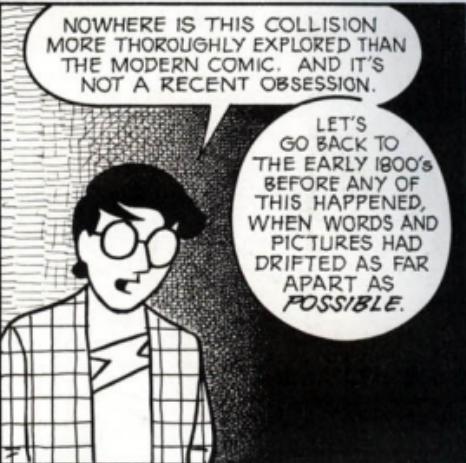


WHILE SOME ARTISTS ADDRESSED THE IRONIES OF WORDS AND PICTURES HEAD-ON!

FACSIMILE OF "ORIENTAL SWEETNESS" (1920) BY PAUL KLEE.

PAINTINGS INCREASINGLY TOOK ON SYMBOLIC, EVEN CALLIGRAPHIC, MEANINGS...





UP TO THAT POINT, *EUROPEAN BROADSHEETS* HAD OFFERED REMINDERS OF WHAT WORDS AND PICTURES COULD DO WHEN COMBINED.

BUT AGAIN IT WAS RODOLPHE TÖPFFER WHO FORESAW THEIR INTERDEPENDENCY AND BROUGHT THE FAMILY BACK TOGETHER AT LAST.



TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE

I'M SURE THAT THESE IDEAS WERE THE FURTHEST THING FROM TÖPFFER'S MIND WHEN HE PUT PEN TO PAPER--



--BUT THE FACT THAT THE MODERN COMIC WAS BORN JUST AS ART AND WRITING WERE PREPARING TO CHANGE DIRECTION IS AT LEAST INTRIGUING.



AND PERHAPS THIS COMMON THREAD OF UNIFICATION DID GROW OUT OF A SHARED INSTINCT OF THE DAY...



...AN INSTINCT WHICH SAID THAT WE HAD REACHED THE END OF A LONG JOURNEY AND THAT IT WAS TIME AT LAST TO HEAD FOR HOME.



UNFORTUNATELY FOR COMICS, NO SOONER HAD THE FINE ARTS REDISCOVERED THE LINK BETWEEN WORDS AND PICTURES--

WHAT THE HECK IS THAT???

IT'S A HOAX, I TELL YA! MY TWO-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER CAN PAINT BETTER THAN THAT!

--THAN MODERN ART ITSELF BECAME VIRTUALLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO THE AVERAGE VIEWER!

DO PEOPLE REALLY PAY MONEY FOR THIS???

IN FACT, THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S PERCEPTIONS OF "GREAT" ART AND "GREAT" WRITING HASN'T CHANGED MUCH IN 150 YEARS.\* ANY ARTIST WISHING TO DO GREAT WORK IN A MEDIUM USING WORDS AND PICTURES WILL HAVE TO CONTEND WITH THIS ATTITUDE.

Thou still unravish'd bride  
Thou foster-child of silex  
Sylvan historian, who cans  
A flowery tale more sweet!  
What leaf fring'd legend he  
Of deities or mortals, or  
In Tempe or the dales  
What men or gods are th  
What mad pursuit? What s  
What nines and timbrels

IN OTHERS AND IN THEMSELVES...



...BECAUSE, DEEP DOWN INSIDE, MANY COMICS CREATORS STILL MEASURE ART AND WRITING BY DIFFERENT STANDARDS AND ACT ON THE FAITH THAT "GREAT" ART AND "GREAT" WRITING WILL COMBINE HARMONIOUSLY BY VIRTUE OF QUALITY ALONE.



FACE

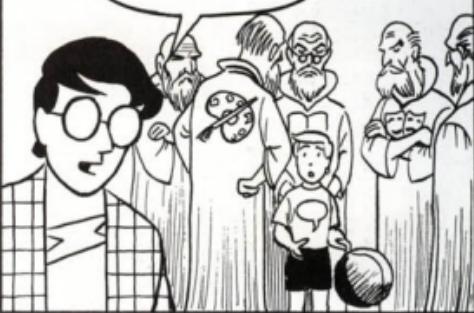
TWO EYES,  
ONE NOSE,  
ONE MOUTH.

The youth's  
prodigious  
gaze is  
on now...

THE ART FORM OF COMICS IS MANY CENTURIES OLD, BUT IT'S PERCEIVED AS A RECENT INVENTION AND SUFFERS THE CURSE OF ALL NEW MEDIA.



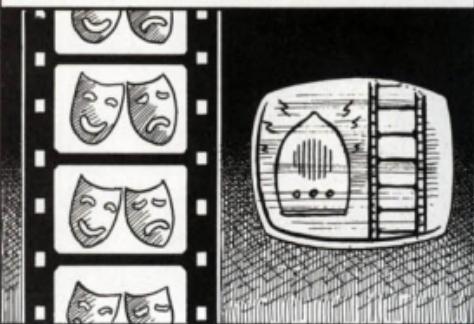
THE CURSE OF BEING JUDGED BY THE STANDARDS OF THE OLD.



EVER SINCE THE INVENTION OF THE WRITTEN WORD, NEW MEDIA HAVE BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD.



EACH NEW MEDIUM BEGINS ITS LIFE BY IMITATING ITS PREDECESSORS. MANY EARLY MOVIES WERE LIKE FILMED STAGE PLAYS, MUCH EARLY TELEVISION WAS LIKE RADIO WITH PICTURES OR REDUCED MOVIES.



FAR TOO MANY COMICS CREATORS HAVE NO HIGHER GOAL THAN TO MATCH THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OTHER MEDIA, AND VIEW ANY CHANCE TO WORK IN OTHER MEDIA AS A STEP UP.



AND AGAIN, AS LONG AS WE VIEW COMICS AS A GENRE OF WRITING OR A STYLE OF GRAPHIC ART THIS ATTITUDE MAY NEVER DISAPPEAR.



WORDS AND PICTURES IN COMBINATION MAY NOT BE MY DEFINITION OF COMICS, BUT THE COMBINATION HAS HAD TREMENDOUS INFLUENCE ON ITS GROWTH.

**com•ics** (kom'iks) n. plural  
1. comic strip, comic book, comic form,  
used with a singular verb.  
Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence,  
intended to convey information, comment, or entertainment,  
and/or to produce laughter, pleasure, or response in the viewer.  
2. Superheroes, comic book characters, comic book  
costumes, fight, comic book heroes, comic book  
villains who want to save the world, in violent situations.

A HUGE RANGE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCES CAN BE PORTRAYED IN COMICS THROUGH EITHER WORDS OR PICTURES.

AS A RESULT--AND DESPITE ITS MANY OTHER POTENTIAL USES -- COMICS HAVE BECOME FIRMLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE ART OF STORYTELLING.

AND *INDEED*, WORDS AND PICTURES HAVE GREAT POWERS TO TELL STORIES WHEN CREATORS FULLY EXPLOIT THEM BOTH.

BIOGRAPHY  
ROMANCE

DADA  
HORROR  
SURREALISM

HISTORICAL FICTION  
FOLK TALES  
EROTICA  
MYSTERY  
RELIGIOUS TOPICS

BLANK VERSE  
EPIC POETRY  
SOCIAL ALLEGORY  
ADAPTATIONS  
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS  
SATIRE

SEQUENTIAL ART

AND SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY SEEN THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG!

AS CHILDREN, WE "SHOW AND TELL" INTERCHANGEABLY, WORDS AND IMAGES COMBINING TO TRANSMIT A CONNECTED SERIES OF IDEAS.



IT'S GOT ONE OF THESE THINGS.

THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH WORDS AND PICTURES CAN COMBINE IN COMICS IS VIRTUALLY UNLIMITED.



BUT LET'S TRY TO BREAK IT DOWN INTO SOME DISTINCT CATEGORIES.



FIRST,  
WE HAVE THE  
**WORD SPECIFIC**  
COMBINATIONS,  
WHERE PICTURES  
ILLUSTRATE, BUT  
DON'T SIGNIFICANTLY  
ADD TO A LARGELY  
COMPLETE  
TEXT.



WE STUMBLED BACK TO THE APARTMENT SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN, VOMITING EVERY 20 YARDS.



JUDY GAVE ME HER KEYS AND SMILED.



THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION WAS ADOPTED BY THE **SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS** IN 1787 AND PUT INTO EFFECT IN 1789.



THEN THERE ARE  
**PICTURE SPECIFIC**  
COMBINATIONS  
WHERE WORDS DO  
LITTLE MORE THAN  
ADD A **SOUNDTRACK**  
TO A VISUALLY  
TOLD SEQUENCE.



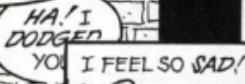
AND,  
OF COURSE,  
**DUO-SPECIFIC**  
PANELS IN WHICH  
BOTH WORDS AND  
PICTURES SEND  
ESSENTIALLY  
THE SAME  
MESSAGE.



GRIM-FACED,  
GEORGE LIFTED HIS LOLLYPOP.



BUT THE CAPTAIN'S MIGHTY BLOW **MISSSES** ITS INTENDED TARGET!



...THOUGHT AMY.

ANOTHER TYPE IS THE **ADDITIVE** COMBINATION WHERE WORDS AMPLIFY OR ELABORATE ON AN IMAGE OR VICE VERSA.



MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A SMASHED PUMPKIN!



HOW D'YA LIKE MY NEW THREADS, BABE?



IS THIS THE SAME JUPITER OF MY YOUTH?



IN **PARALLEL** COMBINATIONS, WORDS AND PICTURES SEEM TO FOLLOW VERY DIFFERENT COURSES--WITHOUT INTERSECTING.



"TALKED TO BILL YET?"

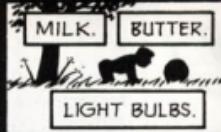


WELL...

PEPPER.  
CEREAL.



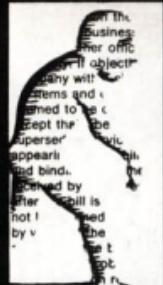
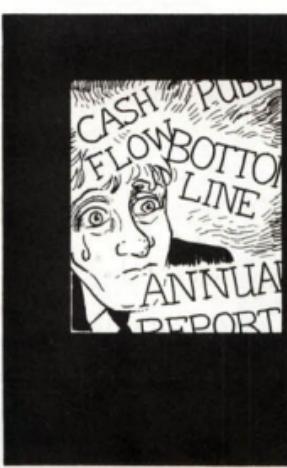
MILK.  
BUTTER.  
LIGHT BULBS.



STILL ANOTHER OPTION IS THE **MONTAGE** WHERE WORDS ARE TREATED AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE PICTURE.



CASH FLOW BOTTOM LINE  
ANNUAL REPORT



PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF WORD/PICTURE COMBINATION IS THE **INTER-DEPENDENT**, WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES GO HAND IN HAND TO CONVEY AN IDEA THAT NEITHER COULD CONVEY ALONE.

MEANWHILE...



THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!

I ASK YOU, DOES THIS GUY LOOK LIKE A C.E.O. TO YOU??

"AND JUST GUESS WHO DROVE UP IN BOB'S TRUCK AN HOUR LATER!"



HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.

"AFTER COLLEGE, I PURSUED A CAREER IN HIGH FINANCE."

HURRY UP, WILLYA??

INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN **EQUAL BALANCE** THOUGH AND MAY FALL **ANYWHERE** ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

P  
—  
W



GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH WORDS, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO EXPLORING AND VICE VERSA.

W  
—  
P

IN COMICS AT ITS **BEST**,  
WORDS AND PICTURES ARE LIKE  
**PARTNERS** IN A **DANCE** AND  
EACH ONE TAKES TURNS  
**LEADING**.



WHEN **BOTH** PARTNERS TRY TO LEAD,  
THE COMPETITION CAN **SUBVERT**  
THE OVERALL GOALS...



...THOUGH A LITTLE **PLAYFUL**  
**COMPETITION** CAN SOMETIMES  
PRODUCE **ENJOYABLE** RESULTS.



BUT WHEN THESE PARTNERS  
EACH **KNOW** THEIR ROLES--



--AND  
**SUPPORT**  
EACH  
OTHER'S  
**STRENGTHS**...



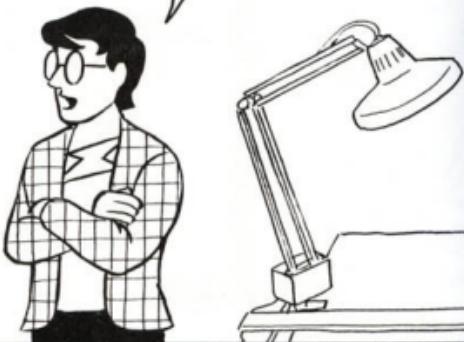
--COMICS CAN MATCH **ANY** OF THE  
ART FORMS IT DRAWS SO MUCH OF  
ITS STRENGTH FROM.



WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.



WHEN A SCENE SHOWS YOU ALL YOU "NEED" TO KNOW, LIKE THIS ONE, THE LATITUDE FOR **SCRIPTING** GROWS ENORMOUSLY.



I MAY BE ALONE  
LIKE THIS FOR A  
VERY LONG TIME.



IT COULD  
BECOME AN  
INTERNAL  
MONOLOGUE.

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY  
INCONGRUOUS



(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG  
ADVERTISEMENT!



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON  
BROADER TOPICS.



(INTERDEPENDENT)

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE WORDS  
LOCK IN THE "MEANING" OF A SEQUENCE,  
THEN THE PICTURES CAN REALLY TAKE OFF.



SAME  
SCENE NOW,  
BUT THIS TIME  
ALL IN WORDS!



I CROSSED THE  
STREET TO THE  
CONVENIENCE STORE.  
THE RAIN SOAKED  
INTO MY BOOTS.

I FOUND THE  
LAST PINT OF  
CHOCOLATE  
CHOCOLATE CHIP  
IN THE FREEZER.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID  
NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

I WENT BACK TO THE  
APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE  
AT LAST.



NOW, ONE COULD JUST *COMBINE* THE PICTURES FROM PAGE 157 WITH THE WORDS FROM PAGE 159--



--BUT WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OPTIONS?



IF THE ARTIST WANTS TO, HE/SHE CAN NOW SHOW ONLY *FRAGMENTS* OF A SCENE.  
(WORD SPECIFIC)

OR MOVE TOWARD GREATER LEVELS OF *ABSTRACTION* OR *EXPRESSION*.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID . NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...



(AMPLIFICATION)

PERHAPS THE ARTIST CAN GIVE US SOME IMPORTANT *EMOTIONAL* INFORMATION.

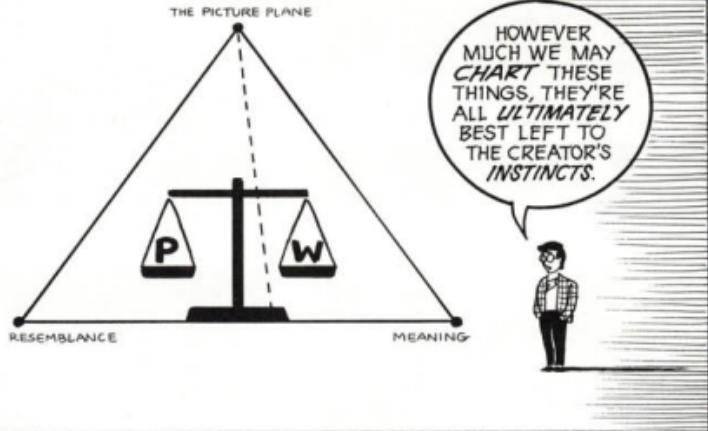


(INTERDEPENDENT)

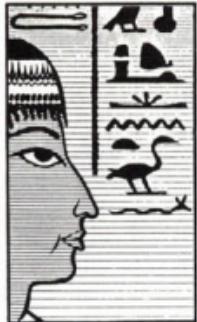
OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.



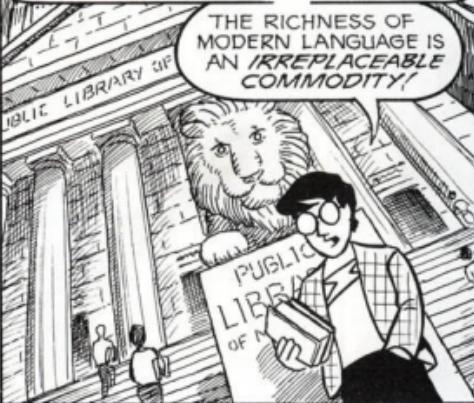
(WORD SPECIFIC)



SOME OF THE SECRETS OF THOSE *FIRST* ALCHEMISTS MAY HAVE BEEN LOST IN THE ANCIENT PAST.



BUT WE HAVE SOME POWERFUL MAGIC RIGHT HERE IN THE *20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY*, TOO!



THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME TO BE MAKING COMICS, AND IN MANY WAYS I FEEL VERY LUCKY TO HAVE BEEN BORN WHEN I WAS.

STILL, I DO FEEL A CERTAIN VAGUE LONGING FOR THAT TIME OVER 50 CENTURIES AGO--

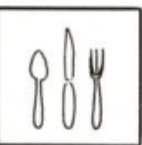
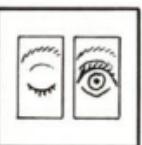
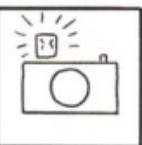
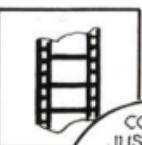
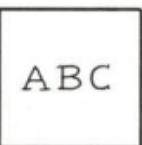
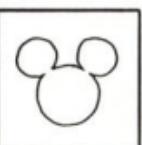
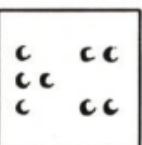
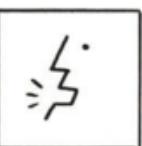
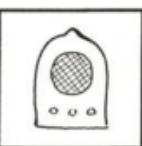
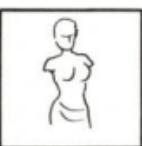
-- WHEN TO TELL WAS TO SHOW --



-- AND TO SHOW WAS TO TELL.

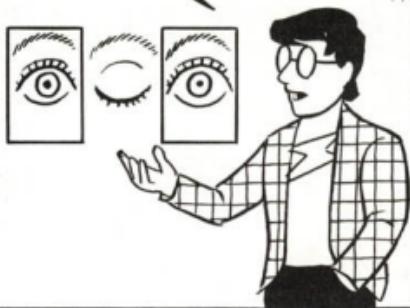
## CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIX STEPS.



COMICS IS  
JUST ONE OF  
**MANY** FORMS OF  
SELF-EXPRESSION  
AND COMMUNICATION  
AVAILABLE  
TO US.

SO FAR, WE'VE MOSTLY DEALT WITH THE **UNIQUE** PROPERTIES OF COMICS.



BUT THERE ARE PROPERTIES THAT COMICS SHARE WITH **ALL OTHER ART FORMS**.



THOUGH IT SEEMS INNOCUOUS ENOUGH *NOW*, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN SUCH A SIMPLE IDEA WAS RIDICULED.

EVEN TODAY, THERE ARE THOSE WHO ASK THE QUESTION, "CAN COMICS BE ART?"



IT IS--

--I'M SORRY--

A REALLY **STUPID** QUESTION!



BUT IF WE **MUST** ANSWER IT, THE ANSWER IS **YES**.



ESPECIALLY IF YOUR DEFINITION OF ART IS AS BROAD AS MINE!



**ART, AS I SEE IT, IS ANY HUMAN ACTIVITY WHICH DOESN'T GROW OUT OF EITHER OF OUR SPECIES' TWO BASIC INSTINCTS: SURVIVAL AND REPRODUCTION!**



**EXAMPLE:** HERE'S  
A PREHISTORIC  
**MALE** CHASING A  
PREHISTORIC FEMALE.  
WITH ONLY ONE THING  
ON HIS MIND--  
**REPRODUCTION!**



**SO STRONG IS THIS  
INSTINCT THAT IT  
GOVERNS HIS *EVERY  
MOVE!* NOT ONE  
STEP IS WASTED IN  
THE *PURSUIT OF  
HIS GOAL!***



**THE FEMALE--AFRAID FOR HER SURVIVAL -- MANAGES TO HIDE. NOW, DEPRIVED OF HIS GOAL, THE MALE STANDS INDECISIVE.**



*SUDDENLY--!*



**NOW ALL OF HIS  
THOUGHTS AND  
ACTIONS ARE  
FOCUSED ON THAT  
*OTHER* VITAL  
HUMAN INSTINCT--  
**SURVIVAL!****



AGAIN HIS LEGS  
PROPEL HIM  
FORWARD WITH  
***MAXIMUM  
EFFICIENCY!***



TRAPPED ON  
THE EDGE OF A  
CLIFF, HIS  
MIND CAN  
ONLY CONCEIVE  
OF ONE PATH  
TO SURVIVAL!



HE TAKES IT!



AND SURVIVES.



HIS NEXT MOVE  
MIGHT BE TO LOOK  
FOR FOOD (SURVIVAL)  
OR PERHAPS ANOTHER  
FEMALE (REPRODUCTION).



BUT INSTEAD...



IT'S A HAPPY FACT OF HUMAN EXISTENCE THAT WE SIMPLY **CAN'T** SPEND OUR EVERY WAKING HOUR **EATING** AND **HAVING SEX**! NO MATTER HOW FRANTICALLY WE PURSUE OUR GOALS, THERE WILL INEVITABLY BE TIMES WHEN WE **JUST DON'T HAVE A THING TO DO!**



WHAT MAY LOOK LIKE A TRIBE OF BORED, INACTIVE CAVE-DWELLERS BELOW US IS, IN FACT, A THRIVING ART COLONY!



SEE THAT OLD WOMAN WITH THE STICK? NOTICE THE LINES SHE'S MAKING IN THE DIRT?



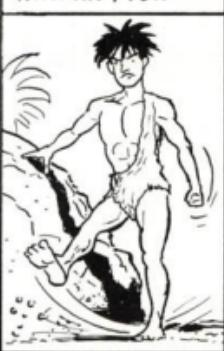
TODAY SHE HAS A STOMACHACHE AND HER LINES ARE TIGHT AND ANGULAR. YESTERDAY SHE FELT BETTER AND HER LINES WERE OPEN AND CURVED.



AND OVER THERE A MAN BEATS A SIMPLE RHYTHM WITH A PAIR OF STONES. HE DOESN'T KNOW WHY, BUT THE SOUND PLEASES HIM.



NEARBY, A BOY KICKS UP PEBBLES AND DIRT AND PUMMELS THE AIR WITH HIS FIST.



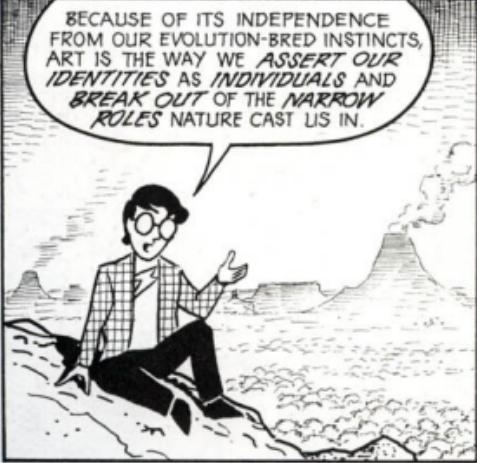
TODAY HE LOST A FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER. NOW ALL HE CAN DO IS DANCE AWAY HIS FRUSTRATION.



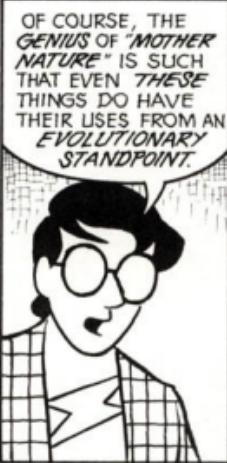
WHILE OVER HERE, A LITTLE GIRL SINGS HER SONG OF YOUTH!



BECAUSE OF ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM OUR EVOLUTION-BRED INSTINCTS, ART IS THE WAY WE ASSERT OUR IDENTITIES AS INDIVIDUALS AND BREAK OUT OF THE NARROW ROLES NATURE CAST US IN.



OF COURSE, THE GENIUS OF "MOTHER NATURE" IS SUCH THAT EVEN THESE THINGS DO HAVE THEIR USES FROM AN EVOLUTIONARY STANDPOINT.



THREE, IN FACT.



**FIRST**, THEY PROVIDE EXERCISE FOR MINDS AND BODIES NOT RECEIVING OUTSIDE STIMULUS.



**SECOND**, THEY PROVIDE AN OUTLET FOR EMOTIONAL IMBALANCES, AIDING IN THE RACE'S MENTAL SURVIVAL.



**THIRD** AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY TO OUR SURVIVAL AS A RACE, SUCH RANDOM ACTIVITIES OFTEN LEAD--



--TO USEFUL DISCOVERIES!



THIS FUNCTION WOULD ALSO BE PERFORMED IN LATER CENTURIES BY SPORTS AND GAMES.



ART AS SELF EXPRESSION, THE ARTIST AS HERO; FOR MANY, ITS HIGHEST PURPOSE.



ART AS DISCOVERY, AS THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH, AS EXPLORATION; THE SOUL OF MUCH MODERN ART AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY.



A LOT HAS CHANGED IN HALF A MILLION YEARS, BUT SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE.



THE PROCESSES ARE MORE COMPLEX NOW, BUT THE INSTINCTS\* REMAIN THE SAME. SURVIVAL AND REPRODUCTION STILL HOLD THE UPPER HAND.



\* ALONG WITH THEIR MANY RELATED FEELINGS AND CUSTOMS.

YET IN ALMOST  
EVERYTHING WE DO  
THERE IS AT LEAST  
AN ELEMENT  
OF ART.

PERHAPS A LITTLE  
UNNECESSARY  
CHOREOGRAPHY  
ON THE ASSEMBLY  
LINE.

OR THE PERSONAL  
STYLE OF A  
BICYCLE MESSENGER.

OR JUST THE WAY  
WE SIGN OUR  
NAMES!



IN SOME OCCUPATIONS, THE LATITUDE  
FOR SELF-EXPRESSION IS GREATER.  
**SURVIVAL**--MAKING A LIVING--GOES  
HAND IN HAND WITH **CREATIVE DESIRE**.

I THINK IT'S FAIR  
TO SAY THAT SOME  
ACTIVITIES HAVE  
MORE ART **IN** THEM  
THAN OTHERS.

LIFE IS A SERIES OF  
MINUTE DECISIONS,  
SOME MOTIVATED BY  
**SURVIVAL**, SOME NOT,  
AND PROPORTIONS  
DO VARY.



BUT THE **IDEAL** OF THE LATTER IS ALIVE IN THE HEARTS OF MANY ARTISTS WHO MAY HOPE FOR SUCCESS, BUT WON'T ALTER THEIR WORK TO **OBTAIN** IT.



THE "FINE ARTIST"--THE **PURE** ARTIST--SAYS TO THE WORLD: "I DIDN'T DO THIS FOR **MONEY**! I DIDN'T DO THIS TO MATCH THE COLOR OF YOUR COUCHES!"



IN OTHER WORDS:  
**"MY ART HAS NO PRACTICAL VALUE WHATSOEVER!"**

"BUT IT'S IMPORTANT!"



AND SOMETIMES IT IS, THOUGH IT MIGHT TAKE A CENTURY OR TWO FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD TO FIND OUT!



"**PURE**" ART IS ESSENTIALLY TIED TO THE QUESTION OF **PURPOSE**-- OF DECIDING WHAT YOU **WANT** OUT OF ART.



THIS IS AS TRUE IN COMICS AS IT IS IN PAINTING, WRITING, THEATRE, FILM, SCULPTURE, OR ANY OTHER FORM...

...BECAUSE THE CREATION OF ANY WORK IN ANY MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW A CERTAIN PATH.



**1**

IDEA/  
PURPOSE



**2**

FORM



**3**

IDIOM



**4**

STRUCTURE



**5**

CRAFT



**6**

SURFACE

A PATH CONSISTING OF **SIX STEPS.**

**1**

IDEA/  
PURPOSE



**FIRST:**  
THE IMPULSES, THE  
IDEAS, THE EMOTIONS,  
THE PHILOSOPHIES, THE  
PURPOSES OF THE  
WORK... THE WORK'S  
**"CONTENT."**



**2**

FORM



**SECOND:**  
THE FORM IT WILL  
TAKE... WILL IT BE A  
BOOK? A CHALK  
DRAWING? A CHAIR?  
A SONG? A SCULPTURE?  
A POT HOLDER? A  
COMIC BOOK?



**3**

IDIOM



**THIRD:**  
THE "SCHOOL" OF  
ART, THE VOCABULARY  
OF STYLES OR GESTURES  
OR SUBJECT MATTER,  
THE GENRE THAT THE  
WORK BELONGS TO...  
MAYBE A GENRE  
OF ITS OWN.



**4**

STRUCTURE



**FOURTH:**  
PUTTING IT ALL  
TOGETHER... WHAT  
TO INCLUDE, WHAT TO  
LEAVE OUT... HOW TO  
ARRANGE, HOW TO  
**COMPOSE** THE  
WORK.



# 5 CRAFT



**FIFTH:**  
CONSTRUCTING  
THE WORK, APPLYING  
SKILLS, PRACTICAL  
KNOWLEDGE, INVENTION,  
PROBLEM-SOLVING,  
GETTING THE  
"JOB" DONE.



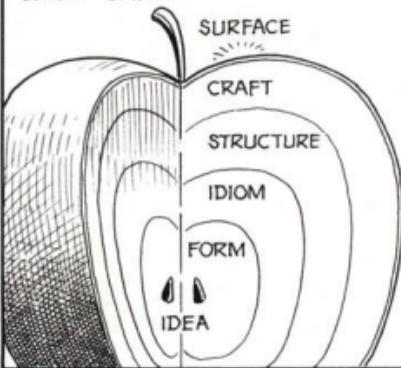
# 6 SURFACE



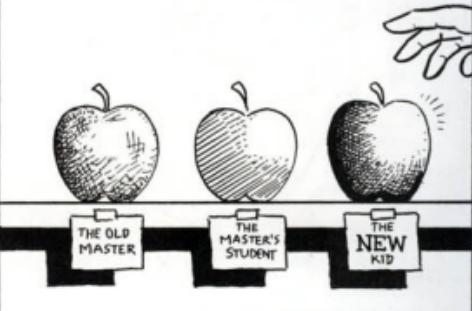
**SIXTH:**  
PRODUCTION  
VALUES, FINISHING...  
THE ASPECTS MOST  
APPARENT ON FIRST  
SUPERFICIAL  
EXPOSURE TO  
THE WORK.



IN ALL THE ARTS IT'S THE **SURFACE**  
THAT PEOPLE APPRECIATE MOST EASILY,  
LIKE AN **APPLE** CHOSEN FOR ITS  
**SHINY SKIN**.



THE LATEST "FAN FAVORITE" OFTEN  
LOOKS BETTER AT A GLANCE THAN THE  
OLDER ARTISTS WHO HAD THE **IDEAS**  
AND CREATED THE **IDIOMS**, BUT WERE  
LESS INTERESTED IN **SURFACES**.

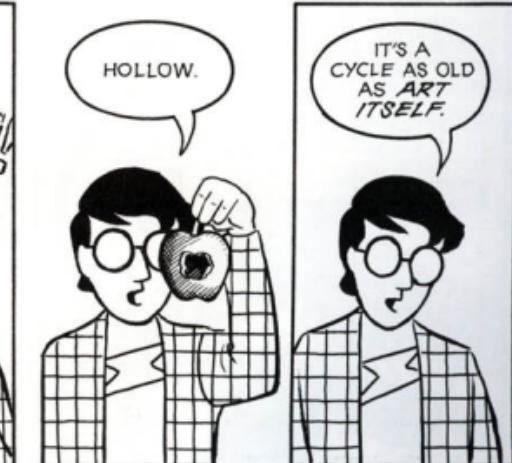


BUT OFTEN  
IF WE **BITE**  
INTO THAT  
SHINY NEW  
APPLE--



**CRUNCH!**

HOLLOW.



IT'S A  
CYCLE AS OLD  
AS ART  
ITSELF.

**IN COMICS, THE CYCLE BEGINS ALL OVER THE WORLD, AS YOUNG READERS DISCOVER COMICS FOR THE FIRST TIME AND IN A FEW CASES, BEGIN TO DEVELOP A LOVE FOR COMICS THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME!**



IN THIS EARLY STAGE, THESE READERS ARE EXPERIENCING THE CHARACTERS, IDEAS, EVENTS AND EMOTIONS OF THE STORY DIRECTLY

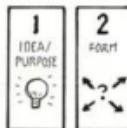
COMICS IS ACTING AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN STORYTELLER AND AUDIENCE.



BUT IN SOME, AN AWARENESS OF THE **FORM** BEGINS TO DEVELOP, AN AWARENESS THAT ALL COMICS ARE JUST INK ON PAPER--

--THAT MAKING THEM ONLY REQUIRES CERTAIN SKILLS--

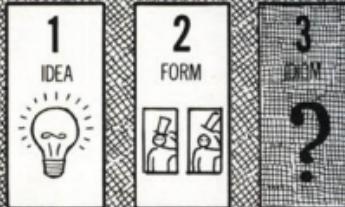
--AND THAT THOSE SKILLS CAN BE LEARNED!



ONE OF THEM--FULL OF **BIG IDEAS**--  
MAKES THE **BIG DECISION**.



HE'S OFF TO A LOGICAL START. HE HAS  
THE **IDEAS** AND HE'S CHOSEN **COMICS**  
AS HIS **FORM OF EXPRESSION**. MAYBE  
NOW HE'LL CONSIDER WHAT **TYPES** OF  
COMICS ARE RIGHT FOR HIM.



BUT PROBABLY **NOT**.

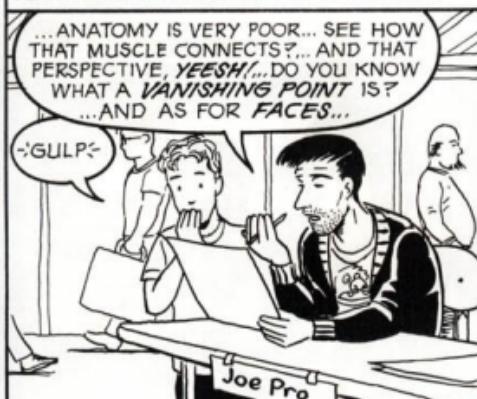
MORE LIKELY HE **POSTPONES** HIS OWN  
IDEAS AND BEGINS TO STUDY THE **CRAFT**  
OF OTHER ARTISTS IN HIS ATTEMPT  
TO BECOME A **PROFESSIONAL**.



EVENTUALLY...



BUT WHEN HE BRINGS THE WORK TO A  
**REAL PROFESSIONAL** AT THE LOCAL **CON**:



SO HE BUYS SOME BOOKS ON **ANATOMY**  
AND **PERSPECTIVE**, STUDIES A VARIETY  
OF DRAWING TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES,  
PRACTICES, PRACTICES FOR **MONTHS**.



BUT SOMEHOW, IT NEVER QUITE "CLICKS" FOR HIM. MAYBE HE JUST DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH SKILL... MAYBE HE LOSES INTEREST... MAYBE LIFE JUST GETS IN THE WAY... BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON...



BUT ALL OVER THE WORLD, OTHERS HAVE UNDERGONE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES AND HAVEN'T GIVEN UP YET!



ONE OF THEM IS NOW READY TO TAKE THE **NEXT STEP!** SHE'S STUDIED HER CRAFT ALL THE WAY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL AND INTO COLLEGE.



SHE'S A GOOD, HARDWORKING STUDENT.

< I THINK I'VE REALLY MADE A BREAKTHROUGH! >

< THIS IS VERY GOOD. >



BUT WHEN SHE SHOWS HER WORK TO A SEASONED PRO...

< YOU'RE A SKILLED SCRIPTER AND DRAFTSPERSON, BUT YOUR STORYTELLING ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH, YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF PACING... THESE LAYOUTS ARE VERY MUDDY... YOU HAVE TO COMPOSE YOUR STORIES... >



HER SKILLS **CAN** GET HER **WORK** AT THIS POINT, BUT ONLY AS AN **ASSISTANT** TO OTHERS. UNTIL SHE UNDERSTANDS THE **STRUCTURE** OF COMICS **BENEATH** THE CRAFT, THIS IS AS FAR AS SHE CAN GO.



BUT MAYBE THIS IS **ENOUGH** FOR THIS PARTICULAR ARTIST, ENOUGH TO JUST BE PART OF THE **ART, BUSINESS, AND COMMUNITY** OF COMICS WITHOUT NECESSARILY CALLING THE SHOTS.



HE SPENDS HIS **EVERY WAKING HOUR** WORKING OUT THE DIFFICULT PRINCIPLES OF COMICS COMPOSITION AND STORYTELLING, THE KIND THEY DON'T TEACH IN BOOKS!\*



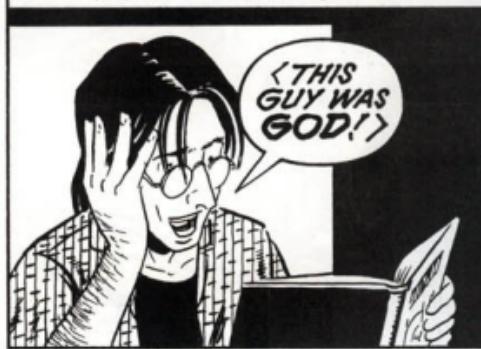
HE LEARNS TO SEE **BENEATH** THE CRAFTS OF DRAFTSMANSHIP AND SCRIPTING TO SEE THE **WHOLE PICTURE**--PACING, DRAMA, HUMOR, SUSPENSE, COMPOSITION, THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT, IRONY--SOON THEY'RE ALL AT HIS COMMAND!



BUT **ELSEWHERE**, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS BEEN THROUGH THE SAME SORT OF PROCESS AND HE WANTS **MORE!**



HE DISCOVERS THAT HIS FAVORITE ARTIST WAS ACTUALLY JUST A **WATERED-DOWN VERSION** OF AN **OLDER, LESS-POLISHED** ARTIST WHOM HE HAD ALWAYS **TAKEN FOR GRANTED**.



\* WELL, OKAY, ONE BOOK! EISNER'S, AGAIN.

AND LET'S SAY IT **WORKS!** HE DOES LAND HIS OWN BOOK AND SOON IS ESTABLISHED AS A CREATOR OF **GREAT SKILL**. HE UNDERSTANDS COMICS STORYTELLING BETTER THAN MOST.



HIS WORK ISN'T PARTICULARLY **ORIGINAL**, THE CRITICS DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO HIM, BUT HE MAKES A **DECENT LIVING** FOR **HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY** AND THAT'S ENOUGH FOR HIM...



BUT **ANOTHER ARTIST** HAS MADE IT THROUGH THE **SAME** SORTS OF HURDLES AND REACHED THE **SAME** LEVELS OF SUCCESS AND **STILL ISN'T SATISFIED**



SHE WONDERS IF HER SUCCESS REALLY MEANS ANYTHING WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY OTHERS DOING THE **SAME** THINGS IN THE **SAME** WAYS. SHE WANTS AN **IDENTITY**.



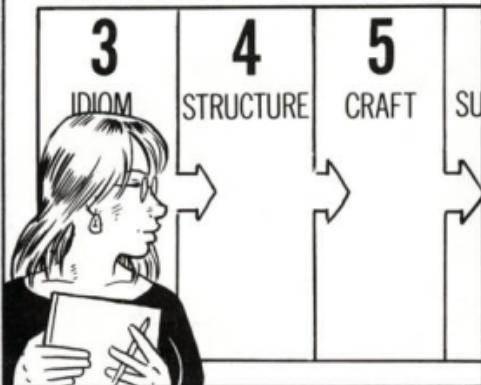
SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE**--**SOME PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**-- THAT SHE **STILL HASN'T FOUND**.

4	5	6
CRAFT		SURFACE

SHE BEGINS TO INVENT **NEW WAYS** OF SHOWING "**THE SAME OLD THING**." SHE DEVELOPS **INNOVATIVE NEW TECHNIQUES**, AND STARTS **DOING AWAY** WITH "**THE SAME OLD THING**" **ALTOGETHER!**



AS SHE CREATES HER OWN PERSONAL IDIOM OF COMICS, SHE FINDS THE WHOLE OF HER WORK CHANGING TO SUIT THAT IDIOM.



LET'S SAY THAT FINANCIAL SUCCESS AND THE RESPECT OF HER PEERS SOON FOLLOW.\*



YOUNG ARTISTS BEGIN TO IMITATE HER STYLE, BUT MOST OF THEM ONLY SEEM TO APPRECIATE THE "SURFACE."



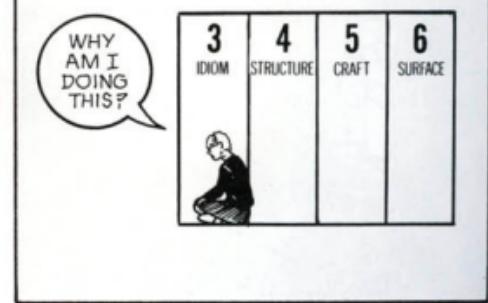
AND MAYBE SHE'LL BE SATISFIED WITH THAT KIND OF SUCCESS, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WHATEVER SHE DOESN'T KNOW, SHE'S ON THE RIGHT PATH TO FIND OUT.

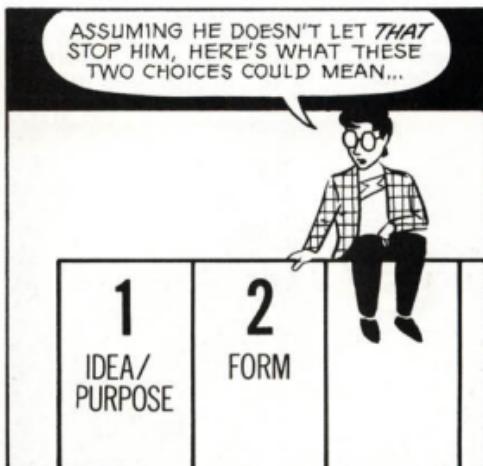
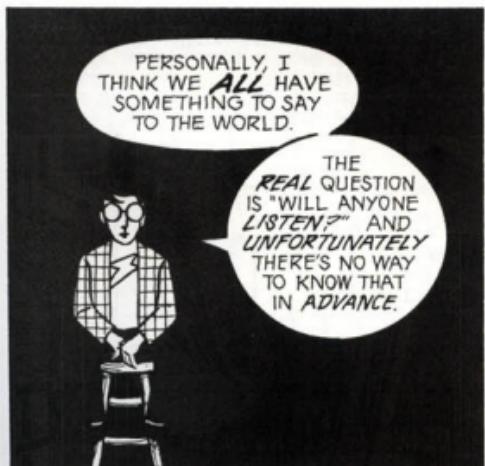
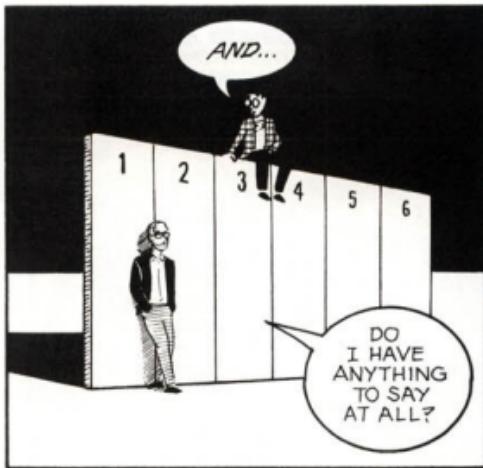
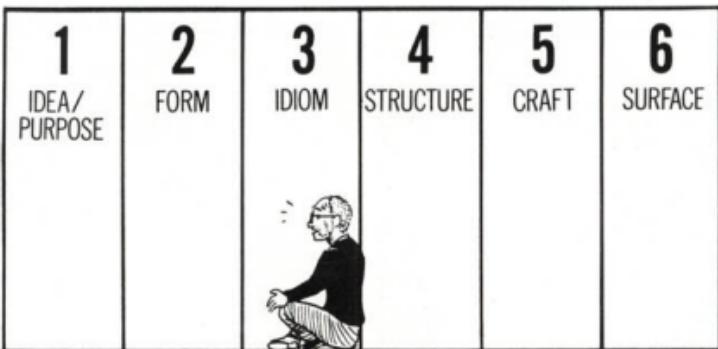


BUT ELSEWHERE, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS DISSATISFIED. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



...SOMETHING FUNDAMENTAL, SOMETHING AT THE CORE OF WHO HE IS AS AN ARTIST. WITH THESE THOUGHTS ON HIS MIND, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE ASKS THAT ONE SIMPLE QUESTION:





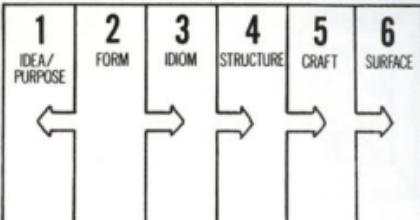
# 2 FORM

BY CHOOSING **FORM**, HE'D BE SETTING UP TO BECOME AN **EXPLORER**.

HIS GOAL: TO DISCOVER ALL THAT THE ART FORM IS CAPABLE OF.



AND HIS ART WOULD NOT LACK FOR IDEAS OR FOR A PURPOSE.



HIS ART WOULD JUST **BECOME** HIS PURPOSE AND THE IDEAS WOULD ARRIVE IN TIME TO GIVE IT **SUBSTANCE**.

CREATORS WHO TAKE THIS PATH ARE OFTEN PIONEERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES--ARTISTS WHO WANT TO **SHAKE THINGS UP**, CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE **THINK**, QUESTION THE FUNDAMENTAL **LAWS** THAT GOVERN THEIR CHOSEN ART.



(IN OTHER ART FORMS: STRAVINSKY, PICASSO, VIRGINIA WOOLF, ORSON WELLES, ETC.)

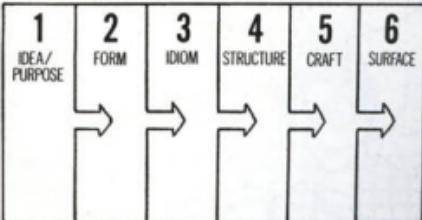
# 1 IDEA/ PURPOSE

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF HE CHOOSES THE **FIRST** STEP AS HIS GOAL, THEN HIS ART BECOMES A **TOOL**.

AND THE **POWERS** OF THAT ART WILL RELY ON THE POWERS OF THE IDEAS **WITHIN**.



NOW "TELLING THE STORY" (OR IN THE CASE OF NON-FICTION, "DELIVERING THE MESSAGE") TAKES PRIORITY OVER INVENTION.



BUT TELLING A STORY AS **EFFECTIVELY** AS POSSIBLE MAY **REQUIRE** SOME INVENTION. IT OFTEN DOES.

THIS IS THE PATH OF GREAT **STORYTELLERS**, CREATORS WHO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY THROUGH COMICS AND DEVOTE ALL THEIR ENERGIES TO CONTROLLING THEIR MEDIUM, REFINING ITS ABILITY TO CONVEY MESSAGES EFFECTIVELY.



SCHULZ.



BARKS



HERGÉ



EISNER.



NAKAZAWA

(IN OTHER ART FORMS: CAPRA, DICKENS, WOODY GUTHRIE, EDWARD R. MURROW, ETC.)

FORTUNATELY,  
THIS CHOICE  
NEVER HAS TO BE  
PERMANENT.

IT  
CAN CHANGE  
AS OFTEN AS  
AN ARTIST  
CHANGES  
PROJECTS!

**NO** WORK OF ART CAN BE **TOTALLY**  
WITHOUT "CONTENT" ANY MORE THAN  
IT CAN EXIST WITHOUT A **FORM!** BUT  
IT DOES HELP TO SET SOME **PRIORITIES.**

HEY, I'M  
DRIVING!

NO, I'M  
DRIVING!



THIS IS A PROBLEM IN MANY  
"ASSEMBLY LINE" COMICS WHERE  
CREATIVE SPECIALIZATION HAS  
"SCRIPTERS," "PENCILLERS" AND "INKERS"  
ALL WORKING AT CROSS-PURPOSES  
IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GET  
NOTICED.

CRASH!

NOT THAT WE "CREATOR/WRITER/ARTIST"  
TYPES NEVER RUN INTO THIS PROBLEM...

DAMN!  
NEEDED TO  
HAVE SOME MORE  
DIALOGUE HERE,  
BUT I REALLY  
WANT TO DRAW  
THAT SNAZZY  
CLOSE-UP!



THE MORE AN ARTIST DEVOTES HIM/HERSELF TO EITHER OF THESE TWO FOCAL POINTS, THE MORE DRAMATIC THE CHANGE IF HE/SHE DECIDES TO *SWITCH!*

ART SPIEGELMAN'S AGGRESSIVELY EXPERIMENTAL WORK OF THE *SEVENTIES* AND EARLY *EIGHTIES* LEFT NO ONE PREPARED FOR THE UNASSUMING "REPORT" STYLE OF HIS LANDMARK BIOGRAPHY *MAUS*.

## 2 FORM



## 1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



PERHAPS IF STRIPPED DOWN FAR ENOUGH, MOST ARTISTS' ULTIMATE GOALS ARE NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE'S. EVEN FOR THOSE WITH *HIGH IDEALS*, BASIC INSTINCTS EXERT A POWERFUL ATTRACTION.

1



1



1



SURVIVAL ↔ REPRODUCTION

AND WHEN ART BECOMES A *JOB* OR A MATTER OF *SOCIAL STATUS* THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFUSING ONE'S GOALS GOES UP CONSIDERABLY.



BUT EVEN IF WE TAKE LIFE'S *DISTRACTIONS* INTO ACCOUNT, IT'S STILL AMAZING HOW MUCH *TIME* AND *EFFORT* IS SPENT BY COMICS CREATORS TRYING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT OUT OF COMICS--

--BEFORE THEY EVEN KNOW *WHAT* THEY WANT!



OF COURSE, NOT *EVERYBODY* TAKES THE *LONG WAY AROUND*. SOME ARTISTS HAVE NO TROUBLE SETTING GOALS AND ACHIEVING THEM WITHOUT ANY *DETOURS*...



1

IDEA/  
PURPOSE

2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



**ANY**  
**ARTIST CREATING**  
**ANY** WORK IN **ANY**  
MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS  
FOLLOW THESE **SIX STEPS**  
WHETHER THEY REALIZE  
IT OR NOT.

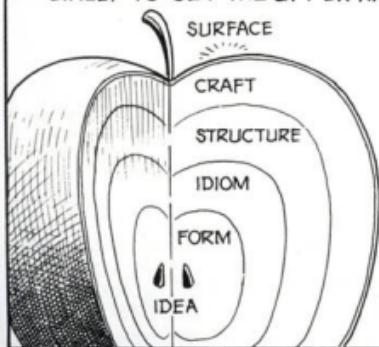
AND **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS  
HAVE THE **POTENTIAL**  
FOR **SELF-EXPRESSION**,  
EVEN WHEN ECONOMIC  
SURVIVAL IS THE  
ARTIST'S MAIN  
CONCERN.



ALL  
WORKS BEGIN  
WITH A PURPOSE,  
HOWEVER ARBITRARY;  
ALL TAKE SOME FORM;  
ALL BELONG TO AN  
IDIOM (EVEN IF IT'S  
AN IDIOM OF ONE); ALL  
POSSESS A STRUCTURE;  
ALL REQUIRE SOME  
CRAFT; ALL  
PRESENT A  
SURFACE.

THERE'S  
ALWAYS ROOM  
FOR A CERTAIN  
AMOUNT OF **"ART."**

BUT THE MORE A CREATOR LEARNS TO COMMAND  
**EVERY** ASPECT OF HIS/HER ART AND TO  
UNDERSTAND HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP TO IT,  
THE MORE "**ARTISTIC**" CONCERNS ARE  
LIKELY TO GET THE **UPPER HAND**.



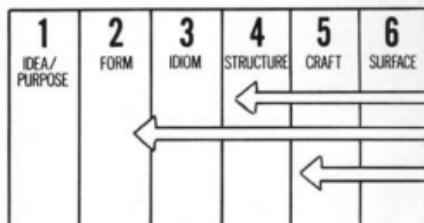
THE ORDER OF THE SIX STEPS  
IS **INNATE**. LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT  
OF BONES IN A DINOSAUR'S SKELETON,  
THEY CAN BE DISCOVERED IN ANY ORDER,  
BUT WHEN **BROUGHT TOGETHER**, THEY  
WILL ALWAYS FALL INTO **PLACE!**



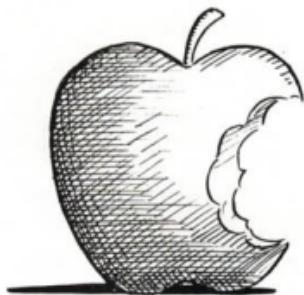
**IN PRACTICE, ANY ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.**



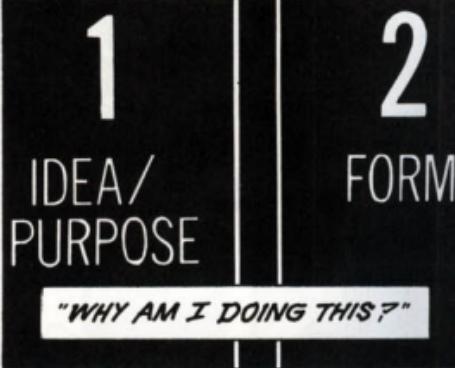
**STILL, THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR MOST ARTISTS IS A SLOW AND STEADY JOURNEY FROM END TO BEGINNING,**



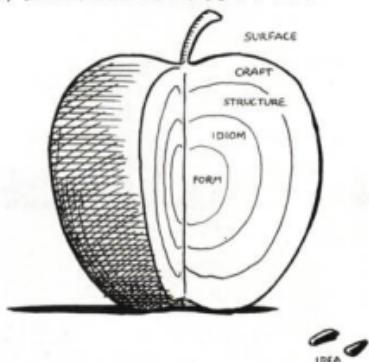
**FROM SURFACE TO CORE.**



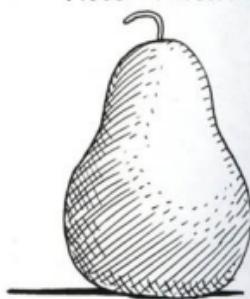
**AND IT'S AT THE CORE OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:**



**WHEN FORM RULES THE WORK, IT MAY SEEM SOMEWHAT ARTIFICIAL AT THE CORE, LIKE A SEEDLESS FRUIT.**



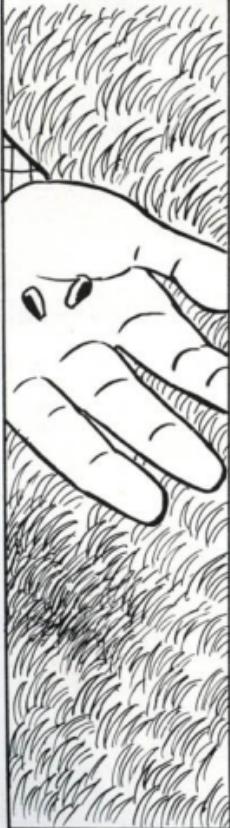
**BUT SUCH WORKS DON'T TAKE THE SHAPE OF ART FOR GRANTED AND BY QUESTIONING OUR FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS--**



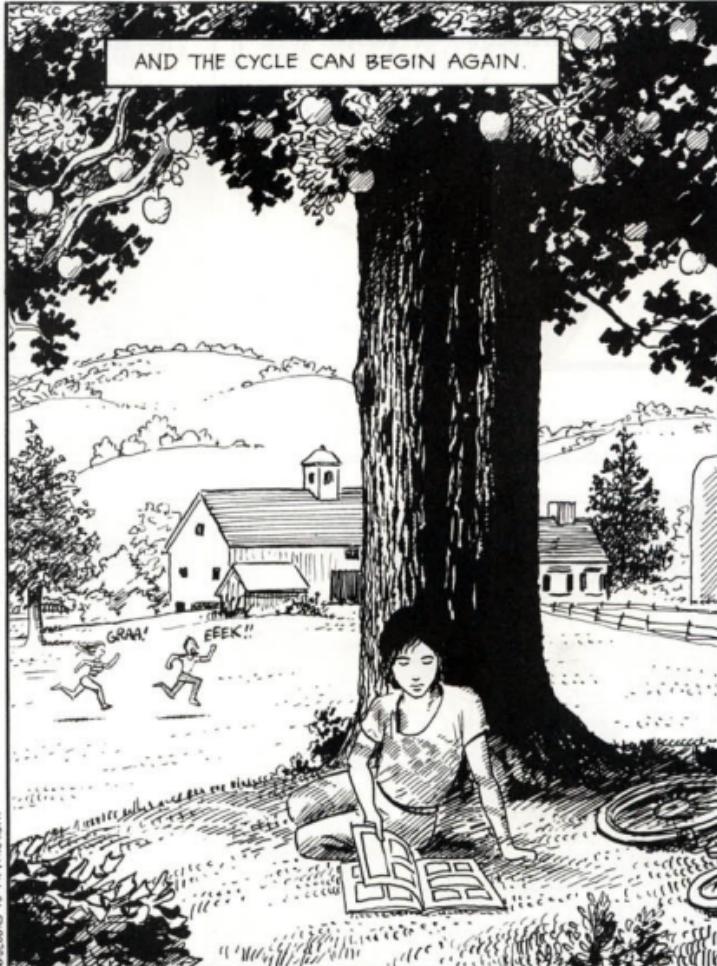
--CAN ANTICIPATE A **WORLD OF UNKNOWN EXPERIENCES**,



WHILE IF **IDEAS**  
RULE THE WORK AND  
**DETERMINE** ITS  
SHAPE, COMICS CAN  
HELP **PLANT** THOSE  
IDEAS FAR AND WIDE.



AND THE CYCLE CAN BEGIN AGAIN.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A WORD ABOUT COLOR.

IN CHAPTER FIVE WE DEALT WITH THE EXPRESSIONISTIC POTENTIAL OF LINES AS ANTICIPATED BY ARTISTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, BUT OF COURSE IT WAS COLOR WHICH MOST CAPTIVATED ARTISTS OF THAT ERA.

THROUGHOUT ART HISTORY, COLOR HAS BEEN A POWERFUL, EVEN PREDOMINANT, CONCERN OF FINE ARTISTS EVERYWHERE.

SOME, LIKE GEORGES SEURAT, DEVOTED THEIR LIVES TO ITS STUDY.



OTHERS, LIKE KANDINSKY, BELIEVED THAT COLORS COULD HAVE PROFOUND PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS ON PEOPLE.

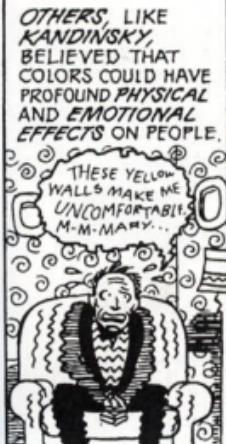
COLOR CAN BE A **FORMIDABLE ALLY** FOR ARTISTS IN ANY VISUAL MEDIUM.



YET IN COMICS THE CAREER OF COLOR HAS BEEN, WELL... A BIT "SPOTTY."



THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE STORMY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMICS AND COLOR, BUT MOST CAN BE SUMMED UP IN TWO WORDS...



COMMERCE

AND

TECHNOLOGY.

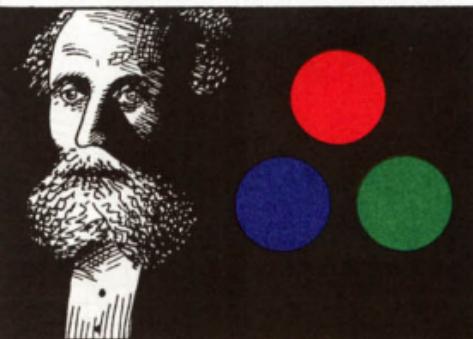
NOW **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS HISTORY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY **COMMERCE**. MONEY HAS A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON WHAT IS AND **ISN'T** SEEN.



BUT **COLOR** IN COMICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNUSUALLY SENSITIVE TO THE SHIFTING TIDES OF **TECHNOLOGY**.



THE TECHNOLOGY OF COLOR REPRODUCTION WAS FIRST ANTICIPATED IN **1861** WHEN SCOTTISH PHYSICIST **SIR JAMES CLERK-MAXWELL** ISOLATED WHAT WE NOW CALL **THE THREE ADDITIVE PRIMARIES**.



THESE COLORS -- ROUGHLY, **RED**, **BLUE** AND **GREEN** -- WHEN PROJECTED TOGETHER ON A SCREEN IN **VARIOUS COMBINATIONS**, COULD REPRODUCE EVERY COLOR IN THE **VISIBLE SPECTRUM**.



THEY WERE CALLED **ADDITIVE** BECAUSE THEY LITERALLY ADDED UP TO **PURE WHITE LIGHT**.



EIGHT YEARS LATER, FRENCH PIANIST **LOUIS DU COS DU HAURON**\* DEVISED THE IDEA OF THREE **SUBTRACTIVE** PRIMARIES.



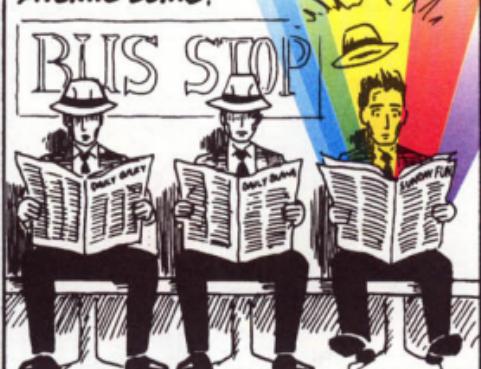
**THESE** COLORS -- CYAN, MAGENTA AND YELLOW -- CAN ALSO MIX TO PRODUCE ANY HUE IN THE VISIBLE SPECTRUM, BUT RATHER THAN ADDING LIGHT, THESE THREE DO IT BY FILTERING IT OUT!



THIS SUBTRACTIVE EFFECT WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH TRANSPARENT SUBSTANCES SUCH AS CELLOPHANE, COLORED GLASS, WATER COLOR --



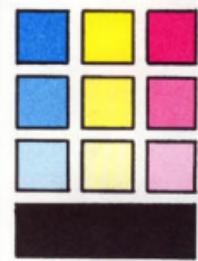
COLOR COMICS HIT THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY LIKE AN ATOMIC BOMB!



COLOR BOOSTED SALES, BUT IT ALSO BOOSTED COSTS! MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO STREAMLINE THE PROCESS AND MAKE IT MORE COST-EFFECTIVE.



AND THE STANDARD "FOUR COLOR" PROCESS TOOK OVER.



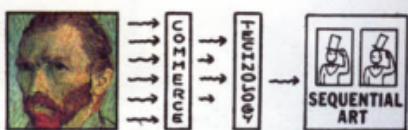
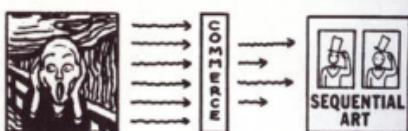
THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO 100%, 50%, AND 20%, USING BLACK INK FOR THE LINE WORK.



THE LOOK OF THESE COLORS, HELD BY BOLD, SIMPLE OUTLINES, AND REPRODUCED ON CHEAP NEWSPRINT EVENTUALLY BECAME THE LOOK OF COMICS IN AMERICA.



SO, WHILE THE EXPRESSIVE ART OF LINE WAS SUBJECT TO THE SUBTRACTIVE FILTER OF COMMERCE ON ITS WAY TO COMICS, COLOR WAS SUBJECT TO THE FILTERS OF BOTH COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY.



\* FOR OPAQUE PIGMENTS: RED, YELLOW AND BLUE.  
I KNOW, IT'S TOTALLY WEIRD.

TO COUNTERACT THE DULLING EFFECTS OF NEWSPRINT AND TO STAND OUT FROM THE COMPETITION, COSTUMED HEROES WERE CLAD IN BRIGHT, PRIMARY COLORS AND FOUGHT IN A BRIGHT PRIMARY WORLD!



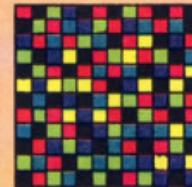
THE COLORS WERE PICKED FOR STRENGTH AND CONTRASTED STRONGLY WITH ONE ANOTHER, BUT ON MOST PAGES NO ONE COLOR DOMINATED.



WITHOUT THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF SINGLE-COLOR SATURATION, THE EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN COLOR COMICS --



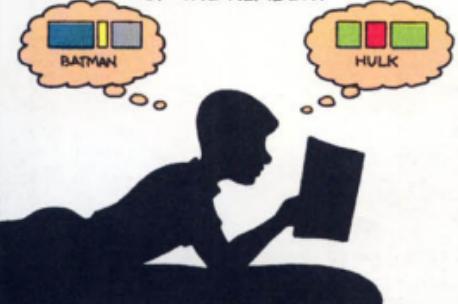
-- WAS OFTEN CANCELLED OUT TO AN EMOTIONAL GREY.



AS ALWAYS, THERE WERE SOME EXCEPTIONS, BUT THIS WAS THE OVERALL TREND.

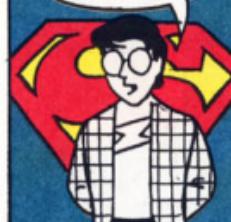


HOWEVER, WHILE COMICS COLORS WERE LESS THAN EXPRESSIONISTIC, THEY WERE FIXED WITH A NEW ICONIC POWER. BECAUSE COSTUME COLORS REMAINED EXACTLY THE SAME, PANEL AFTER PANEL, THEY CAME TO SYMBOLIZE CHARACTERS IN THE MIND OF THE READER.

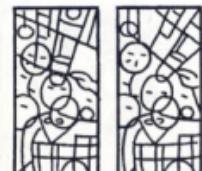


MANY SEE THE SUPERHERO AS A FORM OF MODERN MYTHOLOGY. IF SO, THIS ASPECT OF COLOR MAY PLAY A PART.

SYMBOLS ARE THE STUFF OF WHICH GODS ARE MADE.



ANOTHER PROPERTY OF FLAT COLORS IS THEIR TENDENCY TO EMPHASIZE THE SHAPE OF OBJECTS, BOTH ANIMATE AND INANIMATE--



-- AS ANY CHILD WHO HAS EVER "COLORED-BY-NUMBERS" KNOWS INSTINCTIVELY.



THESE COLORS OBJECTIFY THEIR SUBJECTS. WE BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE PHYSICAL FORM OF OBJECTS THAN IN BLACK AND WHITE.

A GAME IN MOTION BECOMES A BALL IN AIR. A FACE SHOWING EMOTION BECOMES A HEAD AND TWO HANDS.



THE WORLD TAKES ON THE CHILDHOOD REALITY OF THE PLAYGROUND AND RECALLS A TIME WHEN SHAPE PRECEDED MEANING. OBLONG SWING SETS. CYLINDRICAL JUNGLE GYMS. THE WONDER OF THINGS!



DOESN'T IT FOLLOW THEN THAT THE MASTERS OF FLAT-COLOR COMICS ARE, ABOVE ALL, MASTERS OF FORM AND COMPOSITION?



MECAY.



COLE.



FROM STEVE DITKO TO CARL BARKS TO F. CRAIG RUSSELL, THAT LOVE OF SHAPES PERSISTS IN WORLDS FAIRLY GLOWING WITH THE MYSTERY OF FIRST ENCOUNTERS.

ANY WONDER THEN THAT COMICS IN AMERICA HAS BEEN SO RELUCTANT TO "GROW UP?"



IN EUROPE HERGE CAPTURED THE MAGIC OF SUCH FLAT COLORS WITH UNPRECEDENTED SUBTLETY.



HERGÉ CREATED A KIND OF DEMOCRACY OF FORM IN WHICH NO SHAPE WAS ANY LESS IMPORTANT THAN ANY OTHER -- A COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE WORLD.



COMICS PRINTING WAS SUPERIOR IN EUROPE AND FOR HERGÉ, FLAT COLORS WERE A PREFERENCE, NOT A NECESSITY.



BUT OTHERS SUCH AS CLAVELLOUX, CAZA AND MOËBIUS SAW IN THEIR SUPERIOR PRINTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH A MORE INTENSE SUBJECTIVE PALETTE.



SOME OF THIS WORK BEGAN REACHING AMERICA IN THE 70'S, INSPIRING MANY YOUNG ARTISTS TO LOOK BEYOND THEIR FOUR-COLOR WALLS.



SUDDENLY IT SEEMED POSSIBLE FOR COLOR TO TAKE ON A CENTRAL ROLE.



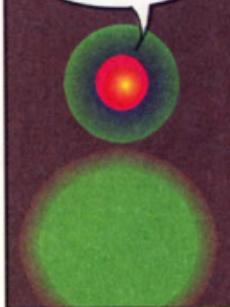
COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.

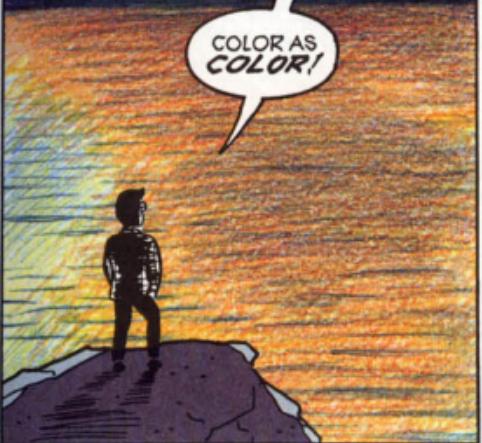


TONES AND MODELLING COULD ADD DEPTH.

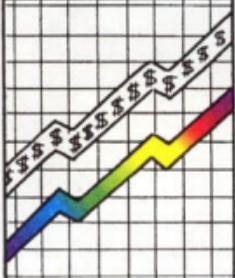


WHOLE SCENES COULD BE VIRTUALLY ABOUT COLOR!





UNFORTUNATELY, COLOR IS STILL AN EXPENSIVE OPTION AND HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN IN THE HANDS OF LARGER, MORE CONSERVATIVE PUBLISHERS.



SINCE THE LATE 70's, MORE AND MORE "UPSCALE" COLOR PROJECTS HAVE BEGUN APPEARING IN AMERICA.



SOME PUBLISHERS AT THE BEGINNING TRIED APPLYING THE TRADITIONAL "FOUR-COLOR" PROCESS TO BETTER PAPER WITH GARISH RESULTS.



WHEN MODELLING AND MORE SUBTLE HUES WERE APPLIED, THOUGH, THEY SEEMED OUT OF PLACE ON THE OLD SHAPE-SENSITIVE LINE DRAWINGS.



THE SURFACE WAS CHANGING, BUT NOT THE CORE. FOR ALL THEIR SUBTLE HUES, COMICS WERE STILL BEING WRITTEN IN PRIMARY COLORS!



THIS IS BEGINNING TO CHANGE AS I WRITE THIS, BUT IT'S STILL THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE. COMIC ARTISTS WANTING TO CONDUCT BOLD NEW EXPERIMENTS IN COMICS ART--



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACK-AND-WHITE AND COLOR COMICS ARE *VAST AND PROFOUND*, AFFECTING EVERY LEVEL OF THE READING EXPERIENCE.



IN BLACK AND WHITE, THE IDEAS *BEHIND* THE ART ARE COMMUNICATED MORE DIRECTLY. MEANING TRANSCENDS FORM. ART APPROACHES LANGUAGE.



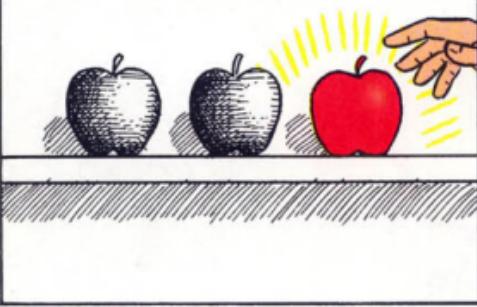
IN FLAT COLORS FORMS THEMSELVES TAKE ON MORE SIGNIFICANCE. THE WORLD BECOMES A PLAYGROUND OF SHAPES AND SPACE.



AND THROUGH MORE EXPRESSIVE COLORS, COMICS CAN BECOME AN *INTOXICATING ENVIRONMENT OF SENSATIONS* THAT ONLY COLOR CAN GIVE.



THE *SURFACE QUALITIES* OF COLOR WILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT READERS MORE EASILY THAN BLACK AND WHITE, AND THE STORY OF COLOR WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO BE INTERTWINED WITH THE FORCES OF COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY.



WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF COLORS, NOT JUST *BLACK AND WHITE*. COLOR COMICS WILL ALWAYS SEEM MORE '*REAL*' AT FIRST GLANCE.



BUT COMICS READERS LOOK FOR MANY THINGS BESIDES "*REALITY*" AND, TECHNOLOGY NOTWITHSTANDING, COLOR WILL NEVER REPLACE BLACK AND WHITE ENTIRELY.



ONE THING'S FOR SURE, THOUGH, WHEN USED WELL, COLOR IN COMICS CAN -- LIKE COMICS ITSELF --



-- AMOUNT TO FAR MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.



## CHAPTER NINE

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.

SO,  
WHY IS THIS  
MEDIUM WE  
CALL COMICS SO  
**IMPORTANT?**  
WHY SHOULD WE  
TRY SO HARD TO  
**UNDERSTAND**  
COMICS?



# SEQUENTIAL ART

I THINK THE  
ANSWER LIES DEEP  
WITHIN THE HUMAN  
CONDITION...

WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF  
PROFOUND ISOLATION.

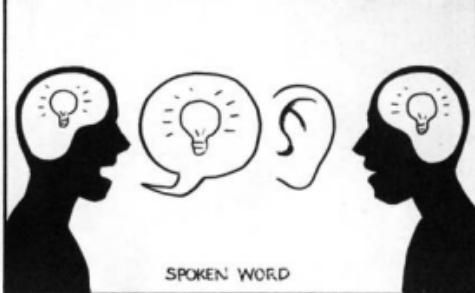
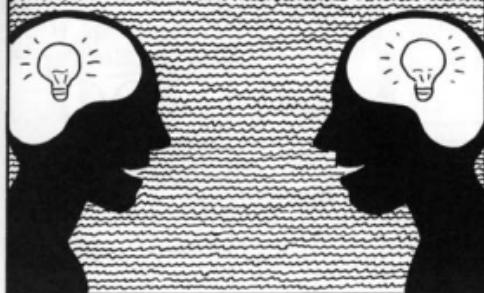
NO OTHER HUMAN BEING CAN  
EVER KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO  
BE YOU FROM THE INSIDE.

AND NO AMOUNT OF REACHING  
OUT TO OTHERS CAN EVER MAKE  
THEM FEEL EXACTLY WHAT  
YOU FEEL.

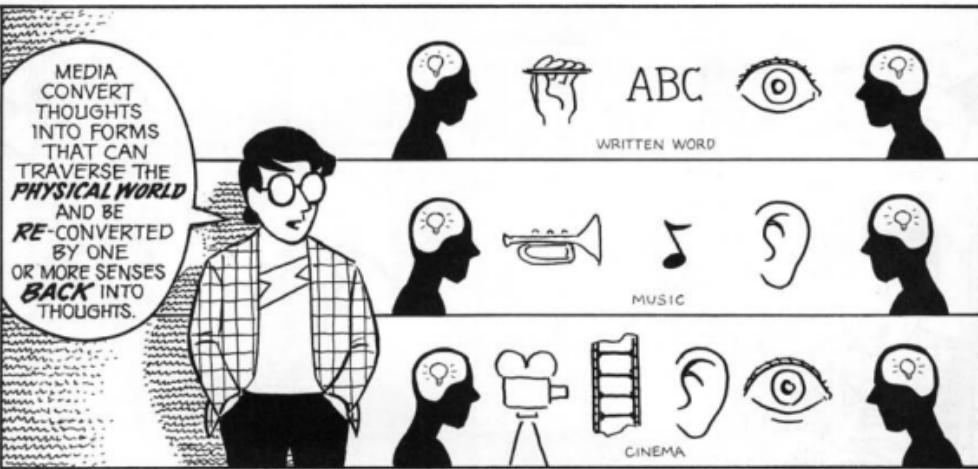
ALL MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION  
ARE A BY-PRODUCT OF OUR SAD  
INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE  
DIRECTLY FROM MIND TO MIND.

SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY STEM FROM THAT INABILITY.

EACH MEDIUM (THE TERM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD MEANING MIDDLE) SERVES AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN MINDS.

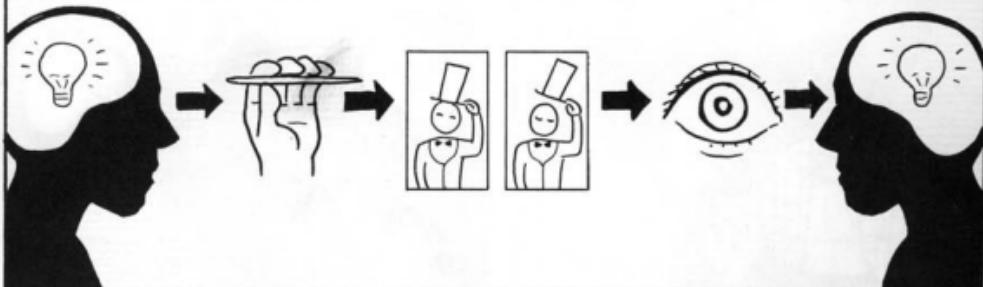


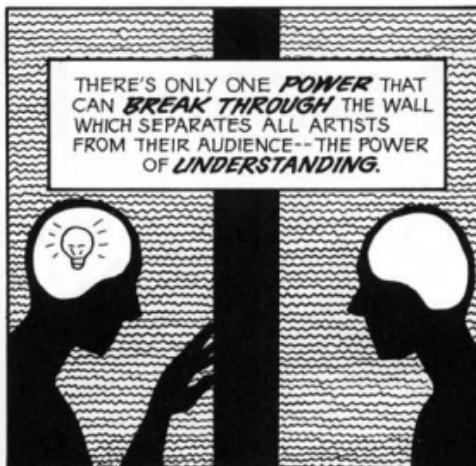
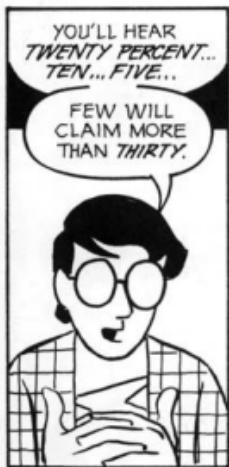
spoken word



IN COMICS THE CONVERSION FOLLOWED A PATH FROM MIND TO HAND TO PAPER TO EYE TO MIND.

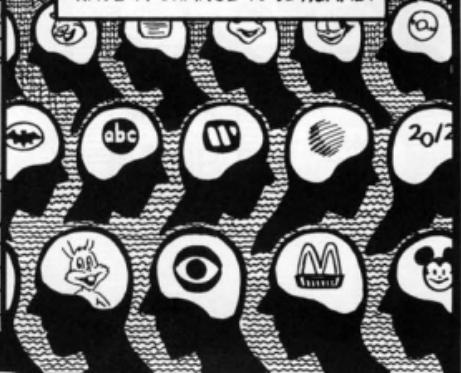
IDEALLY THE ARTIST'S "MESSAGE" WILL RUN THIS GAUNTLET WITHOUT BEING AFFECTED BY IT, BUT IN PRACTICE THIS IS RARELY THE CASE.





UNDERSTANDING  
COMICS IS SERIOUS  
BUSINESS.

TODAY, COMICS IS ONE OF THE  
VERY FEW FORMS OF MASS  
COMMUNICATION IN WHICH  
INDIVIDUAL VOICES STILL  
HAVE A CHANCE TO BE HEARD.

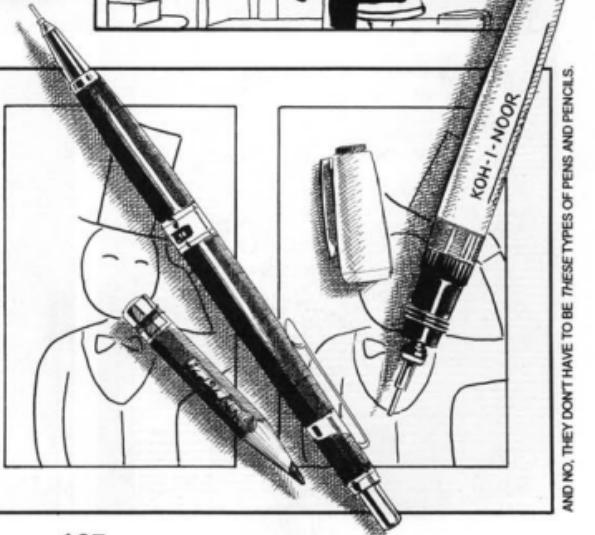


THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE  
**BUSINESS** OF COMICS HAVE MANY  
OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME--

--BUT THEY PALE  
IN COMPARISON TO  
WHAT A FILMMAKER  
OR PLAYWRIGHT  
HAS TO CONTEND  
WITH.

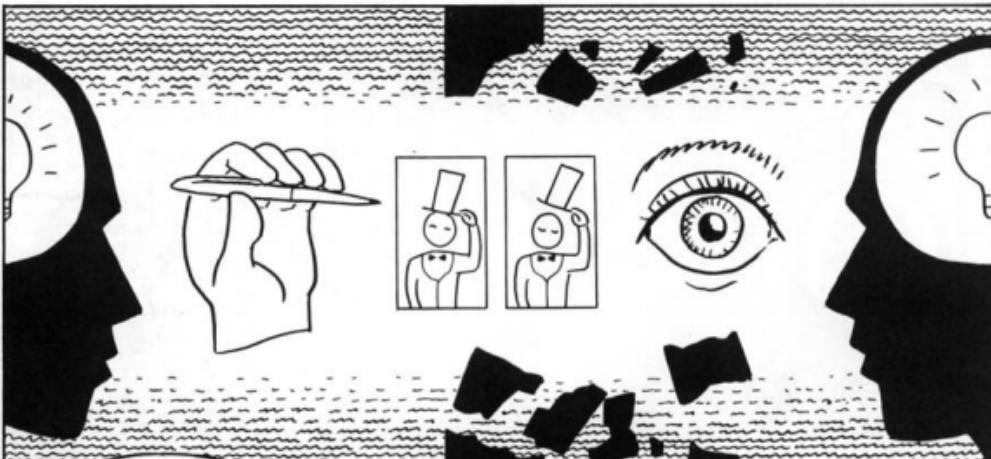


COMICS  
WELCOMES  
ANY WRITER OR  
ARTIST TO STEP INTO  
ITS WORLD, A WORLD  
AS CLOSE AS **PEN**  
OR **PENCIL AND PAPER**.



AND NO, THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE THESE TYPES OF PENS AND PENCILS.

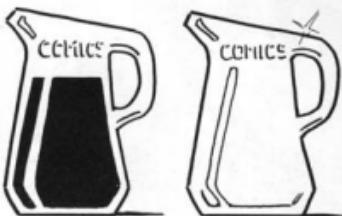
THE WALL OF **IGNORANCE** THAT PREVENTS SO MANY HUMAN BEINGS FROM SEEING EACH OTHER **CLEARLY** CAN ONLY BE BREACHED BY **COMMUNICATION**.



THE FIRST STEP IN ANY SUCH EFFORT IS TO CLEAR OUR MINDS OF ALL PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT COMICS.

ONLY BY STARTING FROM SCRATCH CAN WE DISCOVER THE FULL RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES COMICS OFFER.

THIS MEANS LEARNING TO SEPARATE THE **FORM** OF COMICS FROM ITS OFTEN INCONSISTENT **CONTENTS**.



THE BEST **DEFINITION** FOR COMICS WILL, I THINK, BE THE MOST EXPANSIVE.



## SEQUENTIAL ART

WITH A LITTLE REFINING, SUCH A DEFINITION CAN TAKE 'COMICS FAR INTO THE FUTURE--'

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

-- AND FAR INTO THE **PAST**, BEYOND THE ARTIFICIAL "STARTING POINT" OF 1896 AND "THE YELLOW KID!"

HONK!  
HONK!

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

1775 1800 1825 1850 1875 1900



OVER  
THREE THOUSAND  
YEARS BEYOND!



THERE'S AN  
INCREDIBLE WEALTH  
OF ANCIENT COMICS  
AND SOME MAY YET  
HOLD THE KEY  
TO COMICS'  
**FUTURE!**



DISCOVERING  
AND CATALOGUING  
THIS WORK HAS  
ALREADY **BEGIN\***  
BUT THERE'S MUCH  
MORE THAT **NEEDS**  
TO BE DONE!



THERE'S  
A BIG Gaping  
HOLE IN THE  
OFFICIAL HISTORY  
OF ART AND IT'S HIGH  
TIME SOMEBODY  
**FILLED IT!**



JOURNALISTIC  
PICTURES  
AND OTHER  
IMAGES IN  
DELIBERATE  
SEQUENCE

THROUGH THE WORKS AND WRITINGS OF THESE NEGLECTED MASTERS, WE SEE THE FIRST GLIMPSES OF COMICS' LIMITLESS POTENTIAL AS AN ART FORM--

“...the picture-story, which critics disregard and scholars scarcely notice, has had great influence at all times, perhaps even more than written literature.”

Rudolphe Topffer  
1845

--AND THE ATTITUDES THAT WERE TO OBSCURE THAT POTENTIAL FOR MANY YEARS TO COME!

“...in addition, the picture-story appeals mainly to children and the lower classes...”

Rudolphe Topffer  
1845

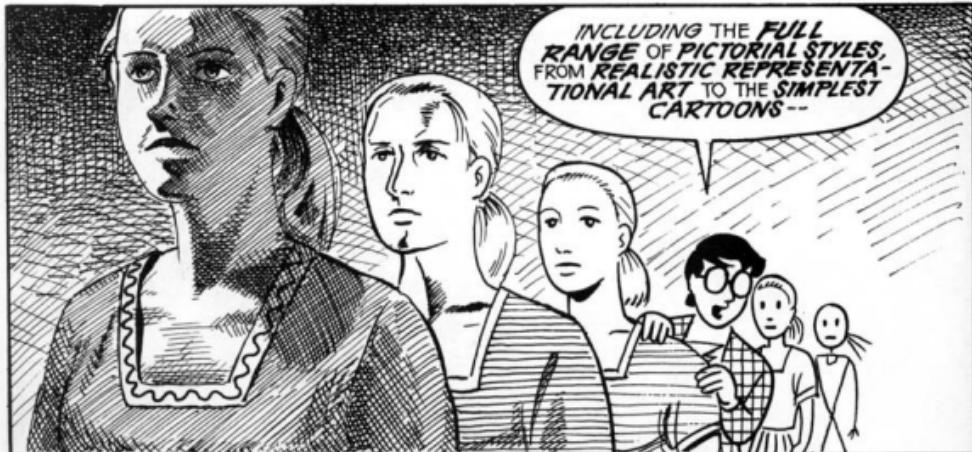
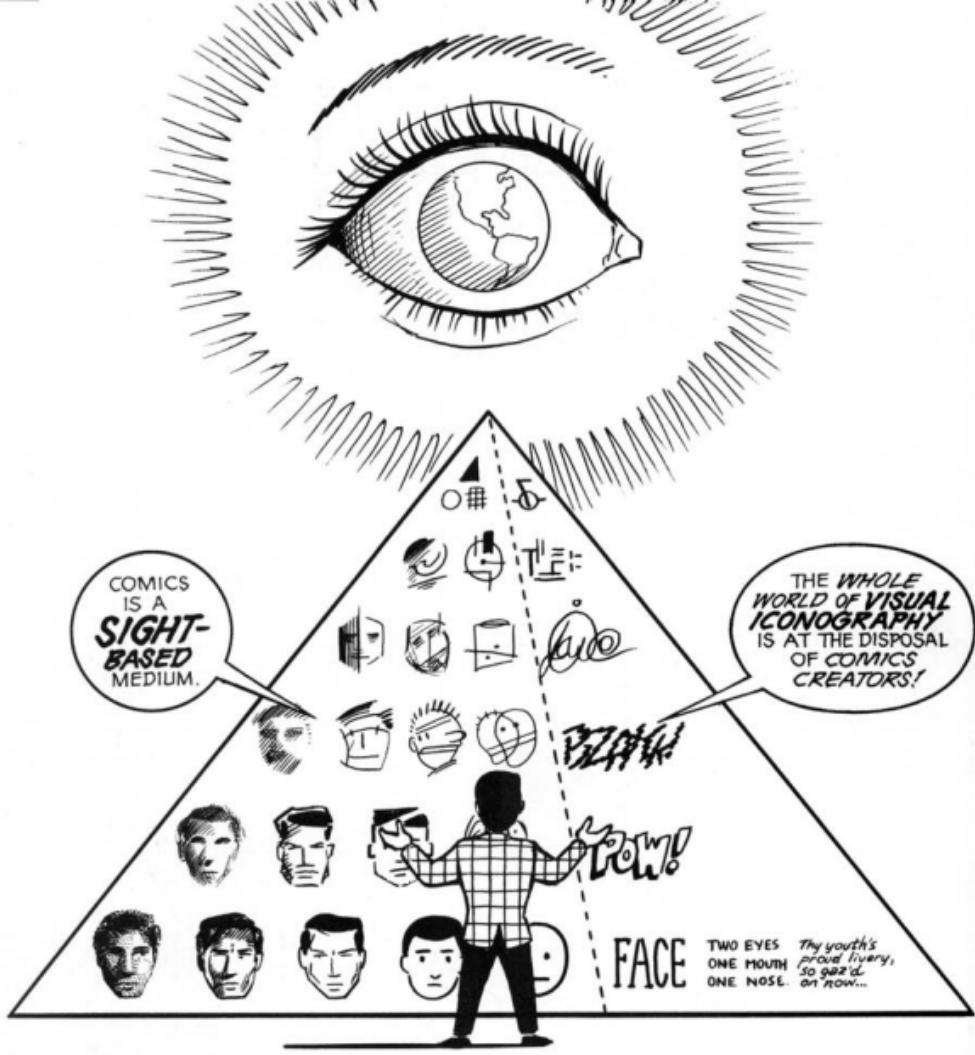


TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE

...ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED SOME OF MODERN COMICS' MOST PROMISING ARTISTS TO BE SEGREGATED FROM THEIR MUCH-MALIGNED COUSINS.

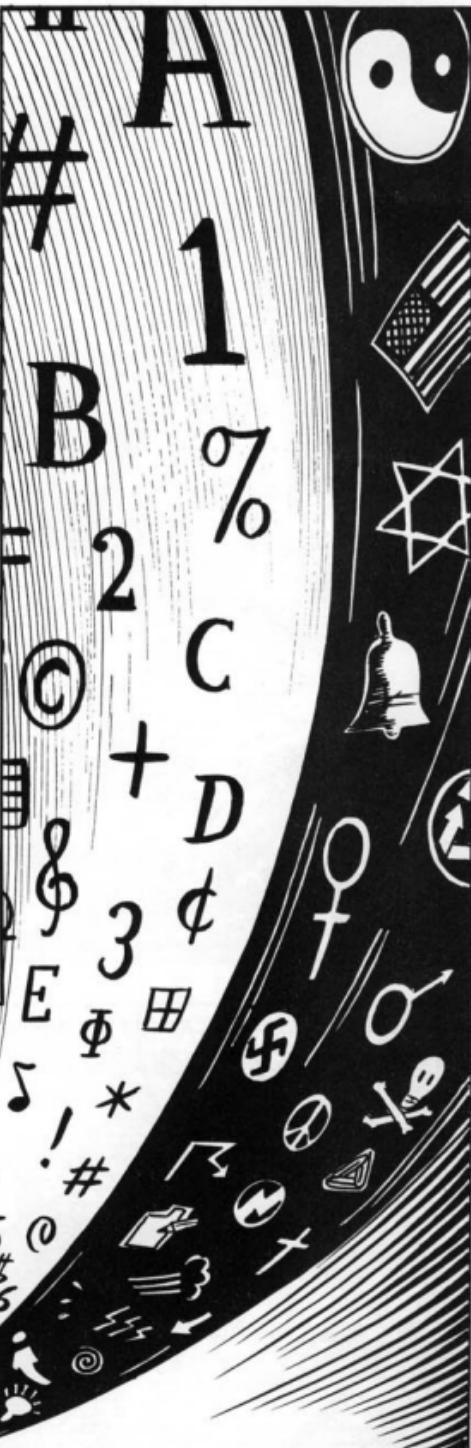
ELEVATED BEYOND THEIR HERITAGE BY A CHANGE OF NAME!

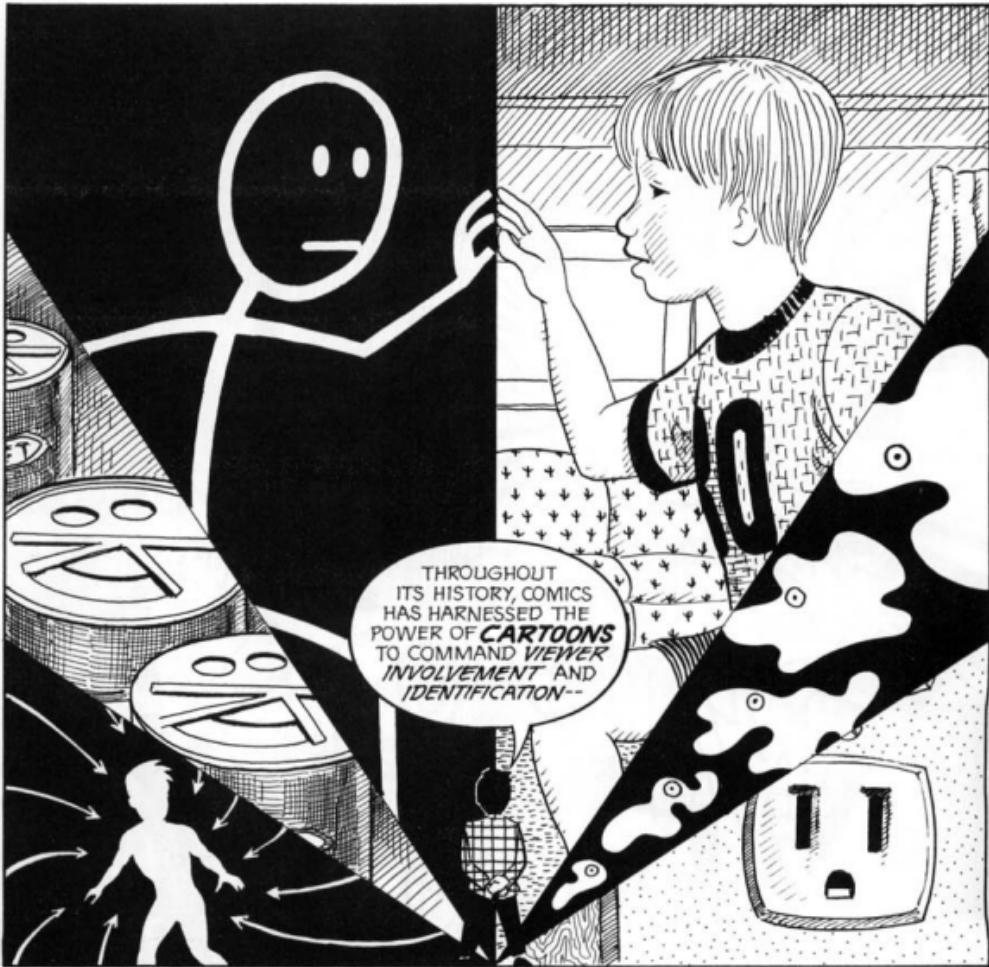






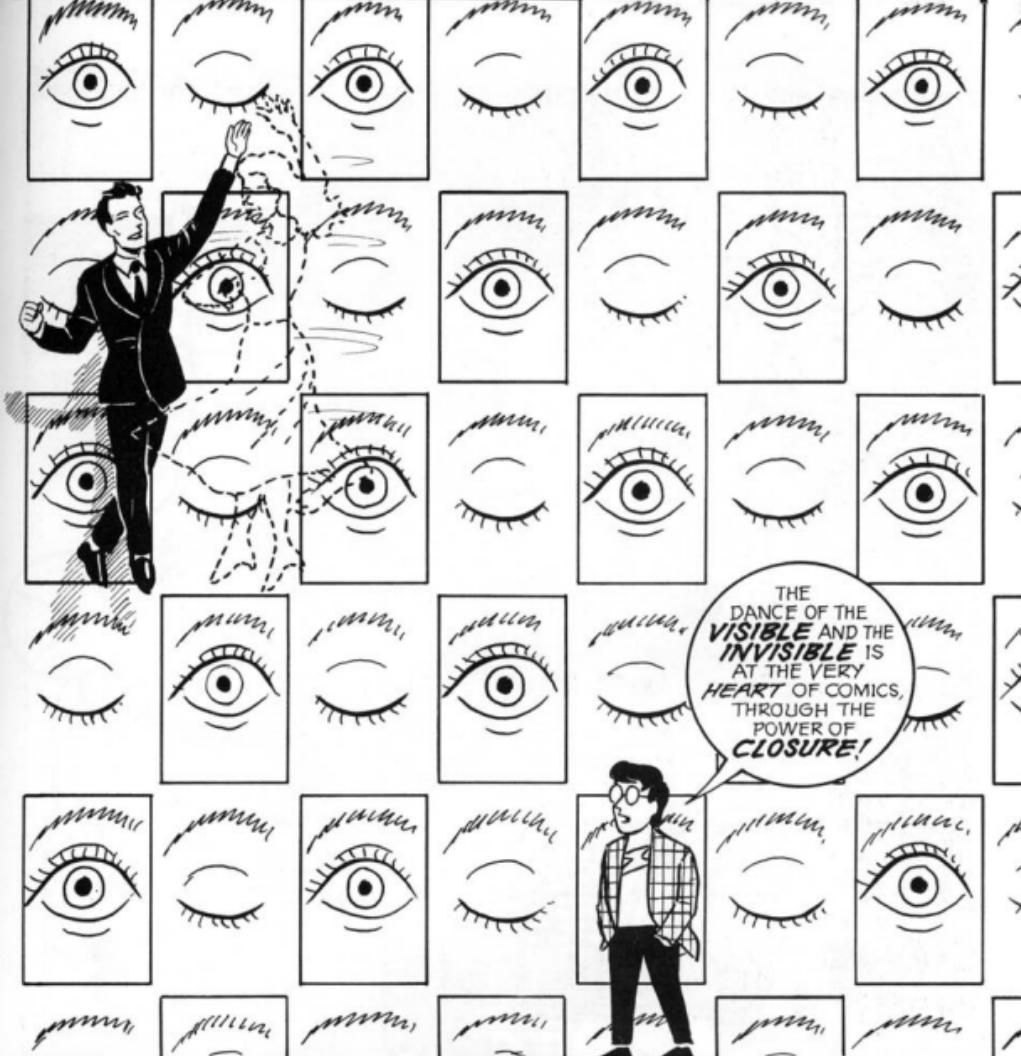
AND THE **INVISIBLE**  
WORLD OF SYMBOLS AND  
LANGUAGE!





-- AND **REALISM** TO CAPTURE THE BEAUTY AND COMPLEXITY OF THE VISIBLE WORLD.



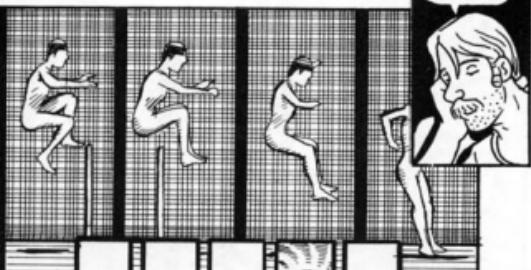
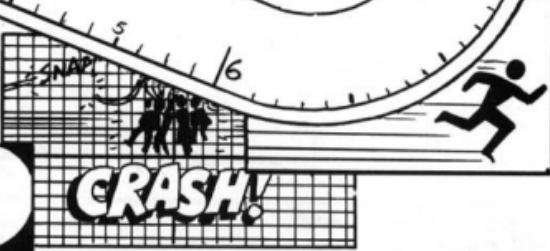
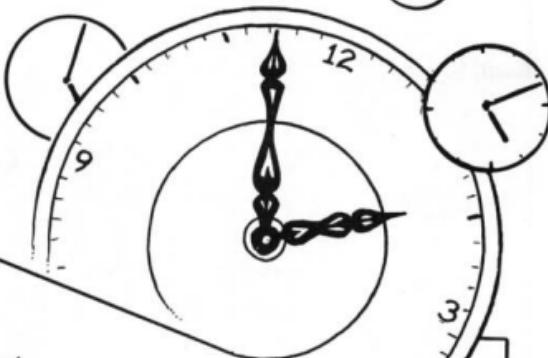
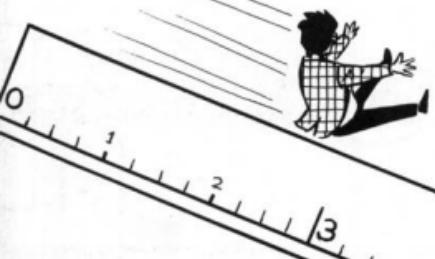


COMICS IS A GREAT  
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE  
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



--AND A  
BAFFLING  
TWO-STEP OF  
TIME AND  
SPACE!



-3 -2 -1 +1



BUT NOWHERE IS THE BALANCE  
BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND THE  
*INVISIBLE* MORE CONSPICUOUS  
THAN IN *PICTURES AND WORDS...*

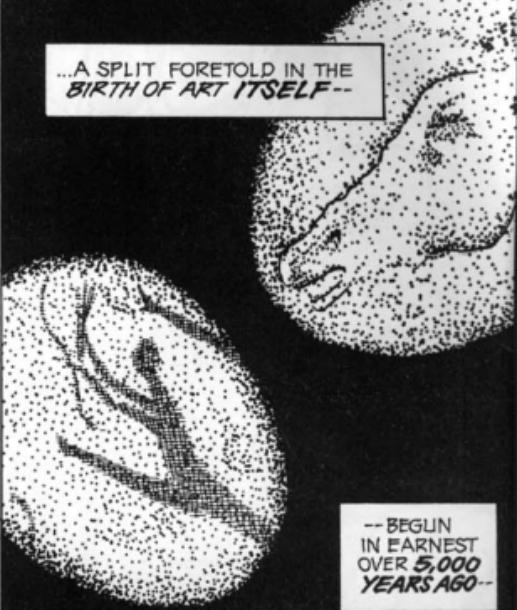


et genuie li  
ini & nephi  
thaalui d  
ihu & capth  
uit sydonem

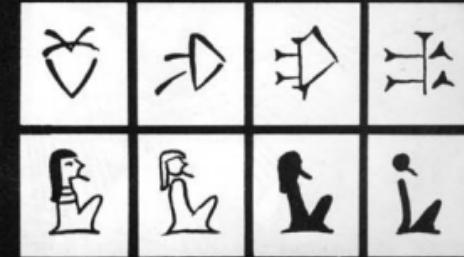
in unravished  
eld of silence  
re, who comit to  
re sweetly, the  
d legend ha  
mortals, of lo  
or the dates o  
gods are these

FACE

--A SPLIT FORETOLD IN THE  
BIRTH OF ART ITSELF--



-- BEGIN  
IN EARNEST  
OVER 5,000  
YEARS AGO --



-- AND GROWN WIDER AND WIDER FOR  
CENTURIES UNTIL EVENTUALLY, ALL  
CONNECTION WAS LOST --

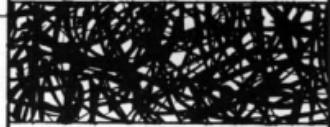
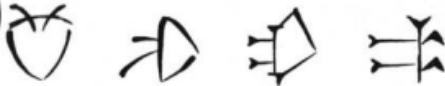




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--AS ALL  
LANGUAGE  
MUST  
EVOLVE--



-- BECAUSE  
EMBEDDED IN  
ALL PICTURES  
OF THE **VISILE**  
WORLD ARE THE  
SEEDS OF THE  
**INVISILE**.

THE SEEDS OF  
**EXPRESSIONISM**  
AND  
**SYNAESTHETICS**.

BUT EVOLUTION IS A TRICKY THING. SPECIES EVOLVE DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT CLIMATES.



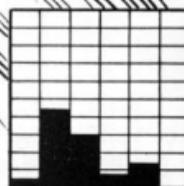
SO IT WAS IN JAPAN WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED IN RELATIVE ISOLATION, SPAWNING A HOST OF UNIQUE APPROACHES TO MAKING COMICS.



EXPRESSIONISM



COLLAGE



STORYTELLING



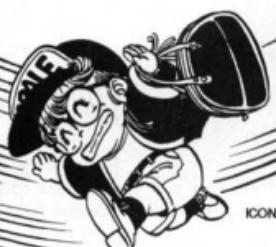
WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



FORMATS



SUBJECTIVE MOTION



ICONIC CHARACTERS



THE "MASKING" EFFECT



AS COMICS GROWS INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, CREATORS WILL ASPIRE TO MANY HIGHER GOALS THAN APPEALING TO THE *'LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR.'*



IGNORANCE AND SHORT-SIGHTED BUSINESS PRACTICES WILL NO DOUBT *OBSCURE* THE POSSIBILITIES OF COMICS FROM TIME TO TIME AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE.



BUT THE *TRUTH* ABOUT COMICS CAN'T STAY HIDDEN FROM VIEW FOREVER AND SOONER OR LATER--

--THE *TRUTH* WILL SHINE THROUGH!

DADA

BIOGRAPHY

ROMANCE

BLANK HORROR

VERSE

SURREALISM

EPIC

HISTORICAL FICTION

POETRY

FOLK TALES

SOCIAL

EROTICA

ALLEGORY

MYSTERY

ADAPTATIONS

RELIGIOUS TOPICS

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SATIRE

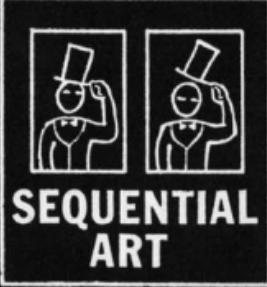


TODAY THE  
POSSIBILITIES FOR  
COMICS ARE -- AS  
THEY ALWAYS  
HAVE BEEN --

--ENDLESS.



COMICS OFFERS  
TREMENDOUS  
RESOURCES TO  
ALL WRITERS  
AND ARTISTS:  
FAITHFULNESS,  
CONTROL, A  
CHANCE TO BE  
HEARD FAR AND  
WIDE, WITHOUT  
FEAR OF  
COMPROMISE...



IT OFFERS  
RANGE AND  
VERSATILITY  
WITH ALL THE  
POTENTIAL IMAGERY  
OF FILM AND  
PAINTING  
PLUS THE  
INTIMACY  
OF THE  
WRITTEN  
WORD.

AND ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS THE DESIRE TO BE HEARD--

1

2

3

4

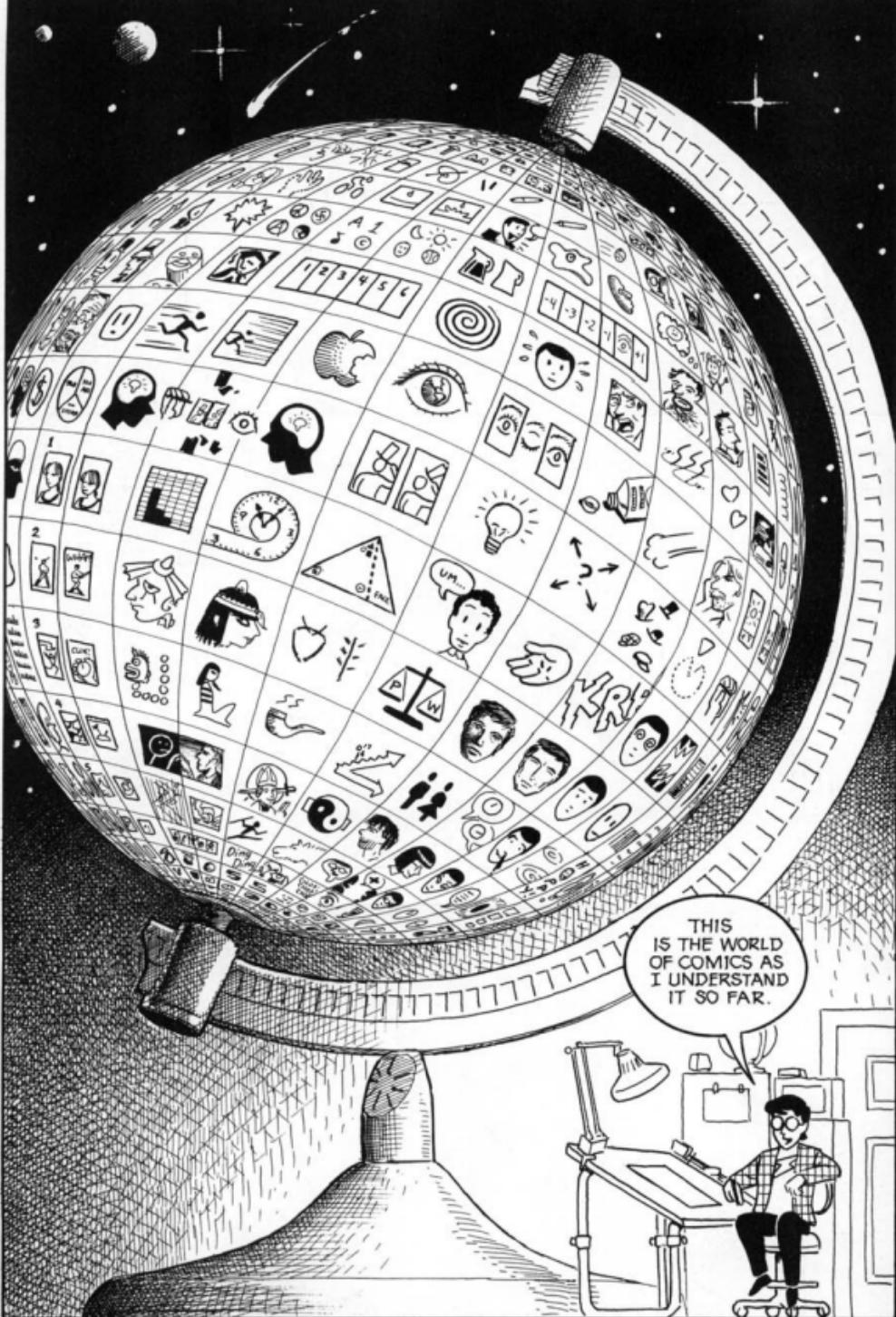
5

6

--THE WILL

TO LEARN--

--AND THE  
ABILITY TO  
SEE.





# wordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswords

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Kunzle, David: *The Early Comic Strip* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

McLuhan, Marshall: *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964).

Schwartz, Tony: *Media: The Second God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983).

Wiese, E., editor, translator: *Enter: The Comics--Rodolphe Topffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crepin* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

Special note: Kunzle's book (see above) has gone virtually unnoticed by the comics community but is an enormously important work, covering nearly 400 years of forgotten European comics. Check it out!

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NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

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THROUGH THE HIDDEN WORLDS  
OF COMICS STORYTELLING.

WITNESS A HISTORY MORE  
THAN 3,000 YEARS OLD.

"AFTER COLLEGE, I PURSUED  
A CAREER IN HIGH FINANCE."

*HURRY UP, WILLYA!?*



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TAP INTO THE POWER  
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GET A RING-SIDE SEAT FOR THE  
BATTLE OF WORDS AND PICTURES.



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BABY!**

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FOR #OCD

