

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!

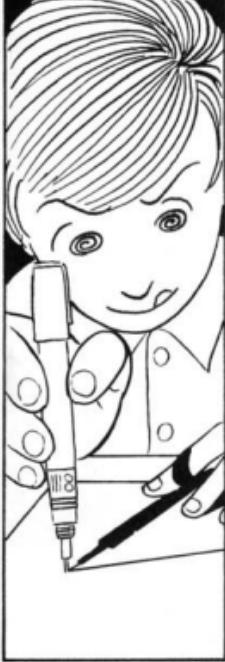


BUT WHEN I WAS IN 8TH GRADE, A
FRIEND OF MINE (WHO WAS A LOT
SMARTER THAN I WAS) CONVINCED
ME TO GIVE COMICS ANOTHER LOOK
AND LENT ME HIS COLLECTION.

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.

SOME
KIND OF
HIDDEN
POWER!

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



--BUT--

THEY
DON'T
HAVE
TO
BE!



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

COMIC HA!
BOOKS? HA!
HA!

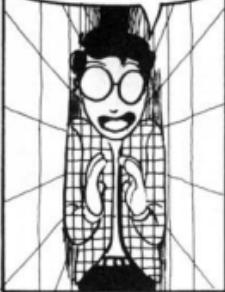
BUT IT--
BUT IT'S--
BUH...

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

DON'T GIMME THAT
COMIC BOOK TALK,
BARNEY!



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



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

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



THIS IS
WHERE OUR
JOURNEY
BEGINS.





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



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

WE CAN ALL VISUALIZE A COMIC.



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



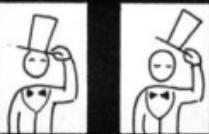
MASTER COMICS ARTIST WILL EISNER USES THE TERM **SEQUENTIAL ART** WHEN DESCRIBING COMICS.

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

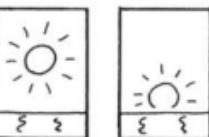
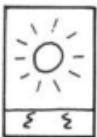
TAKEN INDIVIDUALLY, THE PICTURES BELOW ARE MERELY THAT--PICTURES.



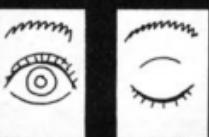
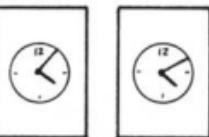
NOTICE THAT THIS DEFINITION IS STRICTLY **NEUTRAL** ON MATTERS OF **STYLE, QUALITY OR SUBJECT MATTER.**



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



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



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



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



=GLUG=
=GLUG=



--FOR THE MESSENGER.



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



BUT FOR COMICS, THIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN RARE.*

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



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

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

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

ANY IDEAS?

SEQUENTIAL ART

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

OKAY.

SEQUENTIAL ART

HOW'S THIS?

SEQUENTIAL VISUAL ART

HEY, WHAT ABOUT ANIMATION?!

BEG PARDON?

ISN'T ANIMATED FILM JUST VISUAL ART IN SEQUENCE?

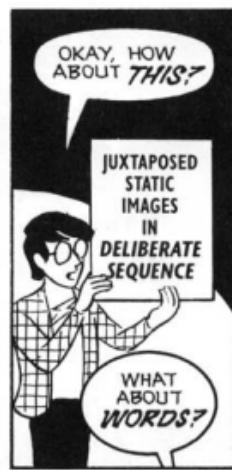
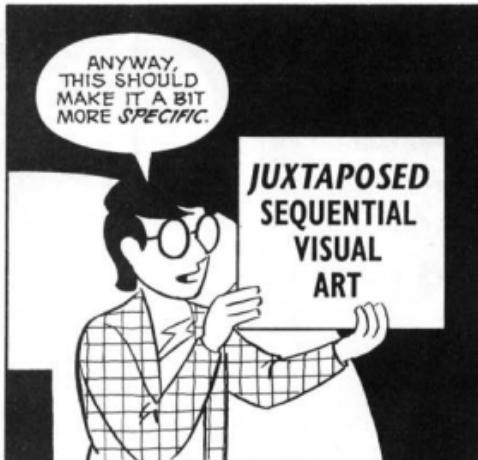
HMM... GOOD POINT.

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

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

SPACE DOES FOR COMICS WHAT TIME DOES FOR FILM!

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



OKAY,
HOW
DOES
THIS
SOUND?

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

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

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

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

tap
tap
tap
tap

THERE!

com-ics (kom'iks)n. plural in form,
used with a singular verb. **1.**

Juxtaposed pictorial and other
images in deliberate sequence,
intended to convey information
and/or to produce an aesthetic
response in the viewer.

2. Superheroes in bright colorful
costumes, fighting darkness

villains who want to conquer the
world, in violent sensational pulse-
pounding action sequences! **3.**

Cute, pudgy bunnies - mice and
taleless bears, dancing to bad to
Hippity Hop, Hippity Hop! **4.**

Corruptor of our Nation's youth.

com-ing (kōm'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.

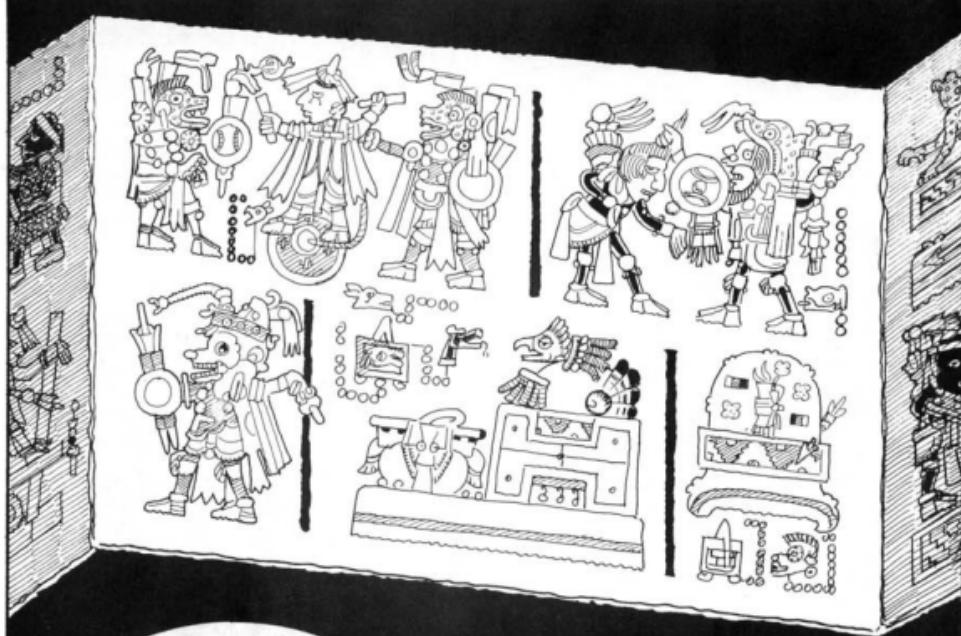
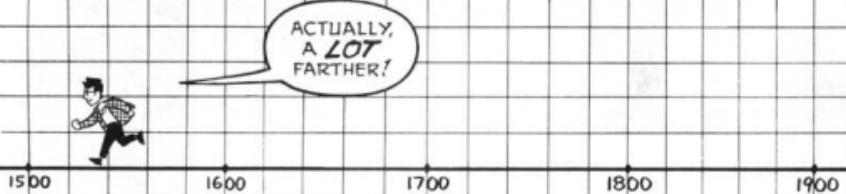
BUT,
WITH A **SPECIFIC**
DEFINITION
UNDER OUR
BELTS--

--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.

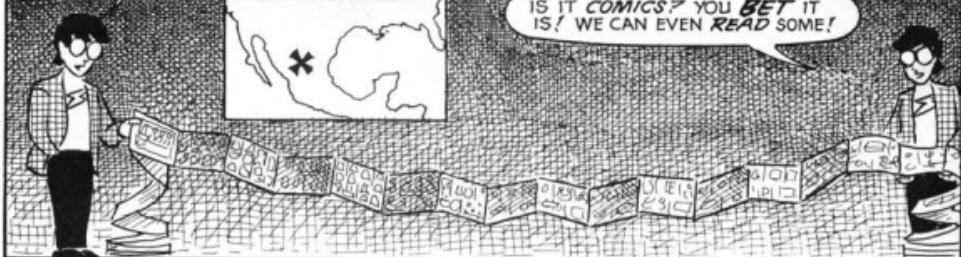
**SEQUENTIAL
ART**

1880 1890 1900 1910



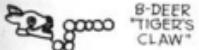
HERE'S
JUST A PIECE OF THE
EPIC STORY CONTAINED
IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN
PICTURE MANUSCRIPT
"DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS
AROUND 1519.

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



* 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)



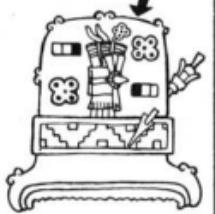
(A DATE)



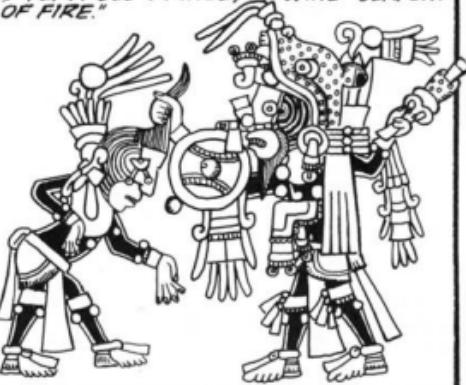
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

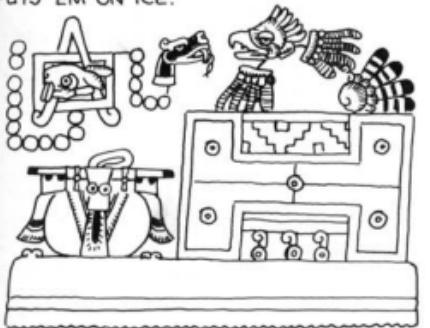
THE YEAR: 1049 AD
THE DATE: MAY 3rd
THE PLACE: HERE!



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

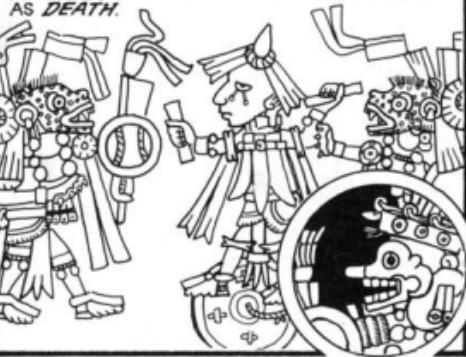


8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING" AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND PUTS 'EM ON ICE.

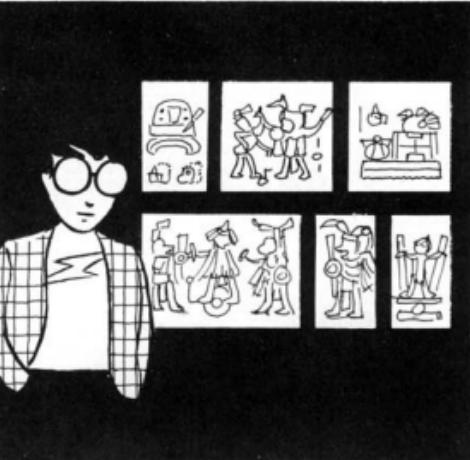
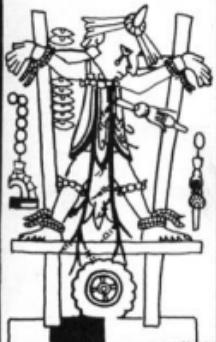


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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



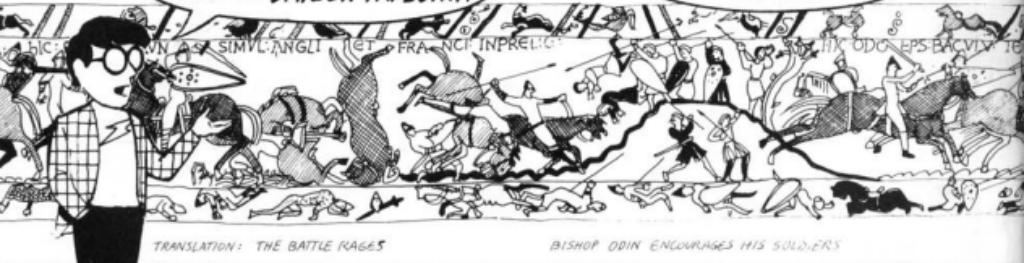
8-DEER KILLS THE OTHER PRINCE, 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" EIGHT DAYS LATER.



*WE KNOW THE YEAR; I'M JUST 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!

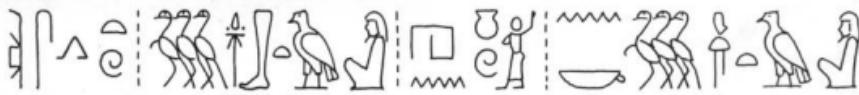
PERENNIAL EXCEPTION WILL FISHER.

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."

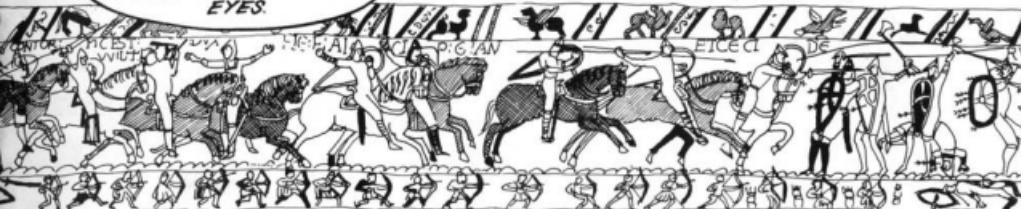
I'M
USING IT
TO INDICATE
AT LEAST SOME
RESEMBLANCE
TO THE SUBJECT.
BUT THESE GLYPHS
REPRESENT ONLY
SOUNDS, NOT
UNLIKE OUR
ALPHABET.

= "baiu"

= "nek"

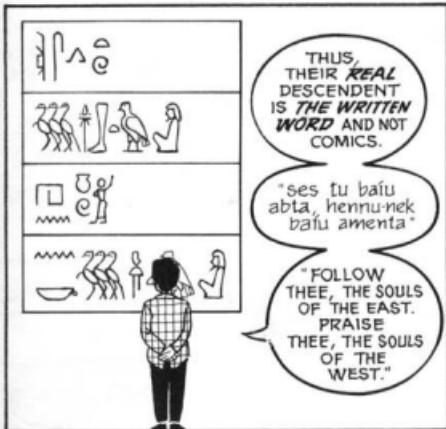
READING LEFT TO RIGHT
WE SEE THE EVENTS OF THE
CONQUEST, IN DELIBERATE
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER
UNFOLD BEFORE OUR VERY
EYES.

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

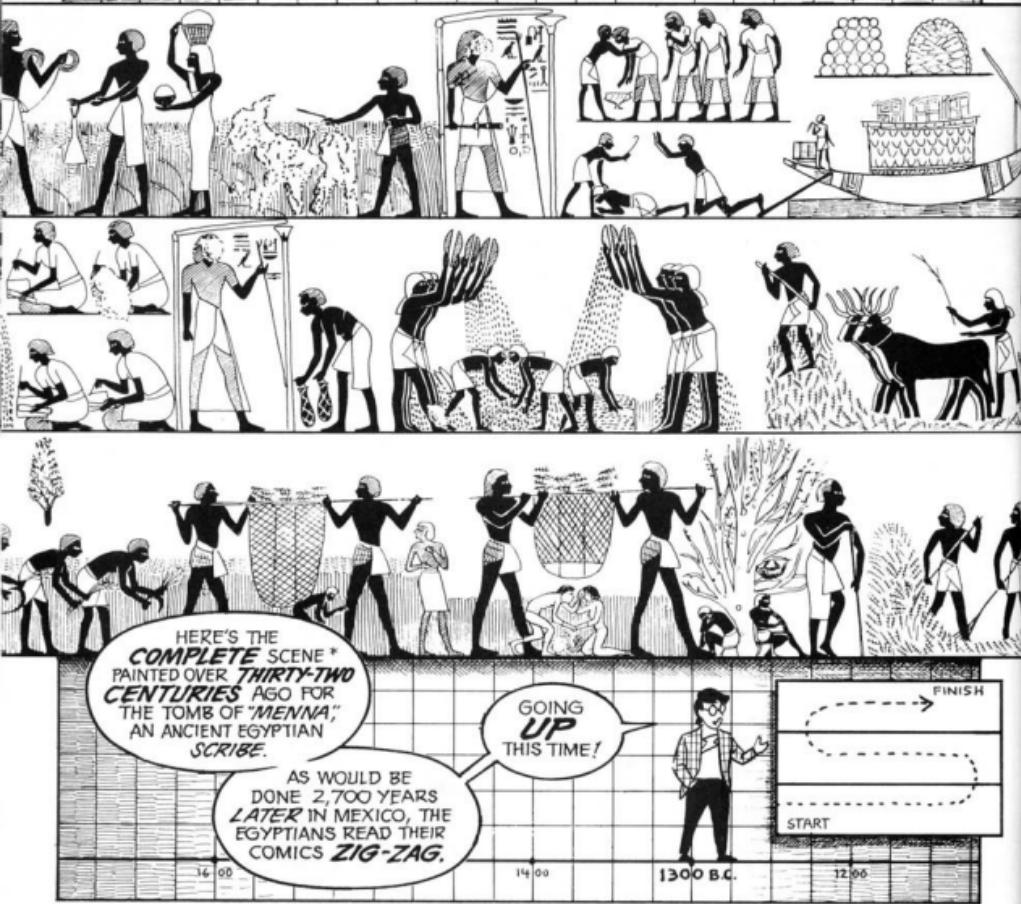


I HAD BEEN TRYING TO FIND SEQUENCE IN EGYPTIAN PAINTINGS FOR YEARS WHEN I BEGAN THIS BOOK AND WAS READY TO CALL IT QUITs --

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

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





HERE'S THE
COMPLETE SCENE*
PAINTED OVER THIRTY-TWO
CENTURIES ago for
THE TOMB OF "MENNA,"
AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN
SCRIBE.

AS WOULD BE
DONE 2,700 YEARS
LATER IN MEXICO,
THE EGYPTIANS READ THEIR
COMICS ZIG-ZAG.

16 00

14 00

1300 B.C.

12 00

START

FINISH

* 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.



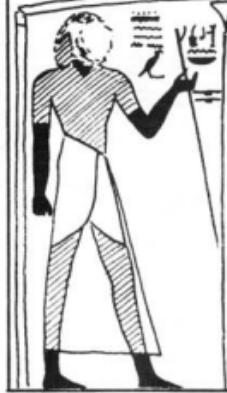
THEN OXEN TREAD
KERNELS OUT OF
THE HUSKS.



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.



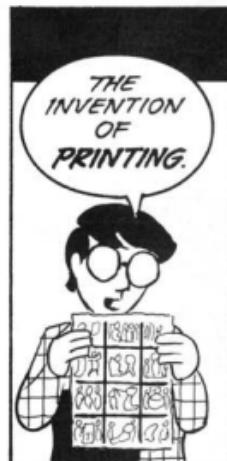
I'VE ONLY SCRATCHED
THE SURFACE IN
THIS CHAPTER...
TRAJAN'S COLUMN,
GREEK PAINTING,
JAPANESE SCROLLS...
ALL THESE HAVE BEEN
SUGGESTED AND ALL
SHOULD BE EXPLORED.



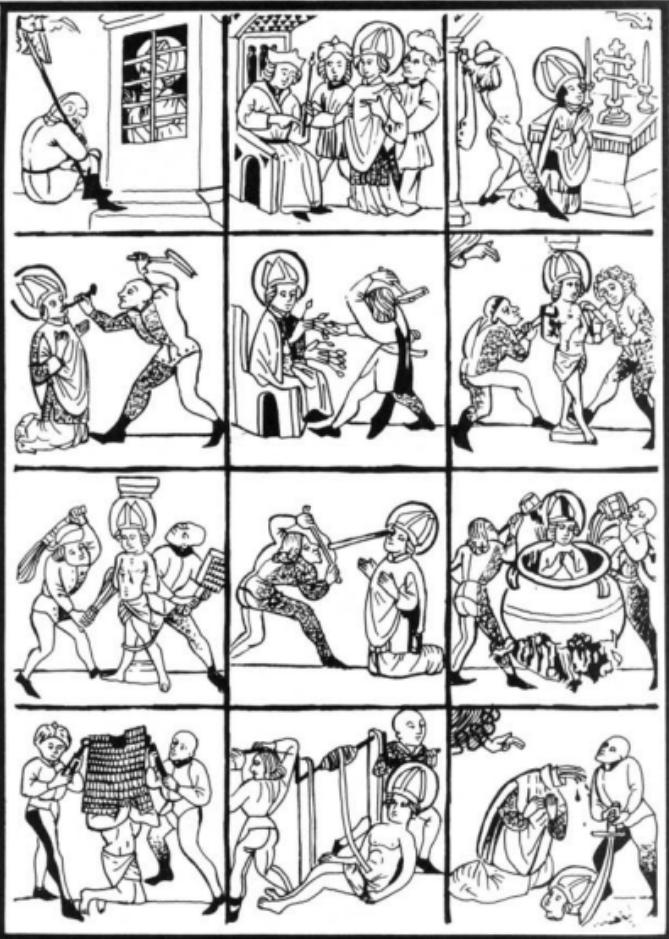
BUT
THERE IS
ONE EVENT WHICH
LOOMS AS LARGE
IN COMICS HISTORY
AS IT DOES IN THE
HISTORY OF THE
WRITTEN WORD.



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!

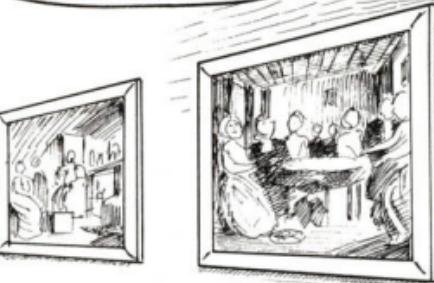


POPULAR TASTES HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH IN FIVE CENTURIES. CHECK OUT "THE TORTURES OF SAINT ERASMUS," CIRCA 1460. WORD HAS IT THIS GUY WAS A VERY POPULAR CHARACTER.



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.



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



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

-Goethe



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

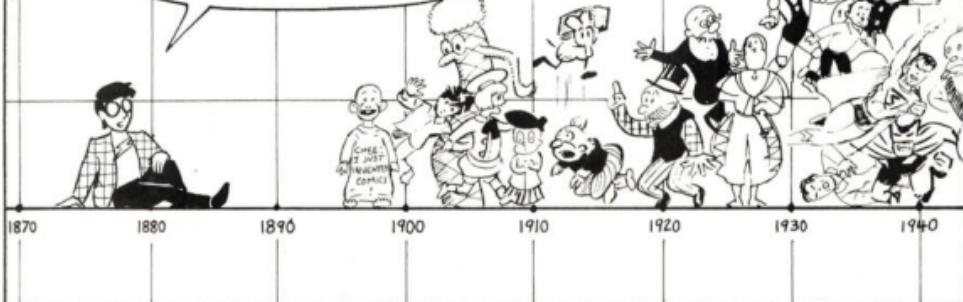


-- HAD CREATED AND MASTERED A FORM WHICH WAS AT ONCE BOTH AND NEITHER.



A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.

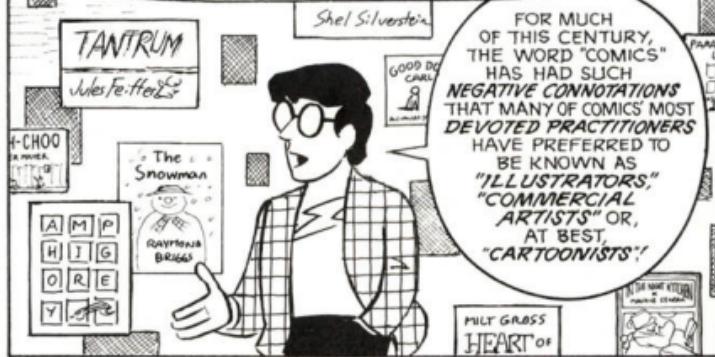
BRITISH CARICATURE MAGAZINES
KEPT THE TRADITIONS ALIVE AND AS
THE 20TH CENTURY DREW NEAR, THE COMICS
WE CALL COMICS BEGAN TO APPEAR AND
EVENTUALLY TO THRIVE IN A STEADY
STREAM OF WAKING DREAMS THAT
HAS YET TO ABATE.



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



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



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



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





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

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



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

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



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

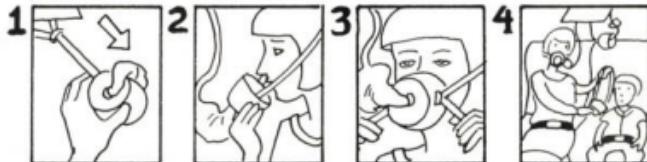
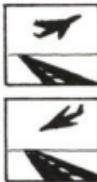
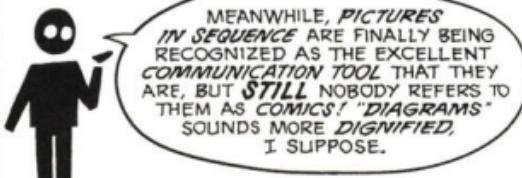
YET, DESPITE THE LACK OF A CONVENTIONAL STORY, THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE CENTRAL ROLE WHICH SEQUENCE PLAYS IN THE WORK. ERNST DOESN'T WANT YOU TO BROWSE THE THING, HE WANTS YOU TO READ IT!



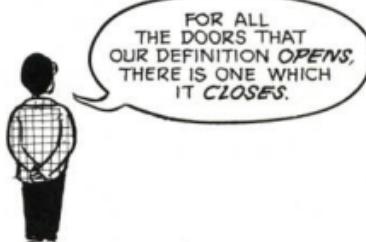
IF WE DON'T EXCLUDE
PHOTOGRAPHY FROM
OUR DEFINITION, THEN
HALF OF AMERICA
HAS BEEN IN COMICS
AT ONE TIME OR
ANOTHER.



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



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



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



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



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



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.



"Mommy, why ain't
Juxtaposed?"

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



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



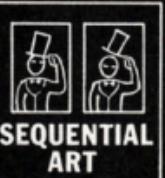
IF COMICS'
SPECTACULARLY VARIED
PAST IS ANY INDICATION,
COMICS' FUTURE WILL BE
VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO
PREDICT USING THE
STANDARDS OF THE
PRESENT.

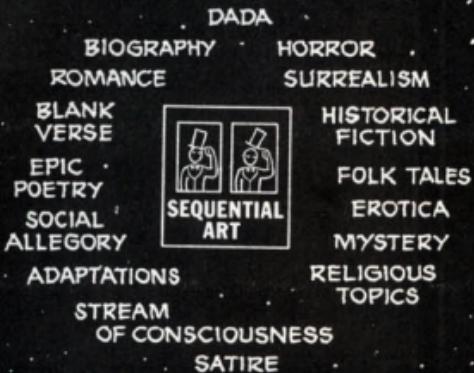


BUT OUR
DEFINITION
CAN OFFER US
SOME CLUES.

1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040

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





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 --



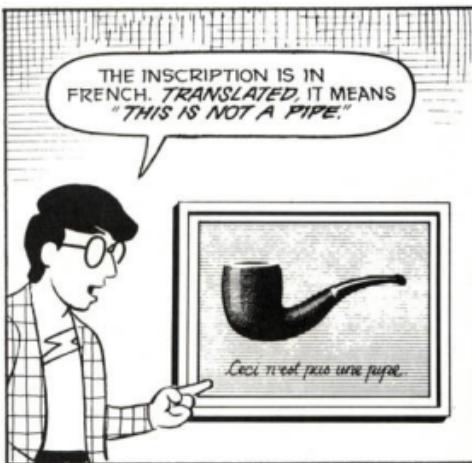
OUR
ATTEMPTS TO
DEFINE
COMICS ARE AN
ON-GOING
PROCESS
WHICH WON'T
END ANYTIME
SOON.

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?

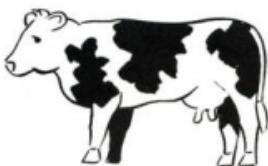


IF YOU DO, HAVE YOUR
EARS CHECKED, BECAUSE
NO ONE SAID A WORD.





THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



SPLAT!

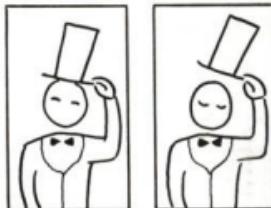
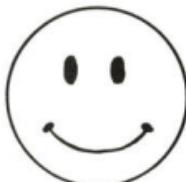
THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



NOW, THE WORD
ICON MEANS
MANY THINGS.

THIS
IS
PAPER

THIS IS
INK ON
PAPER



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

ICON

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

"SYMBOL" IS A
BIT TOO LOADED
FOR ME.



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



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



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

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

ICONS
OF THE
PRACTICAL
REALM.



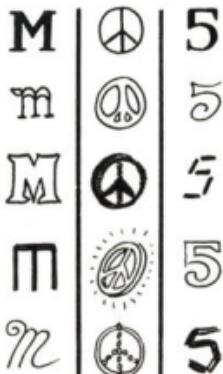
AND FINALLY, THE ICONS WE CALL PICTURES:
IMAGES DESIGNED TO ACTUALLY RESEMBLE
THEIR SUBJECTS.



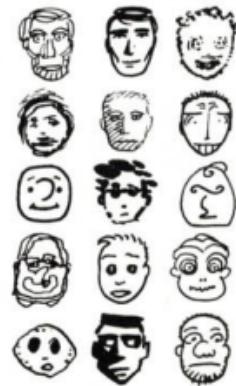
BUT
AS RESEMBLANCE
VARIES, SO DOES THE
LEVEL OF ICONIC
CONTENT.

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.



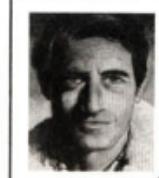
BUT IN PICTURES THE LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION VARIES. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE PREVIOUS PANEL SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS AS TO ALMOST TRICK THE EYE!



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.

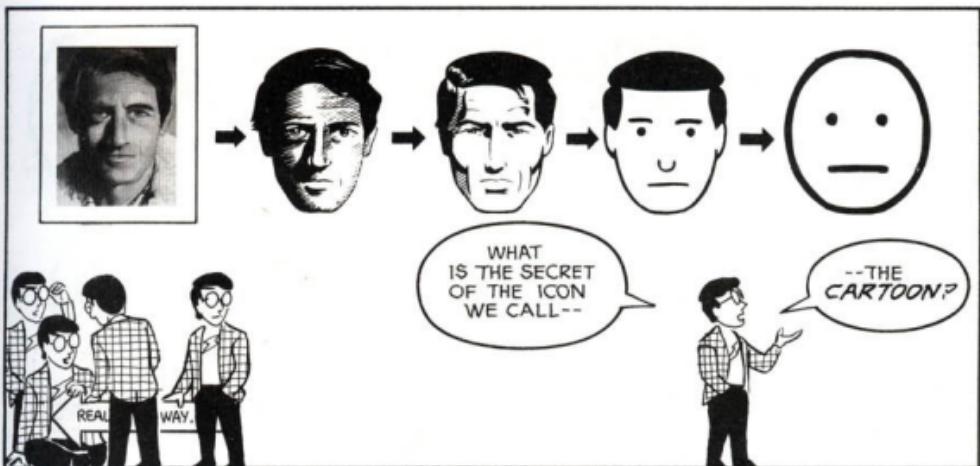
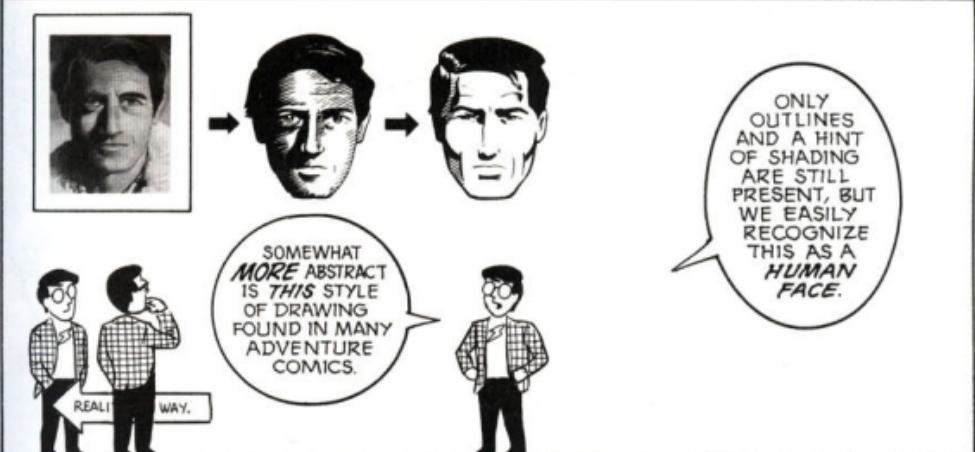


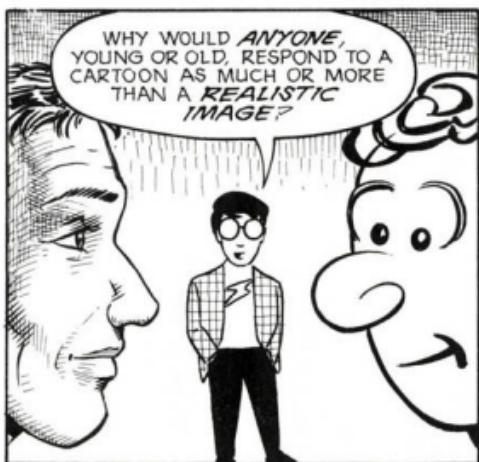
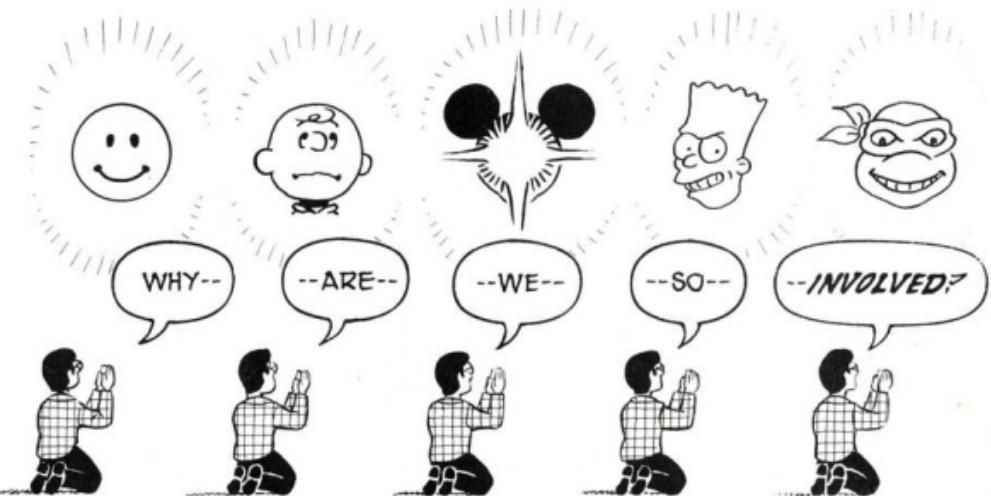
THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM ACTUAL FACES--THEY'RE SMALLER, FLATTER, LESS DETAILED. THEY DON'T MOVE. THEY LACK COLOR--BUT AS PICTORIAL ICONS GO, THEY ARE PRETTY "REALISTIC."



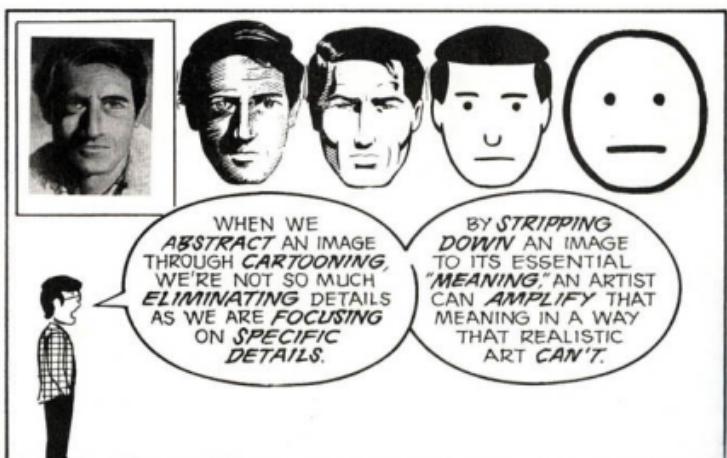
COMMON WISDOM HOLDS THAT THE PHOTOGRAPH AND THE REALISTIC PICTURE ARE THE ICONS THAT MOST RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS.







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



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

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

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



ONE

A FEW

THOUSANDS

MILLIONS

(NEARLY) ALL



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

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



WHAT

ARE YOU



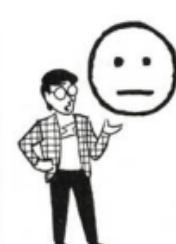
REALLY

SEEING?

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

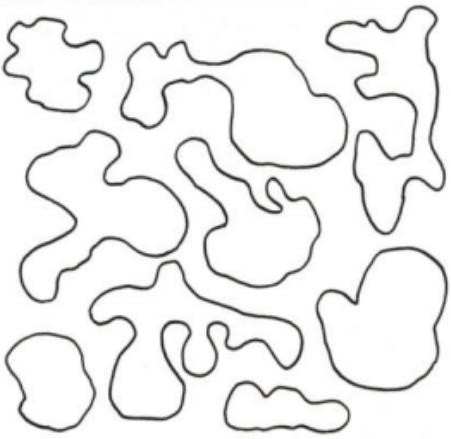


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!



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

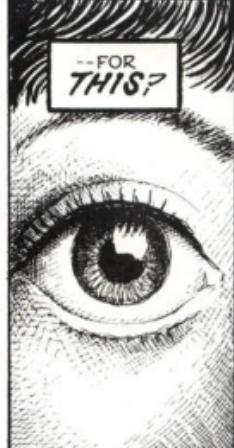
LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS.



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



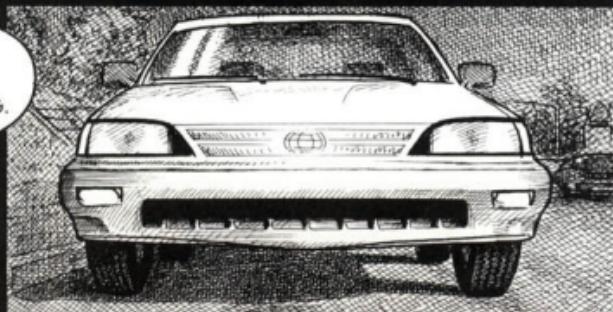
YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE THIS--



WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



WE SEE
OURSELVES
IN
EVERYTHING.



WE
ASSIGN
IDENTITIES
AND EMOTIONS
WHERE NONE
EXIST.



AND WE
MAKE THE
WORLD OVER
IN OUR
IMAGE.





THINK
OF YOUR
FACE AS A
MASK.



THAT'S
WHAT IT IS,
AFTER ALL.



A MASK.



FACING
OUTWARD.



WORN FROM
THE DAY YOU
WERE BORN.



SLAVE TO
YOUR EVERY
MENTAL
COMMAND.



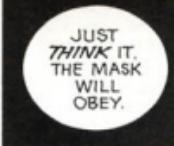
SEEN BY
EVERYONE
YOU MEET.



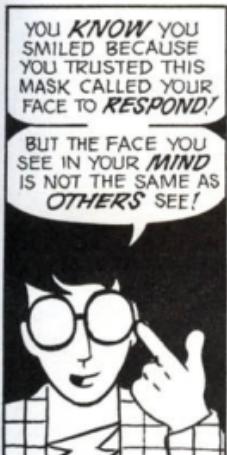
BUT
NEVER
BY YOU.



OPEN
ITS EYES
NOW.



JUST
THINK IT.
THE MASK
WILL
OBEY.



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

SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AND AS BASIC--



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



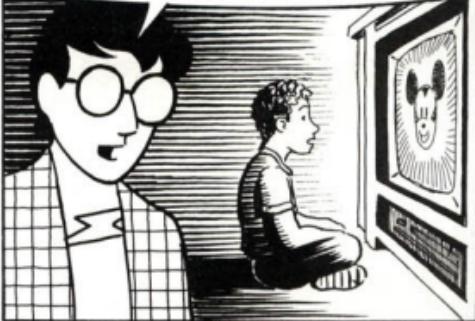
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF ANOTHER.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE CARTOON--

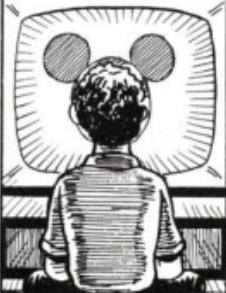


--YOU SEE YOURSELF.

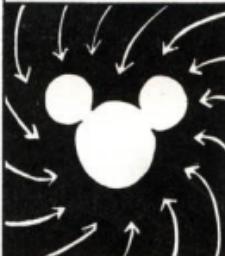
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH CARTOONS, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY AND THE CHILDLIKE FEATURES OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



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



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



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

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



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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

THAT'S THE THEORY, ANYWAY.

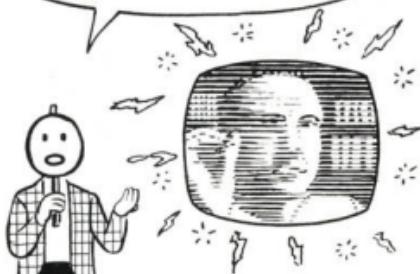


SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY DISCUSSED FACES, BUT THE PHENOMENON OF NON-VISUAL SELF-AWARENESS CAN, TO A LESSER DEGREE, STILL APPLY TO OUR WHOLE BODIES. AFTER ALL, DO WE NEED TO SEE OUR HANDS TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING?

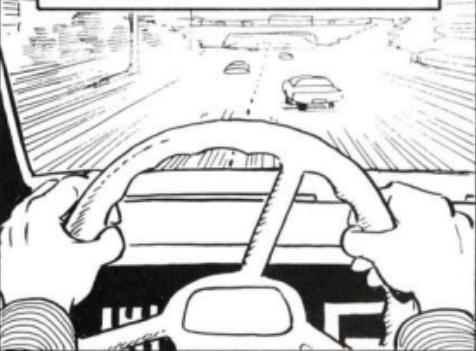
THERE'S MORE, TOO!



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



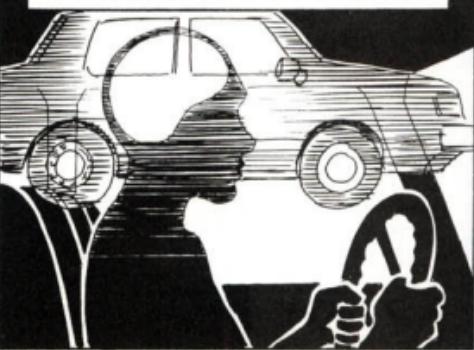
WHEN DRIVING, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR FIVE SENSES REPORT.



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



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



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



THAN "HE HIT MY CAR!"

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

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



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



PIECES OF METAL
TO BECOME
HANDS...



PIECES OF PLASTIC
TO BECOME
EARS...



PIECES OF GLASS
TO BECOME
EYES.



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



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



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



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



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

-- AND
THE REALM
OF THE
SENSES.



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



GRADUALLY WE REACH BEYOND OURSELVES.



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



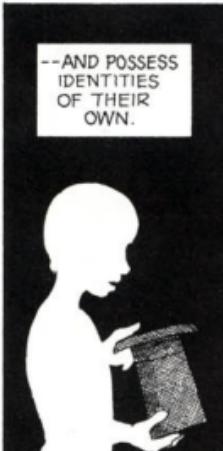
AND OF THE WORLD AROUND US.



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



--AND POSSESS IDENTITIES OF THEIR OWN.



OR, AS OUR EXTENSIONS--



--BEGIN TO GLOW--



--WITH THE LIFE--



--WE LEND
TO THEM.



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



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



--AND THROUGH
THE CARTOON,
THE WORLD
WITHIN.



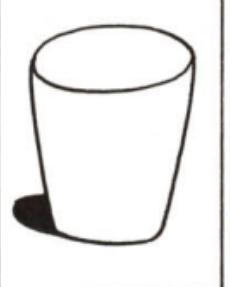
WHEN
CARTOONS
ARE USED
THROUGHOUT
A STORY, THE
WORLD OF
THAT STORY
MAY SEEM TO
PULSE WITH
LIFE.



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



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



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



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



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



--ARE A FAR CRY FROM PHOTO-REALISTS!

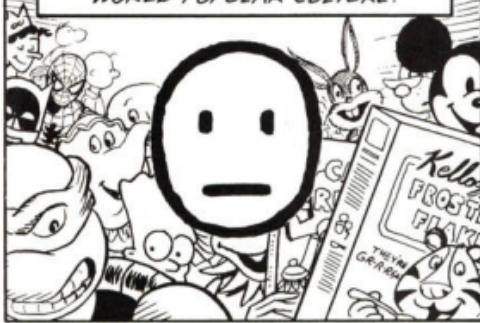


STORYTELLERS IN ALL MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT--

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



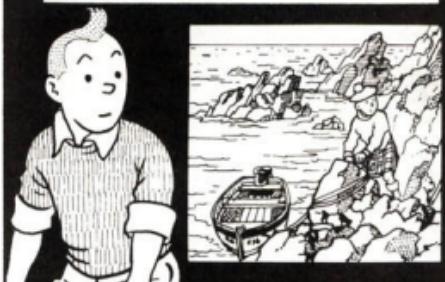
AND SINCE VIEWER-IDENTIFICATION IS A SPECIALTY OF CARTOONING, CARTOONS HAVE HISTORICALLY HELD AN ADVANTAGE IN BREAKING INTO WORLD POPULAR CULTURE.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



CEREBUS © DAVE SIM.

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



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



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



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



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



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



BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



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



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

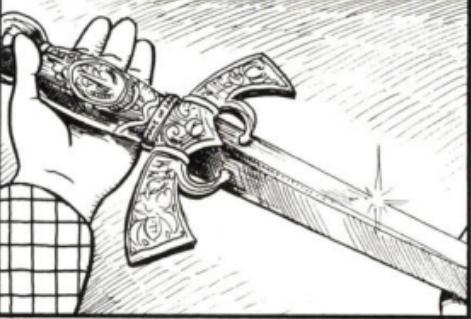


--DUE TO THE "LIFE" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY CARTOON IDENTITY!



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

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



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



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

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

MANY OF MY FAVORITE ARTISTS USE IT VERY RARELY.



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



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



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



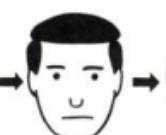
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.



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

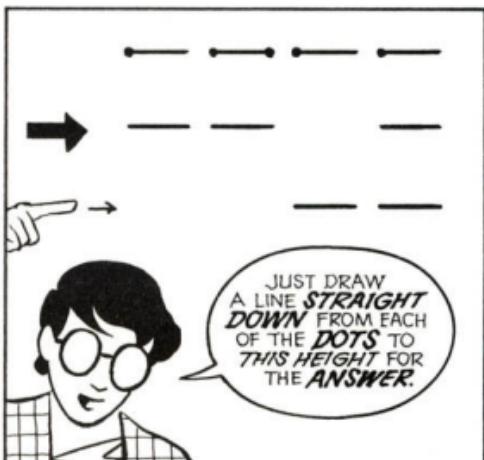
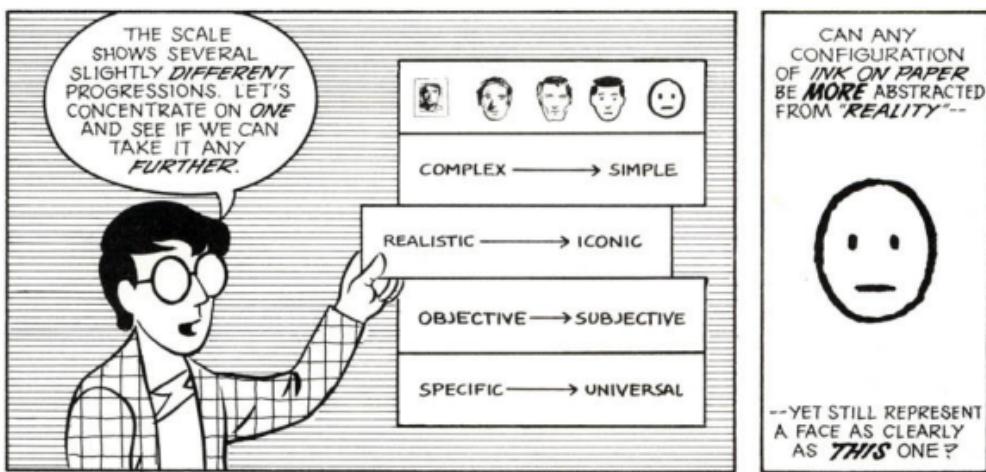
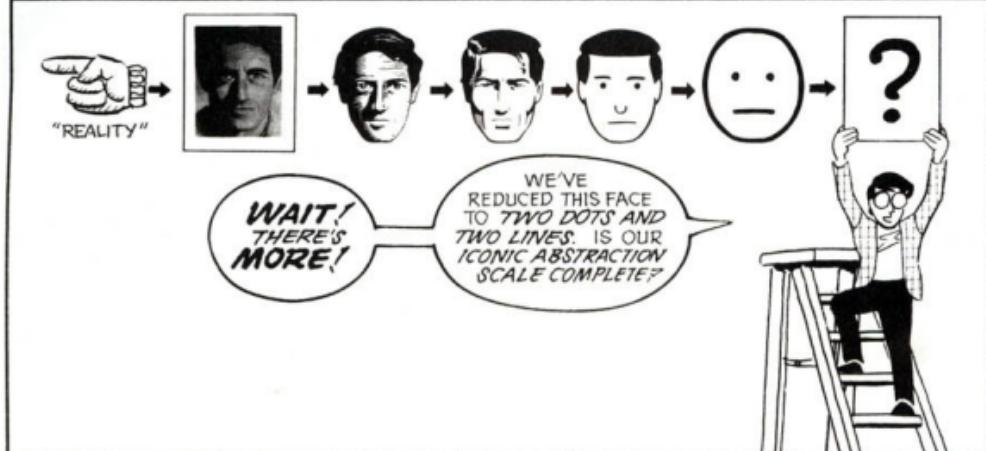


RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.



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





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

MEANING RETAINED.

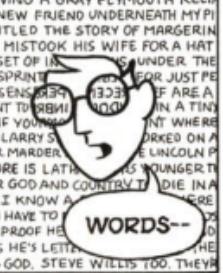
JR. SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO
IDENCY TO MAKE SMALL CRACK
BUT

RESEMBLANCE GONE.

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
S FOR JUST PE
ENSURE
F ARE A
INT TO DRINK
IN A TINY
IF YOU AREN
INT WHERE
LARRY ST
WORKED ON A
R MARDER.
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

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

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



-- ARE THE ULTIMATE ABSTRACTION.



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

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



BUT
JUST HOW
"DIFFERENT"
ARE
THEY
?

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



A SINGLE
UNIFIED
LANGUAGE
DESERVES A
SINGLE, UNIFIED
VOCABULARY.

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



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



AND AMONG
THEM LIE
SOME OF
OUR VERY
BEST
INSTINCTS.



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



FACE

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



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



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



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



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

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



FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

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

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



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



RECEIVED . . .

FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

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

PERCEIVED

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



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

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



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



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

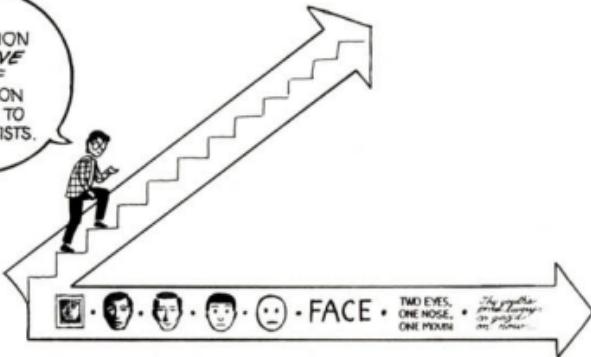
CAN THEY BE
RECONCILED?



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



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



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



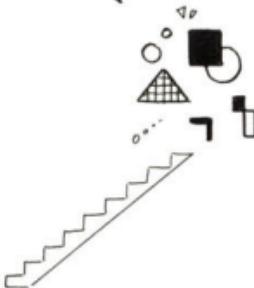
THE TYPE OF
ART WHICH OFTEN
PROMPTS THE QUESTION:
"WHAT DOES IT
MEAN?"



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

IN
THIS
CASE--

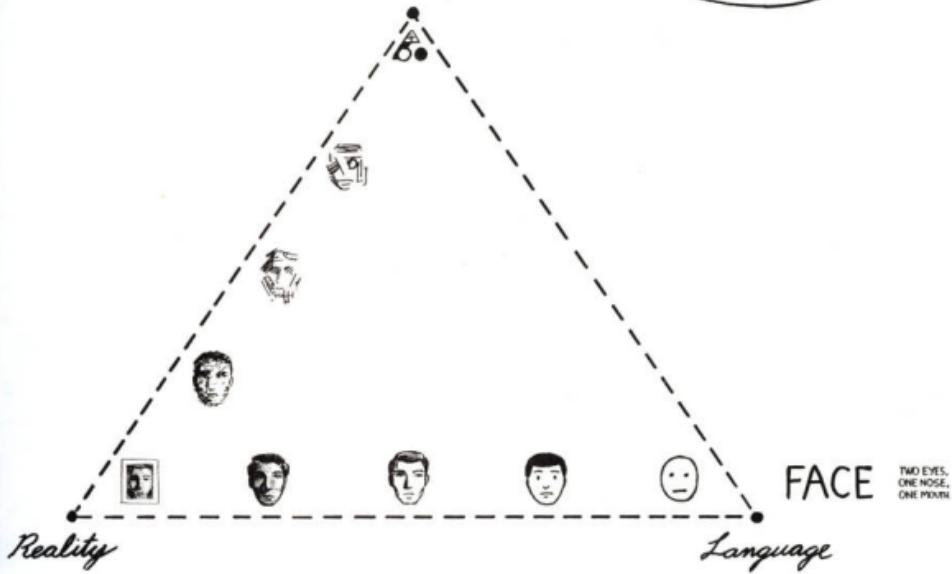
--INK
ON
PAPER.



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

The Picture Plane

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



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

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



WATCH THAT NOSE!



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



--OF THE
UNIVERSE
CALLED
COMICS.



1. MARY FLEENER at her most abstract. 2. MARISCALLO, S. 3. DAVE McKEAN employing one of the many styles found in his series CAGES. 4. MARC HEMPEL's GREGORY. 5. MARK BEYER. 6. LARRY MARANO's "Tales from the BEAUBOARD." "Resembling" has even set them (hence all the way to the right), Marder's beans walk the line from design to meaning. 7. SAUL STERNBERG's "The VAMP" from HOUSE OF THE LIVING DEAD. 8. LORENZO MATTOXI in FIRES (c Editions Albin Michel S.A.) combines deeply impressionistic lighting with iconic forms and strong, design-oriented composition. In this case, the artist has gone places. 9. JIM KOMINSKY-CRUMB. 10. PETER BAGGE's Chuckie-Boy from NEUT STUFF. Compare to 39. 12. KRISTINE KYRTTIE. 13. REA IRVIN. THE SMYTHES & CO. 14. RON GORDON. 15. 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 smooth. Similar drawings are found in 8, 16, 19, 20 and 34. 17. JEFF WONG's art for Scott Russo's JAZZ. 18. ROLY STARK's expressivistic RAIDERS. 19. ROBERT TRAMMELL's FRANK MILLERY'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 MEGATON MAN. Beginning from a

geometric abstract base. Simpson distorts and exaggerates MM'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. LYNDY BARRY. 28. SAMPEI SHIRATO. 29. CHARLES BURNS'S BIG BABY. 29 1/2. (Whoops!) CLIFF STONE. 30. STEPHEN STROUD. The character pictured here from POLLY AND ME is a good example of the latter, but Stroud's art, like Fleener's often heads upward toward the wildy abstract. P.A.H.P. is © Newspaper Features Syndicate, Inc. 30. STEPHEN ARAGONES's GHOST OF THE WANDERER. Aragones is known for his 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 PERIODIC TABLE. 32. JEFFREY MAZZUCHELLI from BATMAN: YEAR ONE. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 33. JOSE MUÑOZ from "Mister Conrad, Mister Wilcox". © Muñoz and Sampayo. 34. CAROL

SWAIN. 35. CHESTER GOULD's DICK TRACY © Chester Gould New York Syndicate, Inc. 36. JACK KIRBY's Darkseed, © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's Rocco Vargas from TRITON. 39. STEPHEN BAGGETTE's Buddy Bradley © D.C. Comics. 40. PEANUTS © Schulz. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCET. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG BUSHNELL's Moon from KING'S THE JUNGLE. Bushnell's style is very much 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. Lately, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 45. GOSEKI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI

"(Not and Co)" 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's Zonks! © Zonks! Productions, Inc. 48. STEPHEN BAGGETTE's Buddy Bradley © D.C. Comics. 49. PEANUTS © Schulz. 50. JOHN JOHNSTON McCULLY. 49. MARK MARTIN. 52. WILL EISNER from TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. Eisner's style is very much CRUMPS swings between realistic and idiomatic styles, usually staying about this high but occasionally venturing upward. 52. STEVE DITKO. 53. NORBERT DOOR. 54. VALENTINO'S NOBODY © Valentin. 55. BILL FOSTER. Foster is a bit like a caricatured version of himself. 56. JOOST SWARTZEL. Anton Makasar. 57. ELZIE COLEMAN's Popeye © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 58. GEORGE HERMAN's "Offiss Pup" from KRAYZ KAT. © International feature Service, Inc. 59. JIM WOODRING's FRANK. 60. NEAL ADAMS. From the comic strip "Madeline" © Neal Adams. 61. X-MEN created by Lee and Kirby. 61. GIL KANE from ACTION COMICS © D.C. Comics, Inc. 62. MILTON CANIFF's EVE CANYON. 62. RON COLEMAN. For specific credits see X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics, Inc. (Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster). 65. JACQUES TARDI from LE DEMON DES CHAMPS. 66. JONATHAN LEE. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES. Laurine from the VALERIAN series. © Dargaud Editore. 67. BILL GRIFFITH's ZIPPI THE PINHEAD. 68. JEFF MATT. 69. KYLE BAKER from WHY I HATE SATURN. 70. TRINN ROBBINS' "Reality" © King Features Syndicate, Inc.

102. DAN CLOWES. 103. WAYNE. 104.

V.T. HAMLIN'S ALLEY OOP © NEA Service, Inc. 105. JAMES BROWN. 106. STAN LAKA. 107. USAGI YOGI. 108. DAVE SIM's CEREBUS THE AARDVARK. 108. WALT KELLY'S POOG © Seely Kelly. 109. RUDOLPH DRINKS'S HANS AND FRITZ © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 110. H.C. McDUGGISH. Jeff from Mutt © Jeff © McDNaughn Syndicate, Inc. 111. MORT WALKER'S HI AND LOIS © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 112. OSAMU TEZUKA's ASTERIX © King Features Syndicate. McDuck © Walt Disney Productions. 114. CROCKETT JOHNSON's MISTER O'Malley from BARNABY © Field Newspaper Syndicate, Inc. 115. PAUL SULLIVAN'S FELIX THE CAT © International Feature Service. 116. UDERZO, ASTERIX © Goscinny and Uderzo & Dargaud Editore.

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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,

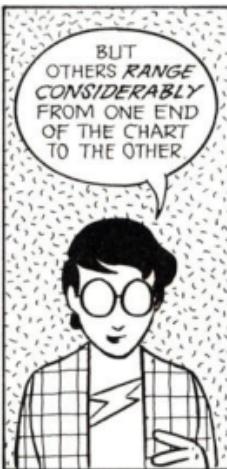
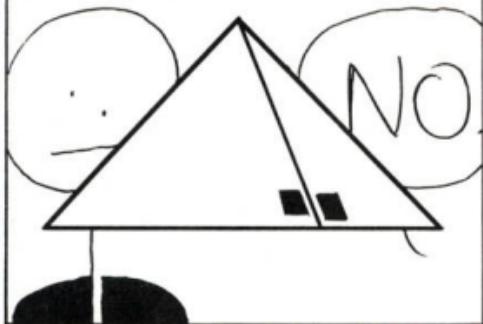
WINE
NO, NO, NO,
NO, NO, NO,

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:

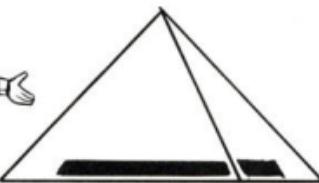


BUT OTHERS RANGE CONSIDERABLY FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER

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!

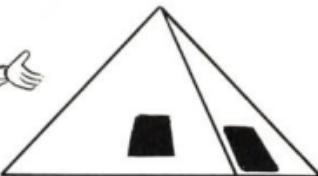


ART © MARY FLEENER.

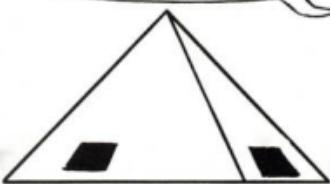


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

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.

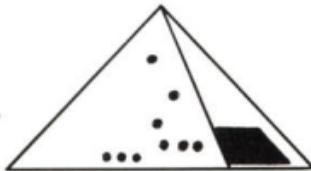


ART: JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS (FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: CHRIS CLAREMONT.

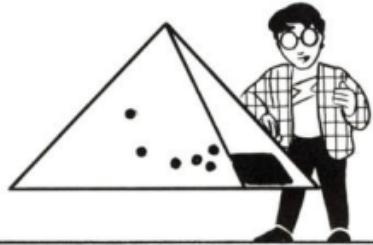
ART FROM COLOR PANELS TRACED FOR REPRODUCTION.
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IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES,
MOST OF THE COUNTERCULTURE OF
INDEPENDENT CREATORS, WORKING MOSTLY
IN BLACK AND WHITE, STAYED TO THE **RIGHT**
OF MAINSTREAM COMICS ART WHILE
COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF
WRITING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



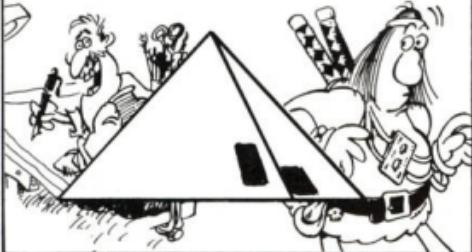
THIS FOLLOWS THE LEAD OF
THE POST-KURTZMAN GENERATION
OF **UNDERGROUND** CARTOONISTS WHO
USED CARTOONY STYLES TO PORTRAY
ADULT THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER.



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.



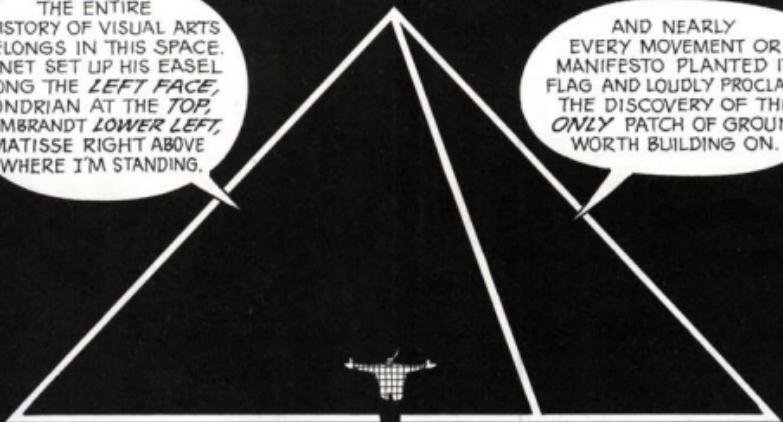
FOR COMICS TO MATURE AS A MEDIUM, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S INNERMOST NEEDS AND IDEAS.



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.



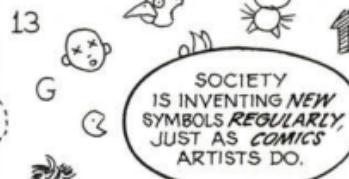
* CHECK OUT WASSILY KANDINSKY'S TERRIFIC 1912 ESSAY, "ON THE PROBLEM OF FORM."

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

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



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



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--

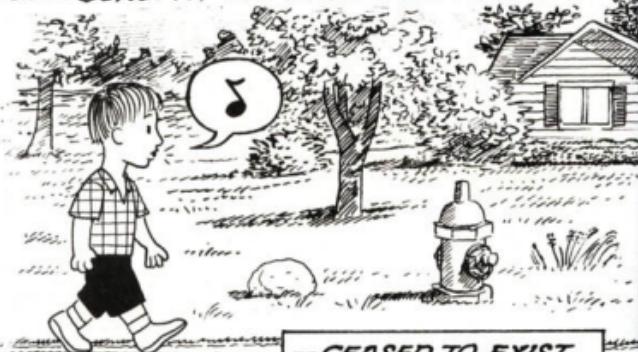
SEQUENTIAL
ART

-- IS
ANYONE'S
GUESS.

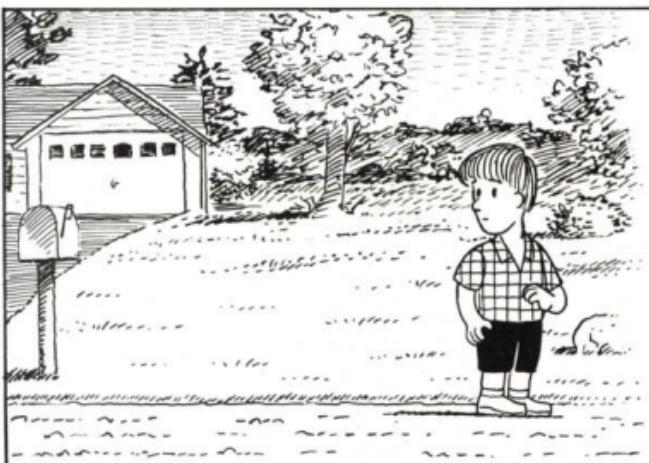
CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

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



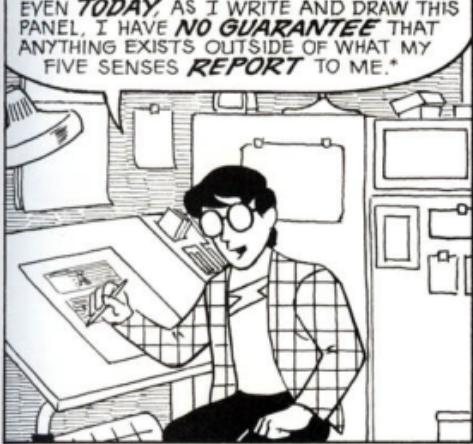
CEASED TO EXIST.



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



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



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



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



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



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



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NOT!



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

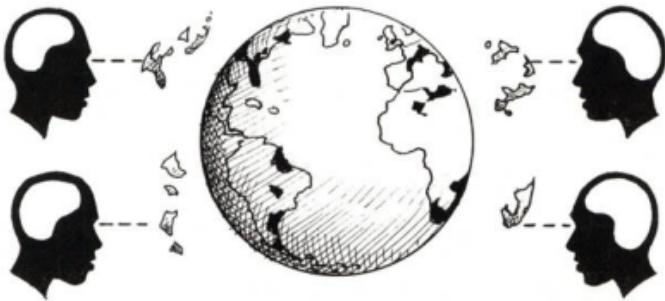
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A **WHOLE** THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR **SENSES**.

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



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

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



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

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



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

IT'S CALLED **CLOSURE**.



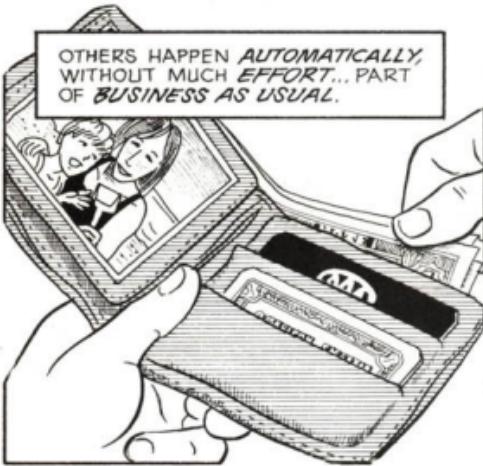
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS INCOMPLETE BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE.



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



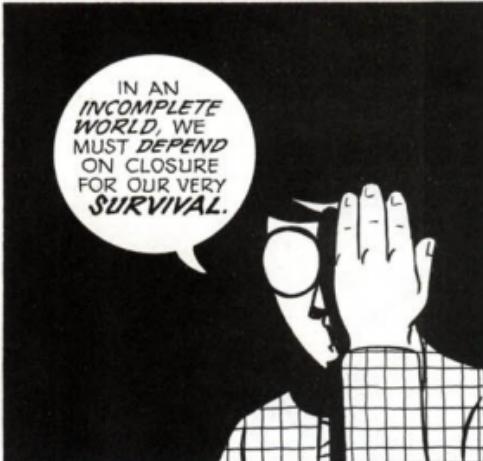
OTHERS HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY, WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT... PART OF BUSINESS AS USUAL.



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



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



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



CLOSURE
CLOSURE
CL S RE
CLOSURE

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

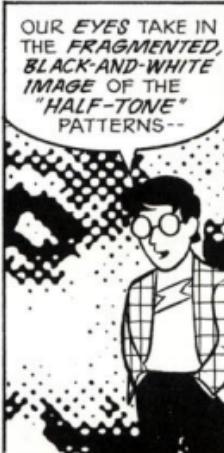


THE MENTAL PROCESS DESCRIBED
IN CHAPTER TWO WHEREBY
THESE LINES BECOME A FACE
COULD BE CONSIDERED CLOSURE.



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

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



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



--OF THE
PHOTOGRAPH!



IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA, CLOSURE IS CONSTANT, EVEN OVERPOWERING!

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

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

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

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

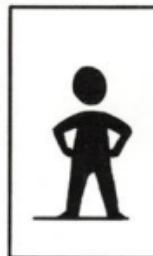
...A MEDIUM WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS A WILLING AND CONSCIOUS COLLABORATOR AND CLOSURE IS THE AGENT OF CHANGE, TIME AND MOTION.



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



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

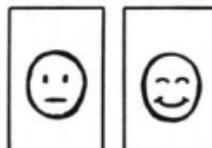
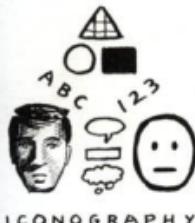


BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO **CONNECT** THESE MOMENTS
AND MENTALLY CONSTRUCT A **CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY**.

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

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

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



CLOSURE



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

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



NOW YOU DIE!!

NO!
NO!



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



AN EQUAL
PARTNER
IN CRIME
KNOWN AS
THE
READER.

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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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



LET'S
TAKE A LOOK
AT THE
CRAFT.



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



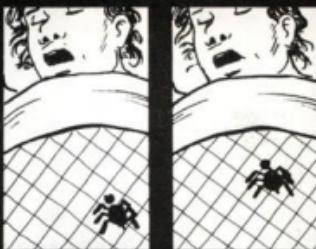
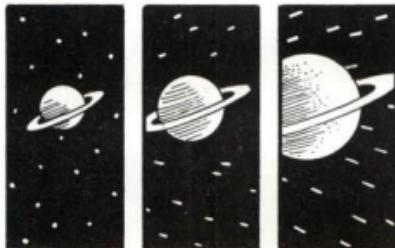
1.



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



2.



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



3.



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



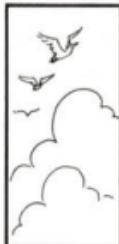
4.



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



5.



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



6.



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



PERSONALLY, I DON'T THINK SO.

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



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



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



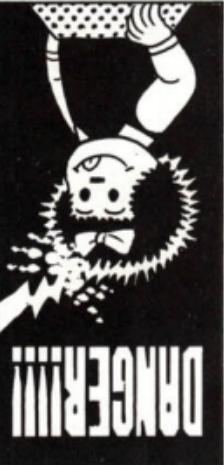
BY CREATING A SEQUENCE WITH TWO OR MORE IMAGES, WE ARE ENDOWING THEM WITH A SINGLE--



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



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



CLOSURE FOR BLOOD, GUTTERS FOR VEINS...





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
INVISILE 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.



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.



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



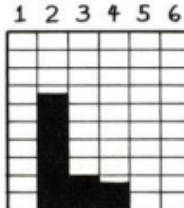
[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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



1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

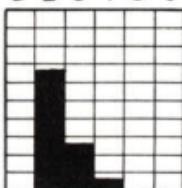
AS A **BAR GRAPH**
IT WOULD LOOK
SOMETHING LIKE
THIS.



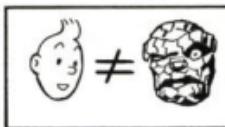
THIS EMPHASIS ON
ACTION-TO-ACTION
STORYTELLING SUITS
MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS
ABOUT KIRBY, BUT
IS HE **UNIQUE**
IN THIS RESPECT?

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

1 2 3 4 5 6



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



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



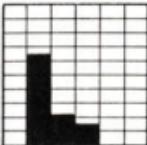
A RANDOM
SAMPLING OF
VARIOUS AMERICAN
COMICS SHOWS THIS
SAME PROPORTION
PRETTY
CONSISTENTLY.

X-MEN #1



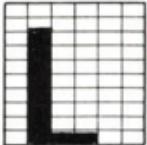
CLAREMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



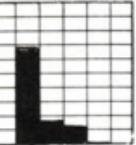
G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



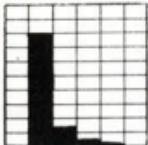
DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



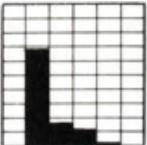
GREGORY

FRANK IN THE RIVER



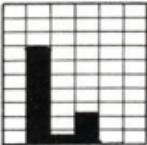
WOODRUFF

A CONTRACT WITH GOD



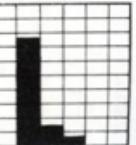
EISNER

MAUS



SPIEGELMAN

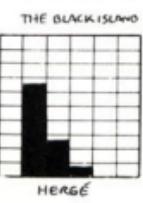
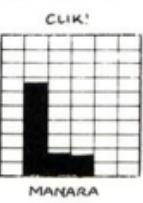
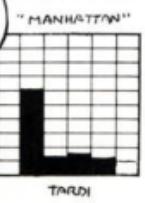
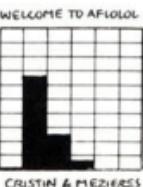
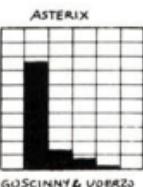
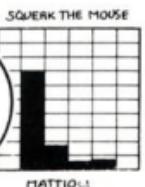
DONALD DUCK



BARKS

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

WHAT CAN WE DEDUCE FROM THIS?



2



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

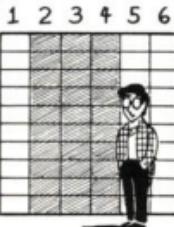
3

4

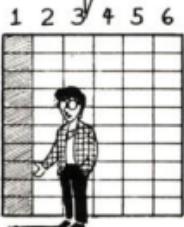
IF WE CHOOSE TO SEE STORIES AS CONNECTED SERIES OF EVENTS, THEN THE PREDOMINANCE OF TYPES 2-4 ARE EASILY EXPLAINED.



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



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



1.

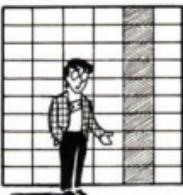


2.

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



1 2 3 4 5 6



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

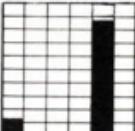
1 2 3 4 5 6



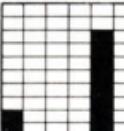
SOME EXPERIMENTAL COMICS, LIKE THOSE OF ART SPIEGELMAN'S EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A FULL RANGE OF TRANSITIONS--

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

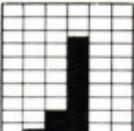
STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



"DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE"



INTRODUCTION



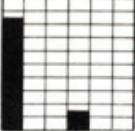
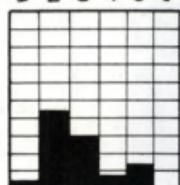
"MAUS" (ORIGINAL)

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

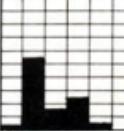


TEZUKA IS A FAR CRY FROM THE EARLY SPIEGELMAN. HIS STORYTELLING IS CLEAR AND STRAIGHTFORWARD. BUT LOOK AT HOW HE CHARTS!

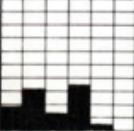
1 2 3 4 5 6



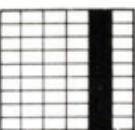
"SKINLESS PERKINS"



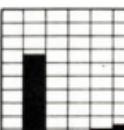
"PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET"



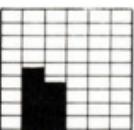
"CRACKING JOKES"



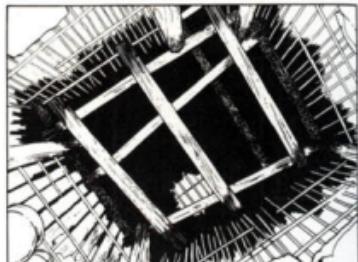
FRONT AND BACK COVERS



"ACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE"



"REAL DREAM" 1975



JUST WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

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

CLIK!

3

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



1



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

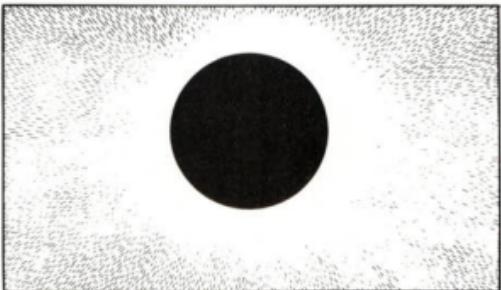


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR FOUR PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGE.



5

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



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



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



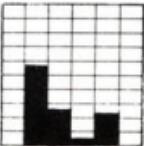
EVEN SEQUENCE WHILE STILL AN ISSUE, SEEMS FAR LESS IMPORTANT HERE THAN IN OTHER TRANSITIONS.



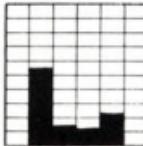
RATHER THAN ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SEPARATE MOMENTS, THE READER HERE MUST ASSEMBLE A SINGLE MOMENT USING SCATTERED FRAGMENTS.



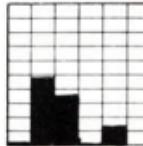
IN EXAMINING
SEVERAL JAPANESE ARTISTS,
WE FIND SIMILAR
PROPORTIONS TO TEZUKA'S,
INCLUDING A HIGH INCIDENCE
OF THE FIFTH TYPE.



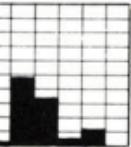
750 RIDER
(石井いさみ?)



FATHER & SON
HAYASHI & OSIMA



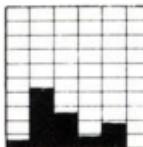
WOLF & CUB
KOIKE & KOJIMA



AKIRA
KATSUHIRO OTOMO

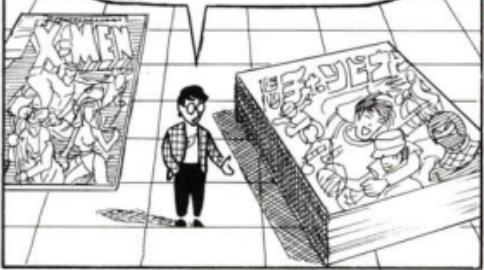


CYBORG 009
SHOTARO ISHINOMORI



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.



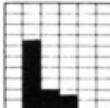
BUT I DON'T THINK
LONGER STORIES ARE
THE ONLY FACTOR,
OR EVEN THE MOST
IMPORTANT ONE.



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.

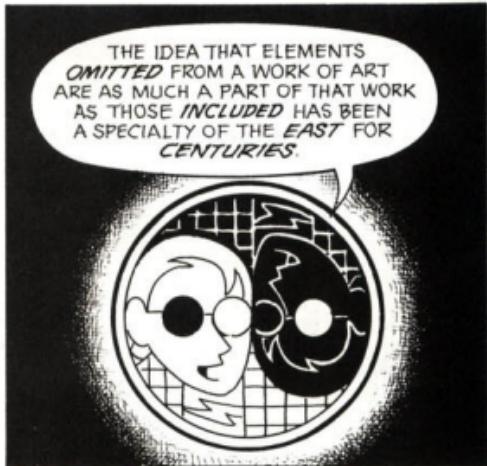


JAPANESE COMICS
MAY BE HEIRS TO
THIS TRADITION, IN
THE WAY THEY SO
OFTEN EMPHASIZE
**BEING THERE OVER
GETTING THERE**.

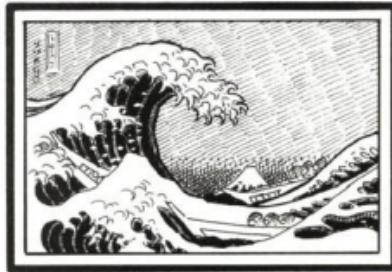
THROUGH THESE AND
OTHER STORYTELLING
TECHNIQUES, THE
JAPANESE OFFER A
VISION OF COMICS
VERY DIFFERENT
FROM OUR OWN.

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

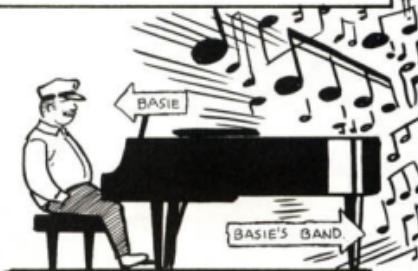


EAST

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**.





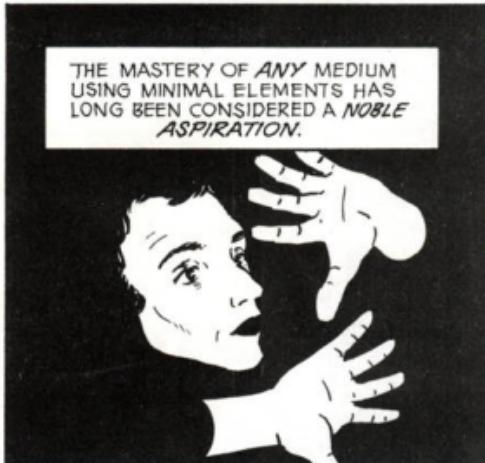
THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS IN WESTERN ART UPON THE PRIMACY OF FOREGROUND SUBJECTS AND CONTINUOUSNESS OF TONES GAVE WAY TO FRAGMENTATION AND A NEW AWARENESS OF THE PICTURE PLANE.



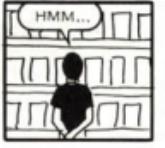
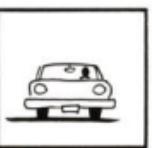
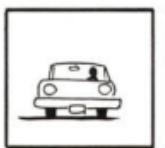
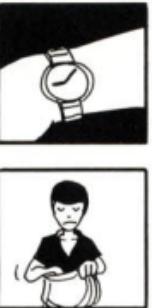
FACSIMILE
OF 'FIGURE'
BY PABLO PICASSO
1948



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



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

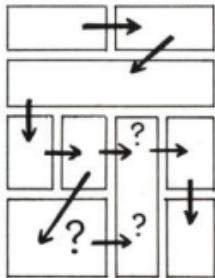


*"BRUM!" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



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

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



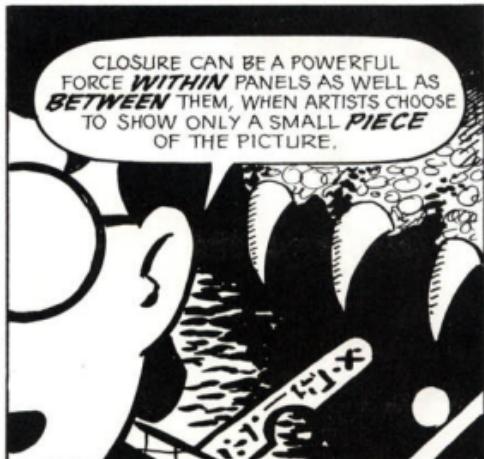
AS CLOSURE **BETWEEN** PANELS BECOMES MORE INTENSE, READER INTERPRETATION BECOMES FAR MORE **ELASTIC**.



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 MADDERNLY VAGUE ABOUT WHAT IT SHOWS US.



BY SHOWING LITTLE OR NOTHING OF A GIVEN SCENE--



--AND OFFERING ONLY CLUES TO THE READER--



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



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

CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!

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

WHOOSH!

= Split Split =

?

Ding! Ding!

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

OW!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

AHEM! I SAY,
JUST AS READERS
COMPLETE --

-- AN
ACTION OR--
OW! OW!

STOP THAT!

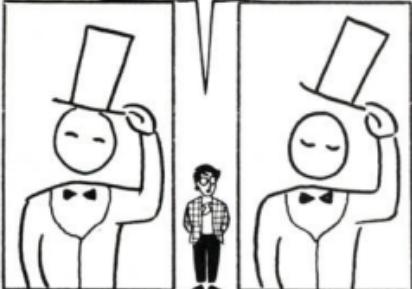
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

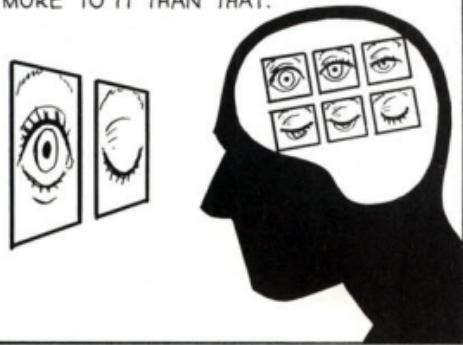
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES
WITHIN EACH PANEL, IT'S THE
POWER OF CLOSURE **BETWEEN**
PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST
INTERESTING.



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

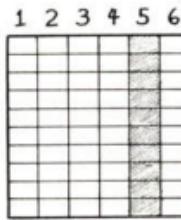


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS
THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF
IN-BETWEENER -- FILLING IN THE GAPS
BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR*
MIGHT-- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL
MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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

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



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



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



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



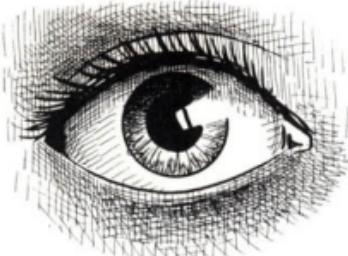
LOOK AGAIN. YOU'VE BEEN IN KITCHENS BEFORE, YOU KNOW WHAT A POT ON THE BOIL SOUNDS LIKE; DO YOU ONLY HEAR IT IN THAT FIRST PANEL?



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



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



BUT WHAT OF THE OTHER **FOUR?**

WE REPRESENT SOUND THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS WORD BALLOONS.



WE REPRESENT SIGHT THROUGH PICTURES SUCH AS THESE. BUT ALL IN ALL, IT IS AN EXCLUSIVELY VISUAL REPRESENTATION.



WITHIN THESE PANELS, WE CAN ONLY CONVEY INFORMATION VISUALLY.



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



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



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

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

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

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



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



IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER *SEAMLESSLY*.

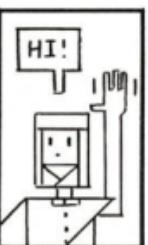
BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



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



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



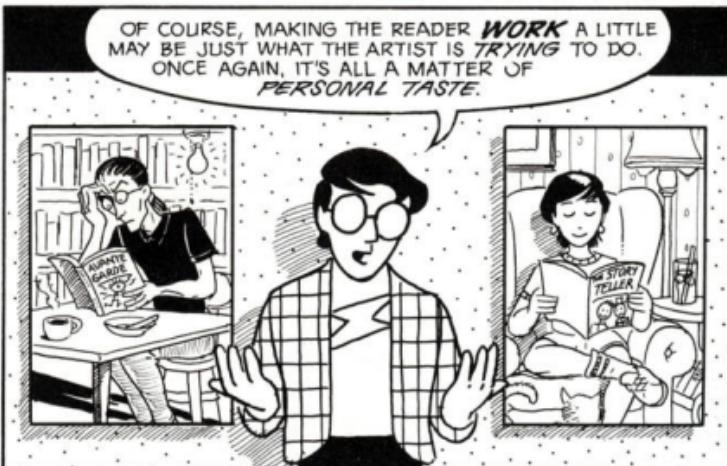
A GOOD RULE OF THUMB IS THAT IF READERS ARE PARTICULARLY **AWARE** OF THE ART IN A GIVEN STORY--

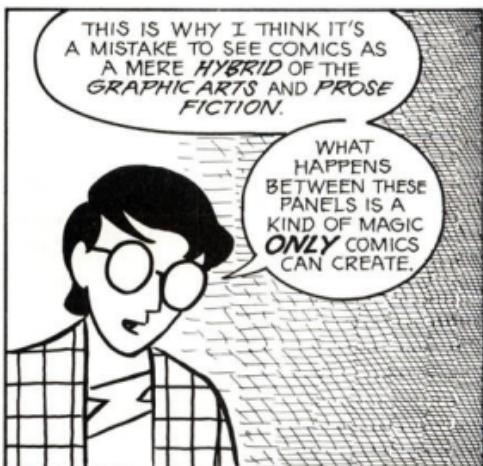
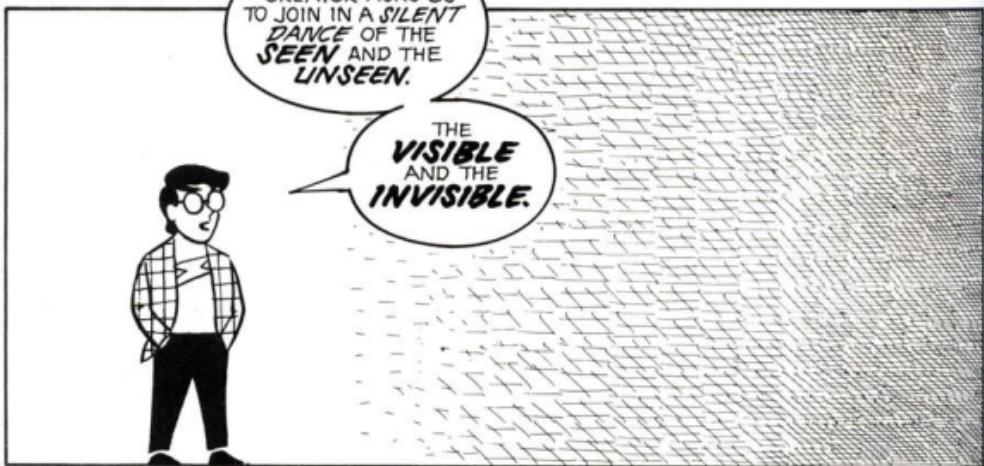


NOW IT'S THE **UNIFYING PROPERTIES** OF DESIGN THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A **WHOLE**, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE **PANELS**.

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

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







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



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



ALL I ASK OF YOU IS A LITTLE FAITH--

--AND A WORLD OF IMAGINATION.

CHAPTER FOUR

TIME FRAMES.

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

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



LIKE A LINE DRAWN
BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

NAAH!
OF COURSE
NOT!

TIME IN COMICS
IS **INFINITELY**
WEIRDER THAN
THAT!

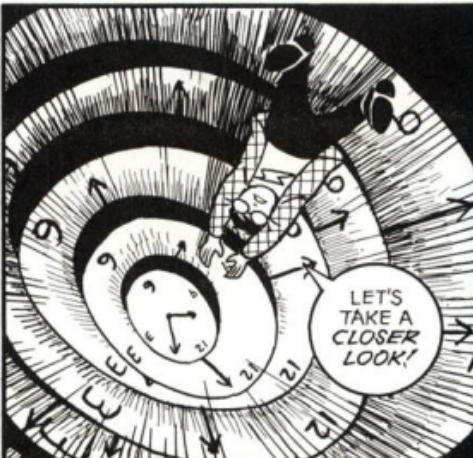


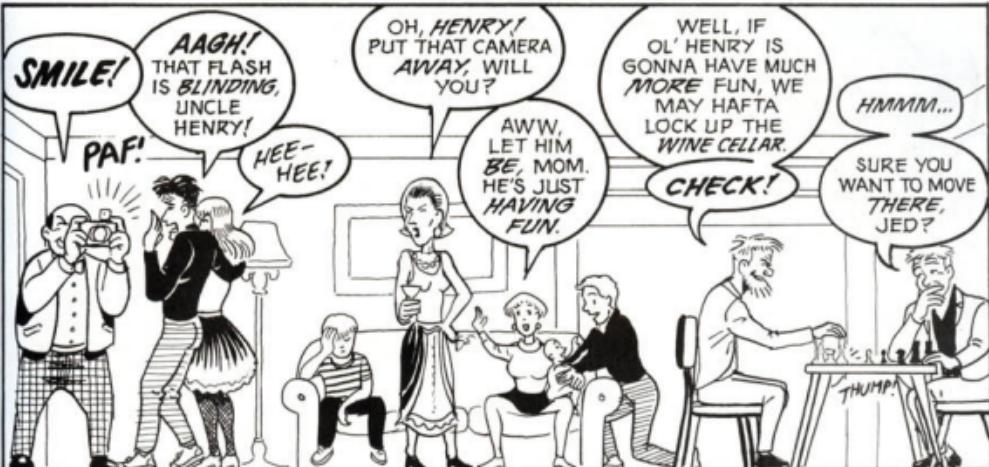
RIGHT?

CLIK



LET'S
TAKE A
CLOSER
LOOK!





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





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



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



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



EACH INCH REPRESENTS A SECOND.



SUCH A ROPE MIGHT BE SAID TO WIND SOMETHING LIKE THIS THROUGH OUR PANEL.

SIMPLIFIED OF COURSE, SINCE EACH BALLOON HAS ITS OWN TWISTS AND TURNS.

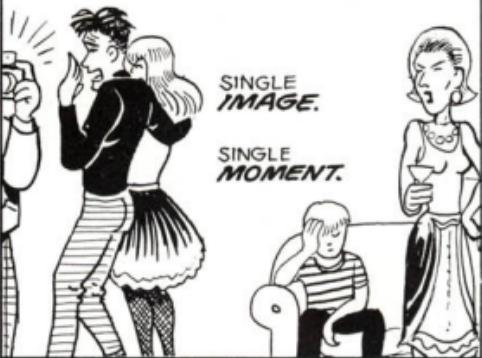
AND SINCE EACH FACE AND FIGURE IS DRAWN TO MATCH HIS/HER OWN WORDS--



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



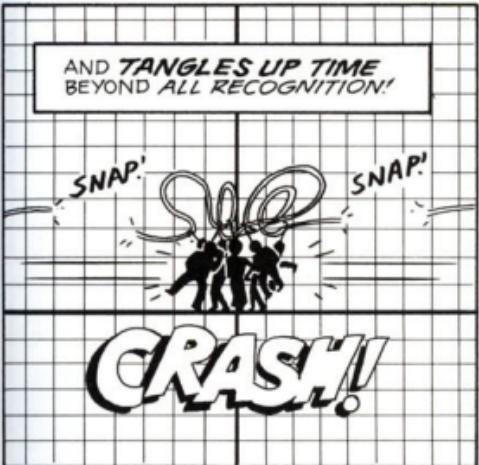
THE PROPERTIES OF THE SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE, MEANWHILE, TEND TO MATCH EACH FIGURE WITH EVERY OTHER FIGURE.



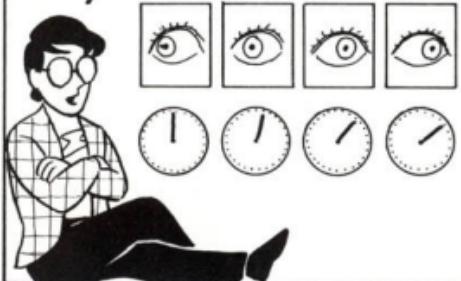
PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING LEFT TO RIGHT, THIS PUTS ALL THE IMAGES ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



AND TANGLES UP TIME BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!



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!



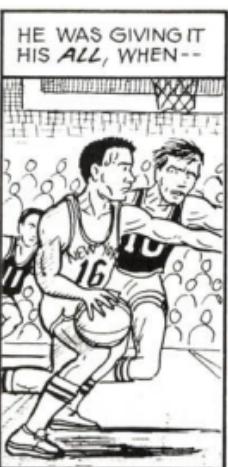
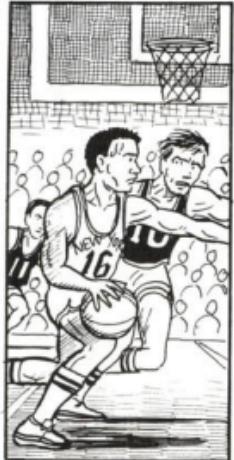
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL "READ" THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT TIME SLOT.



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**.



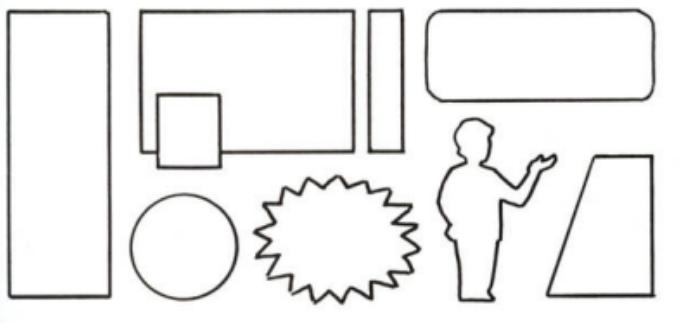
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



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.

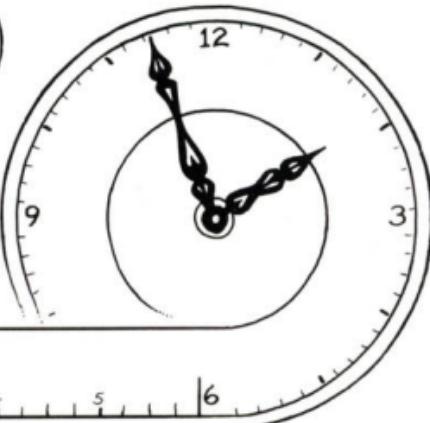


WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AS **DEPICTED** IN COMICS AND TIME AS **PERCEIVED** BY THE READER.



*ESNER DISCUSSES THIS UNDER THE HEADING "FRAMING TIME" IN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART.

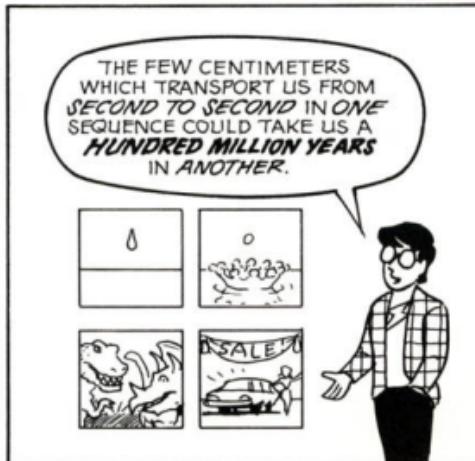
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS
WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE
TIME SPATIALLY, FOR IN THE WORLD
OF COMICS, TIME AND SPACE
ARE ONE AND THE SAME.



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!



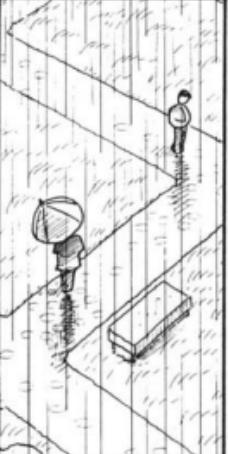
AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE CLASSIC RECTANGLE IS USED MOST OFTEN.



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.

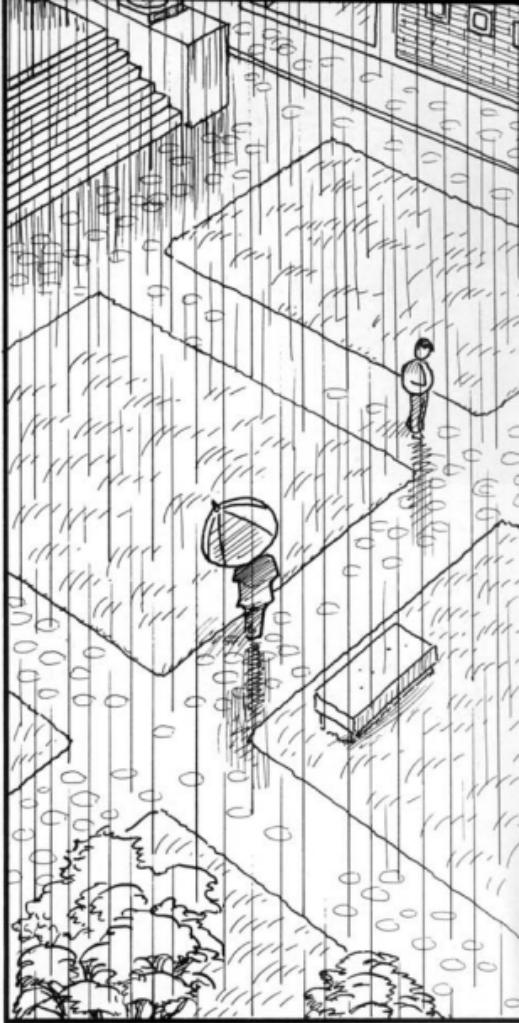


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH FOLLOW IT.



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.





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

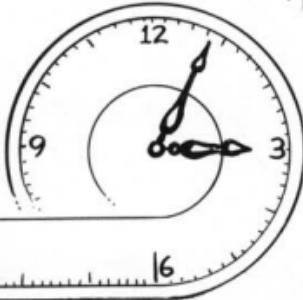
BUT VIEWER PARTICIPATION IS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AN ENORMOUS ISSUE IN OTHER MEDIA.

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.



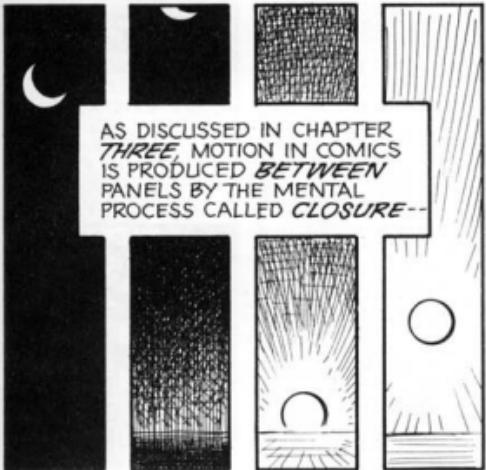
AS MENTIONED EARLIER,
TIME AND SPACE IN THE WORLD OF
COMICS ARE CLOSELY LINKED.



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



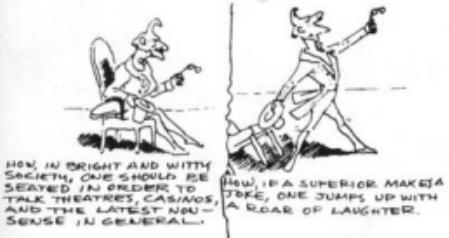
AS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER
THREE, MOTION IN COMICS
IS PRODUCED *BETWEEN*
PANELS BY THE MENTAL
PROCESS CALLED *CLOSURE*—



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

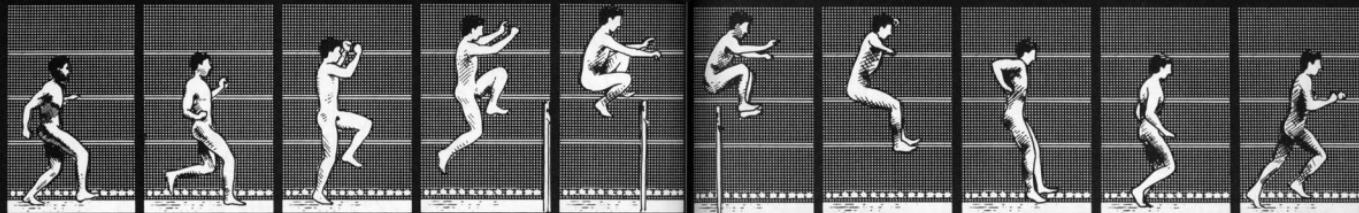


DESPITE COMICS' THREE THOUSAND
YEAR HISTORY, IT WASN'T UNTIL
TÖPFER'S MID-1800'S DOODLINGS
THAT SPECIFIC MOTIONS WERE
PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-
FAMILIAR PANEL-TO-PANEL FORM.



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.

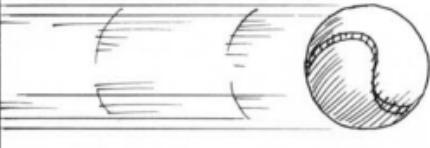


I'M SURE YOU CAN ALL GUESS WHICH MEDIUM I MEAN!





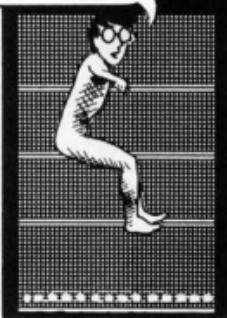
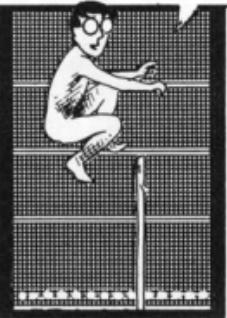
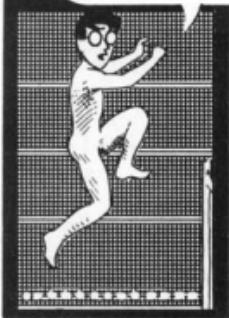
FROM ITS EARLIEST DAYS, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A STATIC MEDIUM.



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.



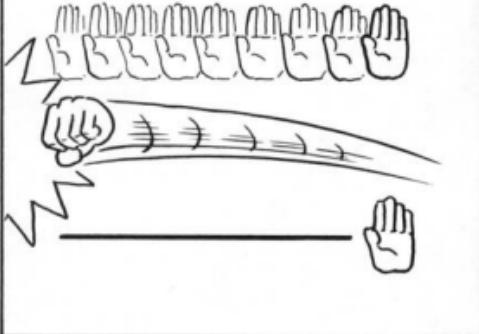
BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A SPAN OF TIME THROUGH SOUND --



--SO TOO CAN A SINGLE PANEL REPRESENT A SPAN OF TIME THROUGH PICTURES!



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!**





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



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 KRISTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

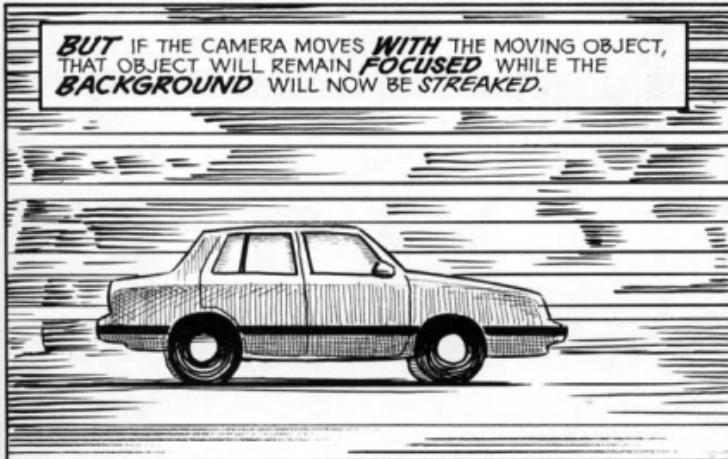
COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*,
WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A
CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO
FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE,
AN INTERESTING BLURRING EFFECT OCCURS.



A CAR GOING AT 60 MPH
MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS.



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



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



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



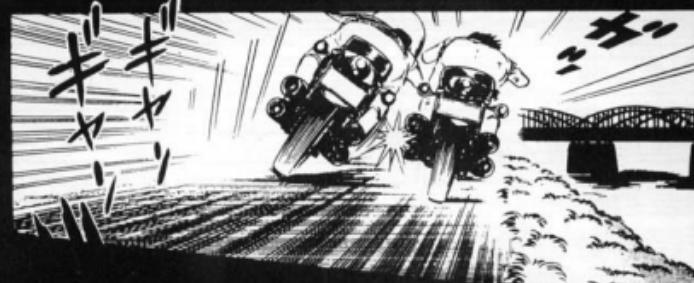
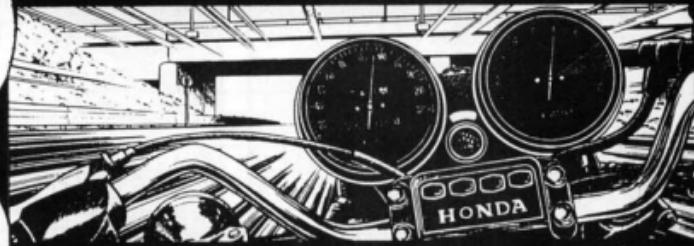
BUT IN **JAPAN**, ONCE
AGAIN, A VERY DIFFERENT
COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED
THIS VERY DIFFERENT
CONCEPT OF MOTION AS
THEIR OWN!



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

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

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



©石井いさみ?

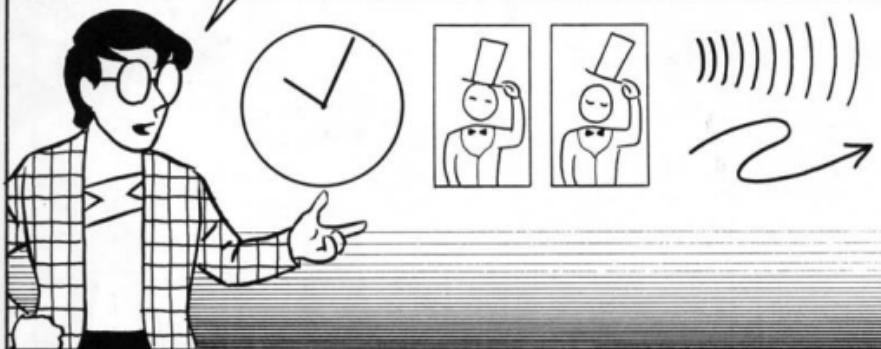


ARE THESE THE **ONLY** WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A SINGLE PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.





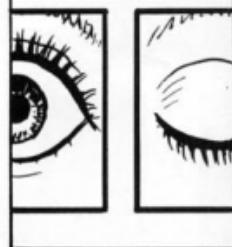
AS WE'VE SEEN, THE INTERACTION OF TIME AND COMICS GENERALLY LEADS US TO ONE OF TWO SUBJECTS:
SOUND OR MOTION.



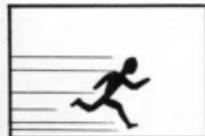
SOUND BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS: WORD BALLOONS AND SOUND EFFECTS.

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

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



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



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



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

SNAP! SNAK SNAP!

CRASH!

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

--THE FACE
IT PRESENTS TO
THE READER--



--IS ONE
OF SIMPLE
NORMALITY.

CLAK



OR THE
ILLUSION OF IT,
ANYWAY.



ALL
DEPENDS ON
YOUR FRAME
OF MIND.

