

UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART



SCOTT McCLOUD

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

UNDERSTANDING COMICS



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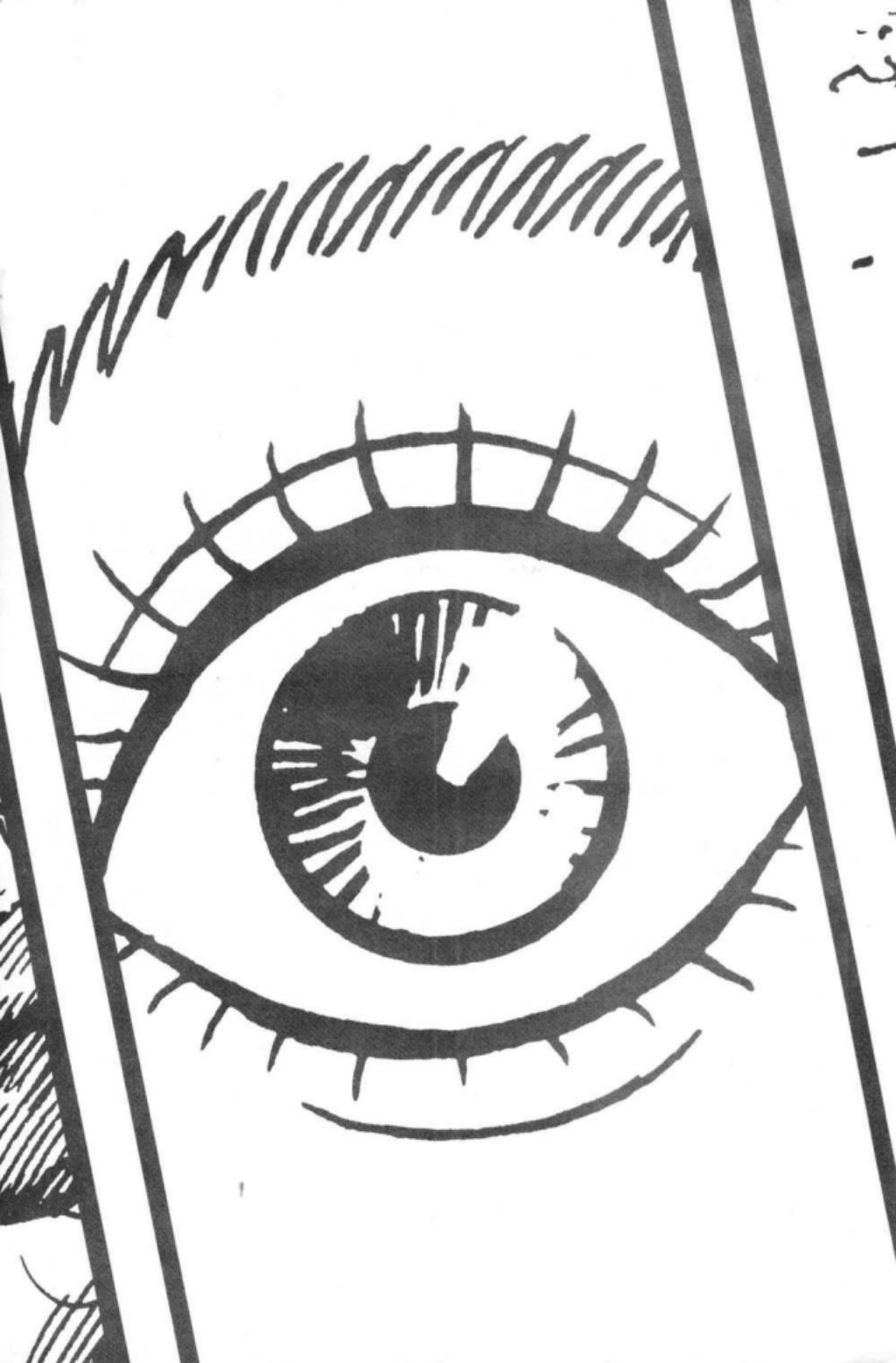
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The book you're about to read took 15 months to produce and many of the ideas it contains had been on the back-burner for over nine years, so acknowledging all of those who have helped in its development may be next to impossible. Furthermore, since 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.

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

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

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

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

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



Scott McCloud



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INTRODUCTION

MY OLD PAL MATT FEAZELL CALLED THE OTHER DAY.

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



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

YOU MEAN LIKE A HISTORY?



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



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



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



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



OH.

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



UNDERSTANDING COMICS

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.



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



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



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

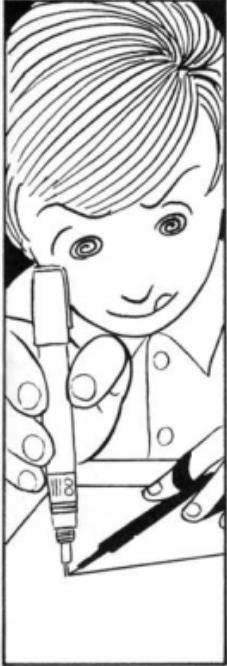


BUT WHEN I WAS IN 8TH GRADE, A
FRIEND OF MINE (WHO WAS A LOT
SMARTER THAN I WAS) CONVINCED
ME TO GIVE COMICS ANOTHER LOOK
AND LENT ME HIS COLLECTION.

SOON, I WAS **HOOKED!**



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



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



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

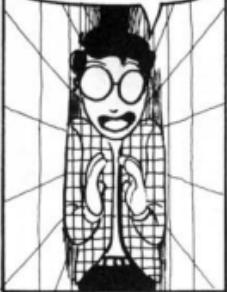


--BUT--

THEY
DON'T
HAVE
TO
BE!



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!



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

COMIC HA!
BOOKS? HA!
HA!



BUT IT--
BUT IT'S--
BUH...

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

DON'T GIMME THAT
COMIC BOOK TALK,
BARNEY!



THIS IS
WHERE OUR
JOURNEY
BEGINS.





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



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

WE CAN ALL VISUALIZE A COMIC.



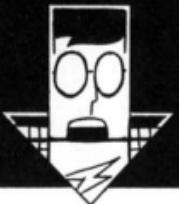
BUT WHAT--
--IS--
--COMICS?



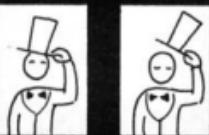
MASTER COMICS ARTIST WILL EISNER USES THE TERM **SEQUENTIAL ART** WHEN DESCRIBING COMICS.

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

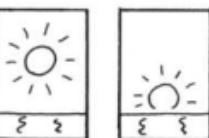
TAKEN INDIVIDUALLY, THE PICTURES BELOW ARE MERELY THAT--PICTURES.



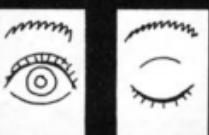
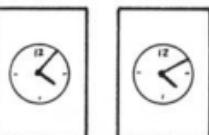
NOTICE THAT THIS DEFINITION IS STRICTLY NEUTRAL ON MATTERS OF STYLE, QUALITY OR SUBJECT MATTER.



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



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



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



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



=GLUG=
=GLUG=



--FOR THE MESSENGER.



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



BUT FOR COMICS, THIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN RARE.*

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



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

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

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

ANY IDEAS?

SEQUENTIAL ART

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

OKAY.

SEQUENTIAL ART

HOW'S THIS?

SEQUENTIAL VISUAL ART

HEY, WHAT ABOUT ANIMATION?!

BEG PARDON?

ISN'T ANIMATED FILM JUST VISUAL ART IN SEQUENCE?

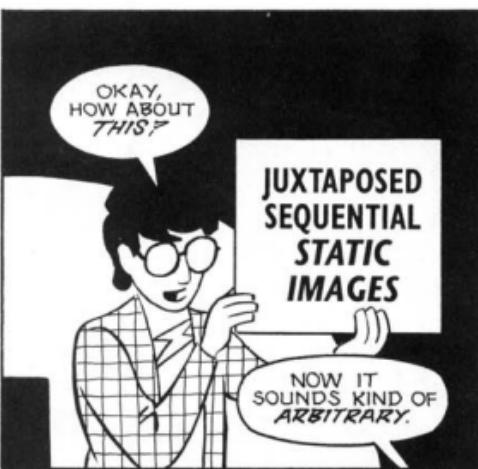
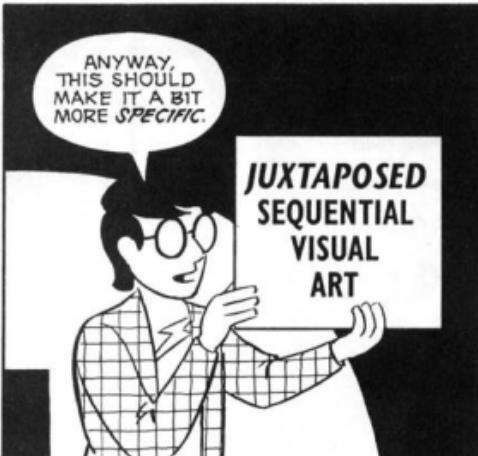
HMM... GOOD POINT.

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

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

SPACE DOES FOR COMICS WHAT TIME DOES FOR FILM!

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



OKAY,
HOW
DOES
THIS
SOUND?

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

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

JUXTAPOSED
PICTORIAL
AND OTHER
IMAGES IN
DELIBERATE
SEQUENCE

WHO LET
HIM IN?

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

R
A
I
D
S

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

tap
tap
tap
tap

THERE!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SEQUENTIAL
ART**

1880 1890 1900 1910

1500

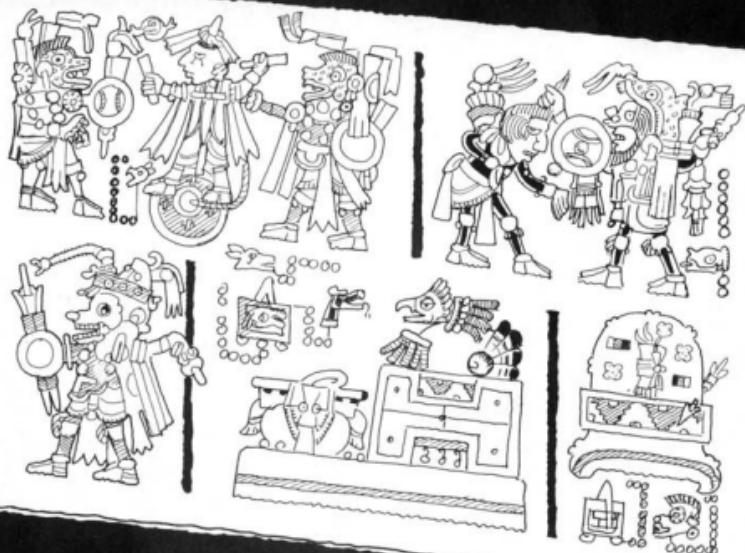
1600

1700

1800

1900

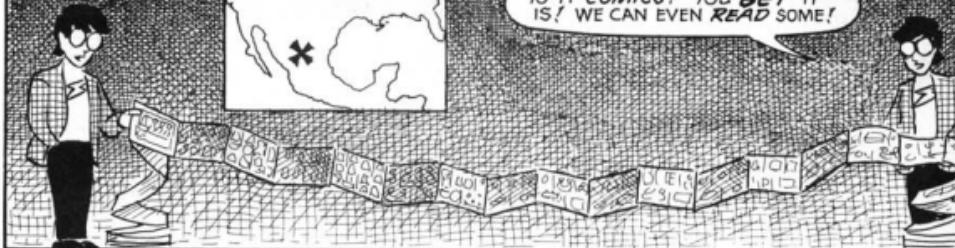
ACTUALLY,
A LOT
FARTHER!



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

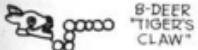
THIS 36-FOOT LONG,
BRIGHTLY-COLORED, PAINTED
SCREENFOLD TELLS OF THE GREAT
MILITARY AND POLITICAL HERO
8-DEER "TIGER'S-CLAW."**

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



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

FIRST, WE SEPARATE WORDS FROM PICTURES.



(A NAME)



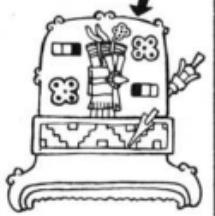
(A DATE)



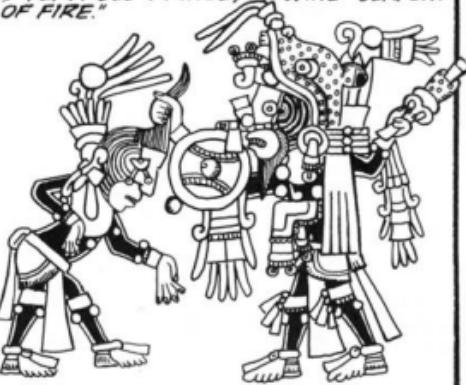
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

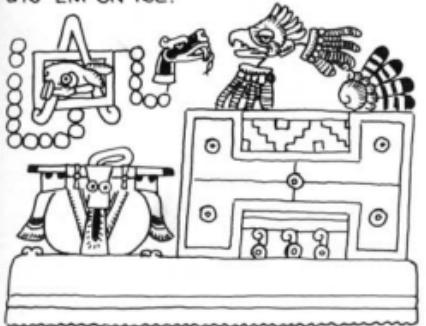
THE YEAR: 1049 AD
THE DATE: MAY 3rd
THE PLACE: HERE!



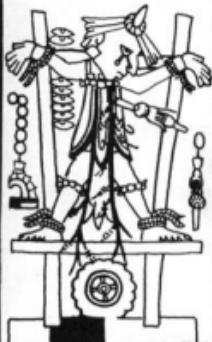
OUR HERO, 8-DEER "TIGER'S CLAW" CONQUERS THE PLACE AND CAPTURES THE 9-YEAR-OLD PRINCE, 4-WIND "SERPENT OF FIRE."



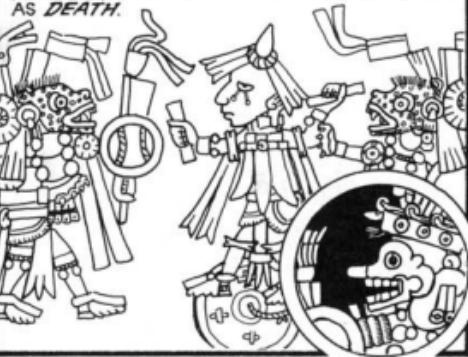
8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING" AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND PUTS 'EM ON ICE.



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



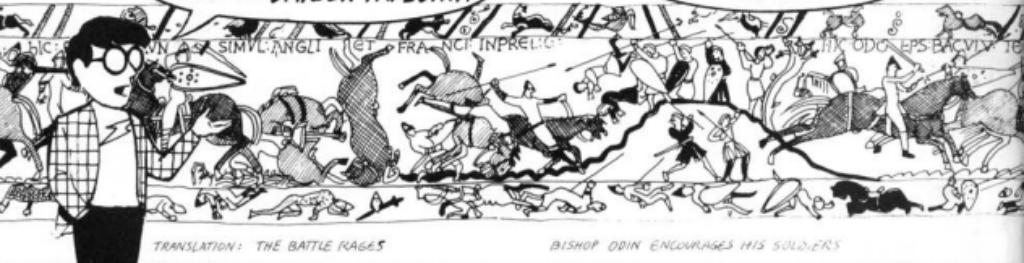
THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 8-DEER AND (PROBABLY) HIS BROTHER, DISGUISED AS TIGERS, ENGAGE IN SACRIFICIAL GLADIATORIAL COMBAT WITH THE PRINCE, 10-DOG, AND ANOTHER WARRIOR DISGUISED AS DEATH.



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

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

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



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

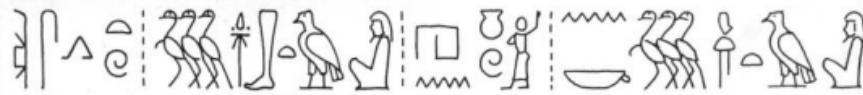
PERENNIAL EXCEPTION WILL FISHER.

WHICH
ONE IS THE
PRINCE?



FINDING
COMICS BEYOND
OUR OWN
MILLENNIUM
IS A BIT
TRICKIER.

0100 1100 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."

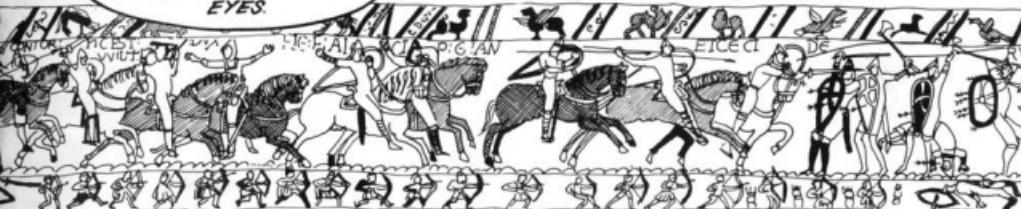
I'M
USING IT
TO INDICATE
AT LEAST SOME
RESEMBLANCE
TO THE SUBJECT.
BUT THESE GLYPHS
REPRESENT ONLY
SOUNDS, NOT
UNLIKE OUR
ALPHABET.

 = "baiu"

 = "nek"

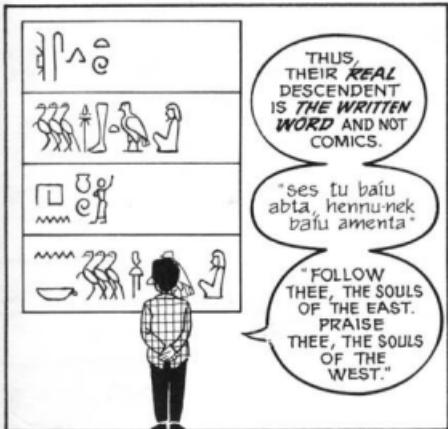
READING LEFT TO RIGHT
WE SEE THE EVENTS OF THE CONQUEST, IN DELIBERATE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER UNFOLD BEFORE OUR VERY EYES.

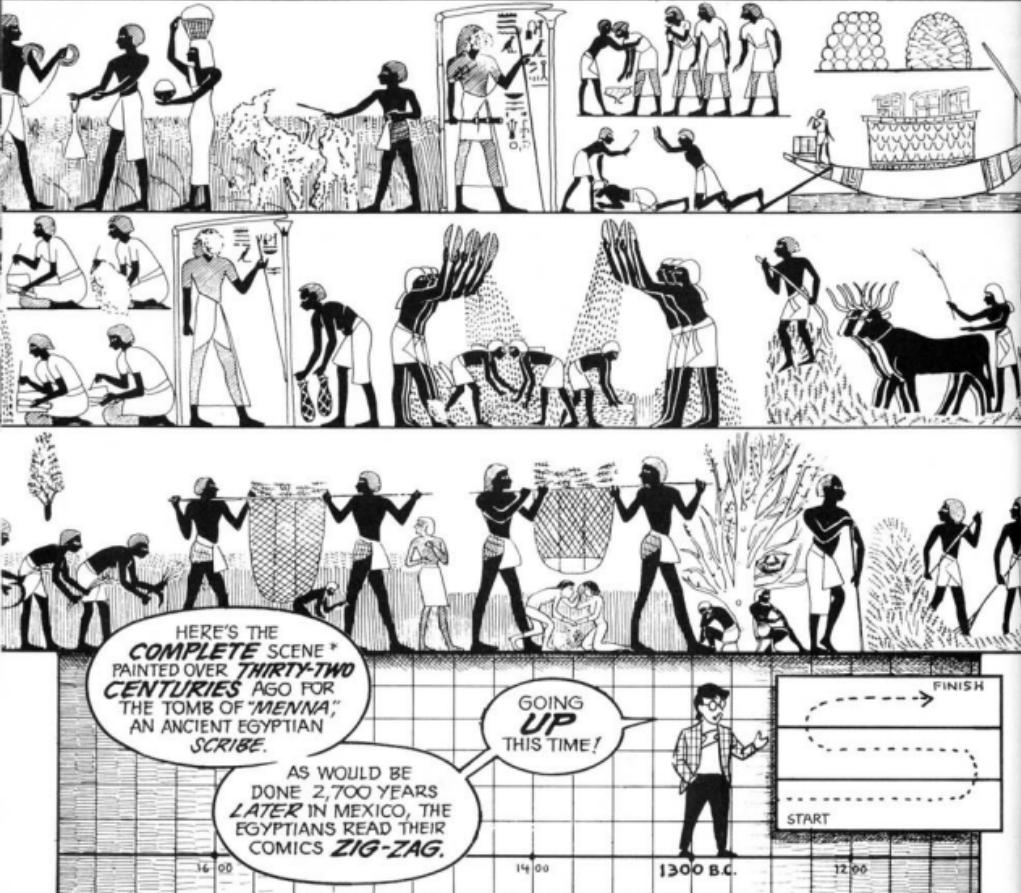
AS WITH THE MEXICAN CODEX, THERE ARE NO PANEL BORDERS PER SE, BUT THERE ARE CLEAR DIVISIONS OF SCENE BY SUBJECT MATTER.



DUKE WILLIAM REMOVES HIS HELMET TO RALLY HIS SOLDIERS

HAROLD'S ARMY IS CUT TO PIECES





* MORE NEARLY COMPLETE, ANYWAY

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



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



PAINTING TRACED FOR BLACK
AND WHITE REPRODUCTION.

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



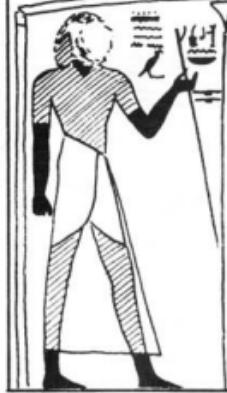
THEN OXEN TREAD
KERNELS OUT OF
THE HUSKS.



NEXT, PEASANTS
SEPARATE THE WHEAT
FROM THE CHAFF.



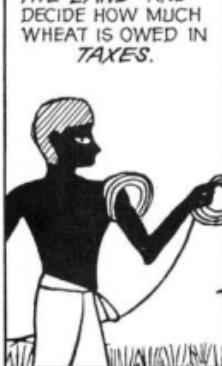
OLD MENNA HIMSELF
LOOKS ON--*



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



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



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



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



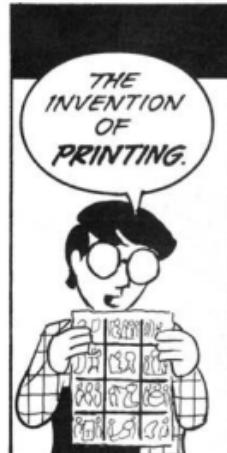
I'VE ONLY SCRATCHED
THE SURFACE IN
THIS CHAPTER...
TRAJAN'S COLUMN,
GREEK PAINTING,
JAPANESE SCROLLS...
ALL THESE HAVE BEEN
SUGGESTED AND ALL
SHOULD BE EXPLORED.



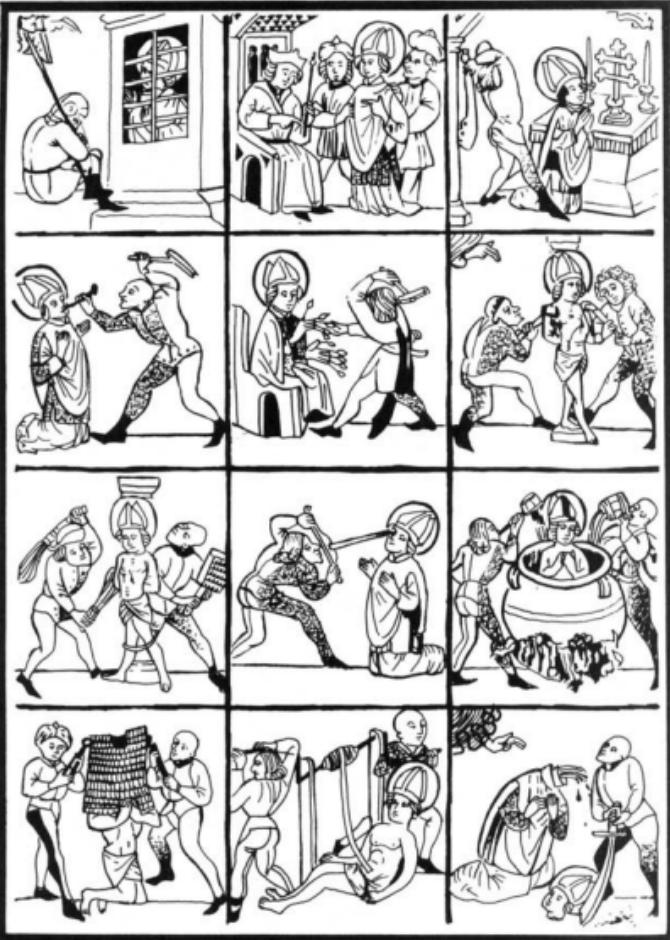
BUT
THERE IS
ONE EVENT WHICH
LOOMS AS LARGE
IN COMICS HISTORY
AS IT DOES IN THE
HISTORY OF THE
WRITTEN WORD.



THE
INVENTION
OF
PRINTING.



* FACE GOUGED OUT BY FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LEADERS



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



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



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

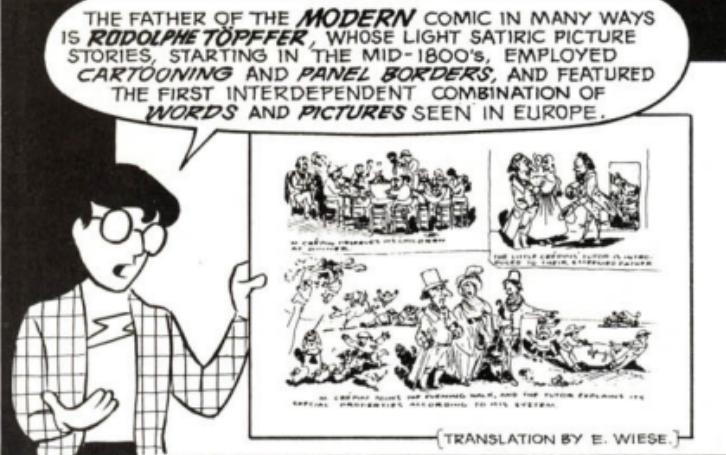
BOTH THE PAINTINGS AND
ENGRAVINGS WERE DESIGNED
TO BE VIEWED SIDE-BY-SIDE
--IN SEQUENCE!



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



THE FATHER OF THE *MODERN* COMIC IN MANY WAYS IS *RODOLPHE 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,
TÖPFFER HIMSELF
FAILED TO GRASP
AT FIRST THE FULL
POTENTIAL OF HIS
INVENTION, SEEING
IT AS A MERE DIVERSION,
A SIMPLE HOBBY...



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

-Goethe



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

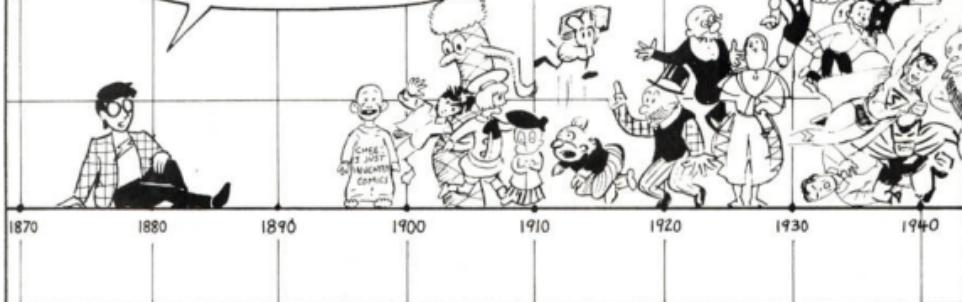


-- HAD CREATED AND
MASTERED A FORM
WHICH WAS AT ONCE
BOTH AND NEITHER



A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.

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



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

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.

JUXTAPOSED
PICTORIAL
AND OTHER
IMAGES IN
DELIBERATE
SEQUENCE

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.

FROM WARD'S *GOD'S MAN*, 1929



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

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



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

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



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

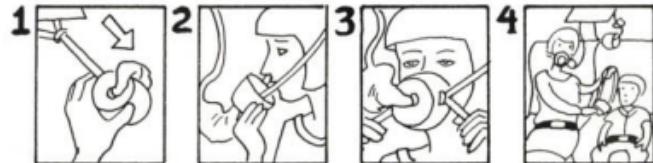
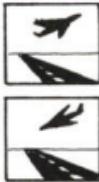
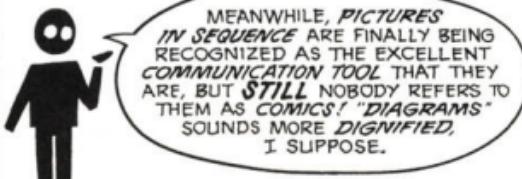
YET, DESPITE THE LACK OF A CONVENTIONAL STORY, THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE CENTRAL ROLE WHICH SEQUENCE PLAYS IN THE WORK. ERNST DOESN'T WANT YOU TO BROWSE THE THING, HE WANTS YOU TO READ IT!



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

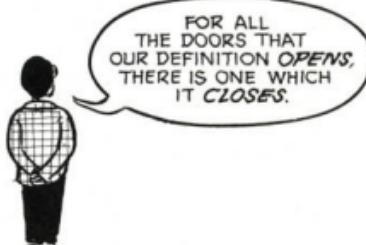


IN SOME COUNTRIES,
PHOTO-COMICS ARE, IN
FACT, QUITE POPULAR.



THANKS TO MARTY REEDZELL FOR THE STAINED GLASS

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



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



"Mommy, why ain't I
juxtaposed?"

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,
BOGEY.

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.



MORE ON
THIS LATER.

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



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



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



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

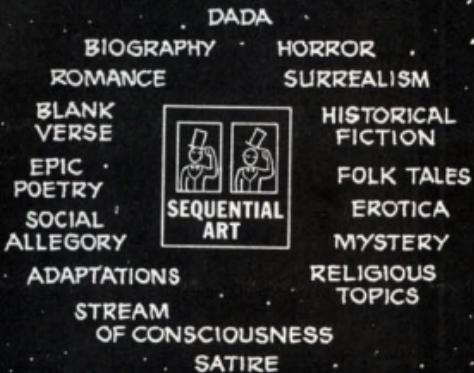


BUT OUR
DEFINITION
CAN OFFER US
SOME CLUES.

1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040

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





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



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

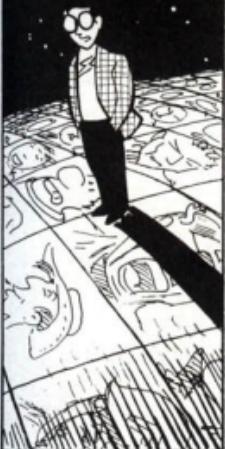


THOSE OF YOU WHO
MAKE COMICS FOR
A LIVING -- OR
WOULD LIKE TO,
SOMEDAY -- PROBABLY
KNOW THAT KEEPING
UP WITH ALL THE
ADVANCES IN
TODAY'S COMICS IS
A **FULL-TIME**
JOB.

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

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

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



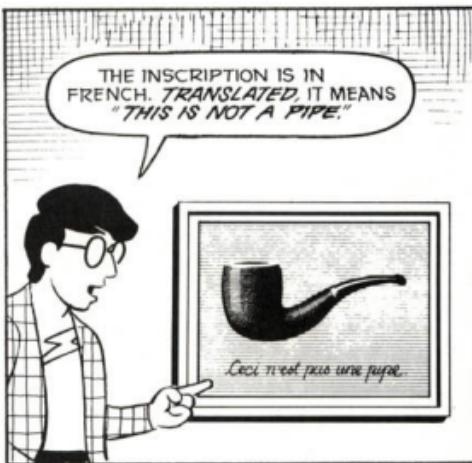
OUR
ATTEMPTS TO
DEFINE
COMICS ARE AN
ON-GOING
PROCESS
WHICH WON'T
END ANYTIME
SOON.

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



CHAPTER TWO

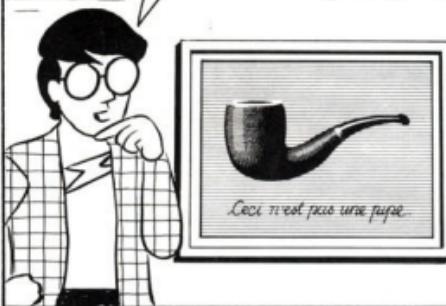
THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



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



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



TEN
COPIES,
ACTUALLY.

SIX, IF YOU
FOLD THE PAGES
BACK.



DO YOU
HEAR WHAT I'M
SAYING?

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





THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



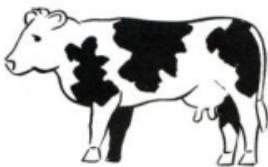
THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT
A LEAF



THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE.



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.

SPLAT!

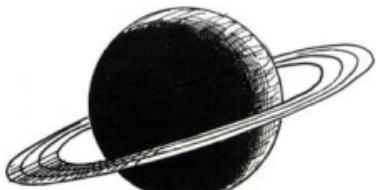
THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



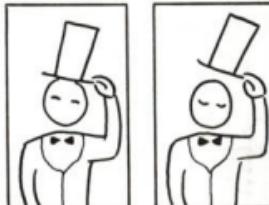
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



THIS IS NOT A
COMPANY.



THIS IS NOT A
FACE.



THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE
MOMENTS.

NOW, THE WORD
ICON MEANS
MANY THINGS.

THIS
IS
PAPER



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

ICON

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

"SYMBOL" IS A
BIT TOO LOADED
FOR ME.



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



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



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

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

ICONS
OF THE
PRACTICAL
REALM.



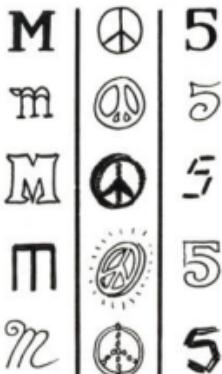
AND FINALLY, THE ICONS WE CALL PICTURES:
IMAGES DESIGNED TO ACTUALLY RESEMBLE
THEIR SUBJECTS.



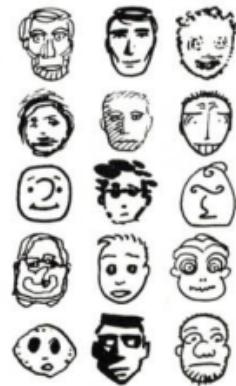
BUT
AS RESEMBLANCE
VARIES, SO DOES THE
LEVEL OF ICONIC
CONTENT.

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

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



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



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



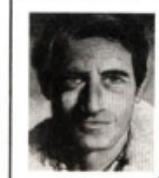
BUT IN PICTURES THE LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION VARIES. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE PREVIOUS PANEL SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS AS TO ALMOST TRICK THE EYE!



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



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

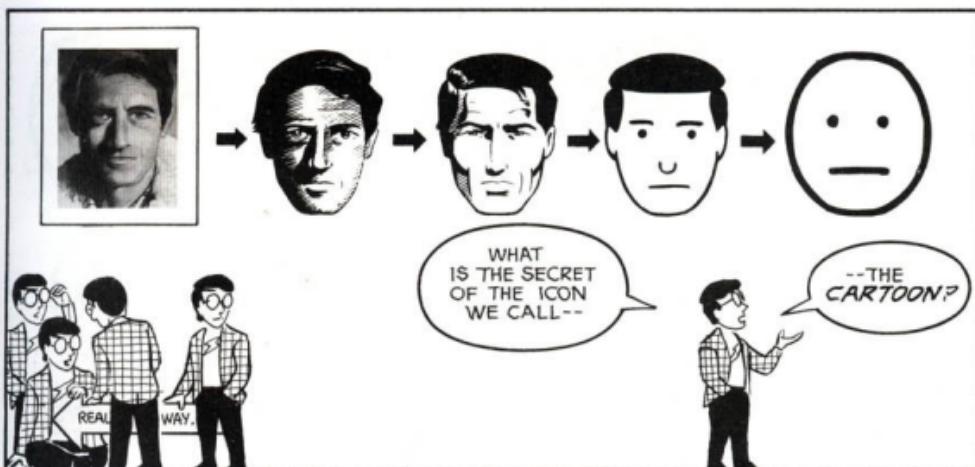
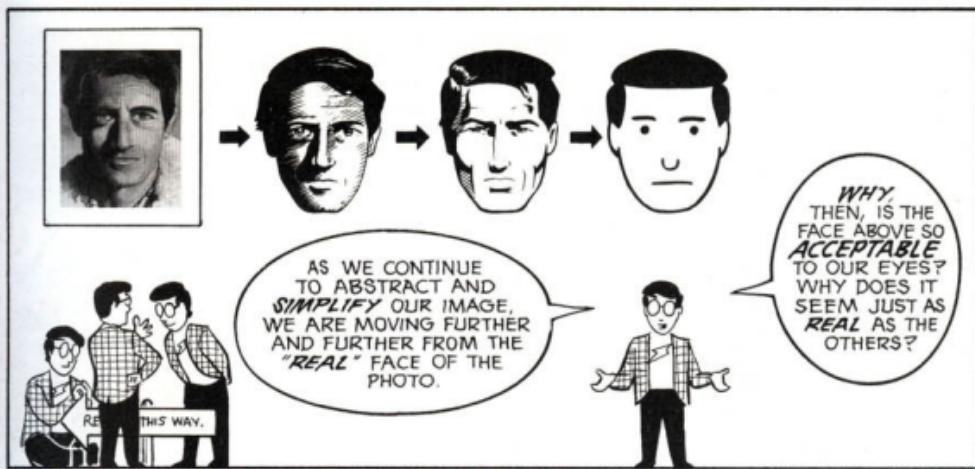
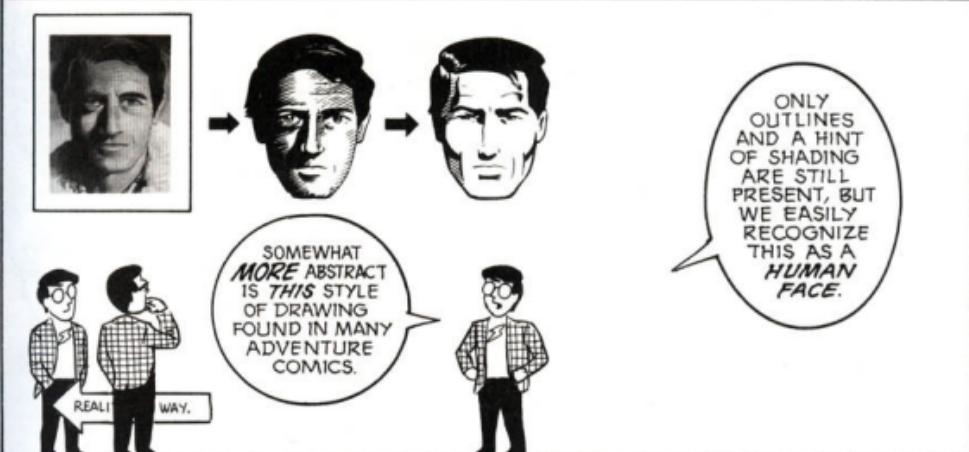


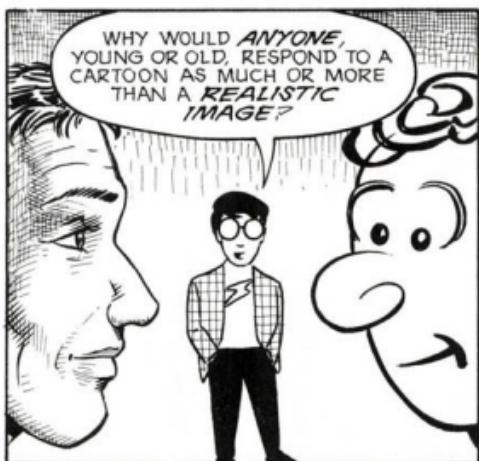
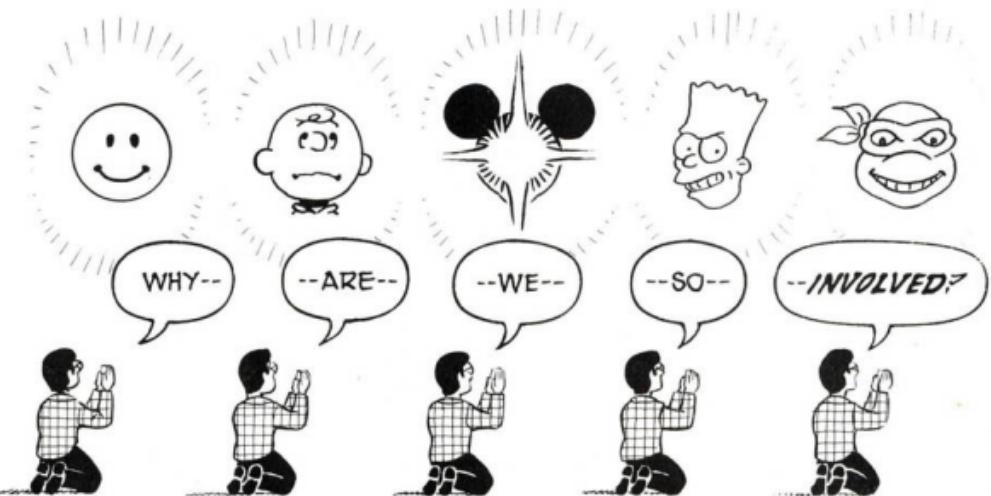
THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM ACTUAL FACES--THEY'RE SMALLER, FLATTER, LESS DETAILED. THEY DON'T MOVE. THEY LACK COLOR--BUT AS PICTORIAL ICONS GO, THEY ARE PRETTY "REALISTIC."



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







SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

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



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

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



WHAT

ARE YOU



REALLY

SEEING?

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

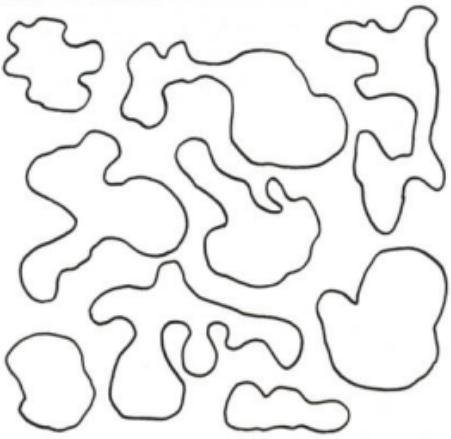


BUT STILL **MORE** INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT **AVOID** SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T **LET** YOU!



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

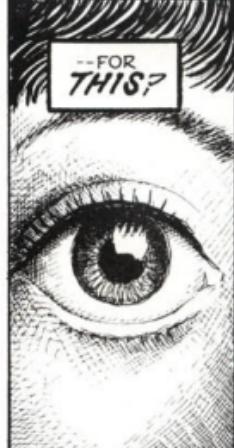
LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS.



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



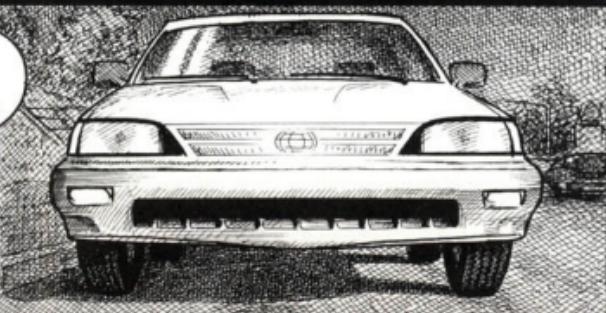
YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE THIS--



WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



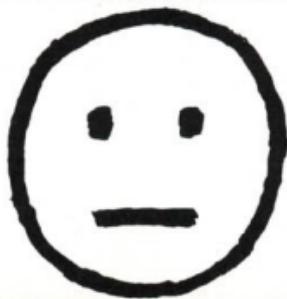
WE SEE
OURSELVES
IN
EVERYTHING.



WE
ASSIGN
IDENTITIES
AND EMOTIONS
WHERE NONE
EXIST.



AND WE
MAKE THE
WORLD OVER
IN OUR
IMAGE.





THINK
OF YOUR
FACE AS A
MASK.



THAT'S
WHAT IT IS,
AFTER ALL.



A MASK.



FACING
OUTWARD.



WORN FROM
THE DAY YOU
WERE BORN.



SLAVE TO
YOUR EVERY
MENTAL
COMMAND.



SEEN BY
EVERYONE
YOU MEET.



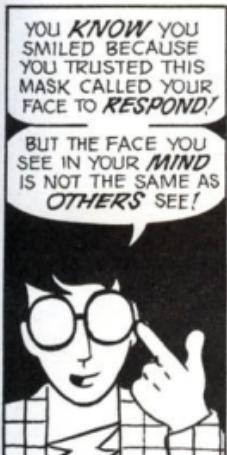
BUT
NEVER
BY YOU.



OPEN
ITS EYES
NOW.



JUST
THINK IT.
THE MASK
WILL
OBEY.



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

SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AND AS BASIC--



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



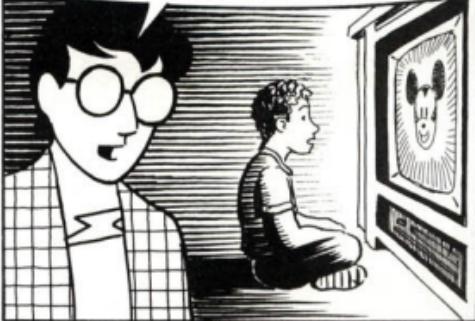
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF ANOTHER.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE CARTOON--

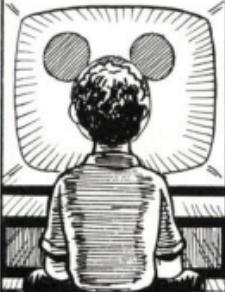


--YOU SEE YOURSELF.

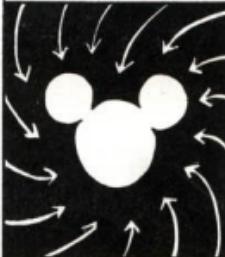
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH CARTOONS, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY AND THE CHILDLIKE FEATURES OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



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



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



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

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



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



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

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

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

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

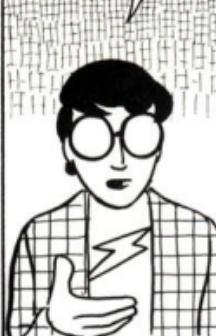


YOU GIVE ME LIFE
BY READING THIS
BOOK AND BY
"FILLING UP"
THIS VERY ICONIC
(CARTOONY) FORM.

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

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

THAT'S
THE THEORY,
ANYWAY.



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

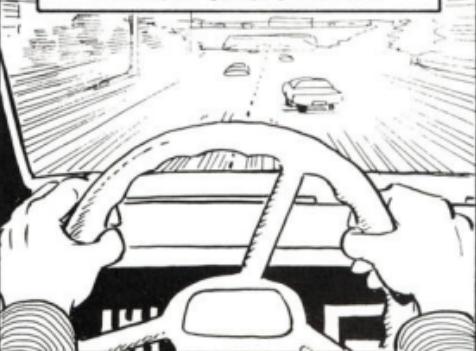
THERE'S
MORE,
TOO!



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



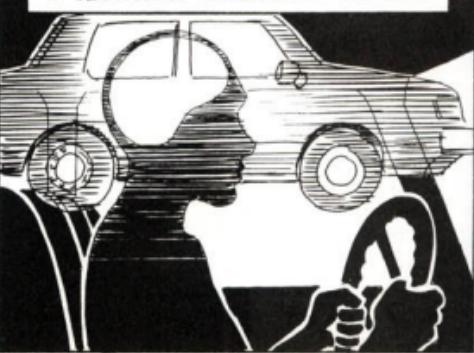
WHEN DRIVING, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR FIVE SENSES REPORT.



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



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



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



THAN "HE HIT MY CAR!"

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

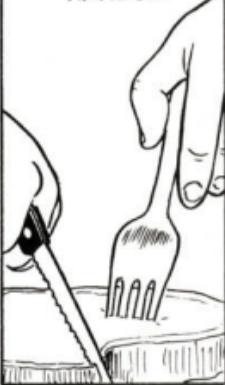
OUR IDENTITIES AND AWARENESS ARE INVESTED IN MANY INANIMATE OBJECTS EVERY DAY. OUR CLOTHES, FOR EXAMPLE, CAN TRIGGER NUMEROUS TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE WAY OTHERS SEE US AND IN THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES.



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



PIECES OF METAL
TO BECOME
HANDS...



PIECES OF PLASTIC
TO BECOME
EARS...



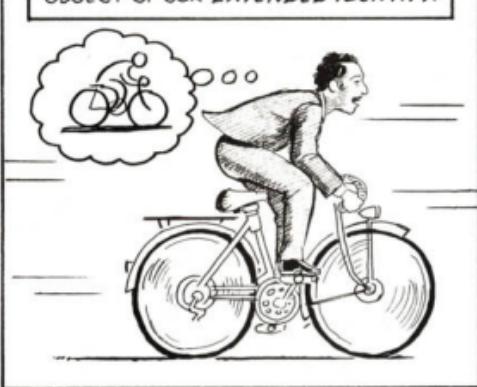
PIECES
OF GLASS
TO BECOME
EYES.



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



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



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



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



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

-- AND
THE REALM
OF THE
SENSES.



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



GRADUALLY WE REACH BEYOND OURSELVES.



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



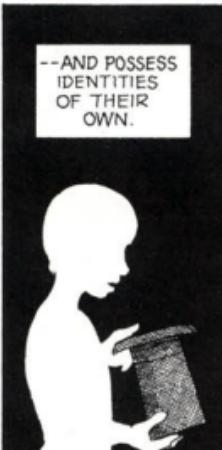
AND OF THE WORLD AROUND US.



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



--AND POSSESS IDENTITIES OF THEIR OWN.



OR, AS OUR EXTENSIONS--



--BEGIN TO GLOW--



--WITH THE LIFE--



--WE LEND
TO THEM.



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



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



--AND THROUGH
THE CARTOON,
THE WORLD
WITHIN.



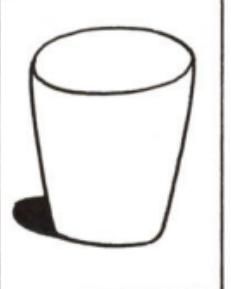
WHEN
CARTOONS
ARE USED
THROUGHOUT
A STORY, THE
WORLD OF
THAT STORY
MAY SEEM TO
PULSE WITH
LIFE.



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



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



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



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



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



--ARE A FAR CRY FROM PHOTO-REALISTS!

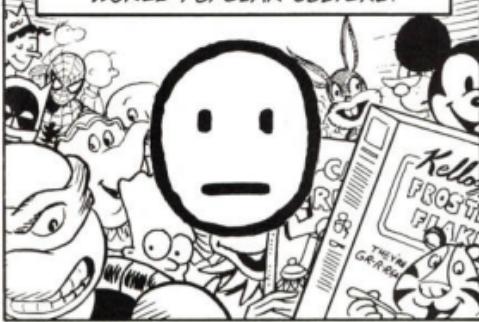


STORYTELLERS IN ALL MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT--

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



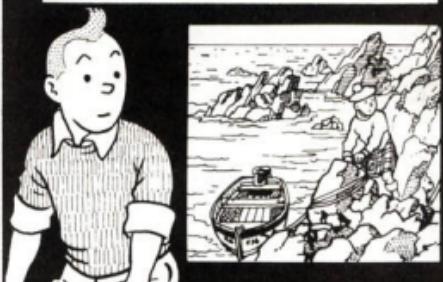
AND SINCE VIEWER-IDENTIFICATION IS A SPECIALTY OF CARTOONING, CARTOONS HAVE HISTORICALLY HELD AN ADVANTAGE IN BREAKING INTO WORLD POPULAR CULTURE.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



CEREBUS © DAVE SIM.

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



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



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



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



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



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



BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



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



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

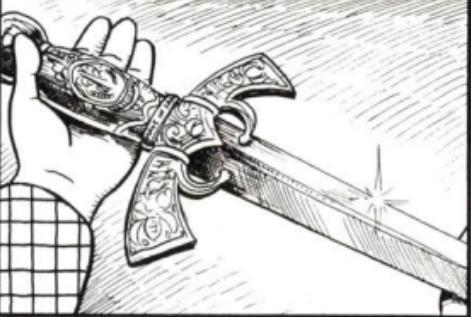


--DUE TO THE "LIFE" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY CARTOON IDENTITY!



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

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



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



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

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

MANY OF MY FAVORITE ARTISTS USE IT VERY RARELY.

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

SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



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



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



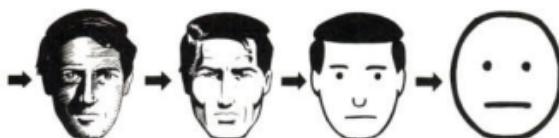
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.

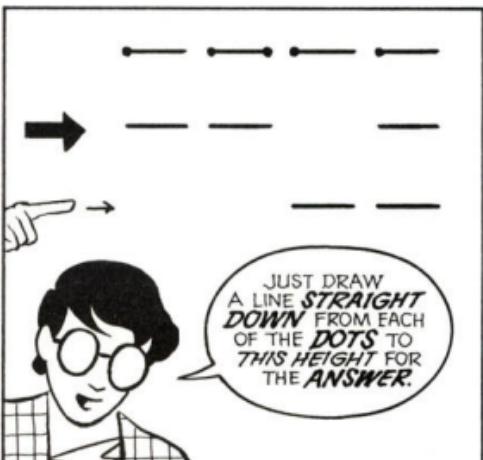
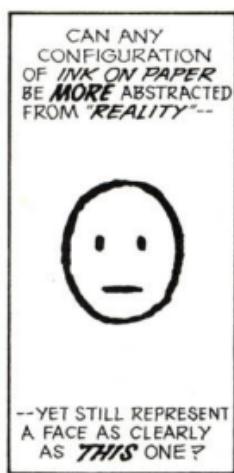
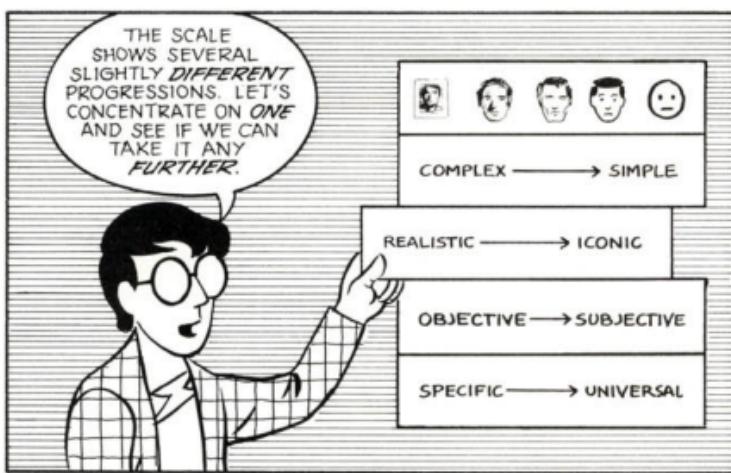
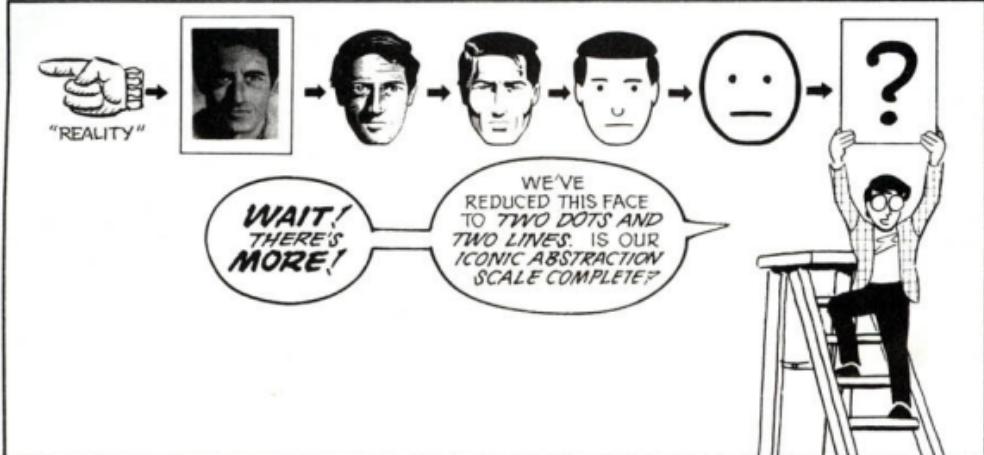


AND LIKE THE ATOM, GREAT POWER IS LOCKED IN THESE FEW SIMPLE LINES.



RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.





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

MEANING RETAINED.

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

RESEMBLANCE GONE.



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

WORDS--

--ARE THE ULTIMATE ABSTRACTION.

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

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

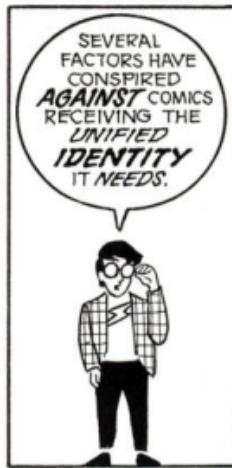


WRITING AND DRAWING ARE SEEN AS SEPARATE DISCIPLINES, WRITERS AND ARTISTS AS SEPARATE BREEDS--

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



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



A SINGLE UNIFIED LANGUAGE DESERVES A SINGLE, UNIFIED VOCABULARY.

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



AND AMONG THEM LIE SOME OF OUR VERY BEST INSTINCTS.

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



FACE

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



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



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



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



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

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



FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

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

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



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



RECEIVED . . .

FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

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

PERCEIVED

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



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

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



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



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

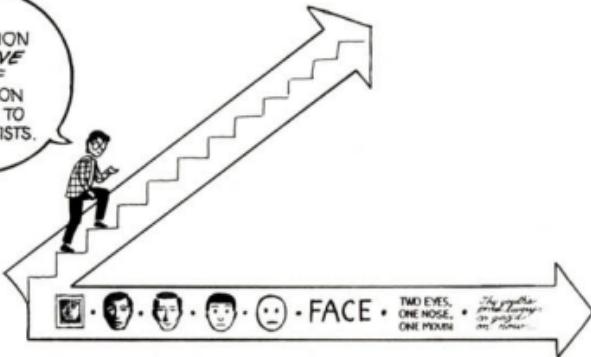
CAN THEY BE
RECONCILED?



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



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



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



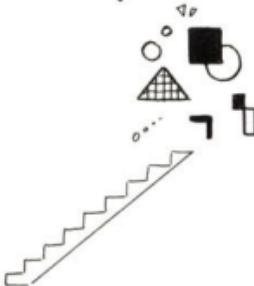
THE TYPE OF
ART WHICH OFTEN
PROMPTS THE QUESTION:
"WHAT DOES IT
MEAN?"



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

IN
THIS
CASE--

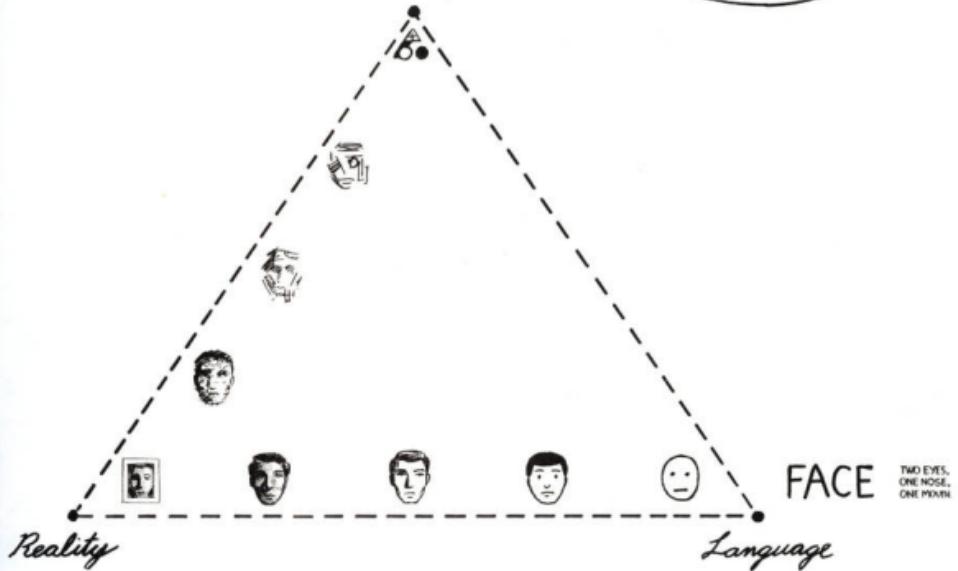
--INK
ON
PAPER.



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

The Picture Plane

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



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

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



WATCH THAT NOSE!



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



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



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

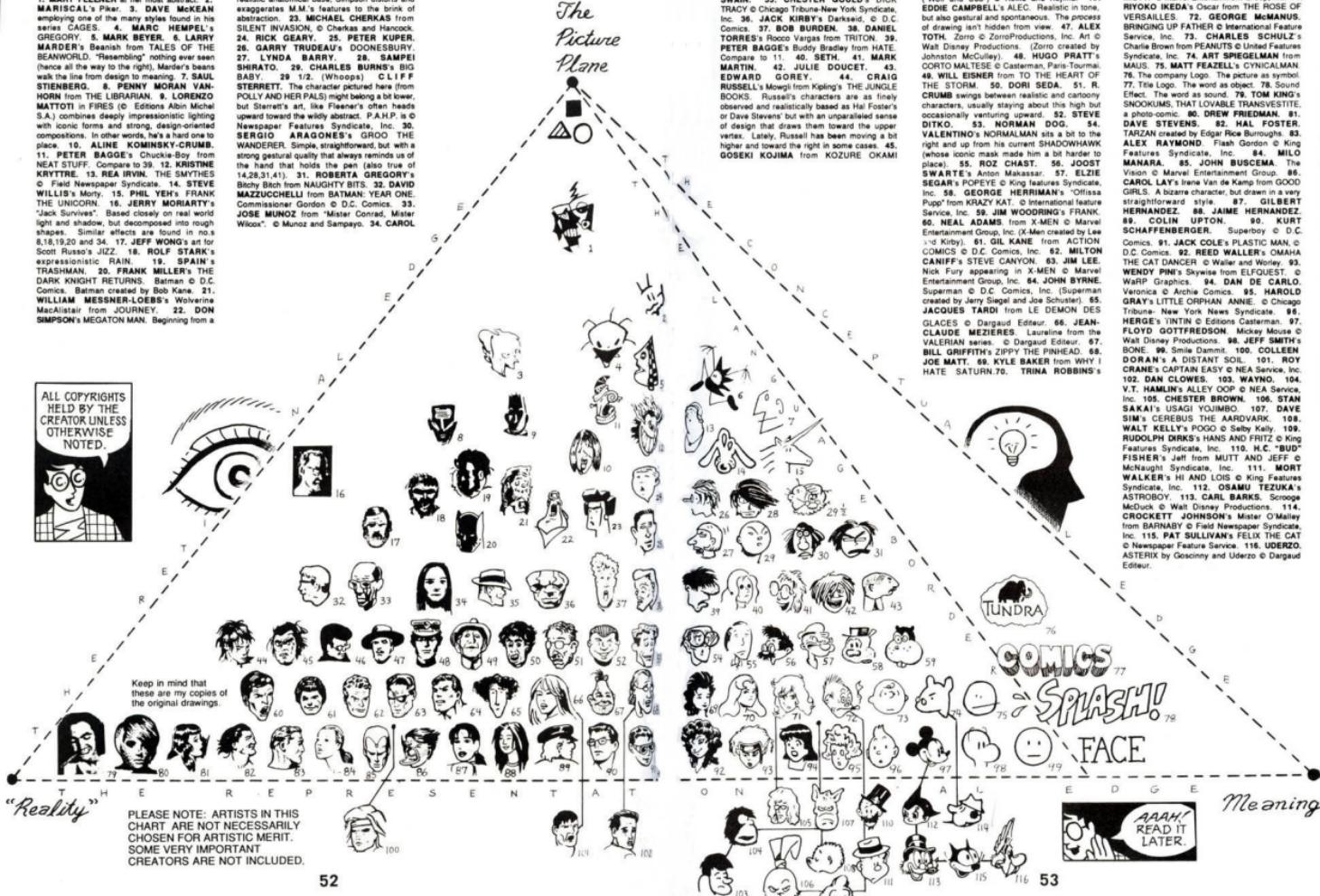
ALL COPYRIGHTS HELD BY THE CREATOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.



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

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

The Picture Plane



SWAIN. 35. CHESTER GOULD'S DICK TRACY © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate, Inc. 36. JACK KIRBY's Darkseed. © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's Roico Vargas from TRITON. 39. ERIC BAGGIE's Bullock Bayou. 40. LE COMPAGNIE. 40 1/2. SETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCET. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's Mouth from KELING's THE JUNGLE. 45. RICHARD STURGEON's art is finely observed and realistically based as Hal Foster's or Dave Stevens' but with an unparalleled sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Lateley, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 46. GOSEKI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI (Will and Cub). © Kojima and Kojima. 46. EDDIE CAMPBELL's ALEC. Realistic in tone, but also gestural and spontaneous. The process of drawing isn't hidden from view. 47. ALEX TOTH. Zombi © Zorro Productions, Inc. © Art © Zorro. 48. DUSTY PERIN's PEPPER © Pepper Syndicate, Inc. 49. ART SPEIGELMAN from MAUS. 55. MATT FEATZELL's CYNICALMAN. 76. The company Logo. The picture as symbol. 77. JOHN KELLY's LOGO. The Heart of the Picture Plane. 78. RICHARD CRUMB's swing between realistic and cartoonish characters, usually staying about this high but occasionally venturing upward. 52. STEVE DITKO. 53. NORAH DOOG. 54. ALFALINNING's NORN. 55. A bit lower and up from his current SHADOWERHOG (whose iconic mask made him a bit harder to place). 55. ROX CHAST. 56. JOOST SWARTZEL. Antje Makasari. 57. ELZIE COLEMAN's Popeye. 58. RON GORDON-SMITH, Inc. 58. GEORGE HERMAN's "Offiss Pupp" from KRAYZ KAT. © International feature Service, Inc. 59. JIM WOODRING's FRANK. 60. NEAL ADAMS from METAL MEN. 61. MICHAEL TURNER's X-MEN (created by Lee and Kirby). 61. GIL KANE from ACTION COMICS © D.C. Comics, Inc. 62. MILTON CANIFF's TIGER CANYON. 63. RON LEE. Rick Fay appears in KILLER KOMIC © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics, Inc. (Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster). 65. JACQUES TARDY. LE DEMON DES GOUTTES. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES. Laurine from the VALERIAN series. © Dargaud Editeur. 67. BILL GRIFFITH'S ZIPPY THE PINHEAD. 68. JOE MATT. 69. KYLE BAKER from WHY I HATE SATURN. 70. TRINA ROBBINS' TUNDRA.

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

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

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



THE AMAZING CYNICALMAN IN JUST SAY NO CARTOONS



No...
MICROWAVE ME NOW!

No...
WINE
NO, NO, NO,
NO, NO, NO,

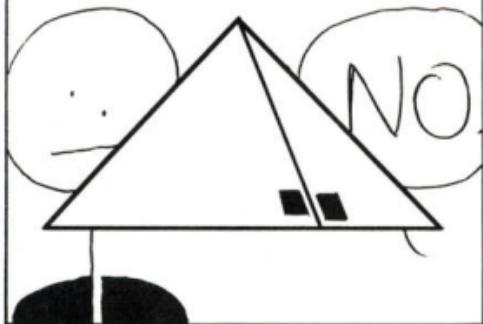
WINE
NO, NO, NO,
NO, NO, NO,

NO...
WINE
NO, NO, NO,
NO, NO, NO,

NO...
WINE
NO, NO, NO,
NO, NO, NO,

WELL, MAYBE
TINA

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



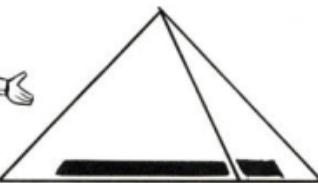
BUT OTHERS RANGE CONSIDERABLY FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER



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



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



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

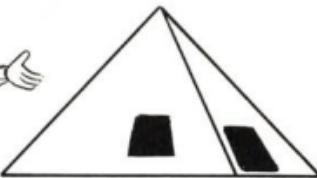


ART © MARY FLEENER.

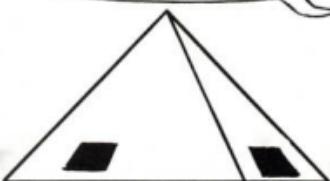


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

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



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



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

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

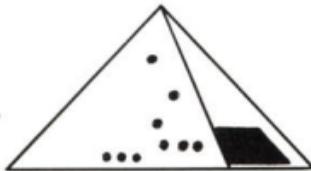


ART: JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS (FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: CHRIS CLAREMONT.

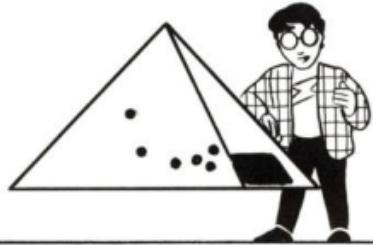
ART FROM COLOR PANELS TRACED FOR REPRODUCTION.
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IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES,
MOST OF THE COUNTERCULTURE OF
INDEPENDENT CREATORS, WORKING MOSTLY
IN BLACK AND WHITE, STAYED TO THE **RIGHT**
OF MAINSTREAM COMICS ART WHILE
COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF
WRITING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



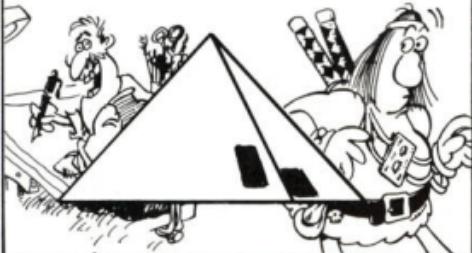
THIS FOLLOWS THE LEAD OF
THE POST-KURTZMAN GENERATION
OF **UNDERGROUND** CARTOONISTS WHO
USED CARTOONY STYLES TO PORTRAY
ADULT THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER.



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



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



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



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



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



THOSE AT THE TOP BY THE BEAUTY OF ART.



AND THOSE ON THE RIGHT BY THE BEAUTY OF IDEAS.



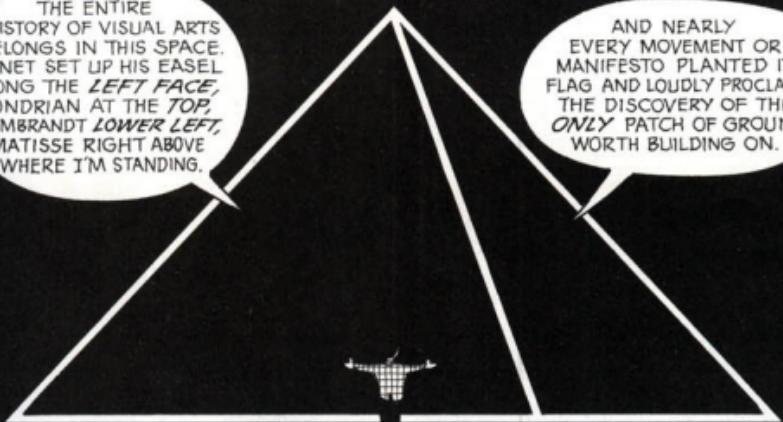
FOR COMICS TO MATURE AS A MEDIUM, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S INNERMOST NEEDS AND IDEAS.

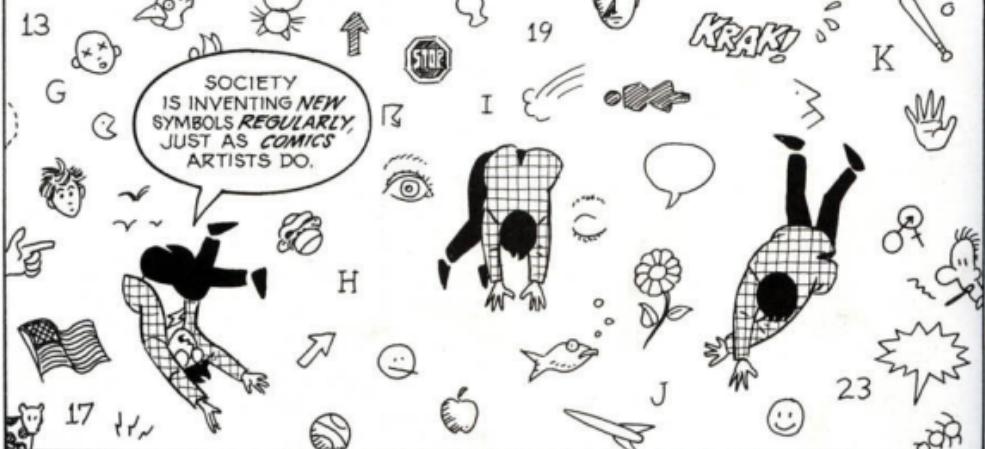


BUT EACH ARTIST HAS DIFFERENT INNER NEEDS, DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW, DIFFERENT PASSIONS, AND SO NEEDS TO FIND DIFFERENT FORMS OF EXPRESSION.*

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

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





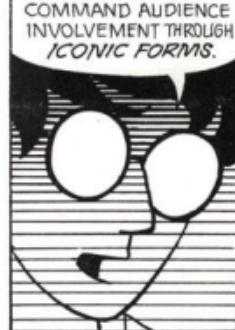
ICONS
DEMAND OUR
PARTICIPATION
TO MAKE THEM
WORK.

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

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

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

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



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

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

THE FATE
OF THE
OTHER ONE,
COMICS--

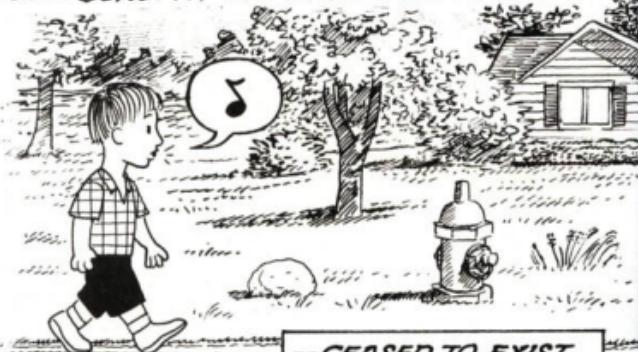


-- IS
ANYONE'S
GUESS.

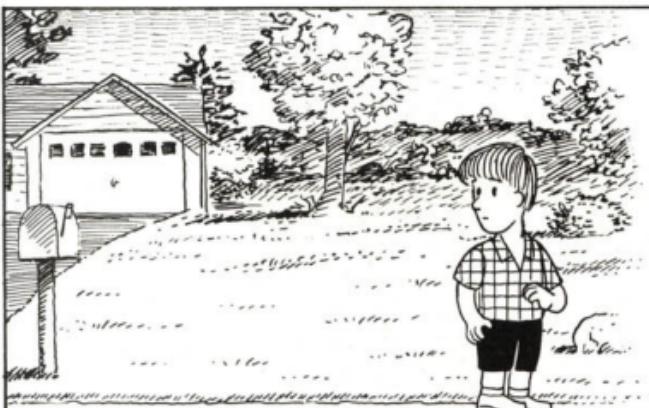
CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

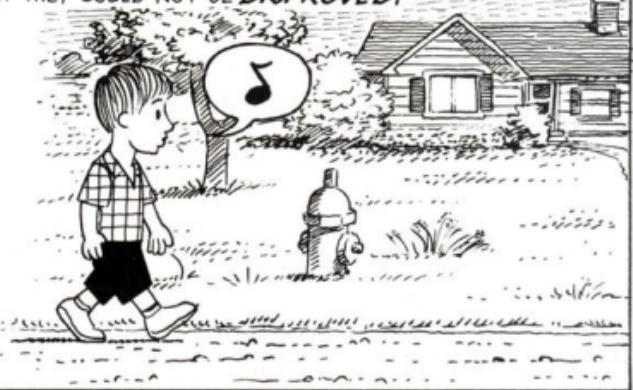
WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, I HAD A RECURRENT *DAYDREAM* THAT THE *WHOLE WORLD* WAS JUST A *SHOW* PUT ON FOR MY *BENEFIT*, THAT UNLESS I WAS PRESENT TO *SEE* THINGS, THEY JUST--



CEASED TO EXIST.



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



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



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



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



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



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



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NOT!



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

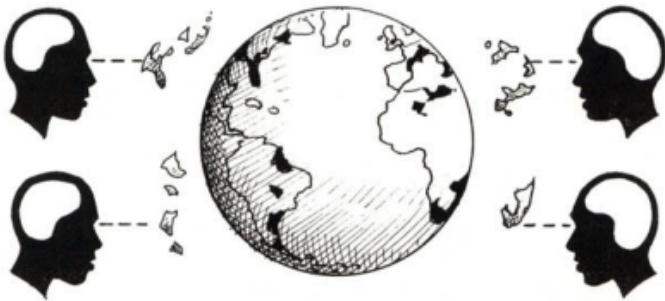
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A **WHOLE** THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR **SENSES**.

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



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

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



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

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



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

IT'S CALLED
CLOSURE.



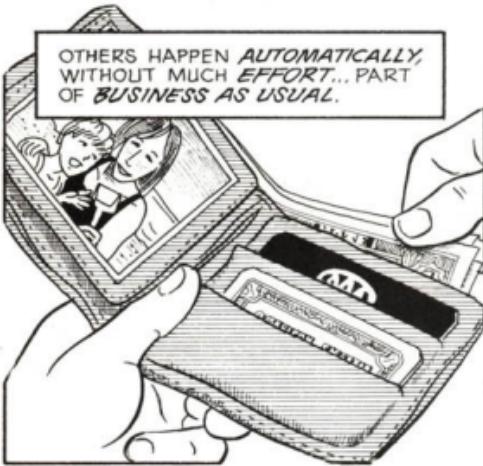
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS INCOMPLETE BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE.



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



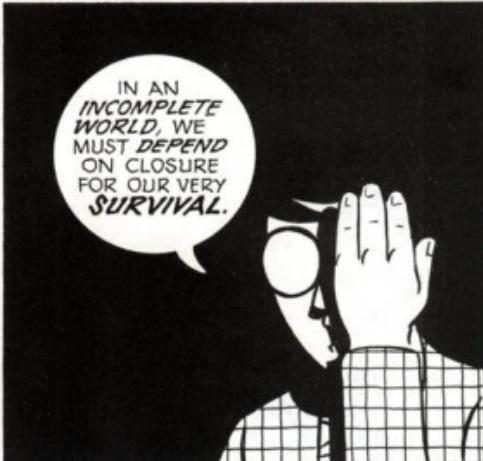
OTHERS HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY, WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT... PART OF BUSINESS AS USUAL.



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



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

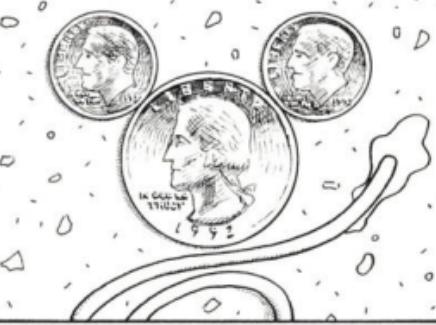


CLOSURE CAN TAKE
MANY FORMS. SOME
SIMPLE, SOME COMPLEX.



CLOSURE
CLOSURE
CL S RE
CLOSURE

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

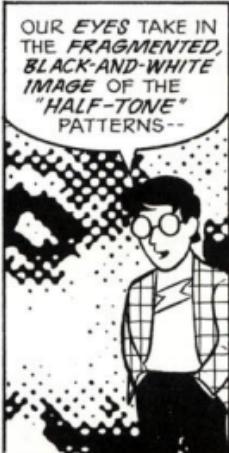


THE MENTAL PROCESS DESCRIBED
IN CHAPTER TWO WHEREBY
THESE LINES BECOME A FACE
COULD BE CONSIDERED CLOSURE.



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

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



IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA, CLOSURE IS CONSTANT, EVEN OVERPOWERING!

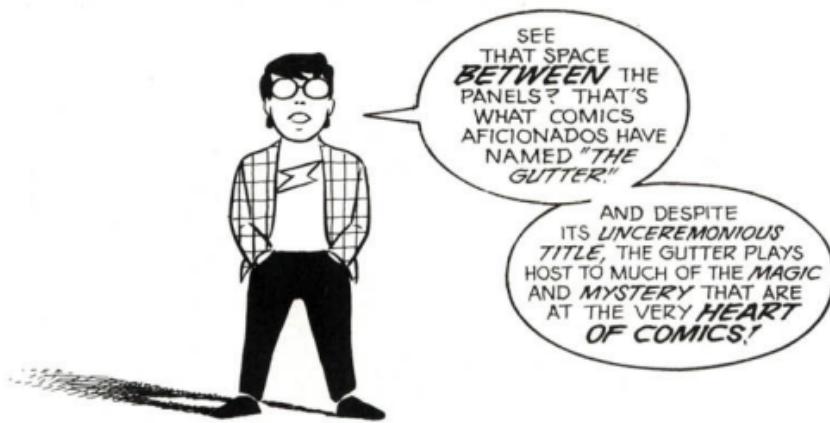
IN FILM, CLOSURE TAKES PLACE CONTINUOUSLY--TWENTY-FOUR TIMES PER SECOND, IN FACT--AS OUR MINDS, AIDED BY THE PERSISTENCE OF VISION, TRANSFORM A SERIES OF STILL PICTURES INTO A STORY OF CONTINUOUS MOTION.

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...

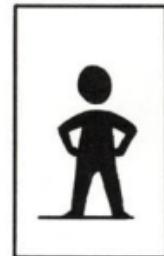
...A MEDIUM WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS A WILLING AND CONSCIOUS COLLABORATOR AND CLOSURE IS THE AGENT OF CHANGE, TIME AND MOTION.



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.

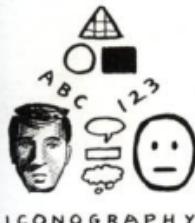


BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO **CONNECT** THESE MOMENTS
AND MENTALLY CONSTRUCT A **CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY**.

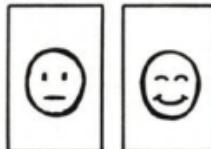
IF VISUAL
ICONOGRAPHY IS
THE VOCABULARY OF
COMICS, CLOSURE IS
ITS GRAMMAR.

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

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



ICONOGRAPHY



CLOSURE



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

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



NOW YOU DIE!!

NO!
NO!



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



AN EQUAL
PARTNER
IN CRIME
KNOWN AS
THE
READER.

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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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



LET'S
TAKE A LOOK
AT THE
CRAFT.



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



1.



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



2.



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



3.



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



4.



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



5.



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



6.



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



PERSONALLY, I DON'T THINK SO.

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



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



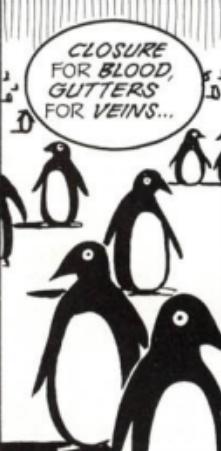
SUCH TRANSITIONS MAY NOT MAKE "SENSE" IN ANY TRADITIONAL WAY, BUT STILL A RELATIONSHIP OF SOME SORT WILL INEVITABLY DEVELOP.



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



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





1.
MOMENT-
TO-
MOMENT



2.
ACTION-
TO-
ACTION



3.
SUBJECT-
TO-
SUBJECT



4.
SCENE-
TO-
SCENE



5.
ASPECT-
TO-
ASPECT



6.
NON-
SEQUITUR

1.

MOMENT-
TO-
MOMENT

2.

ACTION-
TO-
ACTION

3.

SUBJECT-
TO-
SUBJECT

4.

SCENE-
TO-
SCENE

5.

ASPECT-
TO-
ASPECT

6.

NON-
SEQUITUR

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

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



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



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



MO
COM

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



[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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

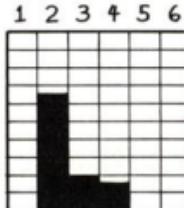


AND SINCE ALL
OF THE REMAINING
TRANSITIONS ARE FROM
SCENE-TO-SCENE,
WE HAVE THE
FOLLOWING
BREAKDOWN.



1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

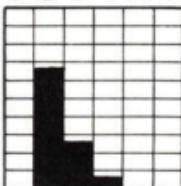
AS A *BAR GRAPH*
IT WOULD LOOK
SOMETHING LIKE
THIS.



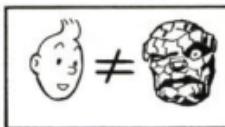
THIS EMPHASIS ON
ACTION-TO-ACTION
STORYTELLING SUITS
MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS
ABOUT KIRBY, BUT
IS HE *UNIQUE*
IN THIS RESPECT?

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

1 2 3 4 5 6



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

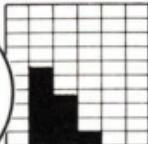


IS THERE SOME KIND
OF UNIVERSAL
PROPORTION AT
WORK HERE, OR
IS THERE ANOTHER
COMMON LINK?
MAYBE A SIMILARITY
OF GENRES?



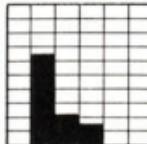
A RANDOM
SAMPLING OF
VARIOUS AMERICAN
COMICS SHOWS THIS
SAME PROPORTION
PRETTY
CONSISTENTLY.

X-MEN #1



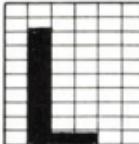
CLAREMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



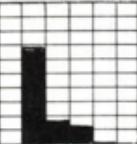
G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



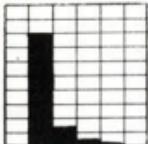
DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



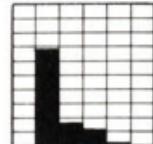
GREGORY

FRANK IN THE RIVER



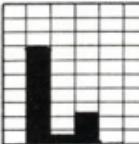
WOODRUFF

A CONTRACT WITH GOD



EISNER

MAUS



SPIEGELMAN

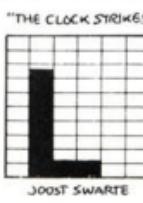
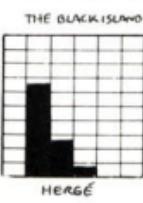
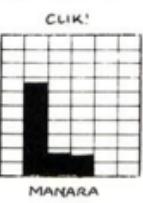
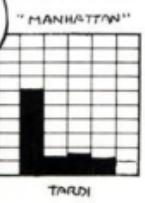
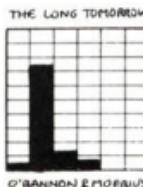
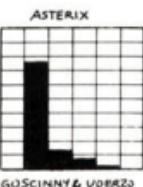
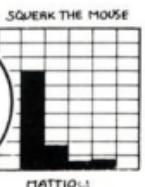
DONALD DUCK



BARKS

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

WHAT CAN WE DEDUCE FROM THIS?



2



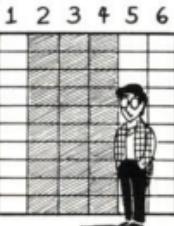
ARE THESE THREE TYPES OF TRANSITIONS ALL ANYONE SHOULD EVER NEED TO TELL A STORY IN COMICS?

3

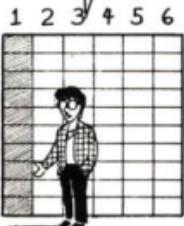
4

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

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



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



1.

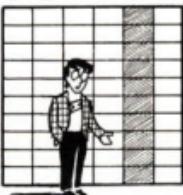


2.

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



1 2 3 4 5 6



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

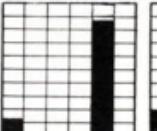
1 2 3 4 5 6



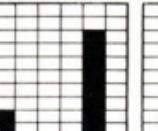
SOME EXPERIMENTAL COMICS, LIKE THOSE OF ART SPIEGELMAN'S EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A FULL RANGE OF TRANSITIONS--

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

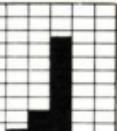
STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



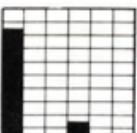
"DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE"



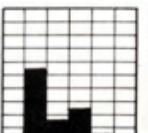
"INTRODUCTION"



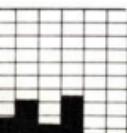
"MAUS"
(ORIGINAL)



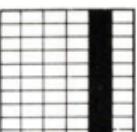
"SKINLESS
PERKINS"



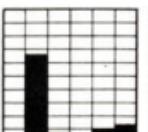
"PRISONER ON THE
HELL PLANET"



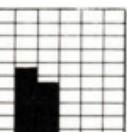
"CRACKING
JOKES"



FRONT AND
BACK COVERS



"ACE-HOLE, MIDGET
DETECTIVE"



"REAL
DREAM" 1975

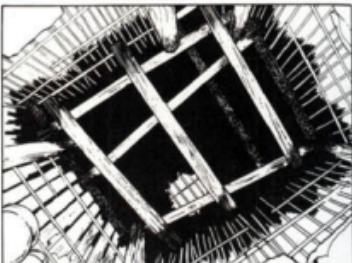
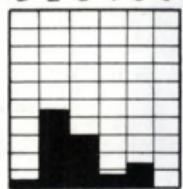
BUT BEFORE WE CONCLUDE THAT TYPES 2-4 HAVE A MONOPOLY ON STRAIGHTFORWARD STORYTELLING, LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT OSAMU TEZUKA FROM JAPAN.



フツズ

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.

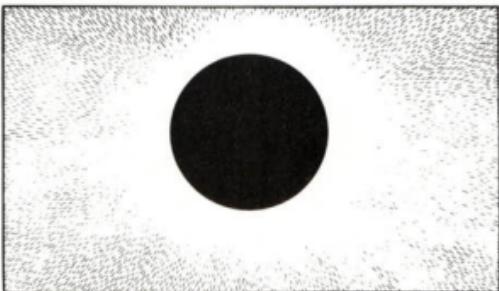


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR FOUR PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGE.



5

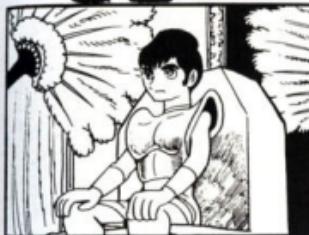
BUT, MOST STRIKING OF ALL IS THE SUBSTANTIAL PRESENCE OF THE FIFTH TYPE OF TRANSITION, A TYPE RARELY SEEN IN THE WEST.



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



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



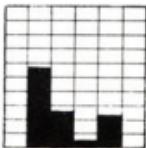
EVEN SEQUENCE WHILE STILL AN ISSUE, SEEMS FAR LESS IMPORTANT HERE THAN IN OTHER TRANSITIONS.



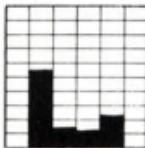
RATHER THAN ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SEPARATE MOMENTS, THE READER HERE MUST ASSEMBLE A SINGLE MOMENT USING SCATTERED FRAGMENTS.



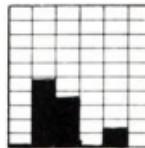
IN EXAMINING
SEVERAL JAPANESE ARTISTS,
WE FIND SIMILAR
PROPORTIONS TO TEZUKA'S,
INCLUDING A HIGH INCIDENCE
OF THE FIFTH TYPE.



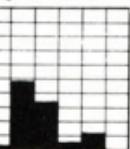
750 RIDER
(石井いさみ?)



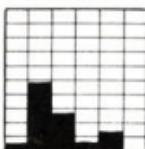
FATHER & SON
HAYASI & OSIMA



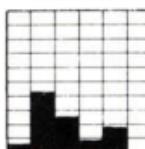
WOLF & CUB
KOIKE & KOJIMA



AKIRA
KATSUHIRO OTOMO

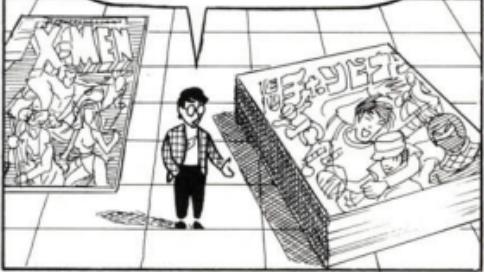


CYBORG 009
SHOTARO ISHIMORI

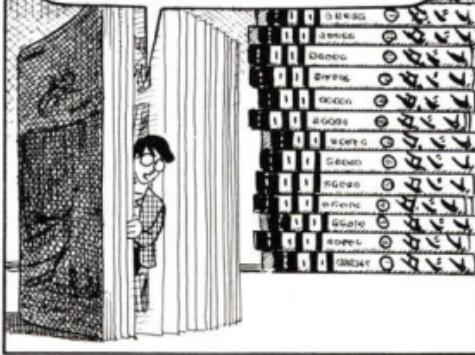


PHOENIX
OSAMU TEZUKA

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



HERGÉ



KIRBY



TEZUKA



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

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

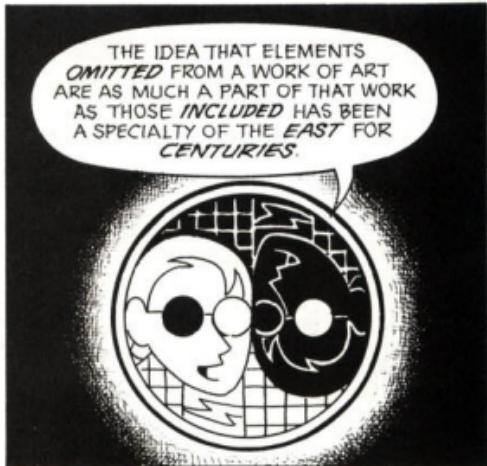


JAPANESE COMICS
MAY BE HEIRS TO
THIS TRADITION, IN
THE WAY THEY SO
OFTEN EMPHASIZE
**BEING THERE OVER
GETTING THERE**.

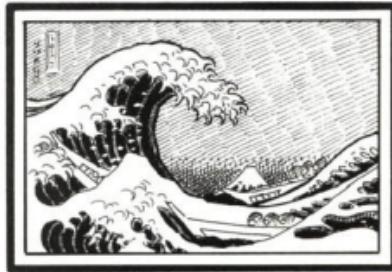
THROUGH THESE AND
OTHER STORYTELLING
TECHNIQUES, THE
JAPANESE OFFER A
VISION OF COMICS
VERY DIFFERENT
FROM OUR OWN.

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





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



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

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



WEST



EAST

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



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





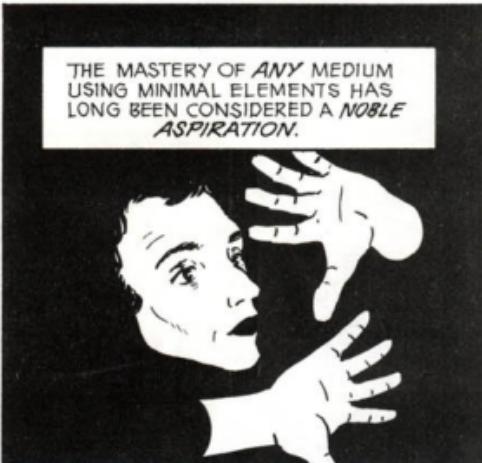
THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS IN WESTERN ART UPON THE PRIMACY OF FOREGROUND SUBJECTS AND CONTINUOUSNESS OF TONES GAVE WAY TO FRAGMENTATION AND A NEW AWARENESS OF THE PICTURE PLANE.



FACSIMILE
OF 'FIGURE'
BY PABLO PICASSO
1948



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



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

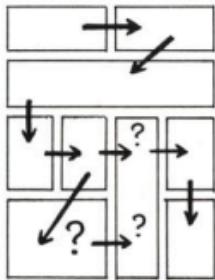


END



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 MADENINGLY VAGUE ABOUT WHAT IT SHOWS US.



BY SHOWING LITTLE OR NOTHING OF A GIVEN SCENE--



--AND OFFERING ONLY CLUES TO THE READER--



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



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

CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!

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

WHOOSH!

= Split Split =

?

Ding! Ding!

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

OW!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

AHEM! I SAY,
JUST AS READERS
COMPLETE --

-- AN
ACTION OR--
OW! OW!

STOP THAT!

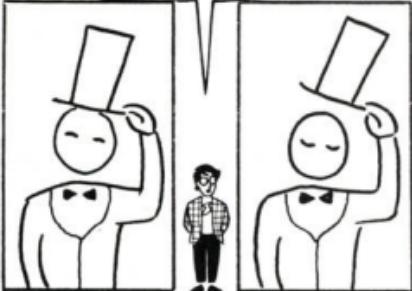
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

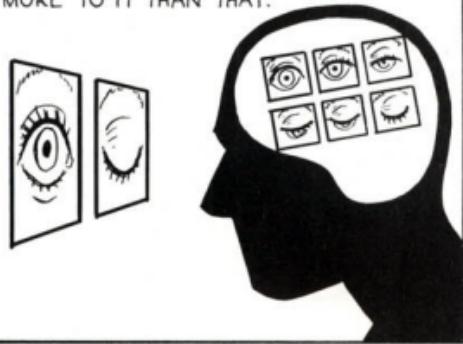
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES
WITHIN EACH PANEL, IT'S THE
POWER OF CLOSURE **BETWEEN**
PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST
INTERESTING.



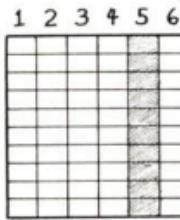
THERE'S SOMETHING
STRANGE AND WONDERFUL
THAT HAPPENS IN THIS
BLANK RIBBON OF
PAPER.



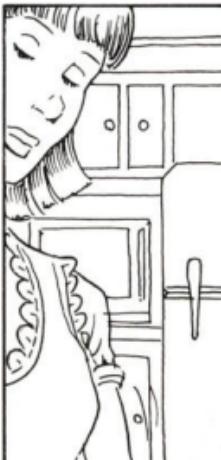
WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS
THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF
IN-BETWEENER -- FILLING IN THE GAPS
BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR*
MIGHT-- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL
MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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



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



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



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



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



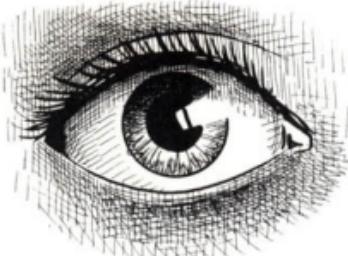
LOOK AGAIN. YOU'VE BEEN IN KITCHENS BEFORE, YOU KNOW WHAT A POT ON THE BOIL SOUNDS LIKE; DO YOU ONLY HEAR IT IN THAT FIRST PANEL?



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



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



BUT WHAT OF THE OTHER **FOUR?**

WE REPRESENT SOUND THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS WORD BALLOONS.



WE REPRESENT SIGHT, 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
TRAPEEZE ARTIST--
INTO THE OPEN AIR
OF IMAGINATION...

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

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

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



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



IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER *SEAMLESSLY*.

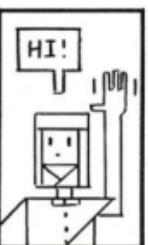
BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



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



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



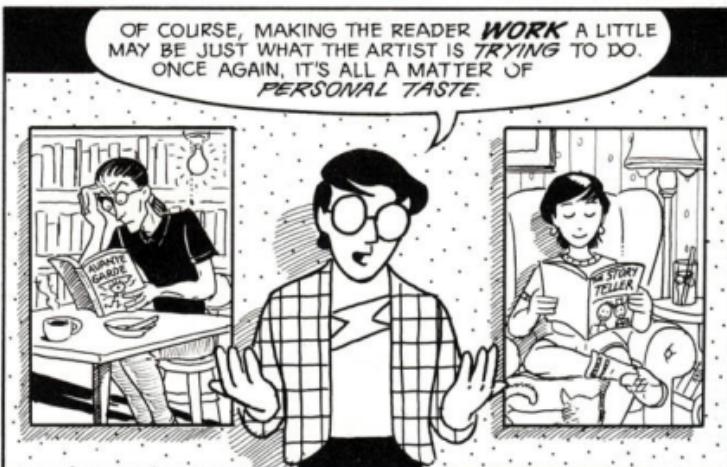
A GOOD RULE OF THUMB IS THAT IF READERS ARE PARTICULARLY **AWARE** OF THE ART IN A GIVEN STORY--

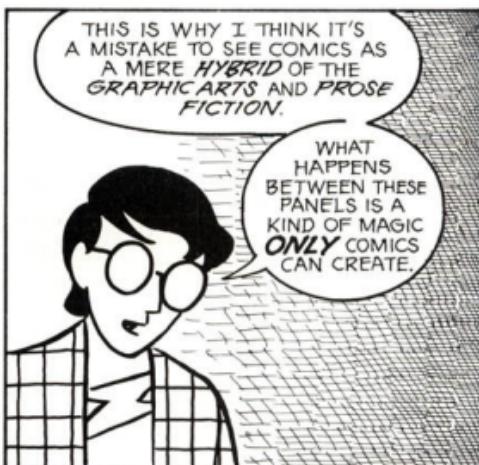
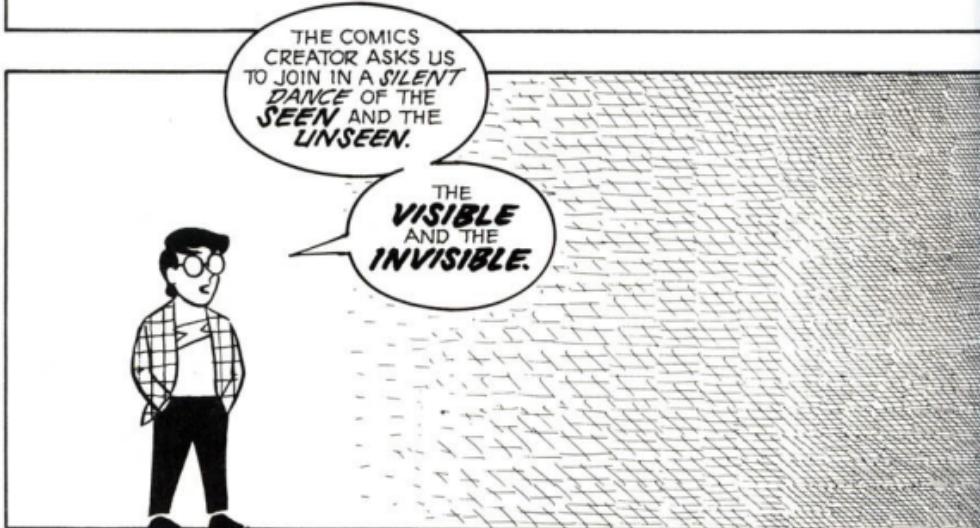
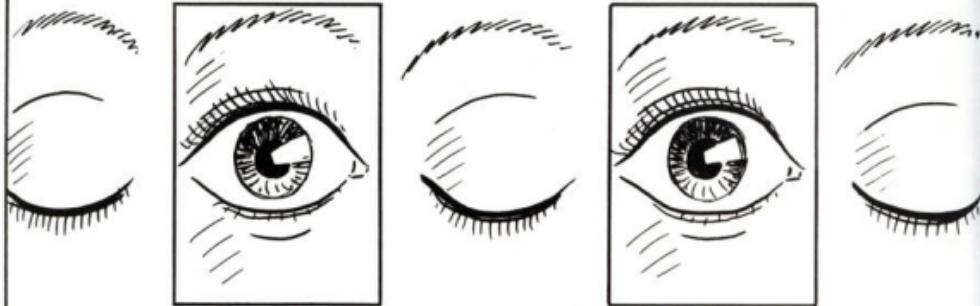


NOW IT'S THE **UNIFYING PROPERTIES** OF DESIGN THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A **WHOLE**, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE **PANELS**.

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

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







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



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



ALL I ASK OF YOU IS A LITTLE FAITH--

--AND A WORLD OF IMAGINATION.

CHAPTER FOUR

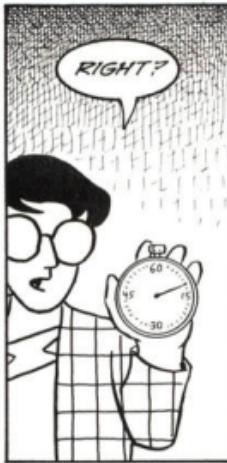
TIME FRAMES.

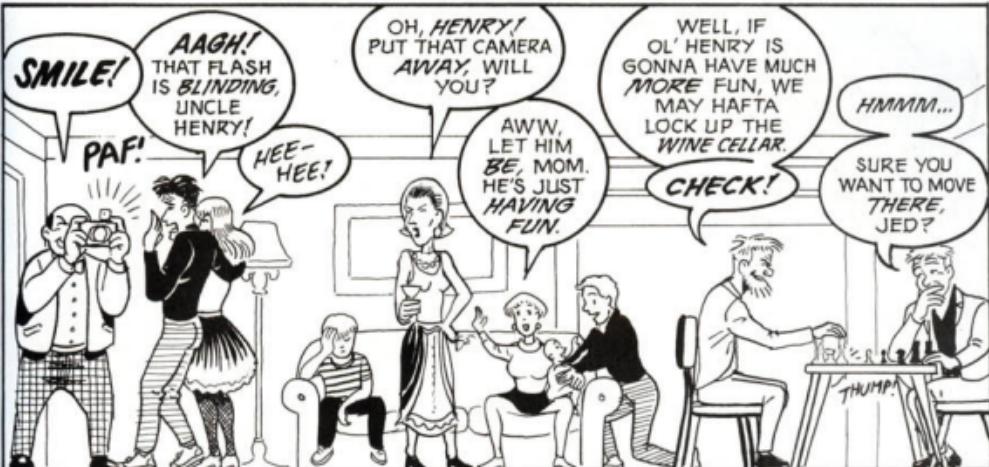
SO! LET'S SEE:
EACH PANEL OF A
COMIC SHOWS A
SINGLE MOMENT
IN TIME.

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



LIKE A LINE DRAWN
BETWEEN TWO POINTS.





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





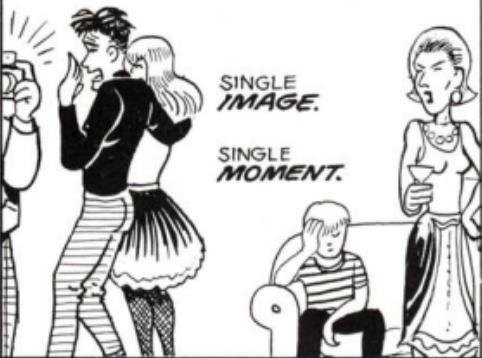
BUT HOW COULD THIS BE ANYTHING BUT A SINGLE MOMENT? OUR EYES HAVE BEEN WELL-TRAINED BY THE PHOTOGRAPH AND BY REPRESENTATIONAL ART TO SEE ANY SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE AS A SINGLE INSTANT IN TIME.



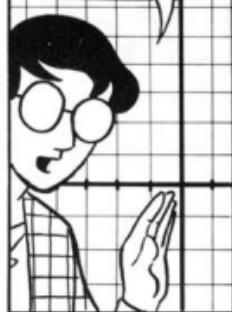
--THOSE FIGURES, FACES AND WORDS ARE MATCHED IN TIME AS WELL.



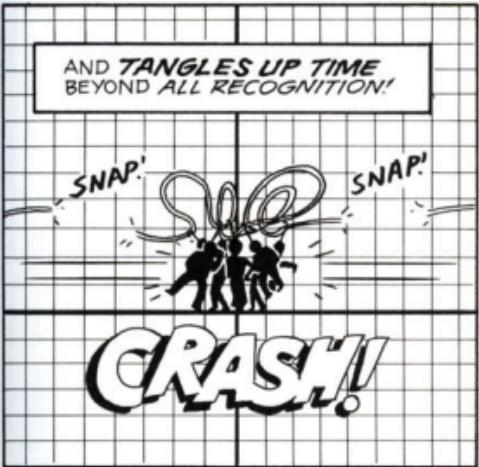
THE PROPERTIES OF THE SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE, MEANWHILE, TEND TO MATCH EACH FIGURE WITH EVERY OTHER FIGURE.



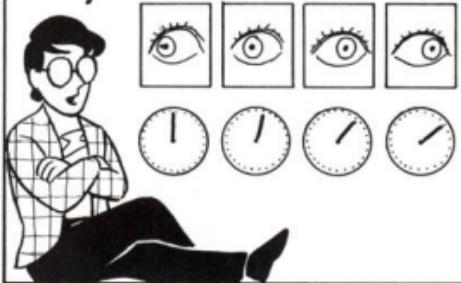
PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING LEFT TO RIGHT, THIS PUTS ALL THE IMAGES ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



AND TANGLES UP TIME BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!



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



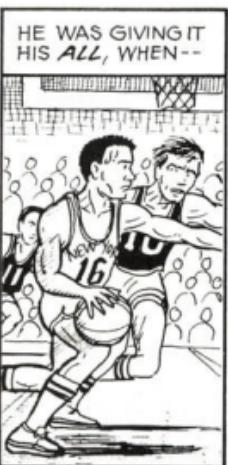
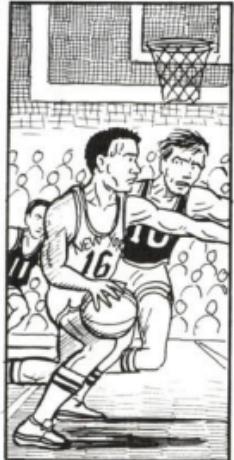
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL "READ" THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT TIME SLOT.



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



ONE PANEL, OPERATING AS SEVERAL PANELS.



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



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



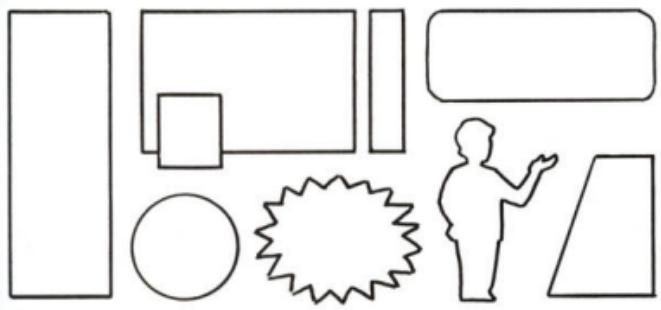
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



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



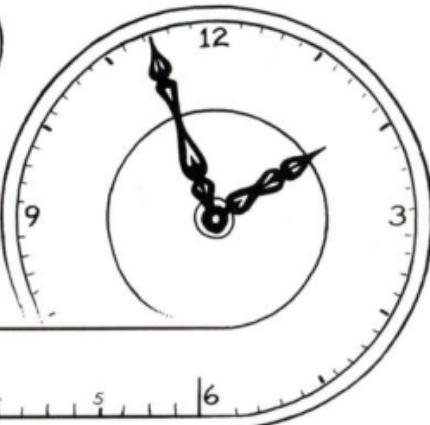
PANEL SHAPES VARY CONSIDERABLY THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "MEANINGS" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY CAN AFFECT THE READING EXPERIENCE.



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



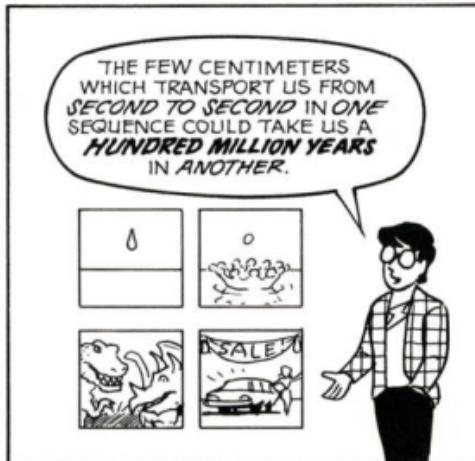
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS
WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE
TIME **SPATIALLY**, FOR IN THE WORLD
OF COMICS, **TIME AND SPACE**
ARE ONE AND THE SAME.



THE PROBLEM
IS **THERE'S NO
CONVERSION
CHART!**

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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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





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



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



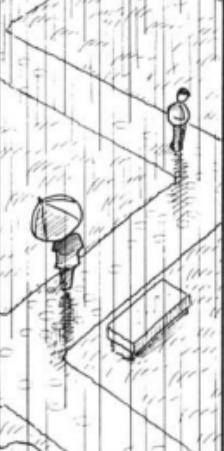
AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE CLASSIC RECTANGLE IS USED MOST OFTEN.



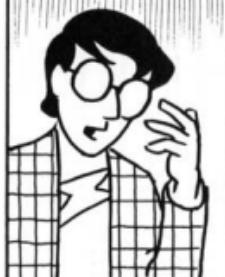
MOST OF US ARE SO USED TO THE STANDARD RECTANGULAR FORMAT THAT A "BORDERLESS" PANEL SUCH AS THIS CAN TAKE ON A TIMELESS QUALITY.



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



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

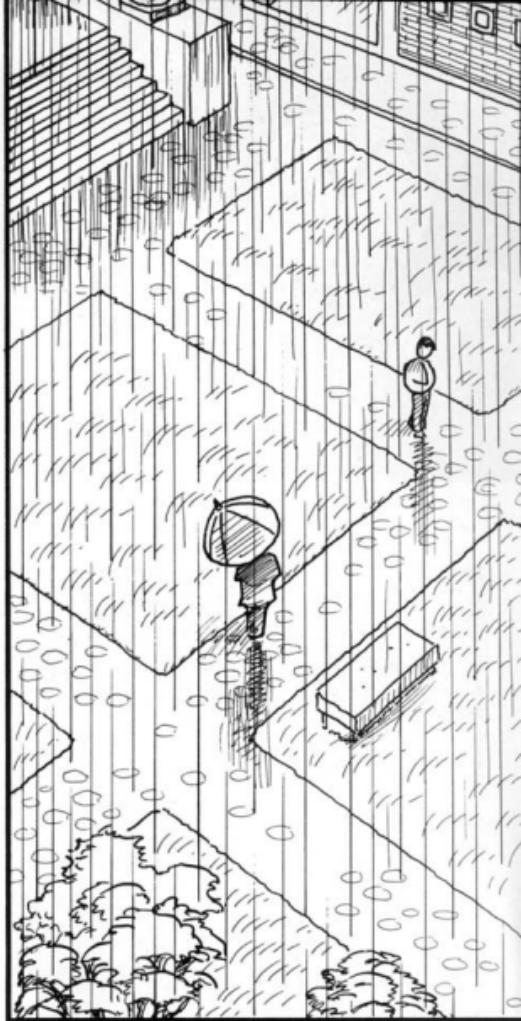


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH FOLLOW IT.



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

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



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



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



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

THIS
PANEL AND
THIS PANEL
ALONE
REPRESENTS THE
PRESENT.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

BUT
EYES, LIKE
STORMS, CAN
CHANGE
DIRECTION!



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



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



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

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



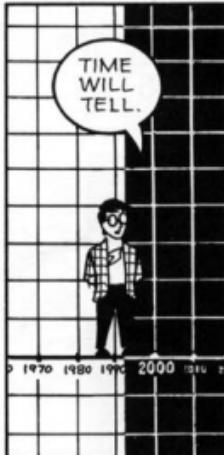


FOR NOW, THESE QUESTIONS ARE THE TERRITORY OF GAMES AND STRANGE LITTLE EXPERIMENTS.

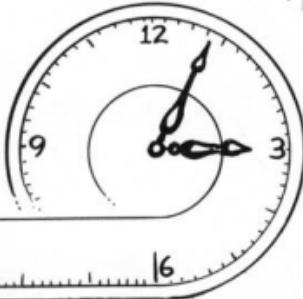
BUT VIEWER PARTICIPATION IS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AN ENORMOUS ISSUE IN OTHER MEDIA.

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

TIME WILL TELL.



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



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



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



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

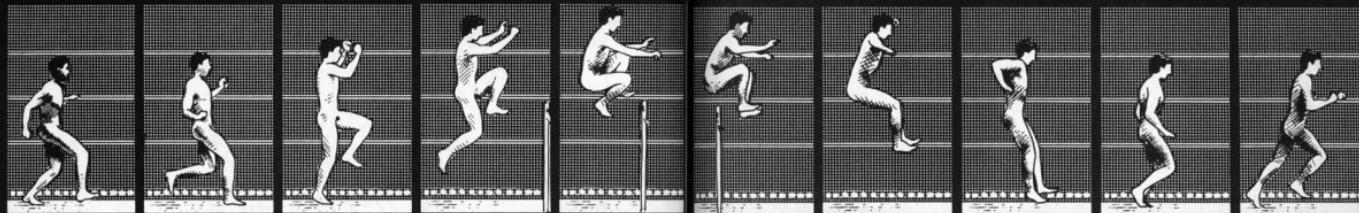


DESPITE COMICS' THREE THOUSAND
YEAR HISTORY, IT WASN'T UNTIL
TÖPFER'S MID-1800'S DOODLINGS
THAT SPECIFIC MOTIONS WERE
PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-
FAMILIAR PANEL-TO-PANEL FORM.



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





COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

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

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

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

BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE WILL SHOW YOU!

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

FRAUDS ALL! MY ZOOPIRAXINOSCOPE WILL--

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

IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A WORLD--

--FILLED WITH MOTION--

--THEN BE PREPARED TO PAINT MOTION!

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

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

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



Girl Running on a Balcony
by Balla



Nude Descending a Staircase #2
by Duchamp

IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!

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

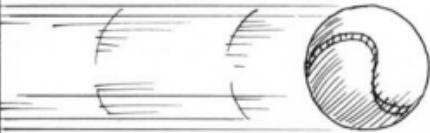
BUT THROUGHOUT THIS SAME PERIOD ANOTHER MEDIUM, LESS CONSPICUOUSLY, HAD BEEN INVESTIGATING THIS SAME AREA.

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





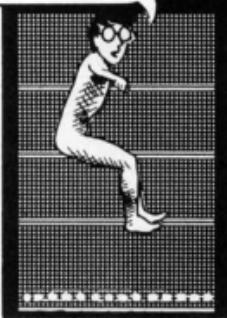
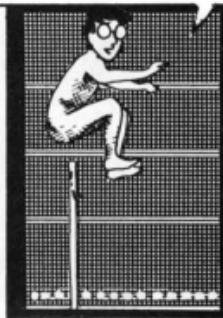
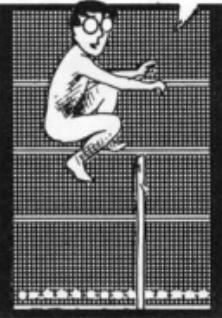
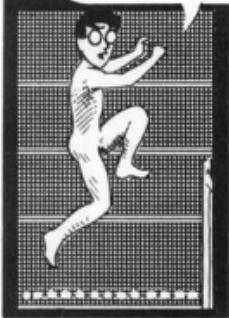
FROM ITS **EARLIEST DAYS**, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A **STATIC MEDIUM**.



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



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



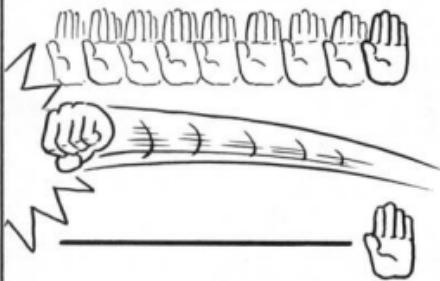
BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A **SPAN** OF TIME THROUGH SOUND--

SMILE!

PAF!



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.



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

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

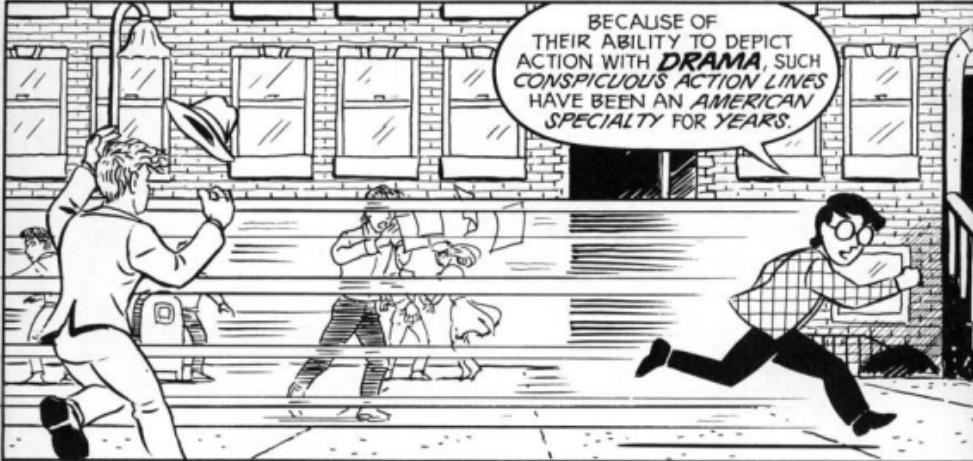


EVENTUALLY, IN THE HANDS OF HEROIC FANTASY ARTISTS LIKE **BILL EVERETT** AND **JACK KIRBY**--



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





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.

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

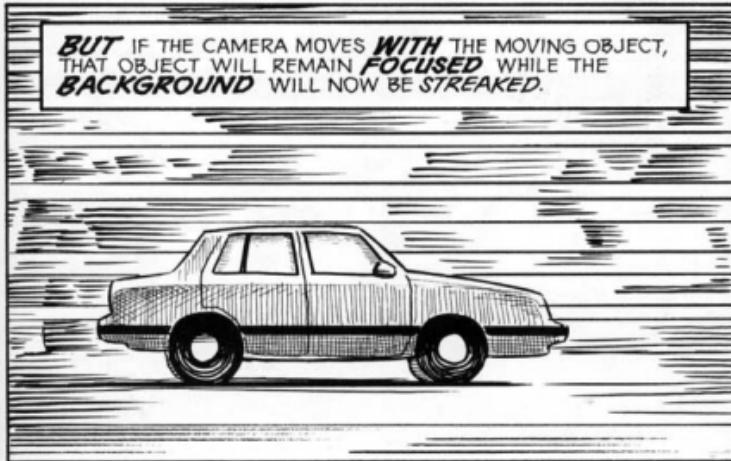
COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*,
WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A
CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO
FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE,
AN INTERESTING BLURRING EFFECT OCCURS.



A CAR GOING AT 60 MPH
MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS.



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



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



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



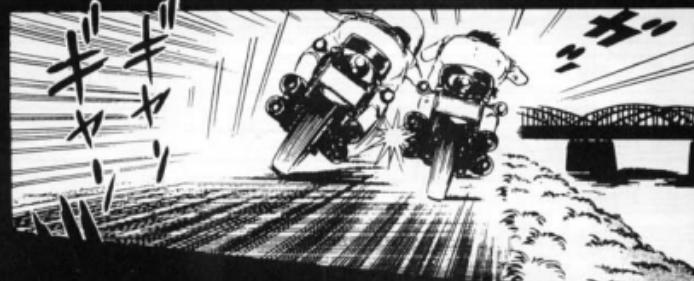
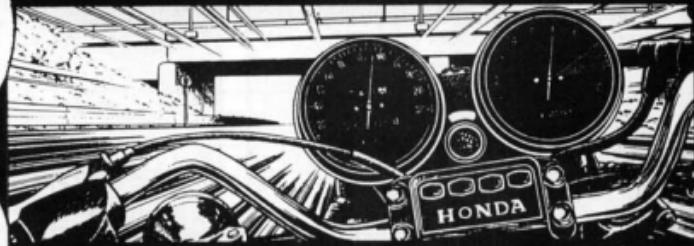
BUT IN **JAPAN**, ONCE
AGAIN, A VERY DIFFERENT
COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED
THIS VERY DIFFERENT
CONCEPT OF MOTION AS
THEIR OWN!



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

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

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

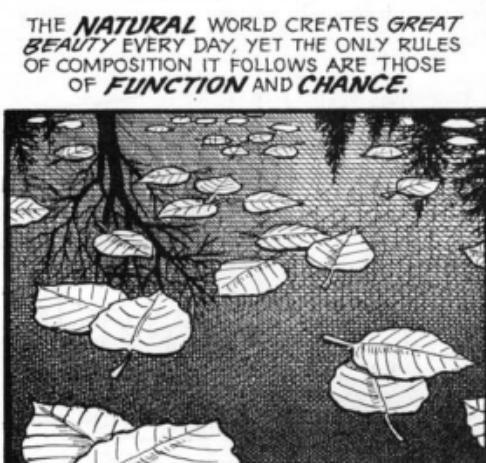


©石井いさみ?

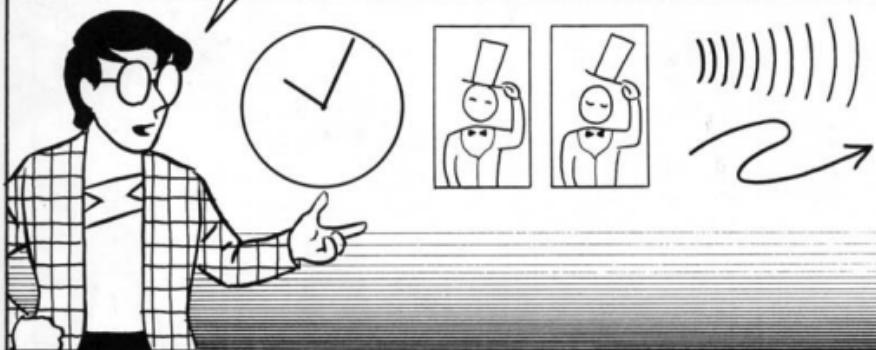


ARE THESE THE ONLY WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A SINGLE PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.





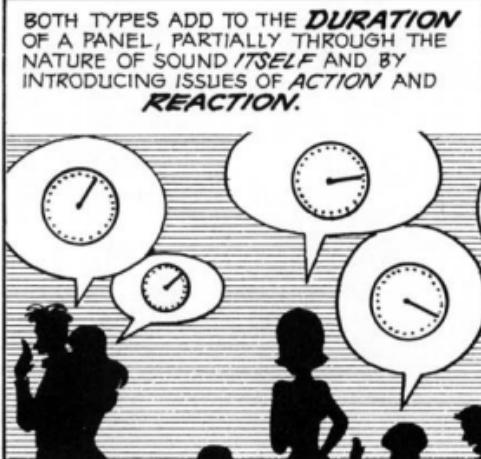
AS WE'VE SEEN, THE INTERACTION OF TIME AND COMICS GENERALLY LEADS US TO ONE OF TWO SUBJECTS:
SOUND OR MOTION.



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

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

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



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



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



TICK TICK TICK



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

SNAP! SNAK SNAP!

CRASH!

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

--THE FACE
IT PRESENTS TO
THE READER--



--IS ONE
OF SIMPLE
NORMALITY.

CLAK



OR THE
ILLUSION OF IT,
ANYWAY.

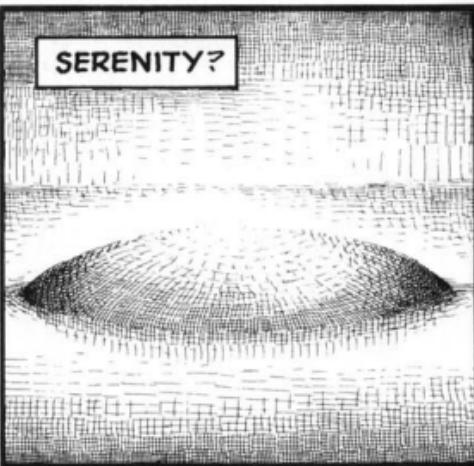
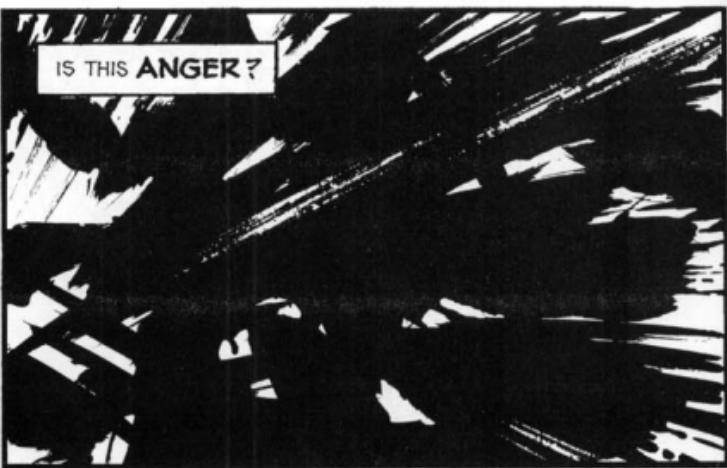


ALL
DEPENDS ON
YOUR FRAME
OF MIND.

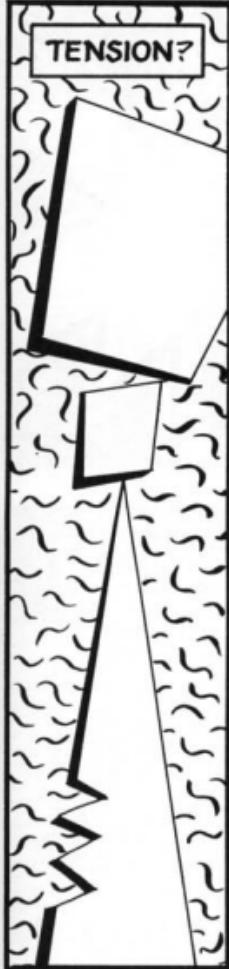


CHAPTER FIVE

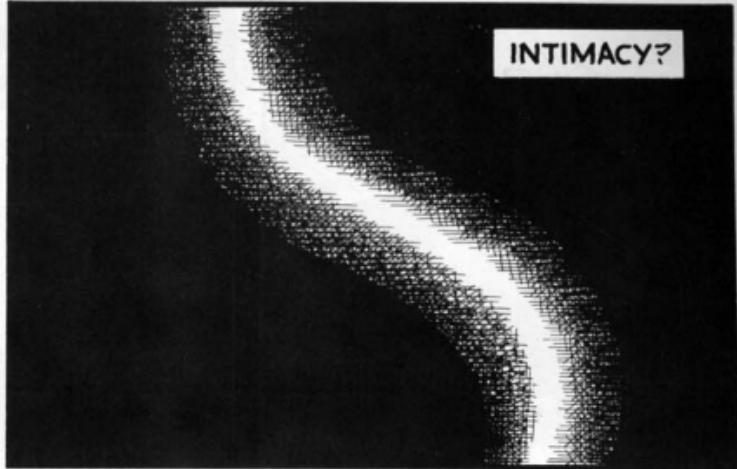
LIVING IN LINE.



TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?



PRIDE?



ANXIETY?



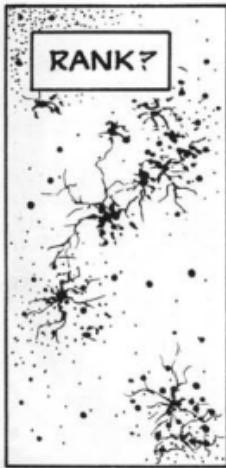
CAN **ONE**
SENSE SPEAK FOR
ALL **FIVE?**



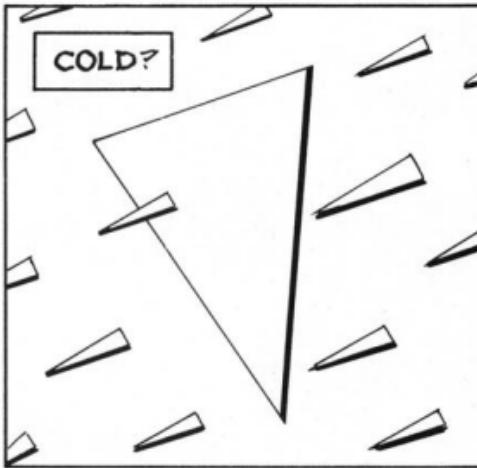
LOUD?



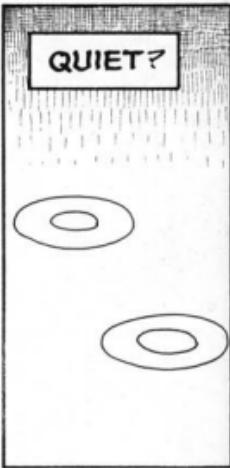
RANK?



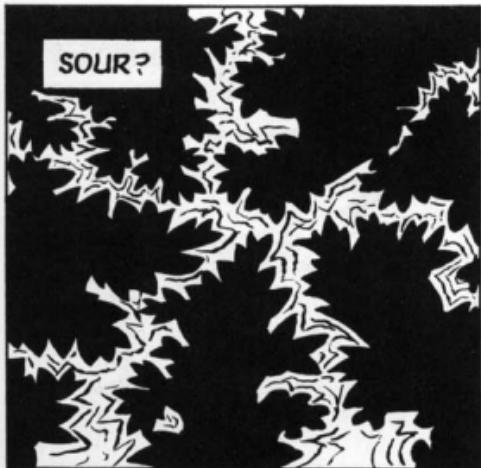
COLD?



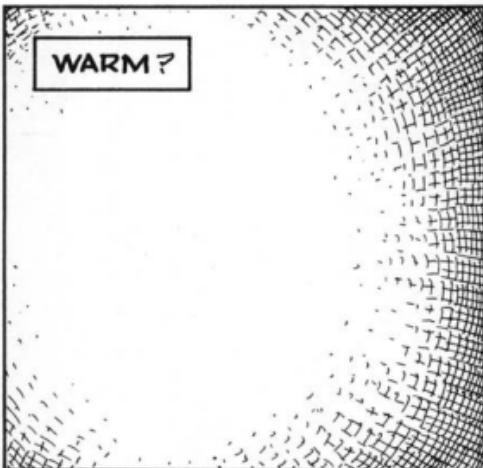
QUIET?



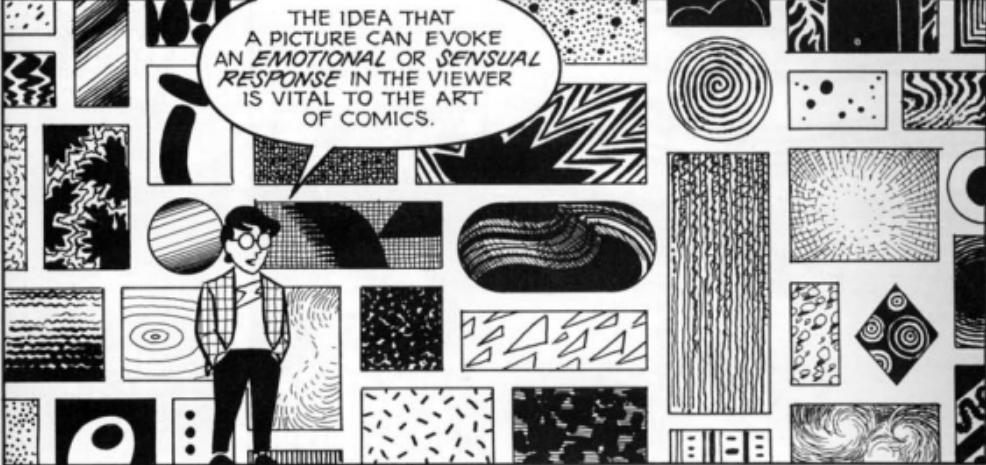
SOUR?



WARM?



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

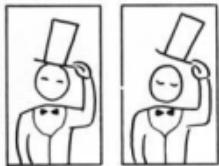


SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS.

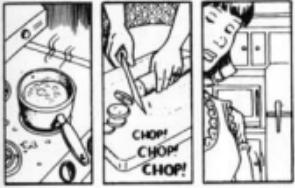
IN CHAPTERS **THREE** AND **FOUR**
WE INVESTIGATED THE VARIOUS WAYS
TIME AND MOTION COULD BE PORTRAYED,
BOTH **BETWEEN** PANELS, THROUGH
CLOSURE--

--AND
WITHIN A
SINGLE
PANEL OR
IMAGE.

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



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



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



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





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

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

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



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



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



THE SCIENCE OF IT WASN'T FAR BEHIND THOUGH!



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



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

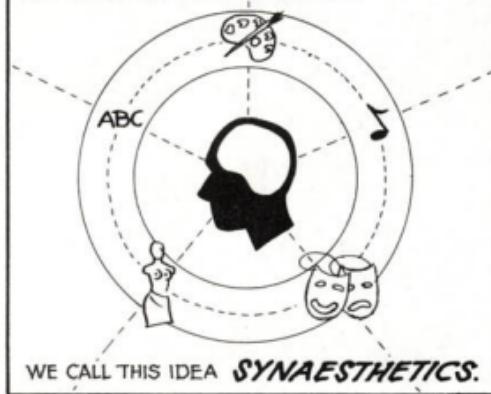
THESE WERE
STRANGE IDEAS
IN 1912!



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



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



WE CALL THIS IDEA **SYNAESTHETICS.**

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

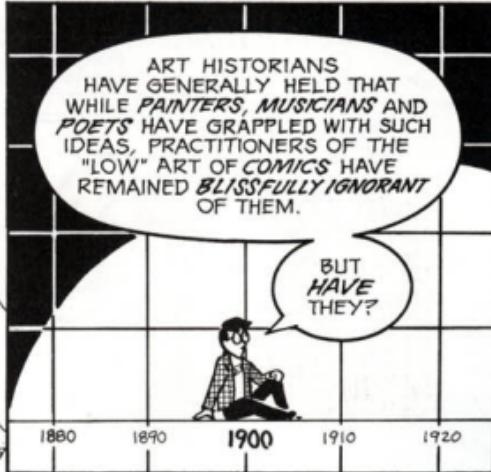
"Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it *makes* visible."

- PAUL KLEE
PAINTER,
TEACHER,
CARTOONIST.



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

BUT
HAVE
THEY?



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



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



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



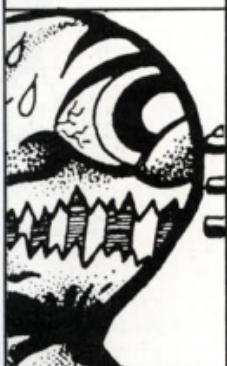
PEANUTS



CHARLES SCHULZ



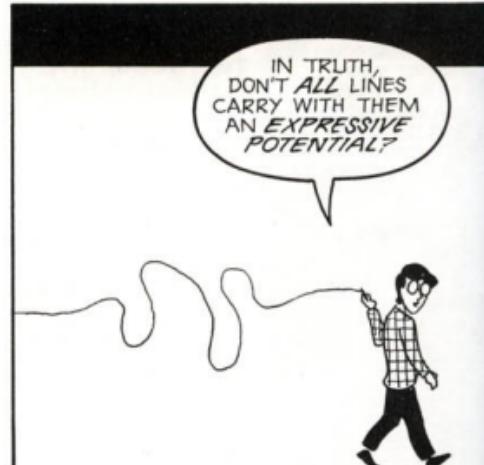
IF THESE LINES ARE EXPRESSIVE OF FEAR, ANXIETY AND MADNESS--



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



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



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

--TO
PROUD
AND
STRONG--

--TO
DYNAMIC
AND
CHANGING!'

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

--OR
WARM
AND GENTLE--

--OR
RATIONAL
AND
CONSERVATIVE.

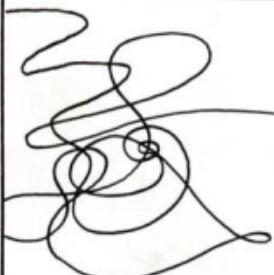
BY ITS
CHARACTER
IT MAY SEEM
SAVAGE AND
DEADLY--

--OR WEAK
AND UNSTABLE--

--OR HONEST
AND DIRECT.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



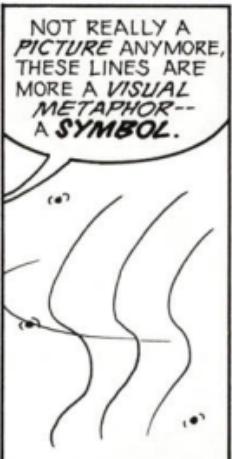
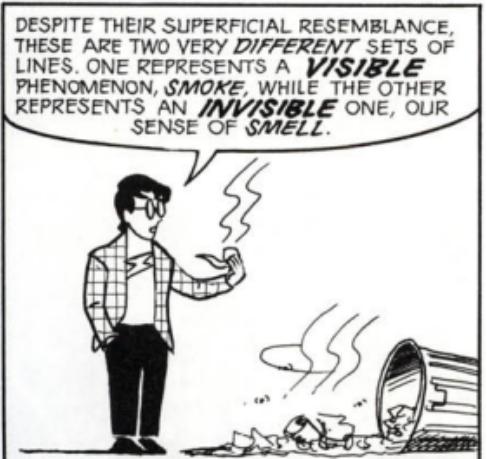


NOW,
IF PICTURES
CAN, THROUGH
THEIR RENDERING,
REPRESENT
INVISIBLE
CONCERNS SUCH
AS *EMOTIONS*
AND THE
OTHER SENSES--

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

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





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



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



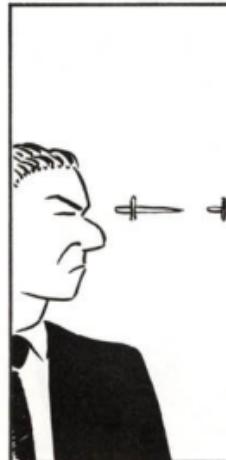
WHENEVER AN ARTIST
INVENTS A NEW WAY
TO REPRESENT THE
INVISIBLE, THERE IS
ALWAYS A CHANCE
THAT IT WILL BE
PICKED UP BY
OTHER ARTISTS.



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

--AS MANY
HAVE THROUGH
THE YEARS.





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



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

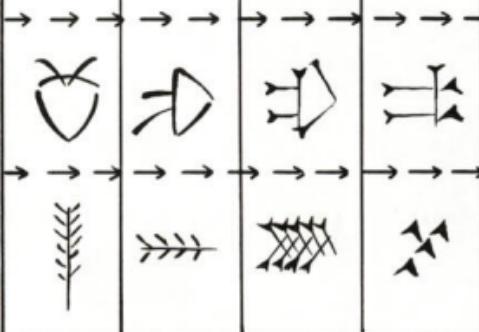


OX



GRAIN

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



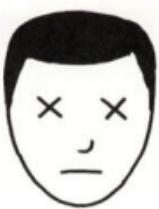
...AND EVENTUALLY TO OUR TOTALLY ABSTRACT SOUND-BASED SYSTEM.



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



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



AND THIS VISUAL VOCABULARY HAS AN UNLIMITED POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH.



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



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



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

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



ANGER



DEMENTIA



SLEEP

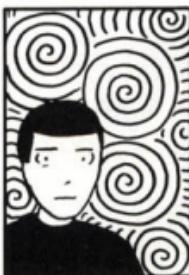


LUST

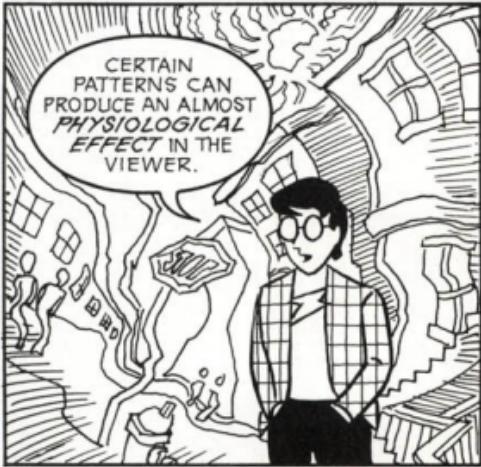
BACKGROUNDS CAN BE ANOTHER VALUABLE TOOL FOR INDICATING **INVISIBLE IDEAS**... PARTICULARLY THE WORLD OF **EMOTIONS**.



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



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



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

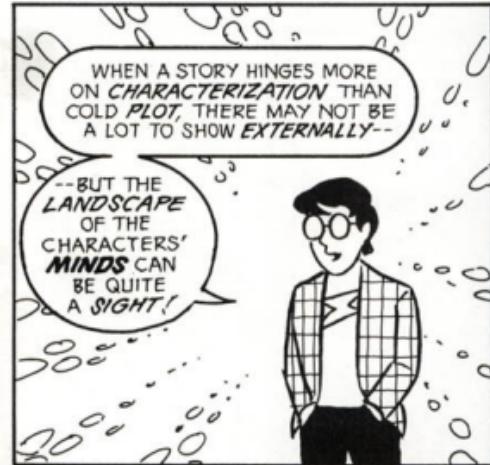


SUCH INTERNAL EFFECTS ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT INTERNAL MATTERS.



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

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



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



SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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



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

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



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

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

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



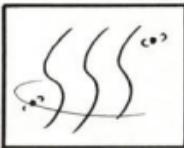
PERHAPS
IT'S TOO MUCH TO
ASK OF **ONE SENSE**
THAT IT BE
RESPONSIBLE FOR
CONVEYING SUCH A
WIDE WORLD OF
EXPERIENCES.



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



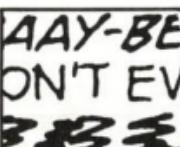
IN THIS
CHAPTER, WE'VE
DEALT WITH THE
INVISIBLE WORLDS
OF **SENSES** AND
EMOTIONS. BUT IN
FACT **ALL** ASPECTS
OF COMICS SHOW IT
TO BE AN **ART OF**
THE INVISIBLE.



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



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



CHAPTER SIX

SHOW AND TELL.

WHAT CAN YOU
TELL US ABOUT
YOUR ROBOT,
TOMMY?



THIS
IS MY
ROBOT.

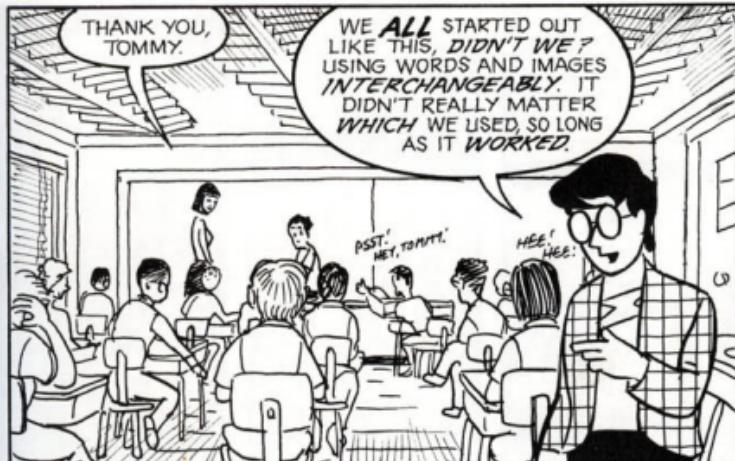


WELL,
UH... I LIKE
IT 'CAUSE...
'CAUSE, UH...

IT'S
GOT ONE OF
THESE
THINGS.

WHAT IS
THAT,
TOMMY?





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



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

Greetings from Hobo



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



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



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



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



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



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



THE
ROOTS
OF
THIS ATTITUDE
RUN PRETTY
DEEP.



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

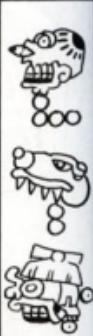
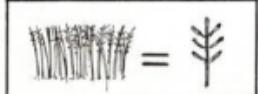
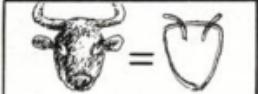


SOME OF THIS ART SHOWS
CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO
DETAIL, VERY MUCH CONCERNED
WITH PICTORIAL **REPRESENTATION**.

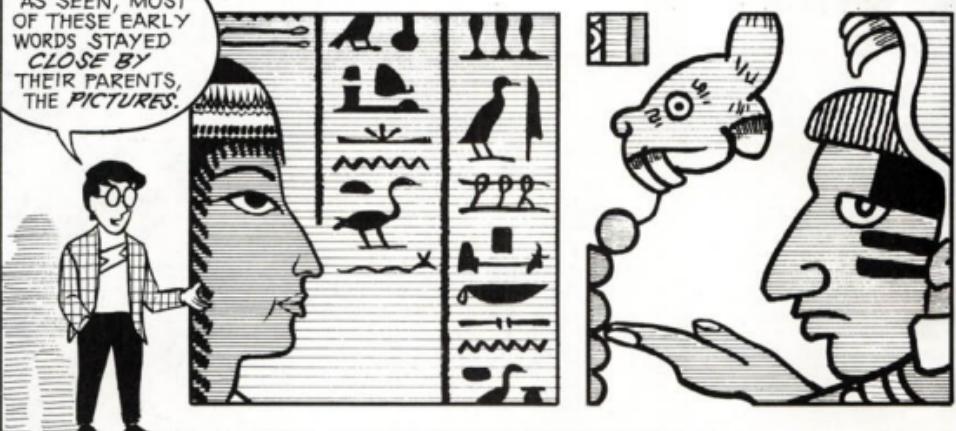


BUT OTHERS WERE VERY **ICONIC**,
ACTING AS **SYMBOLS** RATHER THAN
PICTURES -- MORE LIKE A
PRIMITIVE LANGUAGE!





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



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



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



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



ברוך אתה ייְהוָה נִמְלֵה בָּרוּךְ

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

--AND
ALL OF
HUMANITY
WITH IT.

BUT WHERE HAD
THE PICTURES ALL
GONE?

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

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

...dabli into/carmen
...velatam iamo e
...dale la-
...dam am
...ath: ma-
...om et iauan th...
...tiras.
...Domo filij gromet: ascruet e
...cupbat et
...mogorma. filij autem ian: tisa
et charis cethini e
...filij
...chani: chus et n...
...tana-
...an. filij autem ch... et euila
...sabatha et regnia et se bethaca. Por-
...ro filij regnia-saba et badan. Chus au-
...ten genuit neu... Et ceptit esse po-
...tens in terra. Nam vero genuit lu-
...dim et a... labim et nephtu-
...im: pher... et chassluim de
...qui: sup... philistim et capthu-
...im. Iudaean quo... genuit fridom
...magnificum l...nu: ethicum quoq;
et leonum et amoreu et gegefeum
nequin; et arachicum et asineum ara-
...dium quoq; et samareum et emathe-
...um. filij sem: elam et assur. Et arfa-
...sad. et lud et aram. filij arani: bus et



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

dhalum
ach zara sanma meza.
tan sobal seban ana dib
a. filij
proz a
sobal a
i-onan
on: aba
n i ane
filij diso
n i chau
iach
reg
q:a
l al

pare abram: ite fit abra
utem ab
ce gne
is in
ebel
ualla
ia
dmo.
Hij lund ay ilma
utem crebure
incubine
uos gewirz amuram ic
adian rboer et sur.
m. salu et dad air.
Hij au
m et latheung et boomin
adian. cephe et cphre - et
et iidea.
D medo bij filij
et raur ouff abe alam uia
me brijie ar telt.
que iebus etlon more.
romian humor

-- AND
LESS AND
LESS LIKE
PICTURES.

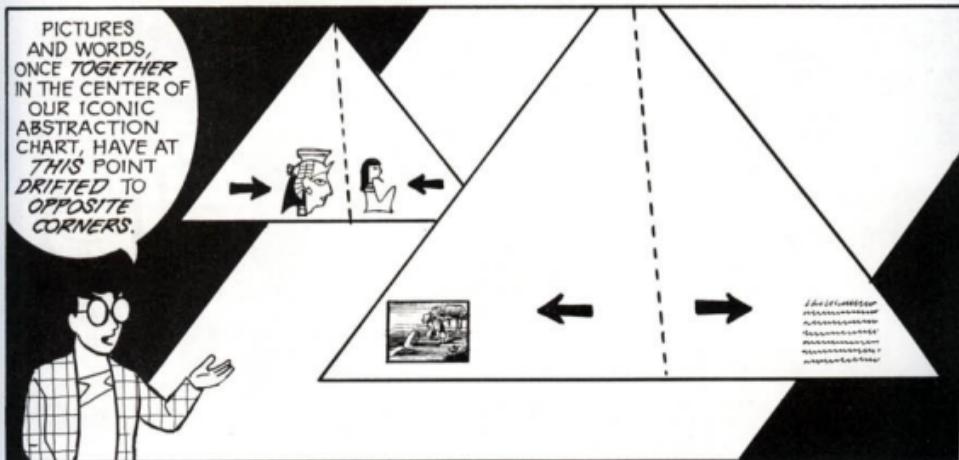
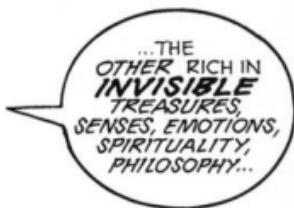
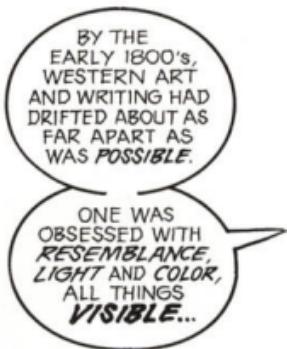
PICTURES, MEANWHILE, BEGAN TO GROW IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION: LESS ABSTRACT OR SYMBOLIC, MORE REPRESENTATIONAL AND SPECIFIC.



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

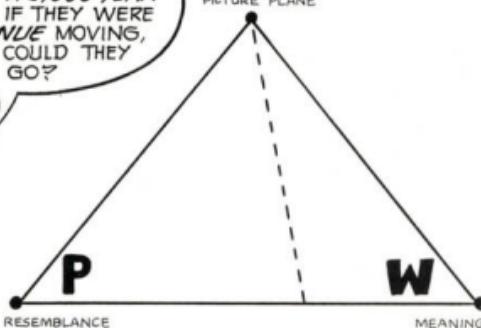
1

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



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

PICTURE PLANE



FOR PICTURES, THERE WAS ONLY UP!



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

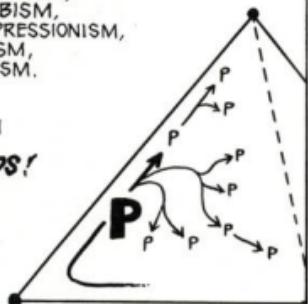


IMPRESSIONISM, WHILE IT COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS THE FIRST MODERN MOVEMENT, WAS MORE A CULMINATION OF THE OLD, THE ULTIMATE STUDY OF LIGHT AND COLOR.

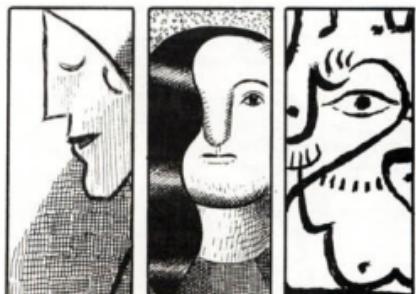


SOON AFTER CAME THE EXPLOSION! EXPRESSIONISM, FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM, FAUVISM, CUBISM, ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, NEO-PLASTICISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM.

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT BACKWARDS!



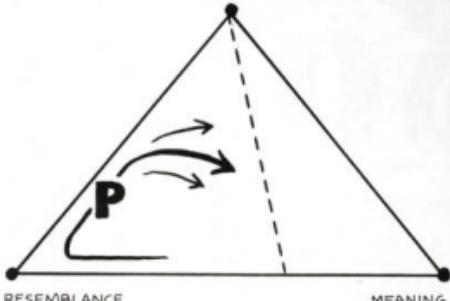
STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. ABSTRACTION, BOTH ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC MADE A SPECTACULAR COMEBACK!



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

MONDRIAN A LA McCLOUD.

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



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

John Keats 1819
Ode on a Grecian Urn

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

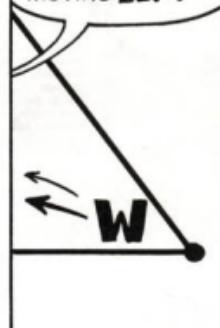
Walt Whitman 1890
Facing West from California's Shores

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

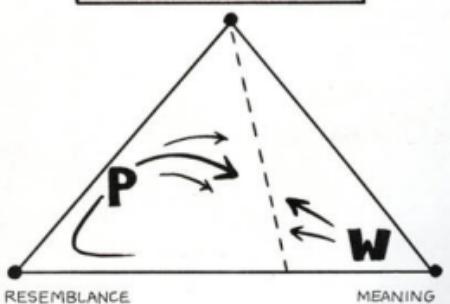
IN PROSE,
LANGUAGE WAS
BECOMING EVEN MORE
DIRECT, CONVEYING
MEANING SIMPLY
AND QUICKLY,
MORE LIKE
PICTURES.



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



-- AND HEADED FOR
A COLLISION!



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

S O I R E

JUillet 1923

D U C O U R

nde semaine
prolongée
au 7 juillet

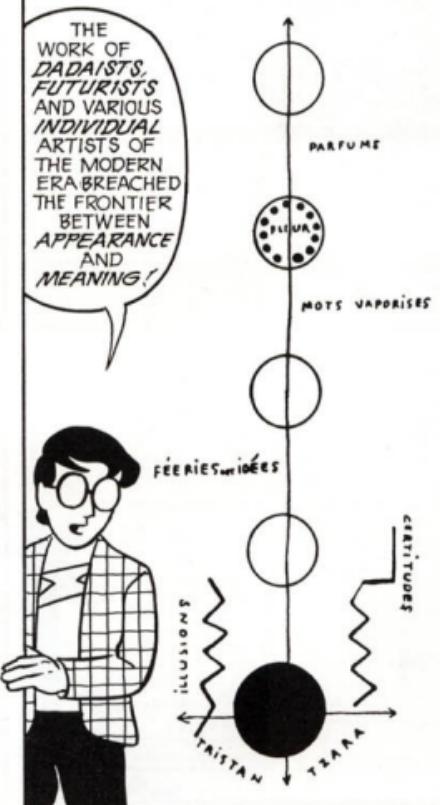


DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

par
FRANCIS PICABIA

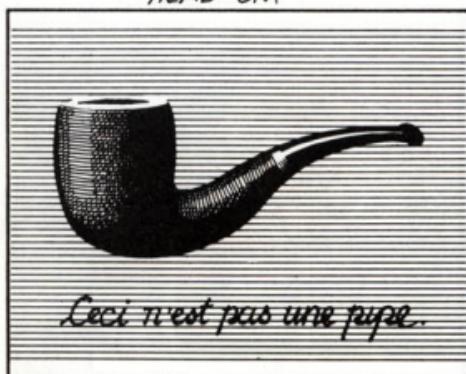
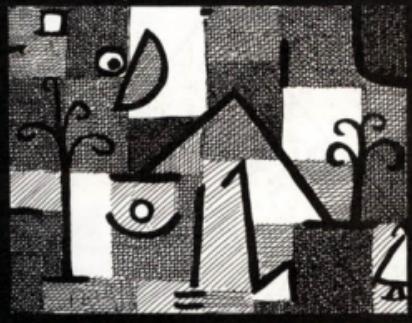
THE WORK OF DADAISTS, FUTURISTS AND VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS OF THE MODERN ERA BREACHED THE FRONTIER BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND MEANING!

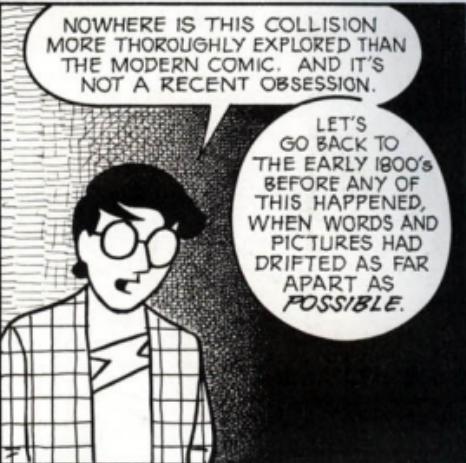


WHILE SOME ARTISTS ADDRESSED THE IRONIES OF WORDS AND PICTURES HEAD-ON!

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

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





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

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



TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE

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



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



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



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



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

WHAT THE HECK IS THAT???

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

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

DO PEOPLE REALLY PAY MONEY FOR THIS??

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

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

IN OTHERS AND IN THEMSELVES...



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

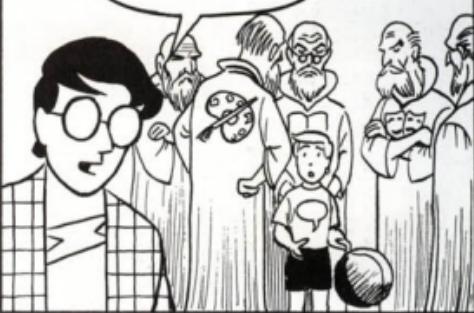


→ → → → → **FACE** → TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE, ONE MOUTH. → *The youth's
prodigious
gaze is now...*

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



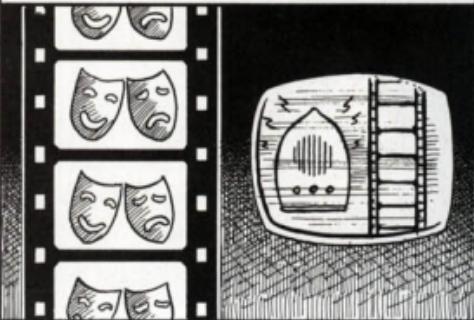
THE CURSE OF BEING JUDGED BY THE STANDARDS OF THE OLD.



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



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



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



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



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

com•ics (kom'iks) n. plural
used with a singular form,
juxtaposed pictorial or other
images in deliberate sequence,
intended to convey an
intended to convey an
and/or to produce a
response in the
2. Superheroes
costumes, fight
villains who want
world, in violent se

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

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

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

BIOGRAPHY
ROMANCE

DADA
HORROR
SURREALISM

HISTORICAL FICTION
FOLK TALES
EROTICA
MYSTERY
RELIGIOUS TOPICS

BLANK VERSE
EPIC POETRY
SOCIAL ALLEGORY
ADAPTATIONS
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS
SATIRE

SEQUENTIAL ART

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

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



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



JUDY GAVE ME HER KEYS AND SMILED.



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



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



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



GRIM-FACED,
GEORGE LIFTED HIS LOLLYPOP.



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

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



HA! I DODGED YOU! I FEEL SO SAD!



...THOUGHT AMY.

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



MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A SMASHED PUMPKIN!



HOW D'YA LIKE MY NEW THREADS, BABE?



IS THIS THE SAME JUPITER OF MY YOUTH?



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



"TALKED TO BILL YET?"

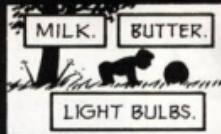


WELL...

PEPPER.
CEREAL.



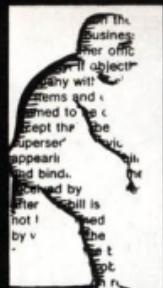
MILK.
BUTTER.
LIGHT BULBS.



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



CASH FLOW BOTTOM LINE
ANNUAL REPORT



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

MEANWHILE...



THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!

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

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



HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.

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

HURRY UP, WILLYA??

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

P
—
W



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

W
—
P

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



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



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



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



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



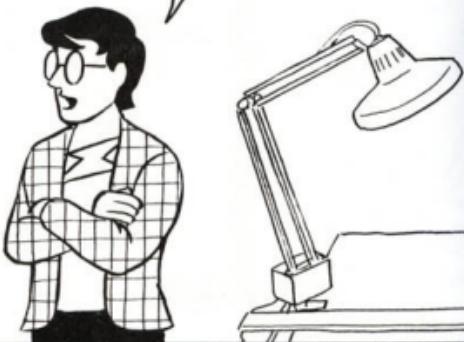
--COMICS CAN MATCH **ANY** OF THE
ART FORMS IT DRAWS SO MUCH OF
ITS STRENGTH FROM.



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



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



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



IT COULD
BECOME AN
INTERNAL
MONOLOGUE.

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY
INCONGRUOUS



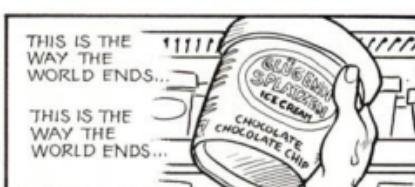
(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG
ADVERTISEMENT!



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON
BROADER TOPICS.



(INTERDEPENDENT)

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



SAME
SCENE NOW,
BUT THIS TIME
ALL IN WORDS!



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

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

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

I WENT BACK TO THE
APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE
AT LAST.



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

--BUT WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OPTIONS?



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



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

(WORD SPECIFIC)

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

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



(AMPLIFICATION)

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

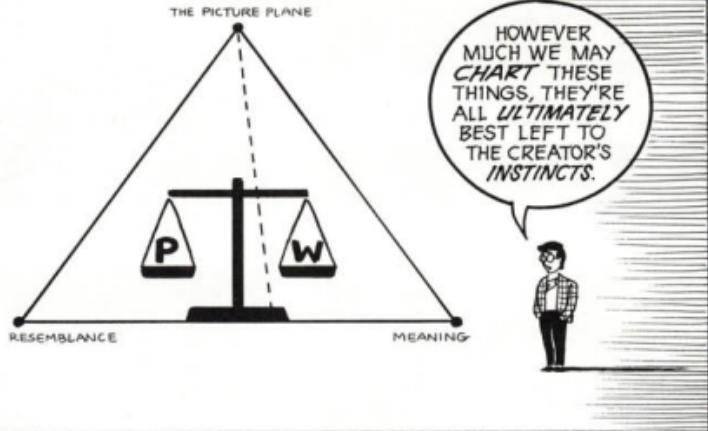


(INTERDEPENDENT)

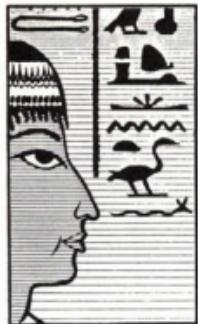
OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.



(WORD SPECIFIC)



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



BUT WE HAVE SOME POWERFUL MAGIC RIGHT HERE IN THE 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--



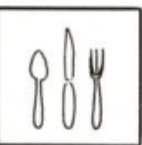
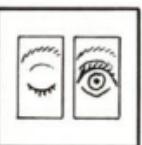
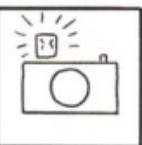
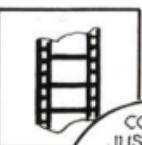
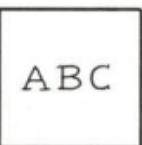
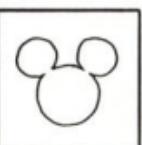
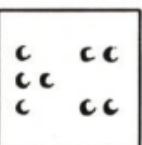
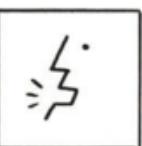
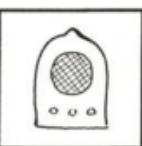
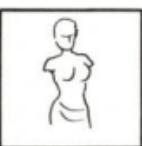
-- WHEN TO TELL WAS TO SHOW --



-- AND TO SHOW WAS TO TELL.

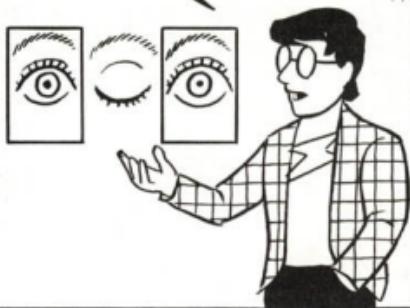
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIX STEPS.



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

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



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



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

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



IT IS--

--I'M SORRY--

A REALLY **STUPID** QUESTION!



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



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



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

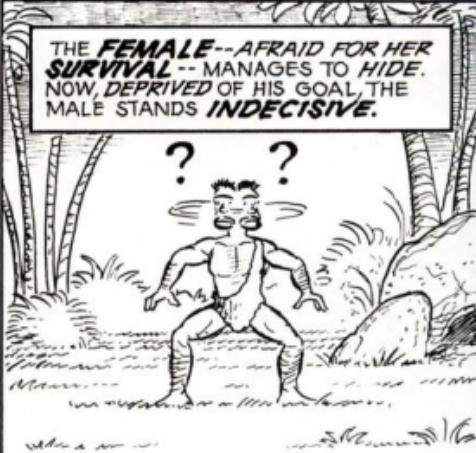
GRAAH!

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--!

ROAR !



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



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



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



HE TAKES IT!



AND SURVIVES.



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



BUT INSTEAD...



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



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



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



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



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



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



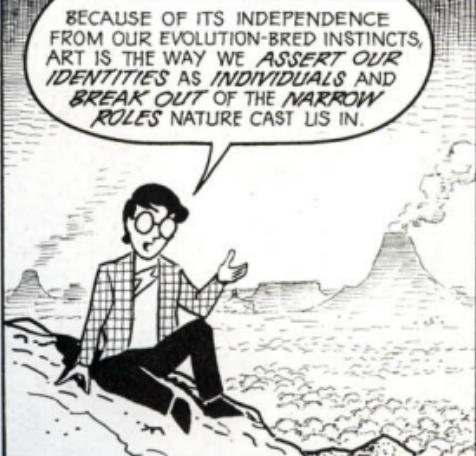
TODAY HE LOST A FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER. NOW ALL HE CAN DO IS DANCE AWAY HIS FRUSTRATION.



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



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



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



THREE, IN FACT.



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



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



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



--TO USEFUL DISCOVERIES!



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



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



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



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



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



* ALONG WITH THEIR MANY RELATED FEELINGS AND CUSTOMS.

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

PERHAPS A LITTLE
UNNECESSARY
CHOREOGRAPHY
ON THE ASSEMBLY
LINE.

OR THE PERSONAL
STYLE OF A
BICYCLE MESSENGER.

OR JUST THE WAY
WE SIGN OUR
NAMES!



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

I THINK IT'S FAIR
TO SAY THAT SOME
ACTIVITIES HAVE
MORE ART **IN** THEM
THAN OTHERS.

LIFE IS A SERIES OF
MINUTE DECISIONS,
SOME MOTIVATED BY
SURVIVAL, SOME NOT,
AND PROPORTIONS
DO VARY.



BUT THE **IDEAL** OF THE LATTER IS ALIVE IN THE HEARTS OF MANY ARTISTS WHO MAY HOPE FOR SUCCESS, BUT WON'T ALTER THEIR WORK TO **OBTAIN** IT.



THE "FINE ARTIST"--THE **PURE ARTIST**-- SAYS TO THE WORLD: "I DIDN'T DO THIS FOR **MONEY**! I DIDN'T DO THIS TO MATCH THE COLOR OF YOUR COUCHES!"



IN OTHER WORDS:
"MY ART HAS NO PRACTICAL VALUE WHATSOEVER!"

"BUT IT'S IMPORTANT!"



AND SOMETIMES IT IS, THOUGH IT MIGHT TAKE A CENTURY OR TWO FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD TO FIND OUT!

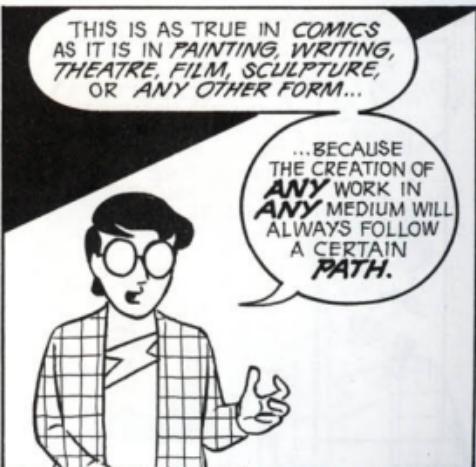


"**PURE**" ART IS ESSENTIALLY TIED TO THE QUESTION OF **PURPOSE**-- OF DECIDING WHAT YOU **WANT** OUT OF ART.



THIS IS AS TRUE IN COMICS AS IT IS IN PAINTING, WRITING, THEATRE, FILM, SCULPTURE, OR ANY OTHER FORM...

...BECAUSE THE CREATION OF ANY WORK IN ANY MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW A CERTAIN PATH.



1

IDEA/
PURPOSE



2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE

A PATH CONSISTING OF **SIX STEPS.**

1

IDEA/
PURPOSE



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



2

FORM



SECOND:
THE FORM IT WILL
TAKE... WILL IT BE A
BOOK? A CHALK
DRAWING? A CHAIR?
A SONG? A SCULPTURE?
A POT HOLDER? A
COMIC BOOK?



3

IDIOM



THIRD:
THE "SCHOOL" OF
ART, THE VOCABULARY
OF STYLES OR GESTURES
OR SUBJECT MATTER,
THE GENRE THAT THE
WORK BELONGS TO...
MAYBE A GENRE
OF ITS OWN.



4

STRUCTURE



FOURTH:
PUTTING IT ALL
TOGETHER... WHAT
TO INCLUDE, WHAT TO
LEAVE OUT... HOW TO
ARRANGE, HOW TO
COMPOSE THE
WORK.



5 CRAFT



FIFTH:
CONSTRUCTING
THE WORK, APPLYING
SKILLS, PRACTICAL
KNOWLEDGE, INVENTION,
PROBLEM-SOLVING,
GETTING THE
"JOB" DONE.



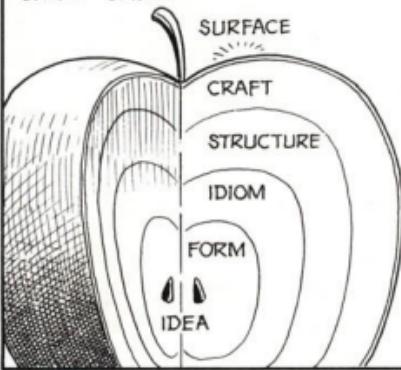
6 SURFACE



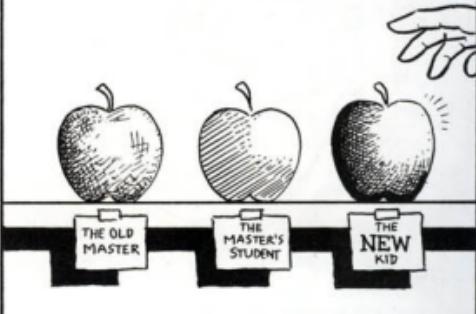
SIXTH:
PRODUCTION
VALUES, FINISHING...
THE ASPECTS MOST
APPARENT ON FIRST
SUPERFICIAL
EXPOSURE TO
THE WORK.



IN ALL THE ARTS IT'S THE **SURFACE**
THAT PEOPLE APPRECIATE MOST EASILY,
LIKE AN **APPLE** CHOSEN FOR ITS
SHINY SKIN.



THE LATEST "FAN FAVORITE" OFTEN
LOOKS BETTER AT A GLANCE THAN THE
OLDER ARTISTS WHO HAD THE **IDEAS**
AND CREATED THE **IDIOMS**, BUT WERE
LESS INTERESTED IN **SURFACES**.



BUT OFTEN
IF WE **BITE**
INTO THAT
SHINY NEW
APPLE--



CRUNCH!



HOLLOW.



IT'S A
CYCLE AS OLD
AS **ART**
ITSELF.



IN COMICS, THE CYCLE BEGINS ALL OVER THE WORLD, AS YOUNG READERS DISCOVER COMICS FOR THE FIRST TIME AND IN A FEW CASES, BEGIN TO DEVELOP A LOVE FOR COMICS THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME!



IN THIS EARLY STAGE, THESE READERS ARE EXPERIENCING THE CHARACTERS, IDEAS, EVENTS AND EMOTIONS OF THE STORY DIRECTLY

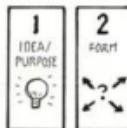
COMICS IS ACTING AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN STORYTELLER AND AUDIENCE.



BUT IN SOME, AN AWARENESS OF THE FORM BEGINS TO DEVELOP, AN AWARENESS THAT ALL COMICS ARE JUST INK ON PAPER--

--THAT MAKING THEM ONLY REQUIRES CERTAIN SKILLS--

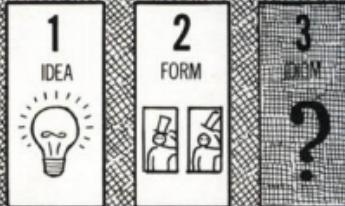
--AND THAT THOSE SKILLS CAN BE LEARNED!



ONE OF THEM--FULL OF **BIG IDEAS**--
MAKES THE **BIG DECISION**.



HE'S OFF TO A LOGICAL START. HE HAS
THE **IDEAS** AND HE'S CHOSEN **COMICS**
AS HIS **FORM OF EXPRESSION**. MAYBE
NOW HE'LL CONSIDER WHAT TYPES OF
COMICS ARE RIGHT FOR HIM.



BUT PROBABLY **NOT**.

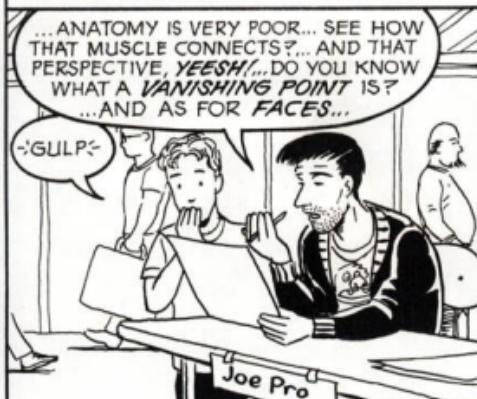
MORE LIKELY HE **POSTPONES** HIS OWN
IDEAS AND BEGINS TO STUDY THE **CRAFT**
OF OTHER ARTISTS IN HIS ATTEMPT
TO BECOME A **PROFESSIONAL**.



EVENTUALLY...



BUT WHEN HE BRINGS THE WORK TO A
REAL PROFESSIONAL AT THE LOCAL CON:



SO HE BUYS SOME BOOKS ON **ANATOMY**
AND **PERSPECTIVE**, STUDIES A VARIETY
OF DRAWING TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES,
PRACTICES, PRACTICES FOR **MONTHS**.



BUT SOMEHOW, IT NEVER QUITE "CLICKS" FOR HIM. MAYBE HE JUST DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH SKILL... MAYBE HE LOSES INTEREST... MAYBE LIFE JUST GETS IN THE WAY... BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON...



BUT ALL OVER THE WORLD, OTHERS HAVE UNDERGONE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES AND HAVEN'T GIVEN UP YET!



ONE OF THEM IS NOW READY TO TAKE THE **NEXT STEP!** SHE'S STUDIED HER CRAFT ALL THE WAY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL AND INTO COLLEGE.



SHE'S A GOOD, HARDWORKING STUDENT.

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

< THIS IS VERY GOOD. >



BUT WHEN SHE SHOWS HER WORK TO A SEASONED PRO...

< YOU'RE A SKILLED SCRIPTER AND DRAFTSPERSON, BUT YOUR STORYTELLING ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH, YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF PACING... THESE LAYOUTS ARE VERY MUDDY... YOU HAVE TO COMPOSE YOUR STORIES... >



HER SKILLS **CAN** GET HER **WORK** AT THIS POINT, BUT ONLY AS AN **ASSISTANT** TO OTHERS. UNTIL SHE UNDERSTANDS THE **STRUCTURE** OF COMICS **BENEATH** THE CRAFT, THIS IS AS FAR AS SHE CAN GO.



BUT MAYBE THIS IS **ENOUGH** FOR THIS PARTICULAR ARTIST, ENOUGH TO JUST BE PART OF THE **ART, BUSINESS, AND COMMUNITY** OF COMICS WITHOUT NECESSARILY CALLING THE SHOTS.



HE SPENDS HIS **EVERY WAKING HOUR** WORKING OUT THE DIFFICULT PRINCIPLES OF COMICS COMPOSITION AND STORYTELLING, THE KIND THEY DON'T TEACH IN BOOKS!*



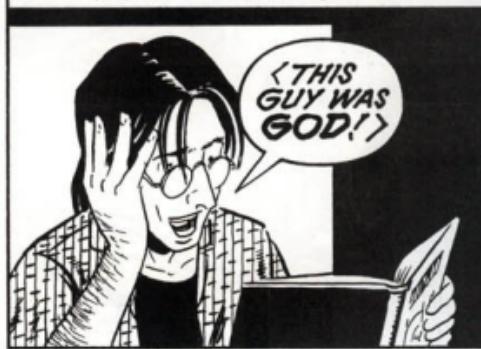
HE LEARNS TO SEE **BENEATH** THE CRAFTS OF DRAFTSMANSHIP AND SCRIPTING TO SEE THE **WHOLE PICTURE**--PACING, DRAMA, HUMOR, SUSPENSE, COMPOSITION, THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT, IRONY--SOON THEY'RE ALL AT HIS COMMAND!



BUT **ELSEWHERE**, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS BEEN THROUGH THE SAME SORT OF PROCESS AND HE WANTS **MORE!**



HE DISCOVERS THAT HIS FAVORITE ARTIST WAS ACTUALLY JUST A **WATERED-DOWN VERSION** OF AN **OLDER, LESS-POLISHED** ARTIST WHOM HE HAD ALWAYS **TAKEN FOR GRANTED**.



* WELL, OKAY, ONE BOOK! EISNER'S, AGAIN.

AND LET'S SAY IT **WORKS!** HE DOES LAND HIS OWN BOOK AND SOON IS ESTABLISHED AS A CREATOR OF **GREAT SKILL**. HE UNDERSTANDS COMICS STORYTELLING BETTER THAN MOST.



HIS WORK ISN'T PARTICULARLY **ORIGINAL**, THE CRITICS DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO HIM, BUT HE MAKES A **DECENT LIVING** FOR **HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY** AND THAT'S ENOUGH FOR HIM...



BUT **ANOTHER ARTIST** HAS MADE IT THROUGH THE **SAME** SORTS OF HURDLES AND REACHED THE **SAME** LEVELS OF SUCCESS AND **STILL ISN'T SATISFIED**



SHE WONDERS IF HER SUCCESS REALLY MEANS ANYTHING WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY OTHERS DOING THE **SAME** THINGS IN THE **SAME** WAYS. SHE WANTS AN **IDENTITY**.



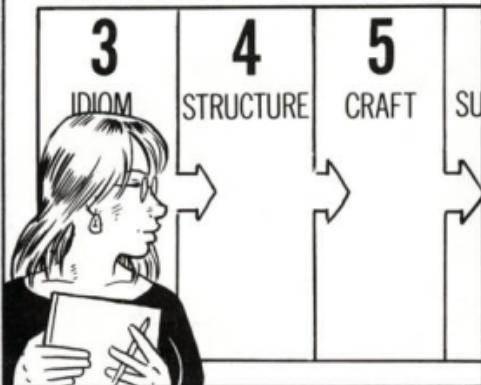
SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE**--**SOME PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**-- THAT SHE **STILL HASN'T FOUND**.



SHE BEGINS TO INVENT **NEW WAYS** OF SHOWING "**THE SAME OLD THING**." SHE DEVELOPS **INNOVATIVE NEW TECHNIQUES** AND STARTS **DOING AWAY** WITH "**THE SAME OLD THING**" **ALTOGETHER!**



AS SHE CREATES HER OWN PERSONAL IDIOM OF COMICS, SHE FINDS THE WHOLE OF HER WORK CHANGING TO SUIT THAT IDIOM.



LET'S SAY THAT FINANCIAL SUCCESS AND THE RESPECT OF HER PEERS SOON FOLLOW.*



YOUNG ARTISTS BEGIN TO IMITATE HER STYLE, BUT MOST OF THEM ONLY SEEM TO APPRECIATE THE "SURFACE."



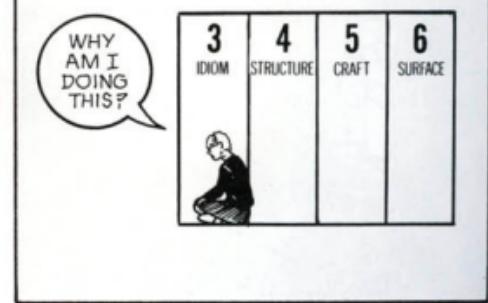
AND MAYBE SHE'LL BE SATISFIED WITH THAT KIND OF SUCCESS, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WHATEVER SHE DOESN'T KNOW, SHE'S ON THE RIGHT PATH TO FIND OUT.

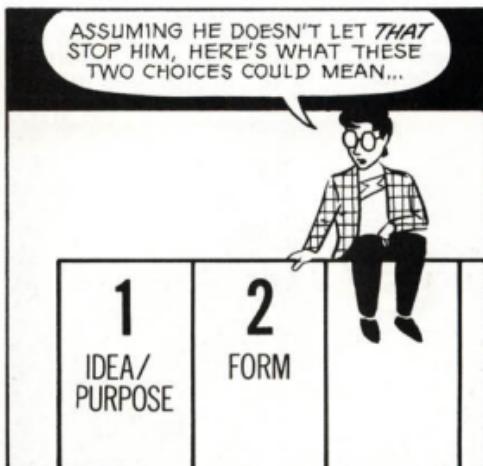
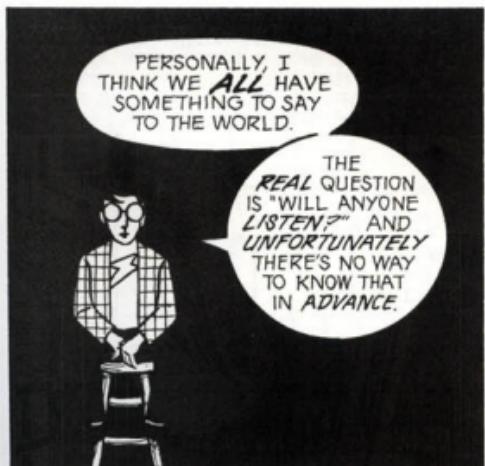
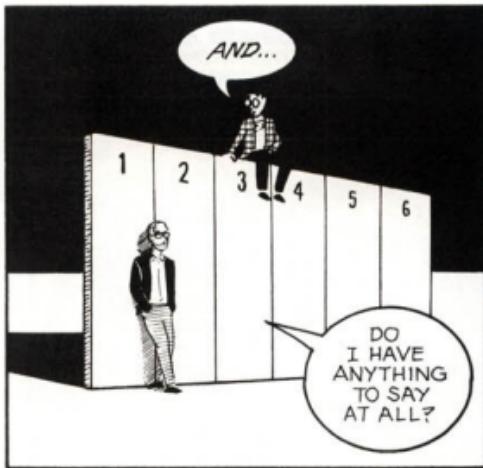
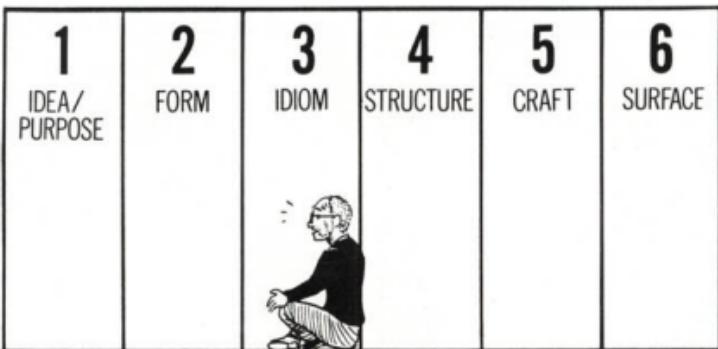


BUT ELSEWHERE, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS DISSATISFIED. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



...SOMETHING FUNDAMENTAL, SOMETHING AT THE CORE OF WHO HE IS AS AN ARTIST. WITH THESE THOUGHTS ON HIS MIND, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE ASKS THAT ONE SIMPLE QUESTION:





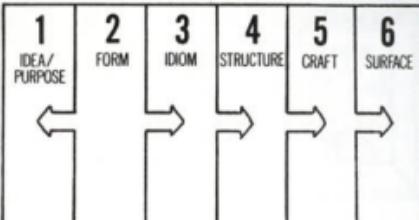
2 FORM

BY CHOOSING **FORM**, HE'D BE SETTING UP TO BECOME AN **EXPLORER**.

HIS GOAL: TO DISCOVER ALL THAT THE ART FORM IS CAPABLE OF.



AND HIS ART WOULD NOT LACK FOR IDEAS OR FOR A PURPOSE.



HIS ART WOULD JUST **BECOME** HIS PURPOSE AND THE IDEAS WOULD ARRIVE IN TIME TO GIVE IT **SUBSTANCE**.

CREATORS WHO TAKE THIS PATH ARE OFTEN PIONEERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES--ARTISTS WHO WANT TO **SHAKE THINGS UP**, CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE **THINK**, QUESTION THE FUNDAMENTAL **LAWS** THAT GOVERN THEIR CHOSEN ART.



(IN OTHER ART FORMS: STRAVINSKY, PICASSO, VIRGINIA WOOLF, ORSON WELLES, ETC.)

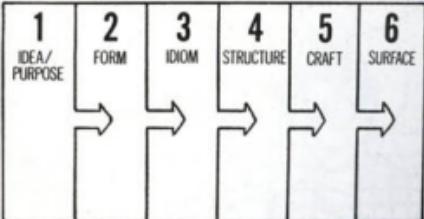
1 IDEA/ PURPOSE

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF HE CHOOSES THE **FIRST** STEP AS HIS GOAL, THEN HIS ART BECOMES A **TOOL**.

AND THE **POWERS** OF THAT ART WILL RELY ON THE POWERS OF THE IDEAS **WITHIN**.



NOW "TELLING THE STORY" (OR IN THE CASE OF NON-FICTION, "DELIVERING THE MESSAGE") TAKES PRIORITY OVER INVENTION.



BUT TELLING A STORY AS **EFFECTIVELY** AS POSSIBLE MAY **REQUIRE** SOME INVENTION. IT OFTEN DOES.

THIS IS THE PATH OF GREAT **STORYTELLERS**, CREATORS WHO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY THROUGH COMICS AND DEVOTE ALL THEIR ENERGIES TO CONTROLLING THEIR MEDIUM, REFINING ITS ABILITY TO CONVEY MESSAGES EFFECTIVELY.



SCHULZ.



BARKS



HERGÉ



EISNER.



NAKAZAWA

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

FORTUNATELY,
THIS CHOICE
NEVER HAS TO BE
PERMANENT.

IT
CAN CHANGE
AS OFTEN AS
AN ARTIST
CHANGES
PROJECTS!

NO WORK OF ART CAN BE **TOTALLY**
WITHOUT "CONTENT" ANY MORE THAN
IT CAN EXIST WITHOUT A **FORM!** BUT
IT DOES HELP TO SET SOME **PRIORITIES.**

HEY, I'M
DRIVING!

NO, I'M
DRIVING!

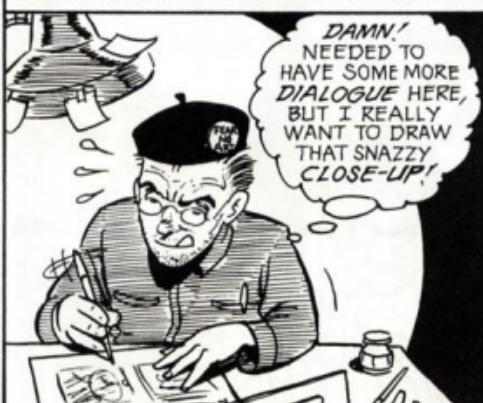


THIS IS A PROBLEM IN MANY
"ASSEMBLY LINE" COMICS WHERE
CREATIVE SPECIALIZATION HAS
"SCRIPTERS," "PENCILLERS" AND "INKERS"
ALL WORKING AT CROSS-PURPOSES
IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GET
NOTICED.

CRASH!

NOT THAT WE "CREATOR/WRITER/ARTIST"
TYPES NEVER RUN INTO THIS PROBLEM...

DAMN!
NEEDED TO
HAVE SOME MORE
DIALOGUE HERE,
BUT I REALLY
WANT TO DRAW
THAT SNAZZY
CLOSE-UP!



THE MORE AN ARTIST DEVOTES HIM/HERSELF TO EITHER OF THESE TWO FOCAL POINTS, THE MORE DRAMATIC THE CHANGE IF HE/SHE DECIDES TO *SWITCH!*

ART SPIEGELMAN'S AGGRESSIVELY EXPERIMENTAL WORK OF THE *SEVENTIES* AND EARLY *EIGHTIES* LEFT NO ONE PREPARED FOR THE UNASSUMING "REPORT" STYLE OF HIS LANDMARK BIOGRAPHY *MAUS*.

2 FORM



1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



PERHAPS IF STRIPPED DOWN FAR ENOUGH, MOST ARTISTS' ULTIMATE GOALS ARE NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE'S. EVEN FOR THOSE WITH *HIGH IDEALS*, BASIC INSTINCTS EXERT A POWERFUL ATTRACTION.

1



1



1



SURVIVAL → REPRODUCTION

AND WHEN ART BECOMES A *JOB* OR A MATTER OF *SOCIAL STATUS* THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFUSING ONE'S GOALS GOES UP CONSIDERABLY.



BUT EVEN IF WE TAKE LIFE'S *DISTRACTIONS* INTO ACCOUNT, IT'S STILL AMAZING HOW MUCH *TIME* AND *EFFORT* IS SPENT BY COMICS CREATORS TRYING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT OUT OF COMICS --

-- BEFORE THEY EVEN KNOW *WHAT* THEY WANT!



OF COURSE, NOT *EVERYBODY* TAKES THE *LONG WAY AROUND*. SOME ARTISTS HAVE NO TROUBLE SETTING GOALS AND ACHIEVING THEM WITHOUT ANY *DETOURS*...



1

IDEA/
PURPOSE

2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



ANY
ARTIST CREATING
ANY WORK IN **ANY**
MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS
FOLLOW THESE **SIX STEPS**
WHETHER THEY REALIZE
IT OR NOT.

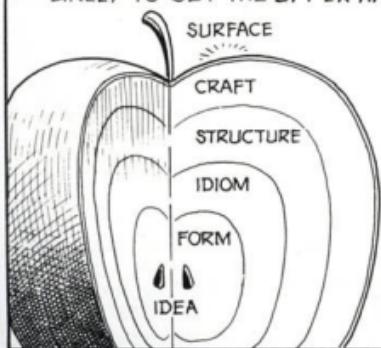
AND **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS
HAVE THE **POTENTIAL**
FOR **SELF-EXPRESSION**,
EVEN WHEN ECONOMIC
SURVIVAL IS THE
ARTIST'S MAIN
CONCERN.



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

THERE'S
ALWAYS ROOM
FOR A CERTAIN
AMOUNT OF **"ART."**

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



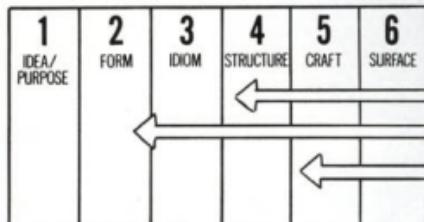
THE ORDER OF THE SIX STEPS
IS **INNATE**. LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT
OF BONES IN A DINOSAUR'S SKELETON,
THEY CAN BE DISCOVERED IN ANY ORDER,
BUT WHEN **BROUGHT TOGETHER**, THEY
WILL ALWAYS FALL INTO **PLACE!**



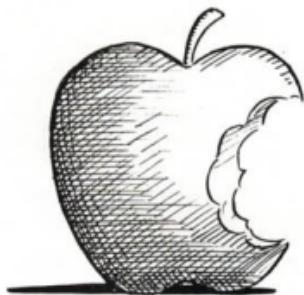
IN PRACTICE, ANY ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.



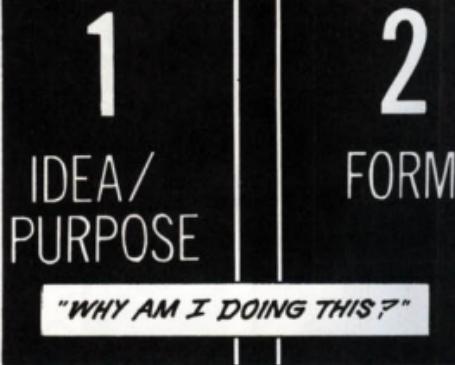
STILL, THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR MOST ARTISTS IS A SLOW AND STEADY JOURNEY FROM END TO BEGINNING,



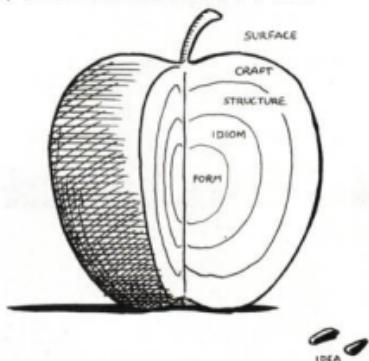
FROM SURFACE TO CORE.



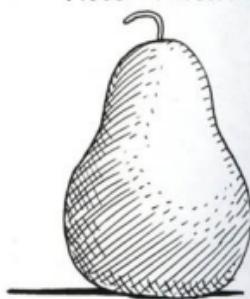
AND IT'S AT THE CORE OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:



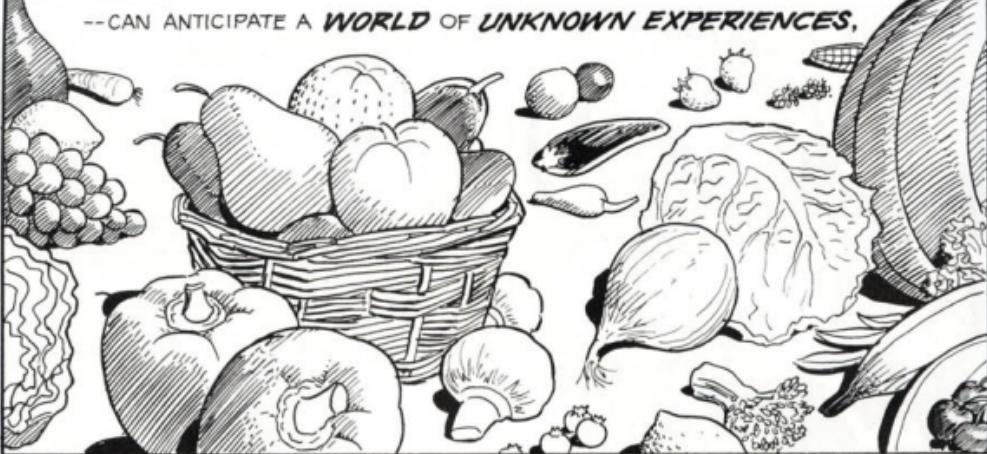
WHEN FORM RULES THE WORK, IT MAY SEEM SOMEWHAT ARTIFICIAL AT THE CORE, LIKE A SEEDLESS FRUIT.



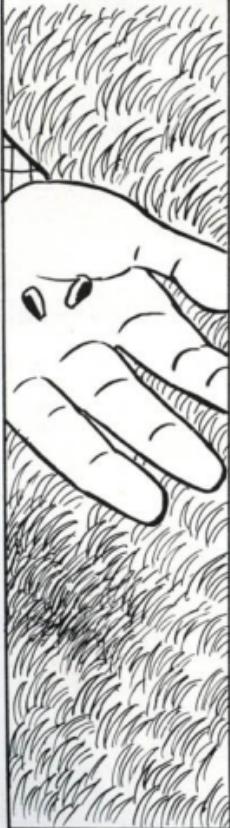
BUT SUCH WORKS DON'T TAKE THE SHAPE OF ART FOR GRANTED AND BY QUESTIONING OUR FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS--



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

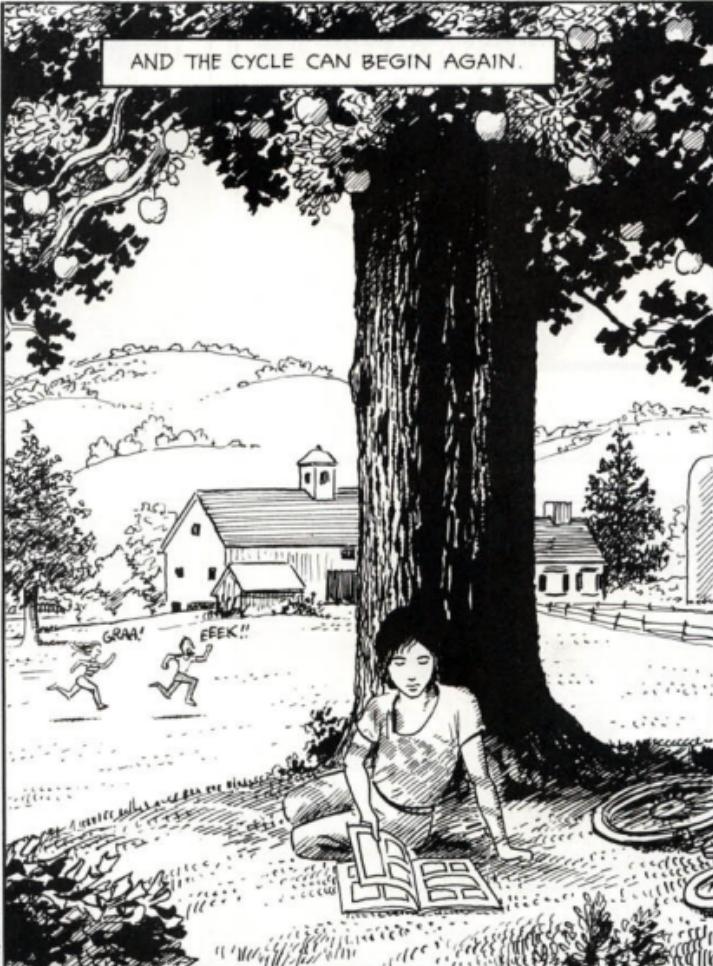


WHILE IF **IDEAS**
RULE THE WORK AND
DETERMINE ITS
SHAPE, COMICS CAN
HELP **PLANT** THOSE
IDEAS FAR AND WIDE.



APOLLODUS TO M. PARASITUS.

AND THE CYCLE CAN BEGIN AGAIN.



CHAPTER EIGHT

A WORD ABOUT COLOR.

IN CHAPTER FIVE WE DEALT WITH THE EXPRESSIONISTIC POTENTIAL OF LINES AS ANTICIPATED BY ARTISTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, BUT OF COURSE IT WAS COLOR WHICH MOST CAPTIVATED ARTISTS OF THAT ERA.



THROUGHOUT ART HISTORY, COLOR HAS BEEN A POWERFUL, EVEN PREDOMINANT, CONCERN OF FINE ARTISTS EVERYWHERE.



SOME, LIKE GEORGES SEURAT, DEVOTED THEIR LIVES TO ITS STUDY.



OTHERS, LIKE KANDINSKY, BELIEVED THAT COLORS COULD HAVE PROFOUND PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS ON PEOPLE.



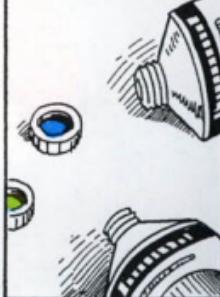
COLOR CAN BE A **FORMIDABLE ALLY** FOR ARTISTS IN ANY VISUAL MEDIUM.



YET IN COMICS THE CAREER OF COLOR HAS BEEN, WELL... A BIT "SPOTTY."



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



COMMERCE

AND

TECHNOLOGY.

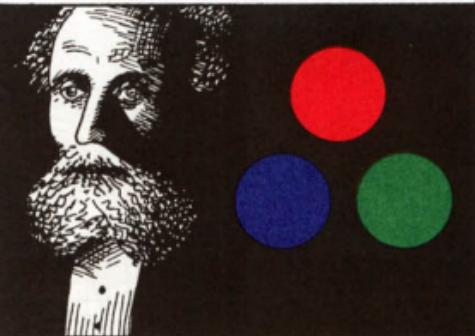
NOW **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS HISTORY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY **COMMERCE**. MONEY HAS A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON WHAT IS AND **ISN'T** SEEN.



BUT **COLOR** IN COMICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNUSUALLY SENSITIVE TO THE SHIFTING TIDES OF **TECHNOLOGY**.



THE TECHNOLOGY OF COLOR REPRODUCTION WAS FIRST ANTICIPATED IN **1861** WHEN SCOTTISH PHYSICIST **SIR JAMES CLERK-MAXWELL** ISOLATED WHAT WE NOW CALL **THE THREE ADDITIVE PRIMARIES**.



THESE COLORS -- ROUGHLY, **RED**, **BLUE** AND **GREEN** -- WHEN PROJECTED TOGETHER ON A SCREEN IN **VARIOUS COMBINATIONS**, COULD REPRODUCE EVERY COLOR IN THE **VISIBLE SPECTRUM**.



THEY WERE CALLED **ADDITIVE** BECAUSE THEY LITERALLY ADDED UP TO **PURE WHITE LIGHT**.



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



THESE COLORS -- CYAN, MAGENTA AND YELLOW -- CAN **ALSO** MIX TO PRODUCE ANY HUE IN THE VISIBLE SPECTRUM, BUT RATHER THAN ADDING LIGHT, THESE THREE DO IT BY **FILTERING IT OUT!**



THIS SUBTRACTIVE EFFECT WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH TRANSPARENT SUBSTANCES SUCH AS CELLOPHANE, COLORED GLASS, WATER COLOR --



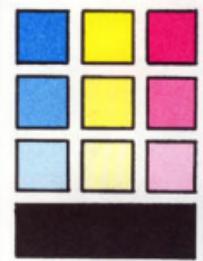
COLOR COMICS HIT THE **NEWSPAPER** INDUSTRY LIKE AN **ATOMIC BOMB!**



COLOR BOOSTED SALES, BUT IT ALSO BOOSTED COSTS! MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO STREAMLINE THE PROCESS AND MAKE IT MORE COST-EFFECTIVE.



AND THE STANDARD "FOUR COLOR" PROCESS TOOK OVER.



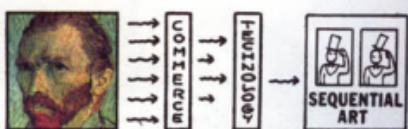
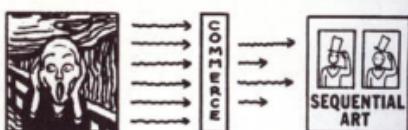
THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO 100%, 50%, AND 20%, USING BLACK INK FOR THE LINE WORK.



THE LOOK OF THESE COLORS, HELD BY BOLD, SIMPLE OUTLINES, AND REPRODUCED ON CHEAP NEWSPRINT EVENTUALLY BECAME THE LOOK OF COMICS IN AMERICA.



SO, WHILE THE EXPRESSIVE ART OF **LINE** WAS SUBJECT TO THE **SUBTRACTIVE FILTER** OF COMMERCE ON ITS WAY TO COMICS, **COLOR** WAS SUBJECT TO THE FILTERS OF BOTH COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY.



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

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



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



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



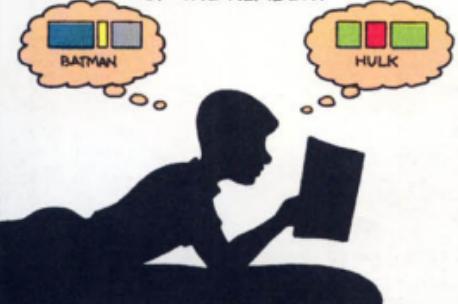
-- WAS OFTEN CANCELLED OUT TO AN EMOTIONAL GREY.



AS ALWAYS, THERE WERE SOME EXCEPTIONS, BUT THIS WAS THE OVERALL TREND.



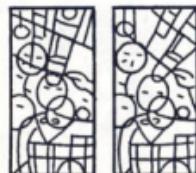
HOWEVER, WHILE COMICS COLORS WERE LESS THAN EXPRESSIONISTIC, THEY WERE FIXED WITH A NEW ICONIC POWER. BECAUSE COSTUME COLORS REMAINED EXACTLY THE SAME, PANEL AFTER PANEL, THEY CAME TO SYMBOLIZE CHARACTERS IN THE MIND OF THE READER.



MANY SEE THE SUPERHERO AS A FORM OF MODERN MYTHOLOGY. IF SO, THIS ASPECT OF COLOR MAY PLAY A PART.



ANOTHER PROPERTY OF FLAT COLORS IS THEIR TENDENCY TO EMPHASIZE THE SHAPE OF OBJECTS, BOTH ANIMATE AND INANIMATE--



-- AS ANY CHILD WHO HAS EVER "COLORED-BY-NUMBERS" KNOWS INSTINCTIVELY.



THESE COLORS OBJECTIFY THEIR SUBJECTS. WE BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE PHYSICAL FORM OF OBJECTS THAN IN BLACK AND WHITE.

A GAME IN MOTION BECOMES A BALL IN AIR. A FACE SHOWING EMOTION BECOMES A HEAD AND TWO HANDS.



THE WORLD TAKES ON THE CHILDHOOD REALITY OF THE PLAYGROUND AND RECALLS A TIME WHEN SHAPE PRECEDED MEANING. OBLONG SWING SETS. CYLINDRICAL JUNGLE GYMS. THE WONDER OF THINGS!



DOESN'T IT FOLLOW THEN THAT THE MASTERS OF FLAT-COLOR COMICS ARE, ABOVE ALL, MASTERS OF FORM AND COMPOSITION?



MECAY.



COLE.



FROM STEVE DITKO TO CARL BARKS TO F. CRAIG RUSSELL, THAT LOVE OF SHAPES PERSISTS IN WORLDS FAIRLY GLOWING WITH THE MYSTERY OF FIRST ENCOUNTERS.

ANY WONDER THEN THAT COMICS IN AMERICA HAS BEEN SO RELUCTANT TO "GROW UP"?



IN EUROPE HERGE CAPTURED THE MAGIC OF SUCH FLAT COLORS WITH UNPRECEDENTED SUBTLETY.



HERGÉ CREATED A KIND OF DEMOCRACY OF FORM IN WHICH NO SHAPE WAS ANY LESS IMPORTANT THAN ANY OTHER -- A COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE WORLD.



COMICS PRINTING WAS SUPERIOR IN EUROPE AND FOR HERGÉ, FLAT COLORS WERE A PREFERENCE, NOT A NECESSITY.



BUT OTHERS SUCH AS CLAVELLOUX, CAZA AND MOËBIUS SAW IN THEIR SUPERIOR PRINTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH A MORE INTENSE SUBJECTIVE PALETTE.



SOME OF THIS WORK BEGAN REACHING AMERICA IN THE 70'S, INSPIRING MANY YOUNG ARTISTS TO LOOK BEYOND THEIR FOUR-COLOR WALLS.



SUDDENLY IT SEEMED POSSIBLE FOR COLOR TO TAKE ON A CENTRAL ROLE.



COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.

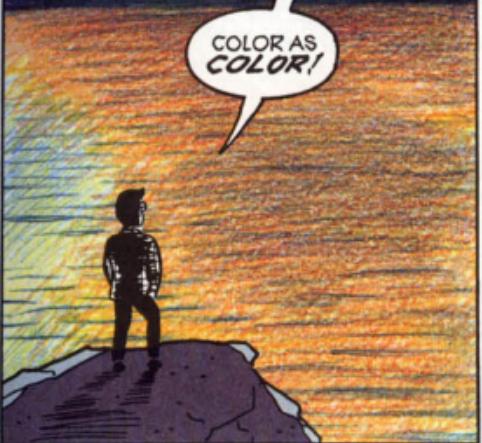


TONES AND MODELLING COULD ADD DEPTH.

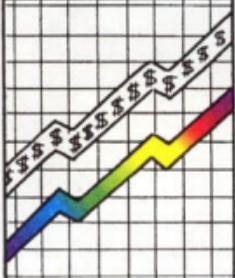


WHOLE SCENES COULD BE VIRTUALLY ABOUT COLOR!





UNFORTUNATELY, COLOR IS STILL AN EXPENSIVE OPTION AND HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN IN THE HANDS OF LARGER, MORE CONSERVATIVE PUBLISHERS.



SINCE THE LATE 70's, MORE AND MORE "UPSCALE" COLOR PROJECTS HAVE BEGUN APPEARING IN AMERICA.



SOME PUBLISHERS AT THE BEGINNING TRIED APPLYING THE TRADITIONAL "FOUR-COLOR" PROCESS TO BETTER PAPER WITH GARISH RESULTS.



WHEN MODELLING AND MORE SUBTLE HUES WERE APPLIED, THOUGH, THEY SEEMED OUT OF PLACE ON THE OLD SHAPE-SENSITIVE LINE DRAWINGS.



THE SURFACE WAS CHANGING, BUT NOT THE CORE. FOR ALL THEIR SUBTLE HUES, COMICS WERE STILL BEING WRITTEN IN PRIMARY COLORS!



THIS IS BEGINNING TO CHANGE AS I WRITE THIS, BUT IT'S STILL THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE. COMIC ARTISTS WANTING TO CONDUCT BOLD NEW EXPERIMENTS IN COMICS ART--



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACK-AND-WHITE AND COLOR COMICS ARE *VAST AND PROFOUND*, AFFECTING EVERY LEVEL OF THE READING EXPERIENCE.



IN BLACK AND WHITE, THE IDEAS *BEHIND* THE ART ARE COMMUNICATED MORE DIRECTLY. MEANING TRANSCENDS FORM. ART APPROACHES LANGUAGE.



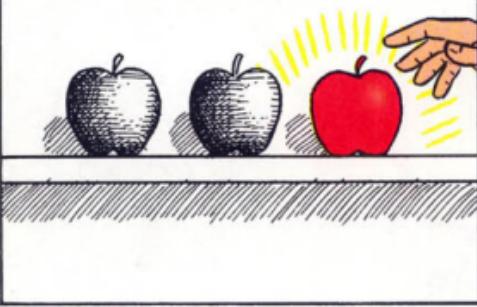
IN FLAT COLORS FORMS THEMSELVES TAKE ON MORE SIGNIFICANCE. THE WORLD BECOMES A PLAYGROUND OF SHAPES AND SPACE.



AND THROUGH MORE EXPRESSIVE COLORS, COMICS CAN BECOME AN *INTOXICATING ENVIRONMENT OF SENSATIONS* THAT ONLY COLOR CAN GIVE.



THE *SURFACE QUALITIES* OF COLOR WILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT READERS MORE EASILY THAN BLACK AND WHITE, AND THE STORY OF COLOR WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO BE INTERTWINED WITH THE FORCES OF COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY.



WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF COLORS, NOT JUST BLACK AND WHITE. COLOR COMICS WILL ALWAYS SEEM MORE 'REAL' AT FIRST GLANCE.



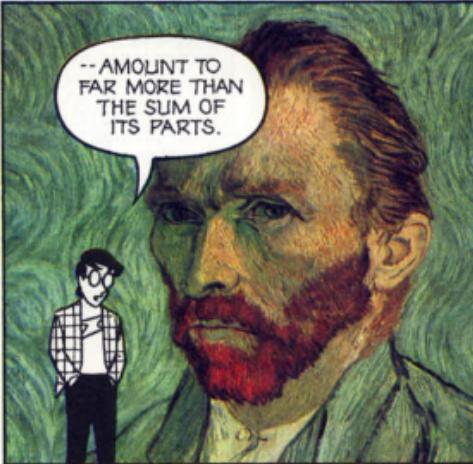
BUT COMICS READERS LOOK FOR MANY THINGS BESIDES "REALITY" AND, TECHNOLOGY NOTWITHSTANDING, COLOR WILL NEVER REPLACE BLACK AND WHITE ENTIRELY.



ONE THING'S FOR SURE, THOUGH, WHEN USED WELL, COLOR IN COMICS CAN -- LIKE COMICS ITSELF --



-- AMOUNT TO FAR MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.



CHAPTER NINE

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.

SO,
WHY IS THIS
MEDIUM WE
CALL COMICS SO
IMPORTANT?
WHY SHOULD WE
TRY SO HARD TO
UNDERSTAND
COMICS?



SEQUENTIAL ART

I THINK THE
ANSWER LIES DEEP
WITHIN THE HUMAN
CONDITION...

WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF
PROFOUND ISOLATION.

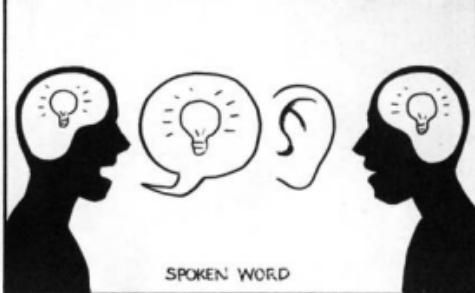
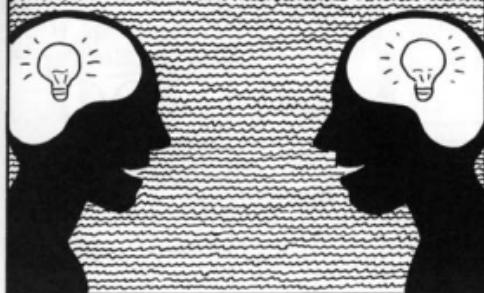
NO OTHER HUMAN BEING CAN
EVER KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO
BE YOU FROM THE INSIDE.

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

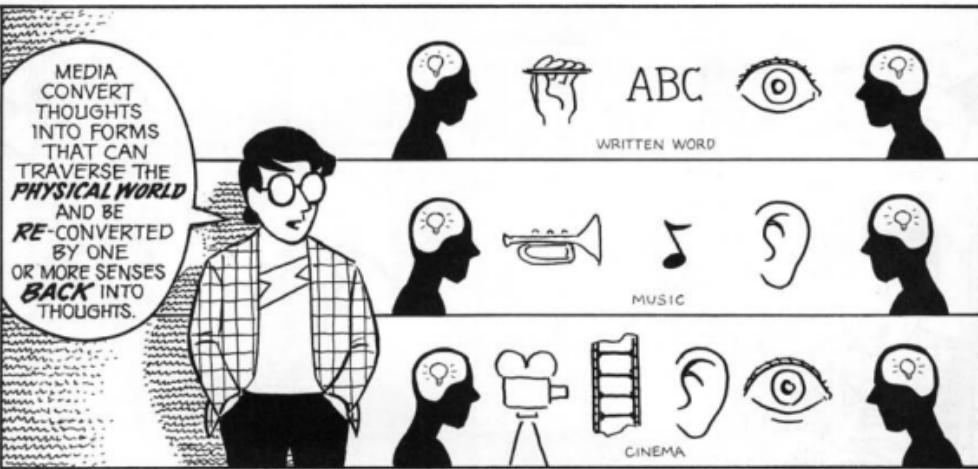
ALL MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION
ARE A BY-PRODUCT OF OUR SAD
INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE
DIRECTLY FROM MIND TO MIND.

SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY STEM FROM THAT INABILITY.

EACH MEDIUM (THE TERM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD MEANING MIDDLE) SERVES AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN MINDS.

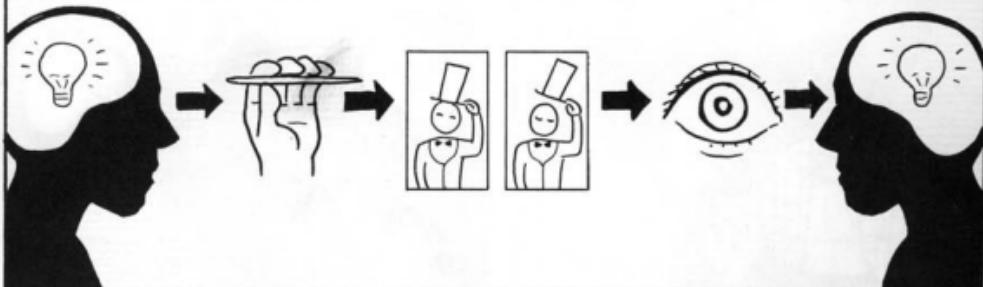


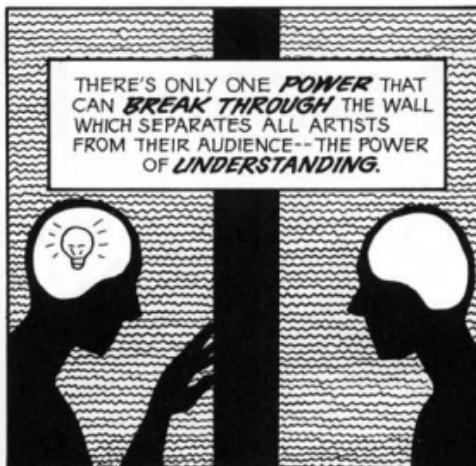
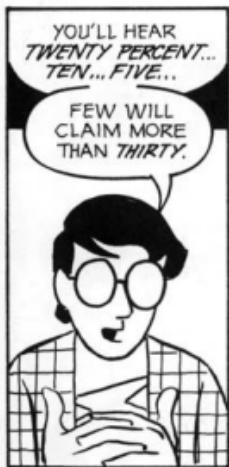
spoken word



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

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





UNDERSTANDING
COMICS IS SERIOUS
BUSINESS.

TODAY, COMICS IS ONE OF THE
VERY FEW FORMS OF MASS
COMMUNICATION IN WHICH
INDIVIDUAL VOICES STILL
HAVE A CHANCE TO BE HEARD.

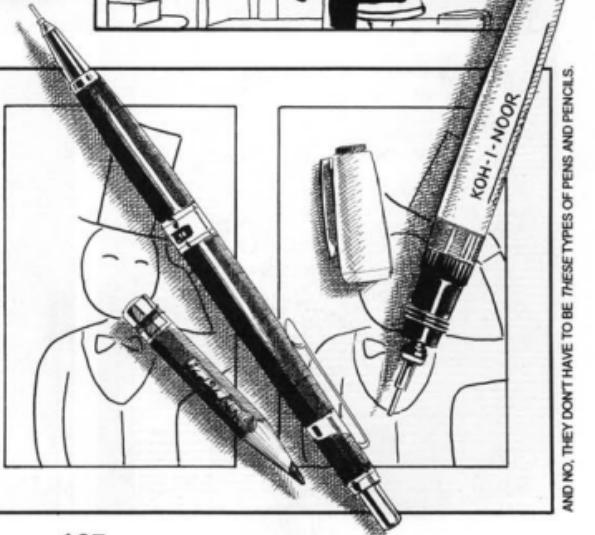


THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE
BUSINESS OF COMICS HAVE MANY
OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME--

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

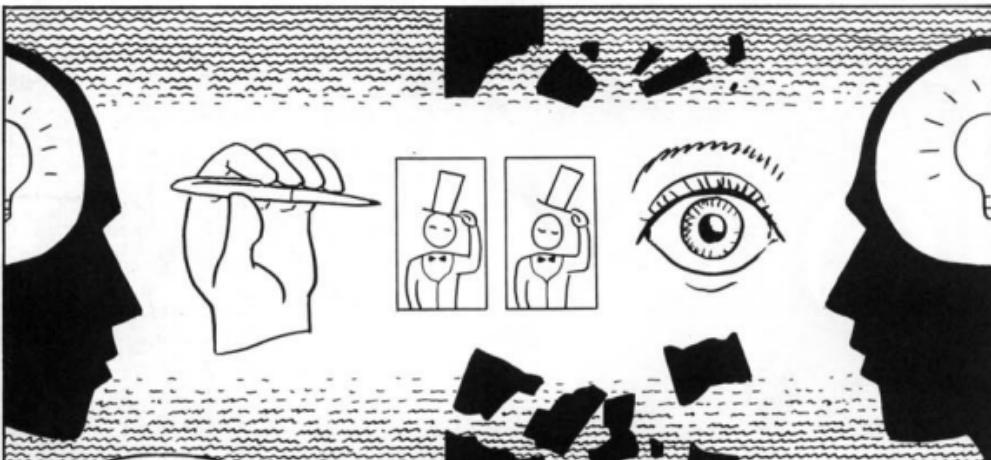


COMICS
WELCOMES
ANY WRITER OR
ARTIST TO STEP INTO
ITS WORLD, A WORLD
AS CLOSE AS **PEN**
OR **PENCIL AND PAPER**.



AND NO, THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE THESE TYPES OF PENS AND PENCILS.

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



THE FIRST STEP IN ANY SUCH EFFORT IS TO CLEAR OUR MINDS OF ALL PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT COMICS.

ONLY BY STARTING FROM SCRATCH CAN WE DISCOVER THE FULL RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES COMICS OFFER.

THIS MEANS LEARNING TO SEPARATE THE **FORM** OF COMICS FROM ITS OFTEN INCONSISTENT **CONTENTS**.



THE BEST **DEFINITION** FOR COMICS WILL, I THINK, BE THE MOST EXPANSIVE.



SEQUENTIAL ART

WITH A LITTLE REFINING, SUCH A DEFINITION CAN TAKE 'COMICS FAR INTO THE FUTURE--'

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

-- AND FAR INTO THE **PAST**, BEYOND THE ARTIFICIAL "STARTING POINT" OF 1896 AND "THE YELLOW KID!"

HONK!
HONK!

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

1775 1800 1825 1850 1875 1900



OVER
THREE THOUSAND
YEARS BEYOND!



THERE'S AN
INCREDIBLE WEALTH
OF ANCIENT COMICS
AND SOME MAY YET
HOLD THE KEY
TO COMICS'
FUTURE!



DISCOVERING
AND CATALOGUING
THIS WORK HAS
ALREADY **BEGIN***
BUT THERE'S MUCH
MORE THAT **NEEDS**
TO BE DONE!



THERE'S
A **BIG Gaping
HOLE** IN THE
OFFICIAL HISTORY
OF ART AND IT'S HIGH
TIME SOMEBODY
FILLED IT!



JOURNAL
PICTURES
AND OTHER
IMAGES IN
DELIBERATE
SEQUENCE

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

“...the picture-story, which critics disregard and scholars scarcely notice, has had great influence at all times, perhaps even more than written literature.”

Rudolphe Topffer
1845

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

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

Rudolphe Topffer
1845

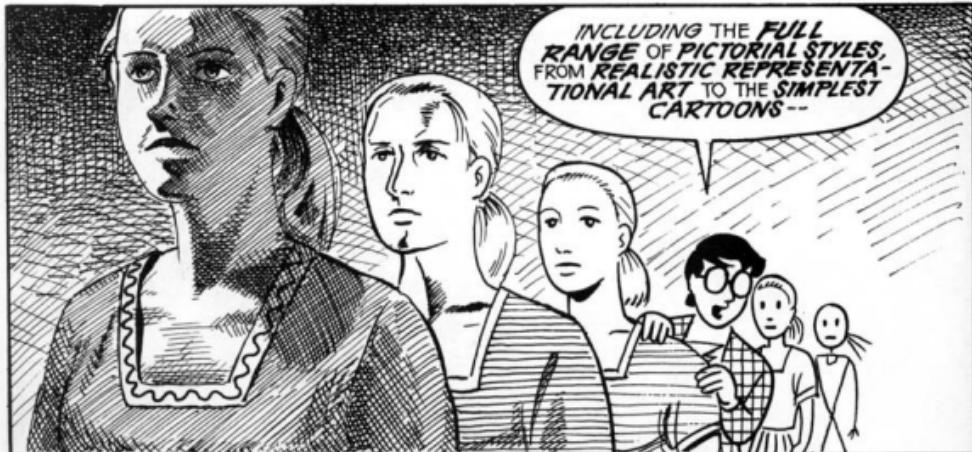
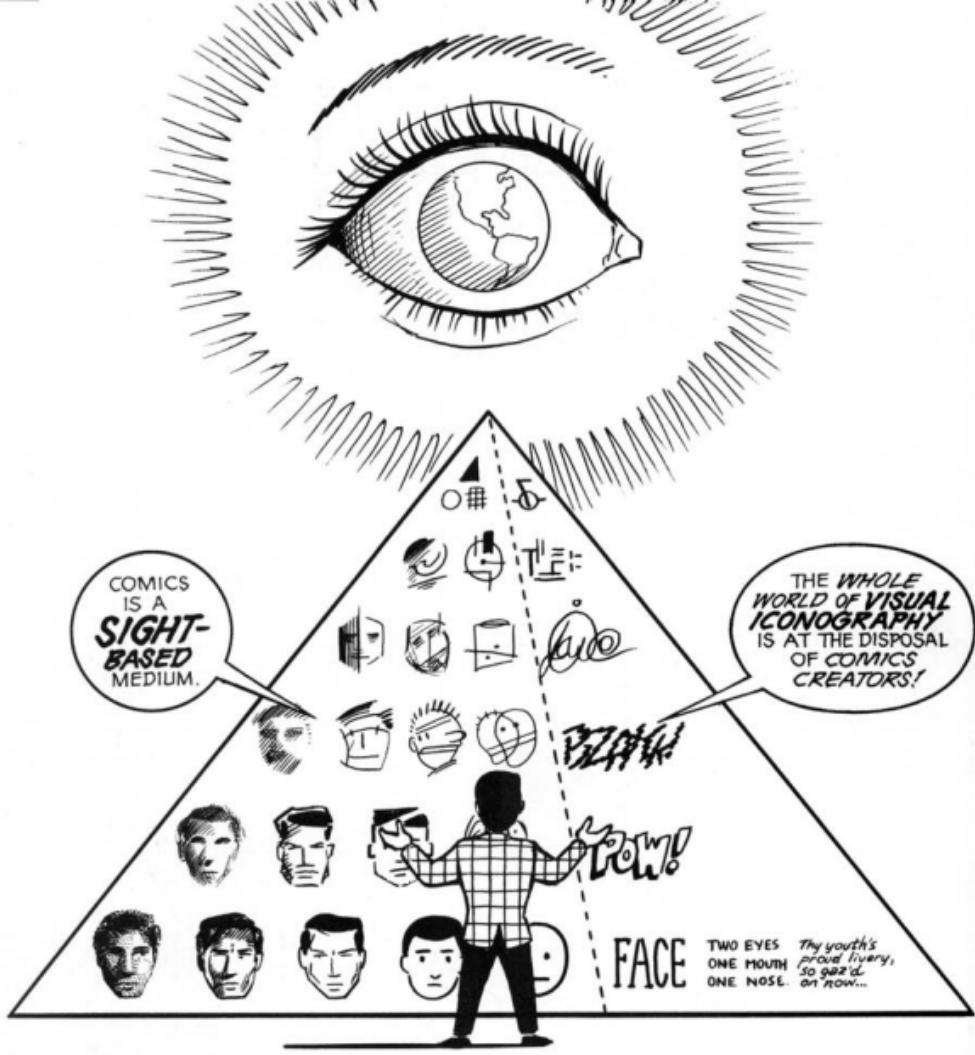


TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE

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

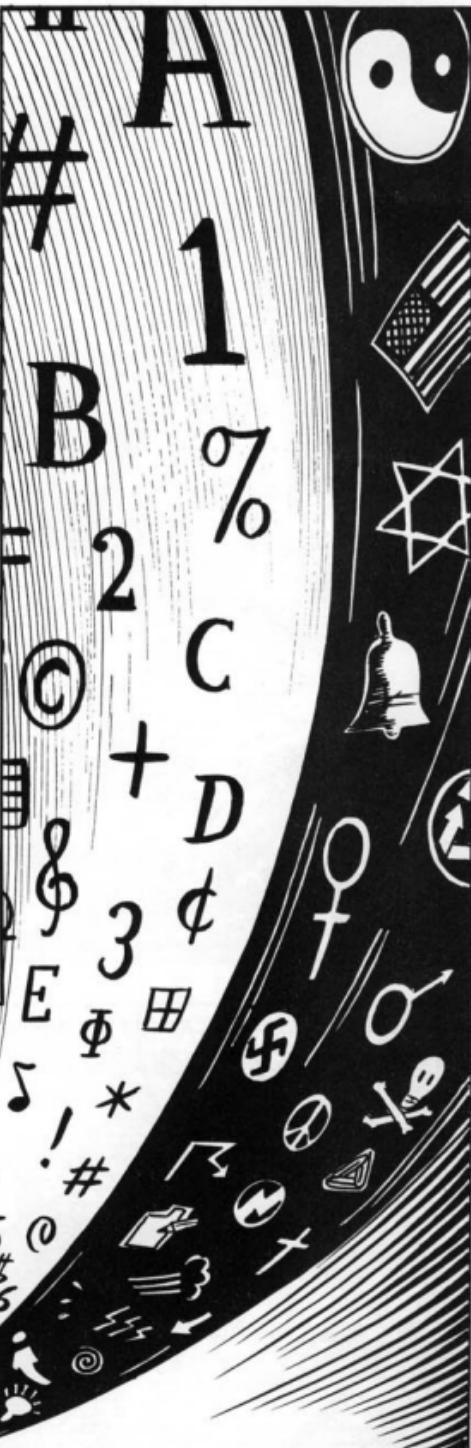
ELEVATED BEYOND THEIR HERITAGE BY A CHANGE OF NAME!

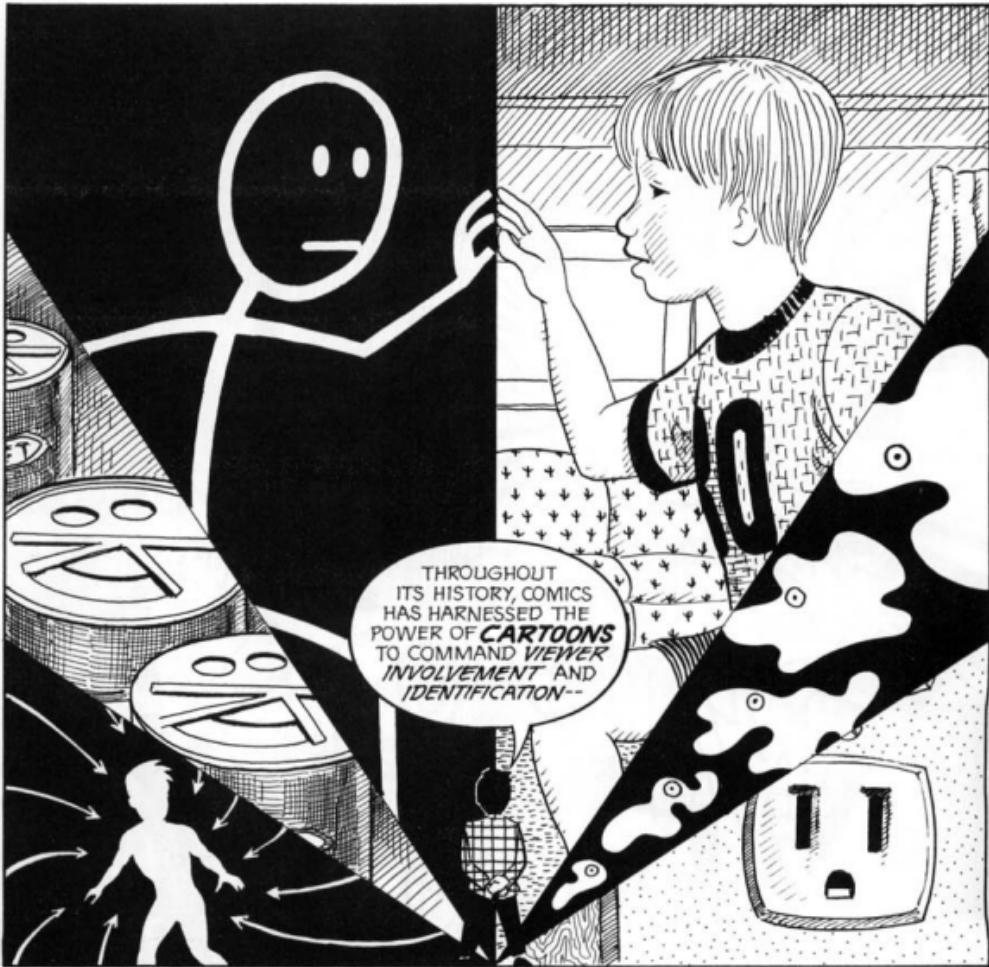






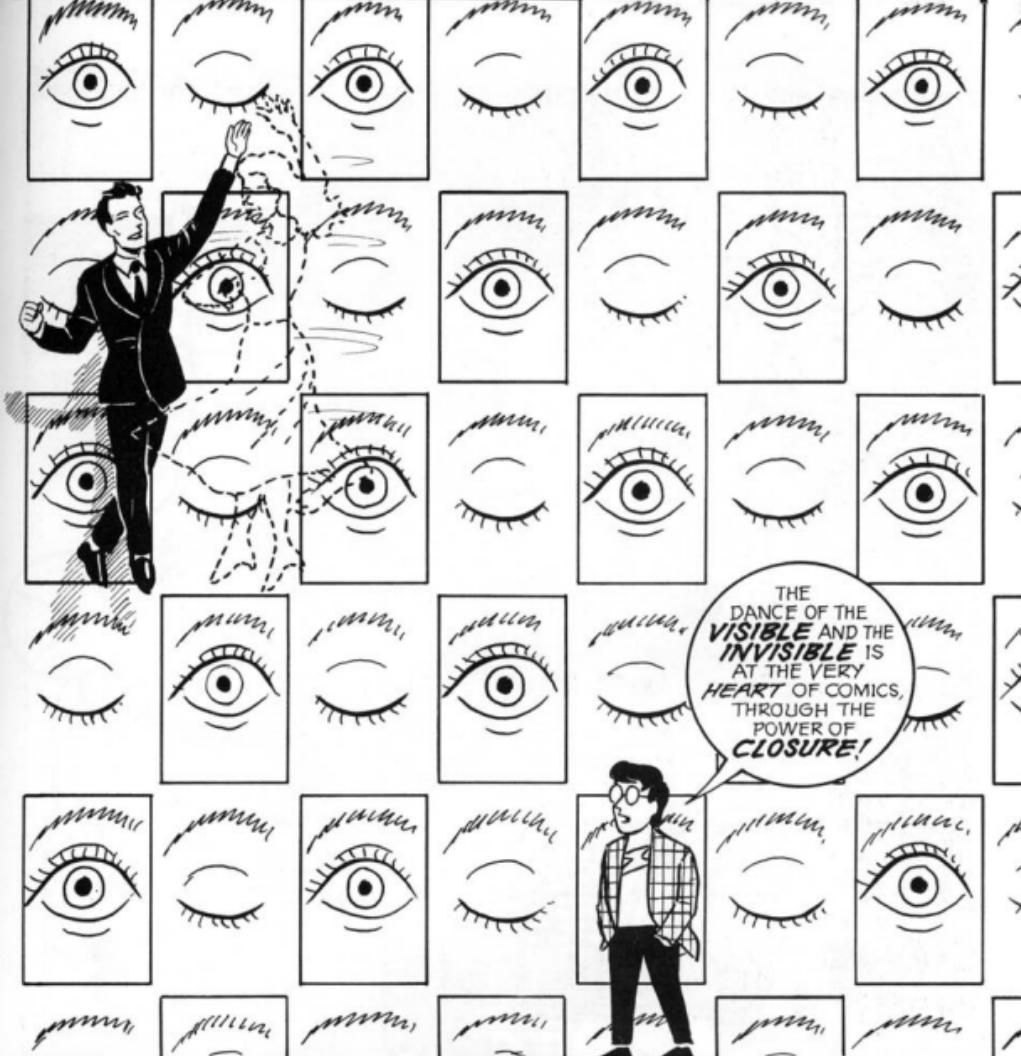
AND THE **INVISIBLE**
WORLD OF SYMBOLS AND
LANGUAGE!





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



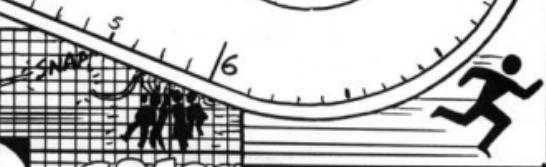
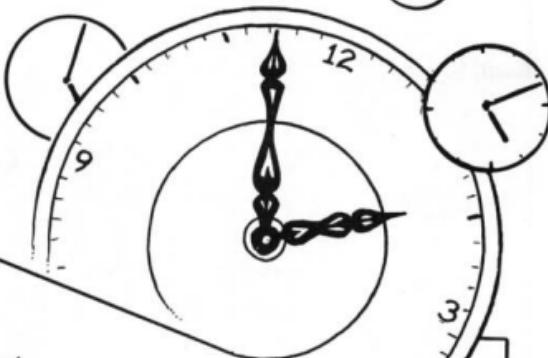
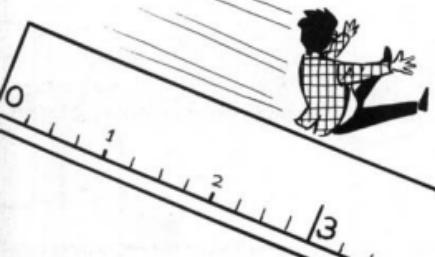


COMICS IS A GREAT
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



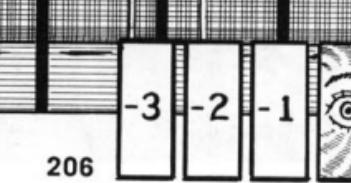
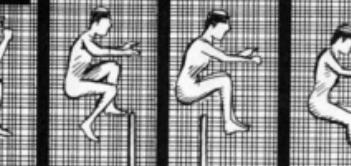
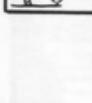
--AND A
BAFFLING
TWO-STEP OF
TIME AND
SPACE!



CRASH!



I GUESS.



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

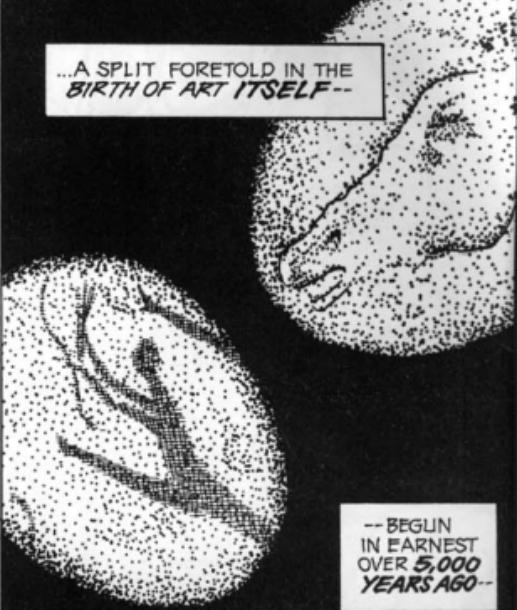


et genuie li
ini & nephi
thaalui d
ihu & capth
uit sydonem

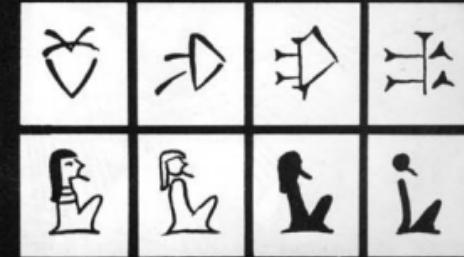
in unravished
eld of silence
re, who comit to
re sweetly, the
d legend ha
mortals, of lo
or the dates o
gods are these

FACE

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



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



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

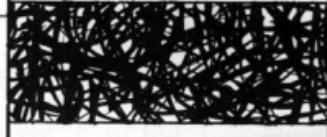
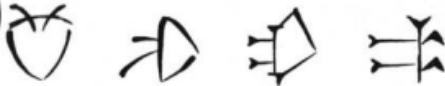




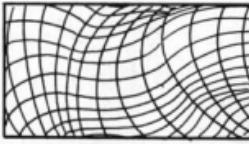
SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



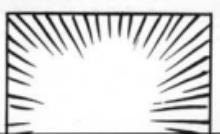
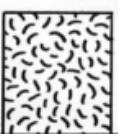
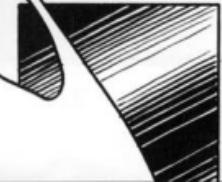
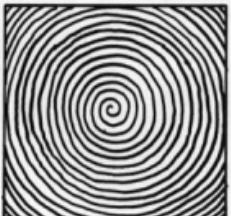
--AS ALL
LANGUAGE
MUST
EVOLVE--



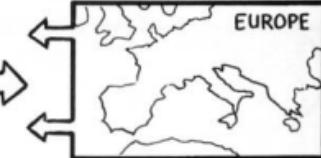
-- BECAUSE
EMBEDDED IN
ALL PICTURES
OF THE **VISILE**
WORLD ARE THE
SEEDS OF THE
INVISIBLE.



THE SEEDS OF
EXPRESSIONISM
AND
SYNAESTHETICS.



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



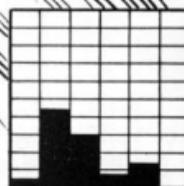
SO IT WAS IN JAPAN WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED IN RELATIVE ISOLATION, SPAWNING A HOST OF UNIQUE APPROACHES TO MAKING COMICS.



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 HORROR

VERSE

SURREALISM

EPIC

HISTORICAL FICTION

POETRY

FOLK TALES

SOCIAL

EROTICA

ALLEGORY

MYSTERY

ADAPTATIONS

RELIGIOUS TOPICS

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SATIRE



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

--ENDLESS.



COMICS OFFERS
TREMENDOUS
RESOURCES TO
ALL WRITERS
AND ARTISTS:
FAITHFULNESS,
CONTROL, A
CHANCE TO BE
HEARD FAR AND
WIDE, WITHOUT
FEAR OF
COMPROMISE...



IT OFFERS
RANGE AND
VERSATILITY
WITH ALL THE
POTENTIAL IMAGERY
OF FILM AND
PAINTING
PLUS THE
INTIMACY
OF THE
WRITTEN WORD.

AND ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS THE DESIRE TO BE HEARD--

1

2

3

4

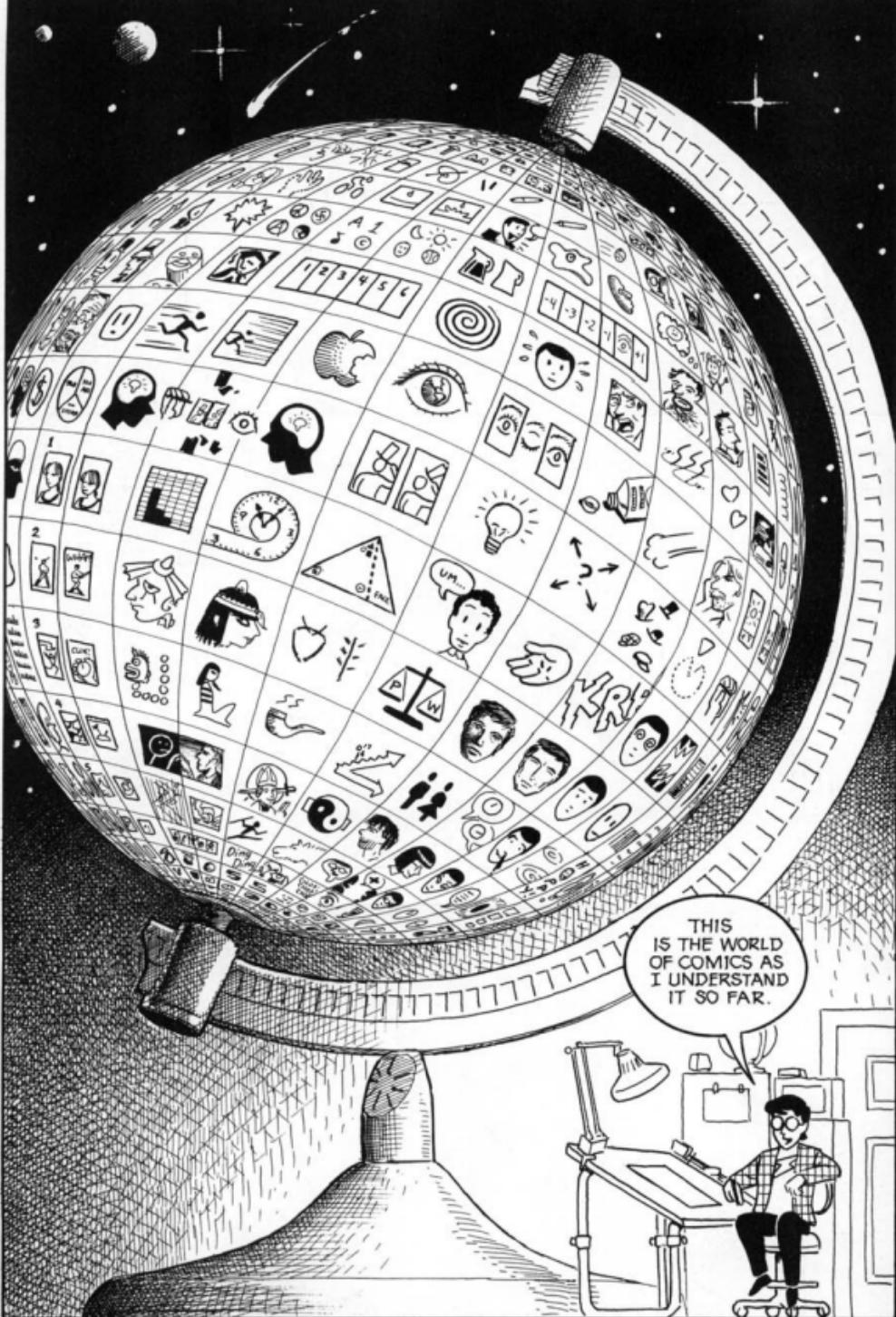
5

6

--THE WILL

TO LEARN--

--AND THE
ABILITY TO
SEE.





wordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswordswords

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Kunzle, David: *The Early Comic Strip* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

McLuhan, Marshall: *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964).

Schwartz, Tony: *Media: The Second God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983).

Wiese, E., editor, translator: *Enter: The Comics--Rodolphe Topffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crepin* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

Special note: Kunzle's book (see above) has gone virtually unnoticed by the comics community but is an enormously important work, covering nearly 400 years of forgotten European comics. Check it out!

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Letters of comment are appreciated (if 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.