



UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT MCCLOUD

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

UNDERSTANDING COMICS

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

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

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



Scott McCloud





INTRODUCTION



MY OLD PAL *MATT FEAZELL* CALLED THE OTHER DAY.

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



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

YOU MEAN LIKE A *HISTORY*?



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



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



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



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



OH.



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



UNDERSTANDING COMICS

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

HI,
I'M SCOTT
MCCLLOUD.

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 **6TH 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!**



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



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

--BUT--

THEY DON'T **HAVE** TO BE!



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

DON'T GIMME THAT **COMIC BOOK TALK, BARNEY!**



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



THIS IS WHERE OUR **JOURNEY BEGINS.**





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

--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?



SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

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

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

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!**

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.



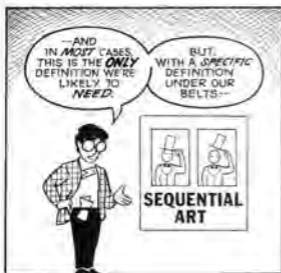
*EISNER'S OWN CONCEPTION AND DEFINITION MAY BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.







com-ics (kəm'iks, 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 dastardly villains who want to conquer the world, in violent sensational pulp-painting action sequences! **3.** Cute buddy buddies, mice and tobytoy bears, dancing to rock'n' roll! **4.** Computer of our nation's youth, covering... *duuuuung!* *duuuuung!* *duuuuung!*



ACTUALLY,
A LOT
FARTHER!

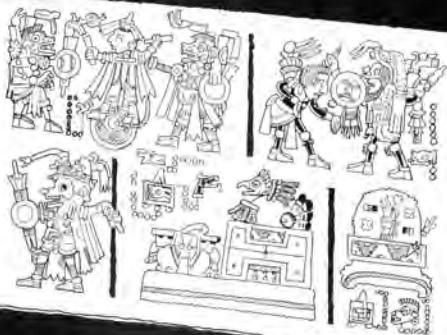
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HERE'S
JUST A PIECE OF THE
EPIC STORY CONTAINED
IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN
PICTURE MANUSCRIPT
"DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS
AROUND 1519.

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

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



FIRST, WE SEPARATE WORDS FROM PICTURES.



B-DEER
"TIGER'S
CLAW"

(A NAME)



11 HOUSE 12 MONKEY

(A DATE)



100 APE'S
BUNDLE

(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:

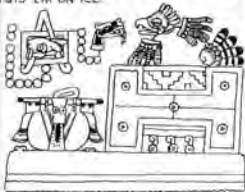
THE YEAR 1049 AD
THE DATE MAY 3rd
THE PLACE HERE!



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

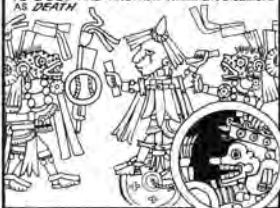


B-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING" AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND PUTS 'EM ON ICE.



(2'M TAKING THE TRANSLATED WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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



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



HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE CORTES 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*



FINDING COMICS BEYOND OUR OWN *MILLENNIUM* IS A BIT *TRICKIER*.






JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE ?

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

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

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

 = "ba'u"

 = "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*.



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THIS, THEIR *REAL* DESCENDENT IS *THE WRITTEN WORD* AND NOT COMICS.

"SES LU BUII abta, henisu nek, walu amenta"

"FOLLOW THEE, THE SOULS OF THE EAST PRAISE THEE, THE SOULS OF THE WEST."

EGYPTIAN *PAINTING* IS *ANOTHER MATTER*. SOME, LIKE THIS, MAY *SEEM* TO BE CONCERNED WITH *SEQUENCE*, BUT ARE ACTUALLY SHOWING *TWO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, EVENTS AND CASTS, GROUPED ONLY BY SUBJECT*.

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*--

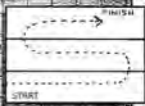
--HAD ONLY BEEN SHOWING ME *PART* OF THE *PICTURE*!



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.

GOING UP THIS TIME!



34:00

3:00

1300 B.C.

12:00

* 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 GIT UNDER A TREE, ONE SLEEPING, ONE PLAYING THE FLUTE!)



PRINTING 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 COLORED OUT BY EDITOR-OPERATORS OF LEDGER



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



THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE PICTURE-STORY DID GROW, HOWEVER, REACHING GREAT HEIGHTS IN THE NIMBLE HANDS OF **WILLIAM HOGARTH**.

HERE IS A TINY PIECE (ABOUT ONE TWENTIETH) OF THE SECOND PLATE FROM HOGARTH'S SIX-PLATE PICTURE-STORY "A HARLOT'S PROGRESS," PUBLISHED IN 1731.

DESPITE THE LOW "PANEL-COUNT," THESE LUSH, RENDERED PICTURES TELL A STORY RICH IN DETAIL AND MOTIVATED BY STRONG SOCIAL CONCERNS.



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

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



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



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



[TRANSLATION BY E. WIEDE.]

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



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

Gaethe



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



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



A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.

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



1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940

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



JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

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



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

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



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



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



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

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



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

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



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

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



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



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



MEANWHILE, PICTURES IN SEQUENCE ARE FINALLY BEING RECOGNIZED AS THE EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION TOOL THAT THEY ARE, BUT **STILL** NOBODY REFERS TO THEM AS COMICS! "DIAGRAMS" SOUNDS MORE DIGNIFIED, I SUPPOSE.



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.

FOR ALL THE DOORS THAT OUR DEFINITION OPENS, THERE IS ONE WHICH IT CLOSES.



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



"Mommy, why ain't I juxtaposed?"

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



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



HI, BOGEY.

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



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



MORE ON THIS LATER.

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



"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.



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



SEQUENTIAL ART

DADA

BIOGRAPHY HORROR

ROMANCE SURREALISM

BLANK VERSE

EPIC POETRY

SOCIAL ALLEGORY

ADAPTATIONS

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SATIRE

HISTORICAL FICTION

FOLK TALES

EROTICA

MYSTERY

RELIGIOUS TOPICS



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

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



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

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



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

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

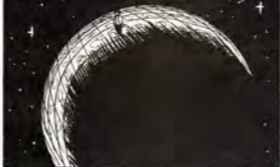


THOSE OF YOU WHO **MAKE** COMICS FOR A LIVING -- OR WOULD **LIKE** TO, SOMEDAY -- PROBABLY KNOW THAT KEEPING UP WITH ALL THE **ADVANCES** IN TODAY'S COMICS IS A **FULL-TIME JOB**.

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



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



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



--OF MANY **POSSIBLE** WORLDS!

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



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



AND SO THEY SHOULD.



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



CHAPTER TWO

THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.

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



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



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

THIS IS A *PAINTING* OF A PIPE.



RIGHT?







THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT A LEAF



THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



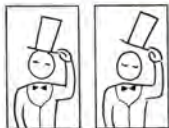
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



THIS IS NOT A COMPANY.



THIS IS NOT A FACE.



THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE MOMENTS.

THIS IS PAPER

NOW, THE WORD **ICON** MEANS MANY THINGS.

THIS IS PAPER 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.



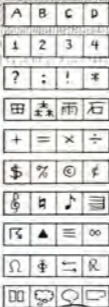
THE SORTS OF IMAGES WE USUALLY **CALL** SYMBOLS ARE ONE **CATEGORY** OF **ICON**, HOWEVER.



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



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



ICONS OF THE **PRACTICAL** REALM.



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



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

OR TO PUT IT SOMEWHAT **CLIMAXILY**, 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**.

EYE

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

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

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



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

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

REALITY THIS WAY.



ONLY
OUTLINES
AND A HINT
OF SHADING
ARE STILL
PRESENT, BUT
WE EASILY
RECOGNIZE
THIS AS A
**HUMAN
FACE.**

SOMEWHAT
**MORE
ABSTRACT**
IS **THIS**
STYLE
OF DRAWING
FOUND IN MANY
ADVENTURE
COMICS.



WHY
THEN, IS THE
FACE ABOVE SO
ACCEPTABLE
TO OUR EYES?
**WHY DOES IT
SEEM JUST AS
REAL AS THE
OTHERS?**

AS WE CONTINUE
TO ABSTRACT AND
SIMPLIFY OUR IMAGE,
WE ARE MOVING FURTHER
AND FURTHER FROM THE
"REAL" FACE OF THE
PHOTO.



WHAT
IS THE SECRET
OF THE **ICON**
WE CALL--

--THE
CARTOON?





WHY--

--ARE--

--WE--

--SO--

--INVOLVED?*



WHY WOULD *ANYONE*, YOUNG OR OLD, RESPOND TO A CARTOON AS MUCH OR MORE THAN A *REALISTIC* IMAGE?



WHY IS OUR CULTURE *SO* IN THRALL TO THE *SIMPLIFIED* REALITY OF THE *CARTOON*?



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*.



WHEN WE *ABSTRACT* AN IMAGE THROUGH *CARTOONING*, WE'RE NOT SO MUCH *ELIMINATING* DETAILS AS WE ARE *FOCUSING* ON *SPECIFIC* DETAILS.



BY *STRIPPING* DOWN AN IMAGE TO ITS ESSENTIAL *MEANING*, AN ARTIST CAN *AMPLIFY* THAT MEANING IN A WAY THAT *REALISTIC* ART CAN'T.

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 EQUALLY WELL APPLIED TO MANY *TIME-TESTED CLASSICS*. SIMPLIFYING CHARACTERS AND IMAGES TOWARD A *PURPOSE* CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR STORYTELLING IN *ANY* MEDIUM.



CARTOONING ISN'T JUST A WAY OF *DRAWING*. IT'S A WAY OF *SEEING!*

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

TWO

THREE

(NEARLY) ALL

ANOTHER IS THE *UNIVERSALITY* OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOON 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!*

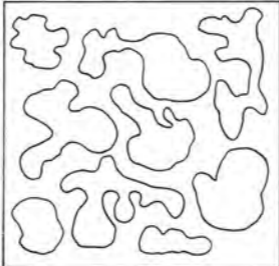


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!



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**.



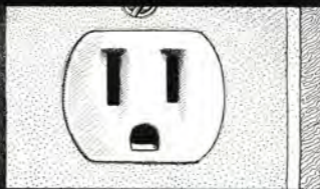
NOW—YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY **LOOK** LIKE, EVERY SINGLE **ONE** OF THOSE SHAPES **CAN** BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.



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



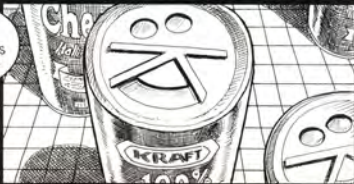
WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



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**--



--AS A **CARTOON**.

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



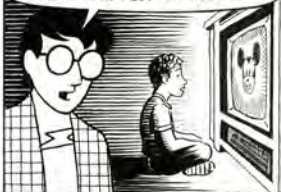
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF **ANOTHER**.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE **CARTOON**--



--YOU SEE **YOURSELF**

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



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



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



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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



THAT'S THE *THEORY*, ANYWAY.



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



THERE'S *MORE*, TOO!



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



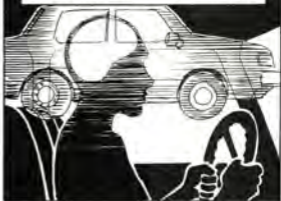
WHEN *DRIVING*, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR FIVE SENSES REPORT



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:

KLUNK!

HEY!
HE HIT
ME!!

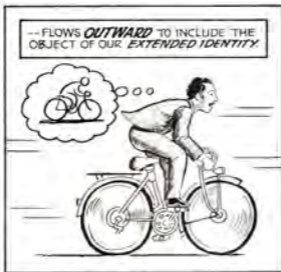


THAN "HE HIT MY *CAR*!"

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



CEFREUS © 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.



"YOGA (GOKU) TOKYO"

BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



SOON, SOME OF THEM REALIZED THAT THE *OBJECTIFYING POWER* OF REALISTIC ART'S COULD BE PUT TO *OTHER* USES



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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.



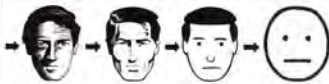
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.



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

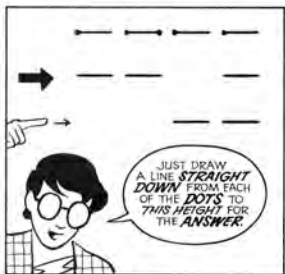
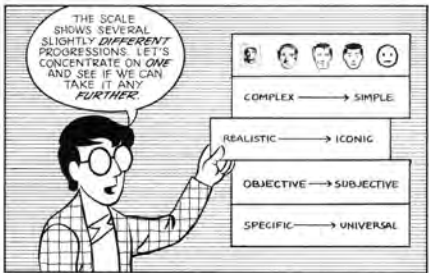


RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.



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



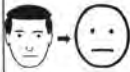


BOTH ARTIST AND WRITER BEGIN, HANDS JOINED ACROSS THE GAP, WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO MAKE COMICS OF **QUALITY**



ARTIST

WRITER



FACE

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



THE WRITER KNOWS THAT THIS MEANS MORE THAN JUST **OO! 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 HERS**.



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 people's
soul lives
so paid
on now..*

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



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



RECEIVED

FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH

*The youth's
said always
so glib
or 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 UNIFIED **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

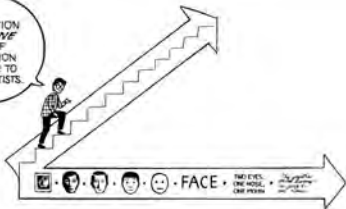
CAN THEY BE **RECONCILED?**



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?"*

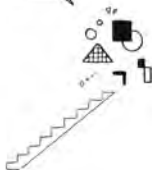


EARNING
THE REPLY
"IT *MEANS*
WHAT IT
IS!"

IN
THIS
CASE--



--INK
ON
PAPER.

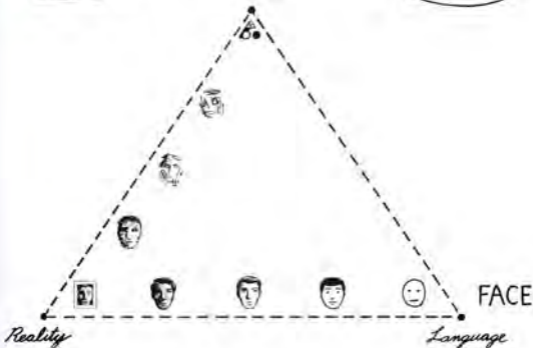


THIS IS THE REALM OF THE ART **OBJECT**, THE **PICTURE PLANE**, WHERE SHAPES, LINES AND COLORS CAN BE **THEMSELVES** AND NOT PRETEND OTHERWISE

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.



FACE IS AT THE TOP OF THE PICTURE PLANE

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!

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

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



MARY FLEENER at her most abstract. 2. MARSHALL FINE. 3. DAVE MAKEAN emptying one of the many styles found in his series. CAGLE. 4. MARC HEMPEL. 5. GREGORY. 6. MARK BEYER. 7. LARRY MARDER's Baskin from TALES OF THE BEANWORLD. "Resembling" nothing ever seen hence all the way to the right. Marder's being walk the line from design to meaning. 7. SAUL STERNBERG. 8. PENNY MORAN VANHORN from THE LEBRARIAN. 9. LORENZO MATTOTI in FRIES (© Editors Alton Mich S.A.) combine deeply impressionistic lighting with comic forms and strong design-oriented compositions. In other words, he's a hard one to place. 10. ALINE KOMINSKY-CRUMB. 11. PETER BASDIE's Cheshire Boy from NEAT STUFF. Compare to 39. 12. KRISTINE KRYFF. 13. REA IRVING. THE SMITHIES © Field Newspaper Syndicate. 14. STEVE WILLIS's Mory. 15. PHIL YEH's FRANK THE UNICORN. 16. JERRY MORTIARTY's "Jack Smooches". Based closely on real world light and shadow, but distanced into rough angles. Similar effects are found in no. 6, 18, 19, 20 and 24. 17. JEFF WOOD's art for Scott Russia's JAZZ. 18. ROLF STARK's expressionistic RAIN. 19. SPAIN'S TRASHMAN. 20. FRANK BELLETTI'S THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. Baiman © D.C. Comics. Baiman created by Bob Kane. 21. WILLIAM MESSNER'S BERRY's Wagon Macabre from JOURNEY. 22. DON SIMPSON'S MEGATON MAN. Beginning from a

realistic anatomical base, Simpson distorts and exaggerates M.A.'s features to the state of abstraction. 23. MICHAEL CHERKAS from SILENT INVADER. © Charles and Harrold. 24. RICK O'NEAL. 25. PETER KURER. 26. GARRY THROUPEAU. 27. LYNDA BARRY. 28. SAMPEI SURATO. 29. CHARLES BURNER'S BOY BABY. 29 1/2. CHRISTOPHER CLIFF STRETT. The character evolved here from POLLY AND HER PALS might belong a bit lower, but Strrett's art, like Fleener's often heads upward toward the wildly abstract. P.A.H.P. © Newspaper Features Syndicate, Inc. 30. SERGIO ARAQUONS's GROO THE WANDERER. Simple, straightforward but with a strong gestural quality that always reminds us of the hand that holds the pen (also look at 14, 26, 31, a). 31. ROBERTA GREGORY's Bony Black from NAUGHTY BITS. 32. DAVID MAZZUCHELLI from BATMAN, YEAR ONE. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 33. JOSE MUNOZ from "Mister Comics, Mister Wink" © Muniz and Delgado. 34. CAROL

SWAIN. 35. CHESTER GOULD'S DICK TRACY © Chicago Tribune News Corp. Syndicate, Inc. 36. JACK KIRBY's Oakland. © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's Racer Vegeta from TRICON. 39. PETER BAGGE's Rudy Bradley from HATE. Compare to 11. 40. SETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE COCKETT. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUGGELL's Mowgli from King of the Jungle. BOCHS's illustrative characters are as finely observed and realistically based as Hal Foster's (or Dave Stevens') but with an unbridled sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Later, "Rugell" has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 45. GOSSEKI KOJIMA from KODJURE. © KAMI.

"WOLF AND CUB" © Kuba and Kojima. 46. "EVE CAMPBELL'S ALEC. Respects to Kline, but also gesture and sophistication. The process of drawing left hand from right. 47. ALEX TOTI. Zone © Zone/Professional, Inc. Art © Wat Disney Productions. (Zoro created by Jeffrey McQuinn). 48. WUDD. PRATT'S COORITAMATSE © Caspary, Paris, France. 49. WILL EISNER from TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. 50. DORI SEGA. 51. R. CRUMB's scene between Yashin and Cobby characters, usually staying about his high but occasionally venturing upward. 52. STEVE DITKO. 53. NORMAN MAZUR. 54. VALENTINE'S NORMALMAN sits a bit to the right and up from his current SHADOWHAWK (whose comic mask made a bit harder to place). 55. ROY CHAST. 56. JOOST SWARTE's Amir Makhani. 57. ELZIE BEGAR'S POPPEY © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 58. GEORGE HERRIMAN's "Offizee Pupp" from KRAZY KAT © International Feature Service, Inc. 59. JIM WOODRING's FRANK. 60. NEAL ADAMS from X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. (X-Men created by Lee C. Kirby). 61. GIL KAY from ACTION COMICS © D.C. Comics, Inc. 62. MILTON CANNIFF'S STEVE CANYON. 63. JIM LEE. Not fully appearing in X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics, Inc. (Superman created by Jerry Siegel and the Shuster). 65. JACQUES TARDI from LE DEMON DES GLACES © Dargaud Editions. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES. Exports from the VALERIAN series. © Dargaud Editions. 67. BILL GRIVETT'S ZIPPY THE PHINEAD. 68. JOE MATT. 68. KYLE BAKER from WHY I HATE BATHING. 70. THINA. NORBYN'S

MIKEY © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 71. NYKO NYKO © Oscar from THE ROSE OF VERVALE. 72. GEORGE MCMAHON. BRINDING UP FATHERS © International Feature Service. 73. CHARLES SCHULZ's Charlie Brown from PEANUTS © United Feature Syndicate, Inc. 74. JARF SINGMAN from MANHATTAN. 75. FRANK FRAZZELL'S CIVICILMAN. 76. The company Logo. The picture as symbol. 77. Tina Logo. The word as object. 78. Steve Ditzko and his team. 79. TOM KING. SMOOCHES. THAT LOVABLE TRANSVESTITE, a photo-comic. 80. DREW FRIEDMAN. 81. DAVID STEVENS. 82. HAL FOSTER. FARZAN created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. 83. ALEX RAYMOND. "Flash Gordon" © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 84. MILLO MANARA. 85. JOHN BUSCEMA. The Virgin © Marvel Entertainment Group. 86. CAROL LAY's three year old Kung from GOOD GIRLS. A bizarre character, but drawn in a very straightforward style. 87. SILBERT HERNANDEZ. 88. JAMIE HERRINGTON. 89. COLLIN UPTON. 90. KURT SCHAFENBERGER. Superboy © D.C. Comics. 91. JACK COLE'S PLASTIC MAN © D.C. Comics. 92. REED WALLER. OMAHA THE CAT CANYON. © Walter and Walter. 93. WENDY PIRN. Sylvain from ELFOREST © Waup Graphics. 94. DAN DE CARLO. Veronica © Archie Comics. 95. HAROLD GRAY. LITTLE ORPHAN ANNE. © Columbia Tribune. New York News Syndicate. 96. HERGE'S Y'INTN © Editors Cadogan. 97. FLOYD GOTTFREDSON. Monkey Muzzle © Walt Disney Productions. 98. JIM SMITH. BONE. 98. Shilo Damm. 100. COLLEEN BODRAN. A BUSTARTY SOCI. 101. ROY CRANE'S CAPTAIN EASY © NEA Service, Inc. 102. DAN CLOWES. 103. WAYNO. 104. V.T. HAWLIN ALLEY DOP © NEA Service, Inc. 105. CHESTER BROWN. 106. STAN SAKATI'S USAGI YOMIBI. 107. DAVE SIM'S CEREBUS THE ANTIPOCK. 108. WALT KELLY'S TOOD © Baby King. 109. RUODOLF DRINKS' HANS AND FRITZ © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 110. H.C. "BUD" FISHER'S Jiff from MUTT AND JEFF © McNaught Syndicate, Inc. 111. MORT WALKER. HE AND LOS © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 112. JIMMY KIMBLE HAWK. ASTROLOGY. 113. CARL BARKS. Scooby McDuck © Walt Disney Productions. 114. CROCK. JONNY. 115. JIMMY O'MALLEY from BARIBAY © Fair Newspaper Syndicate, Inc. 116. PAT SULLIVAN'S FELIX THE CAT Newspaper Features Syndicate. 117. LORENZO MATTOTI. ASTERIX by Goscinny and Uderzo © Dargaud Editions.

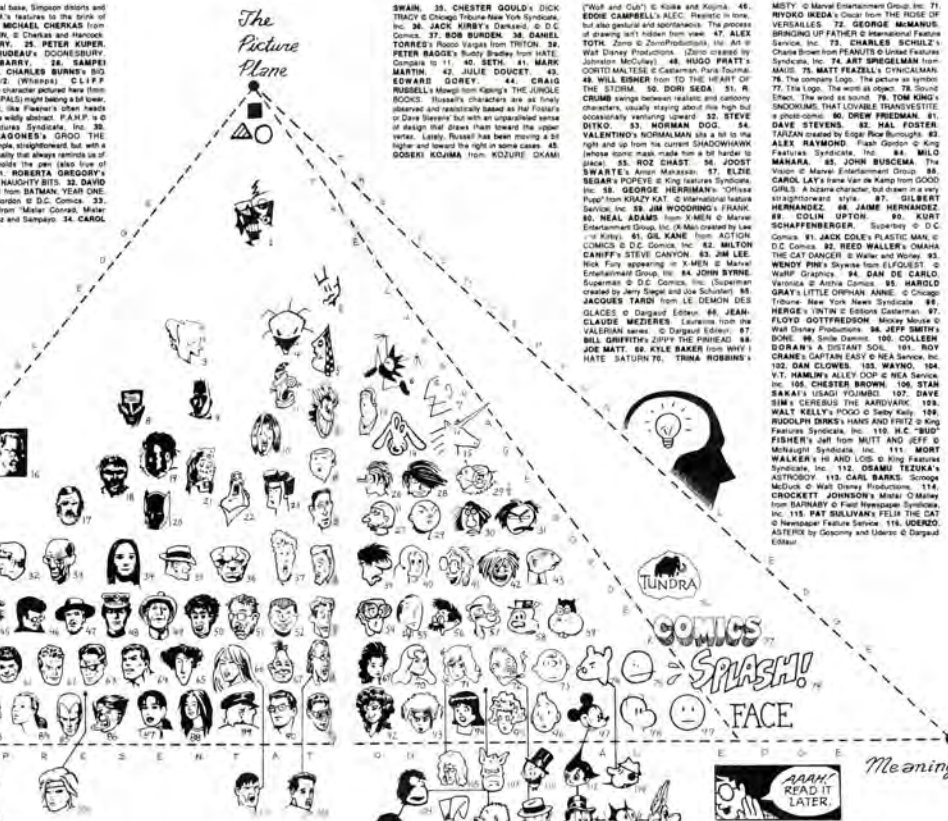
ALL COPYRIGHTS HELD BY THE CREATOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.



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

"Reality"

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



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



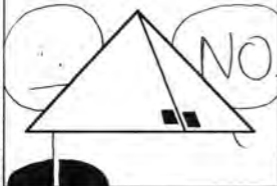
EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A *RANGE* OF STYLES, THOUGH, AND MANY OCCUPY *SEVERAL* PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.



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



THE 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*.



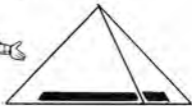
BUT OTHERS RANGE *CONSIDERABLY* FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER



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



HERGE 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

HEY!! COME TO THINK OF IT... WHAT ABOUT THAT WALKIN' TIME BOMB??

THAT'S RIGHT!! IF HE'S STILL LOOSE... THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT'LL HAPPEN!!

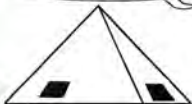


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINIOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE

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 *DESAGNY* 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 NUKIN' MAMA RUSSIA ANY MOMENT.



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



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!

PRETTY FAR APART AS GENRES GO!



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.



SEE PAGE 28 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

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*.*

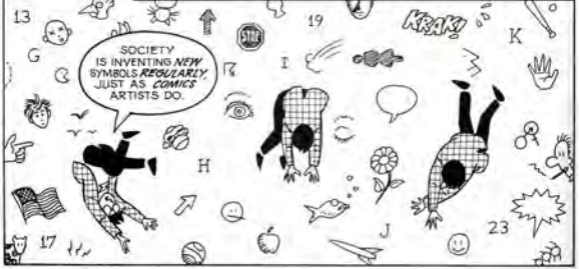


THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF VISUAL ARTS BELONGS IN THIS SPACE. MONET SET UP HIS EASEL ALONG THE *LEFT FACE*, MONDRIAN AT THE *TOP*, REMBRANDT *LOWER LEFT*, MATISSE RIGHT ABOVE WHERE I'M STANDING.

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"



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 CARTOONISTS.

IT'S BEEN OVER *TWENTY YEARS* SINCE
MCLUHAN 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
MCLUHAN AS "COOL"
MEDIA-- THAT IS,
MEDIA WHICH
COMMAND AUDIENCE
INVOLVEMENT THROUGH
ICONIC FORMS.



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

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

THE FATE
OF THE
OTHER ONE,
COMICS--

-- IS
ANYONE'S
GUESS.



CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE **NOT!**



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

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

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



EVEN THE MOST *WIDELY TRAVELLED* 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*

Peek-A-Boo!

Peek-A-Boo!

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



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!

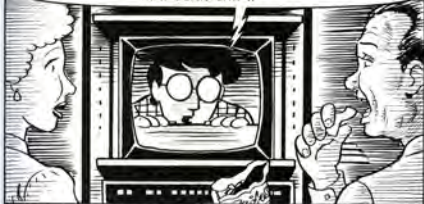


IN
ELECTRONIC
MEDIA, CLOSURE IS
CONSTANT,
EVEN OVER-
POWERING!

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!!*



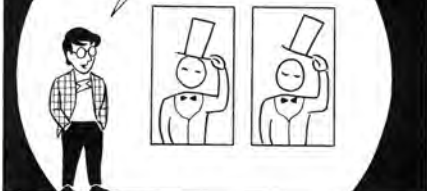
BETWEEN SUCH
AUTOMATIC
ELECTRONIC
CLOSURE AND THE
SIMPLER CLOSURE
OF EVERYDAY
LIFE--



-- 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.



* MEDIA GURU TONY SCHWARTZ DESCRIBES THIS
AT LENGTH IN HIS BOOK *MEDIA: THE SECOND GOD*,
ANCHOR BOOKS, 1983.



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--



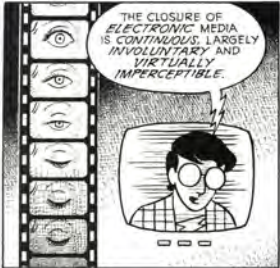
ICONOGRAPHY



CLOSURE

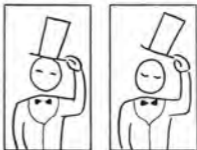
-- THEN, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, *COMICS IS CLOSURE!*





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

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



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 *INVISIBLE ART* OF *COMICS STORYTELLING!*



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



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



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.

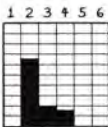


[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE]

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**.



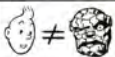
THIS EMPHASIS ON **ACTION-TO-ACTION** STORY TELLING SUITS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT **KIRBY**, BUT IS HE **UNIQUE** IN THIS RESPECT?

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

NOW, HERGE'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?**

1 2 3 4 5 6



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

X-MEN #2



CLAREMONT & LEE

"THE KATDREAR SOAP"



G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



GREGORY

FRANK IN THE BUREAU



WOODRING

A CONTRACT WESBOD



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?



SQUEAK THE MOUSE



MATTIOLO

ASTERIX



GOSCINNY & UDERTZ

WELCOME TO AFRIKOL



CRISTIN & MEDRES

THE LONG TUNDRON



O'BRIEN & EPSTEIN

"HANKY-TINK"



TNUDI

CLIK!



MAHARA

THE BLACK ISLAND



HERGE

"THE CLOCK STRIKES"



JOOST SWARTE



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.

1 2 3 4 5 6



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

1 2 3 4 5 6



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.

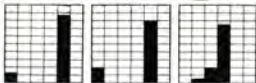
1 2 3 4 5 6



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

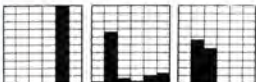
"MAVS" (ORIGINAL)



"SKINLESS PERKINS"

"PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET"

"CRACKING JOKES"



FRONT AND BACK COVERS

"FACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE"

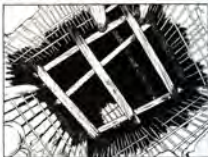
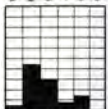
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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



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

1 2 3 4 5 6



JUST WHAT IS *GOING ON* HERE?

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



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.

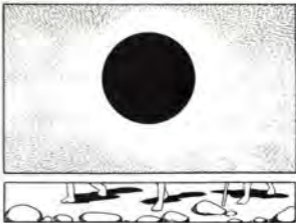


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR *FOUR PERCENT* OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGE.

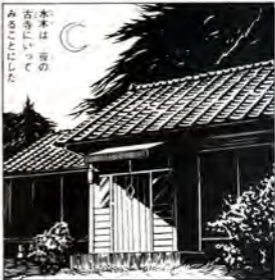


5

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.



本木は、夜の
古寺に、いつて
みることにした



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

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



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



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

WHY?



TSETSUO ARIMA (荒木 兼三)



FUMIHIKO SUNAYAMA & OSAMA



WOLF & KENJI KOYAMA & KOYAMA



KEIJI NAKAZAWA



CYBORG 009 SHOTARO ISHINOMORI



SHONEN GANGAN 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."

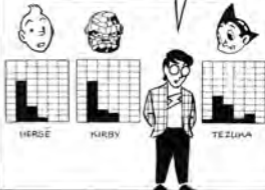
WHEN INDIVIDUAL FEATURES ARE COLLECTED, THEY MAY RUN FOR THOUSANDS OF PAGES.



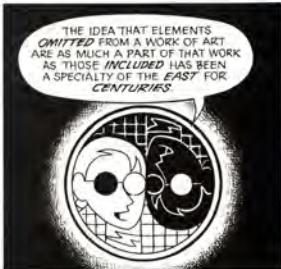
AS SUCH, DOZENS OF PANELS CAN BE DEVOTED TO PORTRAYING SLOW CINEMATIC MOVEMENT OR TO SETTING A MOOD.

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

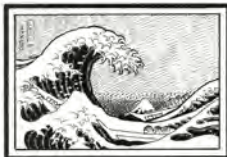
I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING A BIT MORE FUNDAMENTAL TO THIS PARTICULAR EAST/WEST SPLIT







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. 1824)
(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 SWEEP
THE *EAST*, SO TOO HAVE *EASTERN* AND
AFRICAN IDEAS OF *FRAGMENTATION*
AND *RHYTHM* SWEEP THE *WEST*.



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



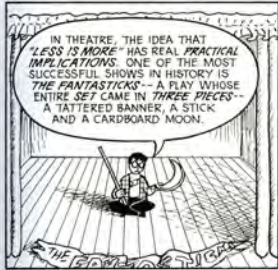


IN THE VISUAL ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.

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



THE MASTERY OF ANY MEDIUM USING MINIMAL ELEMENTS HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED A NOBLE ASPIRATION.

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

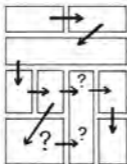


* SLAM! APPEARS INSTEAD OF A SOUND...



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

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



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



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

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



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



COMICS CAN BE **MADDENINGLY VAGUE** ABOUT WHAT IT SHOWS US.



BY SHOWING LITTLE OR NOTHING OF A GIVEN SCENE--



--AND OFFERING ONLY **CLUES** TO THE READER--



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



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

CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!

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

WHOOSH!

≡ Slip Slip ≡

?

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!

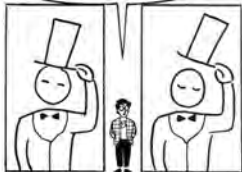
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

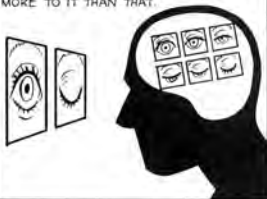
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES *WITHIN* EACH PANEL, IT'S THE POWER OF CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST INTERESTING.



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

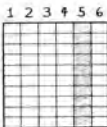


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF *IN-BETWEENER* -- FILLING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR* MIGHT -- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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 THE **OTHER SENSES** THROUGH **WORD BALLOONS**.



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

WITHIN THESE PANELS, WE CAN ONLY CONVEY INFORMATION **VISUALLY**.



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



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



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



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



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



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



-- THAT THE READER MIGHT LEARN TO FLY?



IN CHAPTER TWO, WE DISCUSSED VARIOUS TYPES OF ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC DRAWING STYLES.

DO THESE AFFECT CLOSURE?

I THINK THE ANSWER IS YES.



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

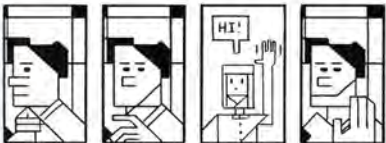
IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER SEAMLESSLY.

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 CONCERNS OF THE *PICTURE PLANE* CLOSURE CAN BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, THOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.



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

...TO *ME* ANYWAY. THESE THINGS ARE ALL *SUBJECTIVE!*



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

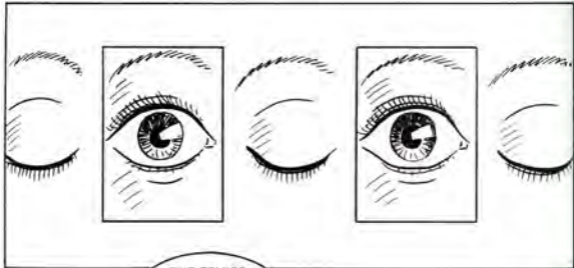


-- THEN CLOSURE IS PROBABLY NOT HAPPENING WITHOUT SOME *EFFORT*.



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*.





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

THE
VISIBLE
AND THE
INVISIBLE.



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



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

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





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



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



ALL I ASK OF YOU
IS A LITTLE
FAITH--

--AND A *WORLD*
OF *IMAGINATION*.



CHAPTER FOUR

TIME FRAMES.

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



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



LIKE A LINE DRAWN BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

RIGHT?



CLIK



NAAH!
OF COURSE
NOT!



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



LET'S
TAKE A
CLOSER
LOOK!





EVEN THE BRIEF SOUND OF A FLASH-BULB HAS A CERTAIN DURATION, SHORT TO BE SURE, BUT NOT INSTANTANEOUS!

FAR SLOWER IS THE DURATION OF THE AVERAGE WORD. UNCLE HENRY ALONE BURNS UP A GOOD SECOND IN THIS PANEL, ESPECIALLY SINCE "SMILE!" UNDOUBTEDLY PRECEDED THE FLASH.

LIKELIWISE, THE NEXT BALLOONS COULD HAVE ONLY FOLLOWED THE BURST OF THE FLASHBULB, THUS ADDING STILL MORE TIME

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



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



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



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



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



EACH INCH REPRESENTS A *SECOND*.



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

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



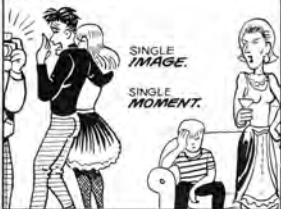
AND SINCE EACH FACE AND FIGURE IS DRAWN TO MATCH HIS/HER OWN *WORDS*--



--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.



SINGLE *IMAGE*.

SINGLE *MOMENT*.

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.



NOT ALL PANELS ARE LIKE THAT, OF COURSE.

A SILENT PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD INDEED BE SAID TO DEPICT A SINGLE MOMENT!



HE'S GIVING IT HIS ALL, FOLKS!

IF SOUND IS INTRODUCED, THIS CEASES TO BE TRUE--



-- BUT, IN AN OTHERWISE SILENT CAPTIONED PANEL, THE SINGLE MOMENT CAN ACTUALLY BE HELD.



HE WAS GIVING IT HIS ALL, WHEN--

THESE VARIOUS SHAPES WE CALL PANELS HOLD IN THEIR BORDERS ALL OF THE ICONS THAT ADD UP TO THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



ALL EXCEPT ONE.

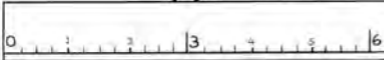


FOR JUST AS THE BODY'S LARGEST ORGAN -- OUR SKIN -- IS SELDOM THOUGHT OF AS AN ORGAN--



-- SO TOO IS THE PANEL ITSELF OVERLOOKED AS COMICS' MOST IMPORTANT ICON!

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.



I ALWAYS FIGURED *MARY-ANNE* WOULD GO FOR *GILLIGAN*



I GUESS



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!**

THE **PANEL BORDER** IS OUR **GUIDE** THROUGH TIME AND SPACE, BUT IT WILL ONLY **GUIDE** US SO FAR.



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



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



HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?!



I GUESS.

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



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

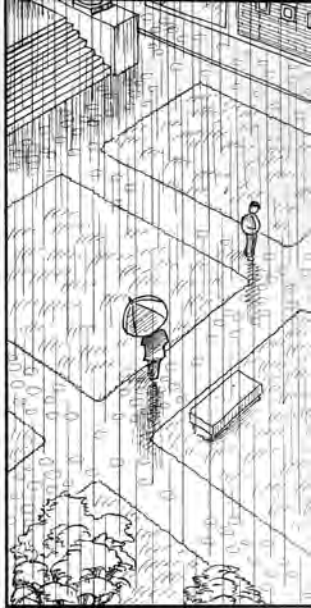


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH **FOLLOW** IT.



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

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



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



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





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



THIS
PANEL AND
THIS PANEL
ALONE
REPRESENTS THE
PRESENT.



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



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



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



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



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

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



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



BUT
EYES, LIKE
STORMS, CAN
CHANGE
DIRECTION!



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



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



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



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



THE INEFFECTIBLE MR. SPOT
I'VE GONE BOGDOWN SOME MONEY FROM MYSELF IN THE FUTURE.
HEY!
NOW I CAN GO OUT TO DINNER!
EAT!
I'VE GONE TO THE CHURCH, ABOUT THE CATHEDRAL.
HEY!

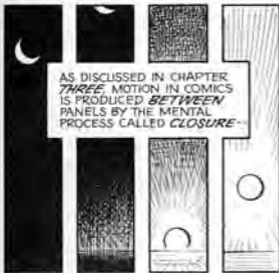
AS MENTIONED EARLIER,
TIME AND *SPACE* IN THE WORLD OF
 COMICS ARE *CLOSELY LINKED*.



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
 TOPFFER'S *MID-1800s DOODLINGS*
 THAT *SPECIFIC* MOTIONS WERE
 PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-
 FAMILIAR *PANEL-TO-PANEL* FORM.

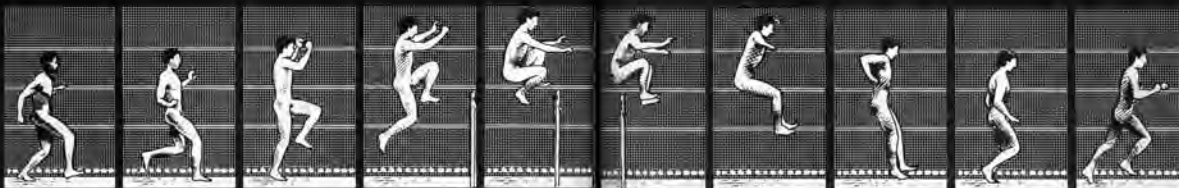


HEA, IN DEWET AND WITH
 SQUINT, ONE SHOULD BE
 BEING TO THE FUTURE TO
 TALK INTERIOR, CAUSE,
 AND THE LATEST NEW-
 SENSE... A GENERAL

AND, IF A STRONGER ANGER
 TREE, ONE JUMP UP WITH
 A LOAD OF LAUGHS

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





COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY FACEMAN: MUYBRIDGE

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

BY 1860, 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 ZOOETROPE!

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 ZOOPRAXINOSCOPE WILL!

EVENTUALLY THOMAS EDISON THAT OLD SCALLYWAG 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--



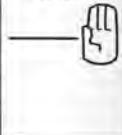
-- FILLED WITH MOTION --



-- 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.



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?*

AND IN COMICS, UNLIKE PAINTING, IT WAS MORE THAN JUST A *THEORETICAL QUESTION!*



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



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

SMILE!

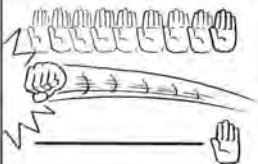
PAF!



--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.



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



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



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





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

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



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



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

* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRISTEEN, 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.

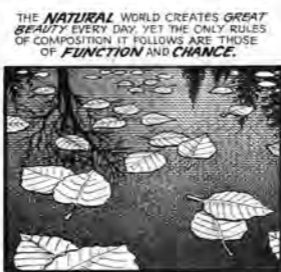
JAPANESE ARTISTS, STARTING IN THE LATE 60's, BEGAN PUTTING THEIR READERS "IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT" WITH PANELS LIKE THESE.

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.



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**.



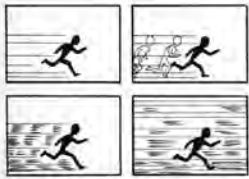
BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE *DURATION* OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF SOUND *ITSELF* AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF *ACTION* AND *REACTION*.



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!

SNAP!

CRASH!

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

--THE FACE IT PRESENTS TO THE READER--

-- IS ONE OF SIMPLE NORMALITY

CLAK

OR THE ILLUSION OF IT, ANYWAY.

ALL DEPENDS ON YOUR FRAME OF MIND.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIVING IN LINE.

CAN
EMOTIONS
BE MADE
VISIBLE?

IS THIS **ANGER?**

JOY?

SERENITY?

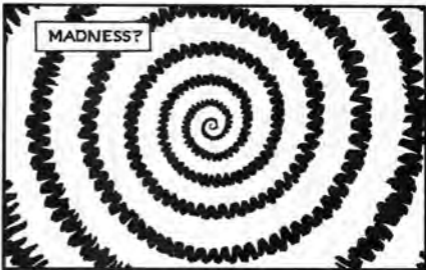
TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?

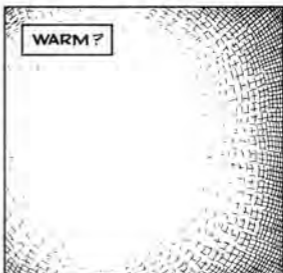
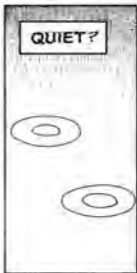
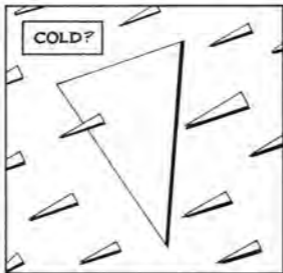
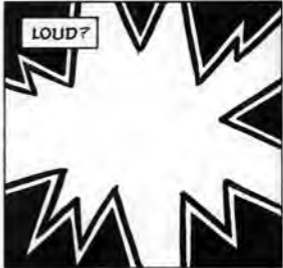


PRIDE?



ANXIETY?





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



SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS

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

-- AND WITHIN A *SINGLE* PANEL OR IMAGE



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



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



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



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





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



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



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



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



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



THE *SCIENCE* OF IT WASN'T FAR *BEHIND* THOUGH!



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

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

THESE WERE
STRANGE IDEAS
IN 1912!



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

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



WE CALL THIS IDEA *SYNAESTHETICS*.

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

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

-- PAUL KLEE
PAINTER,
TEACHER,
CARTOONIST.



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

BUT
HAVE
THEY?

1880 1890 1900 1910 1920

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



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



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



PEANUTS

CHARLES SCHULZ



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



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



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



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



--TO PROUD AND STRONG--



--TO DYNAMIC AND CHANGING!



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



--OR WARM AND GENTLE--



--OR RATIONAL AND CONSERVATIVE.



BY ITS CHARACTER IT MAY SEEM SAVAGE AND DEADLY--



--OR WEAK AND UNSTABLE--



--OR HONEST AND DIRECT.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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





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



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

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

I'LL GIVE YOU AN **EXAMPLE.**

LET'S SAY I WANTED TO SMOKE THIS **PIPE**--

--ASSUMING IT **IS** A PIPE--

--AND I LIT IT WITH A MATCH LIKE **SO:**



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



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



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



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

-- AS MANY *HAVE* THROUGH THE YEARS.





IN DEALING WITH THE FACE ITSELF, THE LINE BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND *INVISIBLE* WORLDS BECOMES EVEN *LESS CLEAR*.



THE CARTOON FACE IS AN *ABSTRACT*, BUT IT IS BASED UPON *VISUAL DATA*.



SOME INDICATORS OF EMOTION ARE *ALSO VISUALLY* BASED, SUCH AS THE FAMILIAR *SWEAT BEAD*.



--THEY DRIFT INTO THE *INVISIBLE* WORLD OF THE *SYMBOL*.



THIS DRIFT FROM *VISIBLE* TO *INVISIBLE* HAS BEEN THE BASIS OF ALL *WRITTEN LANGUAGES* SINCE CIVILIZATION *BEGAN*.

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

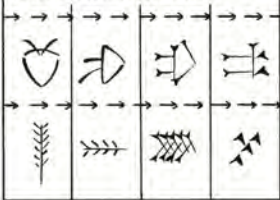


OX



GRAIN

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



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



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



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



AND THIS *VISUAL* *VOCABULARY* HAS AN *UNLIMITED* *POTENTIAL* FOR *GROWTH*.



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



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



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

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



ANGER

DEMENTIA



SLEEP



LUST

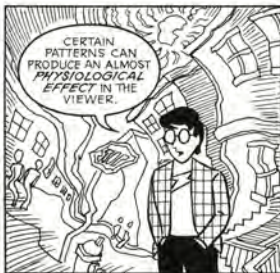
BACKGROUNDS CAN BE ANOTHER VALUABLE TOOL FOR INDICATING *INVISIBLE IDEAS*... PARTICULARLY THE WORLD OF *EMOTIONS*.



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



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



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

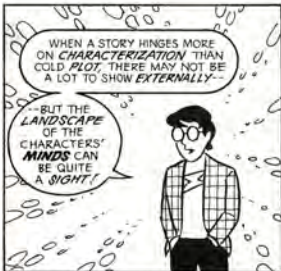


SUCH *INTERNAL EFFECTS* ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT *INTERNAL MATTERS*.

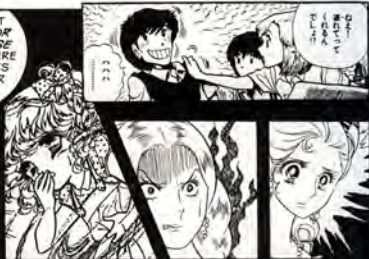


WHEN A STORY HINGES MORE ON *CHARACTERIZATION* THAN COLD *PLOT*, THERE MAY NOT BE A LOT TO SHOW *EXTERNALLY*--

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



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



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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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



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



AND
AS FOR THE
ESSENCE OF
THOUGHT...



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



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



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



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



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



I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M ON TO YOUR PLOT... I KNOW YOU PUT SOMETHING IN MY DOG'S FOOD THAT MADE HIM NOT LOVE ME ANYMORE AND...

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



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

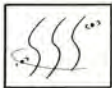


PERHAPS
IT'S TOO MUCH TO
ASK OF **ONE SENSE**
THAT IT BE
RESPONSIBLE FOR
CONVEYING SUCH A
WIDE WORLD OF
EXPERIENCES.

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



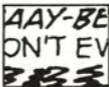
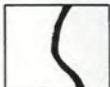
IN THIS
CHAPTER, WE'VE
DEALT WITH THE
INVISIBLE WORLDS
OF **SENSES** AND
EMOTIONS. BUT IN
FACT **ALL** ASPECTS
OF COMICS SHOW IT
TO BE AN **ART OF
THE INVISIBLE**.



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



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



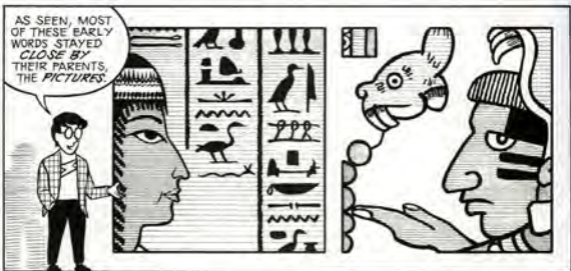
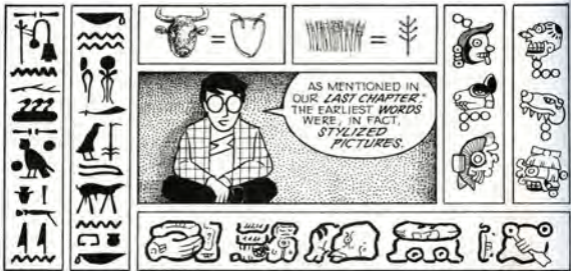
CHAPTER SIX

SHOW AND TELL.









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



ن ت ل خ ل فلما قلعت سائر حبيبه
 בָּרַדְדָּ אֶתְהָ יֵי אֶלְדֵּינֵי נִי הָהָ

re's More! Order Today and receive FREE C

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

--AND ALL OF HUMANITY WITH IT.

...s leth end carnar
 ...malalchet iared e
 ...sale la
 ...cham
 ...afaty.
 ...g ma
 ...y thiras.
 ...Dorro filij gomee: asene: e
 ...riptar et
 ...thogonna. Filij aurenia
 ...an: etifa
 ...et tharchis cerbini
 ...Flij
 ...cham: thus et nief
 ...chana
 ...an. filij aureu ch
 ...et ruila
 ...Sabatha et regna et s
 ...Sathaca. Dor
 ...ro filij regna-saba z dadan. Thus au
 ...ren genuit neu
 ...Iste cepit esse po
 ...tens in terra
 ...um vero genuit lu
 ...dim et a
 ...laabim z nepchu
 ...um: pber
 ...a: et thallum de
 ...qu
 ...philitijum z capthu
 ...um. Quilaan
 ...ro genuit sydonem
 ...perimogenium
 ...um: ethcum quoz
 ...et rebuleum et antoreu et gergeleum
 ...eueumq; et aracheum z asineum ara
 ...dium quoz; et samaceum et emathe
 ...um. filij sem: elam et assur. Et acta
 ...fad- et lud z aram. filij aram: hus z

BUT WHERE HAD THE PICTURES ALL GONE?

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

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

Ode on a Grecian Urn

1

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



BY THE
 EARLY 1800's,
 WESTERN ART
 AND WRITING HAD
 DRIFTED ABOUT AS
 FAR APART AS
 WAS POSSIBLE.

ONE WAS
 OBSESSED WITH
 RESEMBLANCE,
 LIGHT AND COLOR,
 ALL THINGS
VISIBLE...



...THE
 OTHER RICH IN
INVISIBLE
 TREASURES,
 SENSES, EMOTIONS,
 SPIRITUALITY,
 PHILOSOPHY...

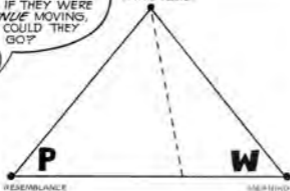
PICTURES
 AND WORDS,
 ONCE *TOGETHER*
 IN THE CENTER OF
 OUR ICONIC
 ABSTRACTION
 CHART, HAVE AT
THIS POINT
 DRIFTED TO
 OPPOSITE
 CORNERS.



THE
 ABSTRACTION
 CHART
 SHOWS
 THE
 DRIFT
 OF
 ART
 AND
 LITERATURE
 TO
 OPPOSITE
 CORNERS
 BY
 THE
 EARLY
 1800'S.

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

PICTURE PLANE:



FOR PICTURES, THERE WAS ONLY UP!

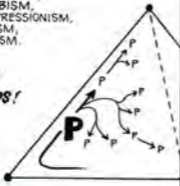
IMPRESSIONISM SENT WESTERN ART TOWARD THE ABSTRACT VERTEX, BUT IN A WAY THAT CLUNG TO WHAT THE EYE SAW.



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



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



EVERY WHICH WAY BUT BACKWARDS!

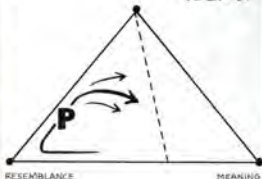
STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. **ABSTRACTION**, BOTH ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC MADE A SPECTACULAR COMEBACK!



FACSIMILE DETAIL OF "A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE GRAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE" BY GEORGES SEURAT

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

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



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

Since 1890
1897
Ode on a Grecian Urn

They still watch'd their birds, their horses,
Their fester'd child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historians, who count they express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of desire, or marble, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady!
What men or gods or beasts believ'd, or lov'd,

Walt Whitman 1890
Facing West from California's Shores

Facing west, from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking
what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the
house of maternity, the
land of migrations, look afar
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the
circle almost circled:

For starting westward from Hindustan,
from the vales of Kashmere, From Asia,
from the north, from the God, the sage,
and the hero, From the south, from the
flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,
Long having wandered since, round the
earth having wandered,
Now I face home again,
very pleased and joyous:
(But where is what I started for,
so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

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



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



-- AND HEADED FOR
A *COLLISION!*



H'âtre MICHEL 40 rue Des Mathurins

vendredi 6 et samedi 7
JULIET 1923

SOIRÉ
DU CŒUR

de semaine
prolongée à
un 7 juillet

CANISÉ
le plan de legs... 20 fr.
le plan d'architecte... 25 fr.
le plan de bureau... 15 fr.
le plan de voyage... 15 fr.
le plan de bureau... 15 fr.

TCH&REZ
A B A R B E

Bernabé Jonez, 35, 36 de la Madeleine
Dorand, 4, Place de la Madeleine
Frenschky, 12, Rue Soufflot
An Simey Fawel, 27, Avenue Kléber
Mlle G. Anette Lemaire
Paul Oullonnet, 22, Rue la Belle
Léonora Murray, 27, 28 Montparnasse
Paul Rosenberg, 27, Rue la Belle
et de Thibaut Michel, 74, 1, Rue de la

DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

par FRANCIS PICABIA

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



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



FACSIMILE OF 'ORIENTAL SWEETNESS' (1936) BY PAUL KLEE



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



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

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



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



TRANSLATION BY E. WEISS



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

WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!

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

DO PEOPLE REALLY PAY MONEY FOR THIS?!

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

COOL

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



*Thou still unravish'd bride
Thou foster-child of silen
Sylvan historian, who canst
A flowery tale more sweetl
What leaf fring'd legend ha
Of deities or mortals, or
In Tempe or the dales
What men or gods are th
What mad pursuit? What
What nines and timbrels*

IN OTHERS AND IN THEMSELVES.



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

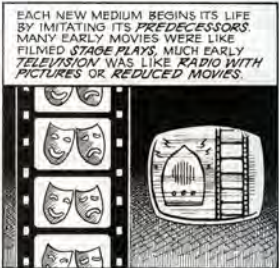


FACE

TWO EYES, ONE NOSE, ONE MOUTH

The yeptha from Lovers so gaz'd on now...

* NOT AS MUCH AS WE LIKE TO THINK IT HAS, ANYWAY.



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

com-ics (kóm'iks) *n.* plural form, used with a singular. Juxtaposed pictorial or other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey an idea and/or to produce an emotional response in the reader.

2. Superheroes: characters in costumes; fight villains who want to rule the world; in violent situations.



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



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



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



DADA
 BIOGRAPHY
 HORROR
 SURREALISM
 ROMANCE
 BLANK VERSE
 EPIC POETRY
 SOCIAL ALLEGORY
 ADAPTATIONS
 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS
 SATIRE
 HISTORICAL FICTION
 FOLK TALES
 EROTICA
 MYSTERY
 RELIGIOUS TOPICS



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



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



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



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



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



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



JUDY GAVE ME HER KEYS AND SMILED.



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



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



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



GRIM-FACED, GEORGE LIFTED HIS LOLLYPOP.



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

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



HA! I DODGED YOU.

I FEEL SO **SAD!**



...THOUGHT AMY.

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



MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A **SMASHED PUMPKIN!**



HOW D'YA LIKE MY **NEW THREADS, BABE?**



IS THIS THE SAME **JUPITER** OF MY YOUTH?



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



"TALKED TO **BILL** YET?"

"**SALLY** DID. WHY?"

"THE **TEST RESULTS** CAME BACK. ALL **NEGATIVE**."



"**REALLY?**" THAT'S GREAT!"

WELL...

PEPPER.

CEREAL.



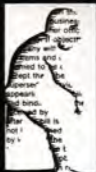
MILK.

BUTTER.

LIGHT BULBS.



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



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



MEANWHILE...

DID ANYONE SEE YOU?



THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!



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



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



HEY, MARGE!

OH, MY GOD!

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



HURRY UP, WILL YA?!

HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.



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

P

W



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

W

P

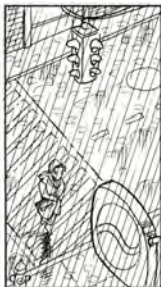


WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.



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

--ALL IN PICTURES.



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



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



IT COULD BECOME AN **INTERNAL MONOLOGUE.**

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY **INCONGRUOUS**

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



(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG **ADVERTISEMENT!**



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON **BROADER TOPICS.**

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS...
THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS...



(INTERDEPENDENT)

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



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

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

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

I **WENT** BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

--AND **FINISHED** IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE
AT LAST.



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



--BUT WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OPTIONS?



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

(WORD SPECIFIC)

OR MOVE TOWARD GREATER LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION OR EXPRESSION.

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



(AMPLIFICATION)

PERHAPS THE ARTIST CAN GIVE US SOME IMPORTANT EMOTIONAL INFORMATION.

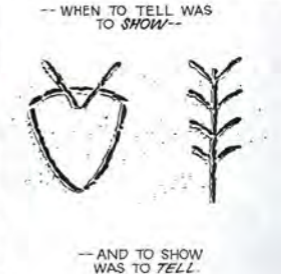
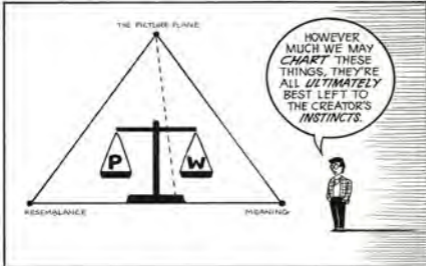


(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.



(WORD SPECIFIC)



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIX STEPS.



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



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



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



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



SUDDENLY--!



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



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



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



HE TAKES IT!



AND SURVIVES.



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



BUT INSTEAD...



ART.



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

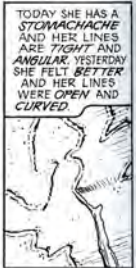




WHAT MAY LOOK LIKE A TRIBE OF BORED, INACTIVE CAVE-DWELLERS BELOW US IS, IN FACT, A THRIVING ART COLONY!



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



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



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

TAP!
TAP!
TAP!
TAP!
TAP!
TAP!



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

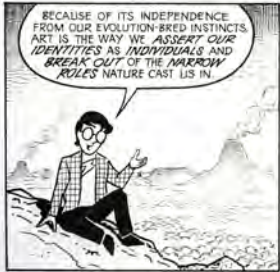


TODAY HE LOST A FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER. NOW ALL HE CAN DO IS DANCE AWAY HIS FRUSTRATION.



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

DOOOORRRRRRR
YB-BIP-BIP-BIP!
GREEGAH!
WUK! WUK!



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



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



THREE, IN FACT.

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



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



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



—TO *USEFUL DISCOVERIES!*



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



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



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



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



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



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



PERHAPS A LITTLE **UNNECESSARY CHOREOGRAPHY** ON THE **ASSEMBLY LINE.**



OR THE **PERSONAL STYLE** OF A **BICYCLE MESSENGER.**



OR JUST THE WAY WE **SIGN OUR NAMES!**



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



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



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



BUT TO PROCLAIM, AS SO MANY SO OFTEN DO, THAT--

THAT'S NOT ART!



RARE IS THE PERSON IN **ANY** OCCUPATION WHO EXPRESSES **NOTHING...**



... AND RARE IS THE **ARTIST** WHO CARES NOTHING FOR **SUCCESS**, I.E., **SURVIVAL!**



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



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



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

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



"BUT IT'S *IMPORTANT!*"



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



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



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

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



1

IDEA/
PURPOSE



2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



A PATH CONSISTING OF *SIX STEPS*.

1

IDEA/
PURPOSE



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



2

FORM



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



3

IDIOM



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



4

STRUCTURE



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



5

CRAFT



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



6

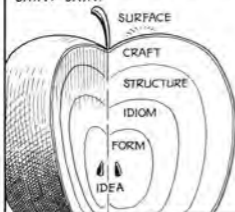
SURFACE



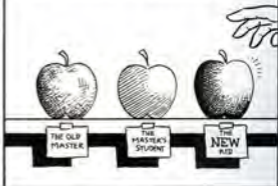
SIXTH:
PRODUCTION
VALUES, FINISHING...
THE ASPECTS MOST
APPARENT ON FIRST
SUPERFICIAL
EXPOSURE TO
THE WORK.



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



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



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



CRUNCH!



HOLLOW.



IT'S A
CYCLE AS OLD
AS ART
ITSELF.



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



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

COMICS IS ACTING AS AN **INTERMEDIARY** BETWEEN **STORYTELLER** AND **AUDIENCE**.



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

--THAT MAKING THEM ONLY REQUIRES CERTAIN **SKILLS**--

--AND THAT THOSE SKILLS CAN BE **LEARNED!**



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

I'M GONNA
MAKE **COMICS**
WHEN I GROW
UP!



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



BUT PROBABLY **NOT**.

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

HE BUYS THE
"RIGHT" BRUSH,
THE **"RIGHT"**
PENS AND THE
"RIGHT" PAPER
AND BEGINS TO
PRACTICE.



EVENTUALLY...

6
SURFACE

LOOK, JACK!
I CAN DRAW AS
WELL AS A
PROFESSIONAL!

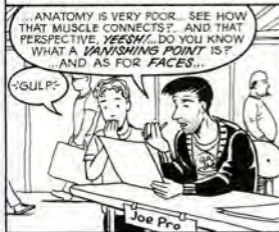
WOW!



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

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

:-GULP:-



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



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



-- HE LEAVES HIS DREAMS OF MAKING COMICS BEHIND.



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

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



SHE'S A GOOD, HARDWORKING STUDENT.



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

<THIS IS VERY GOOD.>

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

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



<GULP!>

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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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

< THAT GUY'S ART IS ALL JUST "SURFACE!" >

AND HE **KNOWS** IT!

< WOW! >

...ENOUGH THAT FOR WHAT HE DOES, HE'S **ONE OF THE BEST.**

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

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



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

4

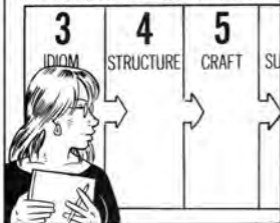
5
CRAFT

6
SURFACE

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



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



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



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




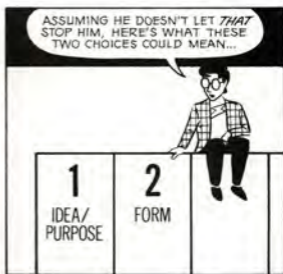
BUT *ELSEWHERE*, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS *DISSATISFIED*. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING *VERY IMPORTANT* HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



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



1 IDEA/ PURPOSE	2 FORM	3 IDIOM	4 STRUCTURE	5 CRAFT	6 SURFACE
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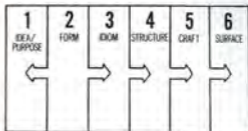
2 FORM



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

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

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



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

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



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

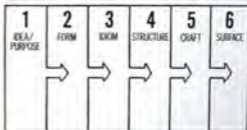
1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



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

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

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



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

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



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

FORTUNATELY, THIS CHOICE NEVER HAS TO BE *PERMANENT*.

IT CAN CHANGE AS OFTEN AS AN ARTIST CHANGES *PROJECTS!*

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

HEY, I'M DRIVING!

NO, I'M DRIVING!

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

CRASH!

NOT THAT WE "*CREATOR/WRITER/ARTIST*" TYPES NEVER RUN INTO THIS PROBLEM...

DAMN! NEEDED TO HAVE SOME MORE *DIALOGUE* HERE, BUT I REALLY WANT TO DRAW THAT *SNAZZY CLOSE-UP!*

THE MORE AN ARTIST DEVOTES HIM/HERSELF TO EITHER OF THESE TWO FOCAL POINTS, THE MORE DRAMATIC THE CHANGE IF HE/SHE DECIDES TO SWITCH!

ART SPIEGELMAN'S AGGRESSIVELY EXPERIMENTAL WORK OF THE SEVENTIES AND EARLY EIGHTIES LEFT NO ONE PREPARED FOR THE UNASSUMING "REPORT" STYLE OF HIS LANDMARK BIOGRAPHY "MAUS":

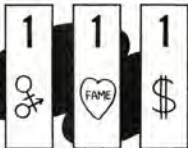
2 FORM



1 IDEA/PURPOSE



PERHAPS IF STRIPPED DOWN FAR ENOUGH, MOST ARTISTS' ULTIMATE GOALS ARE NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE'S. EVEN FOR THOSE WITH *HIGH IDEALS*, BASIC INSTINCTS EXERT A POWERFUL ATTRACTION



SURVIVAL — REPRODUCTION

AND WHEN ART BECOMES A *JOB* OR A MATTER OF *SOCIAL STATUS* THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFUSING ONE'S GOALS GOES UP CONSIDERABLY.



BUT EVEN IF WE TAKE LIFE'S *DISTRACTIONS* INTO ACCOUNT, IT'S STILL AMAZING HOW MUCH *TIME* AND *EFFORT* IS SPENT BY COMICS CREATORS TRYING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT OUT OF COMICS --

-- BEFORE THEY EVEN KNOW *WHAT* THEY WANT!



OF COURSE, NOT *EVERYBODY* TAKES THE *LONG* WAY AROUND. SOME ARTISTS HAVE NO TROUBLE SETTING GOALS AND *ACHIEVING* THEM WITHOUT ANY *DETOURS*...



1
IDEA/
PURPOSE

2
FORM

3
IDIOM

4
STRUCTURE

5
CRAFT

6
SURFACE

ANY ARTIST CREATING **ANY** WORK IN **ANY** MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW THESE **SIX STEPS** WHETHER THEY REALIZE IT OR **NOT**.

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



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

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF **"ART."**

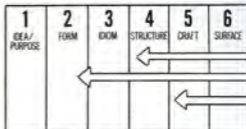
BUT THE MORE A CREATOR LEARNS TO COMMAND **EVERY** ASPECT OF HIS/HER ART AND TO UNDERSTAND HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP **TO** IT, THE MORE **"ARTISTIC"** CONCERNS ARE LIKELY TO GET THE **UPPER HAND**.

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

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



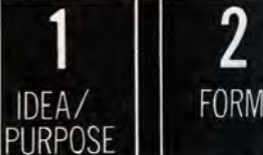
STILL, THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR MOST ARTISTS IS A *SLOW AND STEADY JOURNEY* FROM **END** TO **BEGINNING**,



FROM *SURFACE* TO *CORE*.

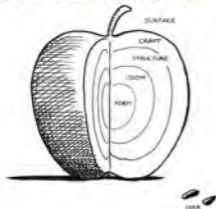


AND IT'S AT THE **CORE** OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:



"WHY AM I DOING THIS?"

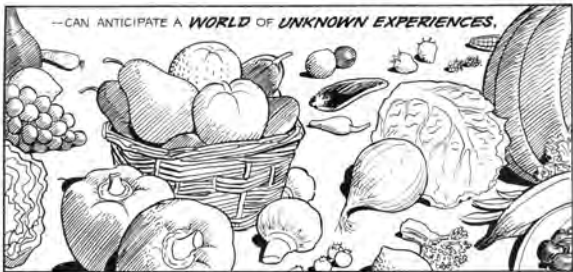
WHEN **FORM** RULES THE WORK, IT MAY SEEM SOMEWHAT **ARTIFICIAL** AT THE CORE, LIKE A **SEEDLESS FRUIT**.



BUT SUCH WORKS DON'T TAKE THE **SHAPE** OF ART FOR GRANTED AND BY QUESTIONING OUR **FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS**--



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



WHILE IF *IDEAS*
RULE THE WORK AND
DETERMINE ITS
SHAPE, COMICS CAN
HELP *PLANT* THOSE
IDEAS *FAR AND WIDE*.



AND THE CYCLE CAN BEGIN AGAIN.



CHAPTER EIGHT

A WORD ABOUT COLOR.

IN CHAPTER FIVE WE DEALT WITH THE EXPRESSIONISTIC POTENTIAL OF LINES AS ANTICIPATED BY ARTISTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, BUT OF COURSE IT WAS COLOR WHICH MOST CAPTIVATED ARTISTS OF THAT ERA.



THROUGHOUT ART HISTORY, COLOR HAS BEEN A POWERFUL, EVEN PREDOMINANT, CONCERN OF FINE ARTISTS EVERYWHERE.



SOME, LIKE GEORGES SEURAT, DEVOTED THEIR LIVES TO ITS STUDY.



OTHERS, LIKE KANDINSKY, BELIEVED THAT COLORS COULD HAVE PROFOUND PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS ON PEOPLE.



COLOR CAN BE A **FORMIDABLE ALLY** FOR ARTISTS IN ANY VISUAL MEDIUM.



YET IN COMICS THE CAREER OF COLOR HAS BEEN, WELL ... A BIT "SPOTTY."



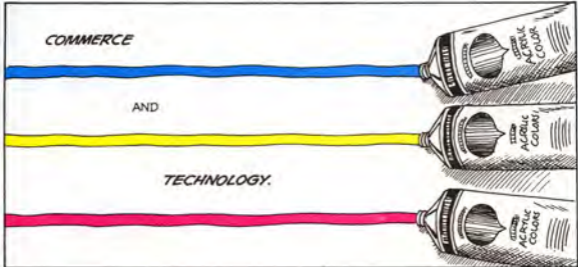
THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE **STORMY RELATIONSHIP** BETWEEN COMICS AND COLOR, BUT MOST CAN BE SUMMED UP IN TWO WORDS.



COMMERCE

AND

TECHNOLOGY.



NOW **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS HISTORY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY **COMMERCE**. MONEY HAS A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON WHAT IS AND **ISN'T** SEEN.

BUT **COLOR** IN COMICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNUSUALLY **SENSITIVE** TO THE **SHIFTING TIDES OF TECHNOLOGY**.



THE TECHNOLOGY OF COLOR REPRODUCTION WAS FIRST ANTICIPATED IN **1861** WHEN SCOTTISH PHYSICIST **SIR JAMES CLERK-MAXWELL** ISOLATED WHAT WE NOW CALL **THE THREE ADDITIVE PRIMARIES**.



THESE COLORS -- ROUGHLY, **RED, BLUE AND GREEN** -- WHEN PROJECTED TOGETHER ON A SCREEN IN **VARIOUS COMBINATIONS**, COULD REPRODUCE EVERY COLOR IN THE **VISIBLE SPECTRUM**.



THEY WERE CALLED **ADDITIVE** BECAUSE THEY LITERALLY **ADDED UP TO PURE WHITE LIGHT**.



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



THESE COLORS -- CYAN, MAGENTA AND YELLOW* -- CAN ALSO MIX TO PRODUCE ANY HUE IN THE VISIBLE SPECTRUM, BUT RATHER THAN ADDING LIGHT, THESE THREE DO IT BY **FILTERING IT OUT!**



THIS SUBTRACTIVE EFFECT WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH TRANSPARENT SUBSTANCES SUCH AS CELLOPHANE, COLORED GLASS, WATER COLORS --



COLOR COMICS HIT THE **NEWSPAPER** INDUSTRY LIKE AN **ATOMIC BOMB!**

BUS STOP



COLOR BOOSTED **SALES**, BUT IT ALSO BOOSTED **COSTS!** MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO **STREAMLINE** THE PROCESS AND MAKE IT MORE **COST-EFFECTIVE.**



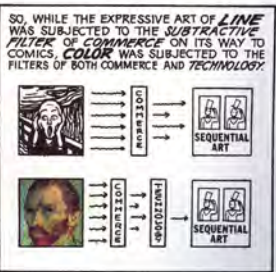
AND THE STANDARD **"FOUR COLOR"** PROCESS TOOK OVER.



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



THE LOOK OF THESE COLORS, HELD BY BOLD, SIMPLE OUTLINES, AND REPRODUCED ON **CHEAP NEWSPRINT** EVENTUALLY BECAME THE LOOK OF COMICS IN AMERICA.



SO, WHILE THE EXPRESSIVE ART OF **LINE** WAS SUBJECT TO THE **SUBTRACTIVE FILTER** OF COMMERCE, **COLOR** WAS SUBJECT TO THE FILTERS OF BOTH COMMERCE AND **TECHNOLOGY!**

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

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



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



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



-- WAS OFTEN CANCELLED OUT TO AN *EMOTIONAL GREY*.



AS ALWAYS, THERE WERE SOME *EXCEPTIONS*, BUT THIS WAS THE OVERALL TREND.



HOWEVER, WHILE COMICS COLORS WERE LESS THAN *EXPRESSIONISTIC*, THEY WERE FIXED WITH A NEW *ICONIC* POWER. BECAUSE COSTUME COLORS REMAINED EXACTLY THE SAME, PANEL AFTER PANEL, THEY CAME TO *SYMBOLIZE* CHARACTERS IN THE MIND OF THE READER.



MANY SEE THE SUPERHERO AS A FORM OF *MODERN MYTHOLOGY*. IF SO, THIS ASPECT OF COLOR MAY PLAY A PART.

SYMBOLS ARE THE STUFF OF WHICH *GODS* ARE MADE.



ANOTHER PROPERTY OF FLAT COLORS IS THEIR TENDENCY TO EMPHASIZE THE *SHAPE* OF OBJECTS, BOTH *ANIMATE* AND *INANIMATE* --



--AS ANY CHILD WHO HAS EVER "COLORED-BY-NUMBERS" KNOWS INSTINCTIVELY.



THESE COLORS *OBJECTIFY* THEIR SUBJECTS. WE BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE *PHYSICAL FORM* OF OBJECTS THAN IN *BLACK AND WHITE*.

A GAME IN MOTION BECOMES A BALL IN AIR. A FACE SHOWING EMOTION BECOMES A HEAD AND TWO HANDS.



THE WORLD TAKES ON THE CHILDHOOD REALITY OF THE *PLAYGROUND* AND RECALLS A TIME WHEN SHAPE *PRECEDED* MEANING. OBLONG SWING SETS. CYLINDRICAL JUNGLE GYMS. THE WONDER OF *THINGS!*



DOESN'T IT *FOLLOW* THEN THAT THE MASTERS OF *FLAT-COLOR* COMICS ARE, ABOVE ALL, MASTERS OF *FORM* AND *COMPOSITION*?



KIRBY.



MSCAY.



COLE.



FROM *STEVE DITKO* TO *CARL BARKS* TO *F. CRAIG RUSSELL*, THAT LOVE OF SHAPES PERSISTS IN WORLDS FAIRLY *GLOWING* WITH THE MYSTERY OF *FIRST ENCOUNTERS*.

ANY WONDER THEN THAT COMICS IN AMERICA HAS BEEN SO RELUCTANT TO "GROW UP"?



IN EUROPE HERGE CAPTURED THE MAGIC OF SUCH FLAT COLORS WITH UNPRECEDENTED SUBTLETY.



HERGÉ CREATED A KIND OF *DEMOCRACY OF FORM* IN WHICH NO SHAPE WAS ANY LESS IMPORTANT THAN ANY *OTHER*—A COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE WORLD.



COMICS PRINTING WAS SUPERIOR IN EUROPE AND FOR HERGÉ, FLAT COLORS WERE A PREFERENCE, NOT A NECESSITY.



BUT OTHERS SUCH AS *CLAVELOUX*, *GAZA* AND *MOEBIUS* SAW IN THEIR SUPERIOR PRINTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH A MORE INTENSE *SUBJECTIVE* PALETTE.



SOME OF THIS WORK BEGAN REACHING AMERICA IN THE 70s, INSPIRING MANY YOUNG ARTISTS TO LOOK BEYOND THEIR FOUR-COLOR WALLS.



SUDDENLY IT SEEMED POSSIBLE FOR COLOR TO TAKE ON A CENTRAL ROLE.



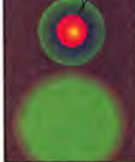
COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.



TONES AND MODELLING COULD ADD DEPTH.



WHOLE SCENES COULD BE VIRTUALLY ABOUT COLOR!





COLOR AS
SENSATION,
COLOR AS
ENVIRONMENT.

COLOR AS
COLOR!

SINCE THE LATE
70'S, MORE AND
MORE "UPSCALE"
COLOR PROJECTS
HAVE BEGUN
APPEARING IN
AMERICA.



SOME PUBLISHERS
AT THE BEGINNING
TRIED APPLYING
THE TRADITIONAL
"FOUR-COLOR" PROCESS
TO BETTER PAPER
WITH *OKARISH*
RESULTS.



WHEN *MODELLING*
AND MORE *SUBTLE*
HUES WERE APPLIED,
THOUGH, THEY SEEMED
OUT OF PLACE ON THE
OLD *SHAPE-SENSITIVE*
LINE DRAWINGS.

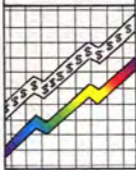


THE *SURFACE* WAS
CHANGING, BUT NOT
THE *CORE*. FOR ALL
THEIR *SUBTLE HUES*,
COMICS WERE STILL
BEING WRITTEN IN
PRIMARY COLORS!



THE NEW
FORM REQUIRED
THE CREATION
OF NEW
IDIOMS!

UNFORTUNATELY,
COLOR IS STILL AN
EXPENSIVE OPTION
AND HAS HISTORICALLY
BEEN IN THE HANDS
OF LARGER, MORE
CONSERVATIVE
PUBLISHERS.



THIS IS BEGINNING TO CHANGE
AS I WRITE THIS, BUT IT'S STILL THE
EXCEPTION, NOT THE *RULE*. COMIC
ARTISTS WANTING TO CONDUCT *BOLD*
NEW EXPERIMENTS IN COMICS ART--

-- STILL
HAVE TO LEARN
IN MOST CASES
TO BE *BOLD* IN
BLACK AND
WHITE!



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACK-AND-WHITE AND COLOR COMICS ARE *VAST AND PROFOUND*, AFFECTING *EVERY LEVEL* OF THE READING EXPERIENCE.



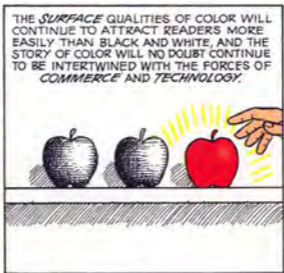
IN BLACK AND WHITE, THE IDEAS *BEHIND* THE ART ARE COMMUNICATED MORE *DIRECTLY*. MEANING TRANSCENDS FORM. ART APPROACHES *LANGUAGE*.



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



AND THROUGH MORE *EXPRESSIVE COLORS*, COMICS CAN BECOME AN *INTOXICATING ENVIRONMENT* OF SENSATIONS THAT ONLY *COLOR* CAN GIVE.



THE *SURFACE* QUALITIES OF COLOR WILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT READERS MORE EASILY THAN BLACK AND WHITE, AND THE STORY OF COLOR WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO BE INTERTWINED WITH THE FORCES OF *COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY*.



WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF *COLORS*, NOT JUST *BLACK AND WHITE*. COLOR COMICS WILL ALWAYS SEEM MORE "*REAL*" AT FIRST GLANCE.



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



ONE THING'S FOR *SURE*, THOUGH. WHEN USED WELL, COLOR IN COMICS CAN--LIKE COMICS ITSELF--



--AMOUNT TO FAR MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

CHAPTER NINE


PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.

SO,
WHY IS THIS
MEDIUM WE
CALL COMICS SO
IMPORTANT?
WHY SHOULD WE
TRY SO HARD TO
UNDERSTAND
COMICS?




**SEQUENTIAL
ART**

I THINK THE
ANSWER LIES DEEP
WITHIN THE HUMAN
CONDITION...



WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF
PROFOUND ISOLATION.



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



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



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

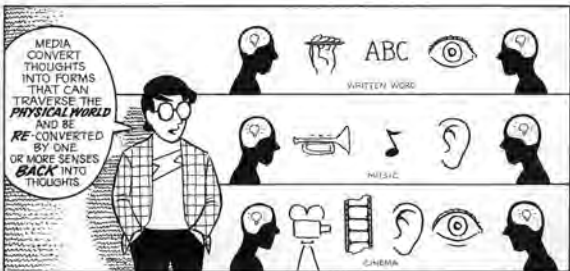
SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY *STEM* FROM THAT INABILITY.



EACH *MEDIUM* (THE TERM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD MEANING *MIDDLE*) SERVES AS A BRIDGE *BETWEEN* MINDS.

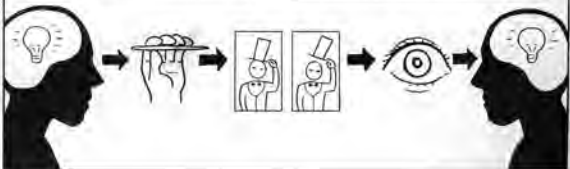


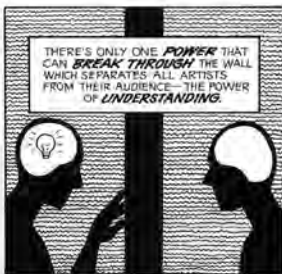
MEDIA CONVERT THOUGHTS INTO FORMS THAT CAN TRAVERSE THE *PHYSICAL WORLD* AND BE *RE-CONVERTED* BY ONE OR MORE SENSES *BACK* INTO THOUGHTS.



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

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







TODAY, COMICS IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW FORMS OF *MASS COMMUNICATION* IN WHICH *INDIVIDUAL VOICES* STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO BE *HEARD*.



THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE *BUSINESS* OF COMICS HAVE MANY OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME --

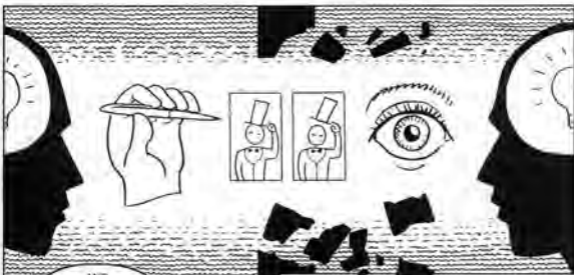
-- BUT THEY *PALE* IN COMPARISON TO WHAT A *FILMMAKER* OR *PLAYWRIGHT* HAS TO CONTEND WITH.



COMICS WELCOMES *ANY* WRITER OR ARTIST TO STEP INTO ITS WORLD, A WORLD AS CLOSE AS *PEN* OR *PENCIL* AND *PAPER*.



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



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



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



THE FIRST STEP IN ANY SUCH EFFORT IS TO CLEAR OUR MINDS OF ALL PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT COMICS.

ONLY BY STARTING FROM SCRATCH CAN WE DISCOVER THE FULL RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES COMICS OFFER.



THIS MEANS LEARNING TO SEPARATE THE **FORM** OF COMICS FROM ITS OFTEN INCONSISTENT **CONTENTS**.



THE BEST **DEFINITION** FOR COMICS WILL, I THINK, BE THE MOST **EXPANSIVE**.



SEQUENTIAL ART

WITH A LITTLE **REFINING**, SUCH A DEFINITION CAN TAKE COMICS FAR INTO THE **FUTURE** --

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

-- AND FAR INTO THE **PAST**, BEYOND THE ARTIFICIAL "STARTING POINT" OF 1896 AND "THE YELLOW KID!"



1775 1800 1825 1850 1875 1900




OVER
THREE THOUSAND
YEARS BEYOND!

THERE'S AN
INCREDIBLE WEALTH
OF ANCIENT COMICS
AND SOME MAY YET
HOLD THE KEY
TO COMICS'
FUTURE!

DISCOVERING
AND CATALOGUING
THIS WORK HAS
ALREADY **BEGUN!**
BUT THERE'S MUCH
MORE THAT **NEEDS**
TO BE DONE!

THERE'S
A **BIG Gaping**
HOLE IN THE
OFFICIAL HISTORY
OF ART AND IT'S HIGH
TIME SOMEBODY
FILLED
IT!

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



"...the picture-story, which critics disregard and scholars scarcely notice, has had great influence at all times, perhaps even more than written literature."

Rudolphe Topffer
1845

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



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

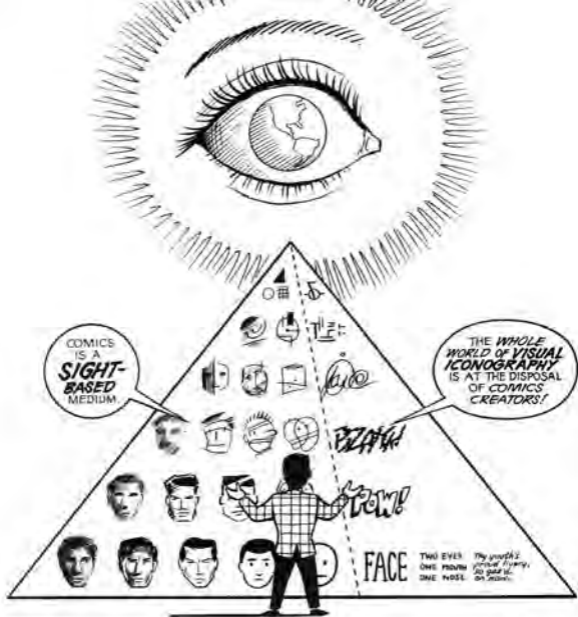
Rudolphe Topffer
1845

TRANSLATION BY E. WEISS

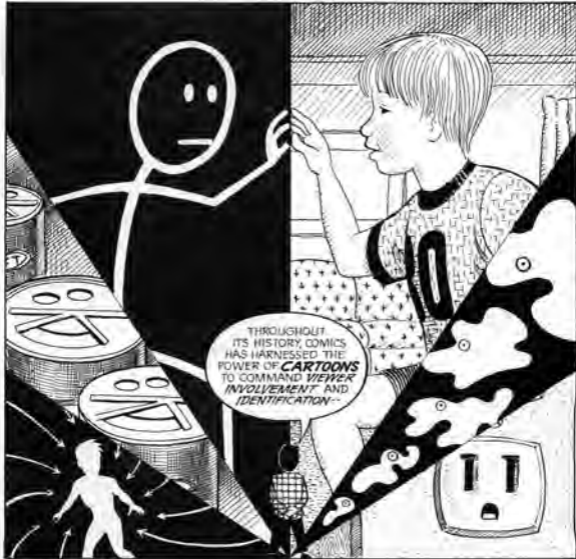
...ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED SOME OF MODERN COMICS' MOST *PROMISING* ARTISTS TO BE *SEGREGATED* FROM THEIR *MUCH-MALIGNED COUSINS*.

ELEVATED *BEYOND* THEIR HERITAGE BY A *CHANGE OF NAME!*



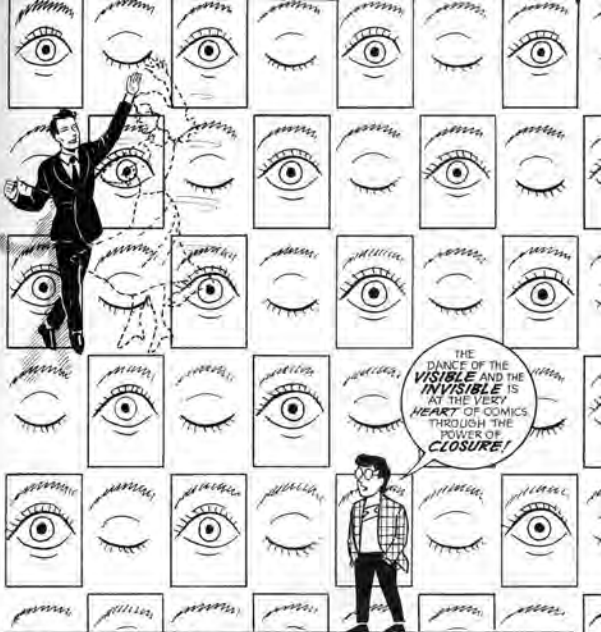






-- AND **REALISM** TO CAPTURE THE **BEAUTY AND COMPLEXITY** OF THE **VISIBLE WORLD.**



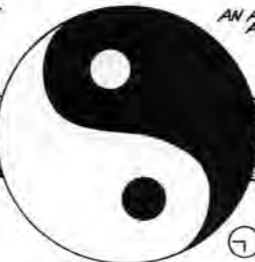


CREATOR AND READER ARE PARTNERS IN THE INVISIBLE CREATING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING, TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

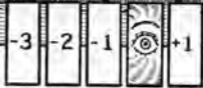
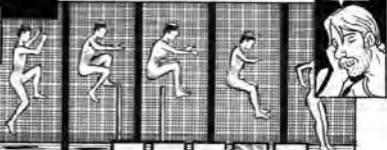
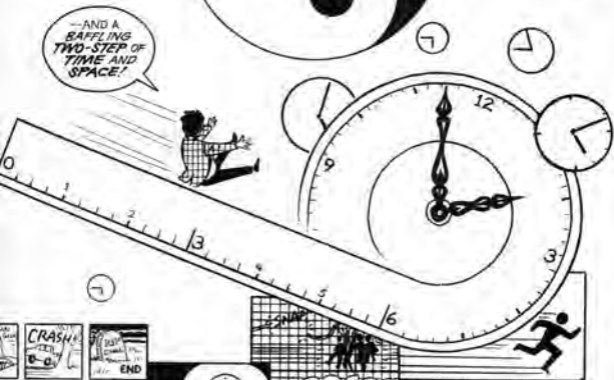


COMICS IS A GREAT
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



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



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



eto genuie lu
ini 2 nepchu
challuim d
ijun 2 capth
uic frdoner



ill unraashed
ild of sibca
m. who coast
re nocstly the
id legend have
mortals, of lo
in the dales o
yods are the



FACE

A SPLIT FORETOLD IN THE
BIRTH OF ART ITSELF--



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



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





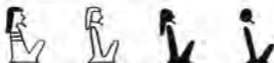
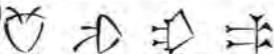
SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION



TODAY'S COMICS DO THEIR DANCE WITH THE INVISIBLE BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE.

BUT THE LANGUAGE OF COMICS CONTINUES TO EVOLVE...

--AS ALL LANGUAGE MUST EVOLVE--



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

THE SEEDS OF *EXPRESSIONISM* AND *SYNAESTHETICS*.

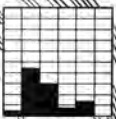
BUT EVOLUTION IS A TRICKY THING. SPECIES EVOLVE DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT CLIMATES.



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



COLLAGE



STORYTELLING



EXPRESSIONISM



WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



JAPAN



FORMATS



SUBJECTIVE MOTION



ICONIC CHARACTERS



THE 'MARKING' EFFECT



AS COMICS GROWS INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, CREATORS WILL ASPIRE TO MANY HIGHER GOALS THAN APPEALING TO THE *LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR*™



IGNORANCE AND SHORT-SIGHTED BUSINESS PRACTICES WILL NO DOUBT *OBSCURE* THE POSSIBILITIES OF COMICS FROM TIME TO TIME AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE.



BUT THE *TRUTH* ABOUT COMICS CAN'T STAY HIDDEN FROM VIEW *FOREVER* AND SOONER OR LATER—



—THE *TRUTH* WILL *SHINE THROUGH!*

AND ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS THE DESIRE TO BE HEARD--

1

2

3

4

5

6

--THE WILL



TO LEARN--

--AND THE
ABILITY TO
SEE.



CO
'92

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Special note: Kunzle's book (see above) has gone virtually unnoticed by the comics community but is an enormously important work, covering nearly 400 years of forgotten European comics. Check it out!

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

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

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