



UNDERSTANDING

COMICS

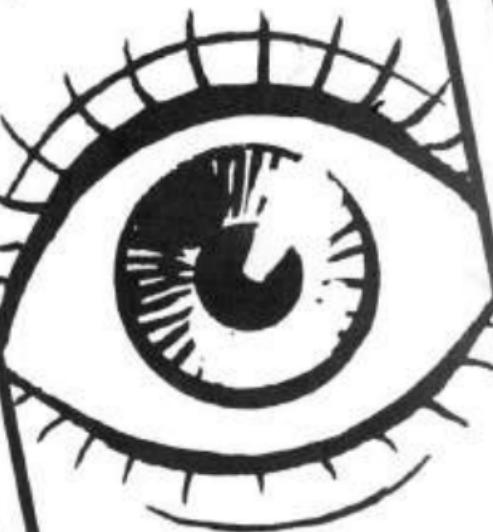
THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT McCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."

—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

UNDERSTANDING COMICS



A Kitchen Sink Book for
HarperPerennial
A Division of HarperCollins Publishers

WRITING AND ART
SCOTT McCLOUD

LETTERING
BOB LAPPAN

EDITORIAL ADVICE AND
SELECTIVE EGO-TRIMMING
STEVE BISSETTE
KURT BUSIEK
NEIL GAIMAN
BOB LAPPAN
JENNIFER LEE
LARRY MARDER
IVY RATAFIA

EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS
WILL EISNER

EDITOR
MARK MARTIN

A paperback edition of this book was originally published in 1993 by Kitchen Sink Press. It is here reprinted by arrangement with Kitchen Sink Press.

UNDERSTANDING COMICS: THE INVISIBLE ART. Copyright © 1993 by Scott McCloud. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information address HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022.

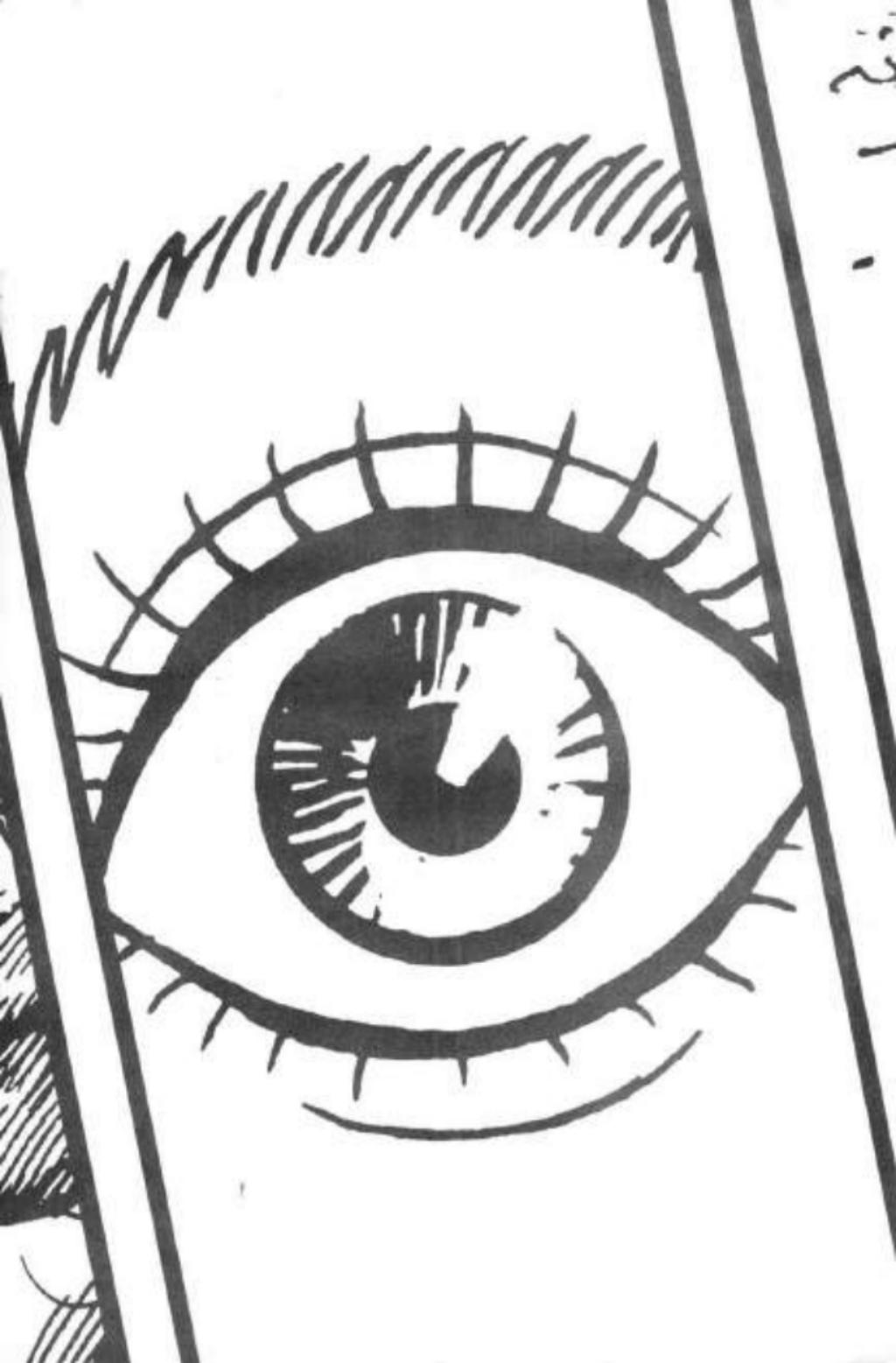
HarperCollins books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. For information please write: Special Markets Department, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022.

First HarperPerennial edition published 1994.

ISBN 0-06-097625-X (pbk.)

94 95 96 97 98 RIPON 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN CHARACTERS/INSTITUTIONS IN THIS WORK
TO ACTUAL CHARACTERS/INSTITUTIONS IS UNINTENDED
ENTIRE CONTENTS COPYRIGHT SCOTT MCCLOUD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED
UNDERSTANDING COMICS IS A TRADEMARK OF SCOTT MCCLOUD
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



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 Ratalia 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 Lappen. 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 Ratalia, Alice Harrigan, Carol Ratalia, Barry Deutsch, Kip Manley, Amy Sacks, Caroline Woolf, Clarence Cummins, Karl Zimmerman, Catherine Bell, Adam Phillips and the legendary Dewan Brothers, Ted and Brian.

In the comics world, special thanks go to Richard Howell, Mike Luce, Dave McKean, Rick Veitch, Don Simpson, Mike Bannon (technical support), Jim Woodring, and all of the wonderful clan at San Diego '92. Thanks also to the numerous professionals who have lent their support and

endorsements to the project. I'm particularly indebted to Jim Valentino, Dave Sim and Keith Giffen who used their own books as a forum on my behalf. In the retail sector, my thanks to the generous members of the Direct Line Group, to the many stores which played host during our first tour and especially to the Mighty Moondog himself, Gary Colobuno. Thanks, as always, to Larry Marder, Nexus of All Comic Book Realities, for his tireless efforts on my behalf.

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.

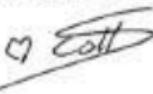
Early influences on the ideas in this book are harder to trace, but no less important. Kurt Busiek introduced me to comics long ago and was my best guide for many years. Eclipse Editor-in-Chief cat yronwode helped shape my critical faculties over seven years on ZOT! and is one of the very few people 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 comic-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



CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

-
- 1** SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT 2 
-
- 2** THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS 24 
-
- 3** BLOOD IN THE GUTTER 60 
-
- 4** TIME FRAMES 94 
-
- 5** LIVING IN LINE 118 
-
- 6** SHOW AND TELL 138 
-
- 7** THE SIX STEPS 162 
-
- 8** A WORD ABOUT COLOR 185 
-
- 9** PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER 193 



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 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!



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



--BUT--

THEY DON'T
HAVE TO
BE!



THE PROBLEM
WAS THAT FOR MOST
PEOPLE, THAT WAS
WHAT "COMIC BOOK"
MEANT!

DON'T GIMME THAT
COMIC BOOK TALK,
BARNEY!



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.



THE WORLD
OF COMICS IS A
HUGE AND **VARIED**
ONE. OUR DEFINITION
MUST ENCOMPASS
ALL THESE TYPES--

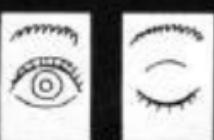
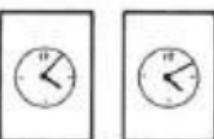
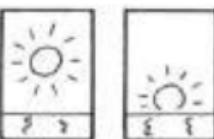
BUT WHAT--
--IS--
--COMICS?



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.



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 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. THAT'S A

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?

PICTORIAL
AND OTHER
IMAGES IN
DELIBERATE
SEQUENCE

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

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

tap
tap
tap
tap
tap

THERE!

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 constantly
crime and trying to conquer the
world, in violent situations, with
pounding action sequences! **3.**
Cartoon, comedy, puns, riddles and
riddle-puzzles, dancing to sed. No.
Hip-Hop, Hippo-Hip-Hop! **4.**
Corruptor of our Nation's Youth.
com•ic (kōm'ik) 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.

1800 1850 1900 1950

ACTUALLY,
A LOT
FARTHER!

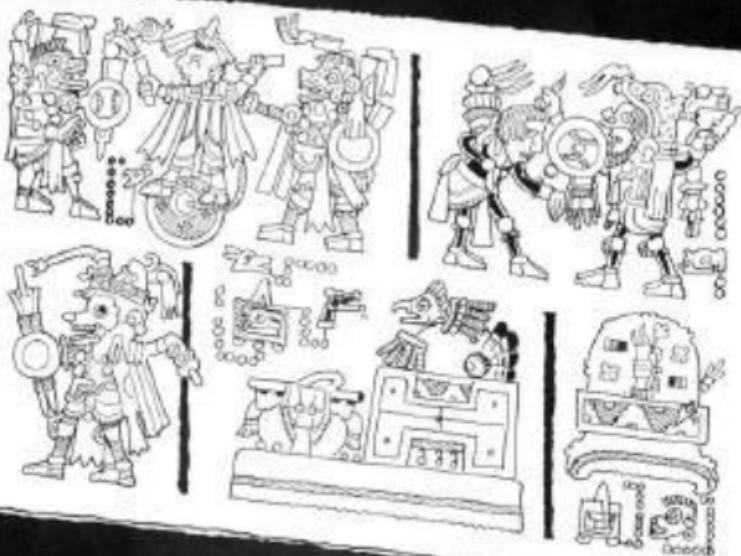
1500

1600

1700

1800

1900



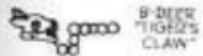
HERE'S
JUST A PIECE OF THE
EPIC STORY CONTAINED
IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN
PICTURE MANUSCRIPT
"DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS
AROUND 1519.

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!



FIRST, WE SEPARATE WORDS FROM PICTURES.



(A NAME)



(A DATE)



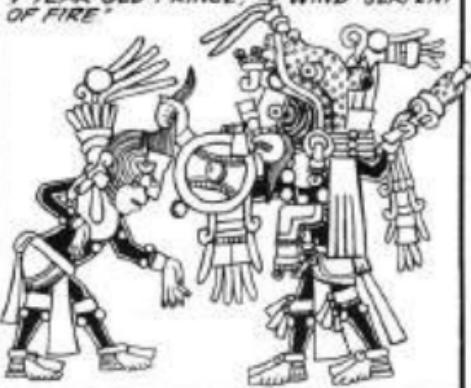
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

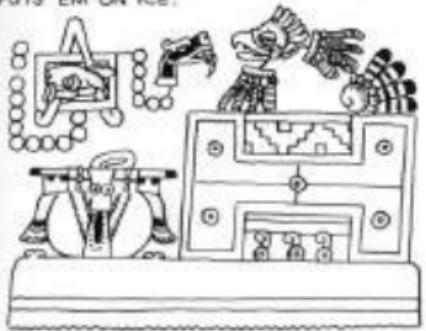
THE YEAR: 1049 AD
THE DATE: MAY 3rd
THE PLACE: HERE!



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.

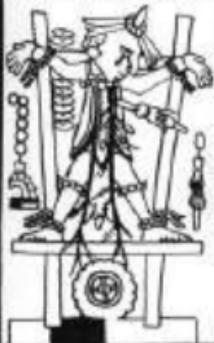


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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.



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



WE KNOW THE YEAR; I'M JUST CRACKING AT THE DATE REPRESENTED BY "12 MONKEY".

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

THIS 280 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 BILL FISHER



FINDING
COMICS BEYOND
OUR OWN
MILLENNIUM
IS A BIT
TRICKIER.

8000 1000 1200



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.

=====
= "bafu"

=====
= "nek"

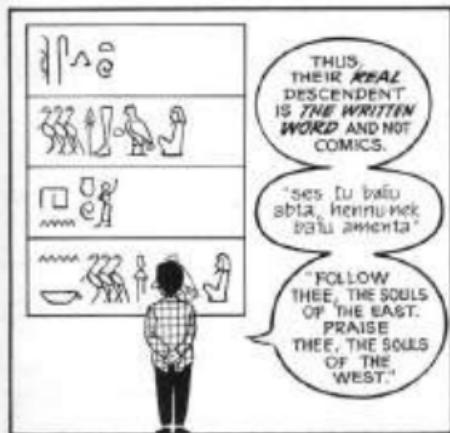
READING LEFT TO RIGHT
WE SEE THE EVENTS OF THE
CONQUEST, IN DELIBERATE
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER
UNFOLD BEFORE OUR VERY
EYES.

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



CARME WILLIAMS REMOVES HIS HELMET TO RALLY HIS SOLDIERS

HAROLD'S ARMY IS CUT TO PIECES

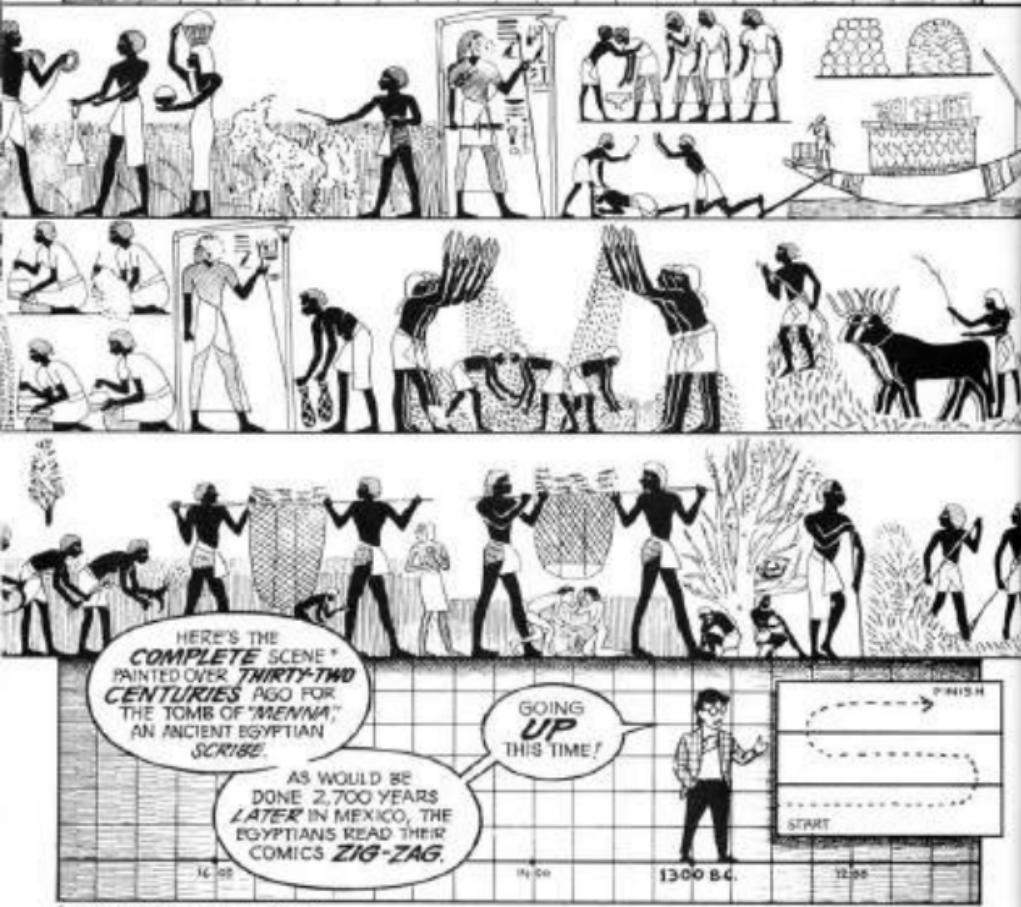


I HAD BEEN TRYING TO FIND SEQUENCE IN EGYPTIAN PAINTINGS FOR YEARS WHEN I BEGAN THIS BOOK AND WAS READY TO CALL IT QUIT --

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

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





* MORE ANSWER 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!)



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



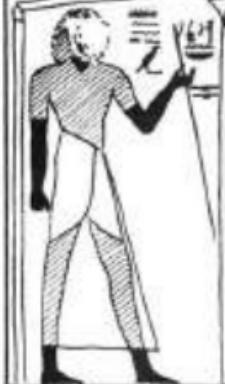
THEN OXEN TREAD
KERNELS OUT OF
THE HUSKS.



NEXT, PEASANTS
SEPARATE THE WHEAT
FROM THE CHAFF.



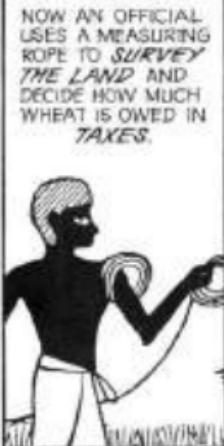
OLD MENNA HIMSELF
LOOKS ON--*



--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.



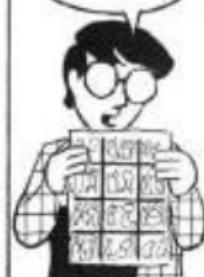
I'VE ONLY SCRATCHED
THE SURFACE IN
THIS CHAPTER...
TRAJAN'S COLUMN,
GREEK PAINTING,
JAPANESE SCROLLS...
ALL THESE HAVE BEEN
SUGGESTED AND ALL
SHOULD BE EXPLORED.



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 SCRUBBED 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 ERASMIUS," CIRCA 1460. WORD HAS IT THIS GUY WAS A VERY POPULAR CHARACTER.



* MAYBE I SHOULDN'T SAY "INVENT". EUROPEANS WERE A BIT LATE IN DISCOVERING PRINTING.

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



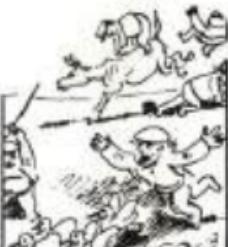
THE FATHER OF THE **MODERN** COMIC IN MANY WAYS IS **RODOLPHE TÖPFER**, WHOSE LIGHT SATIRIC PICTURE STORIES, STARTING IN THE MID-1800'S, EMPLOYED CARTOONING AND PANEL BORDERS, AND FEATURED THE FIRST INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATION OF WORDS AND PICTURES SEEN IN EUROPE.

UNFORTUNATELY, TÖPFER 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, [TÖPFER] WOULD CHOOSE A LESS FRIVOLOUS SUBJECT AND RESTRICT HIMSELF A LITTLE, HE WOULD PRODUCE THINGS BEYOND ALL CONCEPTION."

—Goethe



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

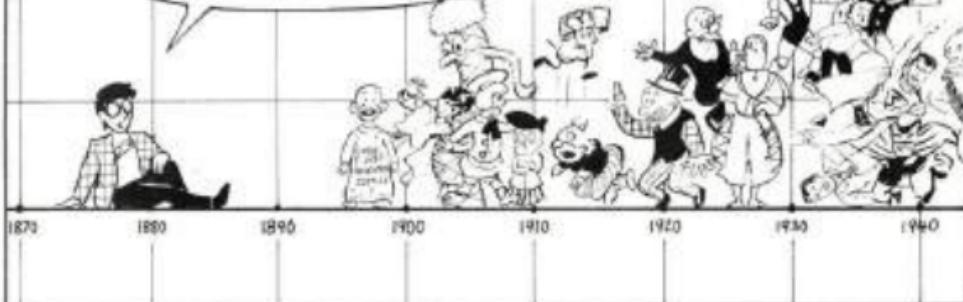


-- HAD CREATED AND MASTERED A FORM WHICH WAS AT ONCE **BOTH** AND **NEITHER**.



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.

FOR MUCH
OF THIS CENTURY,
THE WORD "COMICS"
HAS HAD SUCH
NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS
THAT MANY OF COMICS MOST
DEVOTED PRACTITIONERS
HAVE PREFERRED TO
BE KNOWN AS
"ILLUSTRATORS"
"COMMERCIAL
ARTISTS" OR,
AT BEST,
"CARTOONISTS".

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*, 1910.

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 MASTERSPIECE OF 20TH CENTURY ART, BUT NO ART HISTORY TEACHER WOULD DREAM OF CALLING IT "COMICS!"

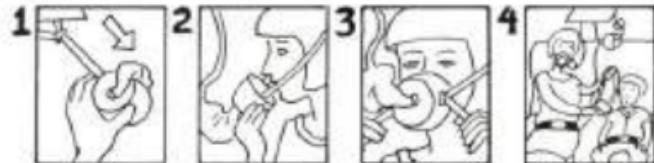
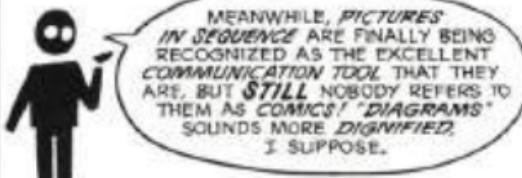
YET, DESPITE THE LACK OF A CONVENTIONAL STORY, THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE CENTRAL ROLE WHICH SEQUENCE PLAYS IN THE WORK. ERNST DOESN'T WANT YOU TO BROWSE THE THING, HE WANTS YOU TO READ IT!



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

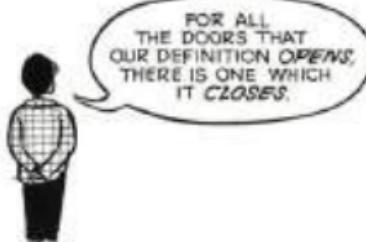


IN SOME COUNTRIES, PHOTO-COMICS ARE, IN FACT, QUITE POPULAR.



TOMO SHIBUYA © 2000, Tomo Shibusawa & Friends' Inc.

comics (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!



HI,
BOGIE.

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.



"Morning, why isn't it
juxtaposed?"

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!



SEQUENTIAL
ART



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

NOTHING IS SAID ABOUT **PAPER** AND **INK**, NO **PRINTING PROCESS** IS MENTIONED, PRINTING ITSELF ISN'T EVEN SPECIFIED! NOTHING IS SAID ABOUT **TECHNICAL PENS** OR **BRISTOL BOARD** OR **WINDSOR & NEWTON FINEST SABLE SERIES 7 NUMBER TWO BRUSHES**!

NO MATERIALS ARE RULED OUT BY OUR DEFINITION. NO TOOLS ARE PROHIBITED.



THERE IS NO MENTION OF **BLACK LINES** AND **FLAT COLORED INK**, NO CALLS FOR **EXAGGERATED ANATOMY** OR FOR **REPRESENTATIONAL ART** OF ANY KIND.



NO SCHOOLS OF ART ARE BANISHED BY OUR DEFINITION, NO PHILOSOPHIES, NO MOVEMENTS, NO WAYS OF SEEING ARE OUT OF BOUNDS!

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.

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

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.

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--



CHAPTER TWO

THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.

HERE'S A PAINTING BY MAGRITTE CALLED "THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES."



THE INSCRIPTION IS IN FRENCH. TRANSLATED, IT MEANS "THIS IS NOT A PIPE."



AND
INDEED
THIS IS **NOT**
A PIPE.

THIS IS A
PAINTING
OF A PIPE.



RIGHT?



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.

N'EST-CE PAS?

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.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.



THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



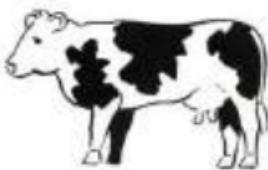
THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



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 LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT A CAR.



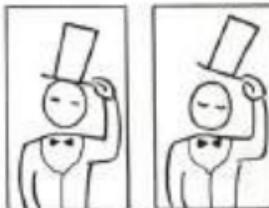
THIS IS NOT FOOD.



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

THIS IS
ICON ON 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
+	=	×	÷
\$	%	©	£
♪	♩	♪	♩
△	▲	≡	○
□	■	△	□

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.

M	5
m	5
M	5
M	5
m	5



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.



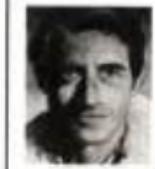
BUT IN PICTURES THE LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION VARIES. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE PREVIOUS PANEL SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS AS TO ALMOST TRICK THE EYE!



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.

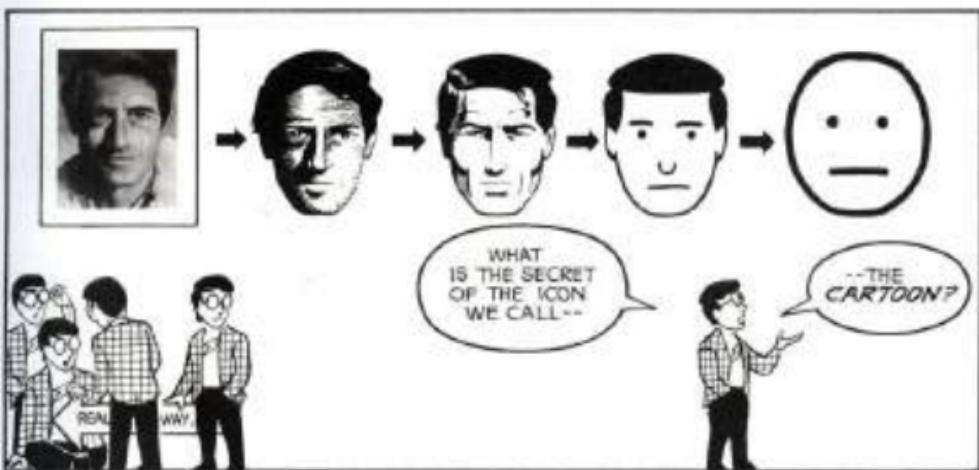
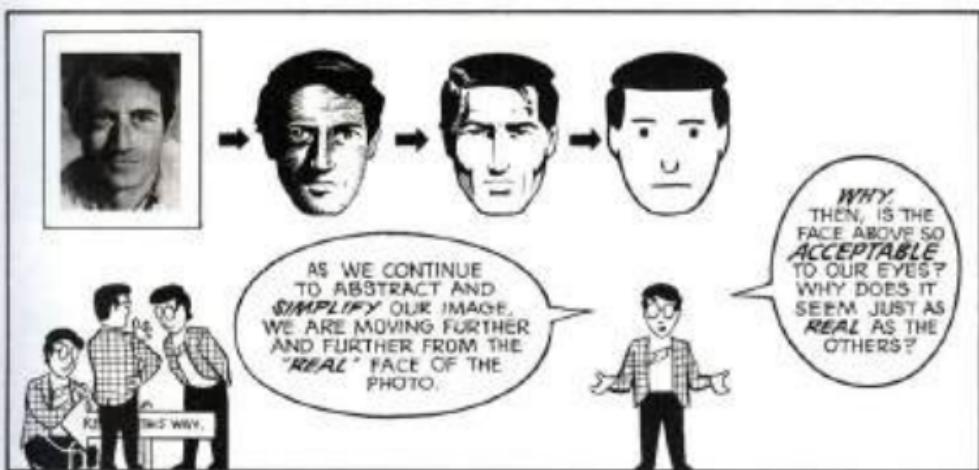
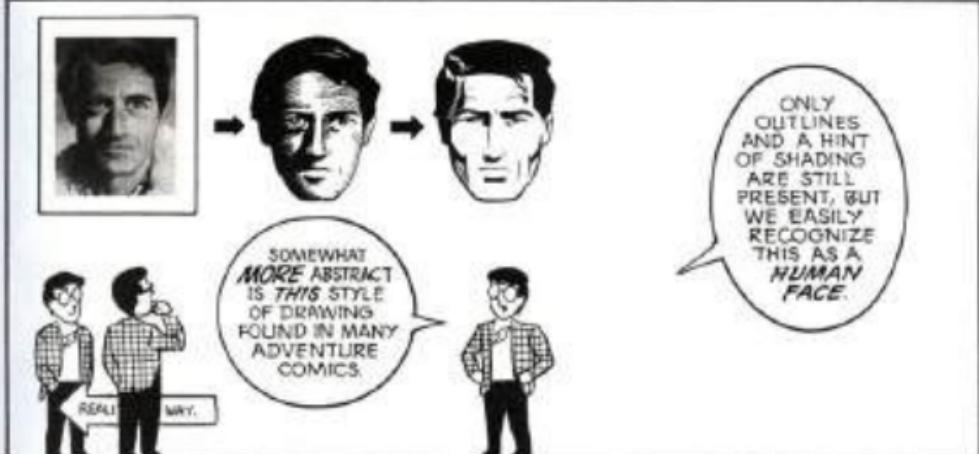


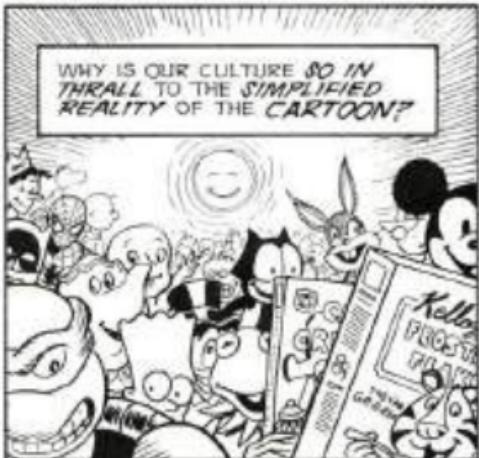
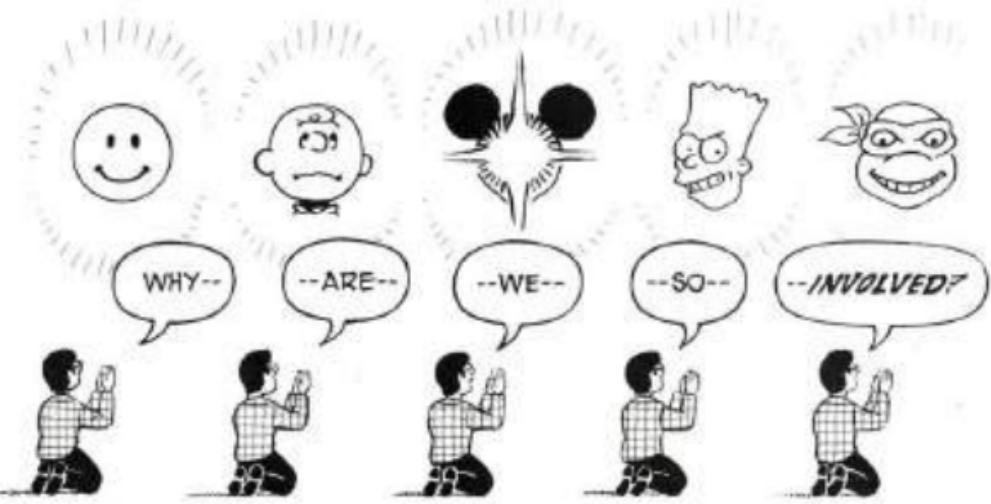
THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM ACTUAL FACES--THEY'RE SMALLER, FLATTER, LESS DETAILED. THEY DON'T MOVE. THEY LACK COLOR--BUT AS PICTORIAL ICONS GO, THEY ARE PRETTY "REALISTIC."



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

REALITY THIS WAY,





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 EQUALY 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

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.



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



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!

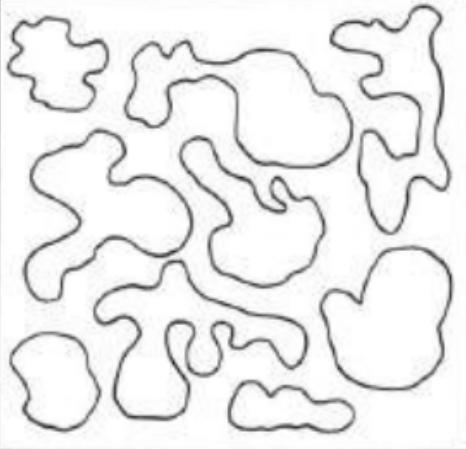


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!

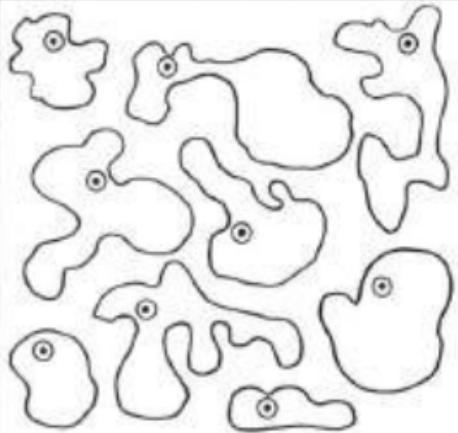


ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE CLOSED CURVES. BUT OTHERWISE CAN BE AS WEIRD AND IRREGULAR AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

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--



--FOR 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...



--AS A CARTOON.

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



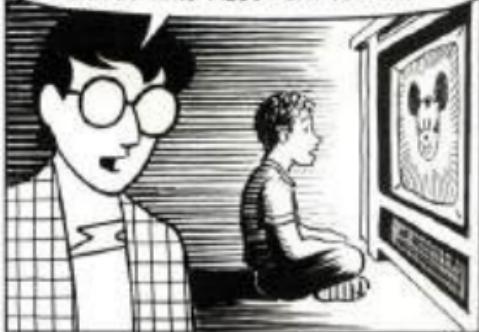
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF ANOTHER.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE CARTOON--

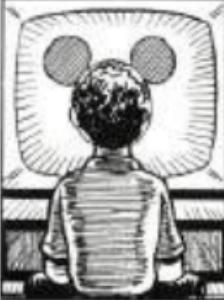


--YOU SEE YOURSELF

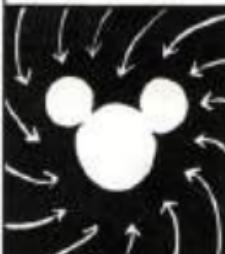
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH CARTOONS, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY AND THE CHILDLIKE FEATURES OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



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.



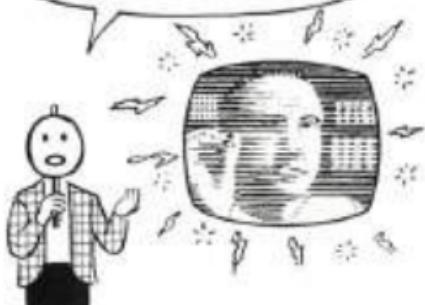
SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY DISCUSSED **FACES**, BUT THE PHENOMENON
OF NON-VISUAL SELF-AWARENESS CAN, TO A LESSER DEGREE,
STILL APPLY TO OUR **WHOLE BODIES**. AFTER ALL, DO WE NEED
TO **SEE** OUR HANDS TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING?



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!

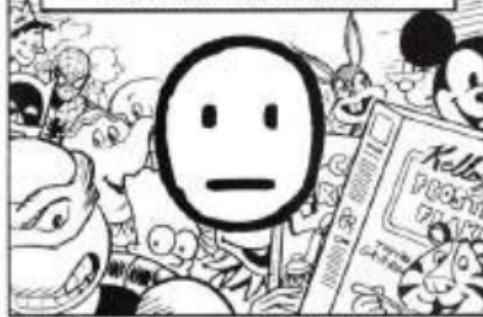


STORYTELLERS IN ALL MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT--

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



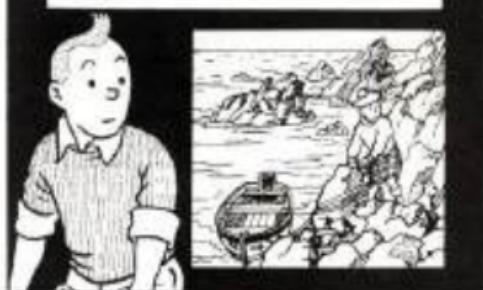
AND SINCE VIEWER-IDENTIFICATION IS A SPECIALTY OF CARTOONING, CARTOONS HAVE HISTORICALLY HELD AN ADVANTAGE IN BREAKING INTO WORLD POPULAR CULTURE.



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 CRESTED UP IN THE WORKS OF ARTISTS AS DIVERSE AS CARL BARKS, JAIME HERNANDEZ AND IN THE TEAM OF DAVE SIM AND GERHARD.



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.



"WHAT GOES TRAHO!"

BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



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



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.



A PROB. LIKE THIS SWORD MIGHT BE VERY CARTOONY IN ONE SEQUENCE—



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



BUT SUPPOSE 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 "ZOOK" OF A STORY.

SEE PAGE 18 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.



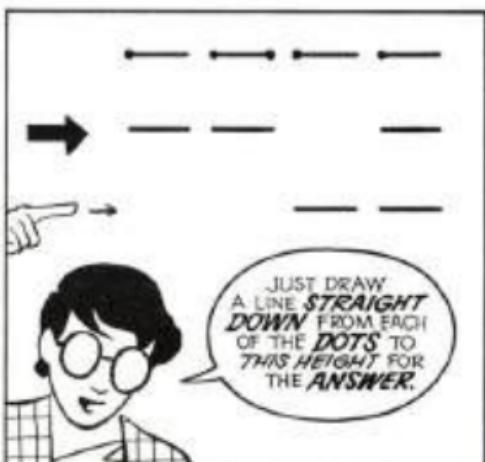
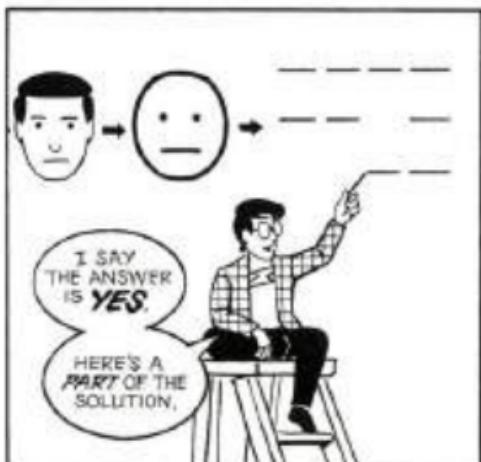
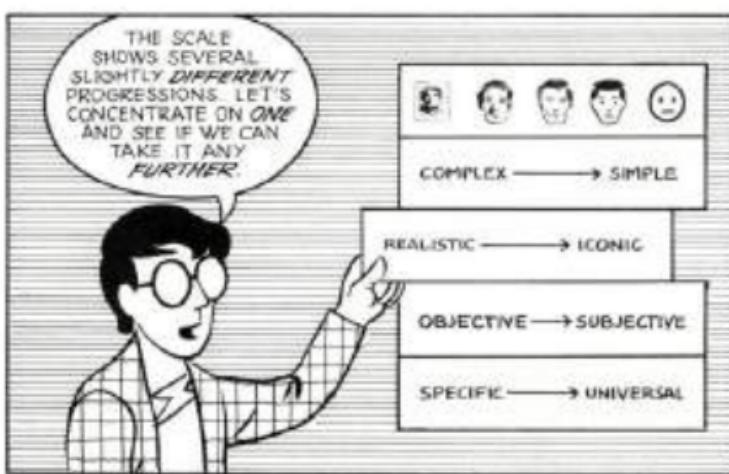
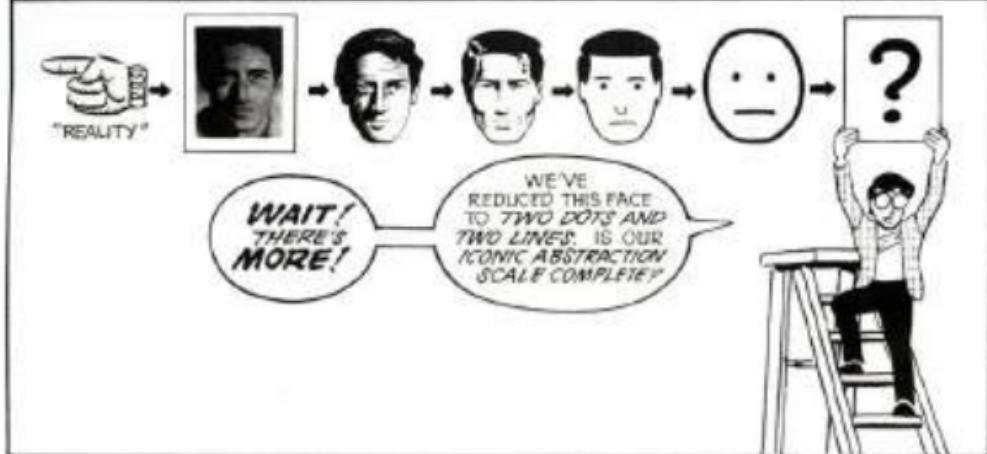
AND LIKE THE ATOM, GREAT POWER IS LOCKED IN THESE FEW SIMPLE LINES.

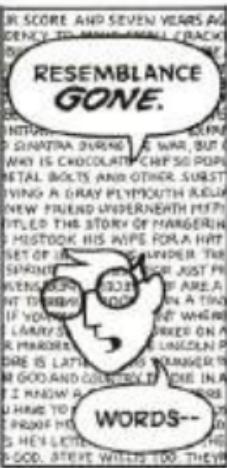


THERE'S A LOT MORE TO CARTOONS THAN MEETS THE EYE!



RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.





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



"ARTIST"

"WRITER"



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 SHAKESPEARIAN SONNET.

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



FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

The yolk's
cold turp.
so gay's
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.

*The words
and things
are mixed
on paper.*

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.

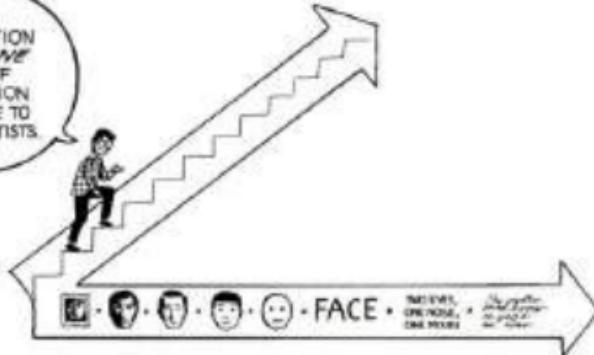
BOTH ARE **WORTHY
ASPIRATIONS**,
BOTH STEM FROM A
LOVE OF COMICS AND
A DEVOTION TO ITS
FUTURE.

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.



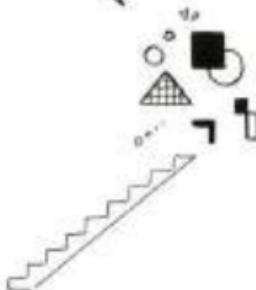
THE TYPE OF
ART WHICH OFTEN
PROMPTS THE QUESTION:
"WHAT DOES IT
MEAN?"



EARNING
THE REPLY
"IT MEANS
WHAT IT
IS!"

IN
THIS
CASE--

--INK
ON
PAPER.

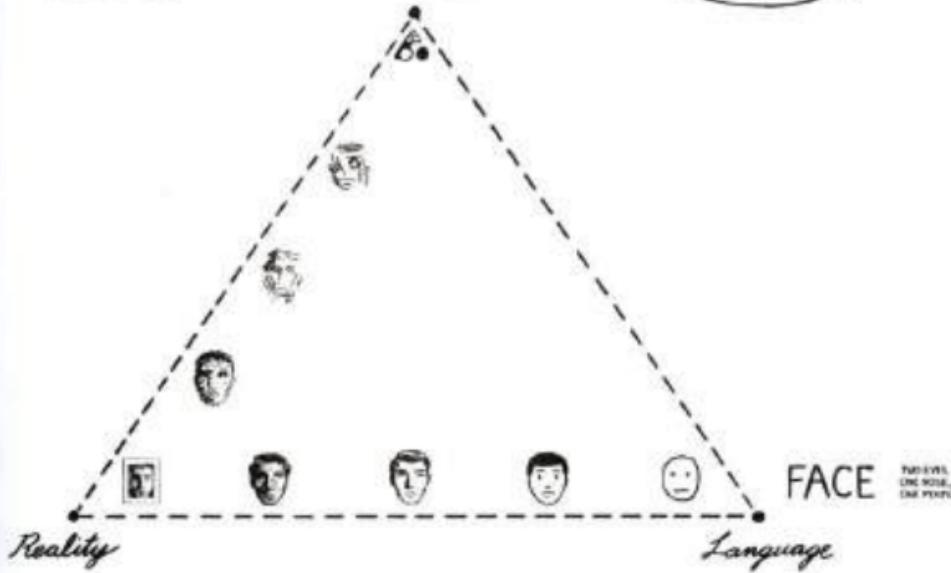


THIS IS THE REALM OF THE ART OBJECT, THE PICTURE PLANE, WHERE SHAPES, LINES AND COLORS CAN BE THEMSELVES AND NOT PRETEND OTHERWISE.

The Picture Plane



BELLOW 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--



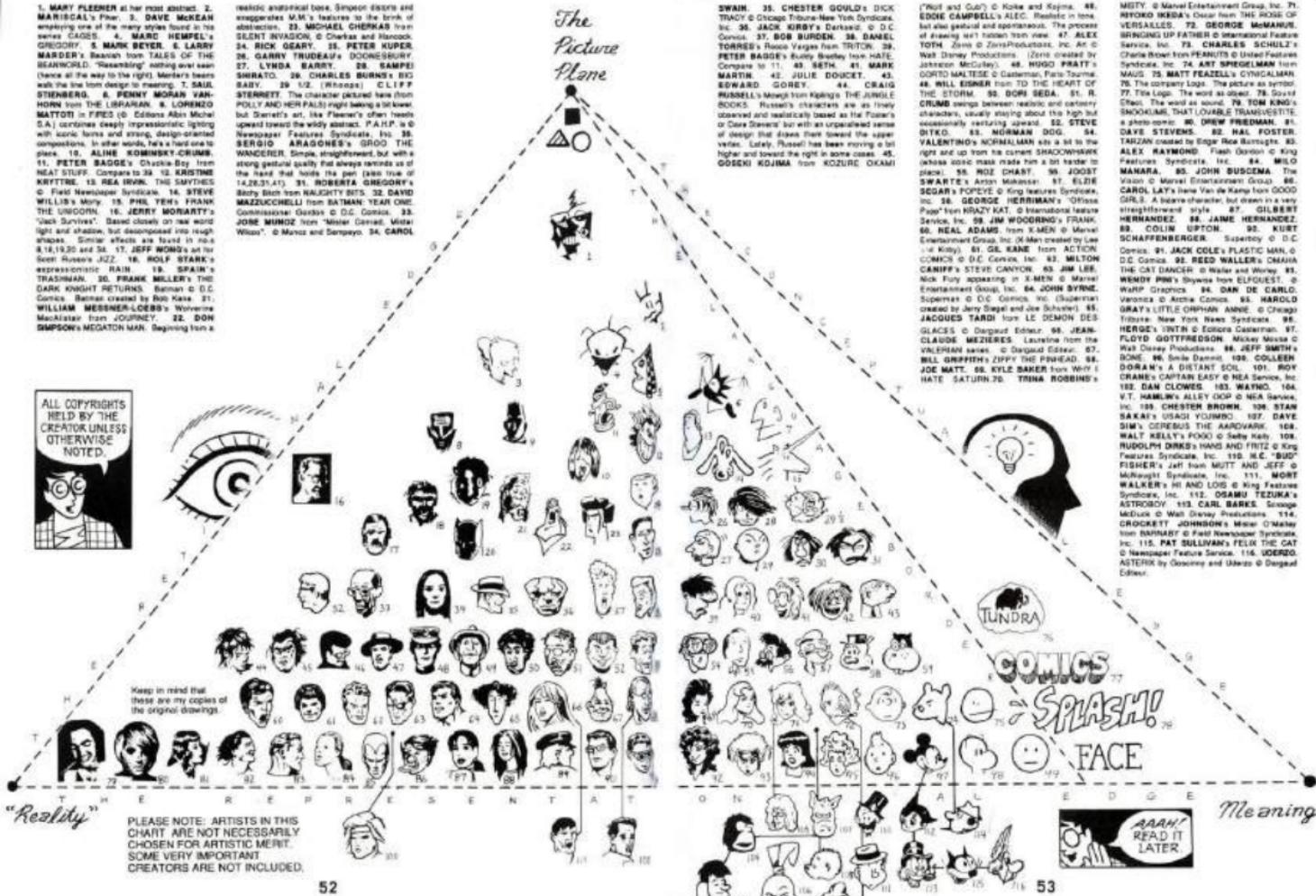
--OF THE UNIVERSE CALLED COMICS.



1. MARY PLEASER in her most adorable. 2. MARISCAL's Fisher. 3. DAVE McKEAN (from his book *THE END*). 4. GENE SAGE'S. 5. RANDY HEMPEL's. 6. GREGORY J. MARK BEYER. 7. LARRY MARDER's (from TALES OF THE UNIVERSE). 8. RONALD WILSON (hence all the way to the right). Marder's bears walk the line from design to meaning. 9. T. SAUL STERNBERG. 10. PENNY MORAN VAN CLEEF & ARPELS' (from *THE HOUSE OF MATTOZI* in *FRIES*) (Edith Adlon-Michel SA) combines cryptic impressionistic lighting with sonic forms and strong, design-oriented shapes. 11. ROBERT RODRIGUEZ (from *PIPER*). 12. ALINE KOMINSKY-CRUMB. 13. PETER BAGGE's Chockie Boy from *NEAT STUFF*. Compare to 34. 14. KRISTINE KELLY's (from *THE COOK*). 15. GREGORY C. Field Newsworld Syndicate. 16. STEVE WILLIAMS's. 17. PHIL YEH's FRANK THE UNICORN. 18. JERRY MORRATT's (from *THE FANTASTIC FOUR*). 19. A. J. HARRIS's light and shadow, but deconstructed into rough shapes. Similar effects are found in nos. 10, 11, 12, 20 and St. 17. 20. JOHN KIRKWOOD's. 21. 22. ROB ROTHSTEIN's impressionistic RAIN. 23. SPAIN's TRASHMAD. 24. FRANK MILLER's THE DARK KNIGHT Returns. 25. NORMAN J. COLEMAN's (from *THE COOK*). 26. BILL WILLIAM MEISSNER-LIBBS's Wolverine. 27. ALISTAIR von JOURNEY. 28. DON SIMPSON's MEGATON MAN. Beginning tom 8.

an anatomical base. Simpson dissects and appraises M.M.'s features to the brink of 23. MICHAEL CHERKAS from NEW YORK INVISION: "A COOL, COOL, COOL RICK GEARY." 35. PETER KUPER. 36. GARRY TRUDEAU's DOONESBURY. 37. LYMDA BARRY. 29. SAMPLER. 38. CHARLES BURNETT. 39. DAVE CHAPPELLE. 40. CLIFF TURRITTEN. The character depicted here from ONLY AND HER PAIS) might be taking a bit lower. Stereotypical, like Fleener's often heads over the top. Still, P.A.H. is © 1990 THOMAS Publications, Inc. 41. ERGIO ARAGONÉS'S GROK THE WANDERER. Simple, straightforward, but with a strong gestural quality that always reminds us of what it means to be human. (See also 12, 28, 31.) 42. JEFF MCGUINNESS. 43. ROBERT CRUMB. 44. RON HORNBY. 45. NAUGHTY BETS. 32. DAVID AZZUCCHINELLI from BATMAN: YEAR ONE. 46. JONATHAN GORDON. © DC Comics. 33. ERIC MUNIZ for "Mister Clean." 47. MISTER KID. © Marvel and Stan Lee. 34. CAROL

the
picture
line



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

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.



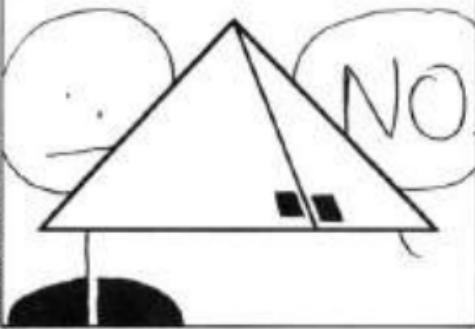
SOME, LIKE MATT FEAZELL'S CYNICALMAN, KEEP TO ONE AREA CONSISTENTLY.



THE AMAZING CYNICALMAN



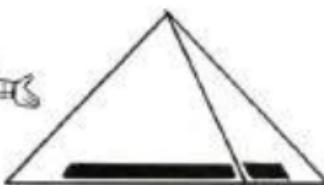
THE COMBINATION OF EXTREMELY ICONIC CHARACTERS AND ENVIRONMENTS, MIXED WITH SIMPLE, DIRECT LANGUAGE AND A SOUND EFFECT OR TWO WOULD GIVE US A SHAPE SOMETHING LIKE THIS:



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.



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.

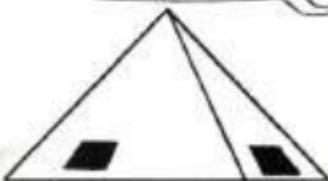


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE

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.

WELL, YOU TALK. I DON'T EXPECT HIM TO START NUKIN' MAMA RUSSIA ANY MOMENT.



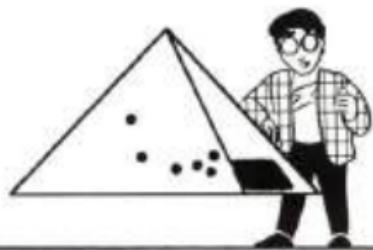
ART FROM COLOR PANELS TRACED FOR REPRODUCTION.
© MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.



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.



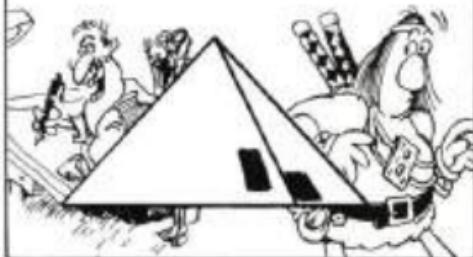
THIS FOLLOWS THE LEAD OF
THE POST-KURTZMAN GENERATION
OF *UNDERGROUND* CARTOONISTS WHO
USED CARTOONY STYLES TO PORTRAY
ADULT THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER.



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.

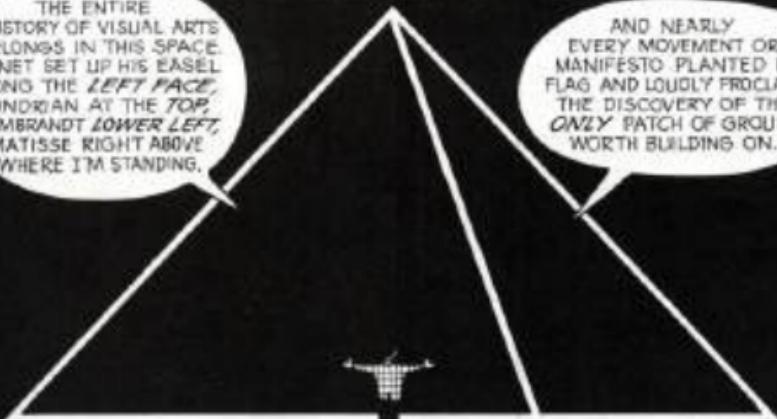
FOR COMICS TO MATURE AS A MEDIUM, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S INNERMOST NEEDS AND IDEAS.

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.



Ping!
SSS
COMICS ARTISTS HAVE A **UNIVERSE** OF ICONS TO CHOOSE FROM!

BY DRAWING **BORDERS** AROUND THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS, I HOPE I HAVEN'T MADE IT SEEM SMALLER THAN IT IS.

Ours is an increasingly symbol-oriented culture.

AS THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY APPROACHES, VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY MAY FINALLY HELP US REALIZE A FORM OF UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATION.

AND IT'S EXPANDING ALL THE TIME!

SOCIETY IS INVENTING NEW SYMBOLS REGULARLY, JUST AS COMICS ARTISTS DO.

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
MCFLUHAN 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
MCFLUHAN 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--

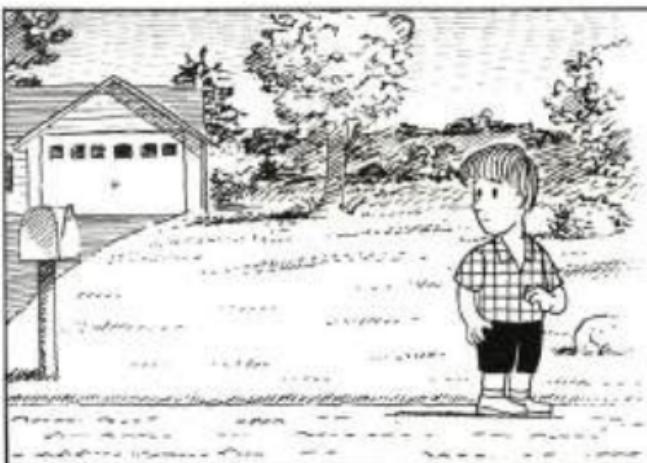
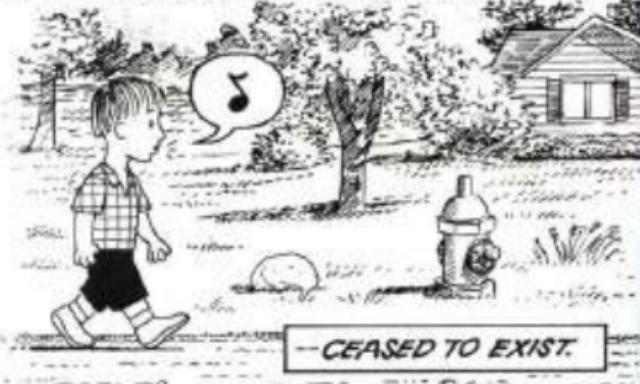


-- IS
ANYONE'S
GUESS.

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--



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!

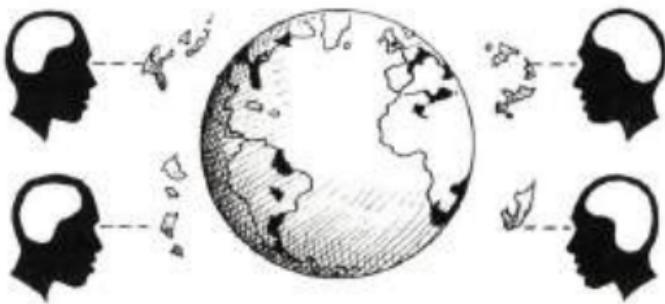
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A WHOLE THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR SENSES.

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"

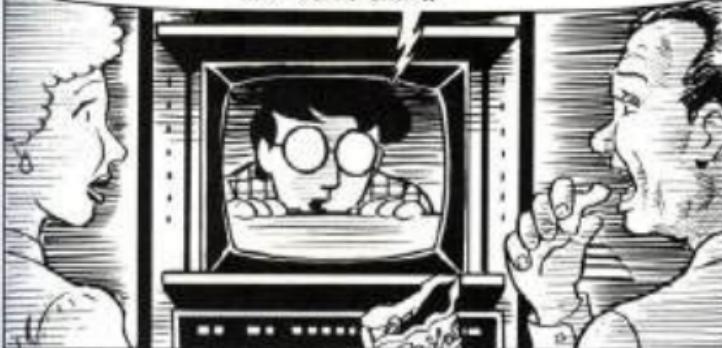


IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA, CLOSURE IS CONSTANT, EVEN OVERPOWERING!

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!*



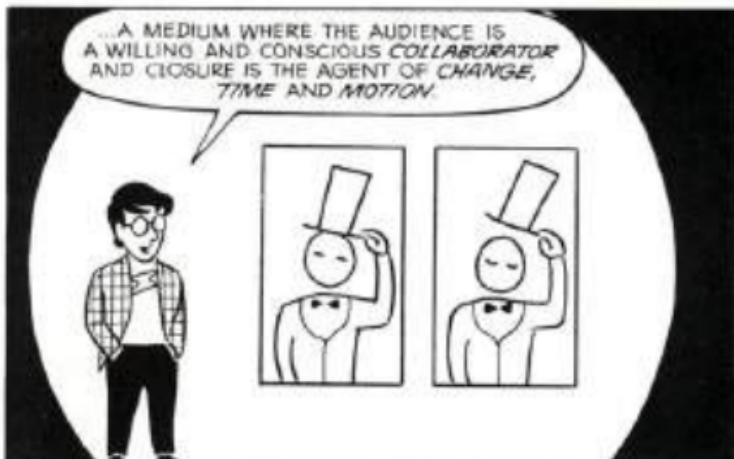
BETWEEN SUCH AUTOMATIC ELECTRONIC CLOSURE AND THE SIMPLER CLOSURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE--



--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**.

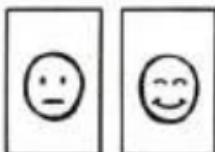
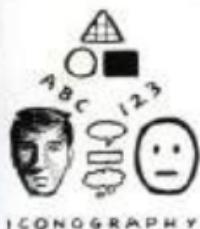


BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO **CONNECT** THESE MOMENTS
AND MENTALLY CONSTRUCT A **CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY**.

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

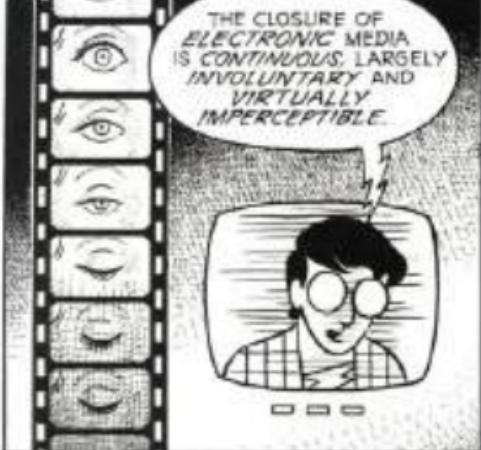
AND SINCE OUR
DEFINITION OF
COMICS Hinges ON
THE ARRANGEMENT
OF ELEMENTS--

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



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

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



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.



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--



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

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.]

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

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

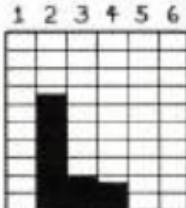


AND SINCE ALL
OF THE REMAINING
TRANSITIONS ARE FROM
SCENE-TO-SCENE,
WE HAVE THE
FOLLOWING
BREAKDOWN



1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

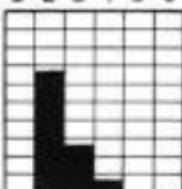
AS A **BAR GRAPH**
IT WOULD LOOK
SOMETHING LIKE
THIS.



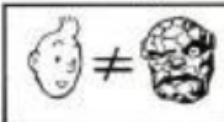
THIS EMPHASIS ON
ACTION-TO-ACTION
STORYTELLING SUITS
MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS
ABOUT KIRBY, BUT
IS HE UNIQUE
IN THIS RESPECT?

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?



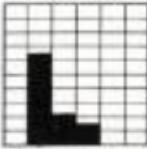
A RANDOM
SAMPLING OF
VARIOUS AMERICAN
COMICS SHOWS THIS
SAME PROPORTION
PRETTY
CONSISTENTLY.

X-MEN #1



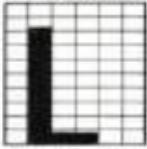
CLARKMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



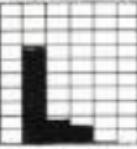
G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



DOYLE & DECARLO

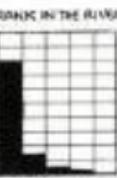
NARRATIVE BIRDS



GREGORY



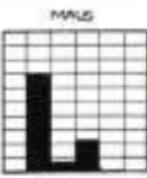
FRANK MILLER'S THE PUNISHER



GARRY TRUDEAU'S DOONESBURY



ART SPIEGELMAN'S MAUS



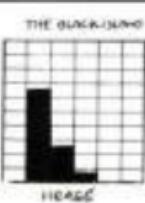
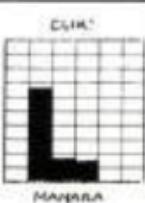
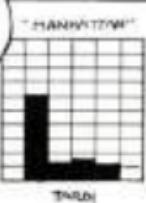
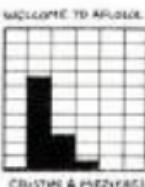
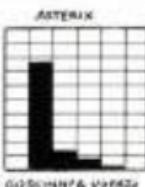
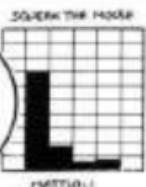
DONALD DUCK



JIM WOODRING

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

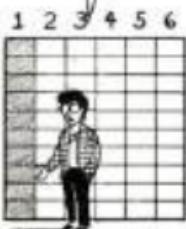
4

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 EQUALY RADICAL STORIES AND SUBJECTS.

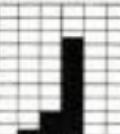
STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



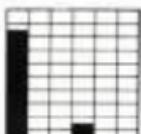
"DON'T GET AROUND
MUCH ANYMORE"



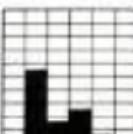
INTRODUCTION



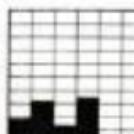
"MAUS"
(ORIGINAL)



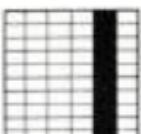
"SKINLESS
PERKINS"



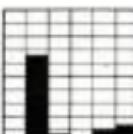
"PRISONER ON THE
HELL PLANET"



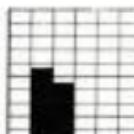
"CRACKING
JOKES"



FRONT AND
BACK COVERS



"ACE-HOLE MIDGET
DETECTIVE"



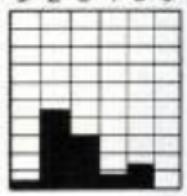
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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



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.

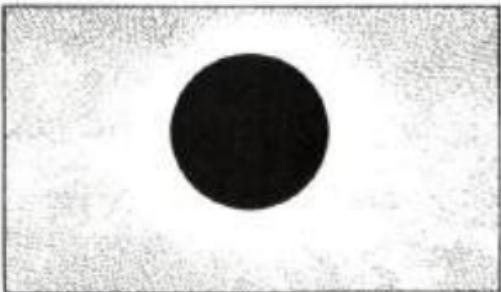


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR FOUR PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGE.



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.



木
木
古
き
に
い
つ
て
し
た



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



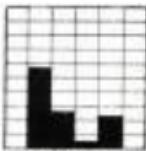
EVEN SEQUENCE, WHILE STILL AN ISSUE, SEEMS FAR LESS IMPORTANT HERE THAN IN OTHER TRANSITIONS.



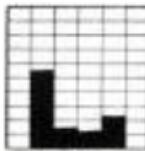
RATHER THAN ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SEPARATE MOMENTS, THE READER HERE MUST ASSEMBLE A SINGLE MOMENT USING SCATTERED FRAGMENTS.



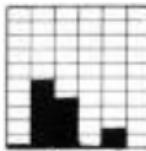
IN EXAMINING
SEVERAL JAPANESE ARTISTS,
WE FIND SIMILAR
PROPORTIONS TO TEZUKA'S,
INCLUDING A HIGH INCIDENCE
OF THE FIFTH TYPE.



TETSU ROPPON
(TERU ROOPPON)



RUMIKO TAKAHASHI
& OSAMU TEZUKA



WALT & OSA
DISNEY & 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 INSTALLMENT TO SHOW
A LOT "HAPPENING."



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

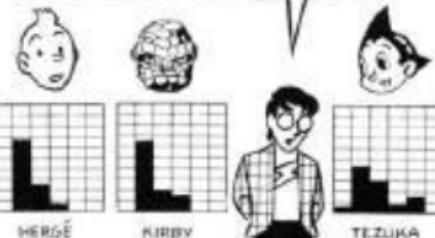


AS SUCH,
DOZENS OF PANELS
CAN BE DEVOTED
TO PORTRAYING
SLOW CINEMATIC
MOVEMENT, OR TO
SETTING A MOOD.

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.





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.

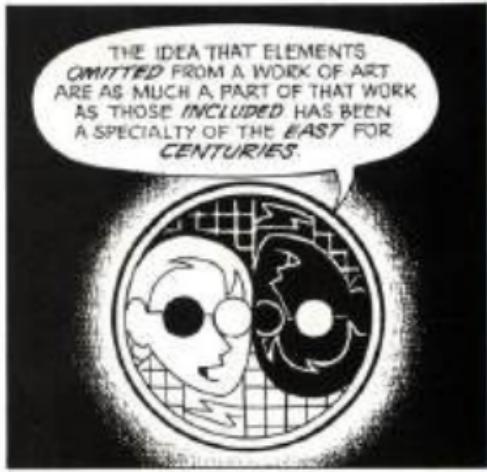


JAPANESE COMICS
MAY BE HEIRS TO
THIS TRADITION, IN
THE WAY THEY SO
OFTEN EMPHASIZE
**BEING THERE OVER
GETTING THERE**

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.1830)
(TURN THIS PICTURE UPSIDE DOWN TO SEE THE GRAND WAVE OF NEGATIVE SPACE... NATURE'S OWN ABSTRACT)

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.

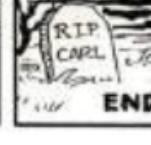
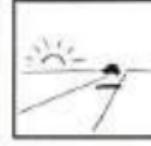


FACSIMILE
OF "FIGURE"
BY PAOLO PICASSO
1948

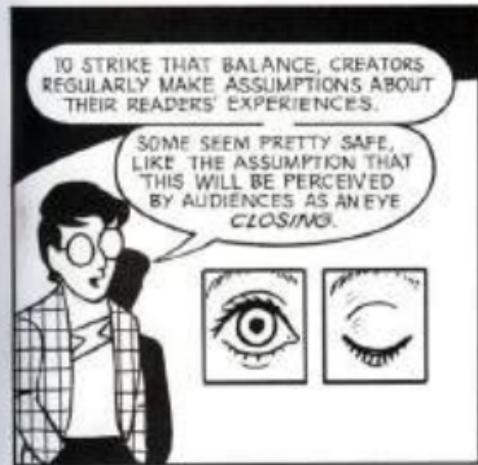


'ANSWER: "THE BIG IF"
SEE PAGE 216'



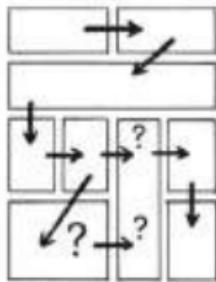


END



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.

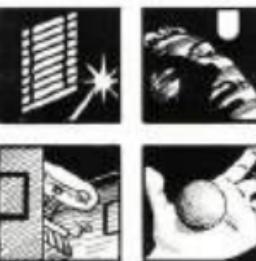


AS CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS BECOMES MORE INTENSE, READER INTERPRETATION BECOMES FAR MORE *ELASTIC*.



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 MADDENINGLY 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!

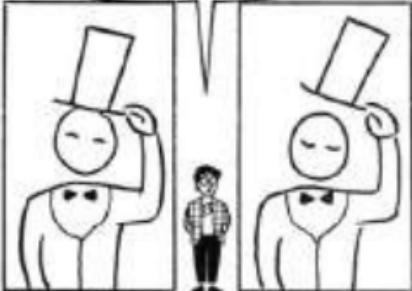
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

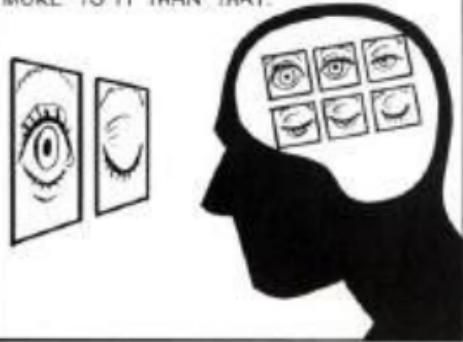
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES
WITHIN EACH PANEL, IT'S THE
POWER OF CLOSURE **BETWEEN**
PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST
INTERESTING.



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

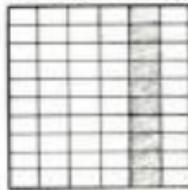


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS
THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF
IN-BETWEENER -- FILLING IN THE GAPS
BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR*
MIGHT -- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL
MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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

1 2 3 4 5 6



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, TASTE, SMELL, AND TOUCH THROUGH WORD BALLOONS. 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
TRAPEZE 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--



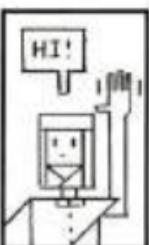
SINCE CARTOONS ALREADY EXIST AS CONCEPTS FOR THE READER, THEY TEND TO FLOW EASILY THROUGH THE CONCEPTUAL TERRITORY *BETWEEN PANELS*.

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



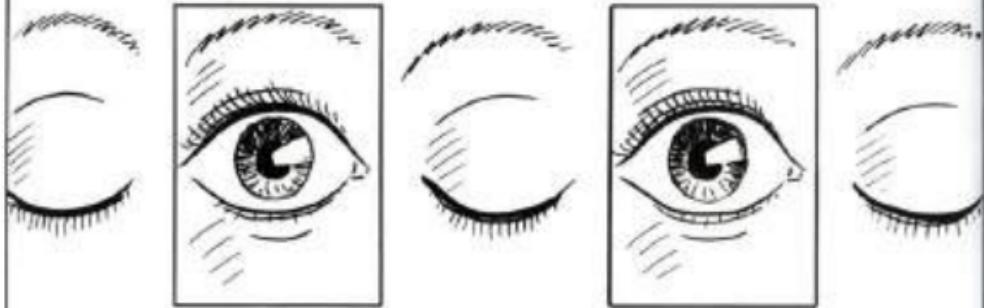
AND SO, WHAT SEEMED LIKE A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF MOMENTS IN THE LAST EXAMPLE, HERE LOOKS A LITTLE MORE LIKE A SERIES OF *STILL PICTURES*.

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



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**.





THE COMICS
CREATOR ASKS US
TO JOIN IN A SILENT
DANCE OF THE
SEEN AND THE
UNSEEN.

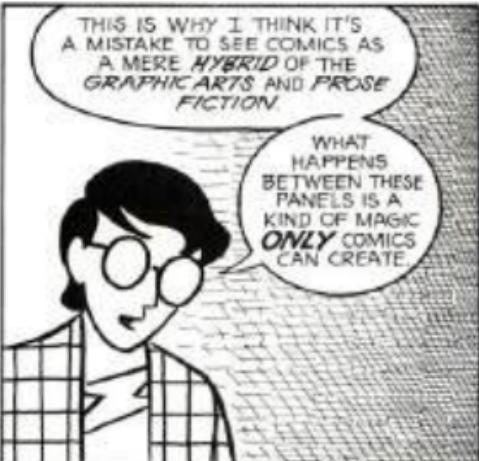
THE
VISIBLE
AND THE
INVISIBLE.



THIS DANCE IS **UNIQUE**
TO COMICS. NO OTHER ARTFORM
GIVES SO MUCH TO ITS AUDIENCE
WHILE ASKING SO MUCH
FROM THEM AS WELL.

THIS IS WHY I THINK IT'S
A MISTAKE TO SEE COMICS AS
A MERE HYBRID OF THE
GRAPHIC ARTS AND PROSE
FICTION.

WHAT
HAPPENS
BETWEEN THESE
PANELS IS A
KIND OF MAGIC
ONLY COMICS
CAN CREATE.





-- 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.

RIGHT?

CLIK

NAAH!
OF COURSE
NOT!

TIME IN COMICS
IS INFINITELY
WEIRDER THAN
THAT!

LET'S
TAKE A
CLOSER
LOOK!



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.



WITH ALL ITS ACTIONS AND REACTIONS, A PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD LAST A GOOD HALF MINUTE OR SO.

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.



BUT THE ACTIONS THAT WE SEE
OCCURRING SEEMINGLY AT THE SAME
TIME OBVIOUSLY CAN'T BE!



ANOTHER
WAY TO LOOK AT
IT: LET'S THINK OF
TIME AS A
ROPE.



EACH INCH
REPRESENTS A
SECOND.



SUCH A ROPE
MIGHT BE SAID
TO WIND SOME-
THING LIKE THIS
THROUGH OUR
PANEL.



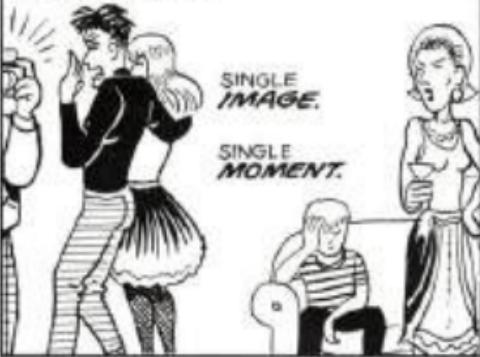
AND SINCE EACH
FACE AND FIGURE
IS DRAWN TO MATCH
HIS/HER OWN
WORDS--



--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!



CRASH!

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**!



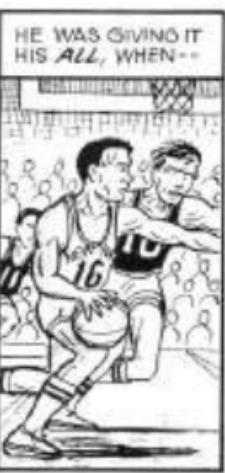
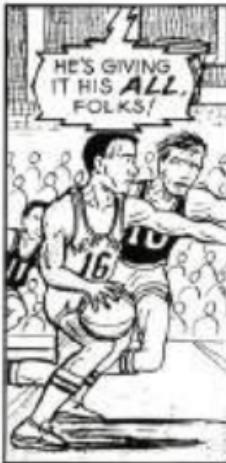
EACH FIGURE IS
ARRANGED FROM
LEFT TO RIGHT IN
THE SEQUENCE WE
WILL "READ" THEM,
EACH OCCUPYING A
DISTINCT TIME
SEGMENT.



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.

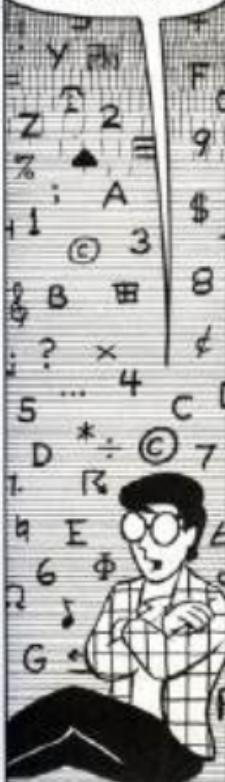


ONE PANEL, OPERATING AS **SEVERAL** PANELS.



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**.



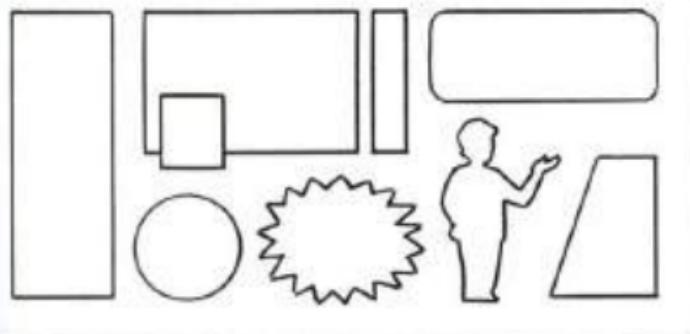
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



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.*



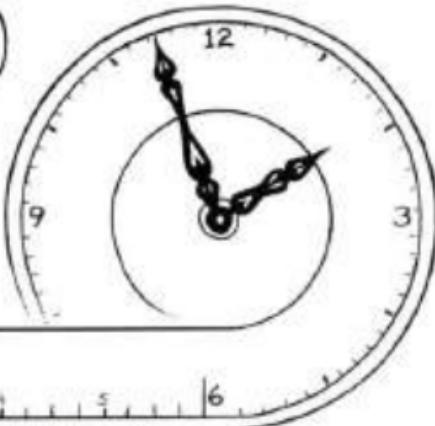
PANEL SHAPES VARY CONSIDERABLY THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "MEANINGS" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY CAN AFFECT THE READING EXPERIENCE.



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.

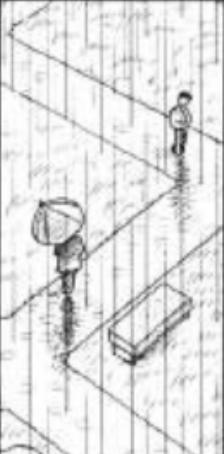


HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME??



E DAUSS.

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.

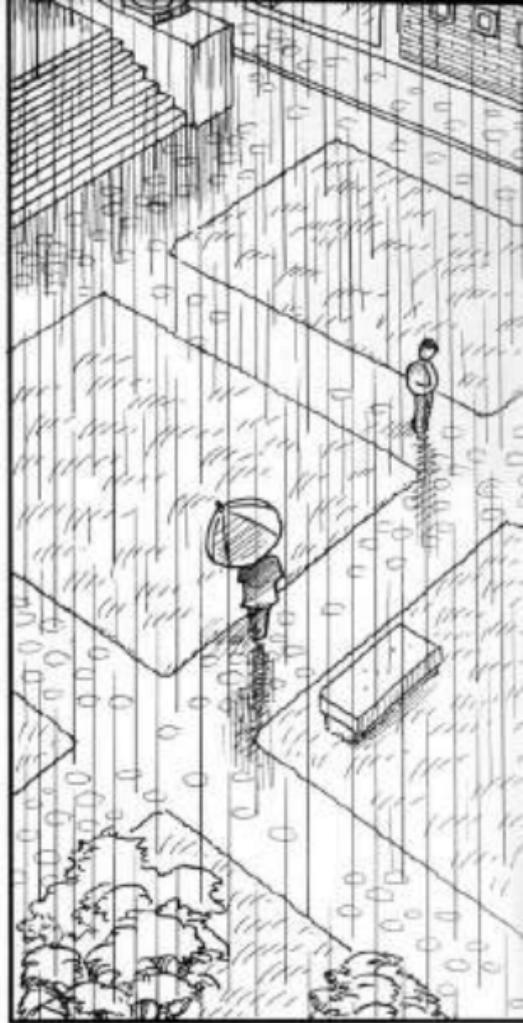


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH FOLLOW IT.



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.

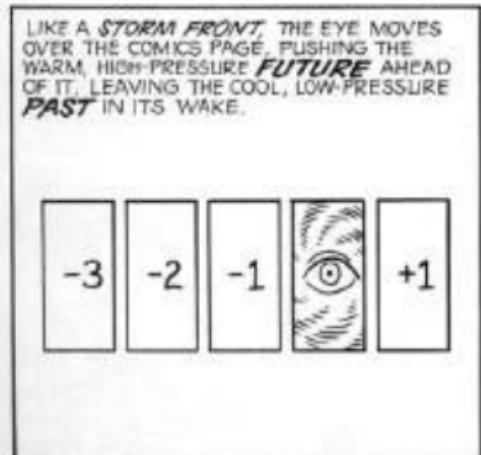


SUCH IMAGES CAN SET THE MOOD OR A SENSE OF PLACE FOR WHOLE SCENES THROUGH THEIR LINGERING TIMELESS PRESENCE.



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







END

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.



COMICS READERS
ARE ALSO CONDITIONED
BY OTHER MEDIA AND THE
"REAL TIME" OF EVERYDAY
LIFE TO EXPECT A VERY
LINEAR PROGRESSION. JUST
A STRAIGHT LINE FROM
POINT A TO POINT B.
BUT IS THAT
NECESSARY?

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

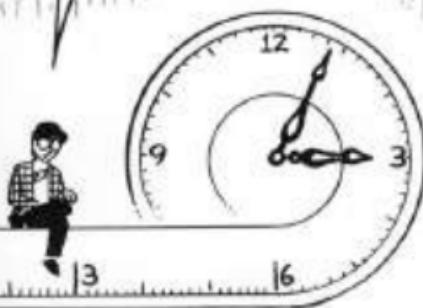
BUT VIEWER
PARTICIPATION
IS ON THE VERGE
OF BECOMING AN
ENORMOUS ISSUE
IN OTHER MEDIA.

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.



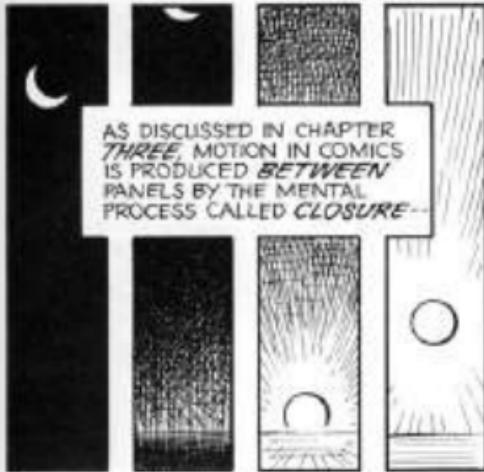
AS MENTIONED EARLIER,
TIME AND SPACE IN THE WORLD OF
COMICS ARE CLOSELY LINKED.



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!

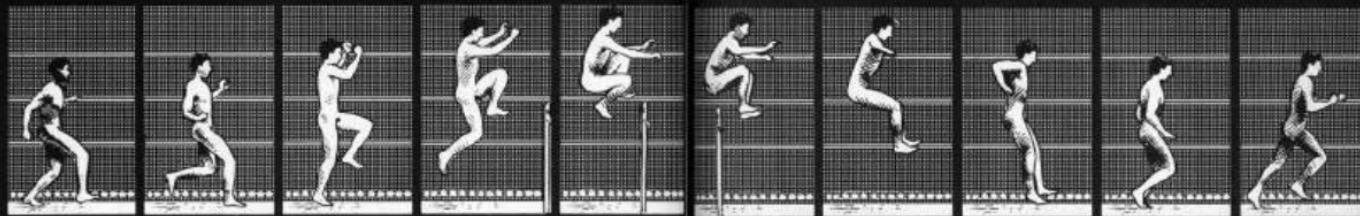


DESPITE COMICS' THREE THOUSAND
YEAR HISTORY, IT WASN'T UNTIL
TOPFER'S MID-1800'S DOODLINGS
THAT SPECIFIC MOTIONS WERE
PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-
FAMILIAR PANEL-TO-PANEL FORM.



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 ZOETROPE!
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,
THAT OLD CAILLY WAG,
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 Boccioni



Nude Descending a
Staircase No. 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 CONSPIRACIOUSLY,
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?



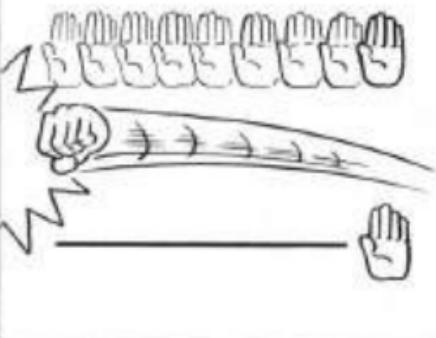
THOUGH SEQUENTIAL ART SURVIVED FOR MANY CENTURIES WITHOUT DEPICTING MOTION, ONCE THE GENIE WAS OUT OF THE BOTTLE IT WAS PERHAPS INEVITABLE THAT MORE AND MORE EFFICIENT MEANS WOULD BE SOUGHT. AT FIRST, THIS SEARCH CENTERED ON MULTIPLE IMAGES IN SEQUENCE.



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



SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE FUTURISTS' DYNAMIC MOVEMENT AND DUCHAMP'S DIAGRAMMATIC CONCEPT OF MOVEMENT LIES COMICS' "MOTION LINE."



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.



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!





BECAUSE OF
THEIR ABILITY TO DEPICT
ACTION WITH **DRAMA**, SUCH
CONSPICUOUS ACTION LINES
HAVE BEEN AN AMERICAN
SPECIALTY FOR YEARS.



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.



OTHER ARTISTS TRIED
ADDITIONAL EFFECTS SUCH
AS **MULTIPLE IMAGES** OF
THE SUBJECT, ATTEMPTING TO
INVOLVE THE READER MORE
DEEPLY IN THE ACTION.*



STILL OTHERS, SUCH AS
MARVEL'S **GENE COLAN**, BEGAN
INCORPORATING PHOTOGRAPHIC
STREAKING EFFECTS WITH
SOME INTRIGUING RESULTS
IN THE SIXTIES AND
SEVENTIES.

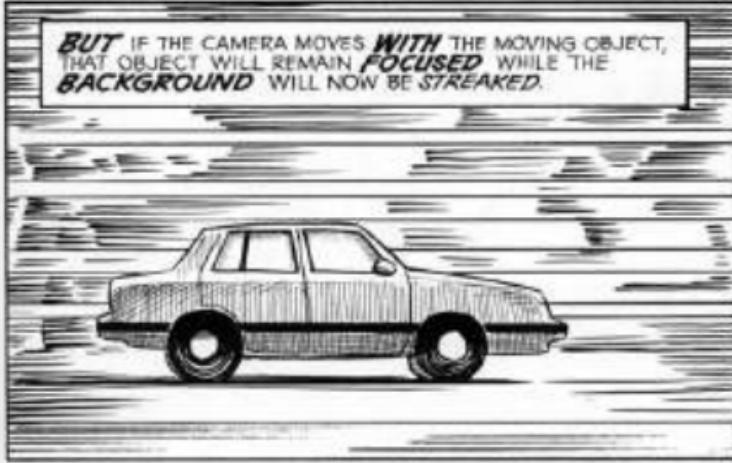
COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*,
WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A
CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO
FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE,
AN INTERESTING BLURRING EFFECT OCCURS.



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, **BETING** 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.

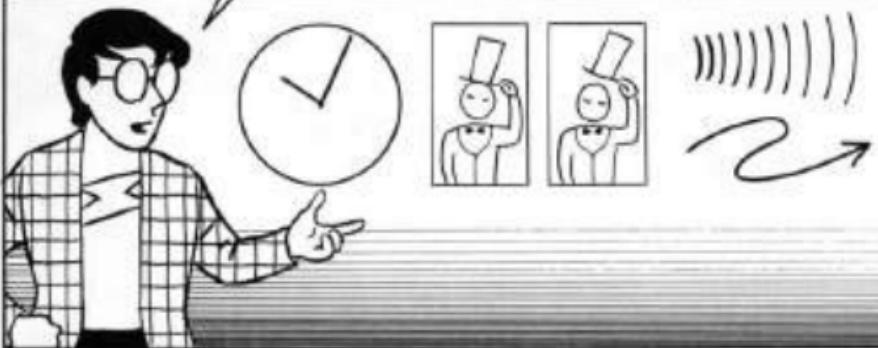


ARE THESE THE **ONLY** WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A SINGLE PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.





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



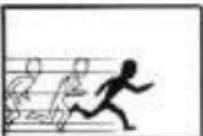
SOUND BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS: WORD BALLOONS AND SOUND EFFECTS.

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

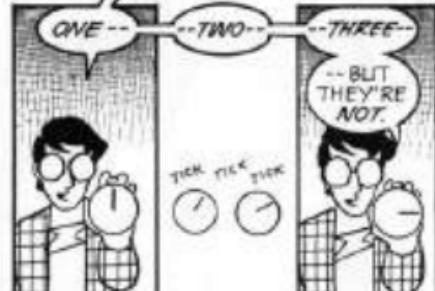
MOTION ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS. THE FIRST TYPE--
PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE-- WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN CHAPTER.



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.



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



--THE FACE
IT PRESENTS TO
THE READER--



--IS ONE
OF SIMPLE
NORMALITY.



OR THE
ILLUSION OF IT,
ANYWAY.

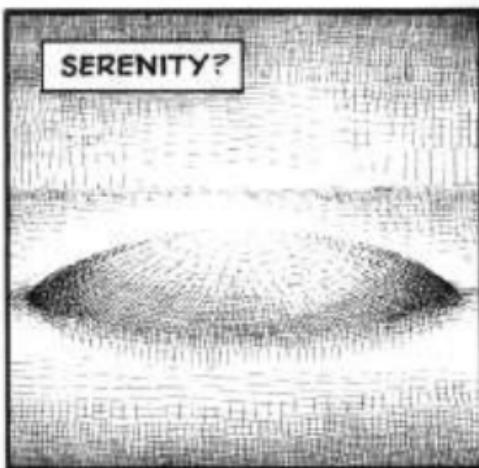
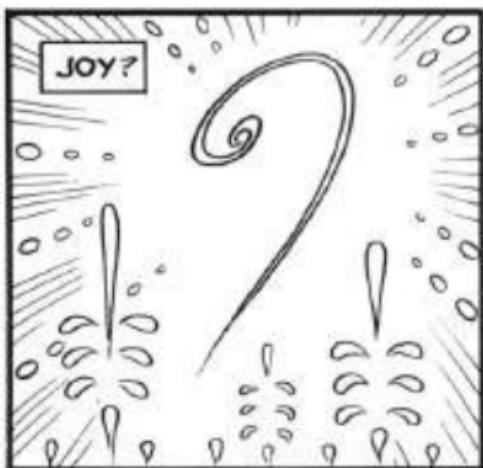


ALL
DEPENDS ON
YOUR FRAME
OF MIND.



CHAPTER FIVE

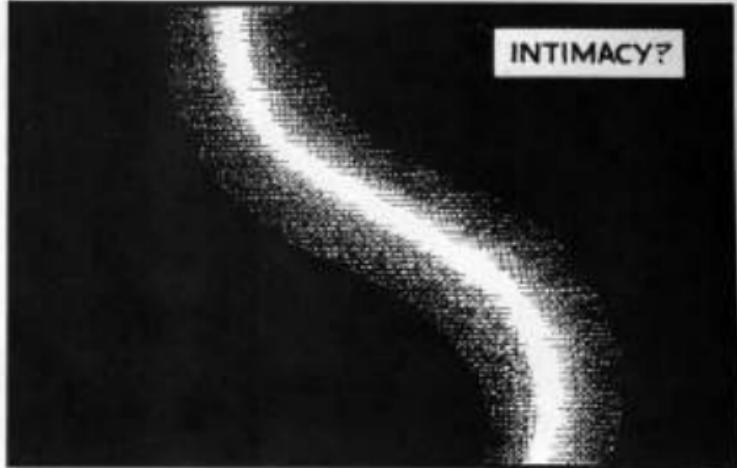
LIVING IN LINE.



TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?



PRIDE?



ANXIETY?



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

LOUD?

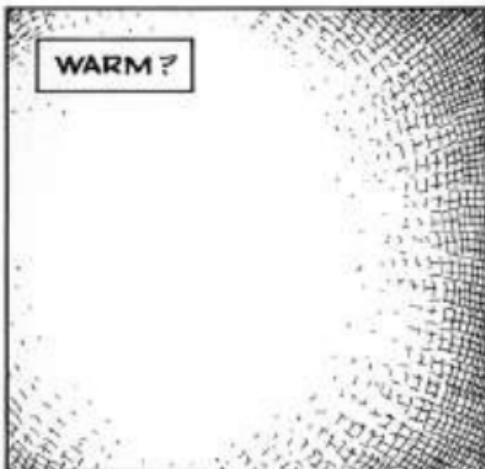
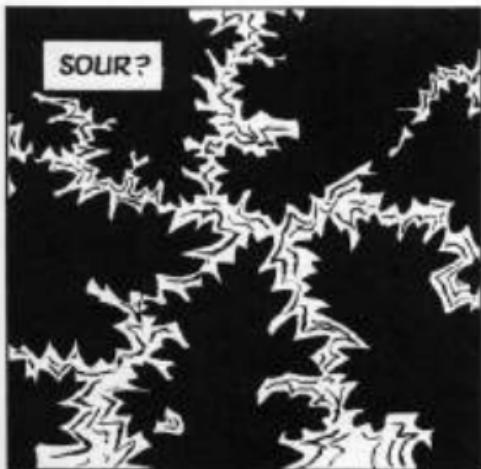
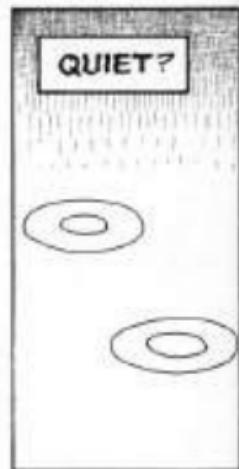
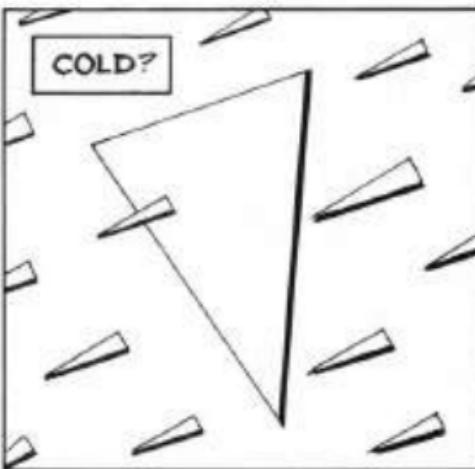
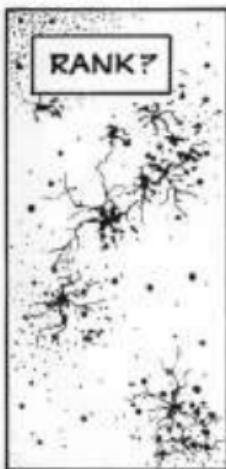
RANK?

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.

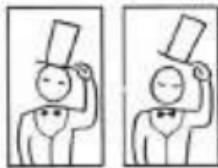


SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS.

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.



AS THE NEW CENTURY GOT UNDER WAY, COOLER HEADS SUCH AS VASSILY 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...

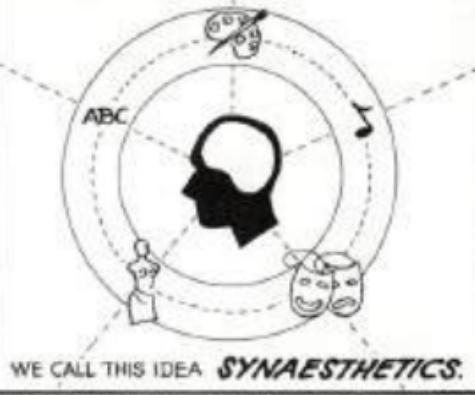
THESE WERE STRANGE IDEAS IN 1912!



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?

1880 1890 1900 1910 1920

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



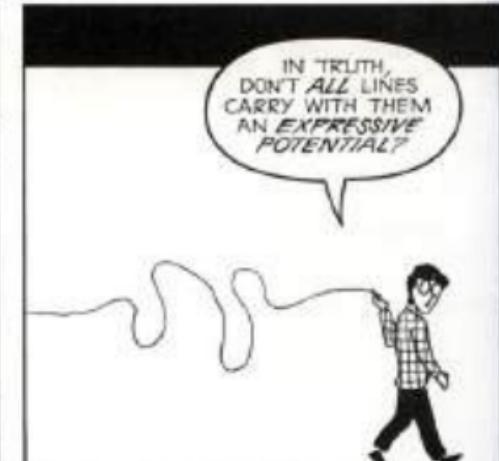
IF THESE LINES ARE EXPRESSIVE OF FEAR, ANXIETY AND MADNESS--



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



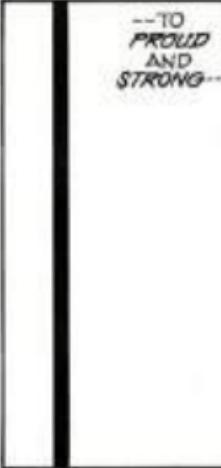
IN TRUTH, DON'T ALL LINES CARRY WITH THEM AN EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL?



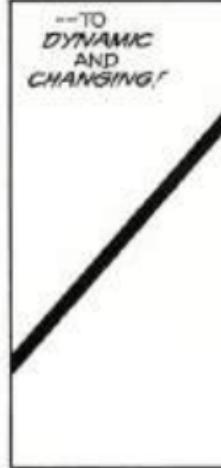
BY DIRECTION
ALONE, A LINE
MAY GO FROM
PASSIVE AND
TIMELESS--



--TO
PROUD
AND
STRONG--



--TO
DYNAMIC
AND
CHANGING--



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



--OR
WARM
AND GENTLE--



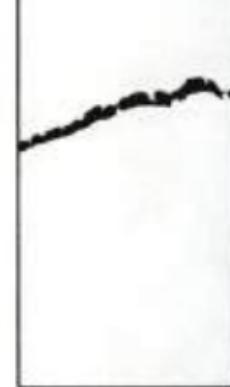
--OR
RATIONAL
AND
CONSERVATIVE.



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!



DICK TRACY, FOR EXAMPLE, CHESTER COULD USE 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 LINework COMBINE TO EVOKE A WORLD OF DEPRAVITY AND MORBID DECAY--



-- WHILE JOOST SWARTE'S CRISP ELEGANT LINES AND JAZZY DESIGNERS SPEAK OF COOL SOPHISITATION 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.





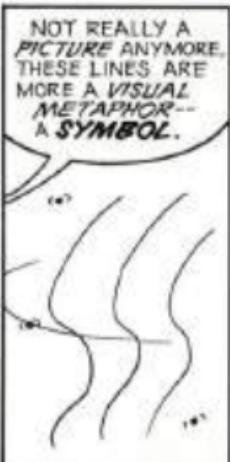
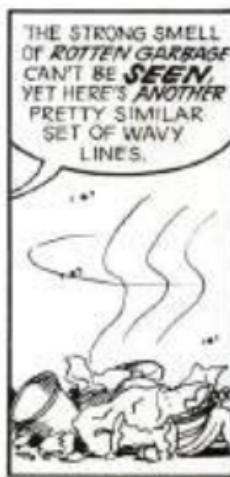
NOW,
IF PICTURES
CAN, THROUGH
THEIR RENDERING,
REPRESENT
INVISIBLE
CONCERNs SUCH
AS **EMOTIONS**
AND THE
OTHER
SENSES--



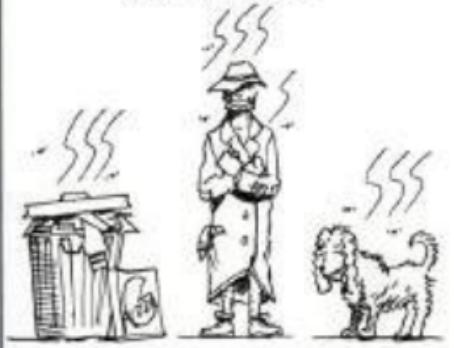
--THEN THE
DISTINCTION
BETWEEN
PICTURES AND
OTHER TYPES OF
ICONS LIKE
LANGUAGE WHICH
SPECIALIZE
IN THE INVISIBLE
MAY SEEM A
BIT BLURRY.

IN FACT, WHAT
WE'RE SEEING IN
THE *LIVING LIVES*
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.

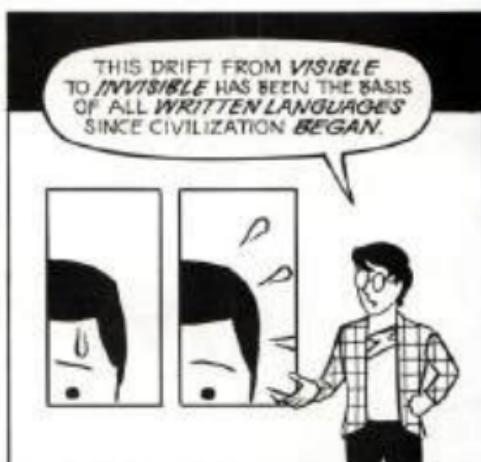
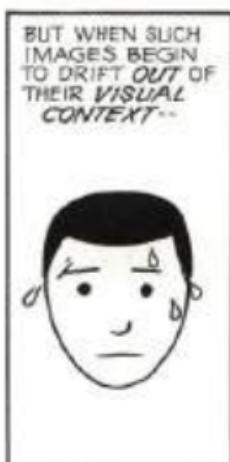
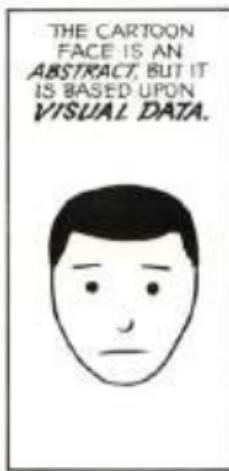
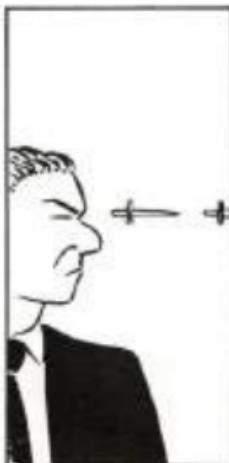
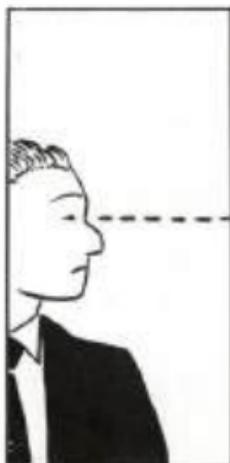


WHENEVER AN ARTIST
INVENTS A NEW WAY
TO REPRESENT THE
INVISIBLE, THERE IS
ALWAYS A CHANCE
THAT IT WILL BE
PICKED UP BY
OTHER ARTISTS.



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





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

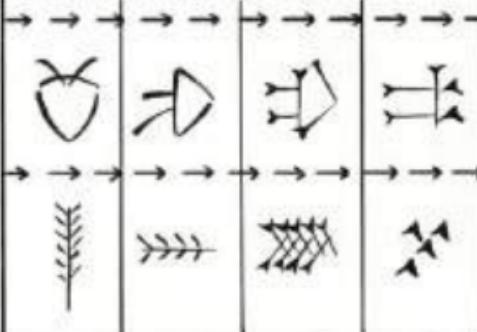


OK



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.

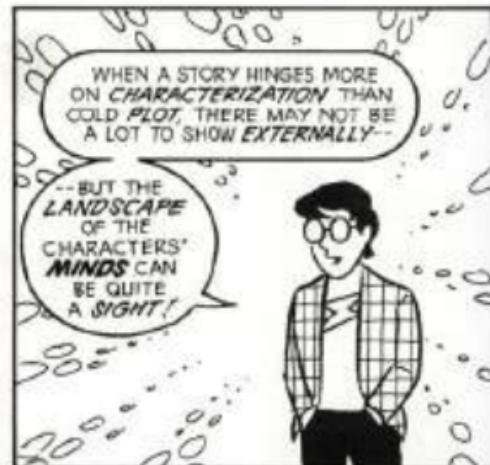


SUCH INTERNAL EFFECTS ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT INTERNAL MATTERS.



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 218 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.

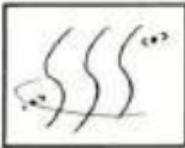


PERHAPS
IT'S TOO MUCH TO
ASK OF **ONE SENSE**
THAT IT BE
RESPONSIBLE FOR
CONVEYING SUCH A
WIDE WORLD OF
EXPERIENCES.

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



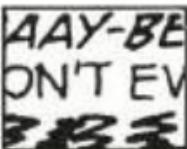
IN THIS
CHAPTER, WE'VE
DEALT WITH THE
INVISIBLE WORLDS
OF SENSES AND
EMOTIONS. BUT IN
FACT **ALL** ASPECTS
OF COMICS SHOW IT
TO BE AN **ART OF**
THE INVISIBLE.



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
Hobos



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.

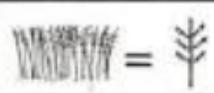
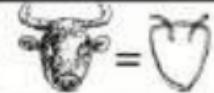
WORDS AND PICTURES ARE
AS POPULAR AS EVER, BUT THIS
WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE
COMBINATION IS SOMEHOW **BASE**
OR **SIMPLISTIC** HAS BECOME A
SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY.



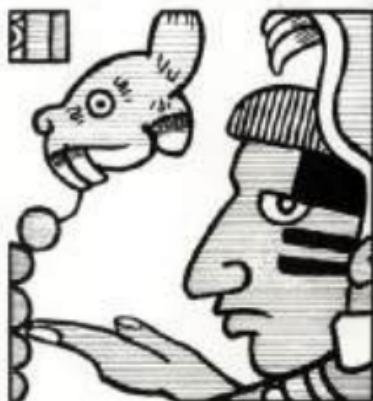
SOME OF THIS ART SHOWS
CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO
DETAIL, VERY MUCH CONCERNED
WITH PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION.

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 יי' אלהיבך מנהה
re's More! Order Today and receive FREE G

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.



12. Ein Bett mit einem Bett
Und ein Bett auf dem Bett
Mit Bett und Bettwäsche
Das Bett auf dem Bett.

13. Ich habe einen großen Pfosten
Um mich und meine Freunde
Die Freunde mein zu verstehen.
Durch einen großen Pfosten.

14. Guten Tag Ihr Herr Kapitän!
Doch es kann nicht so sein
Dass Ihr auf mich nachlegen
Um mich von meinem Geisterland.

15. Ich habe einen kleinen
Zimmer mit einer kleinen
Tisch und einer kleinen
Stuh und einer kleinen Tasse.

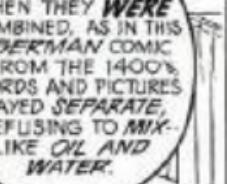


16. Ich habe einen kleinen
Zimmer mit einer kleinen
Tisch und einer kleinen
Stuh und einer kleinen Tasse.

17. Ich habe einen kleinen
Zimmer mit einer kleinen
Tisch und einer kleinen
Stuh und einer kleinen Tasse.

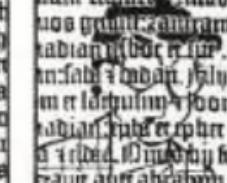
18. Ich habe einen kleinen
Zimmer mit einer kleinen
Tisch und einer kleinen
Stuh und einer kleinen Tasse.

MORE
IMPORTANTLY,
WHEN THEY **WERE**
COMBINED, AS IN THIS
GERMAN COMIC
FROM THE 1400's,
WORDS AND PICTURES
STAYED SEPARATE,
REFUSING TO **MIX**—
LIKE OIL AND
WATER.



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

-- AND
LESS AND
LESS LIKE
PICTURES



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





Thou still unawak'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 thyme:
What leaf fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, all of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens leath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy!

PICTURE BY JEAN-BAPTISTE-CAMILLE COUDREY TO VIEW NEAR VOLTAIRE'S TALK



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.

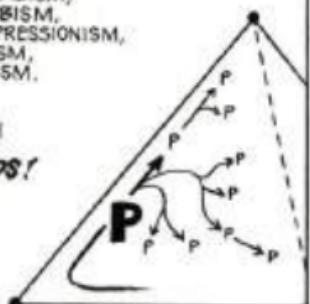


IMPRESSIONISM, WHILE IT COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS THE FIRST MODERN MOVEMENT, WAS MORE A CULMINATION OF THE OLD, THE ULTIMATE STUDY OF LIGHT AND COLOR.

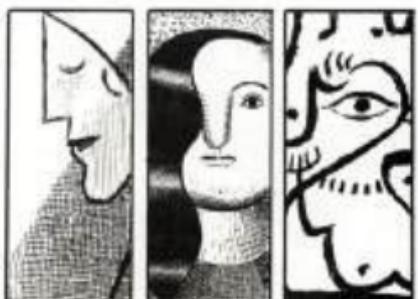


SOON AFTER CAME THE EXPLOSION! EXPRESSIONISM, FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM, FAUVISM, CUBISM, ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, NEO-PLASTICISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM.

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT BACKWARDS!



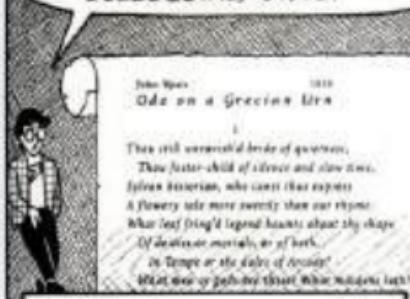
STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. ABSTRACTION, BOTH ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC MADE A SPECTACULAR COMEBACK!



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

MORNING IN A LA MELOCROS

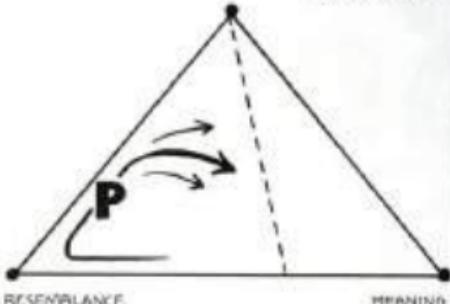
MEANWHILE, THE WRITTEN WORD WAS ALSO CHANGING. POETRY BEGAN TURNING AWAY FROM THE ELLUSIVE, TWICE-ABSTRACTED LANGUAGE OF OLD TOWARD A MORE DIRECT, EVEN COLLOQUIAL, STYLE.



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 mortality, 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 Kashmire, 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 stured for,
so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

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



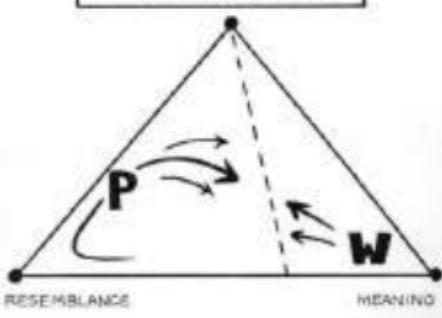
IN PROSE,
LANGUAGE WAS
BECOMING EVEN MORE
DIRECT, CONVEYING
MEANING SIMPLY
AND QUICKLY,
MORE LIKE
PICTURES.



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



-- AND HEADED FOR
A COLLISION!



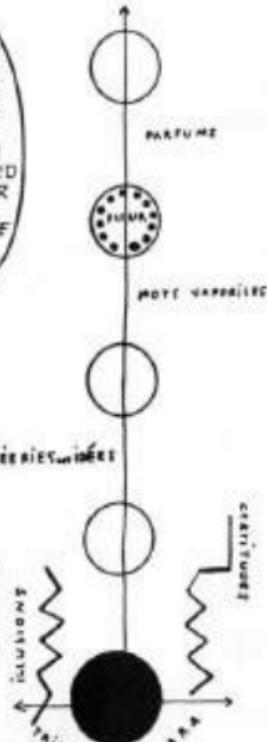


DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

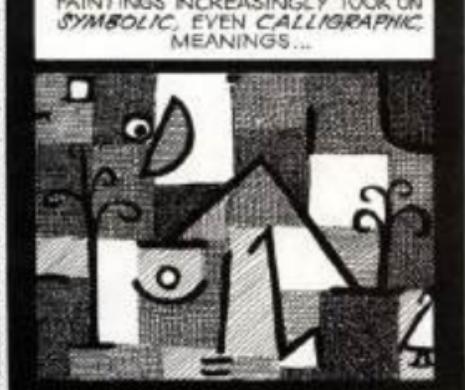
par
FRANCIS PICABIA

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 STATE THESS' (1920) BY PAUL KLEE



AND IN POPULAR CULTURE THE TWO FORMS COLLIDED AGAIN AND AGAIN WITHOUT ANY PRETENSES OF 'HIGH' ART.



NOWHERE IS THIS COLLISION MORE THOROUGHLY EXPLORED THAN THE MODERN COMIC. AND IT'S NOT A RECENT OBSESSION.

LET'S GO BACK TO THE EARLY 1800'S BEFORE ANY OF THIS HAPPENED, WHEN WORDS AND PICTURES HAD DRIFTED AS FAR APART AS POSSIBLE.

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

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



M. CRÉPIN ADVERTISES FOR A TUTOR, AND MANY APPLY FOR THE JOB.

I'M SURE THAT THESE IDEAS WERE THE FURTHEST THING FROM TOPFFER'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.

IN OTHERS AND IN THEMSELVES...



Thou still unravish'd bride
Thou foster-child of silent
Sylvan historian, who cans
A flowery tale more sweetly
What leaf bring'd legend he
Of deities or mortals, or
In Tempe or the dales
What men or gods are these
What mad pursuit? What
What sines and timshels



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 problem
with language
is that
it has so
many
uses...
and
so few
meanings.

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.

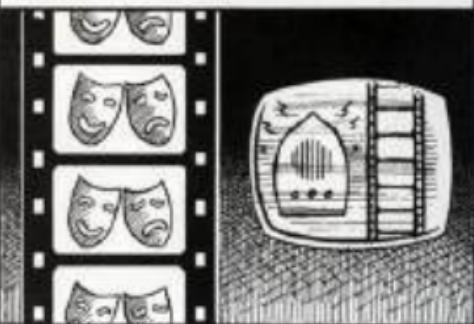


EVER SINCE THE INVENTION OF THE WRITTEN WORD, NEW MEDIA HAVE BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD.



CAREFUL, JACOB! IF YOU KEEP DOING THIS, YOU'LL STOP USING YOUR MEMORY!

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.

comics (kəm'iks, n.) *n.* comic form, used with a singular verb: *the comic*. Juxtaposed pictorial or other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce mental responses in viewer.

2. Superheroes: costumed figures who want world to submit to them.

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

DADA

ROMANCE

HORROR

SURREALISM

BLANK VERSE
EPIC POETRY
SOCIAL ALLEGORY



ADAPTATIONS

HISTORICAL FICTION
FOLK TALES
EROTICA
MYSTERY
RELIGIOUS TOPICS

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SATIRE

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.



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 STUMBBLED 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 LOLLIPOP.



BUT THE CAPTAIN'S MIGHTY BLOW MISSES ITS INTENDED TARGET!

BLAST! HE DODGED MY PUNCH AND I STRUCK THIS BRICK WALL!



HAI! DODGED!

YOU I FEEL SO BAD!



...THOUGHT AMY.

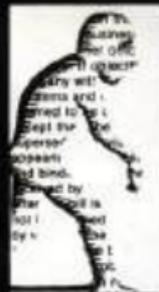
ANOTHER TYPE IS THE **ADDITIVE** COMBINATION WHERE WORDS AMPLIFY OR ELABORATE ON AN IMAGE OR VICE VERSA.



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



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



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...



DID ANYONE SEE YOU?

THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!

I ASK YOU, DOES THIS GUY LOOK LIKE A CEO 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, WILLIAMS!!



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.



LET'S SAY I SHOW YOU A WOMAN WALKING ACROSS THE STREET IN THE RAIN, BUYING A PINT OF ICE CREAM AND EATING IT IN HER APARTMENT--



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

"MISSION CONTROL, MISSION
CONTROL, DO YOU READ ME?"



(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 169 --



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)



IF THE ARTIST WANTS TO, HE/SHE CAN NOW SHOW ONLY FRAGMENTS OF A SCENE.

(WORD SPECIFIC)

PERHAPS THE ARTIST CAN GIVE US SOME IMPORTANT EMOTIONAL INFORMATION.

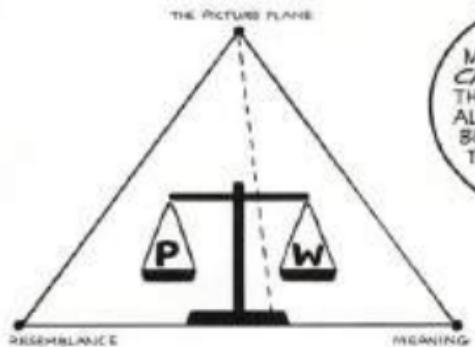


(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.



(WORD SPECIFIC)



HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY CHART THESE THINGS, THEY'RE ALL ULTIMATELY BEST LEFT TO THE CREATOR'S INSTINCTS.

THE MIXING OF WORDS AND PICTURES IS MORE ALCHEMY THAN SCIENCE



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



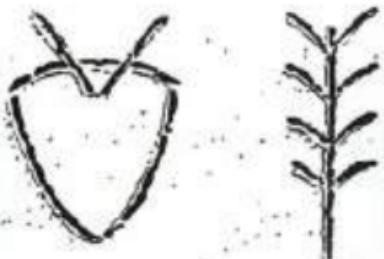
BUT WE HAVE SOME POWERFUL MAGIC RIGHT HERE IN THE 20TH CENTURY, TOO!



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--

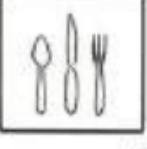
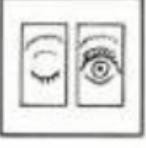
--WHEN TO TELL WAS TO SHOW--



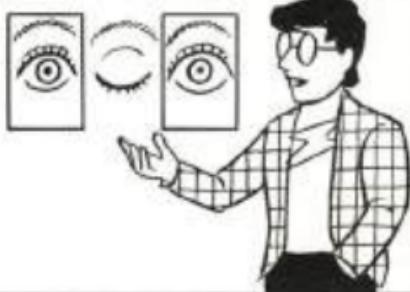
--AND TO SHOW WAS TO TELL.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIX STEPS.



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!**

GRAAH!

EEEK!!

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--!

RAAR!!!



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 CONCIEVE
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...



HPLPLP!!



ART.

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.



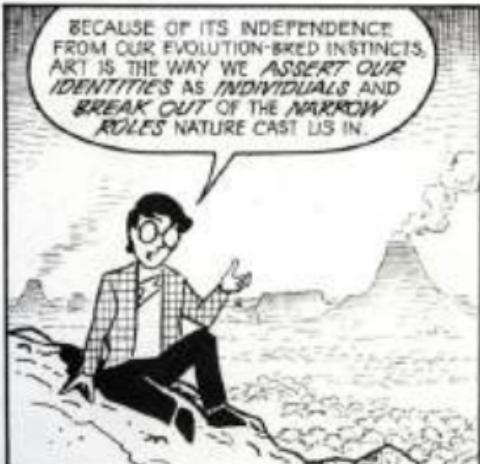
TODAY HE LOST A FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER. NOW ALL HE CAN DO IS DANCE AWAY HIS FRUSTRATION.



WHILE OVER HERE, A LITTLE GIRL SINGS HER SONGS 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!"

"I DIDN'T DO THIS TO GET **LAI'D**!
I DIDN'T DO THIS FOR **FAME** OR
POWER OR **GREED** OR ANYTHING ELSE!
I DID THIS FOR **ART!**"

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

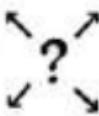


FIRST:
THE IMPULSES, THE
IDEAS, THE EMOTIONS,
THE PHILOSOPHIES, THE
PURPOSES OF THE
WORK... THE WORK'S
"CONTENT."



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.



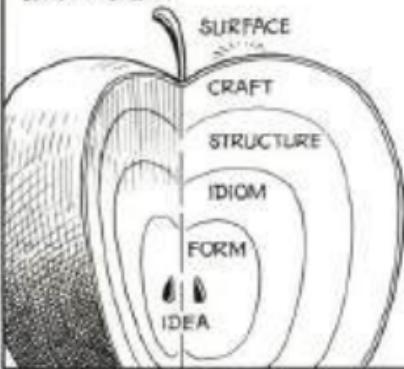
6 SURFACE



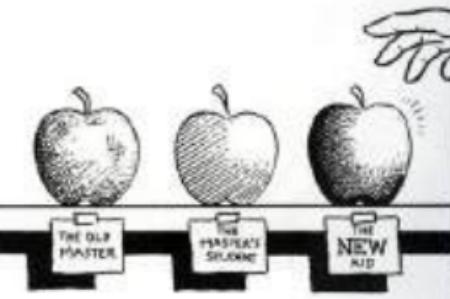
SIXTH:
PRODUCTION
VALUES, FINISHING.
THE ASPECTS MOST
APPARENT ON FIRST
SUPERFICIAL
EXPOSURE TO
THE WORK.



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-

ANATOMY IS VERY POOR... SEE HOW THAT MUSCLE CONNECTS?... AND THAT PERSPECTIVE, YEEH!!... DO YOU KNOW WHAT A VANISHING POINT IS?... AND AS FOR FACES...



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...



-- HE LEAVES HIS DREAMS OF MAKING COMICS BEHIND.

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.



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... >



< GULP! >

SHE'S A GOOD, HARDWORKING STUDENT.



< I THINK I'VE REALLY MADE A BREAKTHROUGH! >

< THIS IS VERY GOOD! >

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.



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.



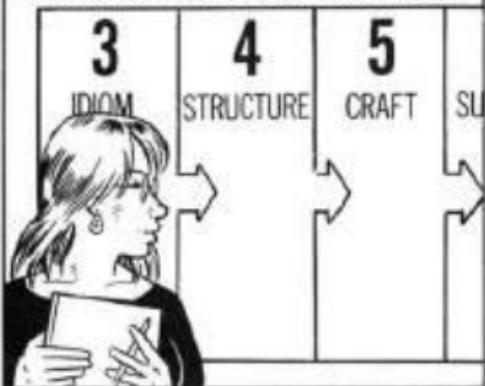
SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING MORE--SOME PIECE OF THE PUZZLE--THAT SHE STILL HASN'T FOUND.



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.



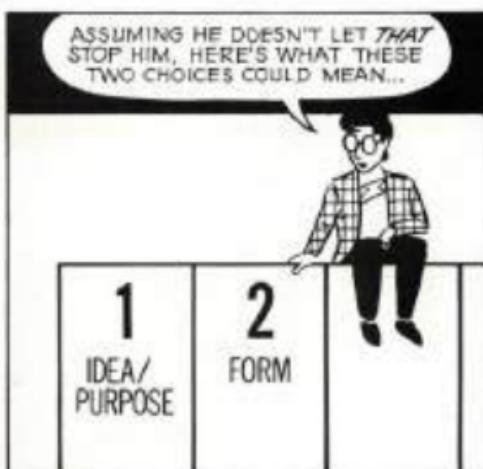
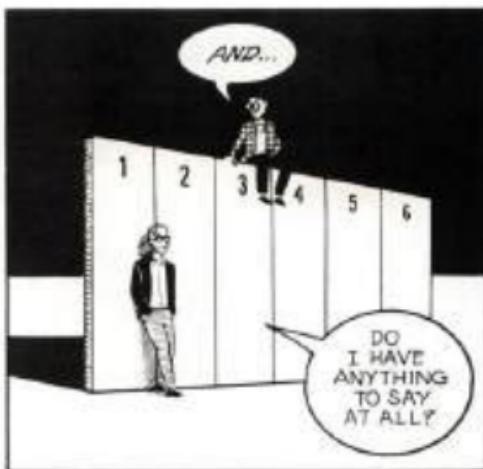
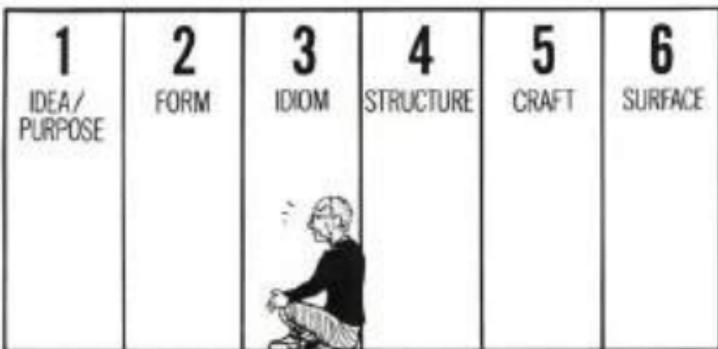
BUT ELSEWHERE, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS DISSATISFIED. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



...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:

WHY AM I DOING THIS?





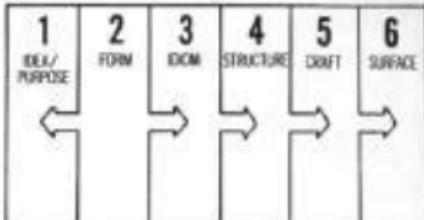
2 FORM

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.)

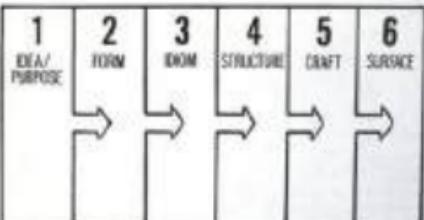
1 IDEA/PURPOSE

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.



(IN OTHER ART FORMS: CAPRA, DICKENS, WOODY GUTHRIE, EDWARD R. MURROW, ETC.)



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*.



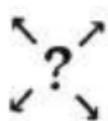
...ESPECIALLY IF THEIR GOALS ARE *MODEST* ONES.

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.

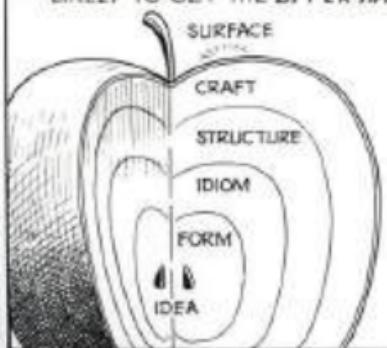


ALL
WORKS BEGIN
WITH A PURPOSE.
HOWEVER ARBITRARY,
ALL TAKE SOME FORM;
ALL BELONG TO AN
IDIOM (EVEN IF IT'S
AN IDIOM OF ONE); ALL
POSSESS A STRUCTURE;
ALL REQUIRE SOME
CRAFT; ALL
PRESENT A
SURFACE.

AND **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS
HAVE THE **POTENTIAL**
FOR *SELF-EXPRESSION*,
EVEN WHEN *ECONOMIC
SURVIVAL* IS THE
ARTIST'S MAIN
CONCERN.



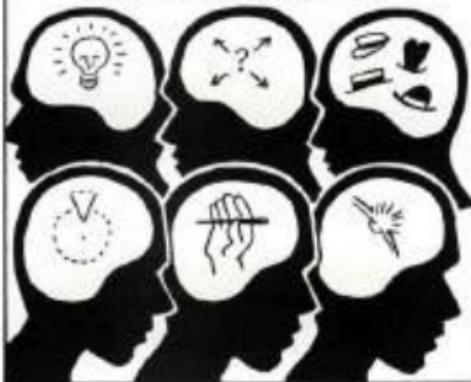
BUT THE MORE A CREATOR LEARNS TO COMMAND
EVERY ASPECT OF HIS/HER ART AND TO
UNDERSTAND HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP TO IT,
THE MORE "ARTISTIC" CONCERNS ARE
LIKELY TO GET THE UPPER HAND.



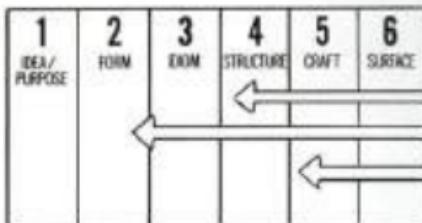
THE ORDER OF THE SIX STEPS
IS **INNATE**. LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT
OF BONES IN A DINOSAUR'S SKELETON,
THEY CAN BE DISCOVERED IN ANY ORDER,
BUT WHEN BROUGHT TOGETHER, THEY
WILL ALWAYS FALL INTO PLACE!



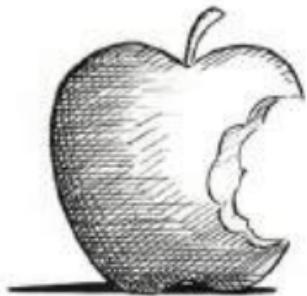
IN PRACTICE, ANY ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.



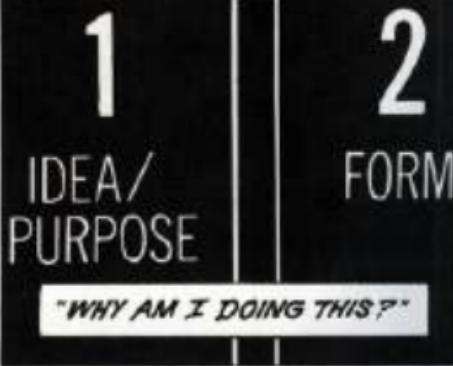
STILL, THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR MOST ARTISTS IS A SLOW AND STEADY JOURNEY FROM **END TO BEGINNING**.



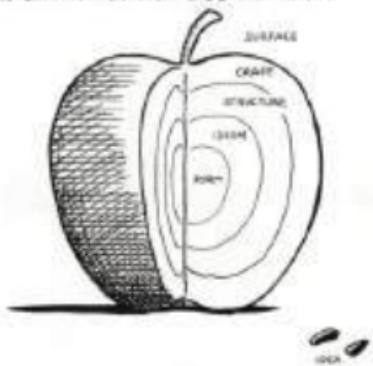
FROM **SURFACE** TO **CORE**:



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**—



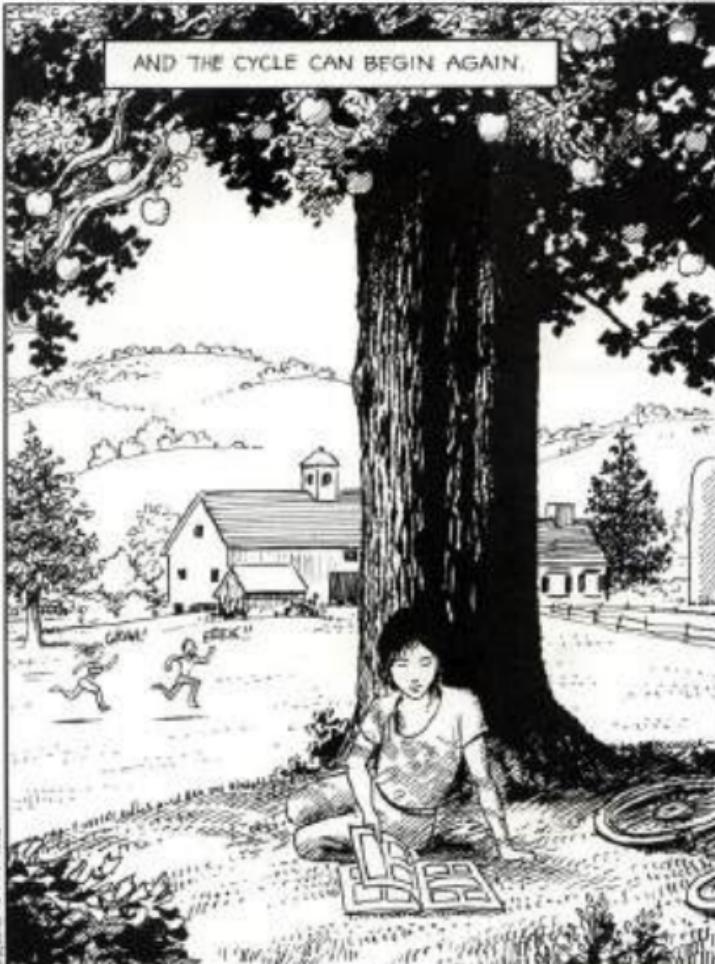
--CAN ANTICIPATE A *WORLD OF UNKNOWN EXPERIENCES*.



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.



ART BY RAY FRAZIER

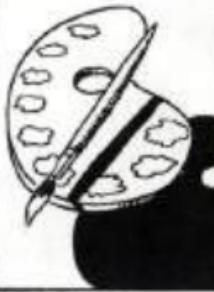
CHAPTER EIGHT

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."



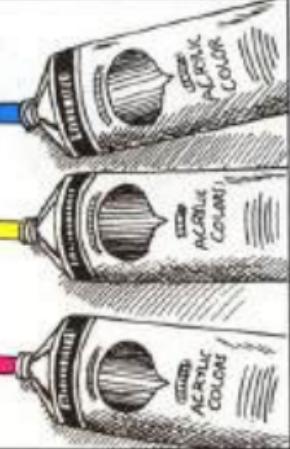
THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE STORMY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMICS AND COLOR, BUT MOST CAN BE SUMMED UP IN TWO WORDS...



COMMERCE

AND

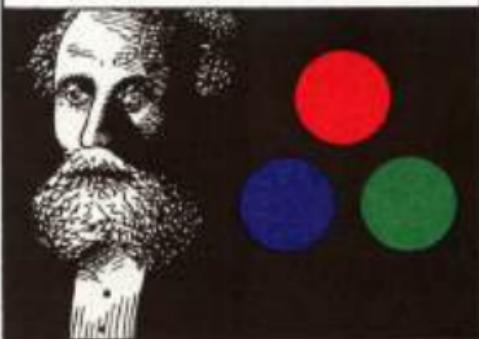
TECHNOLOGY.



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.

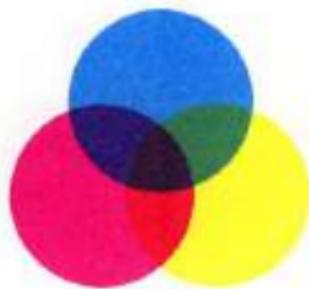


EIGHT YEARS LATER, FRENCH PIANIST LOUIS DU COS DU HAURON* DEVISED THE IDEA OF THREE SUBTRACTIVE PRIMARIES.



*WHOM I DON'T HAVE A PICTURE OF.

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 --



-- OR PRINTER'S INK!



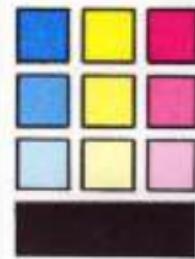
COLOR COMICS HIT THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY LIKE AN ATOMIC BOMB!



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.

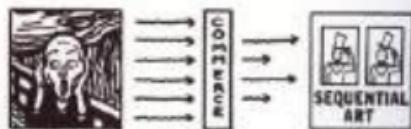


THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO 100%, 50%, AND 20%. USING BLACK INK FOR THE LINE WORK.

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.

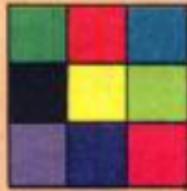


*FOR OPAQUE PIGMENTS: RED, YELLOW AND BLUE. I KNOW, IT'S TOTALLY WEIRD.

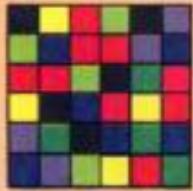
TO COUNTERACT THE DULLING EFFECTS OF NEWSPRINT AND TO STAND OUT FROM THE COMPETITION, COSTUMED HEROES WERE GLAD IN BRIGHT, PRIMARY COLORS AND FOUGHT IN A BRIGHT PRIMARY WORLD!



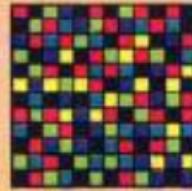
THE COLORS WERE PICKED FOR STRENGTH AND CONTRASTED STRONGLY WITH ONE ANOTHER, BUT ON MOST PAGES NO ONE COLOR DOMINATED.



WITHOUT THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF SINGLE-COLOR SATURATION, THE EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN COLOR COMICS --



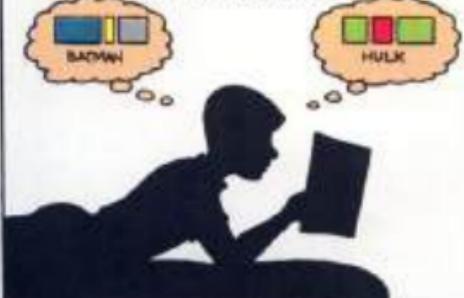
-- WAS OFTEN CANCELLED OUT TO AN EMOTIONAL GREY.



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.



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.

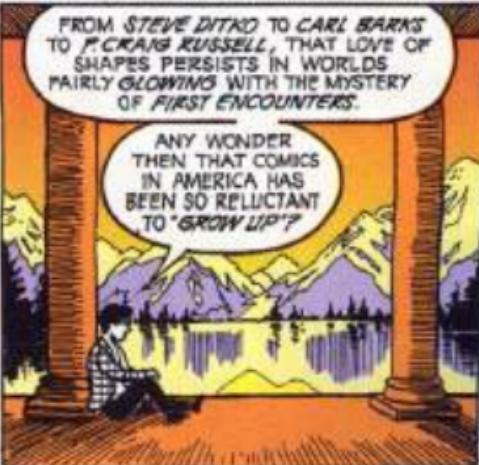


COLE.



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.



HERGE 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 HERGE, FLAT COLORS WERE A PREFERENCE, NOT A NECESSITY.



BUT OTHERS SUCH AS CLAVELOUX, CAZA AND MOEBIUS 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 70s 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!





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.



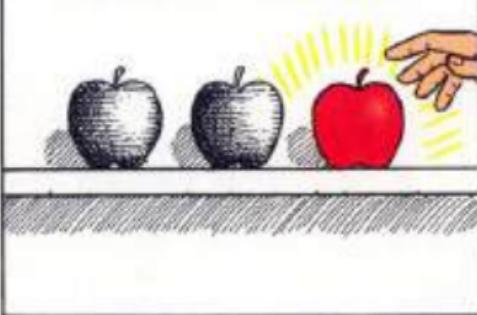
IN FLAT COLORS FORMS THEMSELVES TAKE ON MORE SIGNIFICANCE. THE WORLD BECOMES A PLAYGROUND OF SHAPES AND SPACE.



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.



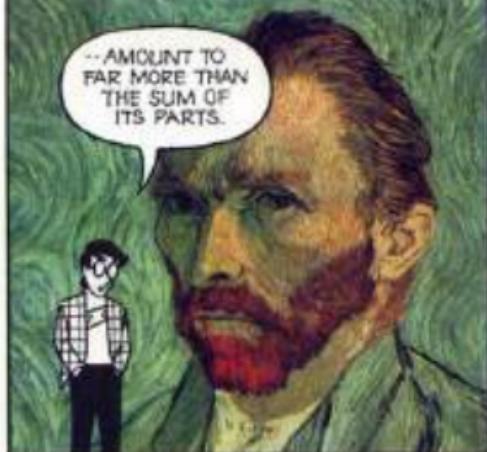
BUT COMICS READERS LOOK FOR MANY THINGS BESIDES "REALITY" AND, TECHNOLOGY NOTWITHSTANDING, COLOR WILL NEVER REPLACE BLACK AND WHITE ENTIRELY.



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...



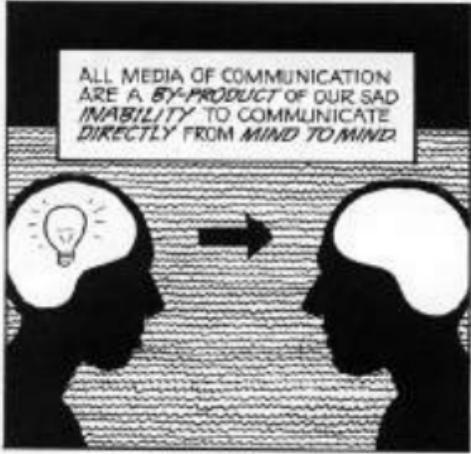
WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF
PROFOUND ISOLATION.



NO OTHER HUMAN BEING CAN
EVER KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO
BE YOU FROM THE INSIDE.



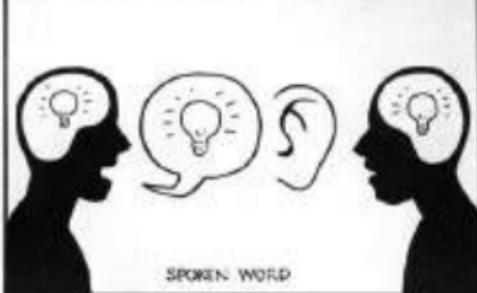
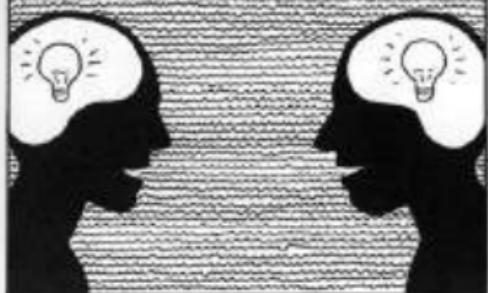
AND NO AMOUNT OF REACHING
OUT TO OTHERS CAN EVER MAKE
THEM FEEL EXACTLY WHAT
YOU FEEL.



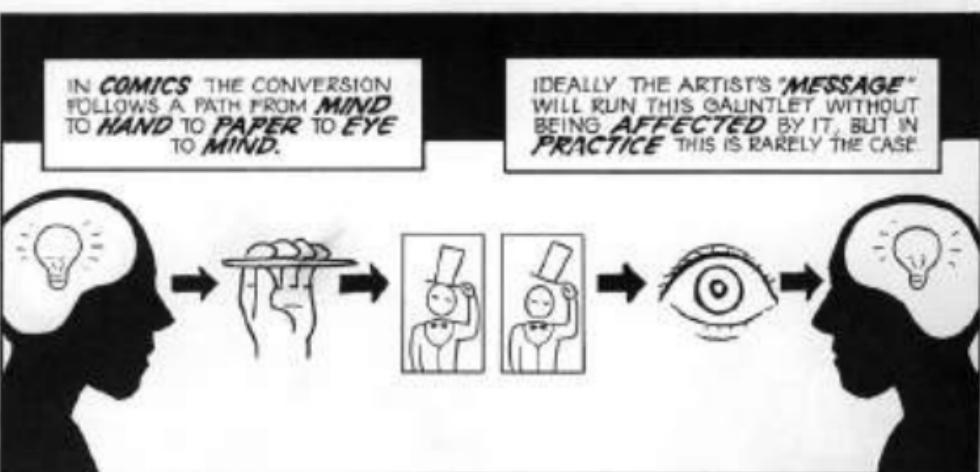
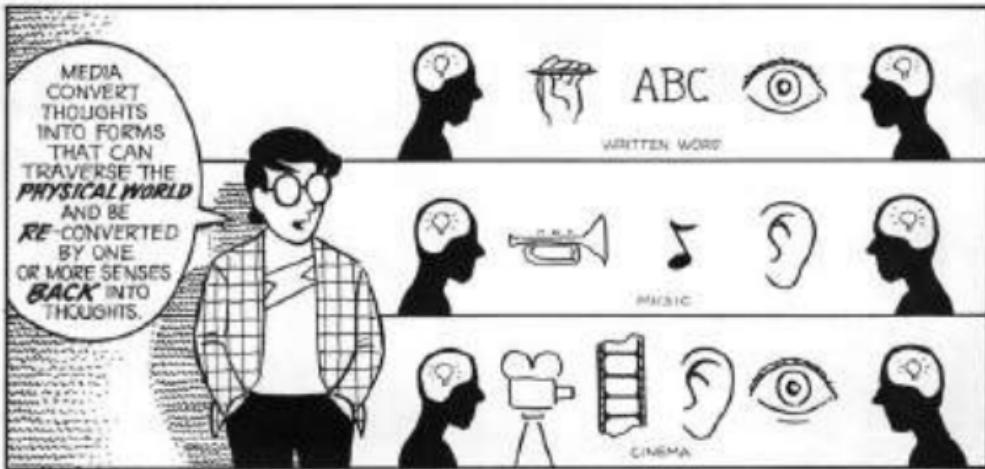
ALL MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION
ARE A BY-PRODUCT OF OUR SAD
INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE
DIRECTLY FROM MIND TO MIND.

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.



SPKEN WORD

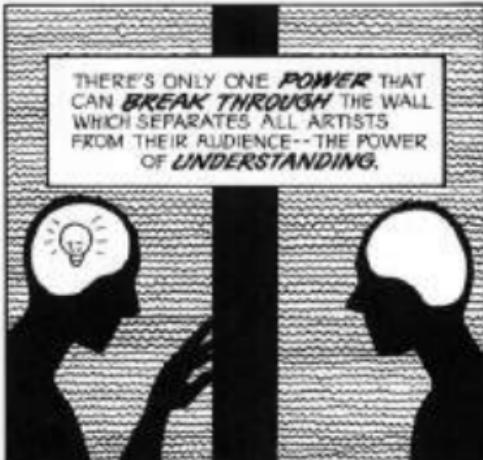


IN COMICS THE CONVERSION FOLLOWES A PATH FROM MIND TO HAND TO PAPER TO EYE TO MIND.

IDEALLY THE ARTIST'S "MESSAGE" WILL RUN THIS GAUNTLET WITHOUT BEING AFFECTED BY IT. BUT IN PRACTICE THIS IS RARELY THE CASE.

THE COMICS I "SEE"
IN MY MIND WILL NEVER
BE SEEN IN THEIR ENTIRETY
BY ANYONE ELSE, NO
MATTER HOW HARD
I TRY.

ASK ANY WRITER
OR FILMMAKER OR
PAINTER JUST HOW
MUCH OF A GIVEN
PROJECT TRULY
REPRESENTS WHAT
HE/SHE ENVISIONED
IT TO BE.



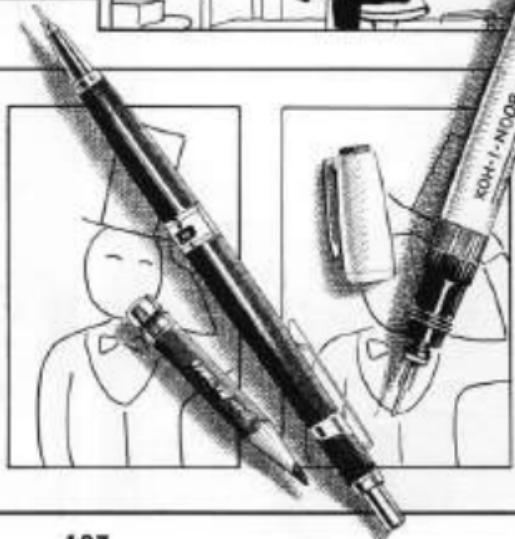
UNDERSTANDING
COMICS IS SERIOUS
BUSINESS.

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--

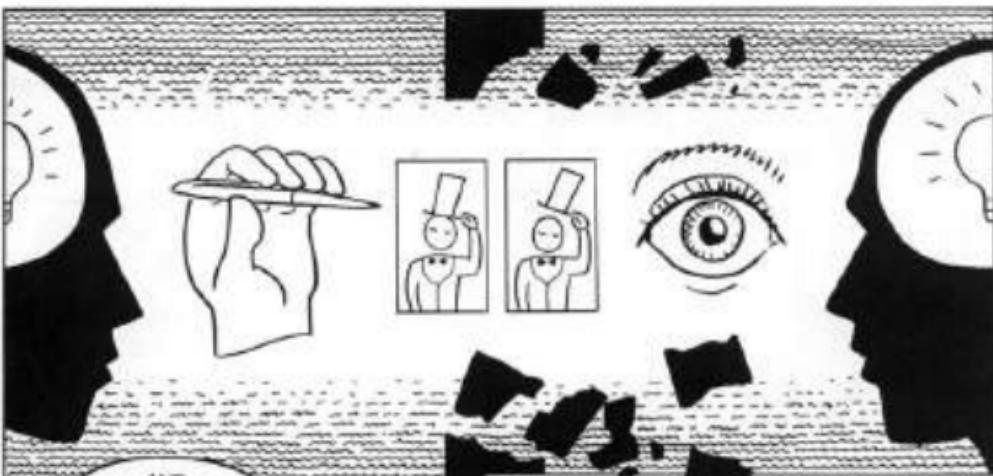
--BUT THEY PALE
IN COMPARISON TO
WHAT A FILMMAKER
OR PLAYWRIGHT
HAS TO CONTEND
WITH.

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.

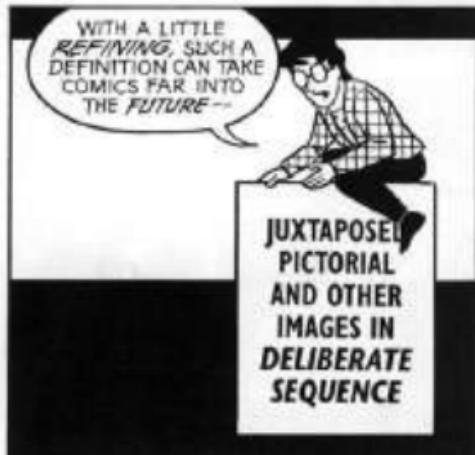
THE WALL OF **IGNORANCE** THAT PREVENTS SO MANY HUMAN BEINGS FROM SEEING EACH OTHER **CLEARLY** CAN ONLY BE BREACHED BY **COMMUNICATION**.



AND
COMMUNICATION
IS ONLY EFFECTIVE
WHEN WE UNDERSTAND
THE **FORMS** THAT
COMMUNICATION
CAN TAKE.



I'VE BEEN
TRYING TO
UNDERSTAND
COMICS FOR
ABOUT 15 YEARS.
HERE'S WHAT I'VE
COME UP WITH
SO FAR.





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 *BEGUN*!
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!

ANCIENT
ARTISTS
ARE STUCK
IN PERIODIC
CATALOGUES.

THROUGH THE WORKS AND WRITINGS OF THESE NEGLECTED MASTERS, WE SEE THE FIRST GLIMPSES OF COMICS' LIMITLESS POTENTIAL AS AN ART FORM—

—AND THE ATTITUDES THAT WERE TO OBSCURE THAT POTENTIAL FOR MANY YEARS TO COME!



“...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



“...in addition, the picture-story appeals mainly to children and the lower classes...”

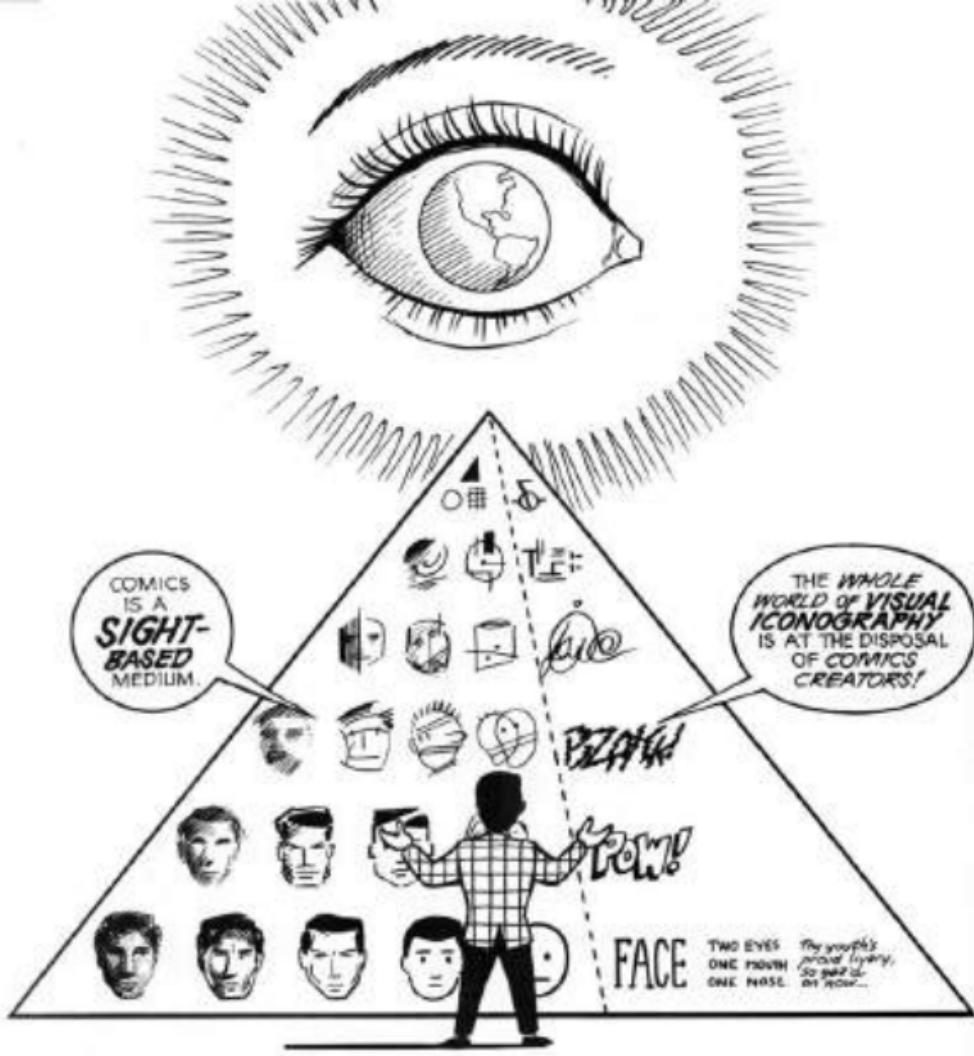
Rudolphe Topffer
1845

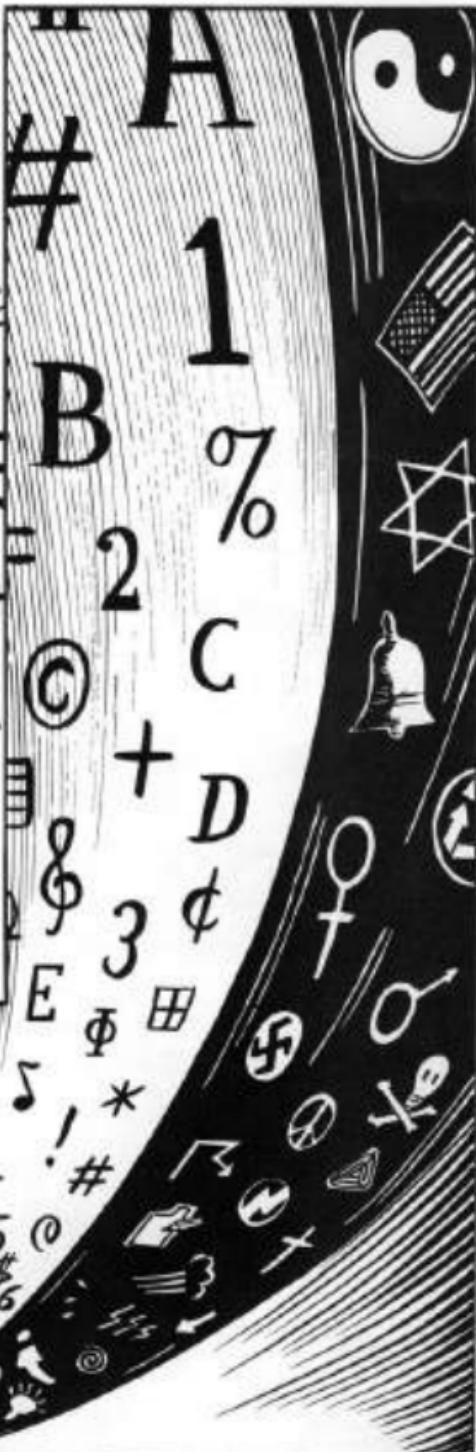
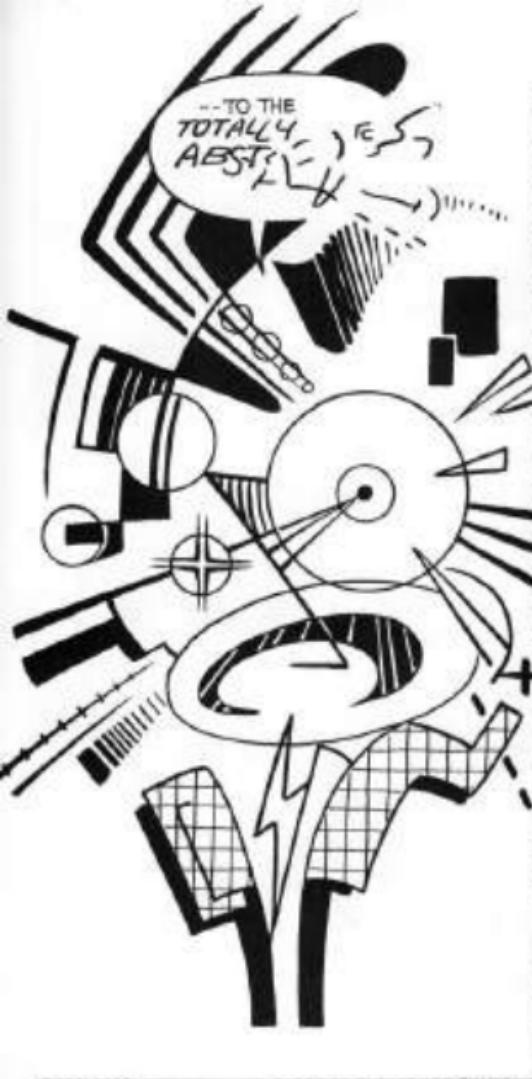
TRANSLATION BY E. NESE

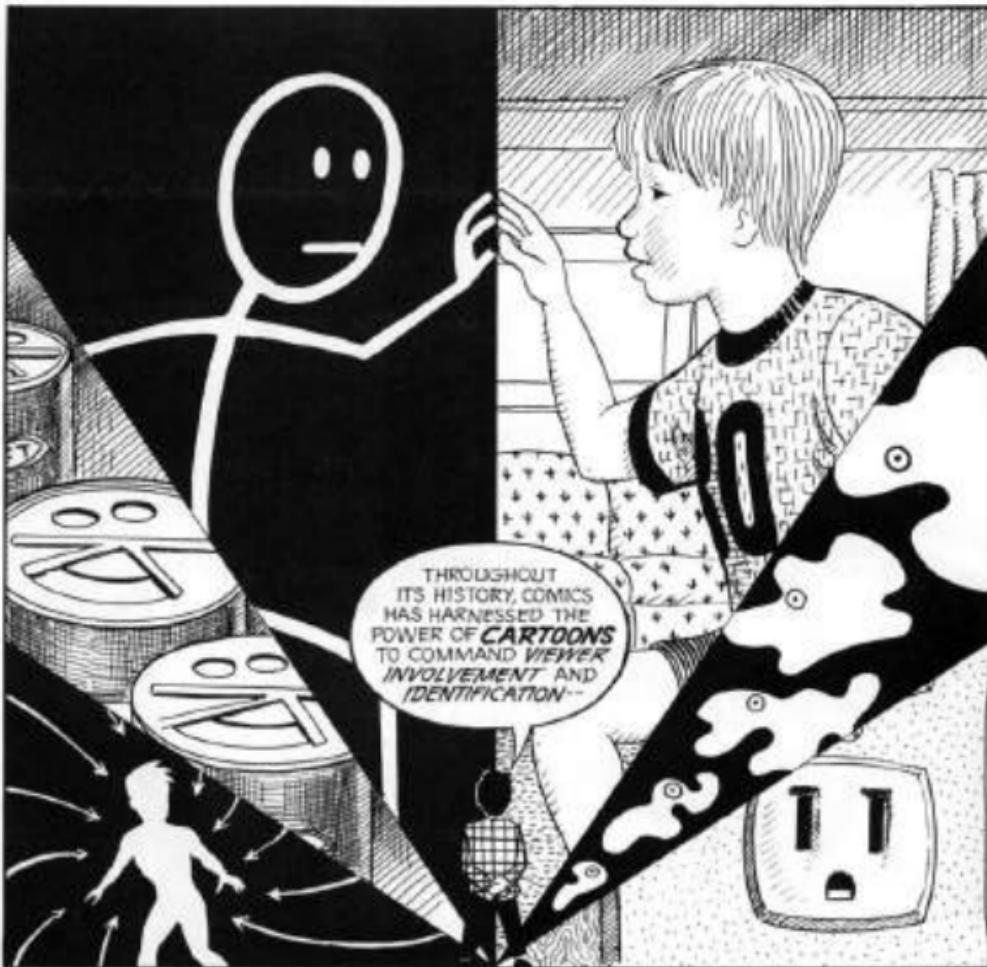
...ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED SOME OF MODERN COMICS' MOST PROMISING ARTISTS TO BE SEGREGATED FROM THEIR MUCH-MALIGNED COUSINS.

ELEVATED BEYOND THEIR HERITAGE BY A CHANGE OF NAME!



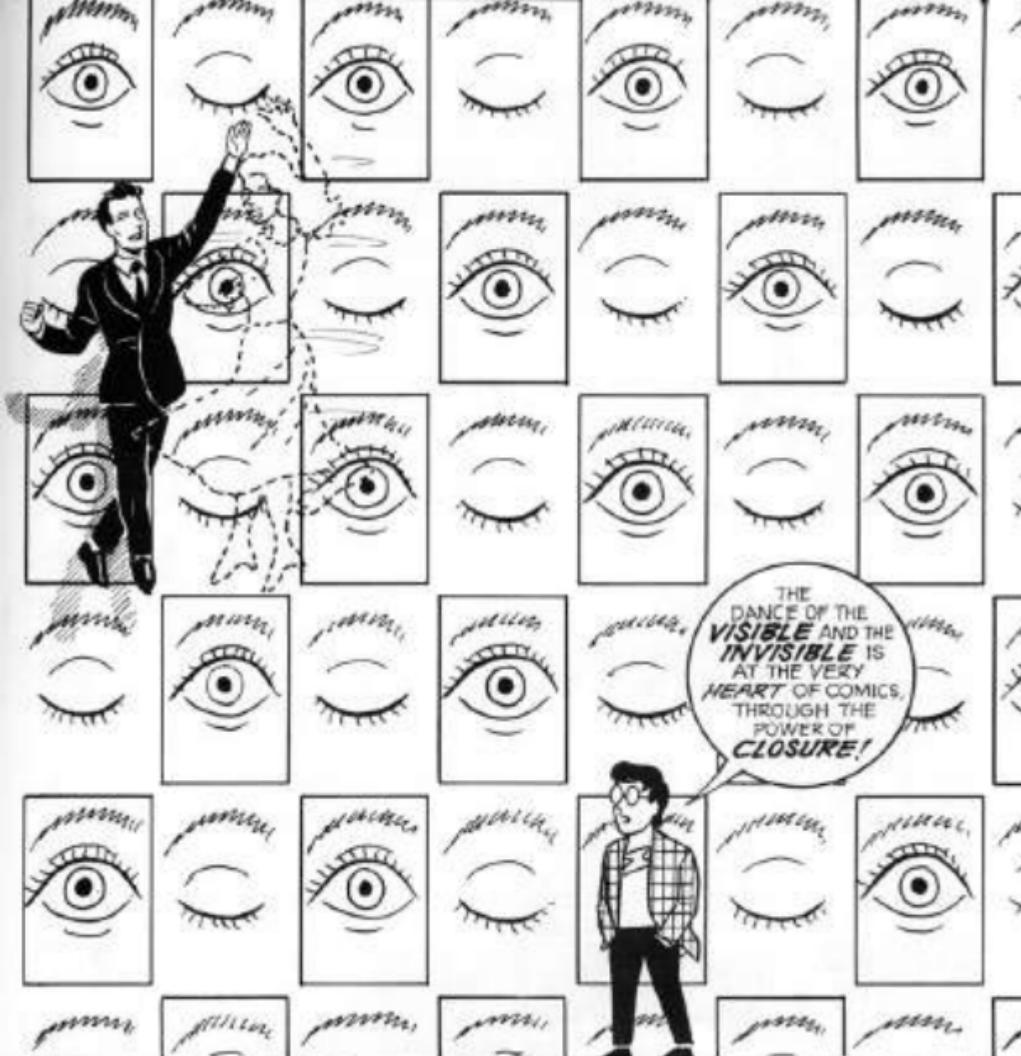






-- AND **REALISM** TO CAPTURE THE BEAUTY AND COMPLEXITY OF THE VISIBLE WORLD.



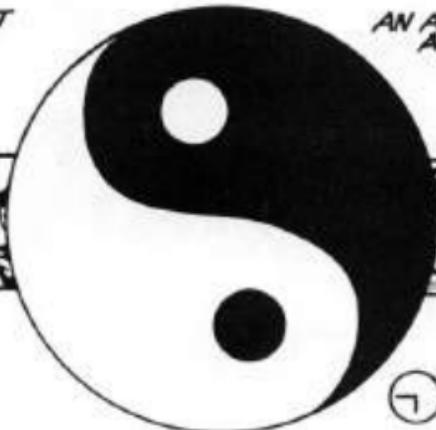


CREATOR AND READER ARE
PARTNERS IN THE INVISIBLE
CREATING SOMETHING OUT OF
NOTHING, TIME AND
TIME AGAIN.

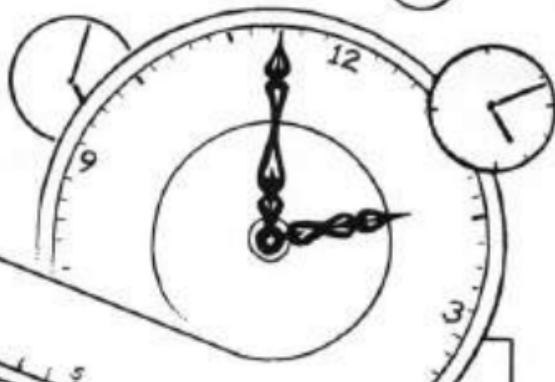
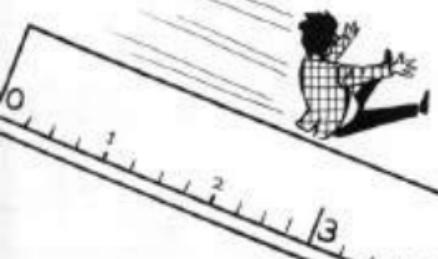


COMICS IS A GREAT
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



--AND A
BAFFLING
TWO-STEP OF
TIME AND
SPACE!



BUT NOWHERE IS THE BALANCE
BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND THE
INVISIBLE MORE CONSPICUOUS
THAN IN *PICTURES AND WORDS...*



FACE

*An unavashed
child of subter-
ranean, who comes to
re-wetify the
old legend have
mortals, of late
on. The dates of
events are true.*

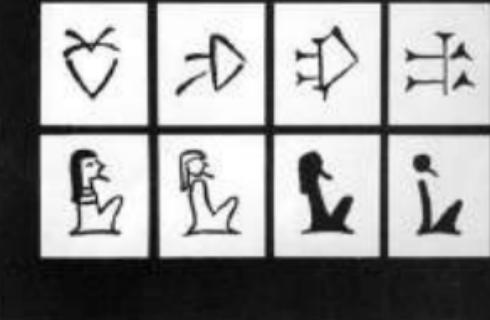
...A SPLIT FORETOLD IN THE
BIRTH OF ART ITSELF--



*to genuine li-
uni & nephi-
thaflum di-
jui & caphe-
uit frdoum*

207

--BEGUN
IN EARNEST
OVER 5,000
YEARS AGO--

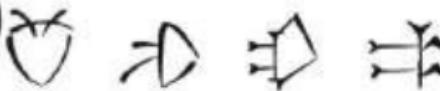


--AND GROWN WIDER AND WIDER FOR
CENTURIES UNTIL EVENTUALLY, ALL
CONNECTION WAS LOST--





--AS ALL
LANGUAGE
MUST
EVOLVE--



-- BECAUSE
EMBEDDED IN
ALL PICTURES
OF THE **VISIBLE**
WORLD ARE THE
SEEDS OF THE
INVISIBLE.

THE SEEDS OF
EXPRESSIONISM
AND
SYNAESTHETICS.

BUT EVOLUTION IS A TRICKY THING. SPECIES EVOLVE DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT CLIMATES.



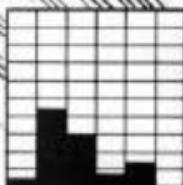
SO IT WAS IN JAPAN WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED IN RELATIVE ISOLATION, SPAWNING A HOST OF UNIQUE APPROACHES TO MAKING COMICS.



EXPRESSIONISM



COLLAGE



STORYTELLING



WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



FORMATS



SUBJECTIVE MOTION



THE 'MASKING' EFFECT

ICONIC CHARACTERS



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
VERSE

SURREALISM

EPIC
POETRY

HISTORICAL
FICTION

SOCIAL
ALLEGORY

FOLK TALES

ADAPTATIONS

EROTICA

STREAM
OF CONSCIOUSNESS

MYSTERY

SATIRE

RELIGIOUS
TOPICS

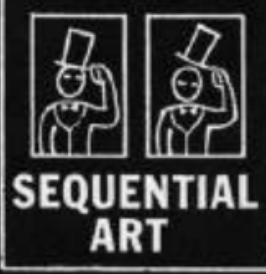


TODAY THE
POSSIBILITIES FOR
COMICS ARE -- AS
THEY ALWAYS
HAVE BEEN --

--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

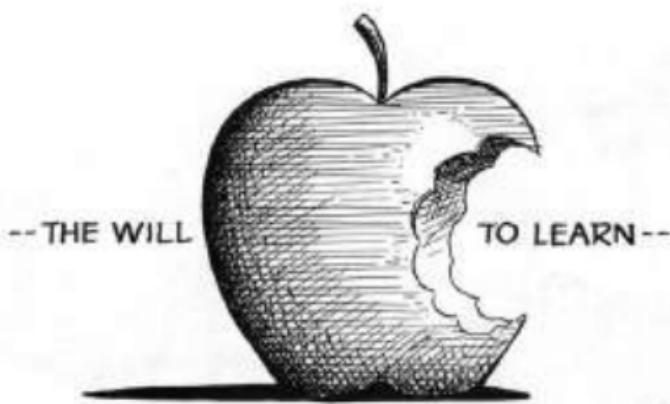
2

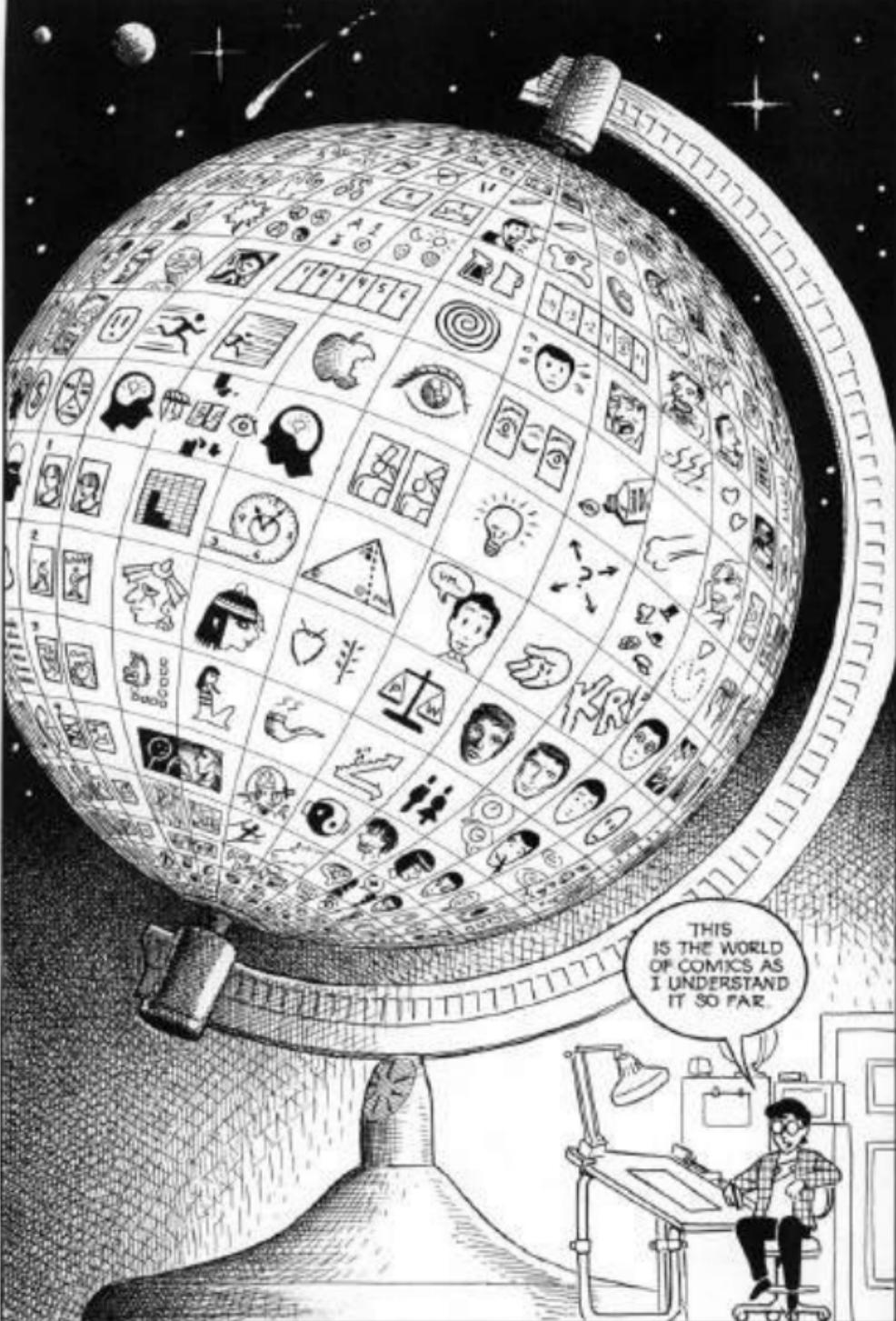
3

4

5

6







CO
'92

wordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswords

Selected Bibliography.

- Chip, Herschel B., editor: *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).
- Eisner, Will: *Comics and Sequential Art* (Princeton, NJ: Kitchen Sink Press, Inc., 1992).
- 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 Töpffer'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!

Copyright Information.

Page 4: El Borba © Charles Burns; Mister O'Malley, Buster Brown, Miss Peach and Nemo © Field Newspaper Syndicate, Inc.; David Chelsea © himself; Cynicalman © Matt Feazell; The Dragon Lady, Little Orphan Annie, Dick Tracy and Uncle Walt © Chicago Tribune - New York News Syndicate; E. Z. Mark, Flash Gordon, Jiggs, Hi and Popeye © King Features Syndicate, Inc.; Alley Oop and Bull Dawson © NEA Service Inc.; Felix the Cat, Polly and Her Pals © Newspaper Feature Service; L'il Abner, Charlie Brown, Gordo and Nancy © United Features Syndicate; Shazam! (Captain Marvel), Death, Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, Plastic Man and Alfred E. Neuman © D.C. Comics; Gen © Keiji Nakazawa; Colin Upton © himself; Betty © Archie Comics; Beanish © Larry Marder; Danny © Terry Laban; The Snowman © Raymond Briggs; Adele Blanc-Sec and Tintin © Casterman; Arale © Akira Toriyama; Alec © Eddie Campbell; Groo © Sergio Aragones; Dan Clowes © himself; Cerebus the Aardvark © Dave Sim; Micky Mouse and Scrooge McDuck © Walt Disney Productions; Jack © Jerry Moriarty; Cardinal Syn © Steve Bissette; The Spirit © Will Eisner; Mike © Gary Trudeau; Heracio © Gilbert Hernandez; Asterix and Laureline © Dargaud Editeur; Reid Fleming © Boswell; Theodore Deeth Head © Pascal Doury; The Torpedo © Catalan Communications; Frank © Jim Woodring; Vladok and Art © Art Spiegelman; Omaha © Reed Waller and Kate Worley; Krazy Kat © International Features Syndicate; The Thing, Wolverine and Spider-Man © Marvel Entertainment Group; Harvey Pekar © himself; Maggie © Jaime Hernandez; Astroboy © Osamu Tezuka; Cutler © WaRp Graphics; Leonardo © Mirage Licensing; R. Crumb © himself; Zippy © Bill Griffith; Arzach © Moebius; Wendel © Howard Cruse; Flaming Carrot © Bob Burden; Ricky © Kyle Baker; Ed © Chester Brown; Julie Doucet © herself; Amy © Mark Beyer; Concrete © Paul Chadwick; Pogo © Selby Kelly; Bitchy Bitch © Roberta Gregony; Piker © Mariscat; A. Mutt © McNaught Syndicate, Inc.; Mark Martin ©

himself; Carol Tyler © herself; Morty the Dog © Steve Wille.

Other Art © Sampai Shirato, Koike-Kojima, Mary Fleener, Matt Groening, Riyoko Ikeda, Joost Swarte, Harold H. Knerr, Albin Michel S. A., Dr. Seuss, O. Soglow, Jose Munoz and Krystine Krytre.

Page 12: To the Heart of the Storm © Will Eisner.

Page 24: The Original painting "The Treachery of Images" by Rene Magritte resides at The Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Our thanks to the museum for allowing us to include the image.

Page 30: As on page 4, plus Kermit © Henson Associates; Bugs Bunny © Warner Brothers; Bart © 20th Century Fox; Mrs. Potts © Walt Disney Productions; Jughead © Archie Comics; Casper © Harvey Comics; Beetle Bailey © King Features.

Page 45: Savage Dragon © Erik Larsen; Tumbleweeds © King Features; Gizmo © Michael Dooney; Jenny © Ivan Velez; Nancy © United Features Syndicate, Inc.; Shadow Hawk © Jim Valentino; Bob © Terry Laban; Portia Prinz © Richard Howell; Dr. Radium © Scott Saavedra; Spawn © Todd McFarlane; Mr. Monster © Michael T. Gilbert; Cutey Bunny © Joshua Quagmire; The Maximortal © Rick Veitch; Raphael © Mirage Licensing; Panda Khan © Monica Sharp and Dave Garcia.

Page 56: As on pages 4, 50 and 51 plus: Steve © Gilbert Hernandez; Art © Mary Fleener; Checkered Demon © S. Clay Wilson; Bear © Rory Hayes; Micky Rat © R. Armstrong; Art © Kim Deitch.

Page 83: AL HELD: *The Big N.* (My facsimile). The original is synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 9 3/8" x 9". Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Armand P. Bartos Fund.

Page 126: As on pages 4, 50 and 51 plus: Reed Richards and Cable © Marvel Entertainment Group; The Teen Titans © D.C. Comics; Tantrum © Jules Feiffer; and art © Munoz and Sampayo, Jooste Swarte, Art Spiegelman and Will Eisner.

Page 133: The Rose of Versailles © Riyoko Ikeda; other art © H. Sato and (?).

Page 199: Daredevil, Ghost Rider, The Punisher, X-Factor, The Amazing Spider-Man, Thor, X-Force, Wolverine, X-Men, Hulk and Iron Man © and tm Marvel Entertainment Group; Superman, Batman, Robin, Sandman and Lobo © and tm D.C. Comics; Aliens © and tm 20th Century Fox; Dark Horse Presents © Dark Horse Comics; Spawn © and tm Todd McFarlane; The Pitt © Dale Keown; Youngblood © and tm Rob Liefeld.

Page 201: As on pages 4, 50 and 51.

Page 206: Batman returns tm Warner Bros.; Linus © U.F.S., Inc.; Action Comics © and tm D.C. Comics; The Yellow Kid © Scripps-Howard Newspapers

Originals for Sale / Letters of Comment.

For information on original art, write to: Scott McCloud, Box 798, Amherst, MA 01004.

Letters of comment are appreciated (it seldom answered due to overwhelming commitments), but I would especially appreciate a public discussion of these issues in comics' trade journals, art magazines, computer nets and any other forum. This book is meant to stimulate debate, not settle it.

I've had my say.
Now, it's your turn.