



UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART


SCOTT MCCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."

—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

UNDERSTANDING COMICS

The background of the cover is composed of several comic book panels. The central panel features a large, detailed eye with long, thick eyelashes. To the left, a panel shows a close-up of a person's mouth and chin. To the right, a panel depicts a person with short hair wearing a plaid shirt. At the bottom, a panel shows a grid of small comic panels, with one panel clearly labeled 'FBI'.

A Kitchen Sink Book for
 **HarperPerennial**
A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers

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

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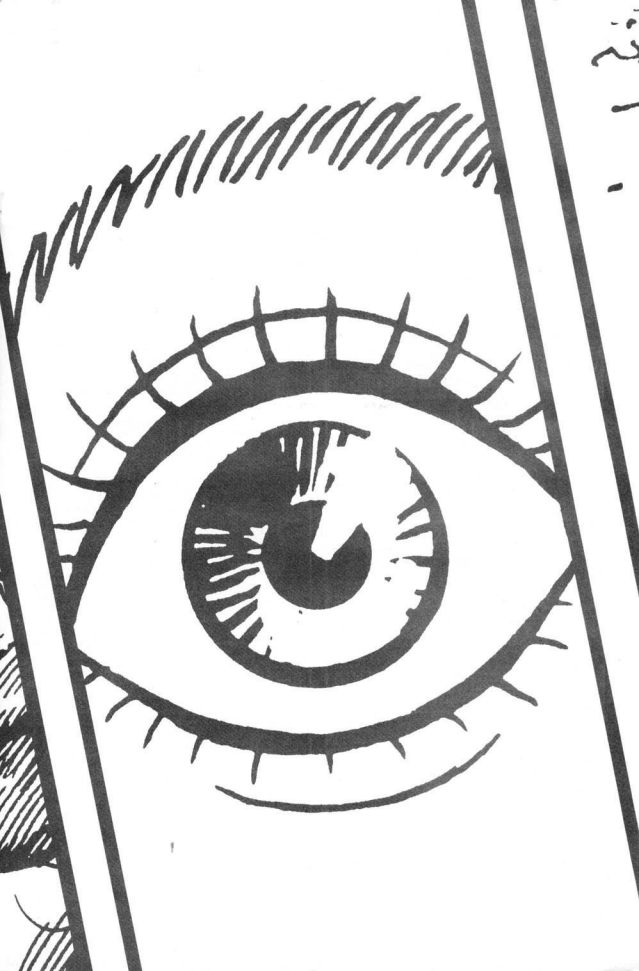
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First HarperPerennial edition published 1994.

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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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

My deepest gratitude to Steve Bissette, Kurt Busiek, Neil Gaiman, Larry Marder and Ivy Ratafia who all reviewed my original draft in detail and offered many valuable critiques. Their contribution to the project cannot be overstated. I was also fortunate to receive detailed analysis from the talented Jennifer Lee and beyond-the-call-of-duty proofreading and good advice from Bob Lappan. Special thanks are also due to the magnificent (and magnanimous) Will Eisner who offered many words of encouragement and excellent advice in the project's later stages. Will Eisner's work has been an inspiration to me, and to thousands of artists, for many years. Eisner's *COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART* was the first book to examine the art-form of comics. Here's the second. I couldn't have done it without you, Will. Thanks.

I'm deeply indebted to all of the friends and family who offered their thoughts on the manuscript as it was being prepared. Among this long list are Holly Ratafia, Alice Harrigan, Carol Ratafia, Barry Deutsch, Kip Manley, Amy Sacks, Caroline Woolf, Clarence Cummins, Karl Zimmerman, Catherine Bell, Adam Phillips and the legendary Dewan Brothers, Ted and Brian.

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

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

Thank you to the legion of journalists in print, radio and television who have been able to talk about this book without quoting sound effects from the old Batman TV show; especially Calvin Reid and the whole gang at PW.

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

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

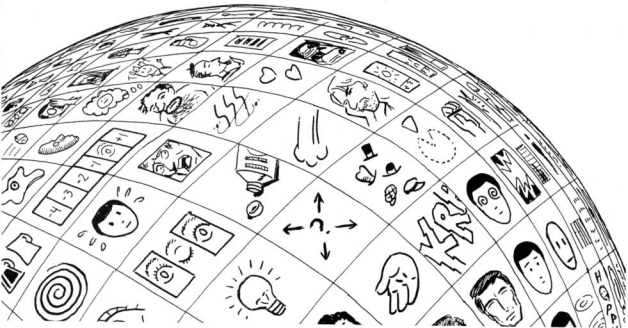
Without Kevin Eastman this book might have never seen the light of day. Thank you, Kevin.

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

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

♡ Scott

Scott McCloud



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INTRODUCTION



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

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



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

YOU MEAN LIKE A *HISTORY*?



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



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



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



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



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

SOME KIND OF **HIDDEN POWER!**



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

COMIC BOOKS?! **HA! HA!**

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



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

--BUT--

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



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

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



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



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

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



THIS IS WHERE OUR **JOURNEY BEGINS.**





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



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

WE CAN ALL VISUALIZE **A** COMIC.



BUT WHAT--

--**IS**--

--COMICS?



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≡



≡GAAK≡
≡WHEEEZZ≡
≡KAF! KAF!≡
GLUGH-GGH...



-ahem-

THE *TRICK* IS TO NEVER MISTAKE THE *MESSAGE*--



--FOR THE *MESSENGER*.



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

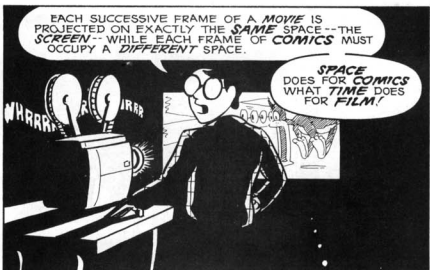
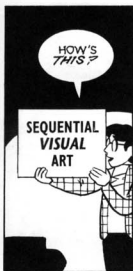
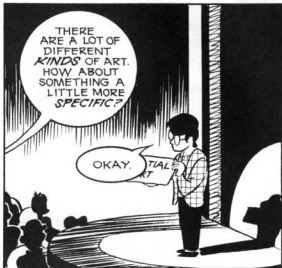
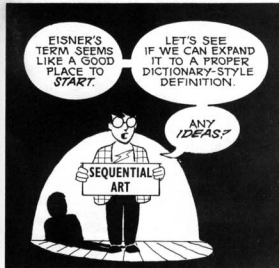


BUT FOR *COMICS*, THIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN *RARE*. *

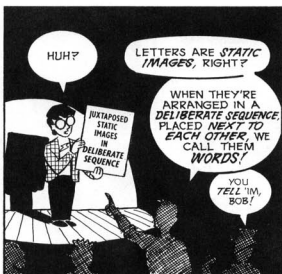
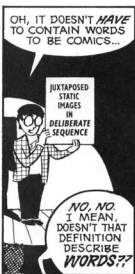
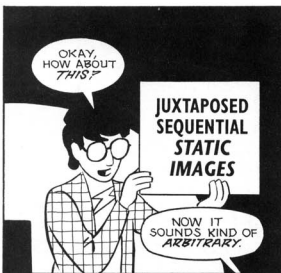
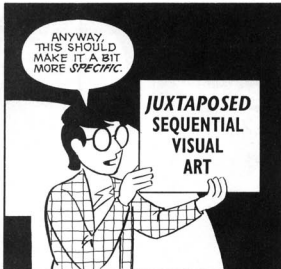
LET'S SEE IF WE CAN HELP *RECTIFY* THE SITUATION.

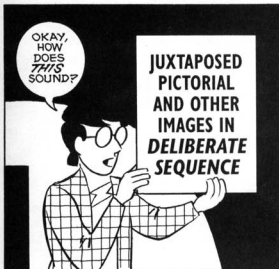


* EISNER'S OWN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.

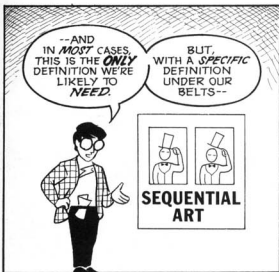


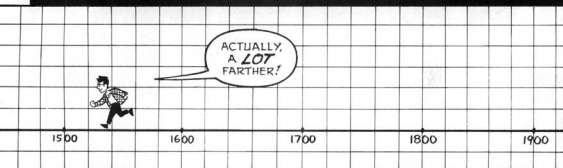
*JUXTAPOSED= ADJACENT, SIDE-BY-SIDE.
GREAT ART SCHOOL WORD.





com-ics (kom'iks)**n.** plural in form, used with a singular verb. **1.** Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer. **2.** Superheroes in bright colorful costumes, fighting dastardly villains who want to conquer the world, in violent sensational pulse pounding action sequences! **3.** Cute, cuddly bunnies, mice and roly-poly bears, dancing to end of Hippy Hop, Hippy Hop. **4.** Corruption of our Nation's youth. **com-ing** (kum'ing) **adj.**

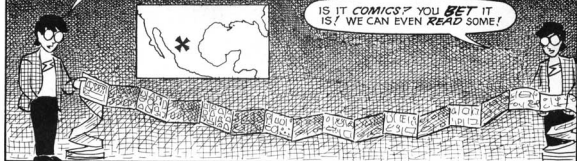




HERE'S
JUST A PIECE OF THE
EPIC STORY CONTAINED
IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN
PICTURE MANUSCRIPT
"DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS
AROUND 1519.

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

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



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

FIRST, WE SEPARATE
WORDS FROM *PICTURES*.



8-DEER
"TIGER'S
CLAW"

(A NAME)



11 HOUSE 12 MONKEY

(A DATE)



GOD
XIPE'S
BUNDLE

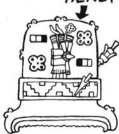
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE
NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

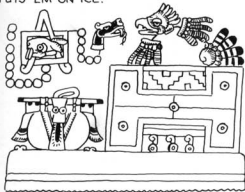
THE PLACE: *HERE!*



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

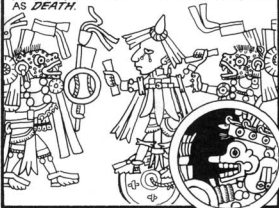


8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER
BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING"
AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND
PUTS 'EM ON ICE.

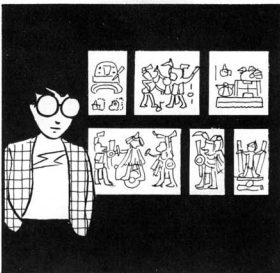
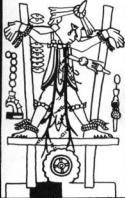


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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



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



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

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

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



TRANSLATION: THE BATTLE RAGES

BISHOP ODIN ENCOURAGES HIS SOLDIERS

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

PERENNIAL EXCEPTION **WILL FISHER**



WHICH ONE IS THE **PRINCE?**

WHAT, **NO HORSES?**

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



900 1100 1200



JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE?

AT FIRST GLANCE, **EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHS** 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.



= "baü"



= "nek"

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

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



DUKE WILLIAM REMOVES HIS HELMET TO RALLY HIS SOLDIERS

HAROLD'S ARMY IS CUT TO PIECES

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

"ses lu baü abta, hiennu-nek baü 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!



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



THEN OXEN TREAD **KERNELS** OUT OF THE HUSKS.



NEXT, PEASANTS SEPARATE THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF.



OLD MENNA HIMSELF LOOKS ON -- *



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



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



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



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



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



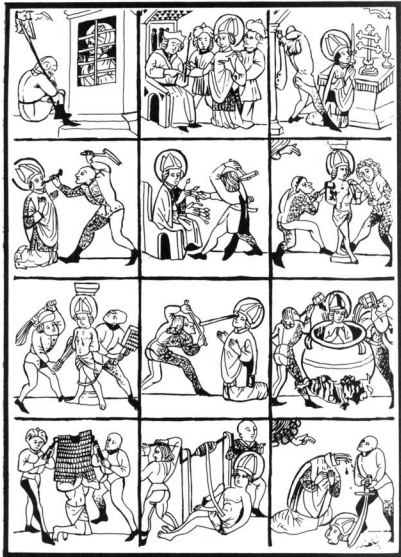
BUT THERE IS **ONE** EVENT WHICH LOOMS AS LARGE IN **COMICS** HISTORY AS IT DOES IN THE HISTORY OF THE **WRITTEN WORD**.



THE **INVENTION OF PRINTING**.



*FACE GOUGED OUT BY FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LEADERS



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



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



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.

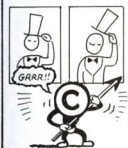


HOGARTH'S STORIES WERE FIRST EXHIBITED AS A SERIES OF *PAINTINGS* AND LATER SOLD AS A PORTFOLIO OF *ENGRAVINGS*.

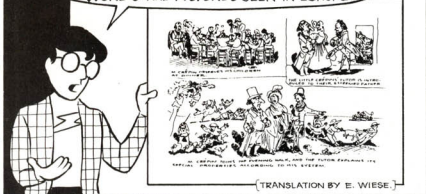
BOTH THE PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS WERE DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED *SIDE-BY-SIDE* --IN SEQUENCE!



"*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.



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



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

-Goethe



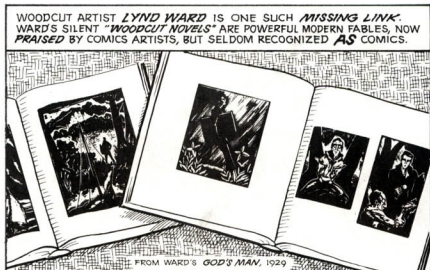
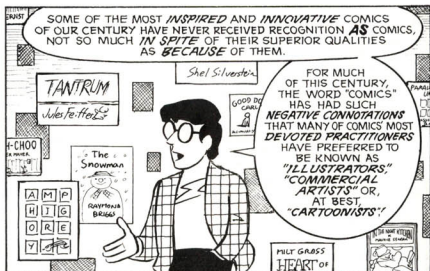
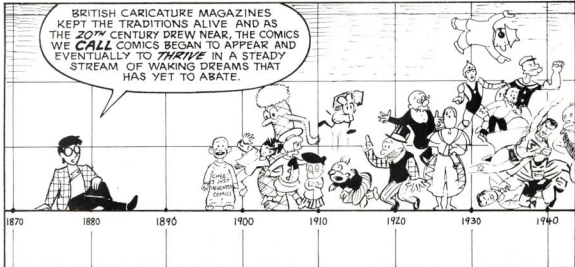
EVEN SO, TÖPFFER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE *UNDERSTANDING* OF COMICS IS CONSIDERABLE, IF ONLY FOR HIS REALIZATION THAT HE WHO WAS NEITHER ARTIST NOR WRITER--



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



A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.





ARTISTS LIKE WARD AND BELGIAN **FRAN'S 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.



FROM **STAINED GLASS WINDOWS** SHOWING BIBLICAL SCENES IN ORDER TO **MONET'S SERIES PAINTINGS**, TO YOUR **CAR OWNER'S MANUAL**, COMICS TURN UP ALL OVER WHEN **SEQUENTIAL ART** IS EMPLOYED AS A DEFINITION.

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**.



1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040

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



SEQUENTIAL ART

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

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



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

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



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

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

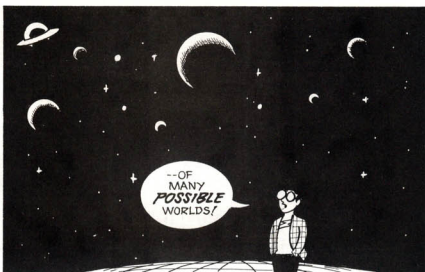


THOSE OF YOU WHO **MAKE** COMICS FOR A LIVING -- OR WOULD **LIKE** TO, SOMEDAY -- PROBABLY KNOW THAT KEEPING UP WITH ALL THE **ADVANCES** IN TODAY'S COMICS IS A **FULL-TIME JOB**.

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

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

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



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?



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

N'EST-CE PAS?

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

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

TEN
COPIES,
ACTUALLY.

SIX, IF YOU
FOLD THE PAGES
BACK.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

DO YOU
HEAR WHAT I'M
SAYING?

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

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

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.



THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT
A LEAF



THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.



THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



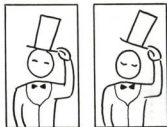
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



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



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 **CLUMSILY**, SOME **PICTURES** ARE JUST MORE **ICONIC** THAN OTHERS.



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



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



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

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.





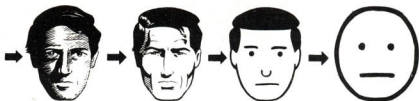
ONLY
OUTLINES
AND A HINT
OF SHADING
ARE STILL
PRESENT, BUT
WE EASILY
RECOGNIZE
THIS AS A
**HUMAN
FACE.**

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?

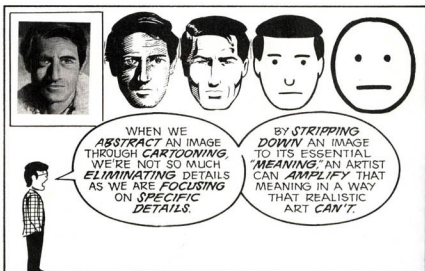
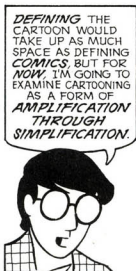
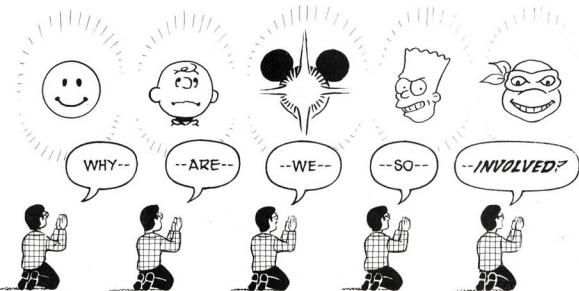
AS WE CONTINUE
TO ABSTRACT AND
SIMPLIFY OUR IMAGE,
WE ARE MOVING FURTHER
AND FURTHER FROM THE
"REAL" FACE OF THE
PHOTO.



WHAT
IS THE SECRET
OF THE ICON
WE CALL--

--THE
CARTOON?

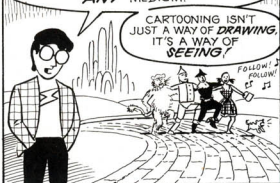




FILM CRITICS WILL SOMETIMES DESCRIBE A *LIVE-ACTION* FILM AS A "CARTOON" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRIPPED-DOWN *INTENSITY* OF A SIMPLE STORY OR VISUAL STYLE.



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.



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



ONE



A FEW



THOUSANDS



MILLIONS



(NEARLY) ALL

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

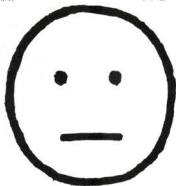


BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE--WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.



WHAT

ARE YOU



REALLY

SEEING?

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

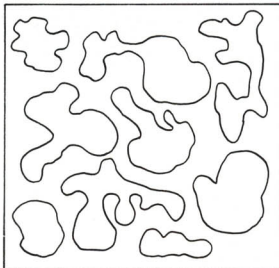


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!

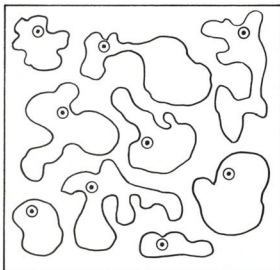


ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE **CLOSED CURVES**. BUT **OTHERWISE** CAN BE AS **WEIRD** AND **IRREGULAR** AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE **THIS**.



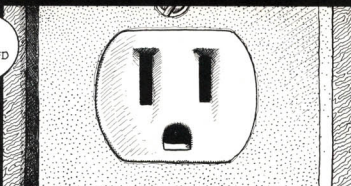
NOW--YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY **LOOK** LIKE, EVERY SINGLE **ONE** OF THOSE SHAPES **CAN** BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.



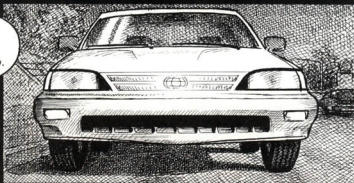
YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE **THIS**--



WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



WE SEE
OURSELVES
IN
EVERYTHING.

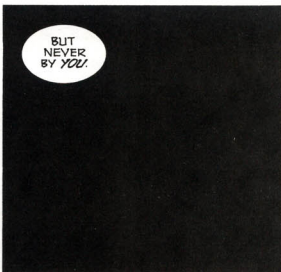


WE
ASSIGN
IDENTITIES
AND EMOTIONS
WHERE NONE
EXIST.



AND WE
MAKE THE
WORLD OVER
IN OUR
IMAGE.







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



SOMETHING AS **SIMPLE** AND AS **BASIC**--



--AS A **CARTOON**.

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



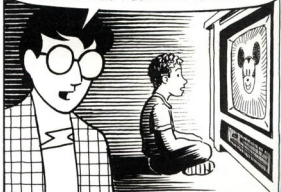
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF **ANOTHER**.

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



--YOU SEE **YOURSELF**.

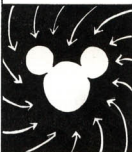
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE **PRIMARY CAUSE** OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH **CARTOONS**, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS **UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION**, **SIMPLICITY** AND THE **CHILDLIKE FEATURES** OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



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



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



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

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



THAT'S THE **THEORY**, ANYWAY.



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



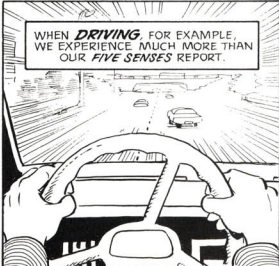
THERE'S **MORE**, TOO!



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



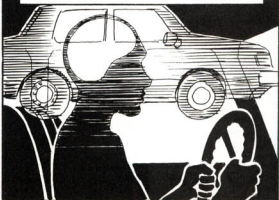
WHEN **DRIVING**, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR **FIVE SENSES** REPORT.



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



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



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

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



PIECES OF METAL TO BECOME *HANDS*...



PIECES OF PLASTIC TO BECOME *EARS*...



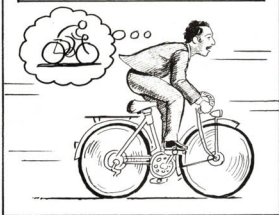
PIECES OF GLASS TO BECOME *EYES*.



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



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



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

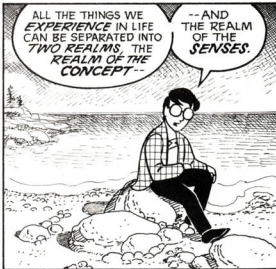


--SO TOO IS OUR AWARENESS OF *THESE* EXTENSIONS GREATLY *SIMPLIFIED*.



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

--AND THE *REALM OF THE SENSES*.



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



GRADUALLY WE REACH **BEYOND** OURSELVES.



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



AND OF THE WORLD **AROUND** US.



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



--AND POSSESS IDENTITIES OF THEIR OWN.



OR, AS OUR **EXTENSIONS**--



--BEGIN TO GLOW--



--WITH THE LIFE--



--WE *LEND*
TO THEM.



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



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



--AND THROUGH
THE *CARTOON*,
THE WORLD
WITHIN.



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



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



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



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



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



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

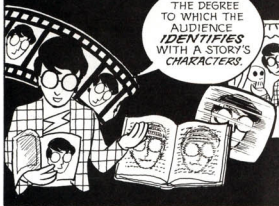


--ARE A *FAR CRY* FROM *PHOTO-REALISTS*!

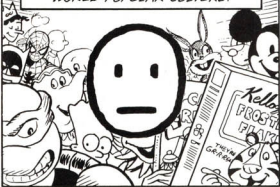


STORYTELLERS IN *ALL* MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF *AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT*--

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



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



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



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



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



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

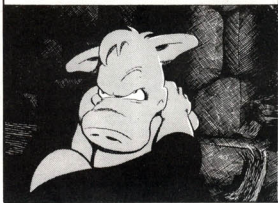


IN THE WORLD OF **ANIMATION**, WHERE THE EFFECT HAPPENS TO BE A PRACTICAL **NECESSITY**, DISNEY HAS USED IT WITH IMPRESSIVE RESULTS FOR OVER **50 YEARS!**

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

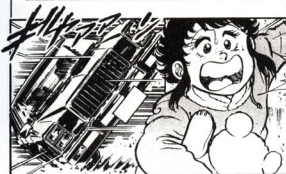


IN **AMERICAN** COMICS, THE EFFECT IS USED FAR LESS **OFTEN**, ALTHOUGH IT HAS CREPT UP IN THE WORKS OF ARTISTS AS DIVERSE AS **CARL BARKS**, **JAIME HERNANDEZ** AND IN THE TEAM OF **DAVE SIM** AND **GERHARD**.



CEREBUS © DAVE SIM.

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



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



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



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



"MONA GOES TOKYO"

BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



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



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



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



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



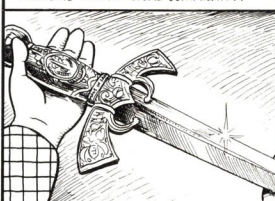
--DUE TO THE "*LIFE*" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY CARTOON IDENTITY!



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



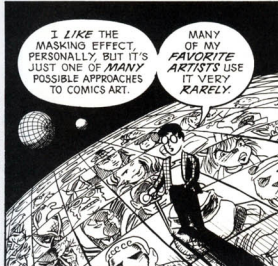
IN JAPANESE COMICS, THE SWORD MIGHT *NOW* BECOME VERY *REALISTIC*, NOT ONLY TO SHOW US THE DETAILS, BUT TO MAKE US AWARE OF THE SWORD AS AN *OBJECT*, SOMETHING WITH *WEIGHT*, *TEXTURE* AND *PHYSICAL COMPLEXITY*.



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*.



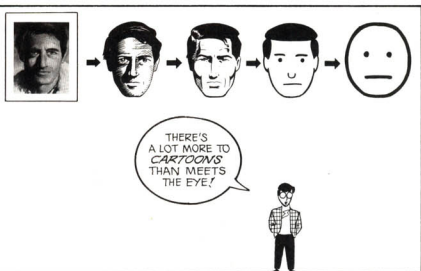
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.



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



RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.





WAIT!
THERE'S
MORE!

WE'VE
REDUCED THIS FACE
TO TWO DOTS AND
TWO LINES. IS OUR
ICONIC ABSTRACTION
SCALE COMPLETE?



THE SCALE
SHOWS SEVERAL
SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT
PROGRESSIONS. LET'S
CONCENTRATE ON ONE
AND SEE IF WE CAN
TAKE IT ANY
FURTHER.



COMPLEX —————> SIMPLE

REALISTIC —————> ICONIC

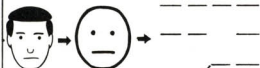
OBJECTIVE —————> SUBJECTIVE

SPECIFIC —————> UNIVERSAL

CAN ANY
CONFIGURATION
OF INK ON PAPER
BE **MORE** ABSTRACTED
FROM "REALITY"---

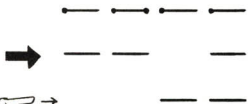


--YET STILL REPRESENT
A FACE AS CLEARLY
AS **THIS** ONE?

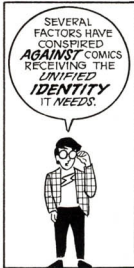
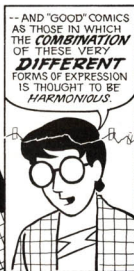
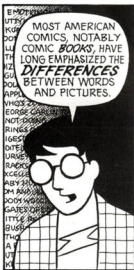


I SAY
THE ANSWER
IS **YES**.

HERE'S A
PART OF
THE
SOLUTION.



JUST DRAW
A LINE **STRAIGHT**
DOWN FROM EACH
OF THE **DOTS**
TO
THIS HEIGHT FOR
THE **ANSWER**.

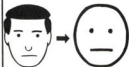


BOTH ARTIST AND WRITER BEGIN, HANDS JOINED ACROSS THE GAP, WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO MAKE COMICS OF "QUALITY"



"ARTIE"

"RITA"



FACE

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



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



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



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

Thy youth's
prowd livery,
so gaud
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.

*Thy youth's
proud luxury
so gaz'd
on now...*

PERCEIVED

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



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

OUR NEED FOR A 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.

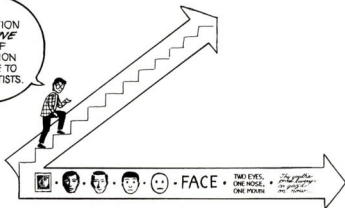
CAN THEY BE **RECONCILED**?



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



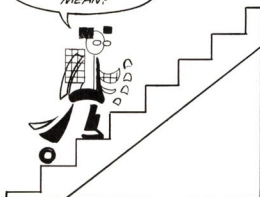
ICONIC
ABSTRACTION
IS ONLY *ONE*
FORM OF
ABSTRACTION
AVAILABLE TO
COMICS ARTISTS.



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

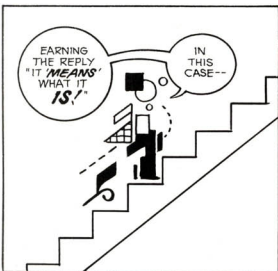


THE TYPE OF
ART WHICH OFTEN
PROMPTS THE QUESTION:
"WHAT DOES IT
MEAN?"

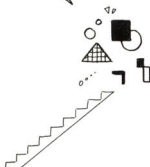


EARNING
THE REPLY
"IT *MEANS*
WHAT IT
IS!"

IN
THIS CASE--



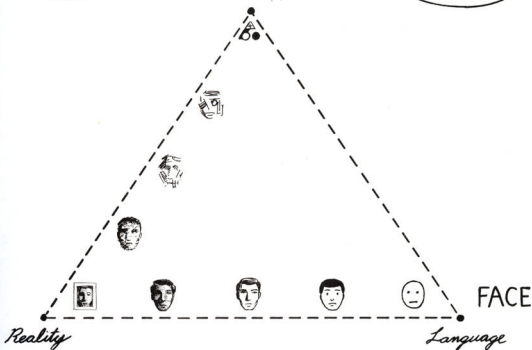
--INK
ON
PAPER.



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.



TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH

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



WATCH THAT NOSE!

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.



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.



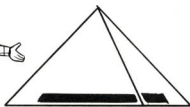
Sound on!

O.K. ...let's roll!

Vision on!



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.

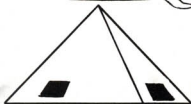


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

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



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



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

WAY YOU TALK, NICHOLAS, FOLKS EXPECT HIM TO START 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.

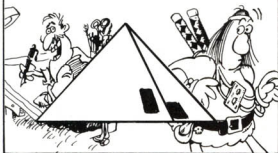


IRONIC THAT THE TWO BASTIONS OF *CARTOONY* ART ARE *UNDERGROUND* AND *CHILDREN'S* COMICS!

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.



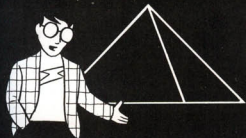
OTHERS, SUCH AS *DAVE MCKEAN*, ARE FOREVER *ON THE MOVE*, EXPERIMENTING, TAKING CHANCES, NEVER SATISFIED.



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

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

THOSE AT THE *TOP* BY THE BEAUTY OF *ART*.



AND THOSE ON THE RIGHT BY THE BEAUTY OF *IDEAS*.

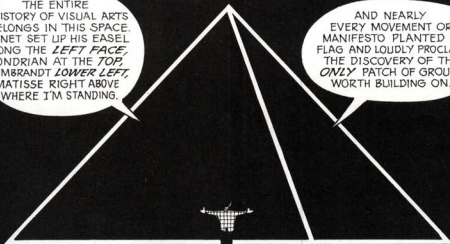
FOR COMICS TO *MATURE* AS A *MEDIUM*, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S *INNERMOST NEEDS* AND *IDEAS*.

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



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

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



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

Ping!

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

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

SPLAT!

F

AND
IT'S EXPANDING
ALL THE TIME!

OURS IS AN INCREASINGLY
SYMBOL-ORIENTED CULTURE.

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

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

ICONS
DEMAND OUR
PARTICIPATION
TO MAKE THEM
WORK.

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



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

IT'S BEEN OVER *TWENTY YEARS* SINCE
MELUHAN 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
MELUHAN 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--

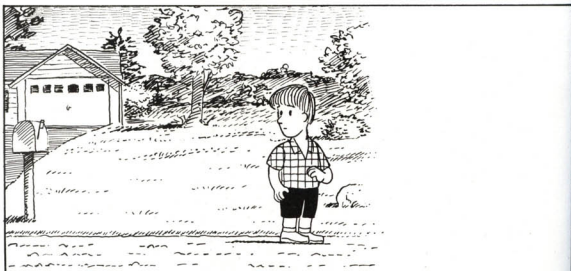
-- IS
ANYONE'S
GUESS.



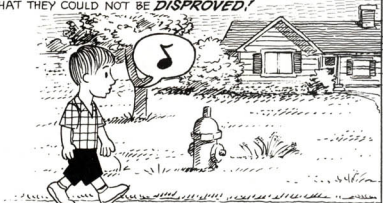
CHAPTER THREE

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*.



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

IT'S
CALLED
CLOSURE.



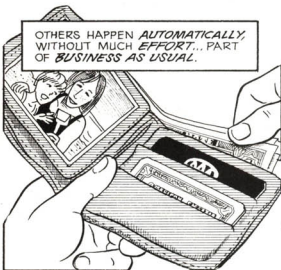
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN
COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY
COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS
INCOMPLETE BASED ON *PAST*
EXPERIENCE.



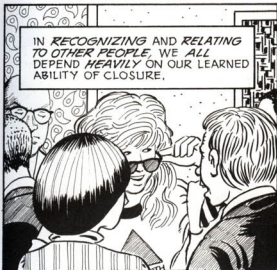
SOME FORMS OF CLOSURE ARE
DELIBERATE INVENTIONS OF
STORYTELLERS TO PRODUCE
SUSPENSE OR TO CHALLENGE
AUDIENCES.



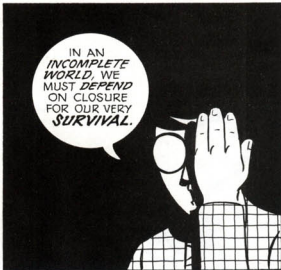
OTHERS HAPPEN *AUTOMATICALLY*,
WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT... PART
OF *BUSINESS AS USUAL.*



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



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



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



CLOSURE

CLOSURE

CL S RE

CLOSURE

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



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



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



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



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



--OF THE
PHOTOGRAPH!



IN
ELECTRONIC
MEDIA, CLOSURE IS
CONSTANT,
EVEN 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!!



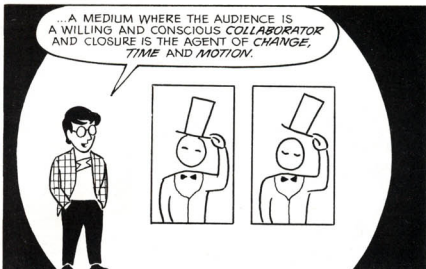
BETWEEN SUCH
AUTOMATIC
ELECTRONIC
CLOSURE AND THE
SIMPLER CLOSURE
OF EVERYDAY
LIFE--



--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.





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

Peek-A-Boo!



Peek-A-Boo!



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.

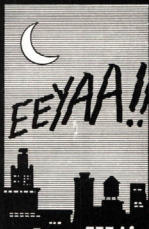


BUT CLOSURE IN **COMICS** IS
FAR FROM CONTINUOUS AND
ANYTHING BUT INVOLUNTARY!



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*.



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

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



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



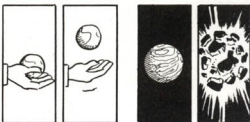
PARTICIPATION
IS A **POWERFUL FORCE**
IN **ANY MEDIUM.**
FILMMAKERS **LONG AGO**
REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE
OF ALLOWING VIEWERS
TO USE THEIR
IMAGINATIONS.



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**.



BANG!



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.

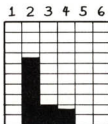


[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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*.



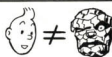
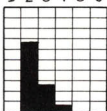
THIS EMPHASIS ON *ACTION-TO-ACTION* STORYTELLING SUITS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT *KIRBY*, BUT IS HE *UNIQUE* IN THIS RESPECT?

APPARENTLY *NOT*! HERE'S A GRAPH OF PANEL TRANSITIONS IN 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 #1



CLAREMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



GREGORY

FRANK IN THE RIVER



WOODRING

A CONTRACT WITH GOD



EISNER

MAUS



SPIEGELMAN

DONALD DUCK



BARKS

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

WHAT
CAN WE
DEDUCE
FROM
THIS?



SQUEAK THE MOUSE



MATTIOLI

ASTERIX



GOSCINNY & UDERZO

WELCOME TO AFLLOLOL



CRISTIN & MEZHERES

THE LONG TOMORROW



O'BANNON & MOEBIUS

"MANHATTAN"



TARDI

CLIK!



MANARA

THE BLACK ISLAND



HERGÉ

"THE CLOCK STRIKES"



JOOST SWARTE



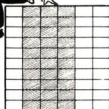
2

3

4



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



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



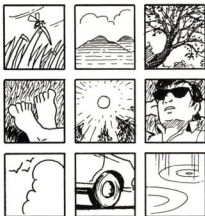
1.



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



"ACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE"



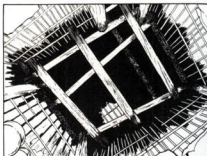
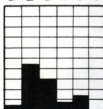
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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



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

1 2 3 4 5 6



JUST WHAT IS **GOING ON** HERE?



3



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



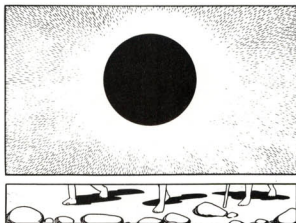
HERE ALSO WE SEE OUR FIRST EXAMPLES OF *MOMENT-TO-MOMENT* TRANSITIONS.



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



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.



水木は夜の
古寺にいて
みることにした



ART © SHIGERU MIZUKI

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.



ART © H. SATO

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

WHY?



750 RIDER
(石井いさみ?)



FATHER & SON
HAYASI & OSIMA



WOLF & CUB
KOIKE & KOIZUMI



AKIRA
KATSUHIRO OTOMO



CYBORG 009
SHOTARO ISHIMORI



PHOENIX
OSAMU TEZUKA

LENGTH MAY BE ONE OF
THE FACTORS AT WORK HERE. MOST
JAPANESE COMICS FIRST APPEAR IN
ENORMOUS *ANTHOLOGY* TITLES WHERE
THE PRESSURE ISN'T AS GREAT ON
ANY ONE INSTALLMENT TO SHOW
A LOT "HAPPENING."

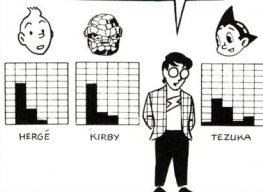
WHEN INDIVIDUAL FEATURES ARE
COLLECTED, THEY MAY RUN FOR
THOUSANDS OF PAGES.



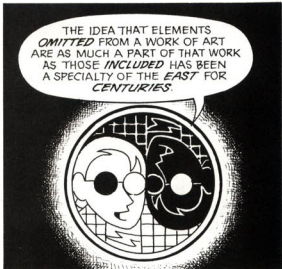
AS SUCH,
DOZENS OF PANELS
CAN BE DEVOTED
TO PORTRAYING
SLOW CINEMATIC
MOVEMENT OR TO
SETTING A MOOD.

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

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







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



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

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



WEST

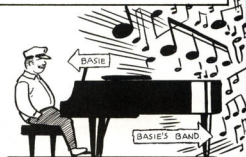


EAST

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



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



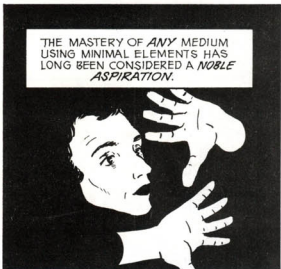
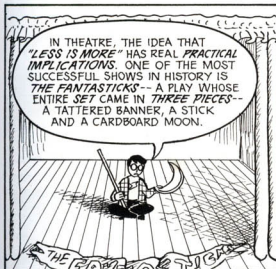


IN THE *VISUAL* ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.

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

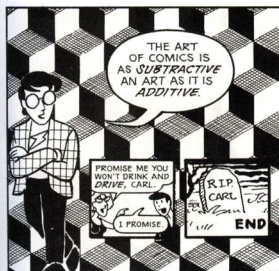


THE MASTERY OF *ANY* MEDIUM USING MINIMAL ELEMENTS HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED A *NOBLE ASPIRATION*.

*ANSWER: "THE BIG N"
[SEE PAGE 216]

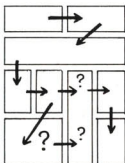


* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



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

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



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



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!

≡ Splip Splip ≡

?

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!

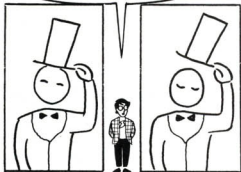
Ding! Ding!

OW!

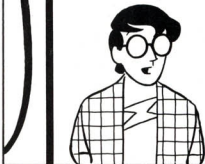
Ding! Ding!

OW!

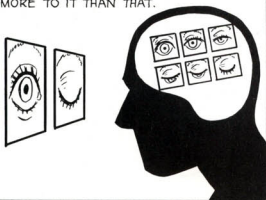
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES *WITHIN* EACH PANEL, IT'S THE POWER OF CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST INTERESTING.



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

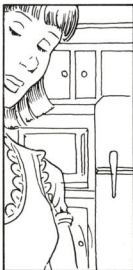
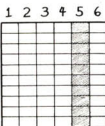


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF *IN-BETWEENER* -- FILLING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR* MIGHT-- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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 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.

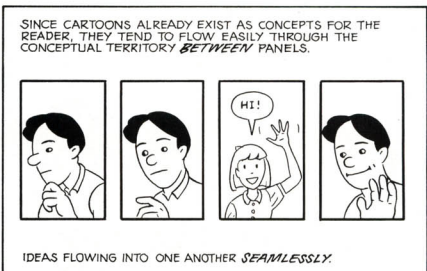


WHICH IS WHY **ALL** OF OUR SENSES ARE ENGAGED!





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

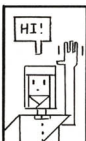


BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



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--

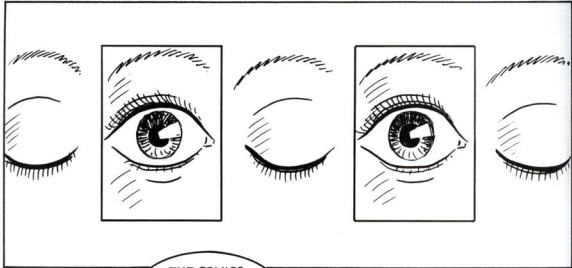


--THEN CLOSURE IS PROBABLY NOT HAPPENING WITHOUT SOME **EFFORT**.



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
UNSEEN.

THE
VISIBLE
AND THE
INVISIBLE.



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



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

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

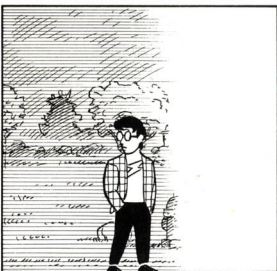
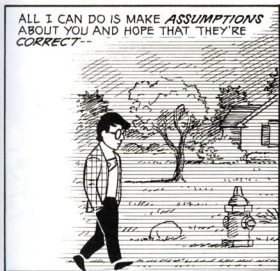




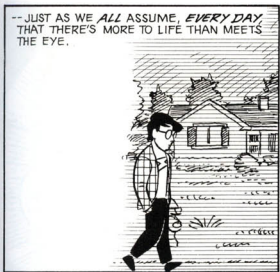
HERE IN
THIS STUDIO, I'VE
TRIED TO **CONTROL**
THAT PROCESS AND
USE IT TO MAKE
MY CASE.

BUT I
CAN ONLY **POINT**
THE WAY. I
CAN'T TAKE YOU
ANYWHERE YOU
DON'T WANT TO
GO.

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



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



ALL I ASK OF YOU
IS A LITTLE
FAITH--



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

CHAPTER FOUR

TIME FRAMES.

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



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



LIKE A LINE DRAWN
BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

RIGHT?



CLIK



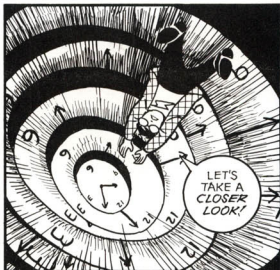
NAAH!
OF COURSE
NOT!

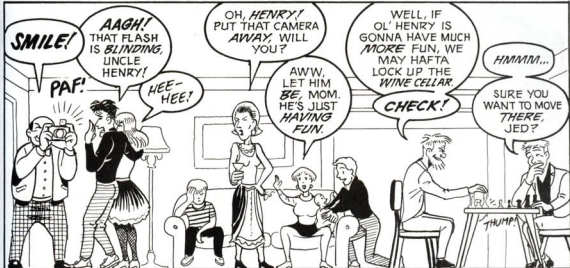


TIME IN COMICS
IS *INFINITELY*
WEIRDER THAN
THAT!

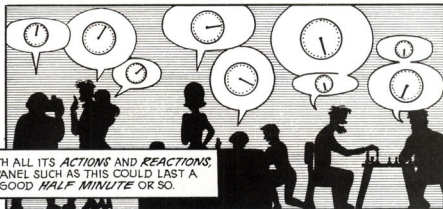


LET'S
TAKE A
CLOSER
LOOK!





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





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



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



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



EACH INCH
REPRESENTS A
SECOND.



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

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



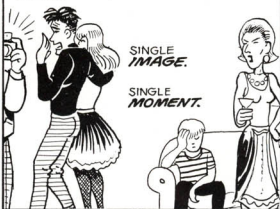
AND SINCE EACH
FACE AND FIGURE
IS DRAWN TO MATCH
HIS/HER OWN
WORDS--



--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.



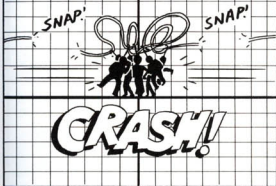
SINGLE *IMAGE*.

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!



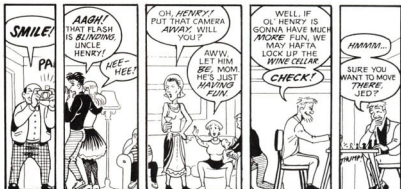
PERHAPS WE'VE BEEN TOO CONDITIONED BY PHOTOGRAPHY TO PERCEIVE SINGLE IMAGES AS *SINGLE MOMENTS*. AFTER ALL, IT DOES TAKE AN EYE *TIME* TO MOVE ACROSS SCENES IN *REAL LIFE*!



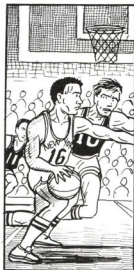
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM *LEFT TO RIGHT* IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL *'READ'* THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT *TIME* SLOT.



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.

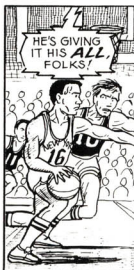


ONE PANEL, OPERATING AS *SEVERAL* PANELS.



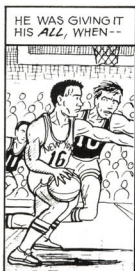
NOT *ALL* PANELS
ARE LIKE THAT,
OF COURSE.

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

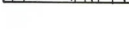


HE'S GIVING
IT HIS *ALL*,
FOLKS!

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



HE WAS GIVING IT
HIS *ALL*, WHEN --



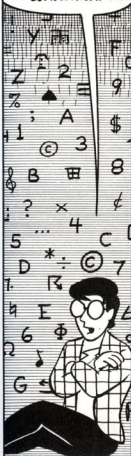
FOR JUST AS THE
BODY'S LARGEST ORGAN
-- OUR *SKIN* --
IS SELDOM *THOUGHT*
OF AS AN ORGAN --



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

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

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

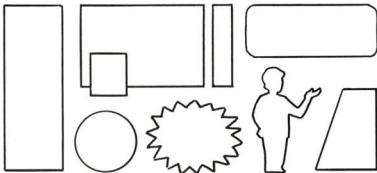


THE **DURATIONS** OF THAT **TIME** AND THE **DIMENSIONS** OF THAT **SPACE** ARE DEFINED MORE BY THE **CONTENTS** OF THE PANEL THAN BY THE PANEL **ITSELF**. *



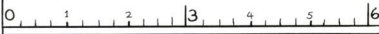
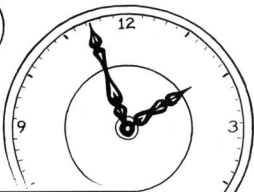
PANEL **SHAPES** VARY **CONSIDERABLY** THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "**MEANINGS**" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY **CAN** AFFECT THE READING **EXPERIENCE**.

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



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

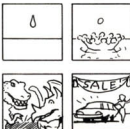
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE TIME **SPATIALLY**, FOR IN THE WORLD OF COMICS, **TIME AND SPACE ARE ONE AND THE SAME.**



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



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



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



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



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?

D'YA THINK THE SOX COULD FINALLY DO IT THIS YEAR?



I GUESS.



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

HEY, I DESERVE A BETTER JOB! I COULD BE A BRAIN SURGEON!



I GUESS.

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!

THAT MADONNA, MAN, SHE'S ONE HOT BARE!



I GUESS.



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'LL 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.

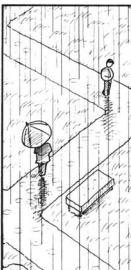


HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?!



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.

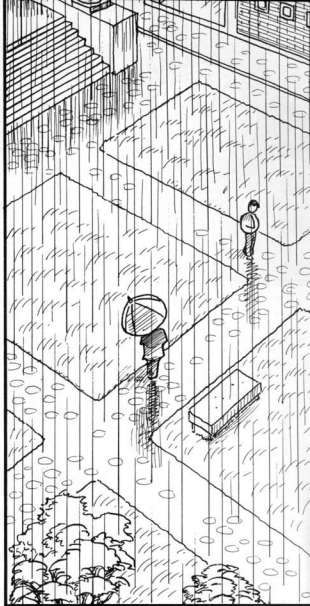


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH **FOLLOW** IT.



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.



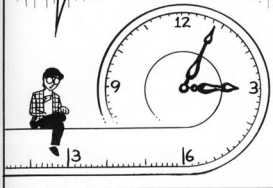
THIS MAY, IN PART, BE THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER MEDIA LIKE FILM AND TELEVISION WHERE VIEWER CHOICE HAS NOT GENERALLY BEEN FEASIBLE.

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

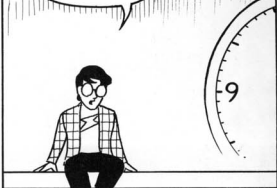




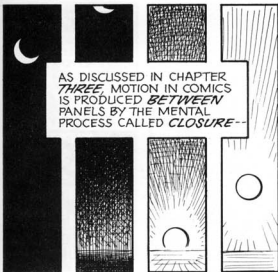
AS MENTIONED EARLIER,
TIME AND *SPACE* IN THE WORLD OF
COMICS ARE *CLOSELY LINKED*.



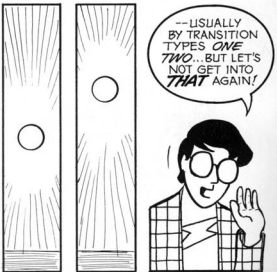
AS A RESULT,
SO TOO ARE THE
ISSUES OF *TIME*
AND *MOTION*.



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

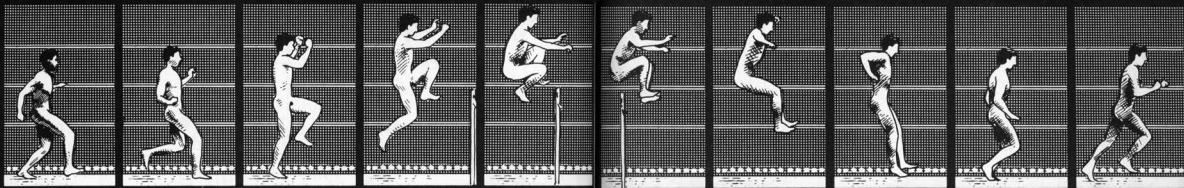


NOW, IN BRIGHT AND WITTY
SOCIETY, ONE SHOULD BE
SEATED IN ORDER TO
TALK THEATRES, CASINOS,
AND THE LATEST NOW-
SENSE IN GENERAL.

NOW, IF A SUPERIOR MAKE-A
JOKE, ONE JUMPS UP WITH
A ROAR OF LAUGHTER.

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





COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

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



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

MY **STROBOSCOPE** IS SUPERIOR IN EVERY
WAY TO THE OBSOLETE **ZOETROPE!**

BAH! MY **PRAXINOSCOPE** IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY
KINEMATOSCOPE
WILL SHOW YOU!

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

FRAUDS ALL! MY **ZOÖPRAXINOSCOPE** 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--

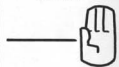


--FILLED
WITH
MOTION--



--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.**



Girl Running on a Balcony
by Batta



Nude Descending a
Staircase #2 by
Duchamp



IT
WASN'T A
BAD IDEA!



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

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

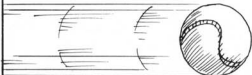


I'M SURE
YOU CAN ALL
GUESS WHICH
MEDIUM I
MEAN!





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

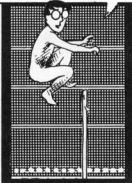
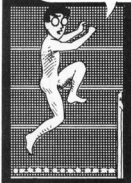


HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?

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!

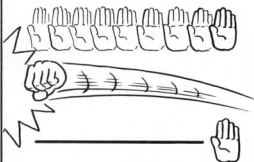
PAF!



--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*.





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

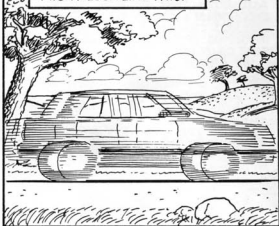


* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRIGSTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

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



A CAR GOING AT 60 MPH MIGHT LOOK LIKE *THIS*.



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



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



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



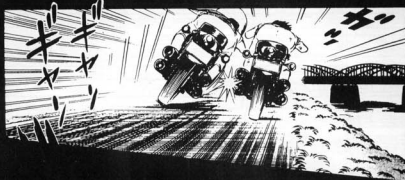
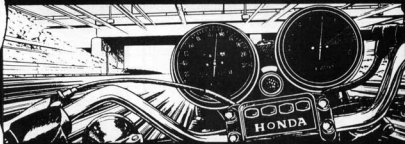
BUT IN *JAPAN*, ONCE AGAIN, A VERY *DIFFERENT* COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED THIS VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF MOTION AS *THEIR OWN*.



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

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

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

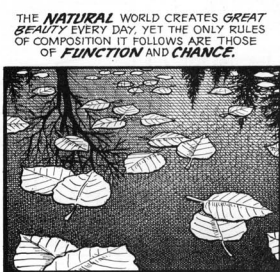


©石井いさみ?



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





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



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



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



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



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



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

ONE--

--TWO--

--THREE--

-- BUT THEY'RE NOT.



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.

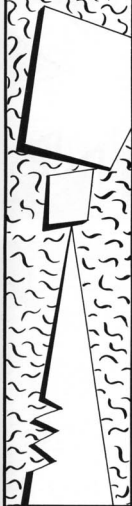
CAN
EMOTIONS
BE MADE
VISIBLE?

IS THIS **ANGER?**

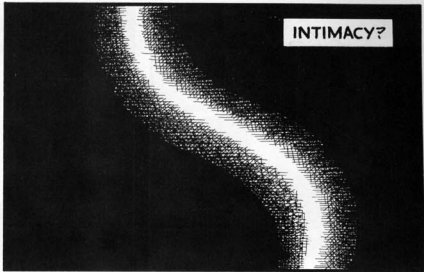
JOY?

SERENITY?

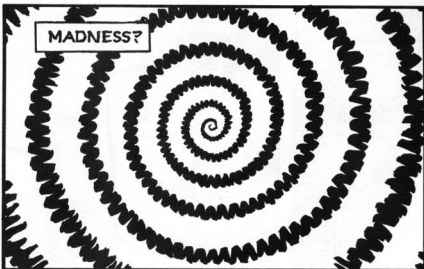
TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?

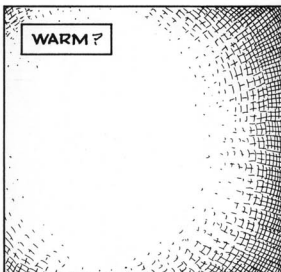
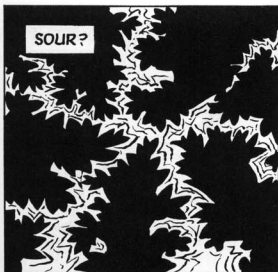
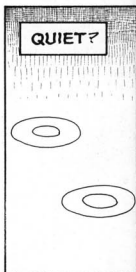
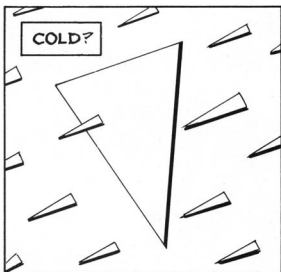
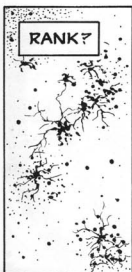


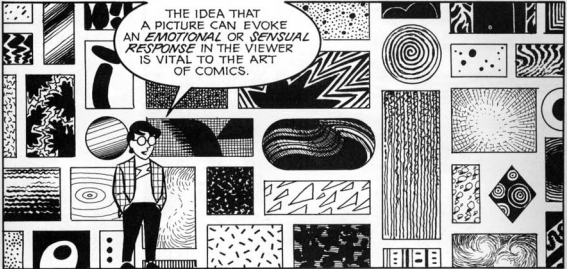
PRIDE?



ANXIETY?

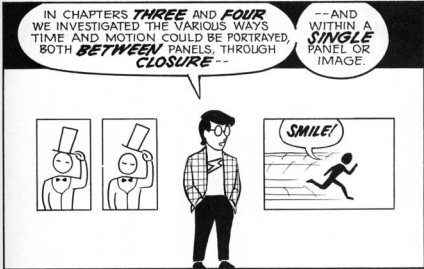






THE IDEA THAT
A PICTURE CAN EVOKE
AN *EMOTIONAL* OR *SENSUAL*
RESPONSE IN THE VIEWER
IS VITAL TO THE ART
OF COMICS.

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**.



THE SCREAM - 1895 LITHOGRAPH BY EDVARD MUNCH.

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*.

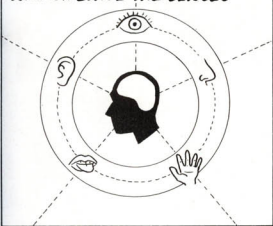


ANGRY REDS...
PLACID BLUES...
ANXIOUS TEXTURES...
LOUD SHAPES...
QUIET LINES...
COLD GREENS...

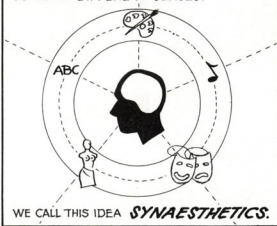
THESE WERE
STRANGE IDEAS
IN 1912!



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*.



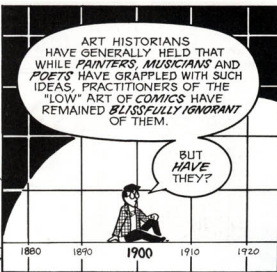
"Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it *makes* visible."

-- 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?



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

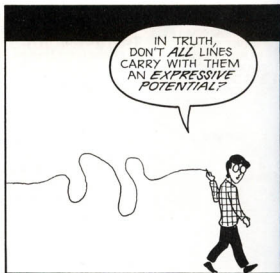
IF *THESE* LINES ARE EXPRESSIVE OF *FEAR, ANXIETY* AND *MADNESS*--



--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 KRYTTRE'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 **JOSÉ MUNOZ'S** WORK, **DENSE PUDDLES OF INK AND FRAYING LINEWORK** COMBINE TO **EVOKE A WORLD OF DEPRAVITY AND MORBID DECAY**--



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



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



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





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



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

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



I'LL GIVE
YOU AN
EXAMPLE.



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

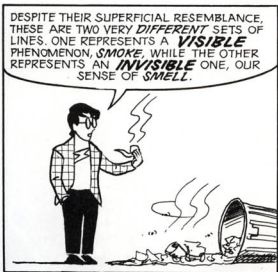


--ASSUMING
IT **IS** A
PIPE--



--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.



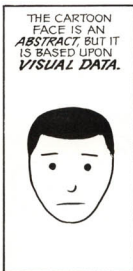
IF ENOUGH ARTISTS
BEGIN *USING* THE
SYMBOL, IT WILL
ENTER THE LANGUAGE
FOR *GOOD*--

--AS MANY
HAVE THROUGH
THE YEARS.





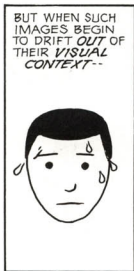
IN DEALING
WITH THE FACE
ITSELF, THE
LINE BETWEEN
THE *VISIBLE* AND
INVISIBLE
WORLDS BECOMES
EVEN *LESS*
CLEAR.



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**.

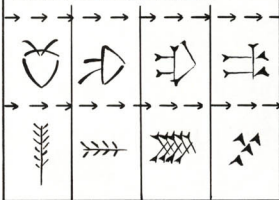


OX



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



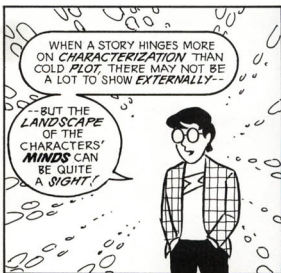
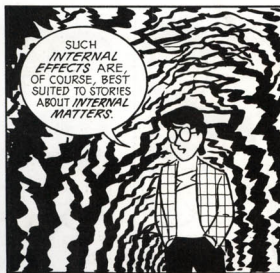
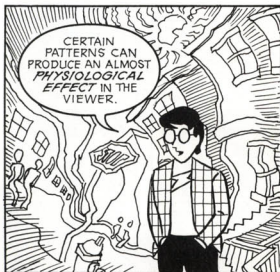
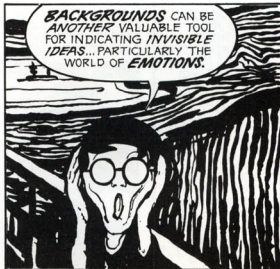
DEMENTIA



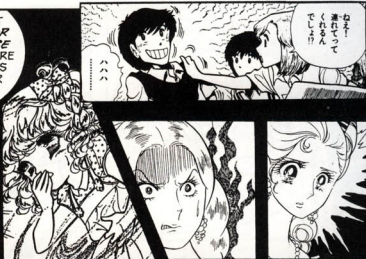
SLEEP



LUST



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.

I WILL BE--

AAARRH!

HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE

IT'S SO
QUIET!

OH, IT'S YOU.

ZACHA

TIMBER!!

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.

CRASH!

HA-
HA!

tip! tip!

MAAY-BEE
I DON'T EVEN
WANT
SHRIMP FOR
DINNER!

||briing!!!||

WHUMP!

KRAK!

KLICK!

SSSSSSSSSSSSSS...

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.



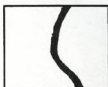
IN THIS
CHAPTER, WE'VE
DEALT WITH THE
INVISIBLE WORLDS
OF **SENSES** AND
EMOTIONS. BUT IN
FACT **ALL** ASPECTS
OF COMICS SHOW IT
TO BE AN **ART OF**
THE INVISIBLE.



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



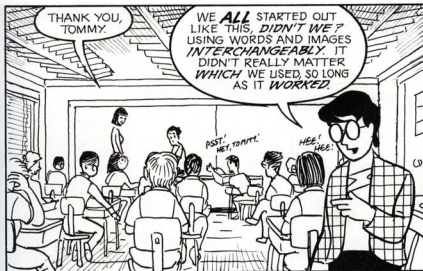
IN THE
END, WHAT
YOU **GET** IS
WHAT YOU
GIVE.



CHAPTER SIX

SHOW AND TELL.





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

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



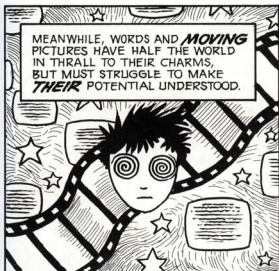
THEN, AS WE GREW,
WE WERE EXPECTED
TO GRADUATE TO
BOOKS WITH MUCH
MORE TEXT AND
ONLY *OCCASIONAL*
PICTURES--



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



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



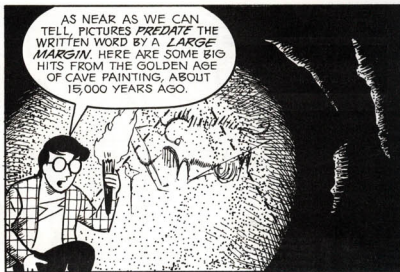
MEANWHILE, WORDS AND **MOVING** PICTURES HAVE HALF THE WORLD IN THRALL TO THEIR CHARMS, BUT MUST STRUGGLE TO MAKE **THEIR** POTENTIAL UNDERSTOOD.



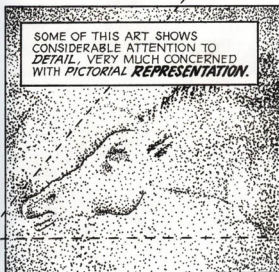
WORDS AND PICTURES ARE AS POPULAR AS EVER, BUT THIS WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE COMBINATION IS SOMEHOW **BASE** OR **SIMPLISTIC** HAS BECOME A **SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY.**



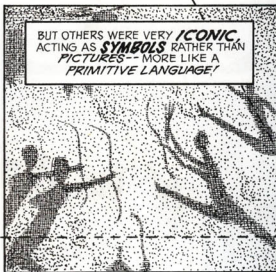
THE ROOTS OF THIS ATTITUDE RUN PRETTY **DEEP.**



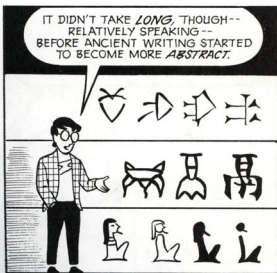
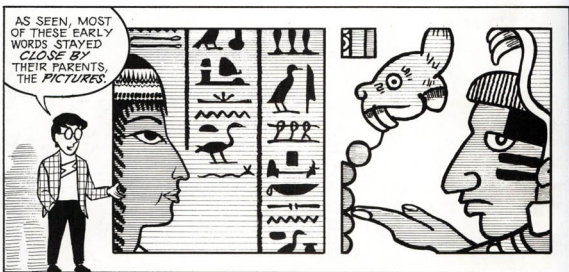
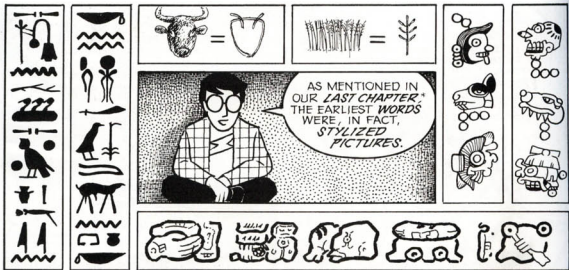
AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, PICTURES **PREDATE** THE WRITTEN WORD BY A **LARGE MARGIN.** HERE ARE SOME BIG HITS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF CAVE PAINTING, ABOUT 15,000 YEARS AGO.



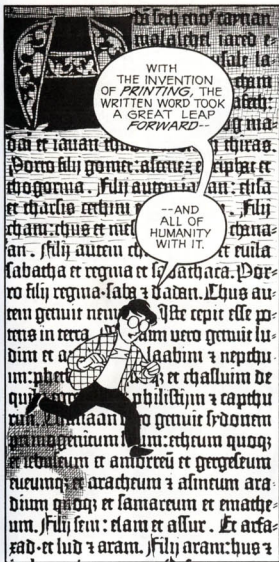
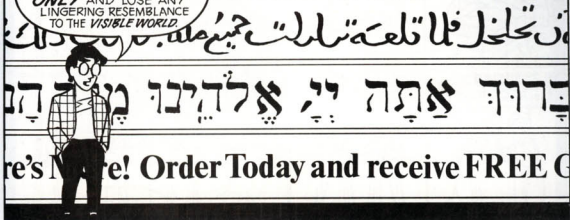
SOME OF THIS ART SHOWS CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO **DETAIL**, VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH **PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION.**



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



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





Don schaff will ich versumen/
Wol auß du miß das bett raumen.
Wich soll noch niemandt mißden/
Es ist noch gar vil zu friden.



Wilt du lauters gottes pflegen/
Werschafft wißst du dich verweigen.
Ich flag von groffen edelen/
Du wirt mich hungerz idelen.



Die rechen solt du legen hin/
Vnd mit dem gasz vernemlich sin.
Wie soll ich mich nun bagen/
Nütz ich von meinen spannen lan.



Wilt du dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.



Ich wil dein fluch mit frid/
Quasich der gasz durten mich.
So ist mich also fer/
Ich in muleghen mer.



Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit,
Vnder beßern alle erden/
Ich mein lieb müge ich erden.



Ich wil dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.

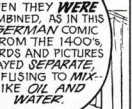


Ich wil dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.

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



Ich wil dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.



Ich wil dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.



Ich wil dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.

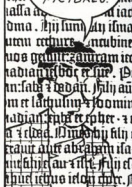


Ich wil dich genieren min/
So müß du gar endlichs sein.
Vnrecht alle samsen was/
Er wil mich endlichs gar.

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



-- AND
LESS AND
LESS LIKE
PICTURES.



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



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



John Keats

1819

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 FIRST STANZA OF KEATS' POEM.

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.

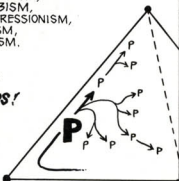
P

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

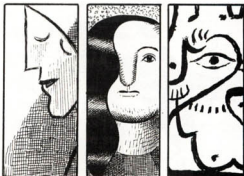


SOON AFTER CAME THE **EXPLOSION!** EXPRESSIONISM, FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM, FAUVISM, CUBISM, ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, NEO-PLASTICISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM.

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT **BACKWARDS!**

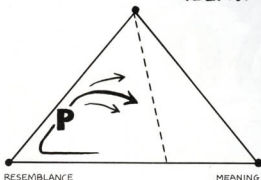


STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. **ABSTRACTION**, BOTH **ICONIC** AND **NON-ICONIC** MADE A **SPECTACULAR COMEBACK!**



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

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.

John Keats 1819
Ode on a Grecian Urn

I
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 or beasts thou hast embrac'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?)

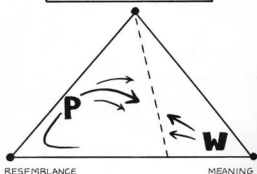
IN PROSE, LANGUAGE WAS BECOMING EVEN MORE DIRECT, CONVEYING MEANING *SIMPLY* AND *QUICKLY*, MORE LIKE *PICTURES*.



"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

SOIRÉE

DU CŒUR

de semaine
prolongée 4
au 7 juillet

ORGANISÉE PAR

le place de la... 20 fr.
estral d'archestre... 20 fr.
estral de balon... 15 fr.
estral de balon... 15 fr.

CHERZ

ARBE

0cati0n :

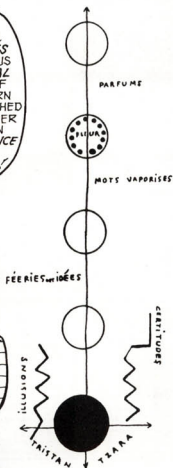
Berthelin Jeanne, 20, Bd de la Madeleine
Durand, 4, Place de la Madeleine
Ferdinand, 12, Rue Bonaparte
An Gene Fardel, 27, Avenue Kléber
Stn. 5, Avenue Ledebur
Paul Guillemain, 20, Rue la Boétie
Librairie Morvan, 27, Bd Montparnasse
Paul Rosenberg, 21, Rue la Boétie
et au Théâtre Michel, Tél. : Oca. 20-20

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!



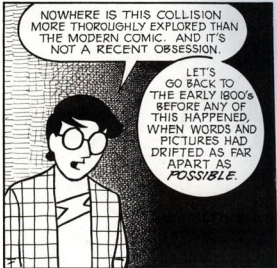
PAINTINGS INCREASINGLY TOOK ON
SYMBOLIC, EVEN CALLIGRAPHIC,
MEANINGS...



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



Ceci n'est pas une pipe.



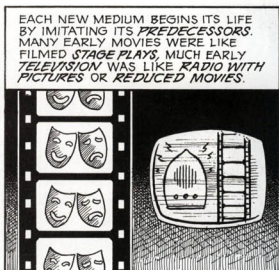
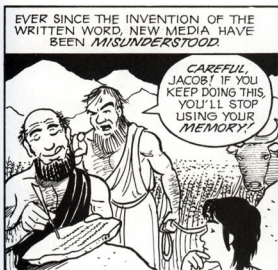
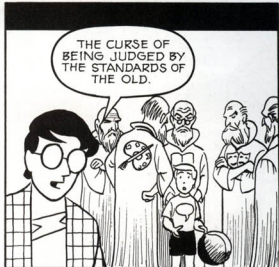
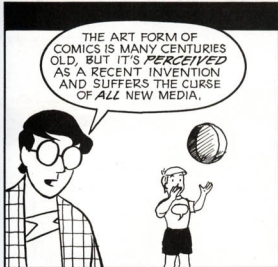
UP TO THAT POINT, *EUROPEAN BROADSHEETS* HAD OFFERED REMINDERS OF WHAT WORDS AND PICTURES COULD DO WHEN COMBINED.

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



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





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

com-ics (kom'iks) **n.** plural form, used with a singular. Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey an idea and/or to produce a response in the reader. **2. Superheroes** in costumes, fight villains who want to take over the world, in violent settings.



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
ROMANCE
BLANK VERSE
EPIC POETRY
SOCIAL ALLEGORY
ADAPTATIONS
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS
SATIRE
HORROR
SURREALISM
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.



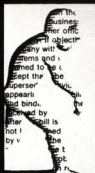
MILK.

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!"



HE'S LYING.



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



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

P

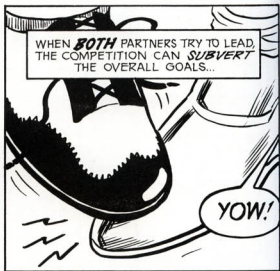
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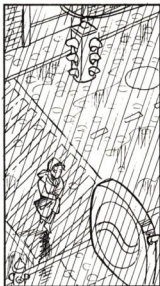
GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH **WORDS**, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO EXPLORING AND **VICE VERSA**.

W

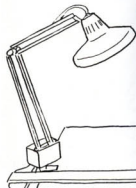
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WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.



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



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



IT COULD
BECOME AN
**INTERNAL
MONOLOGUE.**

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY
INCONGRUOUS

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



(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG
ADVERTISEMENT!



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON
BROADER TOPICS.



(INTERDEPENDENT)

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



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.

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.



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



--BUT WHAT ARE SOME **OTHER** OPTIONS?



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



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

(WORD SPECIFIC)

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

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



(AMPLIFICATION)

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

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--



(INTERDEPENDENT)

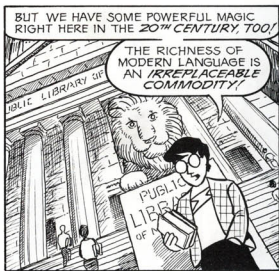
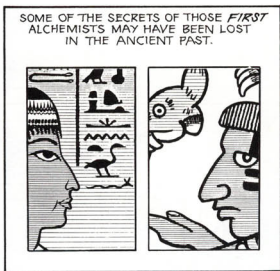
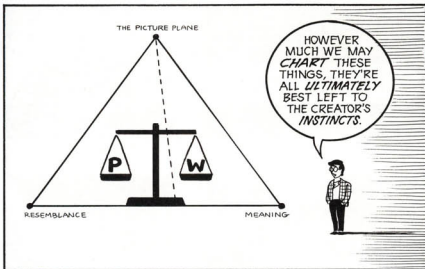
OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.



(WORD SPECIFIC)



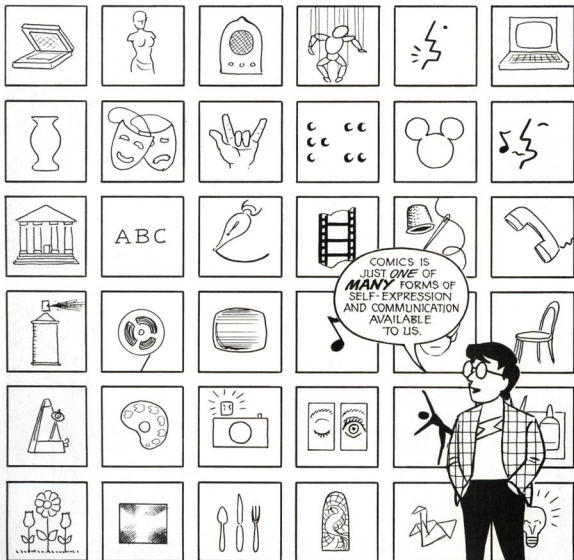
-- WHEN TO TELL WAS TO *SHOW*--

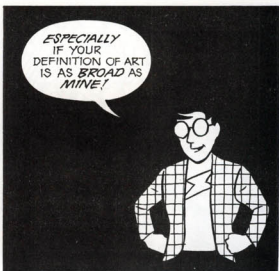
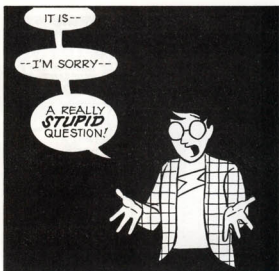
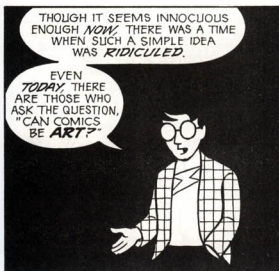


-- AND TO SHOW WAS TO *TELL*.

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!**

GRAAH!

EEEEK!!

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

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

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

SUDDENLY--!

ROAR!!!

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

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

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



HE TAKES IT!



AND SURVIVES.



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



BUT INSTEAD...

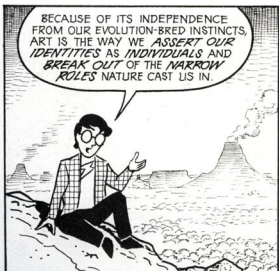
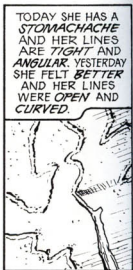


ART.



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!





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



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



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



--TO *USEFUL DISCOVERIES!*



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



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



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



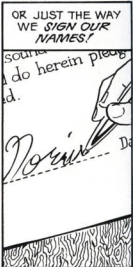
A LOT HAS *CHANGED* IN HALF A MILLION YEARS, BUT SOME THINGS *NEVER CHANGE*.



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



* ALONG WITH THEIR MANY RELATED FEELINGS AND CUSTOMS.



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



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



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

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



"BUT IT'S **IMPORTANT!**"



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



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



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



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

1

IDEA/
PURPOSE

2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



A PATH CONSISTING OF *SIX STEPS*.

1

IDEA/
PURPOSE**FIRST:**

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



2

FORM

**SECOND:**

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



3

IDIOM

**THIRD:**

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



4

STRUCTURE

**FOURTH:**

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



5

CRAFT



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



6

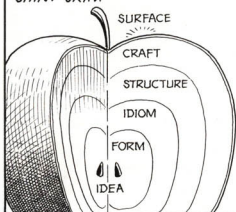
SURFACE



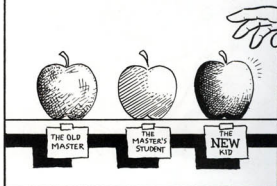
SIXTH:
PRODUCTION
VALUES, FINISHING...
THE ASPECTS MOST
APPARENT ON FIRST
SUPERFICIAL
EXPOSURE TO
THE WORK.



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



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



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



CRUNCH!



HOLLOW.



IT'S A
CYCLE AS OLD
AS ART
ITSELF.



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



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

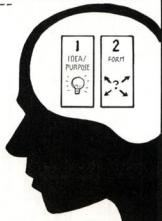
COMICS IS ACTING AS AN **INTERMEDIARY** BETWEEN **STORYTELLER** AND **AUDIENCE**.



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

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

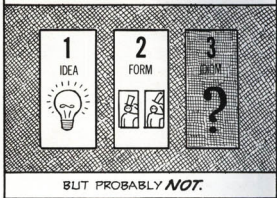
--AND THAT THOSE SKILLS CAN BE **LEARNED!**



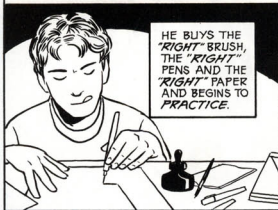
ONE OF THEM--FULL OF **BIG IDEAS**--
MAKES THE **BIG DECISION**.



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



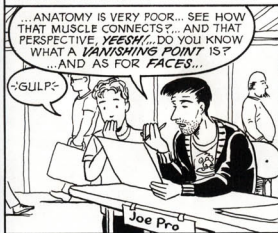
MORE LIKELY HE **POSTPONES** HIS OWN
IDEAS AND BEGINS TO STUDY THE **CRAFT**
OF **OTHER ARTISTS** IN HIS ATTEMPT TO
BECOME A **PROFESSIONAL**.



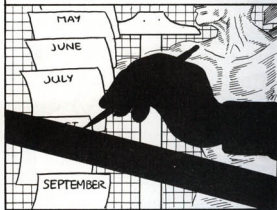
EVENUALLY...



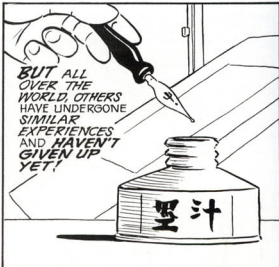
BUT WHEN HE BRINGS THE WORK TO A
REAL PROFESSIONAL AT THE LOCAL **CON**:



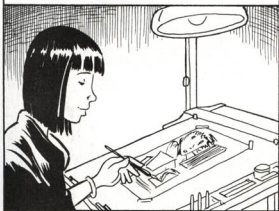
SO HE BUYS SOME BOOKS ON **ANATOMY**
AND **PERSPECTIVE**, STUDIES A VARIETY
OF **DRAWING TECHNIQUES** AND **PRACTICES**,
PRACTICES, **PRACTICES** FOR **MONTHS**.



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



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*.



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

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



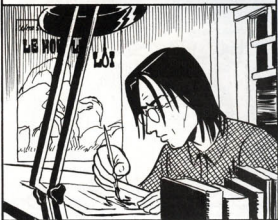
HER SKILLS *CAN* GET HER *WORK* AT THIS POINT, BUT ONLY AS AN *ASSISTANT* TO OTHERS. UNTIL SHE UNDERSTANDS THE *STRUCTURE* OF COMICS *BENEATH* THE CRAFT, THIS IS AS FAR AS SHE CAN GO.



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



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!**



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

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



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



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



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



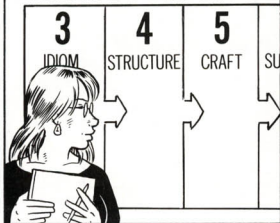
SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE**--SOME **PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**--THAT SHE **STILL HASN'T FOUND**.



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



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



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



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



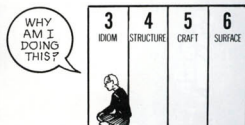
AND MAYBE SHE'LL BE *SATISFIED* WITH THAT KIND OF SUCCESS, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WHATEVER SHE *DOESN'T* KNOW, SHE'S ON THE RIGHT PATH TO *FIND OUT*.




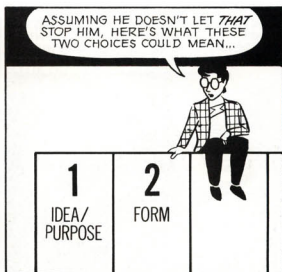
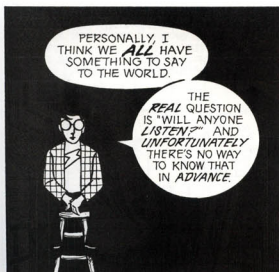
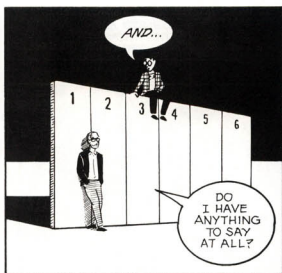
BUT *ELSEWHERE*, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS *DISSATISFIED*. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY *IMPORTANT* HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



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



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

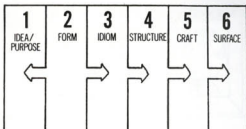
FORM



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.)

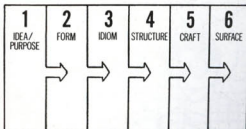
1

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*.



SCHULZ



BARKS



HERGE



EISNER



NAKAZAWA

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

FORTUNATELY,
THIS CHOICE
NEVER HAS TO BE
PERMANENT.

IT
CAN CHANGE
AS OFTEN AS
AN ARTIST
CHANGES
PROJECTS!

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

HEY, *I'M*
DRIVING!

NO, *I'M*
DRIVING!

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

CRASH!

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

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

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

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

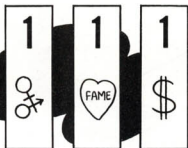
2 FORM



1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



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



SURVIVAL \leftrightarrow REPRODUCTION

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



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

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



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



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

1

IDEA/
PURPOSE

2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



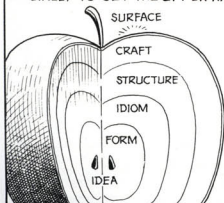
ANY
ARTIST CREATING
ANY WORK IN **ANY**
MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS
FOLLOW THESE **SIX STEPS**
WHETHER THEY REALIZE
IT OR **NOT**.

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

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

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

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



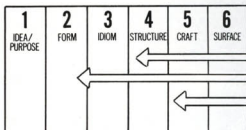
THE **ORDER** OF THE SIX STEPS
IS **INNATE**, LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT
OF BONES IN A **DINOSAUR'S SKELETON**.
THEY CAN BE **DISCOVERED** IN **ANY ORDER**,
BUT WHEN **BROUGHT TOGETHER**, THEY
WILL ALWAYS FALL INTO **PLACE**!



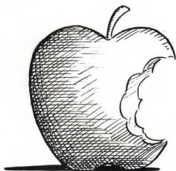
IN *PRACTICE*, **ANY** ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.



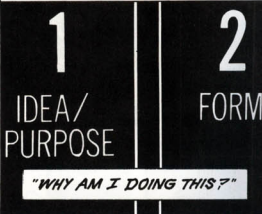
STILL, THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR MOST ARTISTS IS A *SLOW AND STEADY JOURNEY* FROM **END** TO **BEGINNING**,



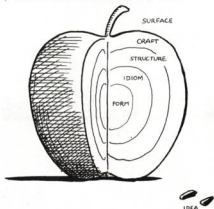
FROM *SURFACE* TO *CORE*.



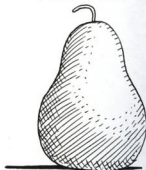
AND IT'S AT THE **CORE** OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:



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



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



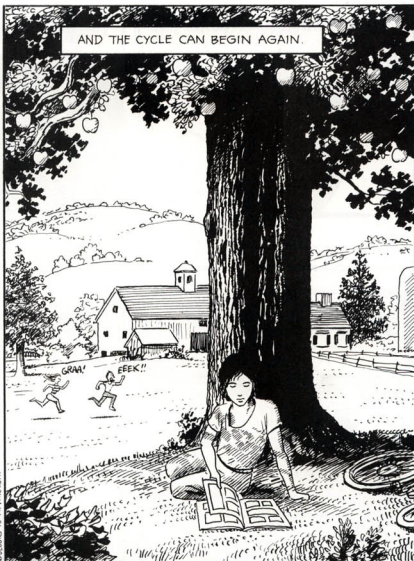
--CAN ANTICIPATE A **WORLD** OF **UNKNOWN EXPERIENCES**,



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



AND THE CYCLE CAN BEGIN AGAIN.



ARTWORK BY M. FARRUKH.

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.



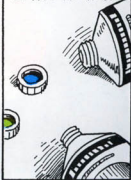
COLOR CAN BE A *FORMIDABLE ALLY* FOR ARTISTS IN ANY *VISUAL MEDIUM*.



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



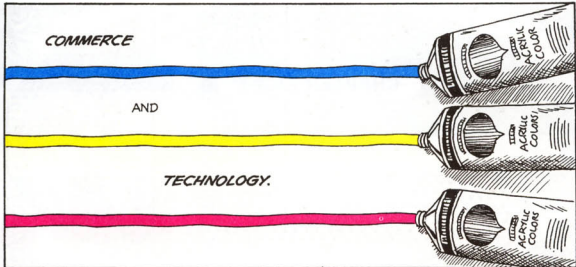
THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE *STORMY RELATIONSHIP* BETWEEN COMICS AND COLOR, BUT MOST CAN BE *SUMMED UP* IN *TWO WORDS*...



COMMERCE

AND

TECHNOLOGY.

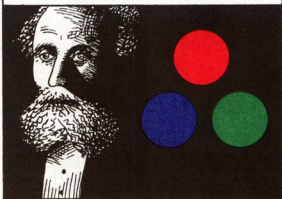


NOW **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS HISTORY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY **COMMERCE**. MONEY HAS A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON WHAT IS AND **ISN'T** SEEN.

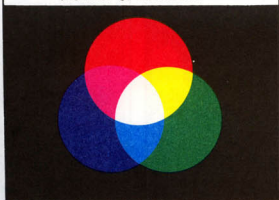
BUT **COLOR** IN COMICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNUSUALLY **SENSITIVE** TO THE **SHIFTING TIDES OF TECHNOLOGY**.



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



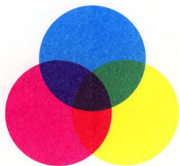
THEY WERE CALLED **ADDITIVE** BECAUSE THEY LITERALLY **ADDED UP** TO **PURE WHITE LIGHT**.



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!**



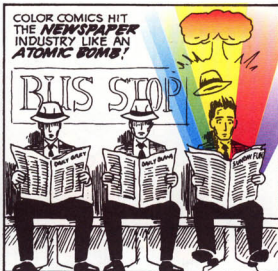
THIS **SUBTRACTIVE** EFFECT WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH **TRANSPARENT SUBSTANCES** SUCH AS **CELLOPHANE, COLORED GLASS, WATER COLORS** --



--OR **PRINTER'S INK!**



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



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



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



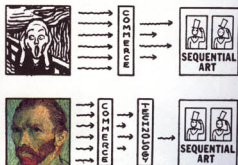
THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO 100%, 50% AND 20%, USING **BLACK INK** FOR THE LINE WORK.



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

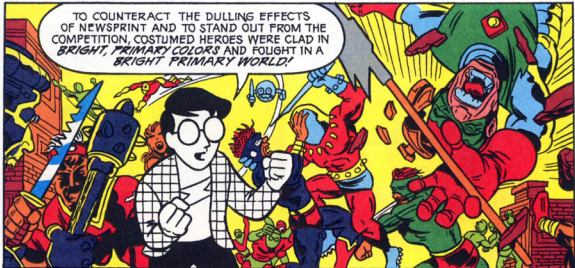


SO, WHILE THE EXPRESSIVE ART OF **LINE** WAS SUBJECTED TO THE **SUBTRACTIVE FILTER OF COMMERCE** ON ITS WAY TO COMICS, **COLOR** WAS SUBJECTED TO THE FILTERS OF BOTH COMMERCE AND **TECHNOLOGY.**



* 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 *EXPRESSIVE*, 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.



BATMAN



HULK

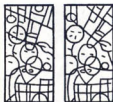


MANY SEE THE SUPERHERO AS A FORM OF *MODERN MYTHOLOGY*. IF SO, THIS ASPECT OF COLOR MAY PLAY A PART.

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!**



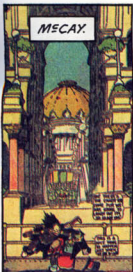
DOESN'T IT **FOLLOW** THEN THAT THE MASTERS OF **FLAT-COLOR** COMICS ARE, ABOVE ALL, MASTERS OF **FORM** AND **COMPOSITION**?



KIRBY.



MCCAY.



COLE.

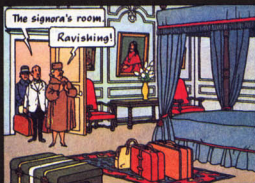


FROM **STEVE DITKO** TO **CARL BARKS** TO **F. CRAIG RUSSELL**, THAT LOVE OF SHAPES PERSISTS IN WORLDS FAIRLY **GLOWING** WITH THE MYSTERY OF **FIRST ENCOUNTERS**.

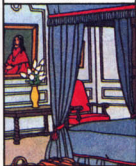
ANY WONDER THEN THAT COMICS IN AMERICA HAS BEEN SO RELUCTANT TO "GROW UP"?



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

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

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

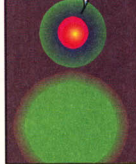


SUDDENLY IT SEEMED POSSIBLE FOR COLOR TO TAKE ON A CENTRAL ROLE.

COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.

TONES AND MODELLING COULD ADD DEPTH.

WHOLE SCENES COULD BE VIRTUALLY ABOUT COLOR!





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



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



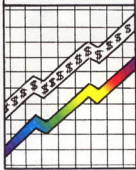
WHEN *MODELLING* AND MORE *SUBTLE* HUES WERE APPLIED, THOUGH, THEY SEEMED *OUT OF PLACE* ON THE OLD *SHAPE-SENSITIVE* LINE DRAWINGS.



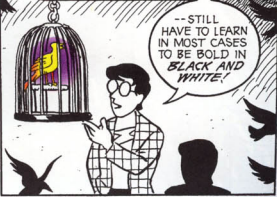
THE *SURFACE* WAS CHANGING, BUT NOT THE *CORE*. FOR ALL THEIR *SUBTLE* HUES, COMICS WERE STILL BEING WRITTEN IN *PRIMARY* COLORS!

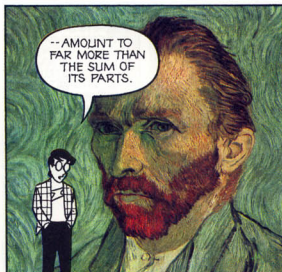
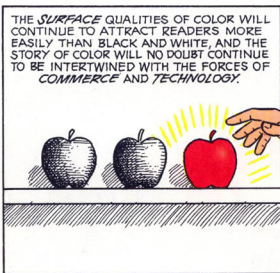


UNFORTUNATELY, COLOR IS STILL AN *EXPENSIVE* OPTION AND HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN IN THE HANDS OF LARGER, MORE CONSERVATIVE PUBLISHERS.



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--





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...



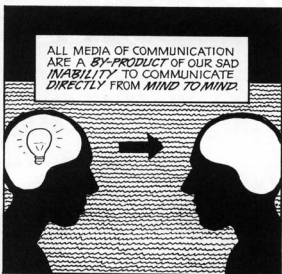
WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF
PROFOUND ISOLATION.



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

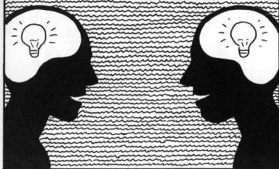


AND NO AMOUNT OF *REACHING*
OUT TO *OTHERS* CAN EVER MAKE
THEM FEEL EXACTLY WHAT
YOU FEEL.



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

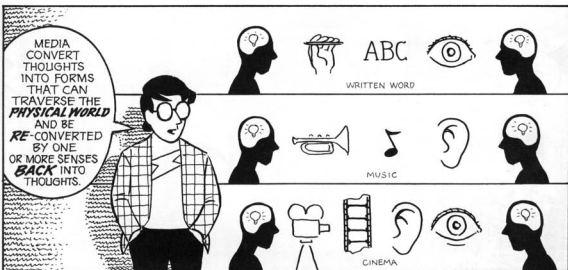
SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY *STEM* FROM THAT INABILITY.



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

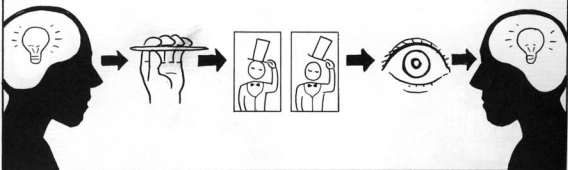


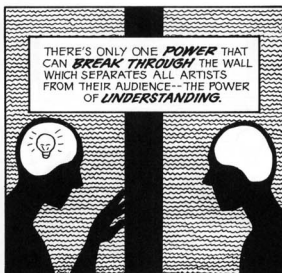
MEDIA CONVERT THOUGHTS INTO FORMS THAT CAN TRAVERSE THE *PHYSICAL WORLD* AND BE *RE-CONVERTED* BY ONE OR MORE SENSES *BACK* INTO THOUGHTS.



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

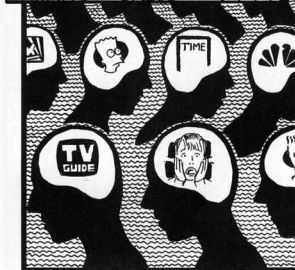
IDEALLY THE ARTIST'S "*MESSAGE*" WILL RUN THIS GAUNTLET WITHOUT BEING *AFFECTED* BY IT, BUT IN *PRACTICE* THIS IS RARELY THE CASE.







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

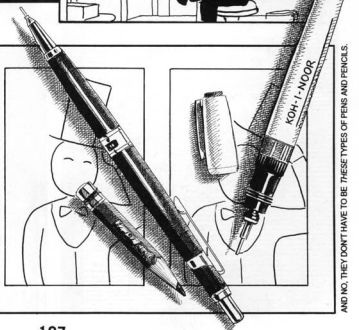


THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE *BUSINESS* OF COMICS HAVE MANY OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME--

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

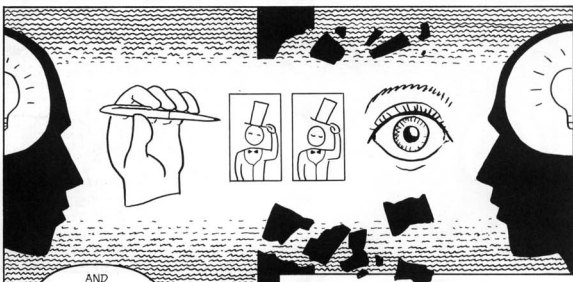
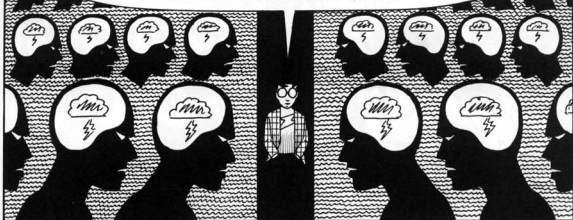


COMICS WELCOMES *ANY* WRITER OR ARTIST TO STEP INTO ITS WORLD, A WORLD AS CLOSE AS *PEN* OR *PENCIL* AND *PAPER*.



AND NO, THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE THESE TYPES OF PENS AND PENCILS.

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



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



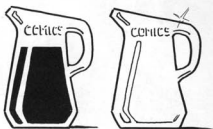
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND COMICS FOR ABOUT 15 YEARS. HERE'S WHAT I'VE COME UP WITH SO FAR.



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

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

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



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



SEQUENTIAL ART

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

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

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

HONK!
HONK!

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

1775 1800 1825 1850 1875 1900



OVER
THREE THOUSAND
YEARS BEYOND!

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

DISCOVERING
AND CATALOGUING
THIS WORK HAS
ALREADY **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!

FROM
PICTURE
AND OTHER
IN THE
DELIVERANCE

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

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

Rudolphe Topffer
1845

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

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

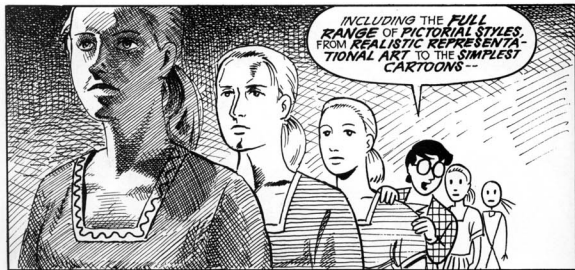
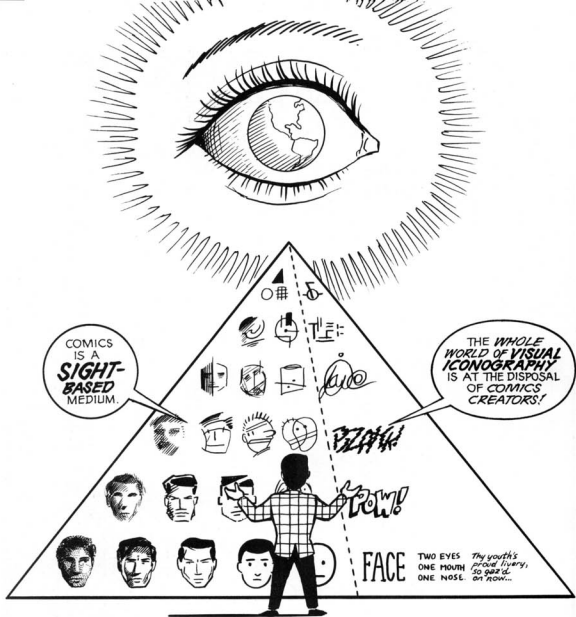
Rudolphe Topffer
1845

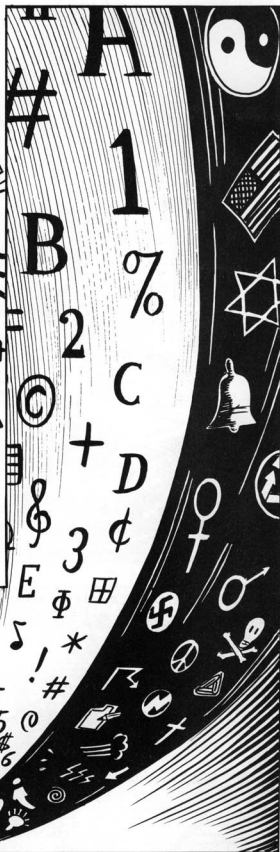
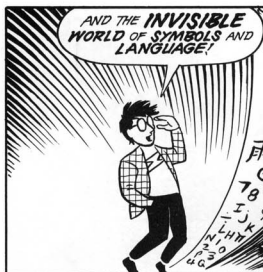
TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE.

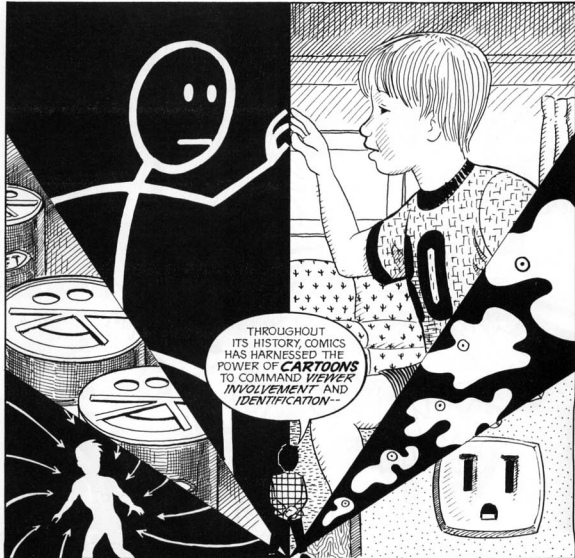
...ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED SOME OF
MODERN COMICS' MOST *PROMISING* ARTISTS
TO BE *SEGREGATED* FROM THEIR *MUCH-*
MALIGNED COUSINS.

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



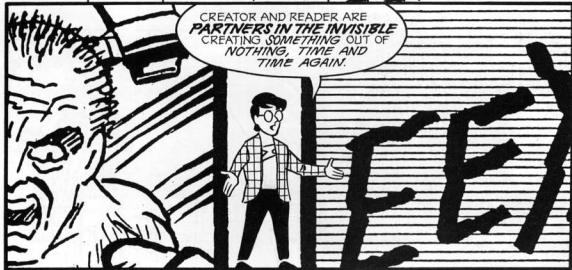
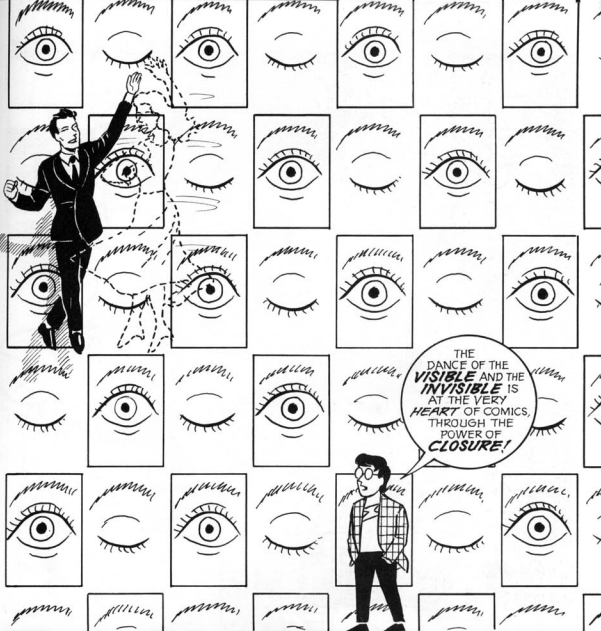






--AND **REALISM** TO CAPTURE THE **BEAUTY** AND **COMPLEXITY** OF THE **VISIBLE** WORLD.



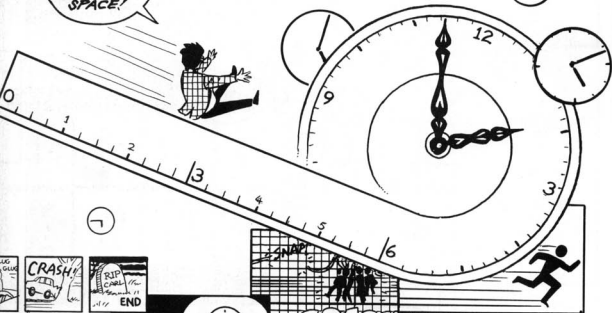


COMICS IS A GREAT
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



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



CRASH!



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



ero genuit lu
ini 7 nepchu
challuim d
ijn 7 capth
uit frdonen



ill unravished
ild of subca
r, who const
re sweetly the
d legend have
mortals, of lo
or the dales o
gods are there

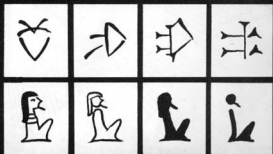


FACE

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



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

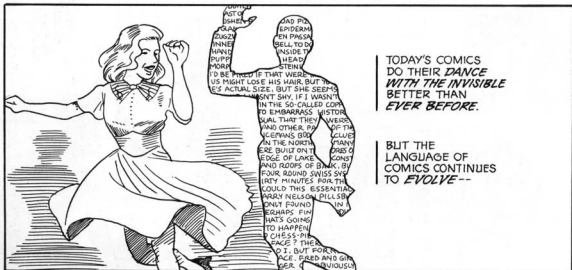


-- AND GROWN **WIDER AND WIDER** FOR
CENTURIES UNTIL EVENTUALLY, ALL
CONNECTION WAS LOST--





SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



--AS ALL
LANGUAGE
MUST
EVOLVE--



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

THE SEEDS OF
EXPRESSIONISM
AND
SYNAESTHETICS.

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



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



EXPRESSIONISM



WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



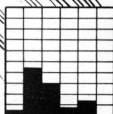
SUBJECTIVE MOTION



COLLAGE



JAPAN



STORYTELLING



FORMATS



THE "MASKING" EFFECT



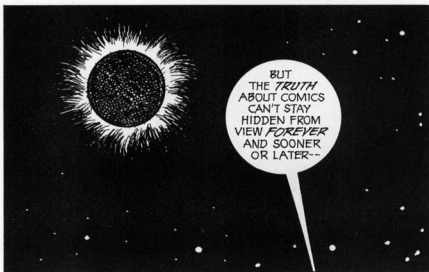
ICONIC CHARACTERS



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



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



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



--THE
TRUTH WILL
*SHINE
THROUGH!*

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

1

2

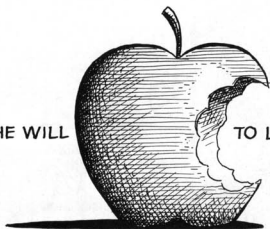
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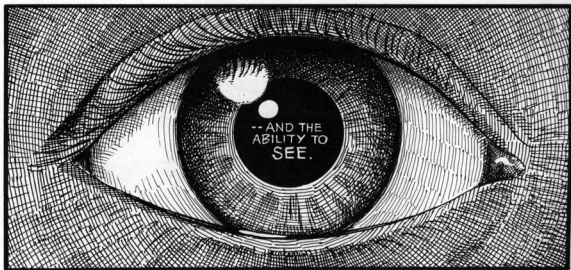
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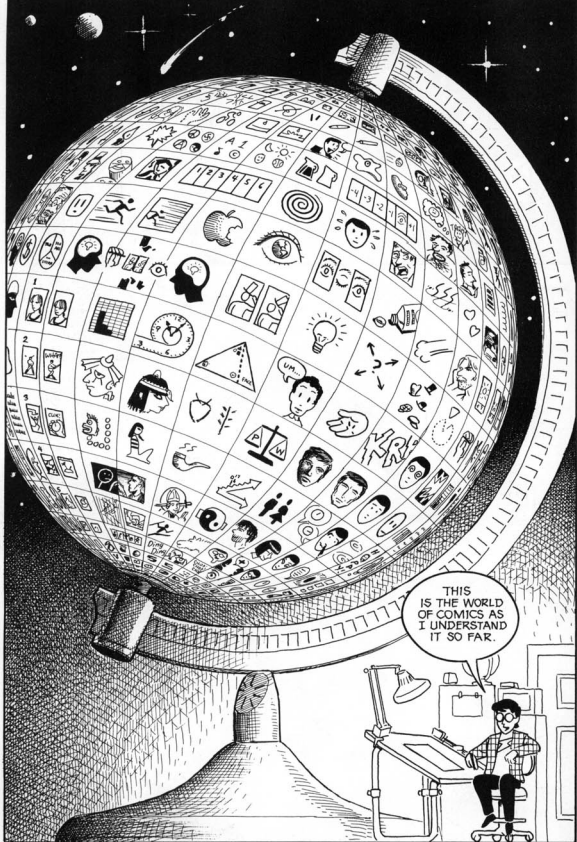
--THE WILL



TO LEARN--

-- AND THE
ABILITY TO
SEE.







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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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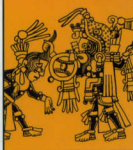
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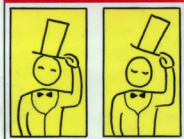
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