

= The Beguiling =

The Beguiling is a comic shop in Toronto , Ontario , Canada . It specializes in underground and alternative comics , classic comic strip reprints , and foreign comics . It has built an international reputation for focusing on and promoting non @-@ superhero comics in the superhero @-@ dominated North American comic book market .

The store has made effort to promote comics culture in Toronto by organizing the annual Toronto Comic Arts Festival (TCAF) in coöperation with the Toronto Public Library , and by opening sister store Little Island Comics , the first North American comic shop aimed exclusively at children .

= = History = =

Founded in 1987 by Steve Solomos and Sean Scoffield on Harbord Street near the University of Toronto in Toronto , Ontario , Canada , The Beguiling quickly built a reputation for the diversity of its stock , focused on art @-@ oriented , avant @-@ garde , underground and alternative comics ? " anything that is even peripherally comic book @-@ oriented " , according to current owner Peter Birkemoe . In the earliest days , much of the store 's income was made through mail order , as the material it dealt in was not mainstream . It also built a reputation for stocking the works of cartoonists such as Chester Brown and Julie Doucet , whose comics most stores would not handle due to the controversial nature of their contents . Well @-@ known Toronto @-@ based cartoonists such as the trio of Brown , Seth and Joe Matt became associated with the store , and sometimes depicted it in their comics . Others such as Jay Stephens made it their shop of choice .

In 1998 , Solomos and Scoffield decided to devote their time to creating art (and later film production) , and ownership was passed to Peter Birkemoe and Shane Chung , who expanded operations . In 1992 it relocated to a two @-@ floor Victorian building in Mirvish Village in Toronto , and has since branched out into selling to libraries , organizing the Toronto Comic Arts Festival , and running another location , called Little Island Comics , which caters to children .

= = Description and reputation = =

The Beguiling is " a store with an agenda " , according to Birkemoe , and has been derided for some for its perceived elitism , which stems in part from its sponsoring of Crash , a journal of comics criticism that mainly condemned bad comics . Others , such as comics historian Charles Hatfield , have praised the store for its sense of history , saying , " You always leave the shop with a larger sense of what comics are about . " The Beguiling is patronized by an international audience . The store has made the top five retailer list in The Comics Journal , and among the awards it has received , it shared the inaugural Eisner Spirit of Retailing Award in 1993 , and it won the Joe Shuster Awards ' Harry Kremer Retailer Award in 2010 .

= = Toronto Comic Arts Festival = =

In 2003 , Peter Birkemoe and Chris Butcher of The Beguiling first organized the Toronto Comic Arts Festival (TCAF) . Unusual in the world of comics conventions , TCAF is a free @-@ admission event . It focuses on alternative and independent comics , but includes other creative arts besides comics . Rather than being like a traditional comics convention , it is patterned after European festivals such as Angoulême , and the American Small Press Expo . The organizers considered Toronto to be a hotbed of alternative cartooning , but were concerned that most Torontonians associated comic books with superheroes . Their stated goal was " to present the quality and prestige of ... local and international artists in a package that 's respected and recognized " . The festival was biannual until 2009 , when in partnership with the Toronto Public Library it became an annual event . Starting that year , the festival took place at the Toronto Reference Library .

= = Little Island Comics = =

As most North American comic shops focus on teenage and adult customers , and The Beguiling itself mainly on adults , the owners wanted to fill a void by opening the first children 's comic shop in North America , and possibly the world . Little Island Comics opened 6 September 2011 at 742 Bathurst Street in the Annex , close to The Beguiling . The shop was designed with children in mind , with bright colours and shelves at child @-@ height .