



# UNDERSTANDING

# COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT MCCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."

—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



# UNDERSTANDING COMICS

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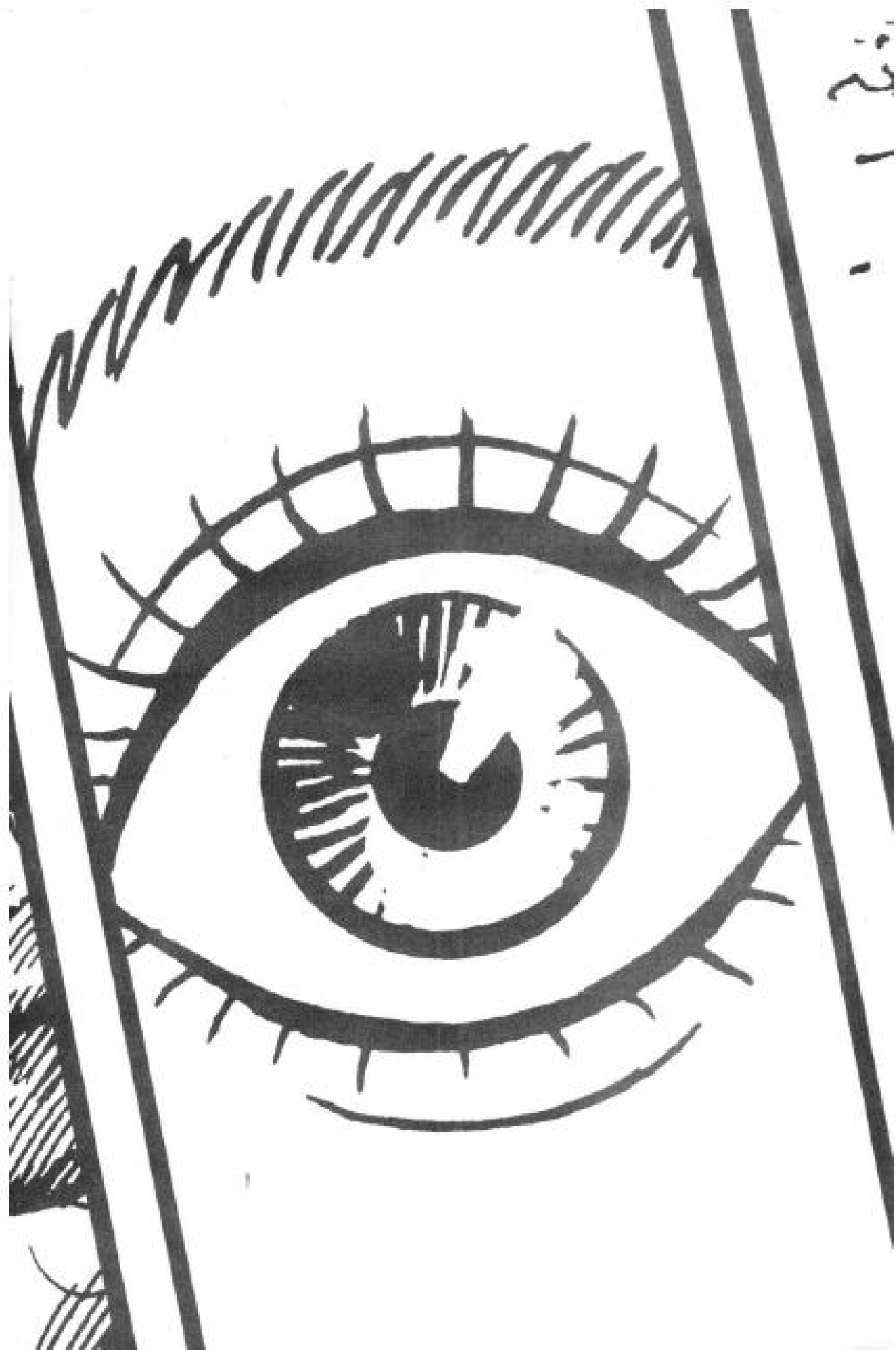
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1. 1. 2. 3.



## 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.

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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 Ralafia, Alice Harrigan, Carol Ralafia, Barry Deutsch, Kip Manley, Amy Sacks, Caroline Woolf, Clarence Cummins, Karl Zimmerman, Catherine Bell, Adam Phillips and the legendary Dewan Brothers, Ted and Brian.

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Early influences on the ideas in this book are harder to trace, but no less important. Kurt Busiek introduced me to comics long ago and was my best guide for many years. Eclipse Editor-in-Chief cal 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.

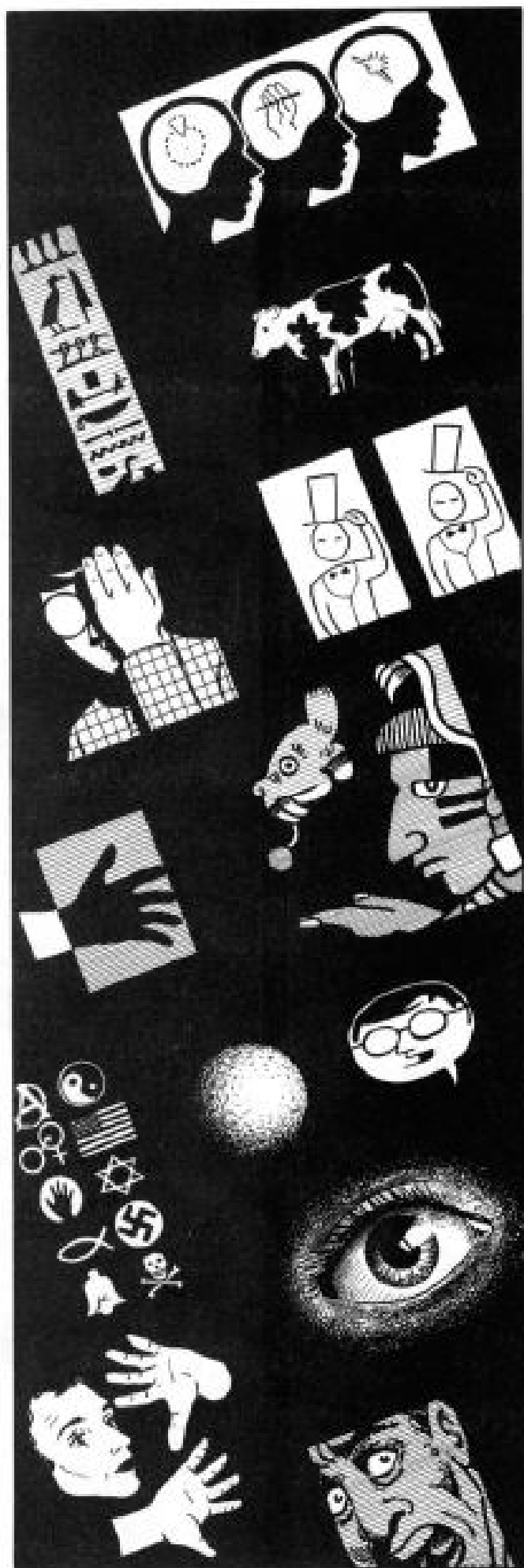
Without Ian Ballantine, you wouldn't be holding it in your hands today. Thank you, Ian.

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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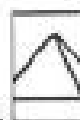
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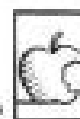
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# INTRODUCTION



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*.



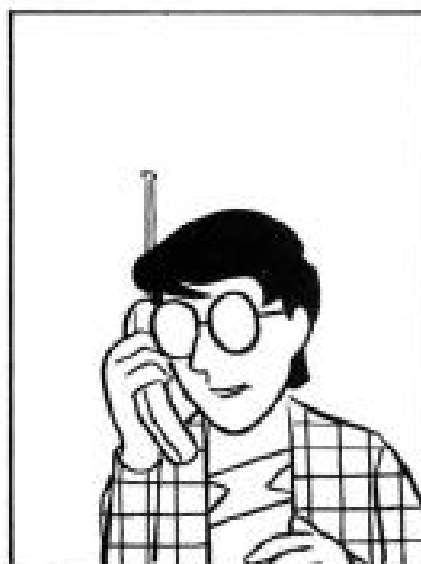
I EVEN PUT TOGETHER A NEW *COMPREHENSIVE THEORY* OF THE *CREATIVE PROCESS* AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR COMICS AND FOR *ART IN GENERAL*!!



OH.



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



# UNDERSTANDING COMICS

## CHAPTER ONE

### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.



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



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



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

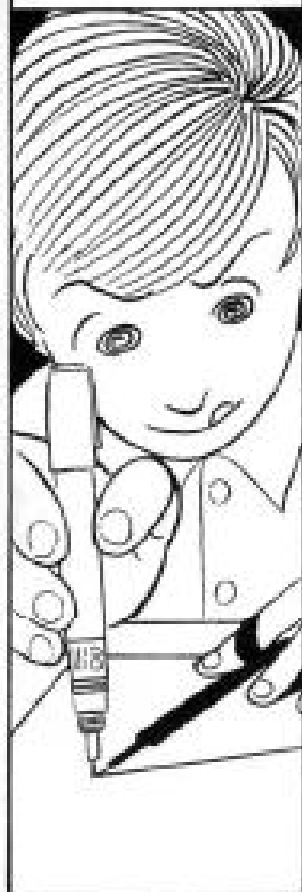


BUT WHEN I WAS IN **8th GRADE**, A  
FRIEND OF MINE (WHO WAS A LOT  
**SMARTER** THAN I WAS) CONVINCED  
ME TO GIVE COMICS ANOTHER LOOK  
AND LENT ME HIS COLLECTION.

© ★ ❖ ❖ ❖ ©  
**SOON, I WAS HOOKED!**



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



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

SOME KIND OF **HIDDEN POWER!**



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

COMIC BOOKS? HA! HA!

BUT IT'S... BUT IT'S... BLUH...



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

--BUT--

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

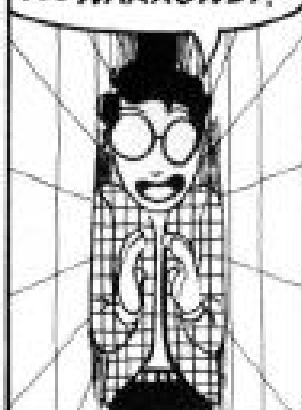


THE **PROBLEM** WAS THAT FOR MOST PEOPLE, THAT WAS WHAT "COMIC BOOK" **MEANT!**

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?

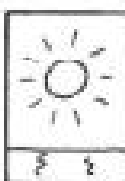
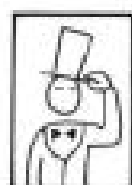
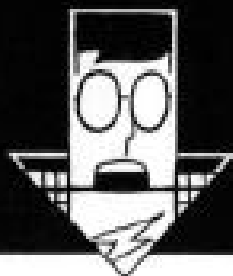


MASTER COMICS ARTIST *WILL EISNER* USES THE TERM **SEQUENTIAL ART** WHEN DESCRIBING COMICS.

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**.

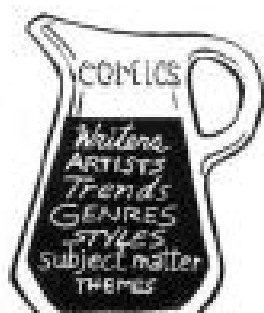


BUT TO **DEFINE** COMICS, WE MUST FIRST DO A LITTLE **AESTHETIC SURGERY** AND SEPARATE **FORM** FROM **CONTENT!**





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!



--FOR THE *MESSANGER*.

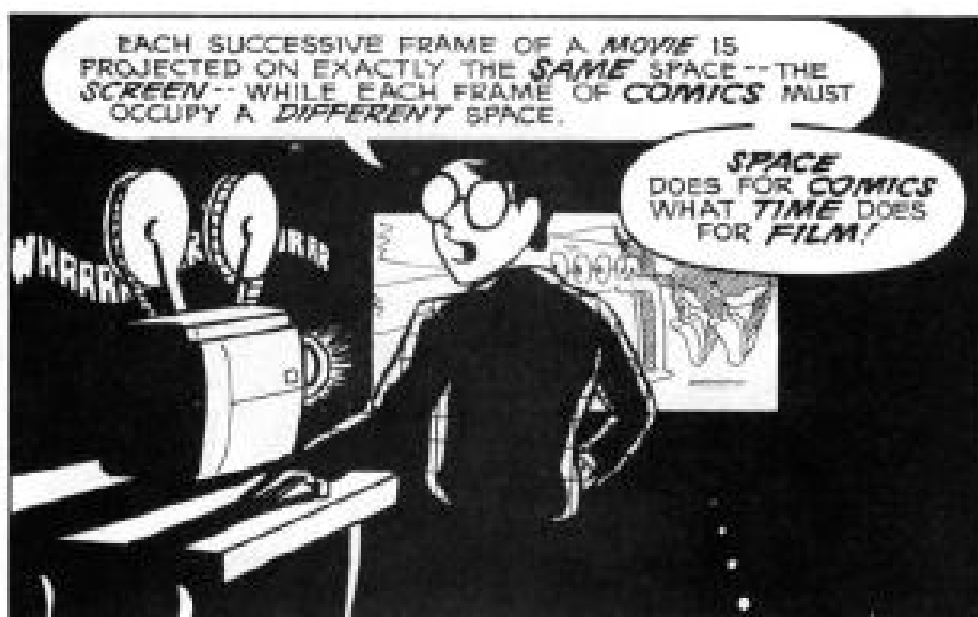


BUT FOR *COMICS*, THIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN *RARE*.\*

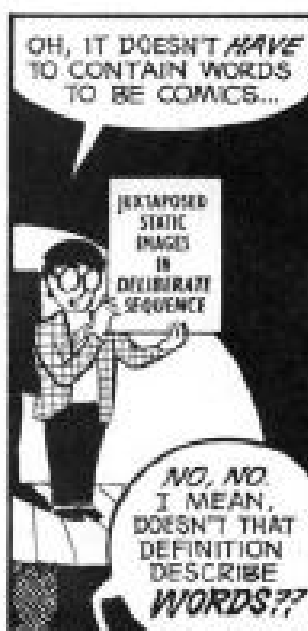
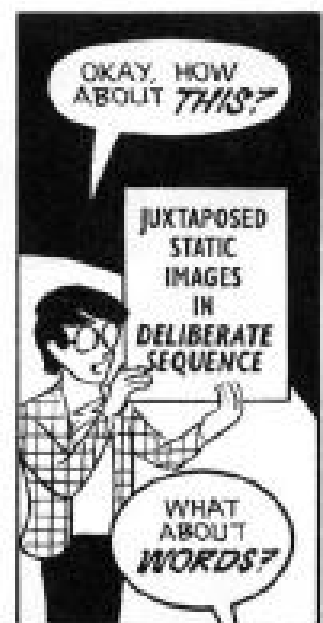
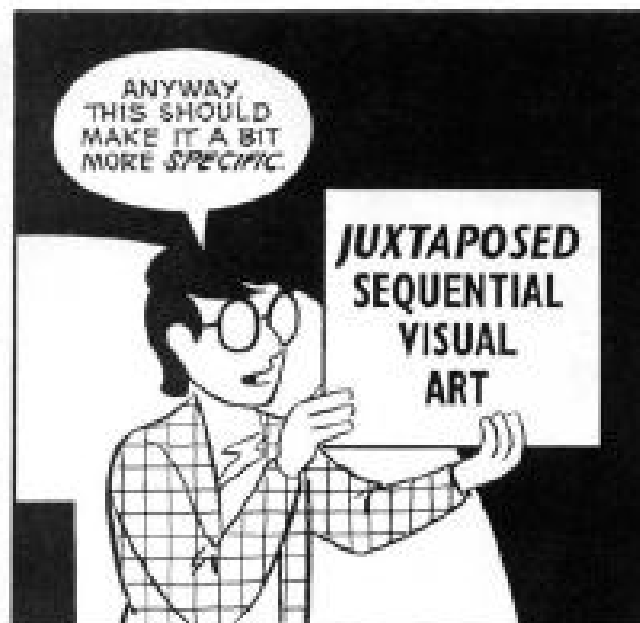
LET'S SEE IF WE CAN HELP *RECTIFY* THE SITUATION.

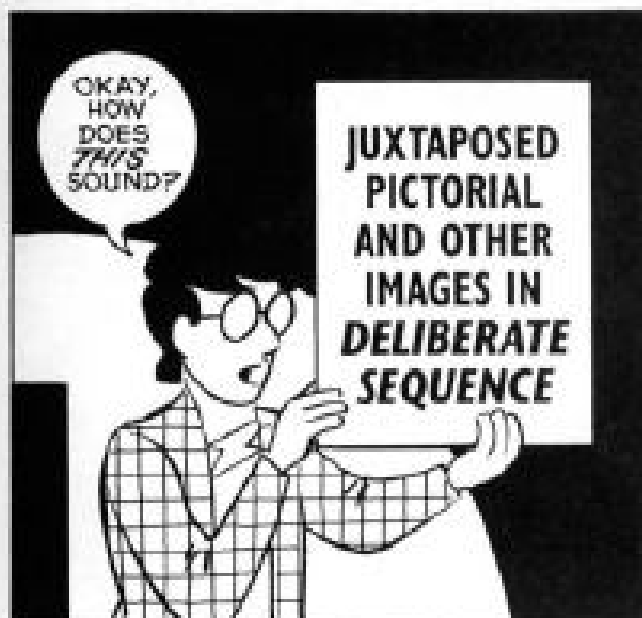


\*EISNER'S OWN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.

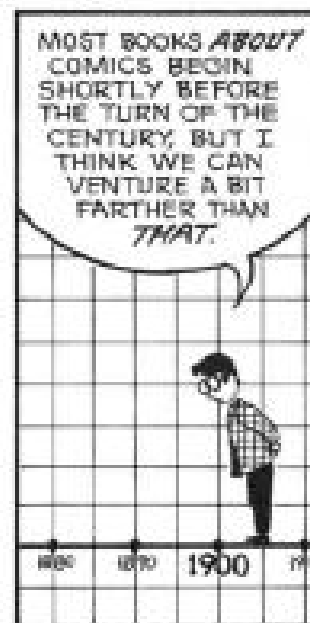
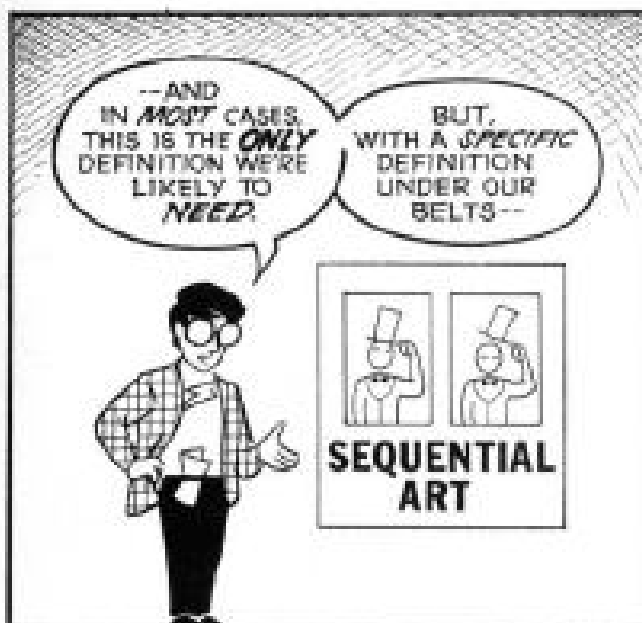


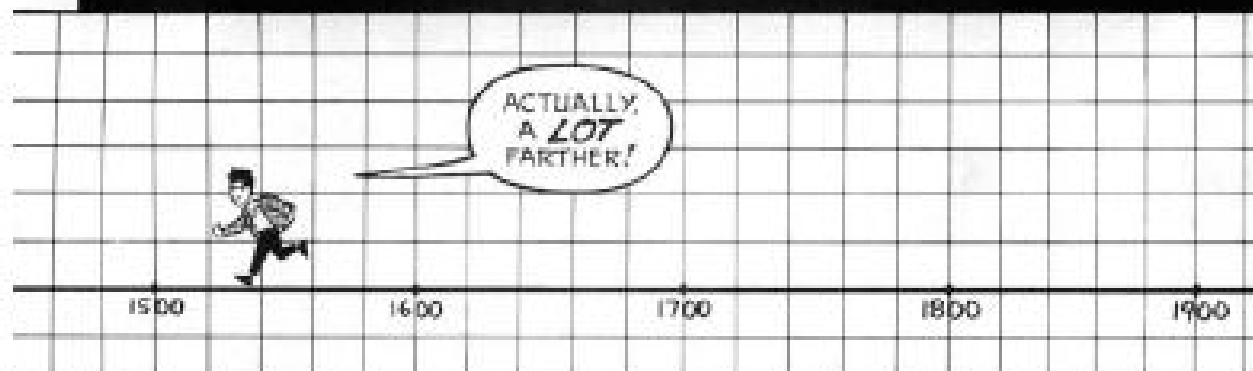
\*JUXTAPOSED= ADJACENT, SIDE-BY-SIDE. GREAT ART SCHOOL WORD.





**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, insuring death andly villains who want to conquer the world, in violent sensational pulse-pounding action sequences. **3.** Cute, buddy bunnies, mice and role-play heart, dancing to and fro Hippy-hop, Hippy-hop. **4.** Compared to our nation's youth, **com-ing** (kom'ing) **ed**

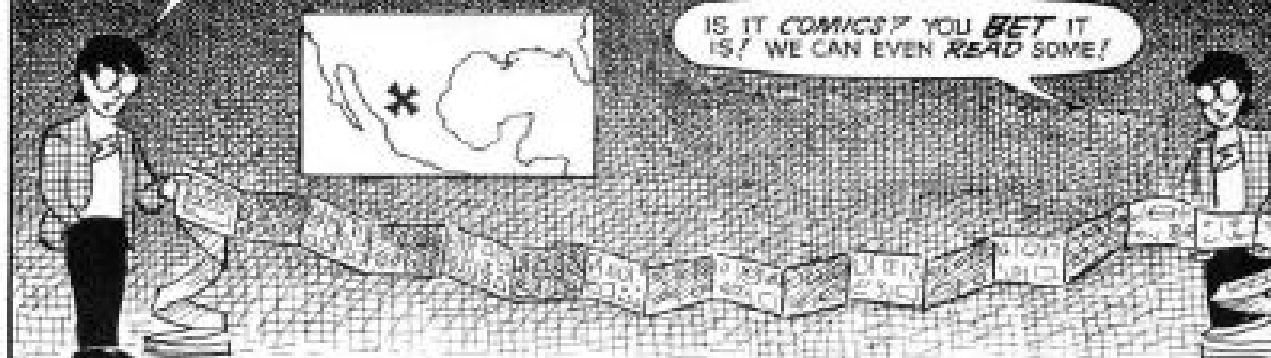




HERE'S JUST A PIECE OF THE EPIC STORY CONTAINED IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN PICTURE MANUSCRIPT "DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS AROUND 1519.

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

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

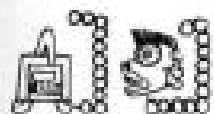


\* OR 'COELOT'S CLAW' DEPENDING ON WHOSE BOOK YOU READ. THIS SEQUENCE IS BASED ON A READING BY MEXICAN HISTORIAN AND ARCHAEOLOGIST ALFONSO CASO.

FIRST, WE SEPARATE  
WORDS FROM PICTURES.



(A NAME)



(A DATE)



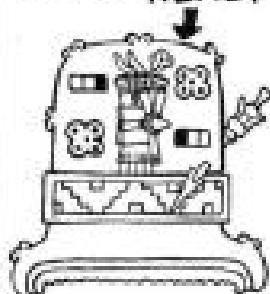
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE  
NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

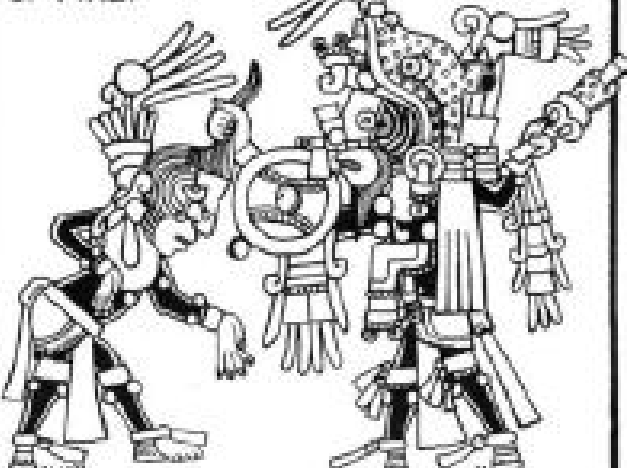
THE YEAR: 1049 AD

THE DATE: MAY 3\*

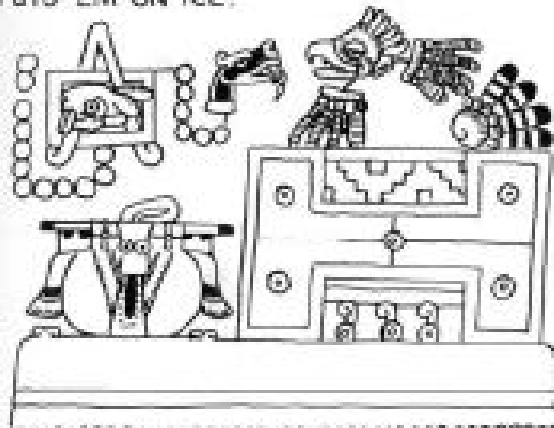
THE PLACE: HERE!



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

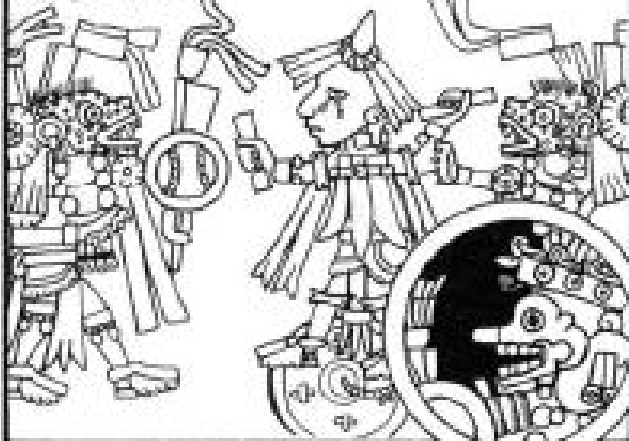


8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER  
BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING"  
AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND  
PUTS 'EM ON ICE.

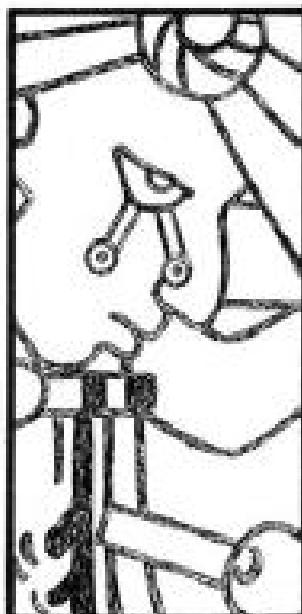
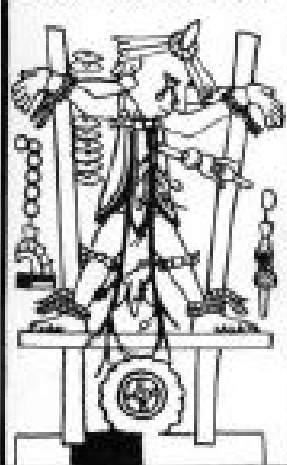


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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 OF HATTIN

INSIDE: DON ENGLISH'S HIS SUBJECTS

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!

WHICH ONE IS THE PRINCE?

PERENNIAL EXCEPTION WILL EISNER



WHAT, NO HORSES?

FINDING COMICS BEYOND OUR OWN MILLENNIUM IS A BIT TRICKIER.



JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE?

AT FIRST GLANCE, EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHS WOULD SEEM TO FIT OUR DEFINITION PERFECTLY.

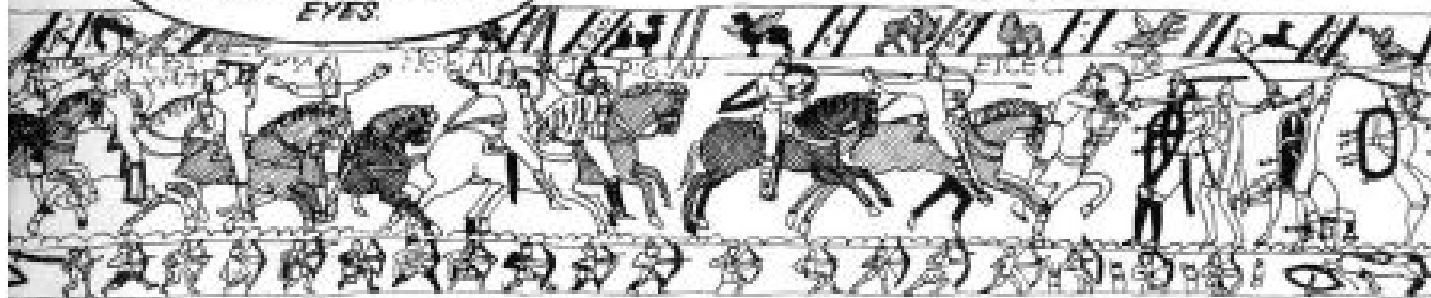
BUT MUCH DEPENDS ON OUR USE OF THE WORD "PICTORIAL."

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



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



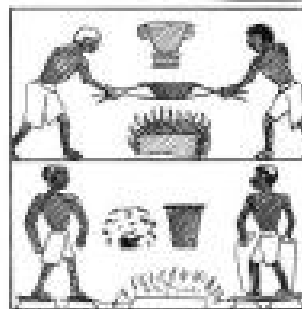
THIS,  
THEIR *REAL*  
DESCENDENT  
IS THE *WRITTEN*  
WORD AND NOT  
COMICS.

"ses tu batu  
abia, hermu-nek  
batu amonta"

"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 QUILTS--

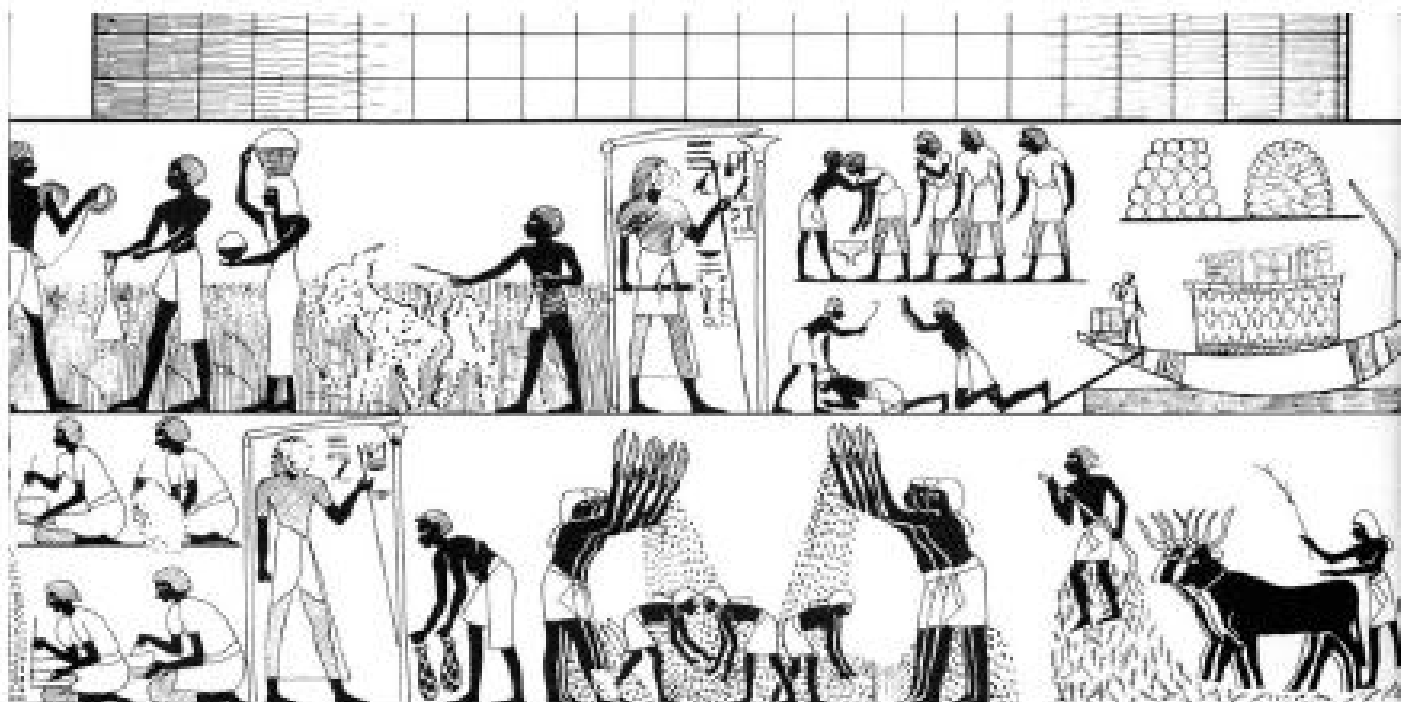
--UNTIL I  
DISCOVERED THAT  
THE BOOKS I HAD  
BEEN USING AS  
REFERENCE--



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



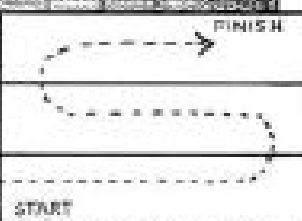




HERE'S THE **COMPLETE SCENE**\*  
PAINTED OVER **THIRTY-TWO**  
**CENTURIES** AGO FOR  
THE TOMB OF **"MENNA,"**  
AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN  
**SCRIBE.**

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

GOING  
**UP**  
THIS TIME!



\* MORE *NEARLY* COMPLETE, ANYWAY.

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



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



PAINTING TRACED FOR BLACK  
AND WHITE REPRODUCTION.

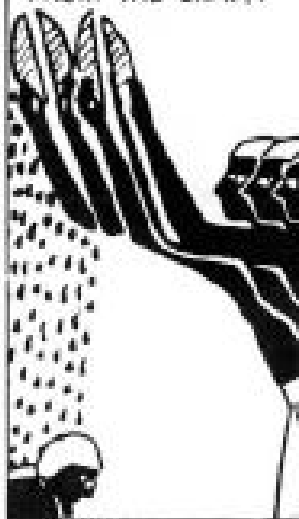
THE SHEAVES ARE THEN **RAKED OUT** INTO A **THICK CARPET OF WHEAT**.



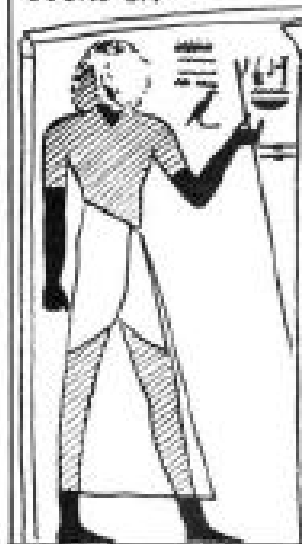
THEN OXEN TREAD **KERNELS OUT** OF THE **HUSKS**.



NEXT, PEASANTS **SEPARATE THE WHEAT** FROM THE **CHAFF**.



OLD MENNA HIMSELF LOOKS ON -- \*



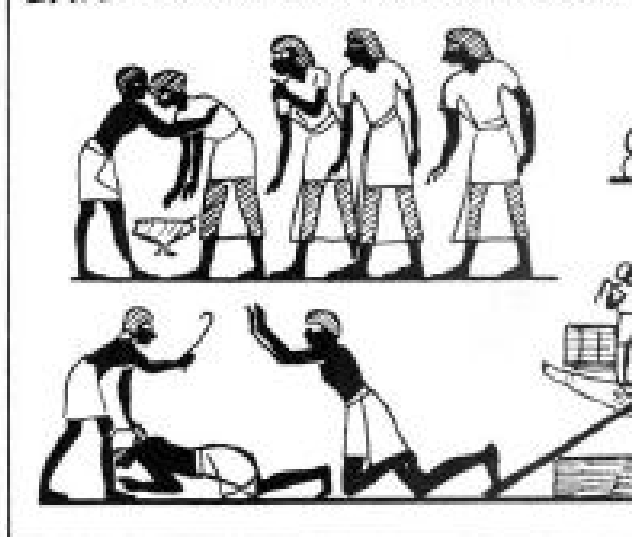
-- AS LOYAL SCRIBES RECORD THE **YIELD** ON THEIR **TABLETS**.



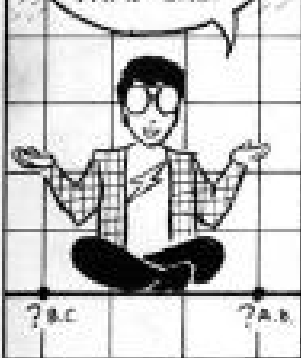
NOW AN OFFICIAL USES A MEASURING ROPE TO **SURVEY THE LAND** AND DECIDE HOW MUCH WHEAT IS OWED IN **TAXES**.



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



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



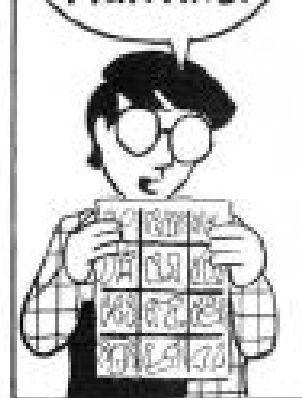
I'VE ONLY **SCRATCHED THE SURFACE** IN THIS CHAPTER... **TRAJAN'S COLUMN, GREEK PAINTING, JAPANESE SCROLLS...** ALL THESE HAVE BEEN **SUGGESTED** AND ALL SHOULD BE **EXPLORED**.



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



**THE INVENTION OF PRINTING.**



\*FACE GUESSED 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.

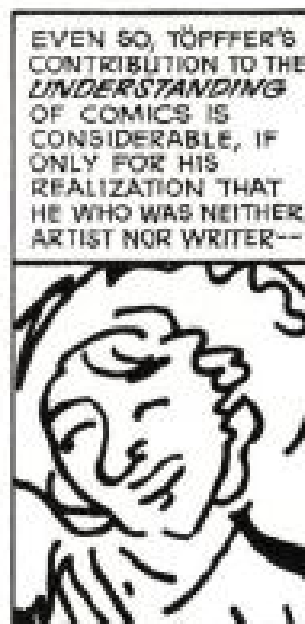
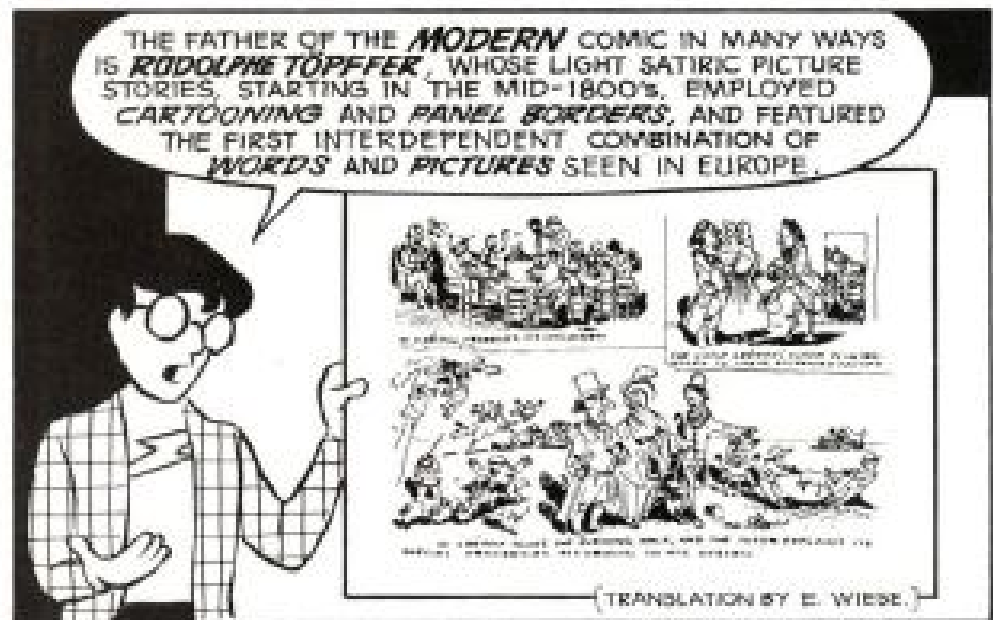
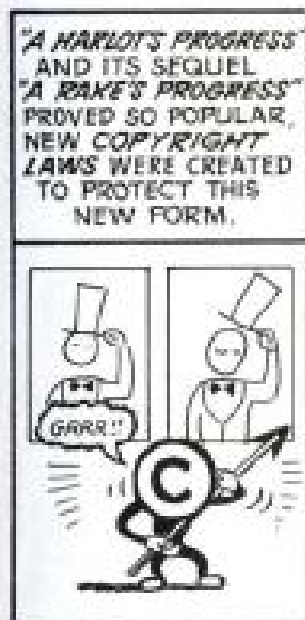


THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE PICTURE-STORY DID *GROW*, HOWEVER, REACHING GREAT HEIGHTS IN THE NIMBLE HANDS OF **WILLIAM HOGARTH**.

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.

\* MAYBE I SHOULDN'T SAY "INVENT" EUROPEANS WERE A BIT LATE IN DISCOVERING PRINTING.

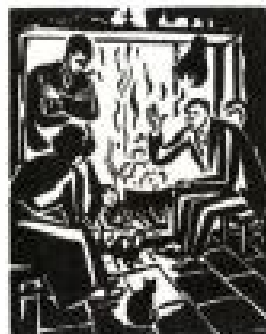






ARTISTS LIKE WARD AND BELGIAN *FRANK MASEREEL* SAID MUCH THROUGH THEIR WOODCUTS ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF COMICS, BUT FEW IN THE COMICS COMMUNITY OF THE DAY COULD *GET THE MESSAGE*.

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



FROM FRANK MASEREEL'S *PASSIONATE JOURNEY*, 1949.

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 20<sup>TH</sup> 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!



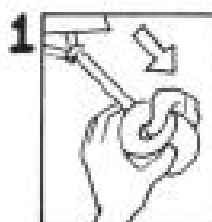
IF WE DON'T EXCLUDE *PHOTOGRAPHY* FROM OUR DEFINITION, THEN HALF OF *AMERICA* HAS BEEN IN COMICS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.



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*.

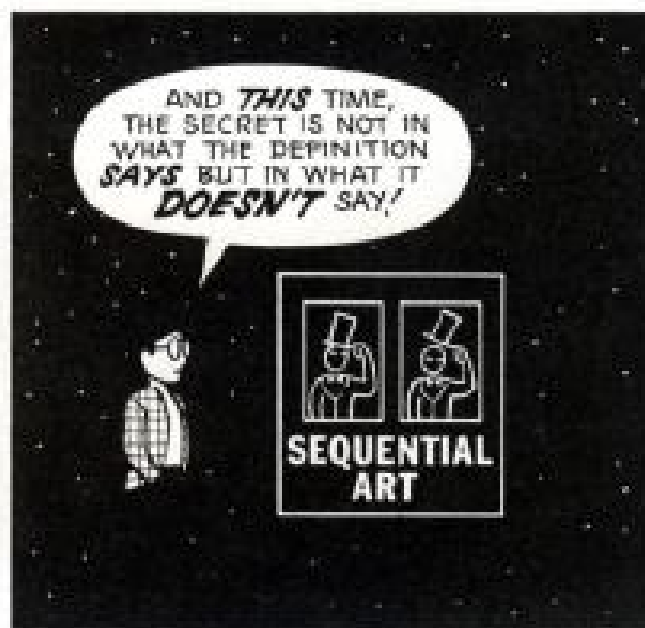
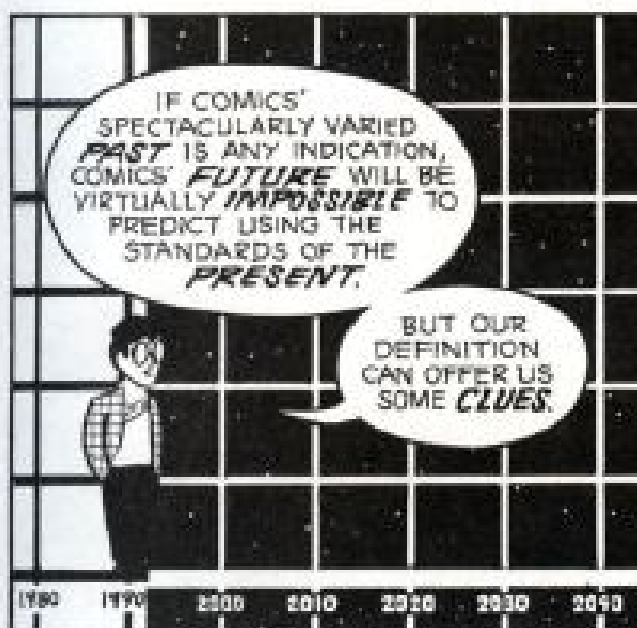
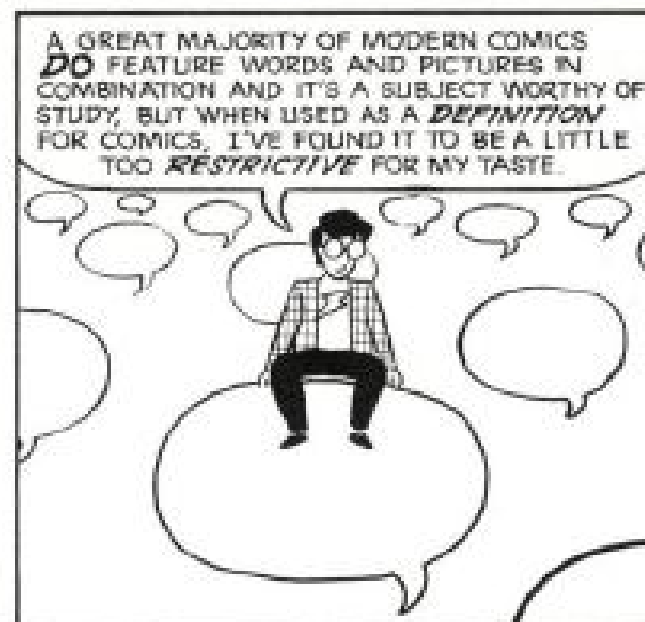
*SINGLE PANELS* LIKE *THIS ONE* ARE OFTEN *LUMPED IN* WITH COMICS, YET THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SEQUENCE OF *ONE*!



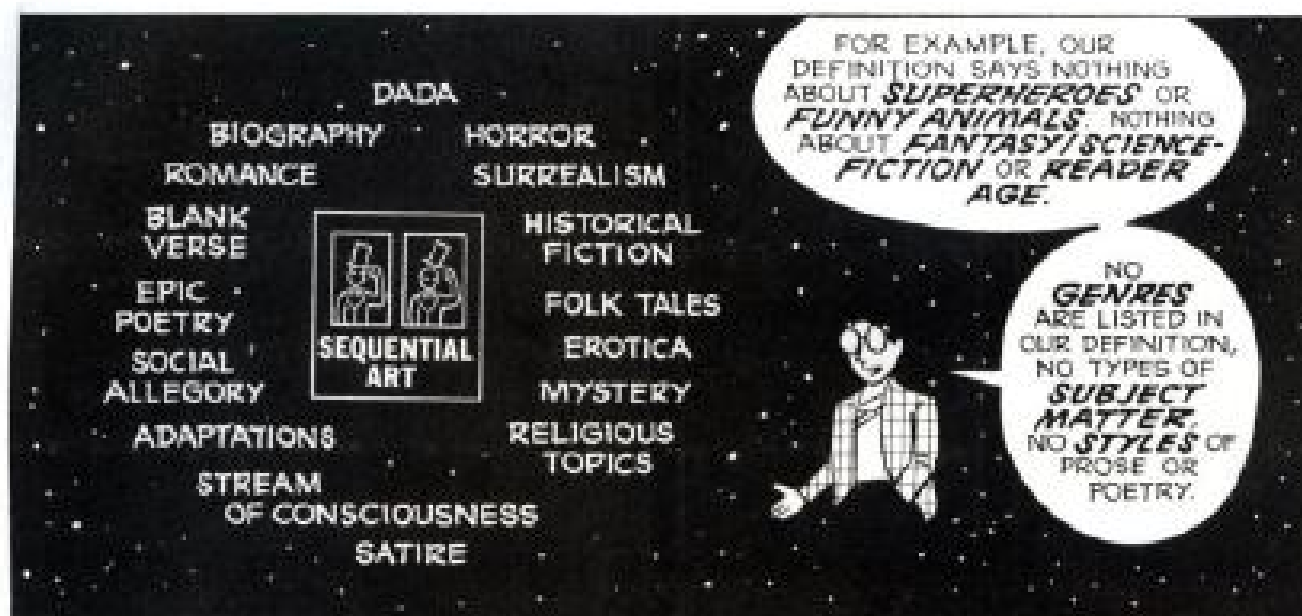
"Mommy, why ain't I Juxtaposed?"

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









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

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



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



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



--OF MANY **POSSIBLE** WORLDS!



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



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



AND SO THEY SHOULD.

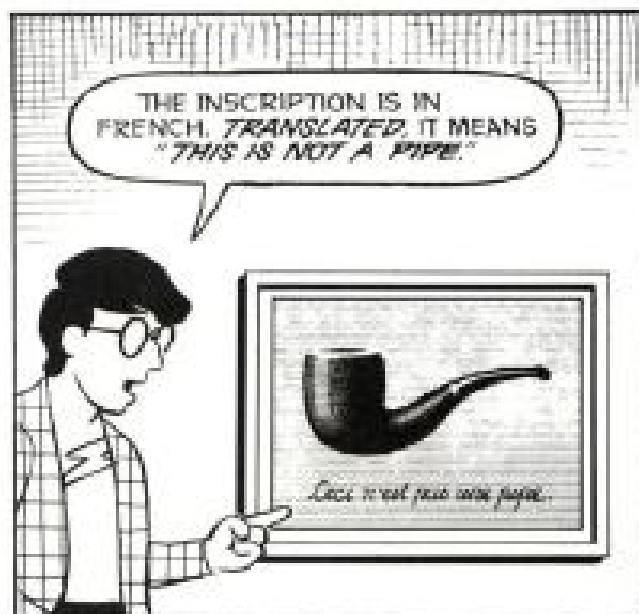


HERE'S TO THE **GREAT DEBATE!**



# CHAPTER TWO

## THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



SEE PAGE 216 FOR MORE INFORMATION.





THIS IS NOT A MAN.



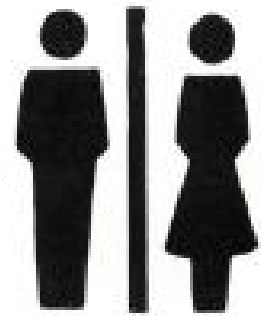
THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT A LEAF



THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE.



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



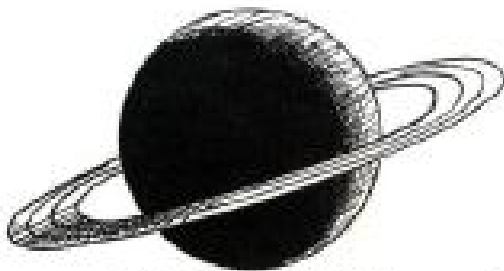
THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



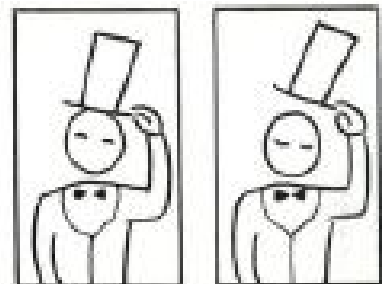
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



THIS IS NOT A COMPANY.



THIS IS NOT A FACE.



THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE MOMENTS.

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

THIS IS  
A  
PAPER



FOR THE PURPOSES OF  
THIS CHAPTER, I'M USING THE  
WORD **ICON** TO MEAN ANY  
IMAGE USED TO REPRESENT A  
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.



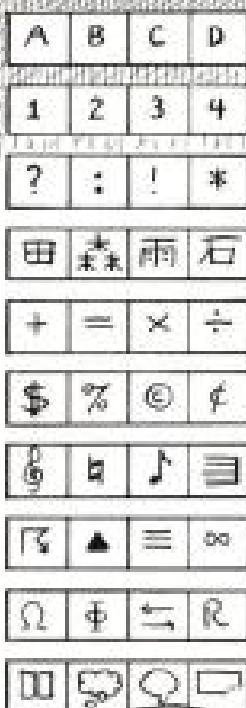
THE SORTS OF  
IMAGES WE  
USUALLY **CALL**  
SYMBOLS ARE  
ONE **CATEGORY**  
OF **ICON**,  
HOWEVER.



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 **CLUMBILY**,  
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*.

M	☮	5
m	☯	5
M	☮	5
m	☯	5
ℳ	☮	5

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

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

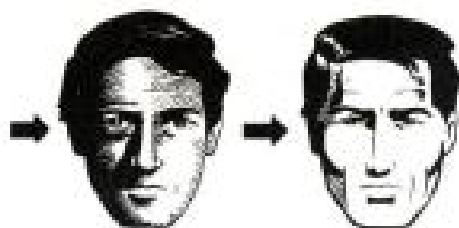
BUT IN PICTURES THE *LEVEL* OF ABSTRACTION *VARIES*. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE *PREVIOUS* PANEL, SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR *REAL-LIFE* COUNTERPARTS AS TO ALMOST *TRICK* THE EYE!

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

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

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

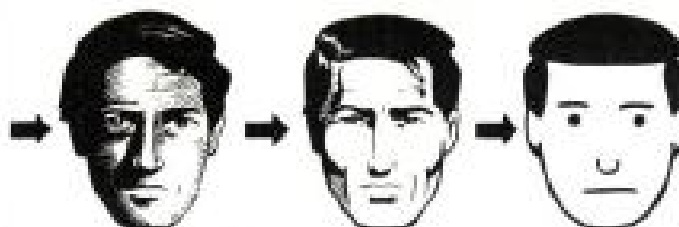
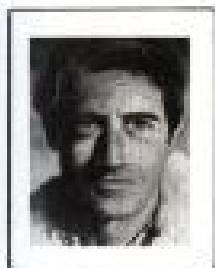
THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM ACTUAL *FACES*--THEY'RE SMALLER, FLATTER, LESS *DETAILED*. THEY DON'T MOVE. THEY LACK COLOR--BUT AS PICTORIAL ICONS GO, THEY ARE PRETTY "*REALISTIC*."



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



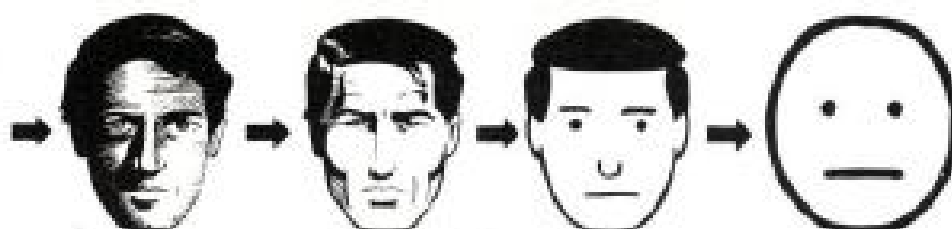
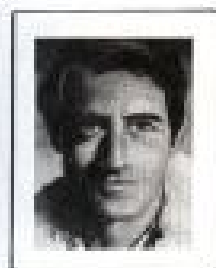
SOMEWHAT  
*MORE* ABSTRACT  
IS *THIS* STYLE  
OF DRAWING  
FOUND IN MANY  
ADVENTURE  
COMICS.



*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.

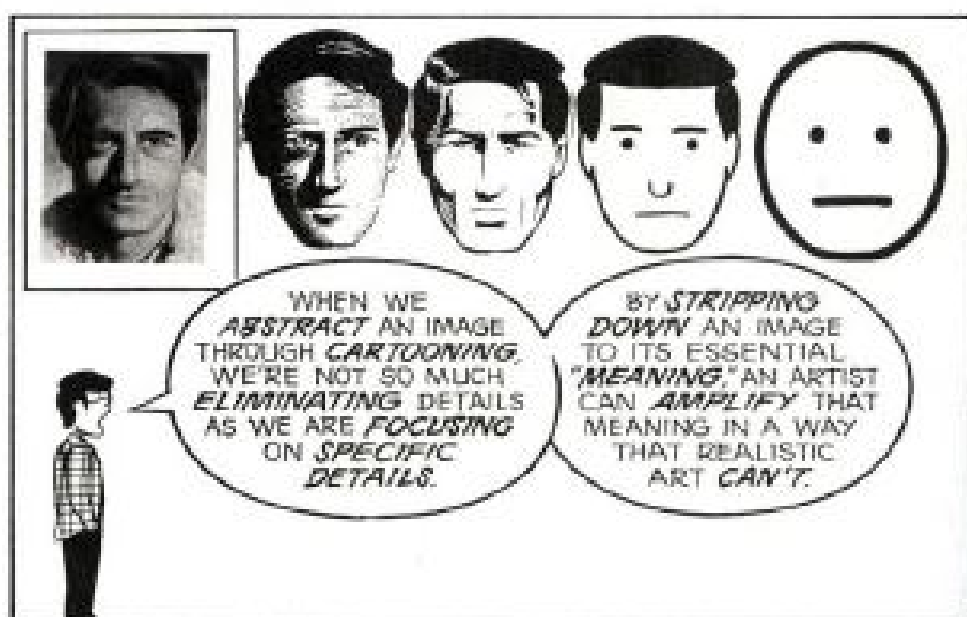
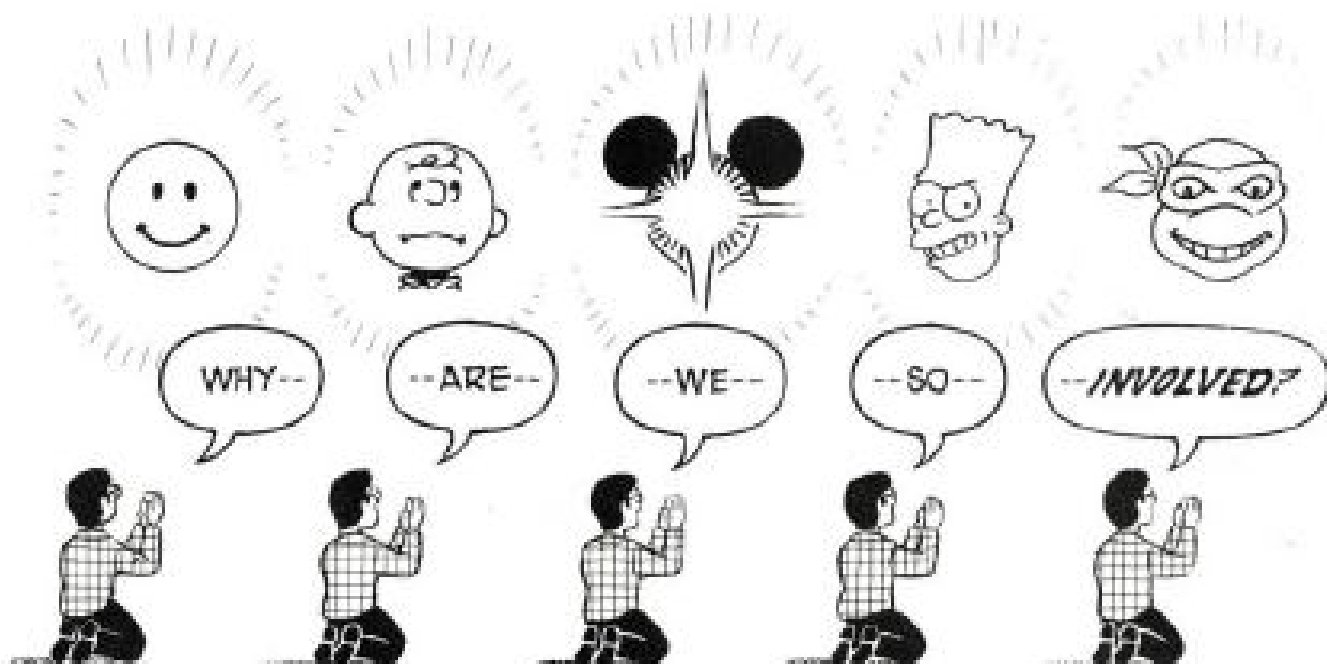


WHAT  
IS THE SECRET  
OF THE ICON  
WE CALL--

--THE  
*CARTOON?*







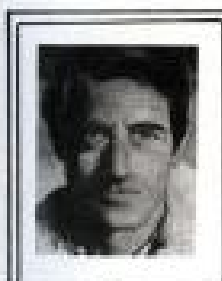
FILM CRITICS WILL SOMETIMES DESCRIBE A *LIVE-ACTION* FILM AS A "CARTOON" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRIPPED-DOWN *INTENSITY* OF A SIMPLE STORY OR VISUAL STYLE.



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.



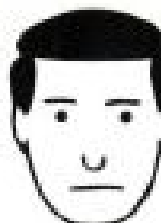
ONE



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*.

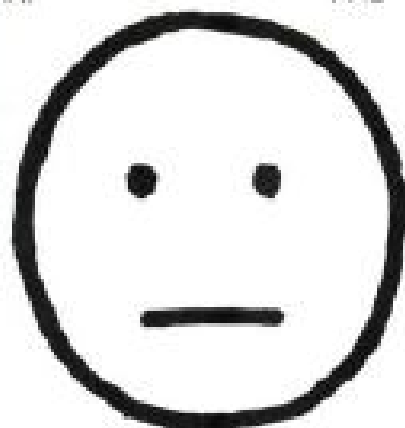


BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE--WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.



WHAT

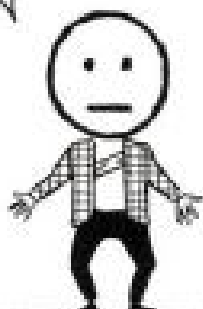
ARE YOU



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*!



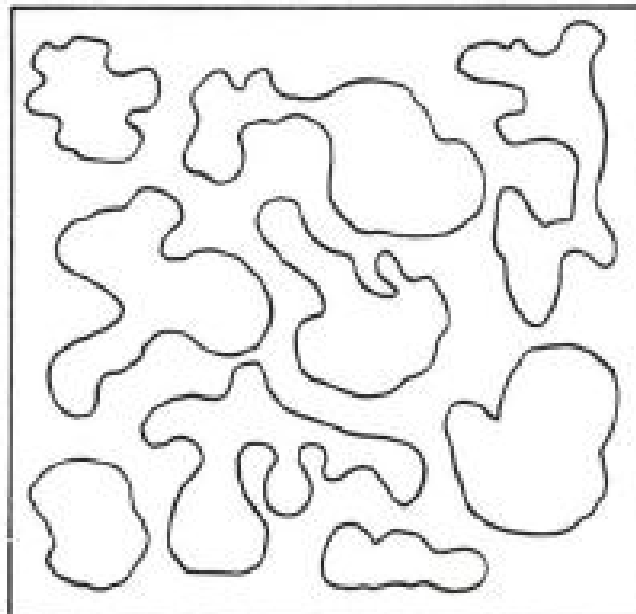
BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!



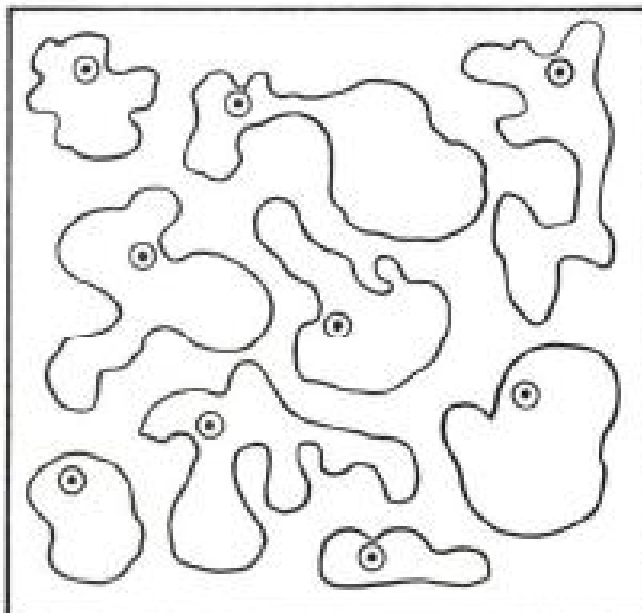
ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE **CLOSED CURVES**, BUT **OTHERWISE** CAN BE AS **WEIRD** AND **IRREGULAR** AS HE OR SHE **WANTS**.



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**--



--FOR **THIS?**

WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



WE SEE  
OURSELVES  
IN  
EVERYTHING.

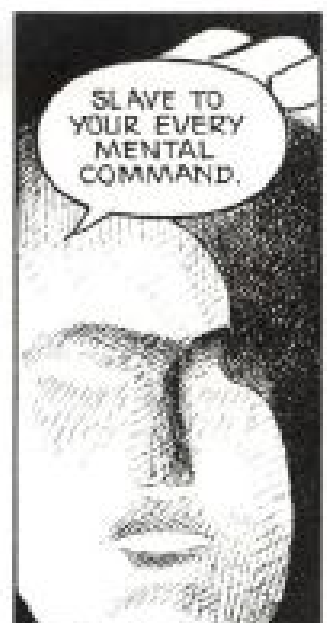


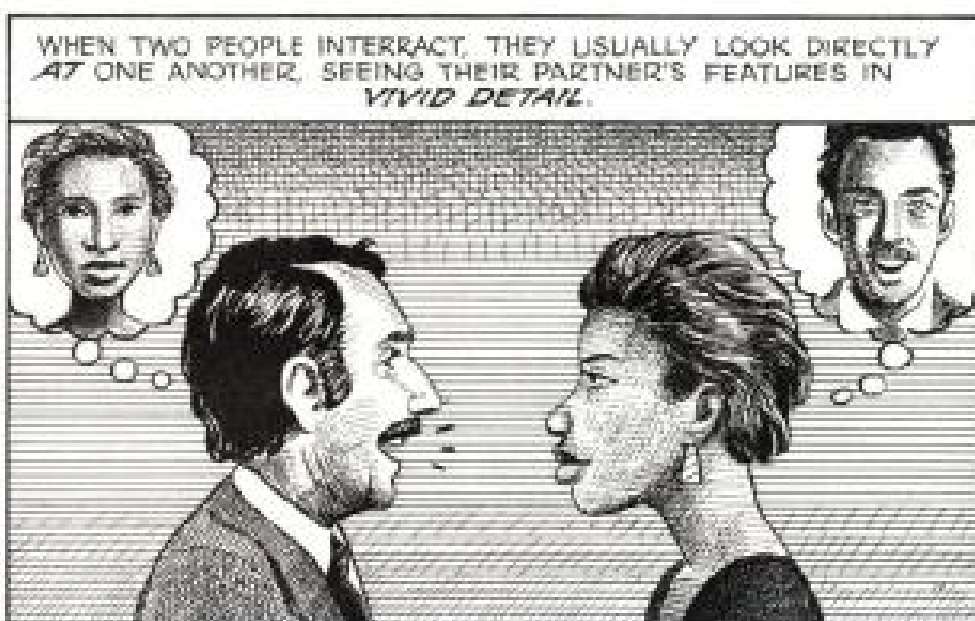
WE  
ASSIGN  
IDENTITIES  
AND EMOTIONS  
WHERE NONE  
EXIST.



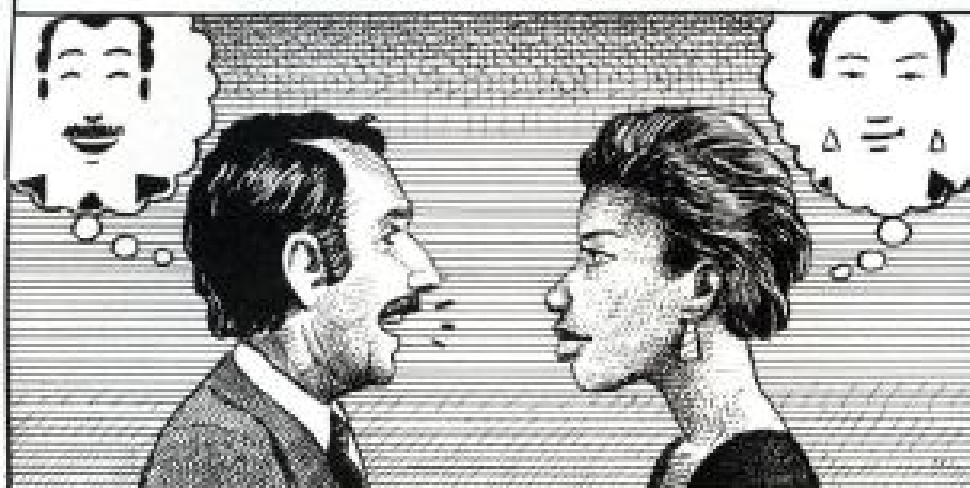
AND WE  
MAKE THE  
WORLD OVER  
IN OUR  
IMAGE.



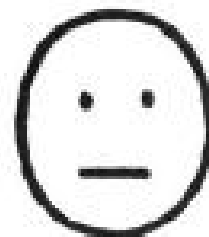




EACH ONE *ALSO* SUSTAINS A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER *OWN* FACE. BUT *THIS* MIND-PICTURE IS NOT NEARLY SO VIVID; JUST A SKETCHY ARRANGEMENT... A SENSE OF SHAPE... A SENSE OF *GENERAL* PLACEMENT.



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



--AS A *CARTOON*.

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



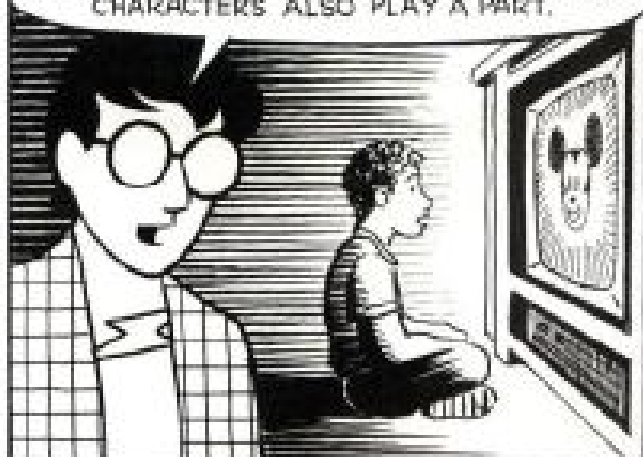
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF *ANOTHER*.

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

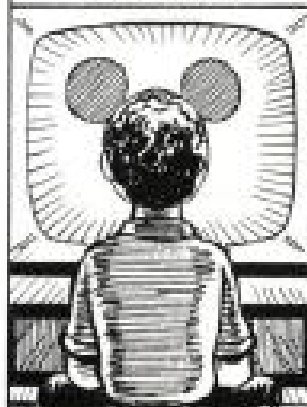


--YOU SEE *YOURSELF*

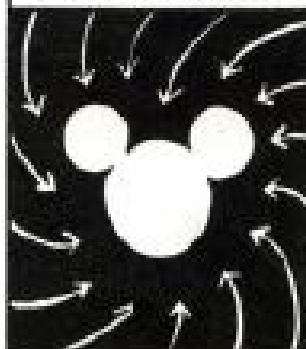
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE *PRIMARY CAUSE* OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH *CARTOONS* THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS *UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY* AND THE *CHILDLIKE FEATURES* OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



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*.



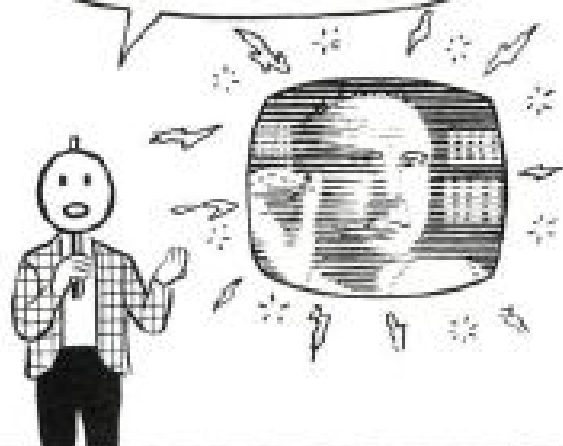
WOULD YOU HAVE *LISTENED* TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE *THIS*??



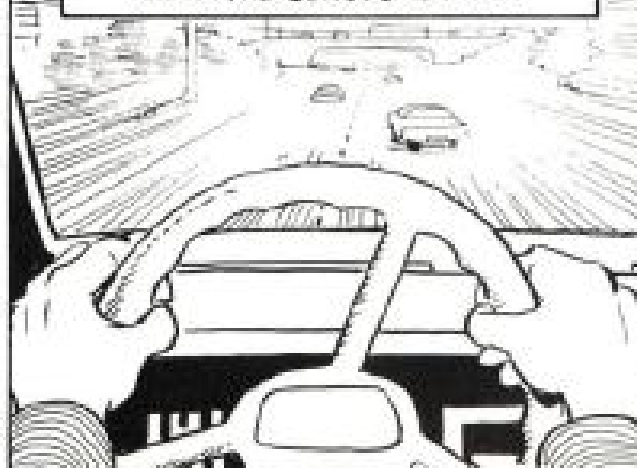




THE LATE GREAT *MARSHALL MELLER* OBSERVED A *SIMILAR* FORM OF *NON-VISUAL AWARENESS* WHEN PEOPLE INTERACT WITH *INANIMATE OBJECTS*.



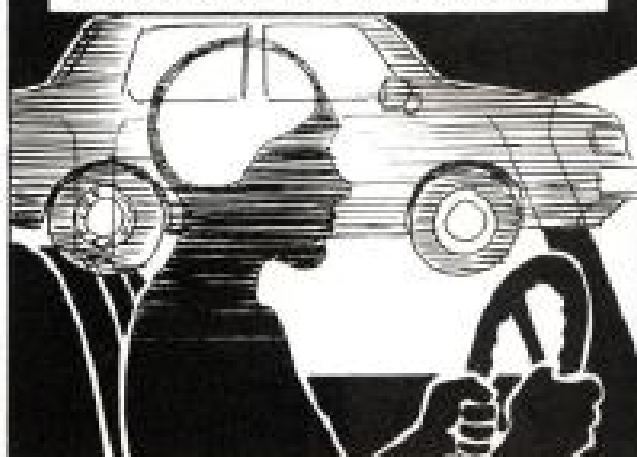
WHEN *DRIVING*, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR *FIVE SENSES* REPORT.



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



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

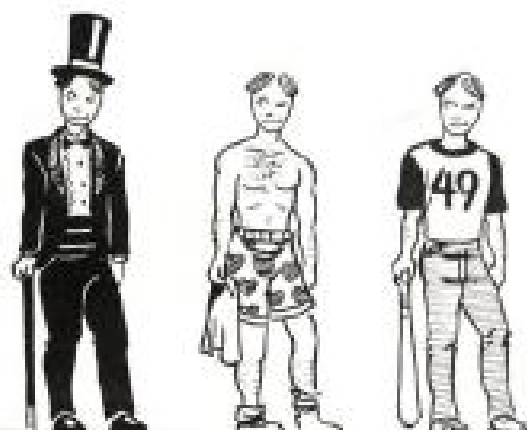


IF ONE CAR *HITS* ANOTHER, THE DRIVER OF THE VEHICLE BEING *STRUCK* IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO SAY:

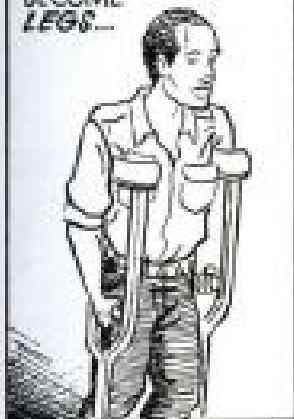


THAN "HE HIT MY *CAR*!"  
OR "HIS *CAR* HIT MY CAR", FOR THAT MATTER.

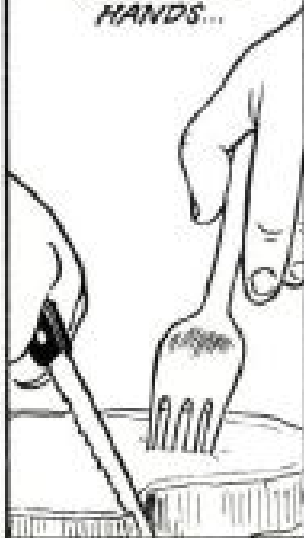
OUR *IDENTITIES* AND *AWARENESS* ARE INVESTED IN MANY *INANIMATE OBJECTS* EVERY DAY. OUR *CLOTHES*, FOR EXAMPLE, CAN TRIGGER *NUMEROUS TRANSFORMATIONS* IN THE WAY OTHERS SEE US AND IN THE WAY WE SEE *OURSELVES*.



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



PIECES OF METAL TO BECOME *HANDS*...



PIECES OF PLASTIC TO BECOME *EARS*...



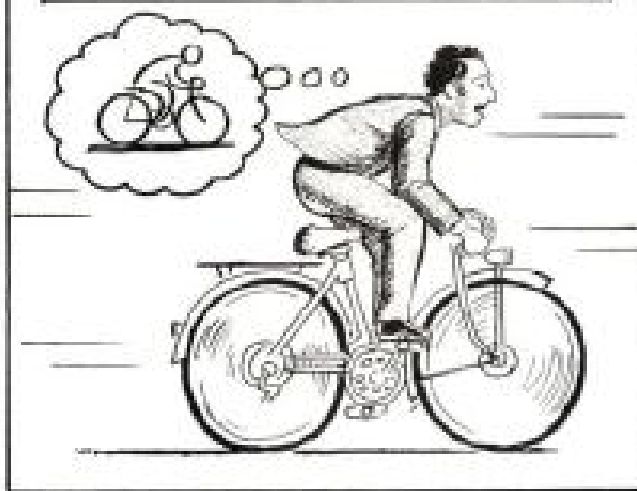
PIECES OF GLASS TO BECOME *EYES*.



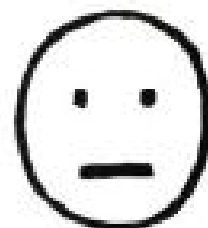
AND IN *EVERY CASE*, OUR CONSTANT AWARENESS OF *SELF*--



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



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



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



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

-- AND THE *REALM OF THE SENSES*.



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

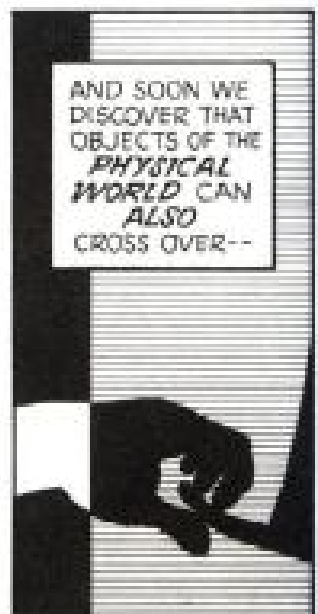
GRADUALLY WE REACH *BEYOND* OURSELVES.



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

AND OF THE WORLD *AROUND* US.

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

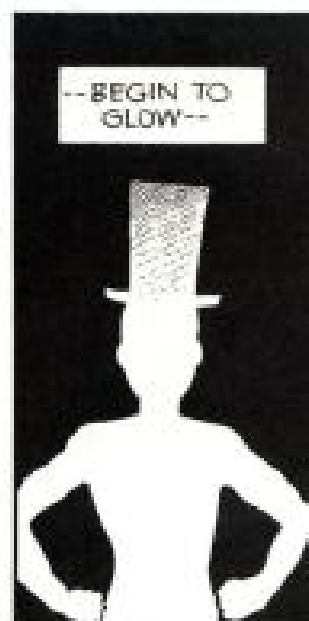
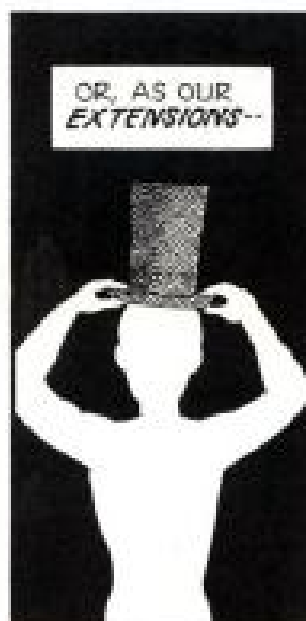
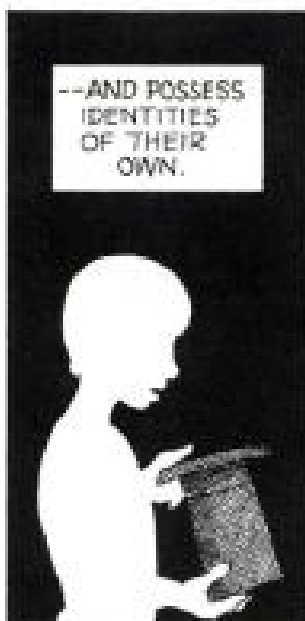


--AND POSSESS IDENTITIES OF THEIR OWN.

OR, AS OUR *EXTENSIONS*--

--BEGIN TO GLOW--

--WITH THE *LIFE*--



--WE *LEND*  
TO THEM.



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



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



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



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



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



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

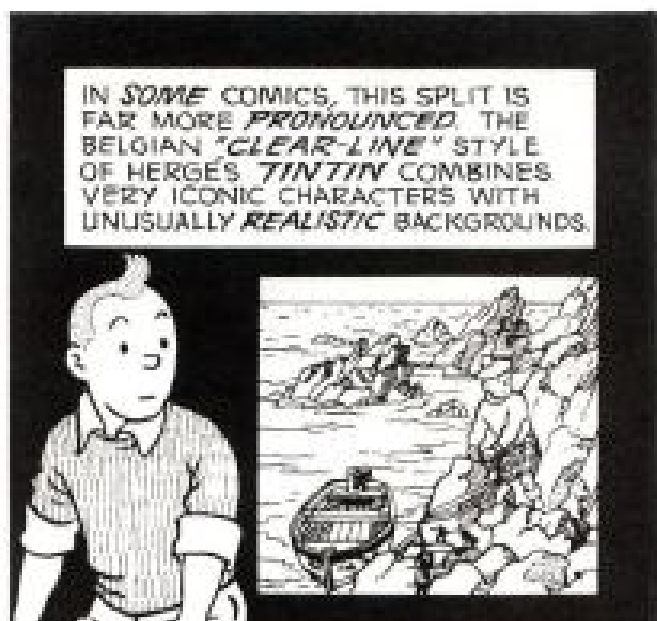


IF AN ARTIST  
WANTS TO PORTRAY  
THE BEAUTY AND  
COMPLEXITY OF THE  
*PHYSICAL*  
WORLD--



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





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**.



GERHARD © 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?

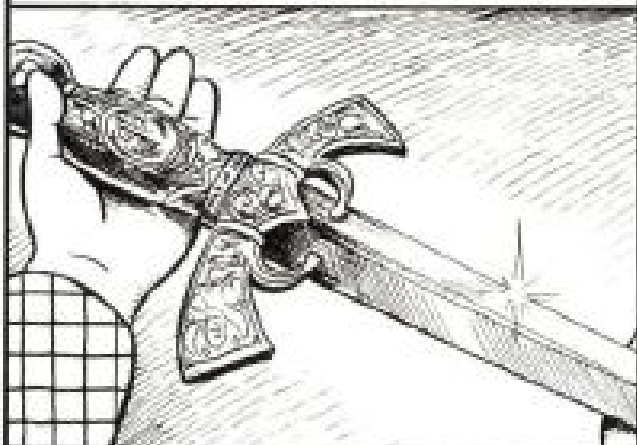
ART © HAYASHI AND COSIMA



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

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

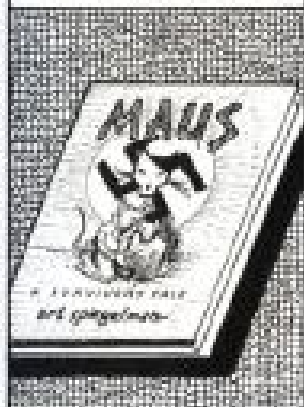
IN THIS AND IN *OTHER WAYS*, COMICS IN JAPAN HAVE EVOLVED VERY *DIFFERENTLY* FROM THOSE IN THE WEST.



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



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



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



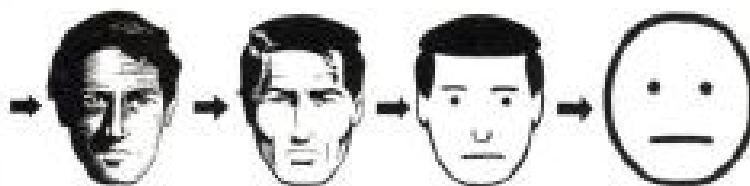
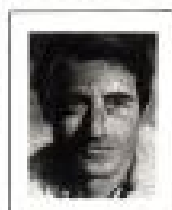
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.



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



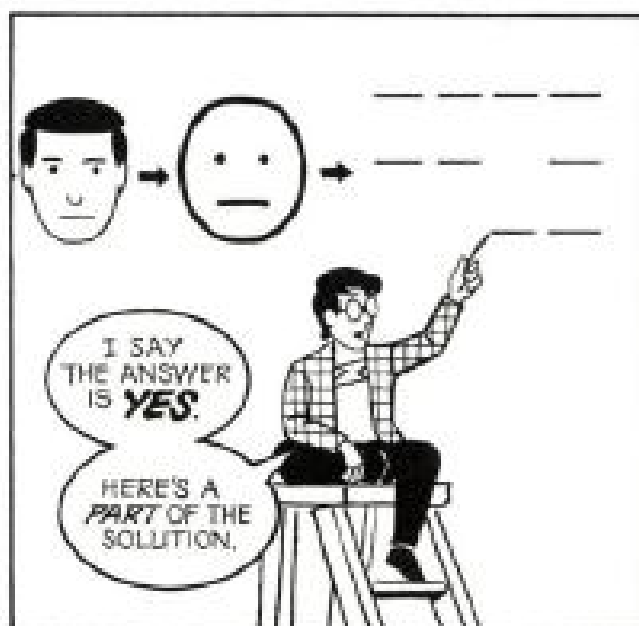
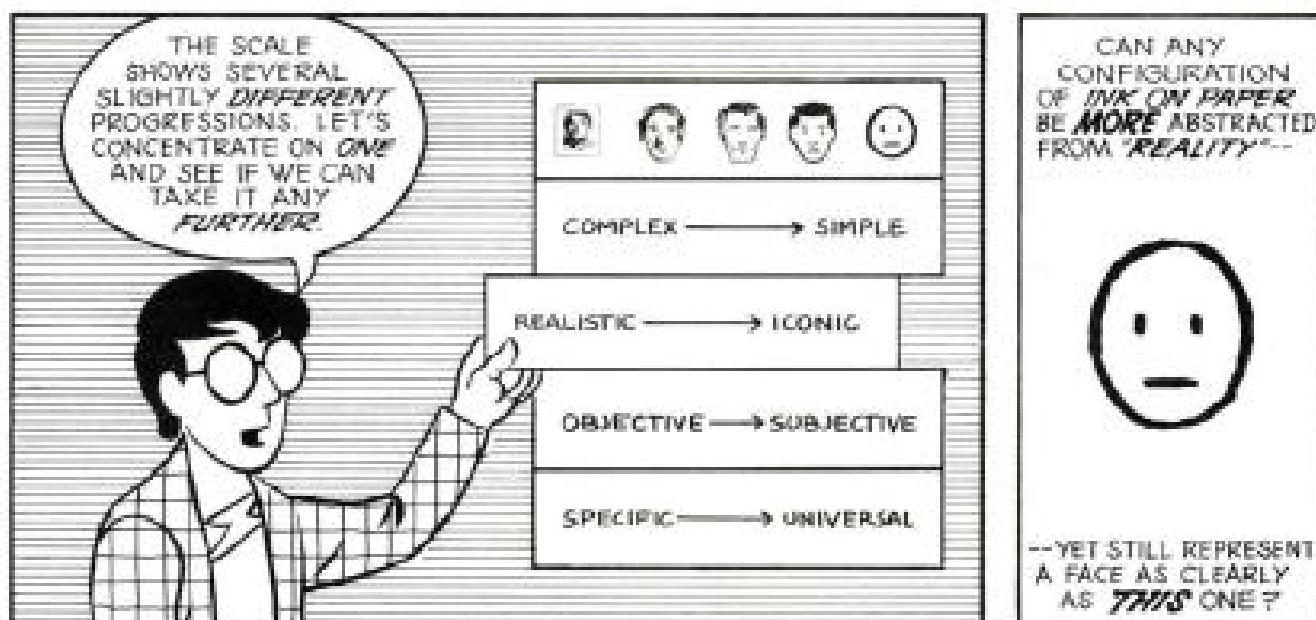
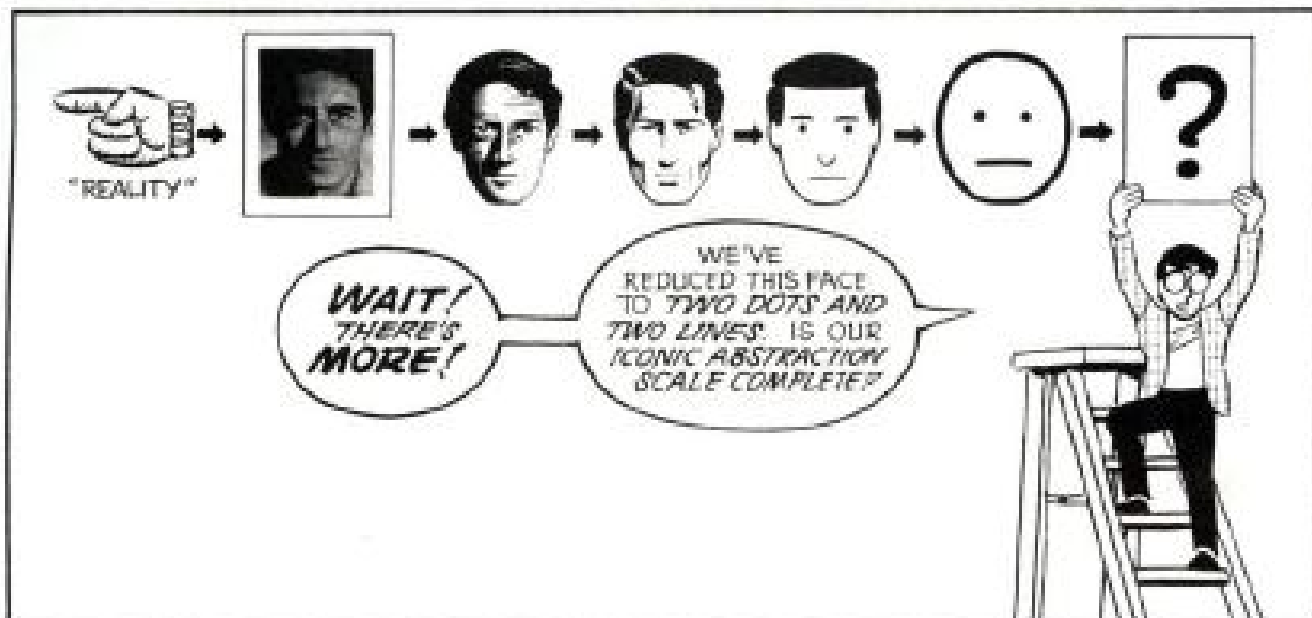
RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.

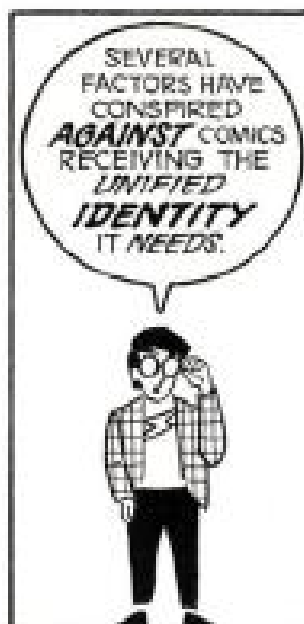
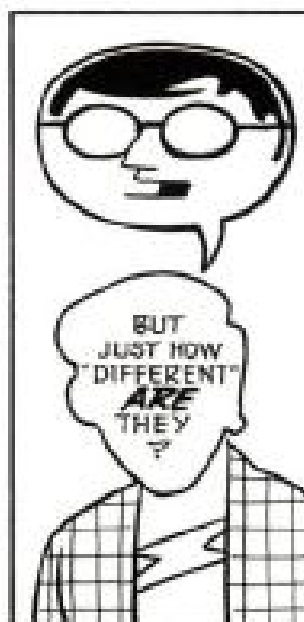
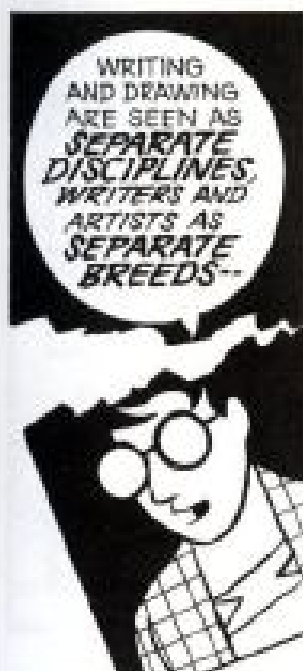
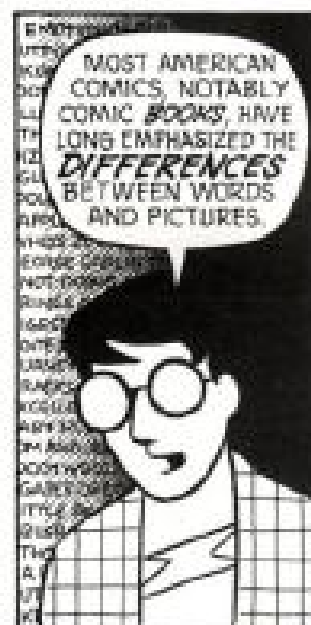


THERE'S A LOT MORE TO *CARTOONS* THAN MEETS THE EYE!

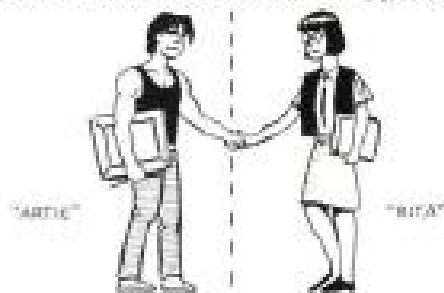








BOTH ARTIST AND WRITER BEGIN, HANDS JOINED ACROSS THE GAP, WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO MAKE COMICS OF *"QUALITY"*



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 *OOE! POW! BLAM!* AND *ONE-A-DAY GAGS*. SHE SETS OFF IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING *DEEPER*.



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



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



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

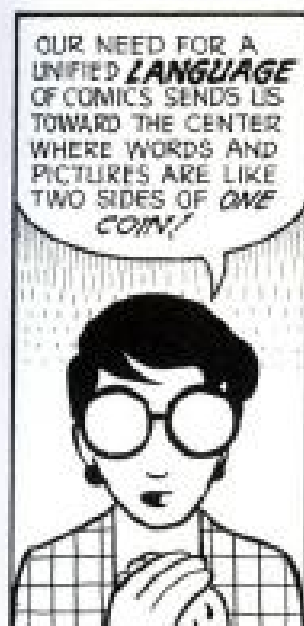
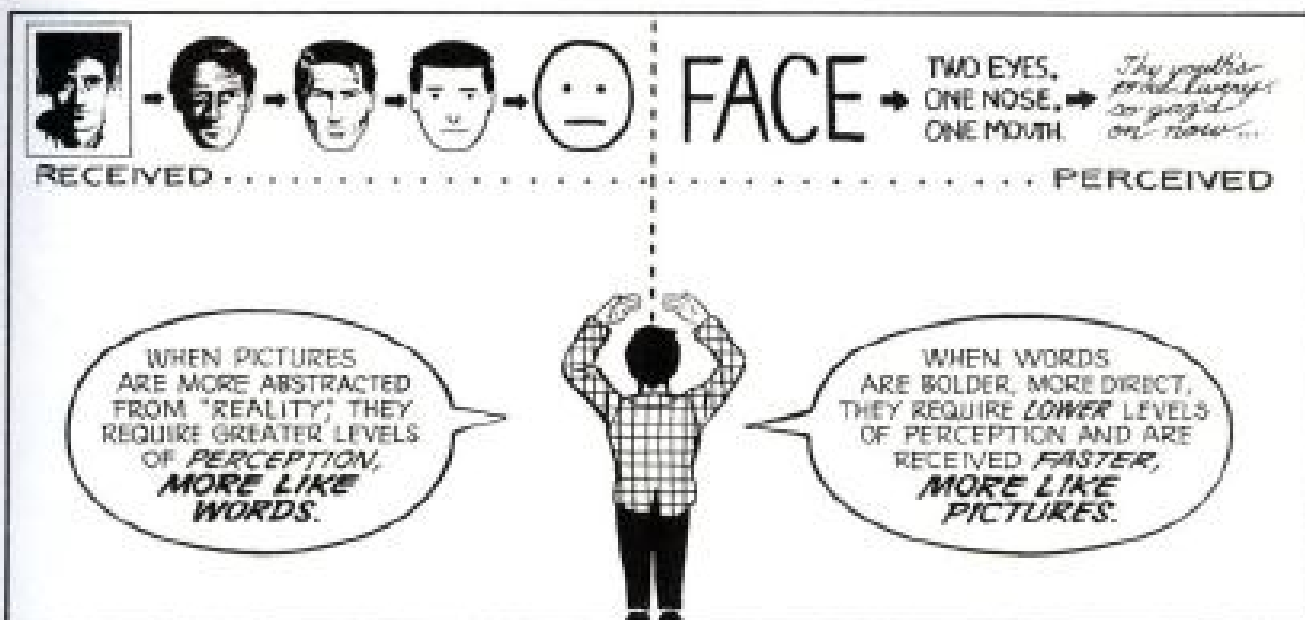
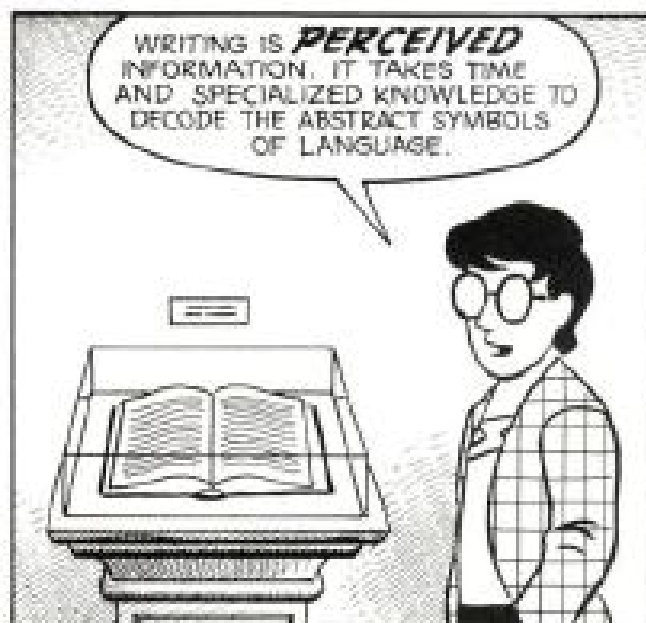
THEY'RE READY TO *JOIN HANDS* ONCE MORE AND CREATE A *COMICS MASTERPIECE*.

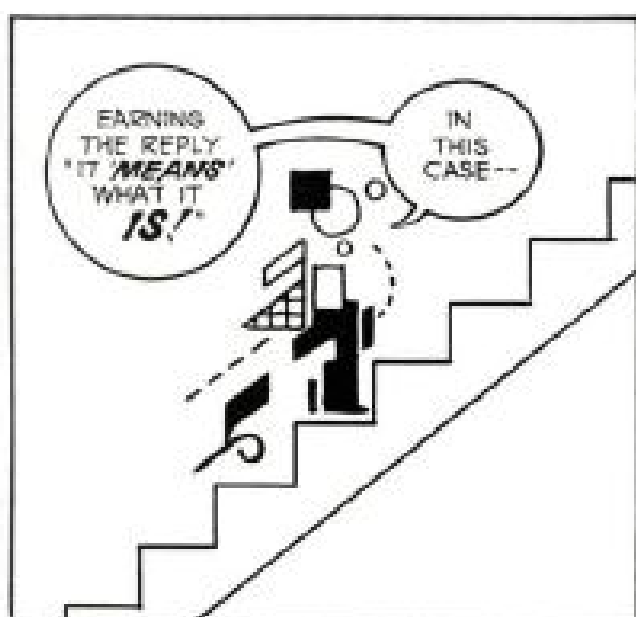
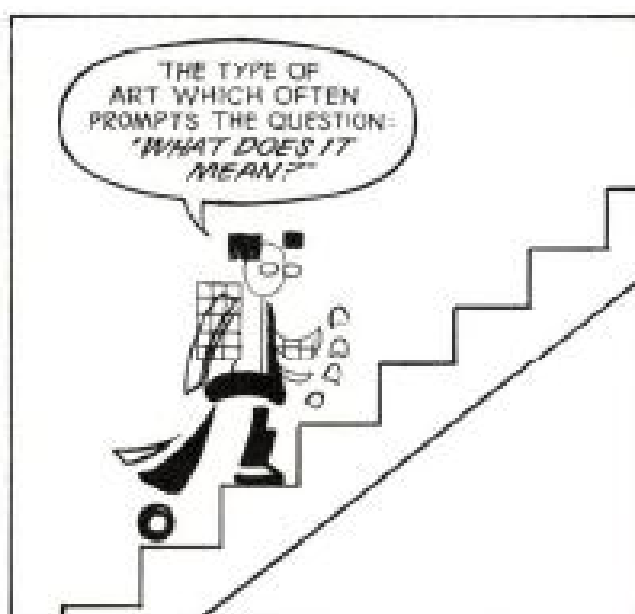
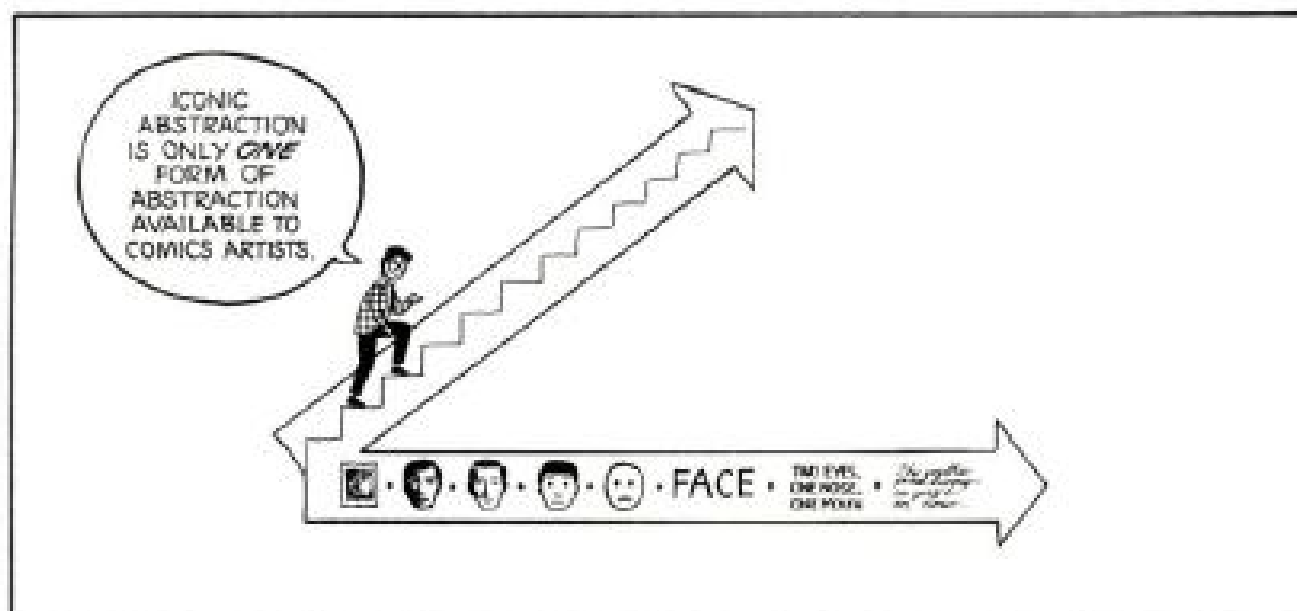


FACE

TWO EYES,  
ONE NOSE,  
ONE MOUTH.

*The youths  
proudly  
so gazed  
on flow...*

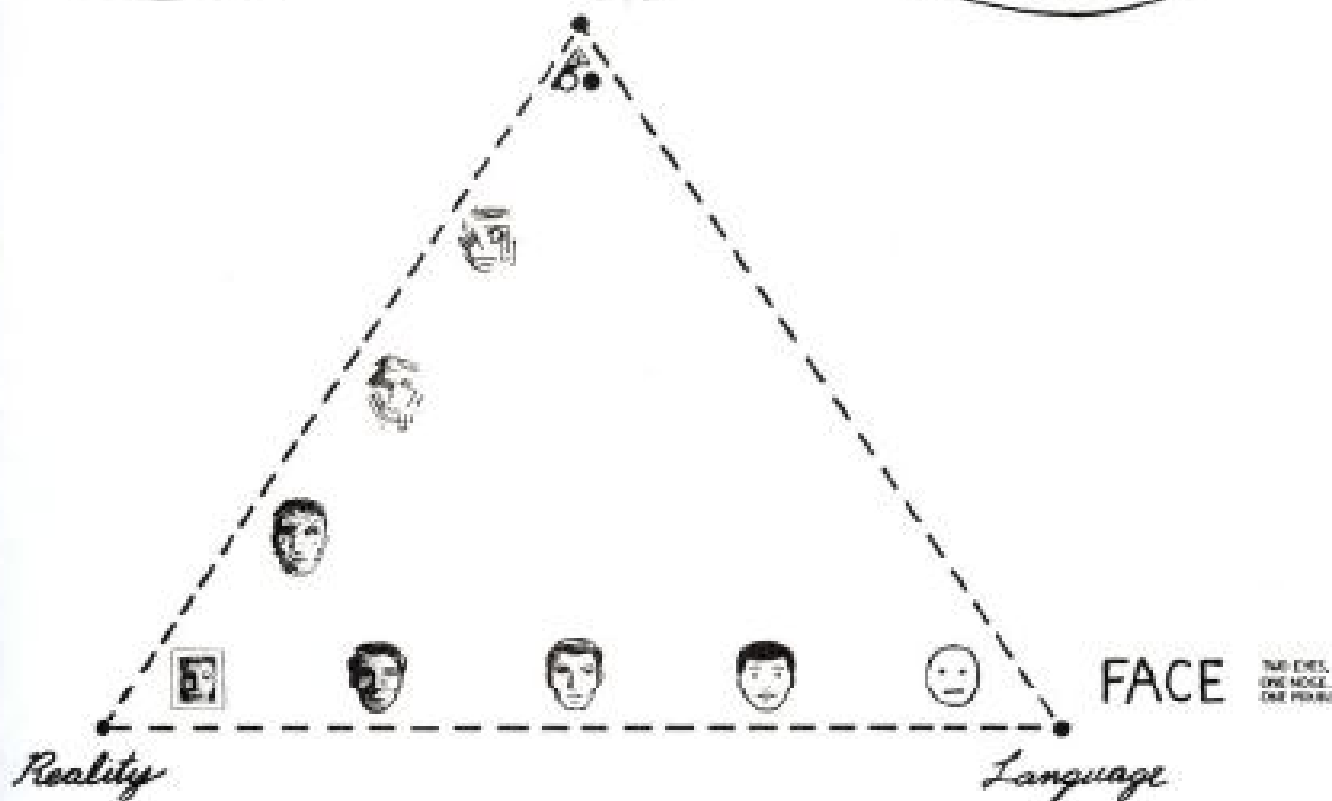




THIS IS THE REALM OF THE ART **OBJECT**, THE **PICTURE PLANE**, WHERE SHAPES, LINES AND COLORS CAN BE **THEMSELVES** AND NOT PRETEND OTHERWISE.

# The Picture Plane

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



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

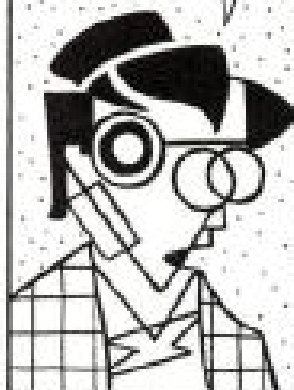


WATCH THAT NOSE!

**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.



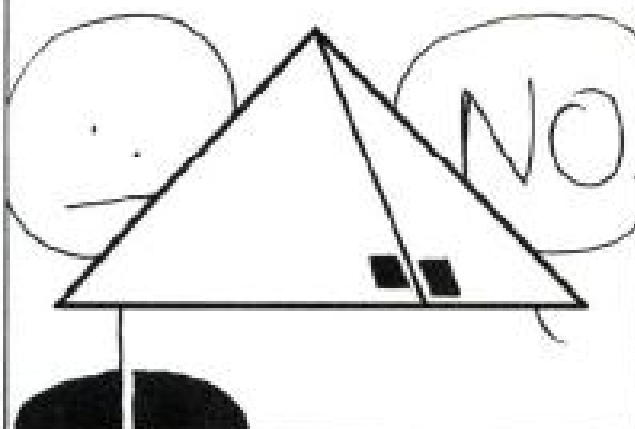
EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A *RANGE* OF STYLES, THOUGH, AND MANY OCCUPY *SEVERAL* PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.



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*:



CYNICALMAN © MATT FEAZELL

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



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

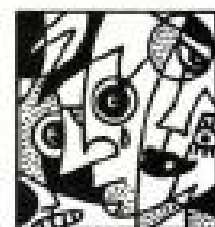
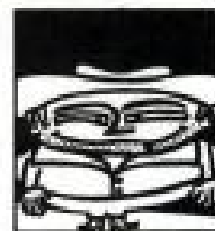
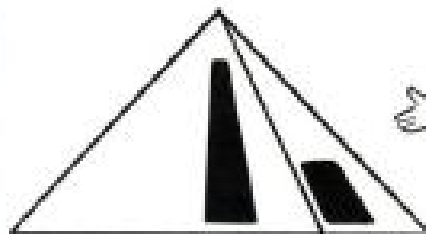


HERGE STRETCHES NEARLY FROM *LEFT TO RIGHT*--FROM *REALISM* TO *CARTOONING*--BUT VENTURES VERY *LITTLE* INTO THE *UPPER* WORLD OF *NON-ICONIC* ABSTRACTION.





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

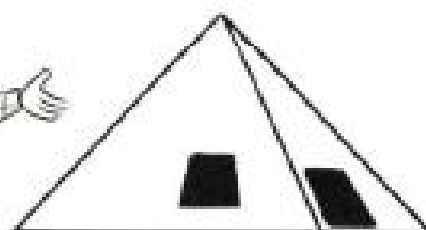


ART © MARY FLEENER

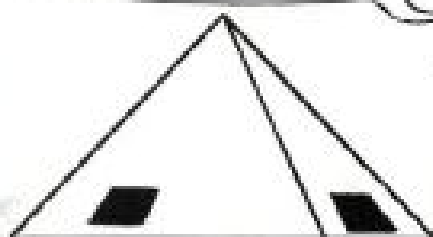


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINOTT (MY FACSIMILE)  
SCRIPT: STAN LEE

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.

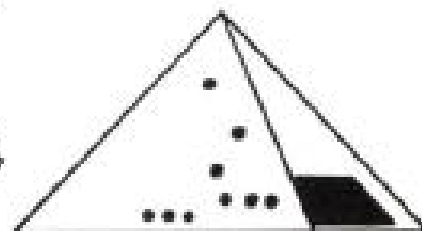


A FIGHT STARTED ON HIS DOORSTEP. HE PUT A STOP TO IT. FAR AS ANYONE KNOWS, ALL THE SURVIVORS ARE PRETTY MUCH OKAY. WAY YOU TALK, NICHOLAS. FOLKS EXPECT HIM TO START NUKIN' MAMA RUSSIA ANY MOMENT.

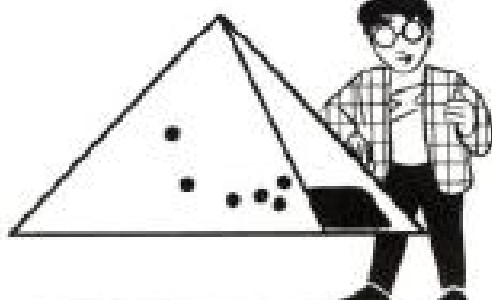




IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES, MOST OF THE COUNTERCULTURE OF INDEPENDENT CREATORS, WORKING MOSTLY IN BLACK AND WHITE, STAYED TO THE RIGHT OF MAINSTREAM COMICS ART WHILE COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF WRITING STYLES.



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

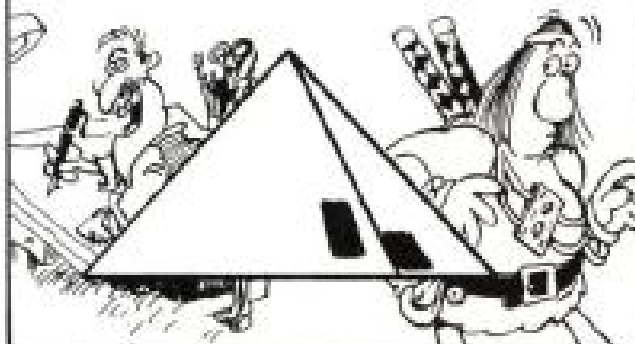


IRONIC THAT THE TWO BASTIONS OF CARTOONY ART ARE *UNDERGROUND* AND *CHILDREN'S* COMICS!

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.



SERGIO AND GROO © SERGIO ARAGONES

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

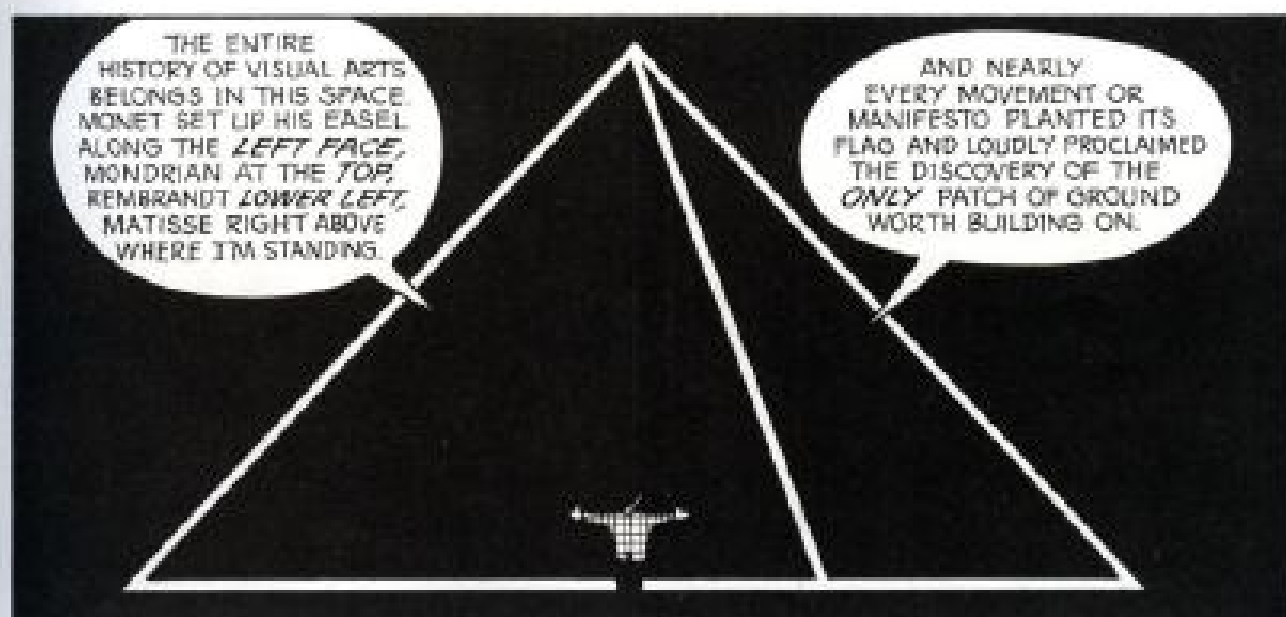


ART (LEFT) © DAVE McKEAN, (RIGHT) © D.C. COMICS

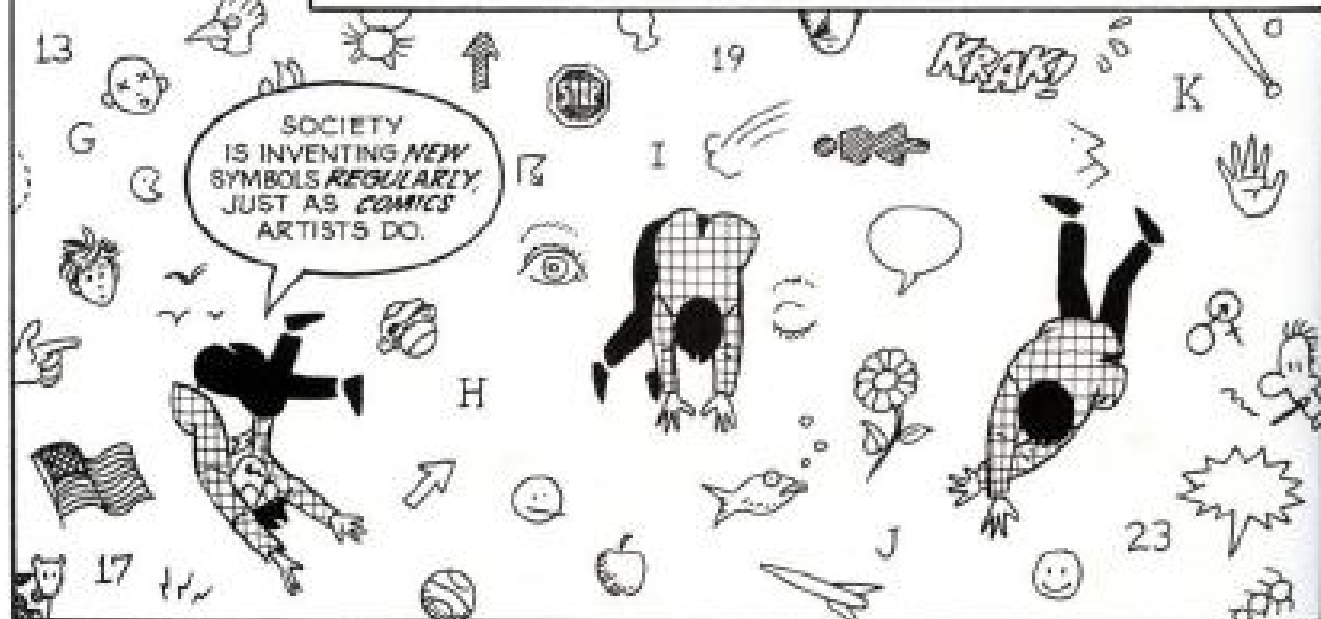
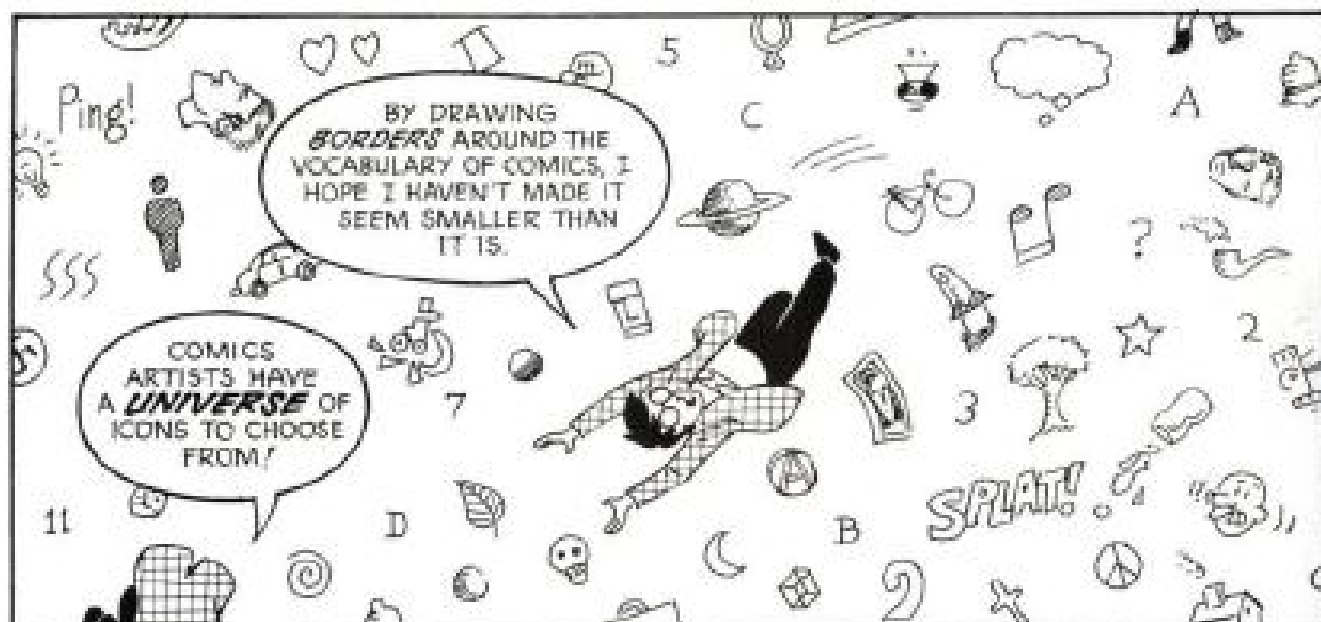


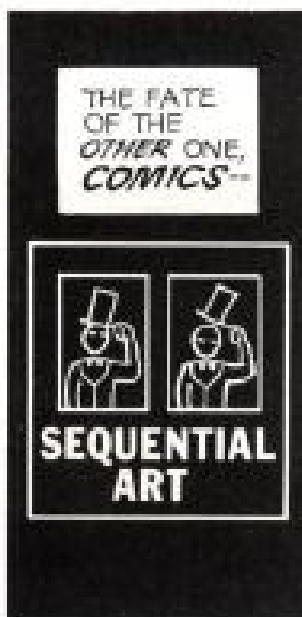
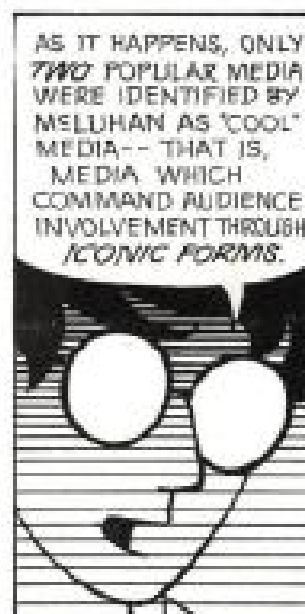
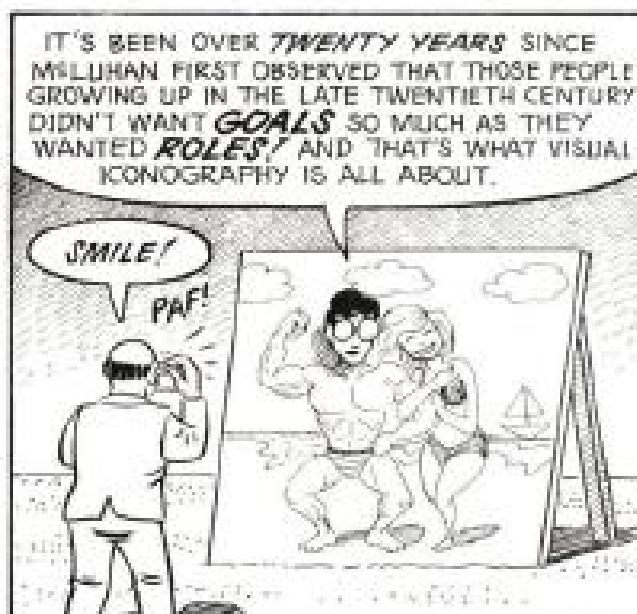
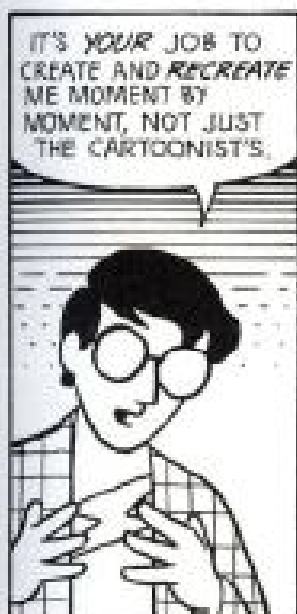
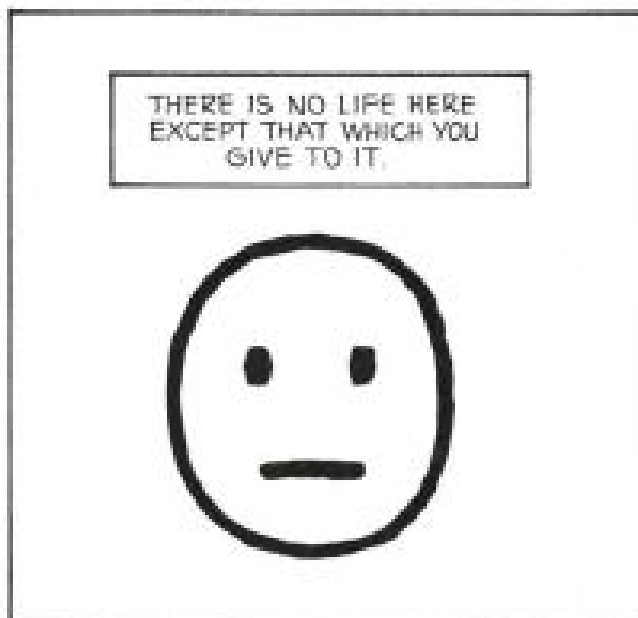
FOR COMICS TO *MATURE* AS A *MEDIUM*, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S *INNERMOST NEEDS* AND *IDEAS*.

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



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

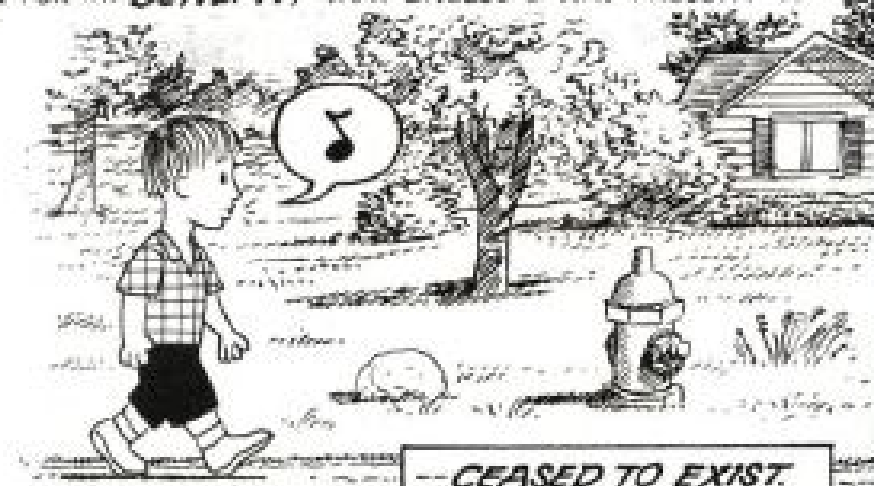




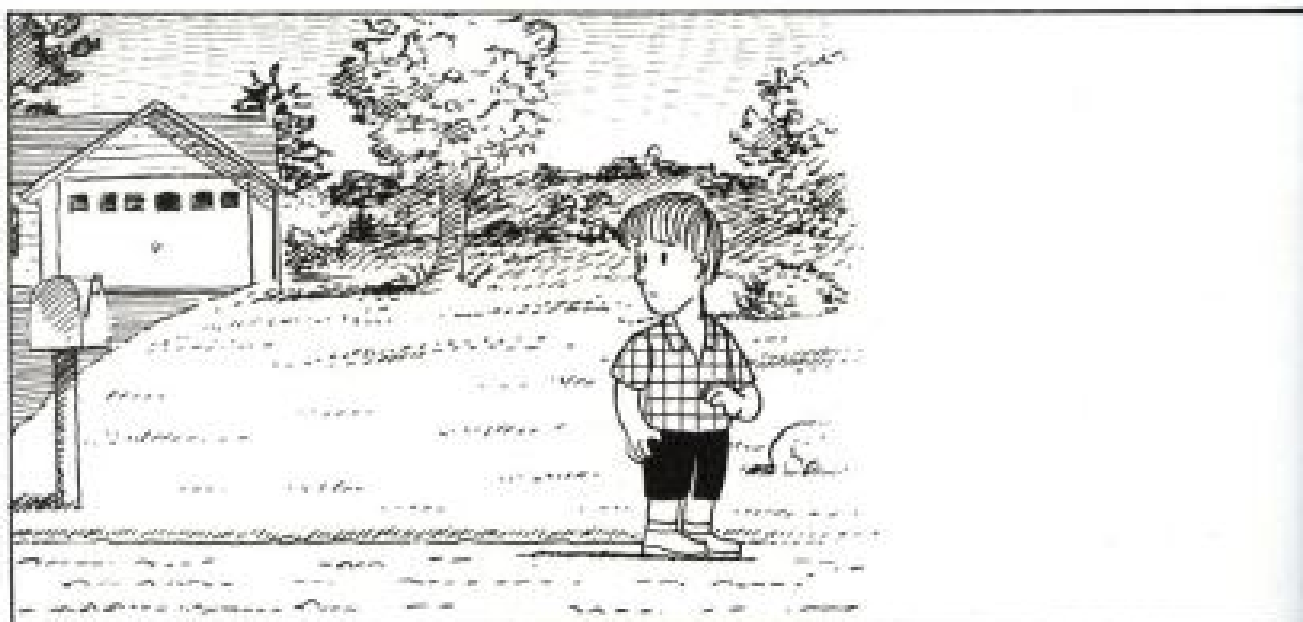
### CHAPTER THREE

#### BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

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



--CEASED TO EXIST.



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



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



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



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



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



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

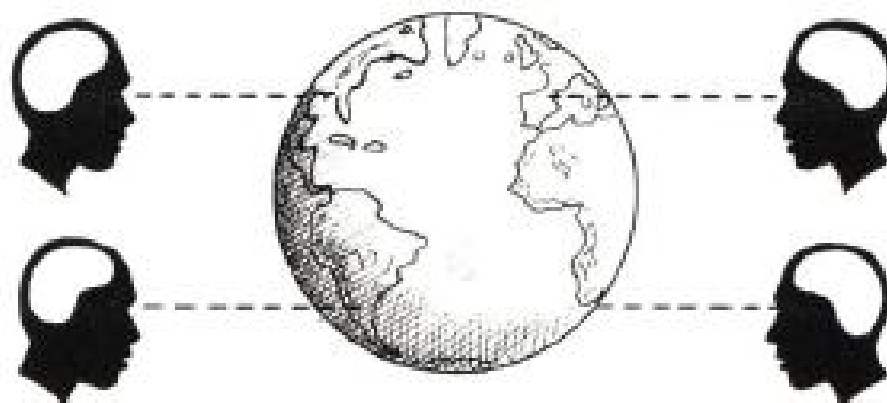


EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE **NOT!**



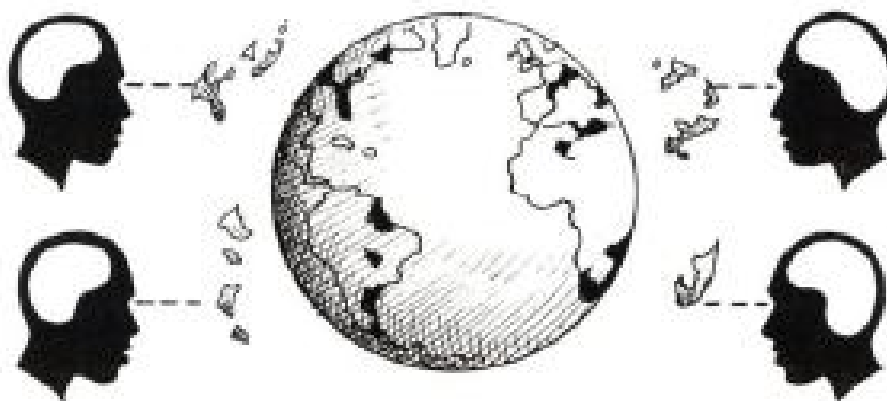
\* NOT TO SAY OUR SENSES ARE ANY KIND OF **GUARANTEE!**

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



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

EVEN THE MOST *WIDELY*  
*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*.

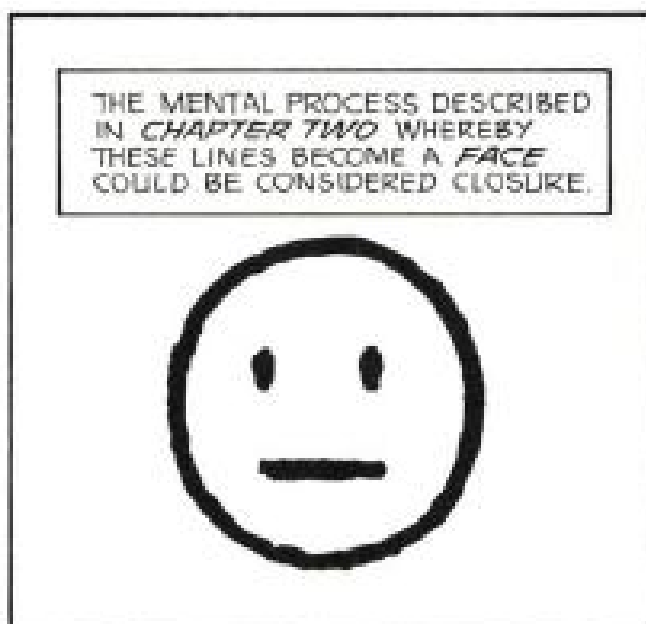
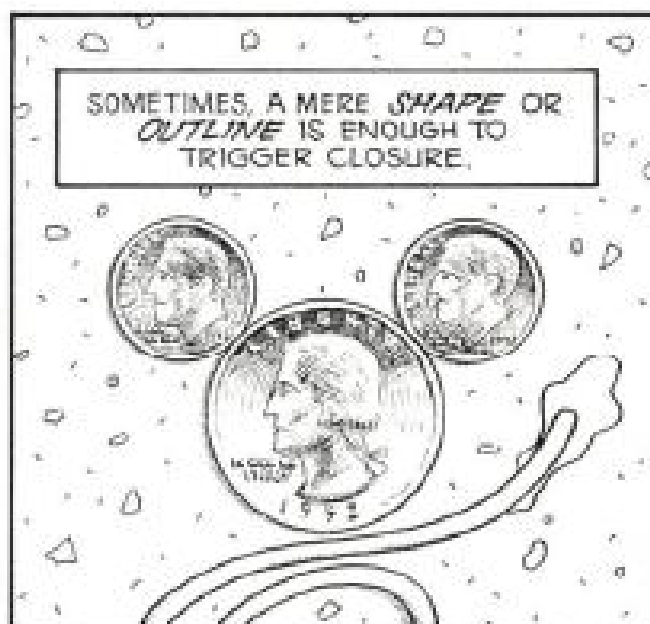
AS *INFANTS*, WE'RE *UNABLE*  
TO COMMIT THAT ACT OF FAITH.  
IF WE CAN'T *SEE* IT, *HEAR* IT,  
*SMELL* IT, *TASTE* IT OR *TOUCH* IT,  
IT ISN'T *THERE*!

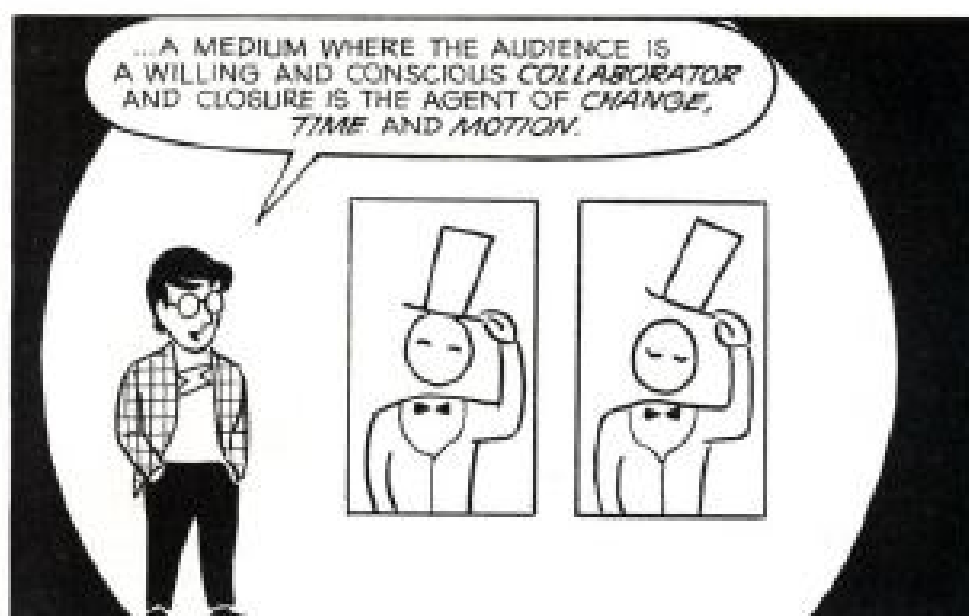
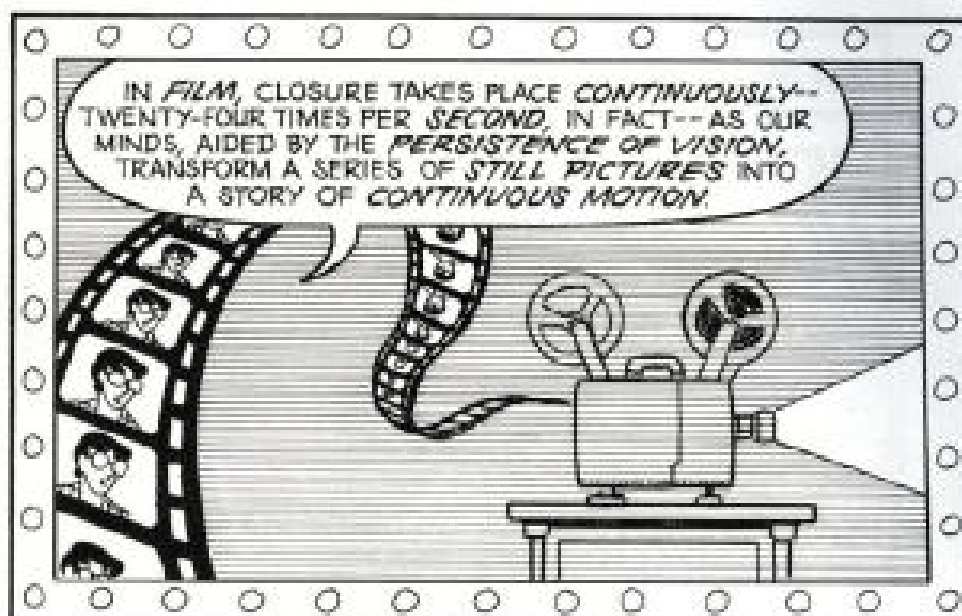
THE GAME "*PEEK-A-BOO*" PLAYS  
ON THIS IDEA. GRADUALLY, WE ALL  
LEARN THAT EVEN THOUGH THE *SIGHT*  
OF MOMMY COMES AND GOES,  
MOMMY *REMAINS*.

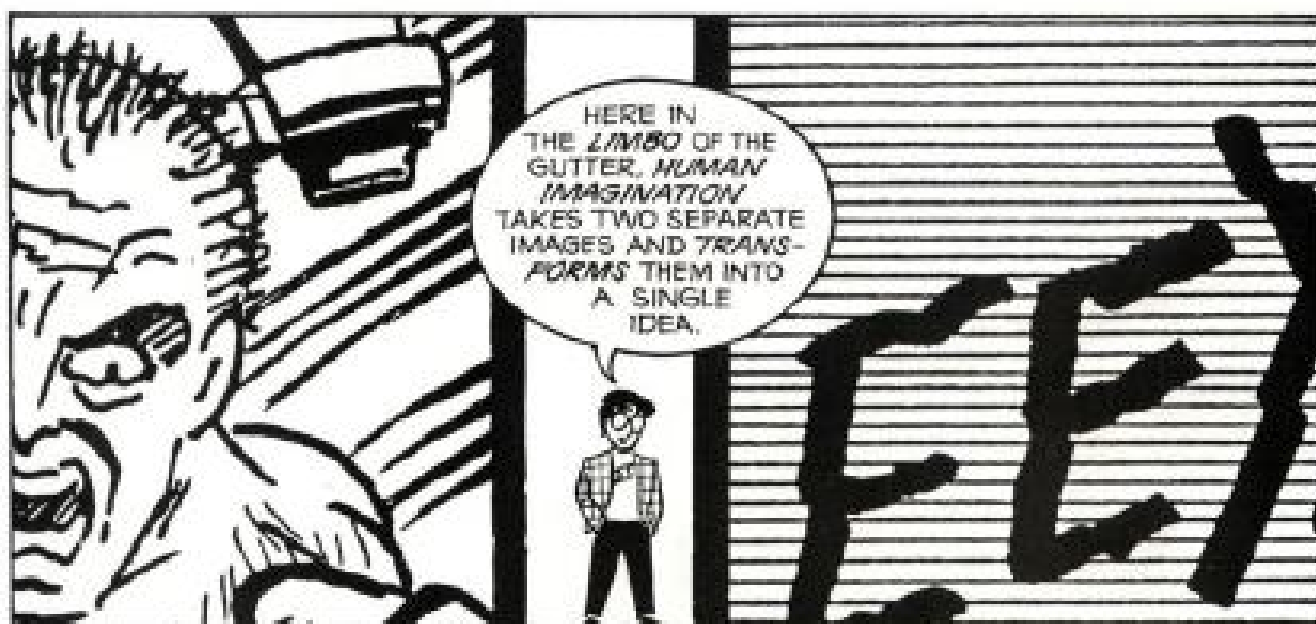






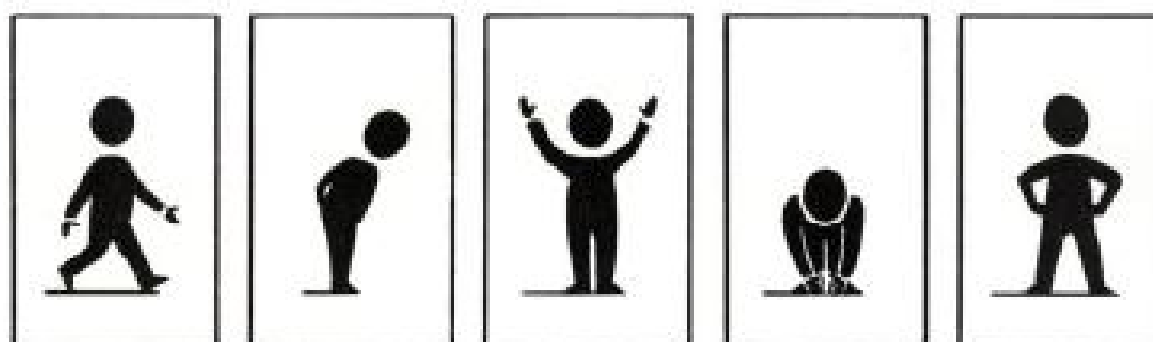




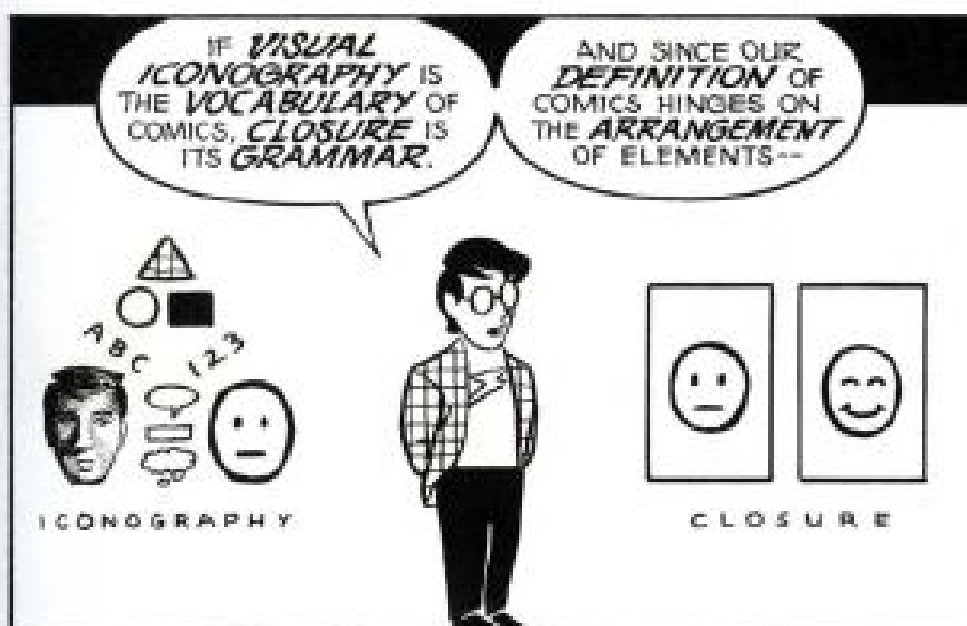


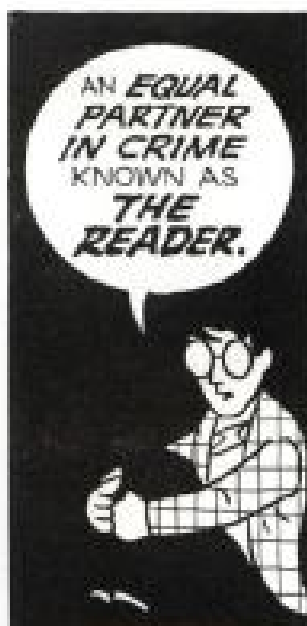
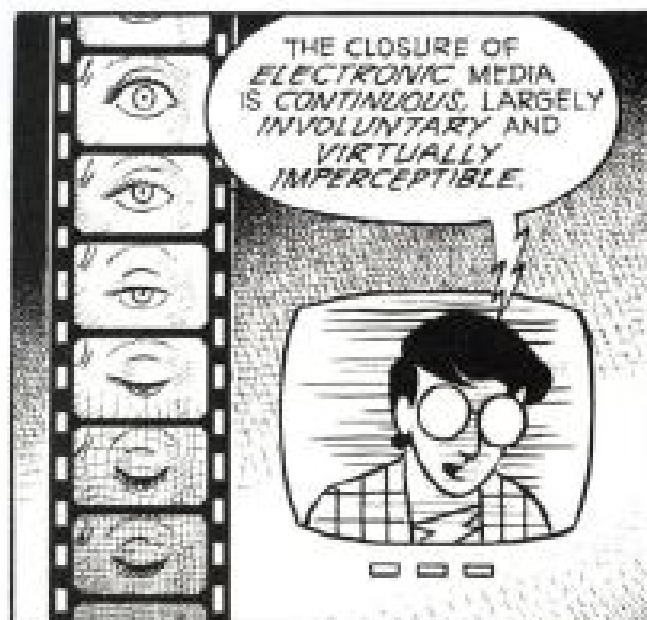


COMICS PANELS *FRACTURE* BOTH *TIME* AND *SPACE*, OFFERING A *JAGGED, STACCATO RHYTHM* OF *UNCONNECTED MOMENTS*.



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





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*.



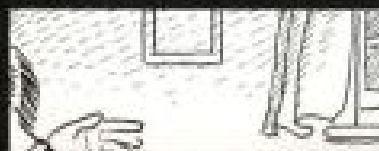
THAT, DEAR READER, WAS YOUR *SPECIAL CRIME*, EACH OF YOU COMMITTING IT IN YOUR OWN *STYLE*.



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



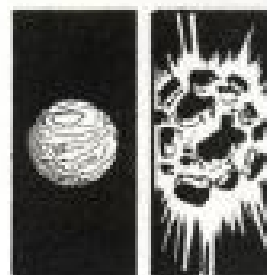
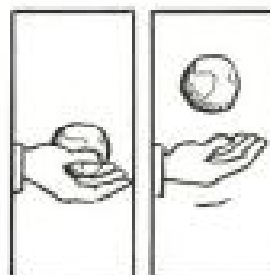
**PARTICIPATION**  
IS A *POWERFUL FORCE*  
IN *ANY* MEDIUM.  
FILMMAKERS *LONG AGO*  
REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE  
OF ALLOWING VIEWERS  
TO USE THEIR  
*IMAGINATIONS.*



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.*



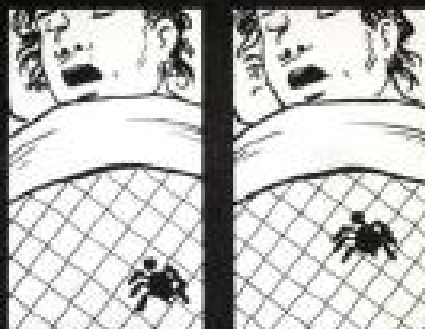
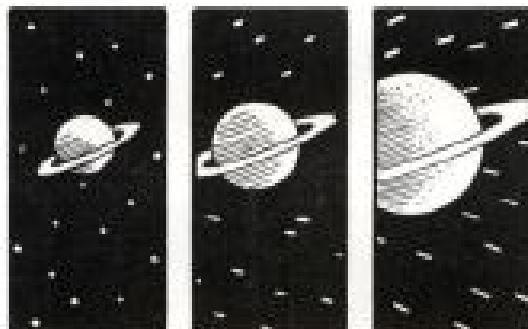
LET'S  
TAKE A LOOK  
AT THE  
*CRAFT.*



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.



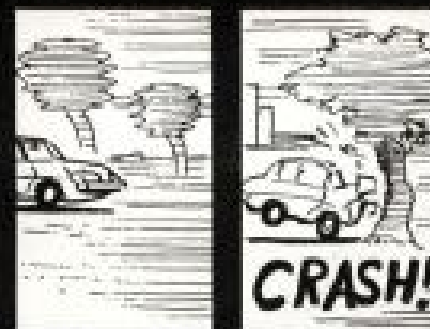
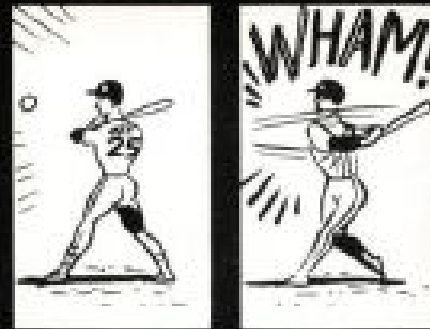
1.



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



2.

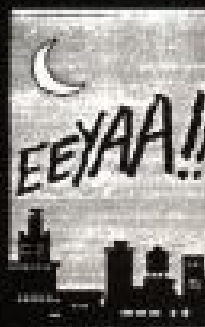




THE NEXT TYPE TAKES US FROM **SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT** WHILE STAYING WITHIN A SCENE OR IDEA. NOTE THE DEGREE OF **READER INVOLVEMENT** NECESSARY TO RENDER THESE TRANSITIONS **MEANINGFUL**.



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.



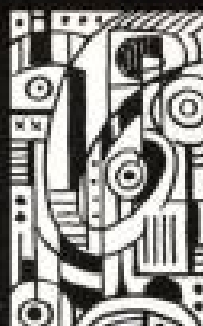
5.



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



6.

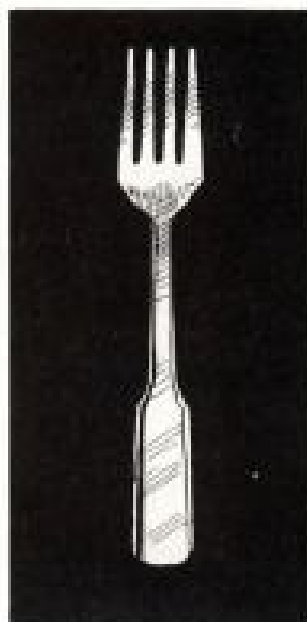


THIS *LAST* CATEGORY SUGGESTS AN INTERESTING *QUESTION*. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR *ANY* SEQUENCE OF PANELS TO BE *TOTALLY UNRELATED* TO EACH OTHER?



PERSONALLY, I DON'T *THINK* SO.

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



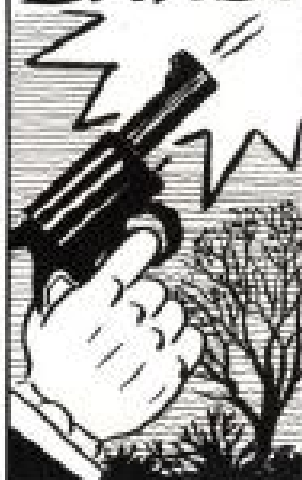
--*ALCHEMY* AT WORK IN THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS WHICH CAN HELP US FIND *MEANING* OR *RESONANCE* IN EVEN THE MOST *JARRING* OF COMBINATIONS.



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*



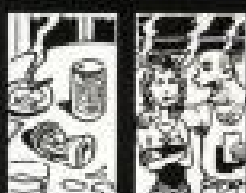
**2.**  
*ACTION-  
TO-  
ACTION*



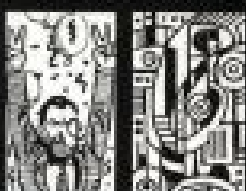
**3.**  
*SUBJECT-  
TO-  
SUBJECT*



**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.



[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE]

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



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

1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

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

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

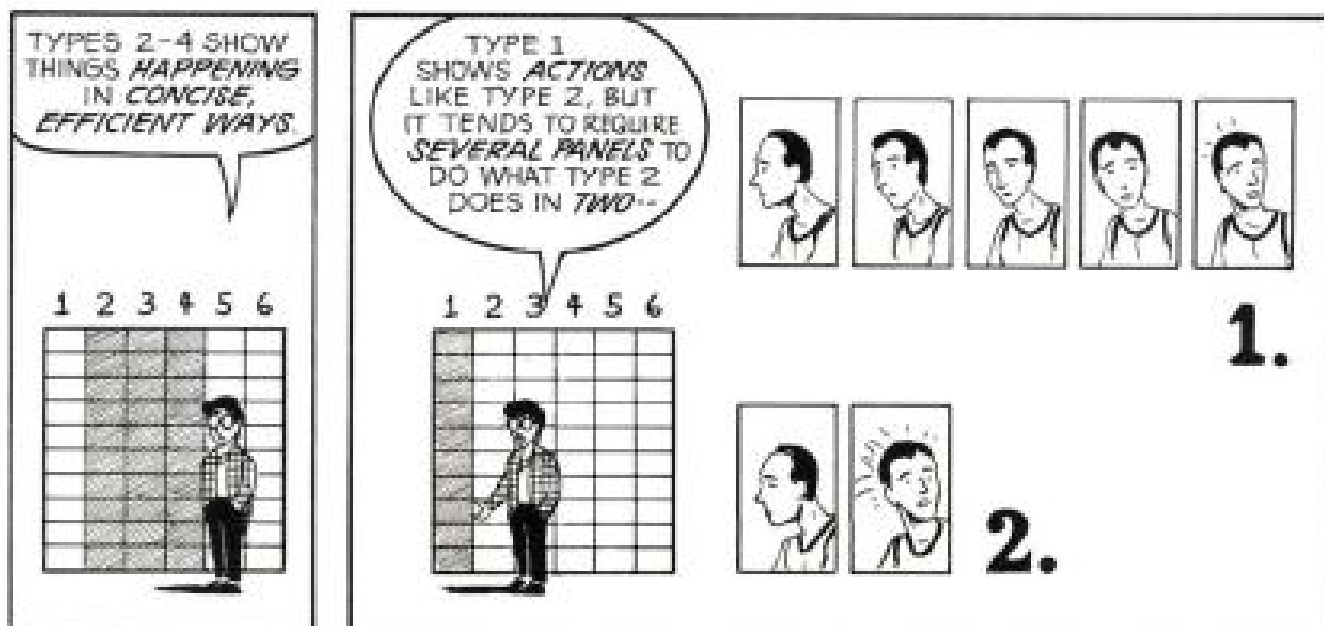
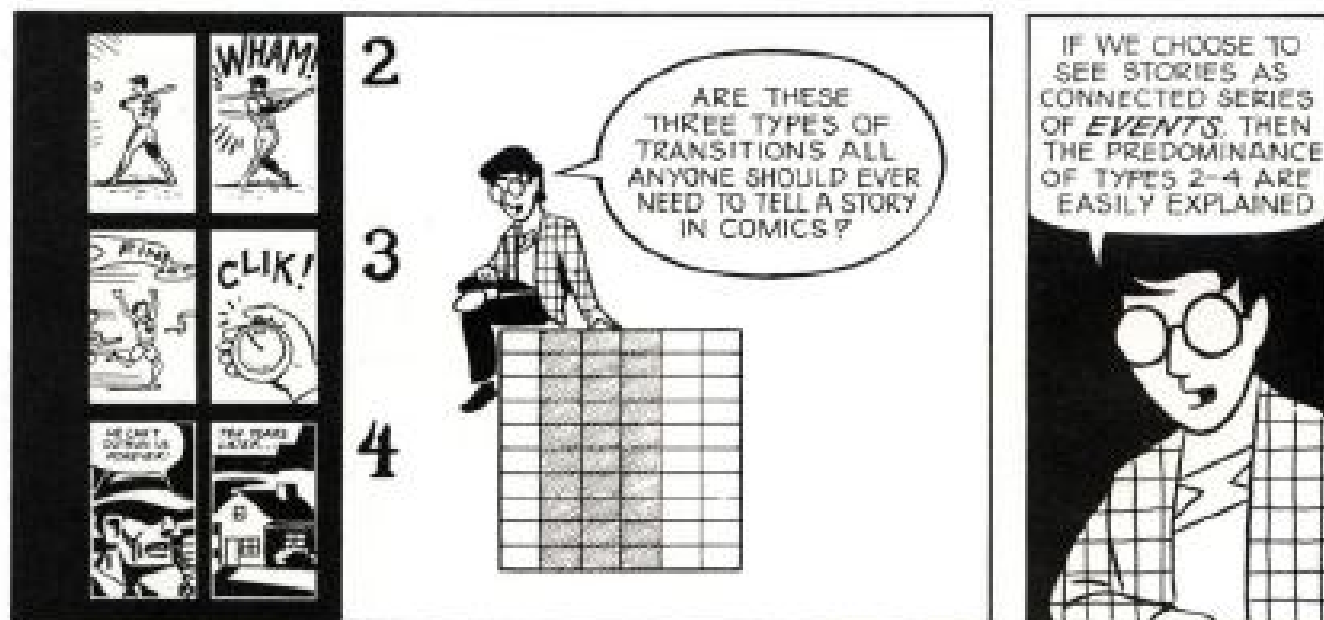
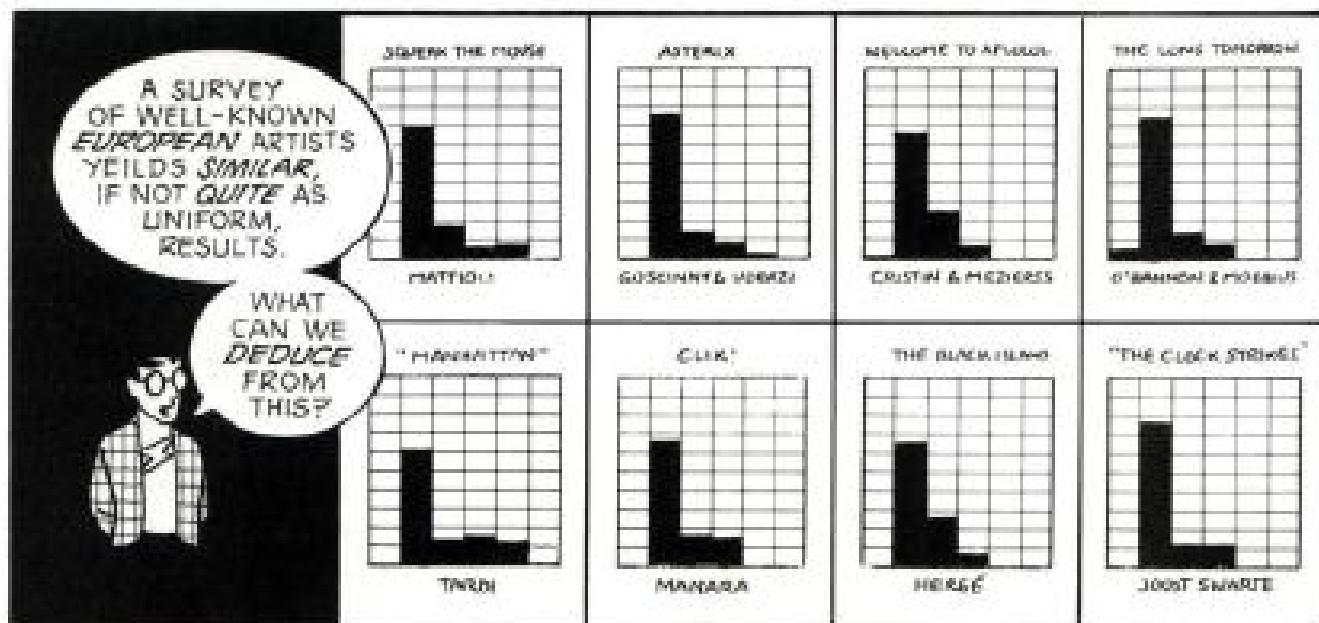
APPARENTLY *NOT*! HERE'S A GRAPH OF PANEL TRANSITIONS IN HERGÉ'S *TINTIN* AND THE PROPORTION ARE VERY *SIMILAR* TO *KIRBY*'S

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

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

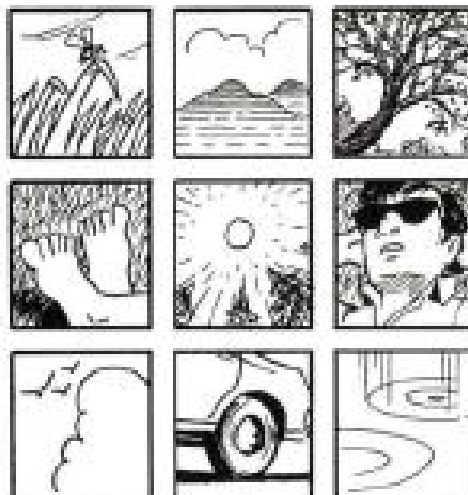
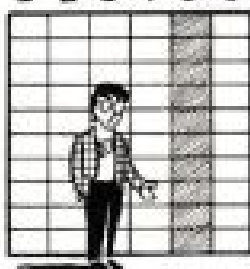
A RANDOM SAMPLING OF VARIOUS AMERICAN COMICS SHOWS THIS SAME PROPORTION PRETTY *CONSISTENTLY*.

<p>X-MEN #1</p> <p>CLAREMONT &amp; LEE</p>	<p>"HONEYMOON SOUP"</p> <p>G. HERNANDEZ</p>	<p>BETTY &amp; VERONICA</p> <p>DOYLE &amp; DECARLO</p>	<p>NAUGHTY BITS</p> <p>GREGORY</p>
<p>FRANK IN THE RIVER</p> <p>WOODRUM</p>	<p>A CONTRACT WITH GOD</p> <p>EISNER</p>	<p>MAUS</p> <p>SPIEGELMAN</p>	<p>DONALD DUCK</p> <p>BLAIRS</p>



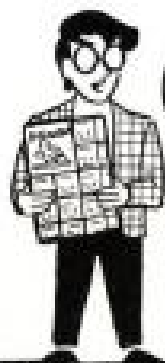
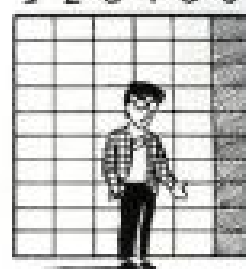
--WHILE IN THE *FIFTH* TYPE, BY DEFINITION, NOTHING "HAPPENS" AT ALL!

1 2 3 4 5 6



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

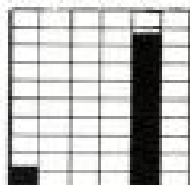
1 2 3 4 5 6



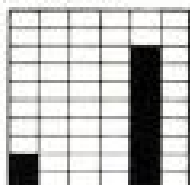
SOME *EXPERIMENTAL* COMICS, LIKE THOSE OF *ART SPIEGELMAN'S* EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A *FULL RANGE* OF TRANSITIONS--

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

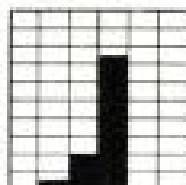
STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



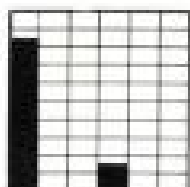
"DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE"



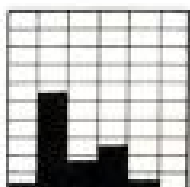
INTRODUCTION



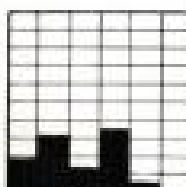
"MAUS" (ORIGINAL)



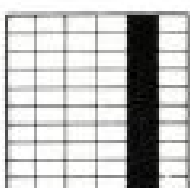
"SKINLESS PERKINS"



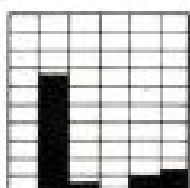
"PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET"



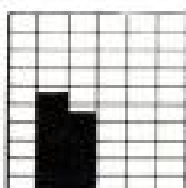
"CRACKING JOES"



FRONT AND BACK COVERS



"ACE-HOLE MIDGET DETECTIVE"



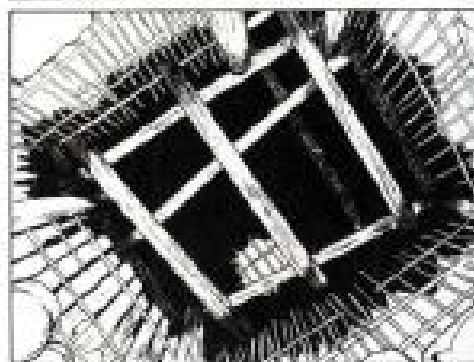
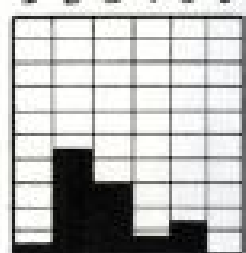
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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

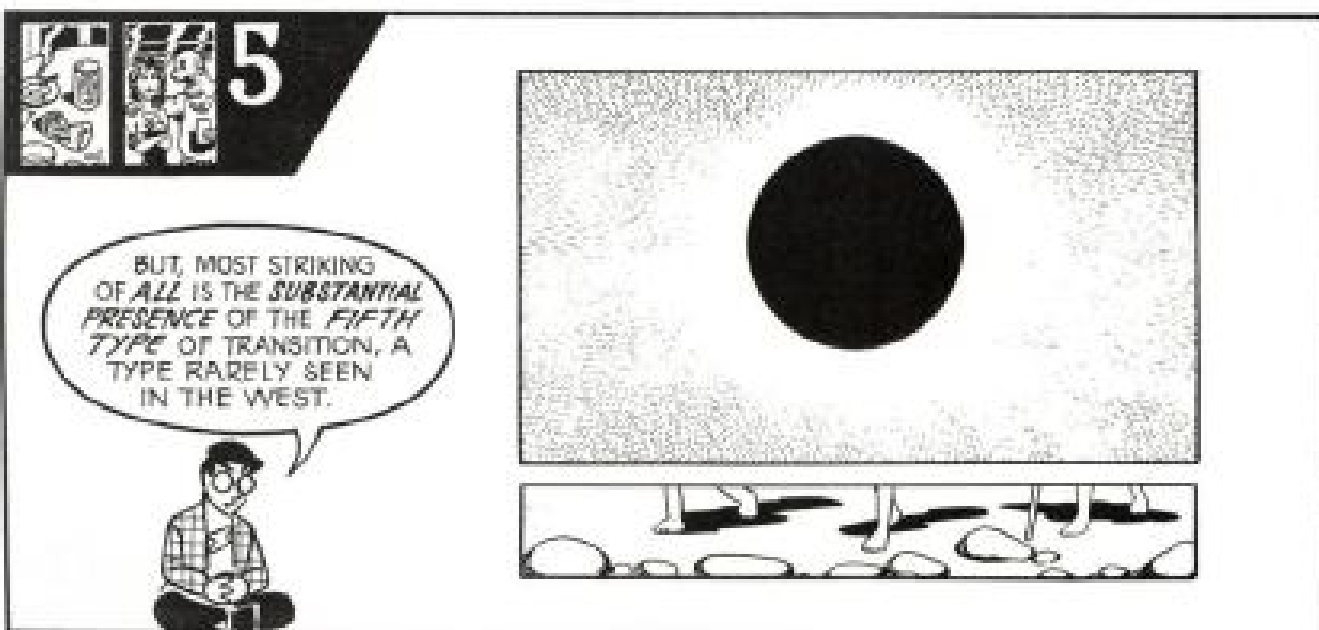


TEZUKA IS A FAR *CRY* FROM THE EARLY SPIEGELMAN. HIS STORYTELLING IS CLEAR AND *STRAIGHTFORWARD*. BUT LOOK AT *HOW* HE CHARTS!

1 2 3 4 5 6



JUST WHAT IS *GOING ON* HERE?





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



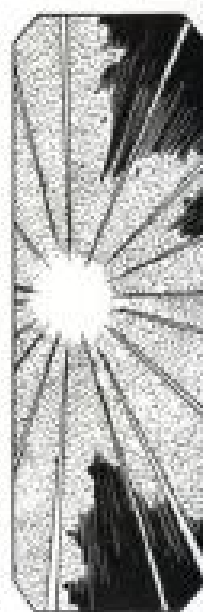
ART © SHIGERU MIZUGI

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.



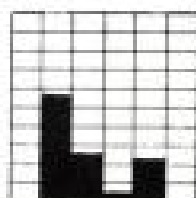
RATHER THAN ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SEPARATE MOMENTS, THE READER *HERE* MUST ASSEMBLE A *SINGLE* MOMENT USING *SCATTERED* FRAGMENTS.



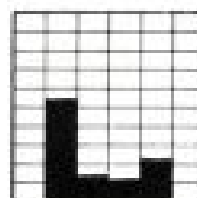
ART © H. SAKITA

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

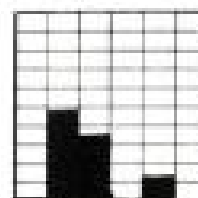
WHY?



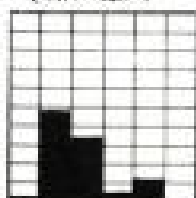
TSO RIMA  
(石井 良)



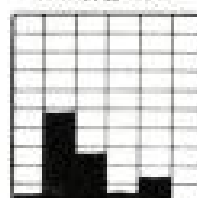
FATHER & SON  
HAYASHI & OSHIMA



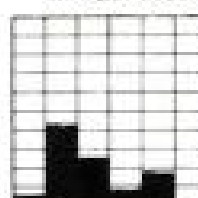
WOLF & CUB  
KOROE & KOSUDA



ANAKA  
KATSUMI OGIHO



CHIBANDS (OSHIMOTO)



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.

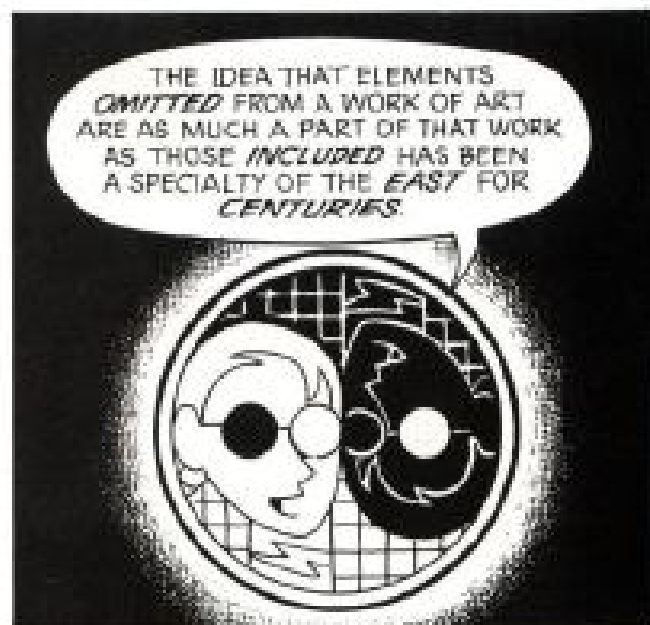
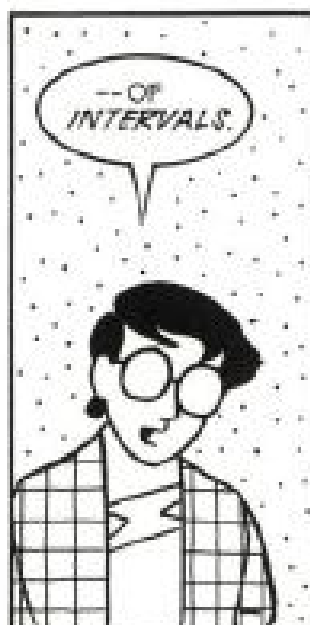


HERGE

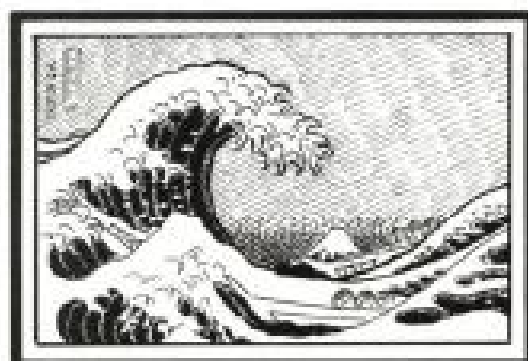
KIRBY

TEZUKA





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.1825)  
(TURN THIS PICTURE UPSIDE DOWN TO SEE THE OTHER WAVE OF NEGATIVE SPACE...NATURE'S YIN AND YANG.)

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



WEST



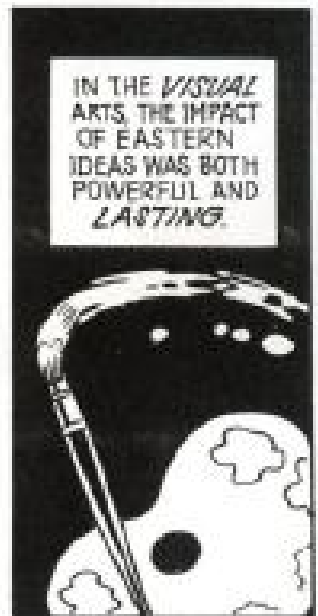
EAST

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



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

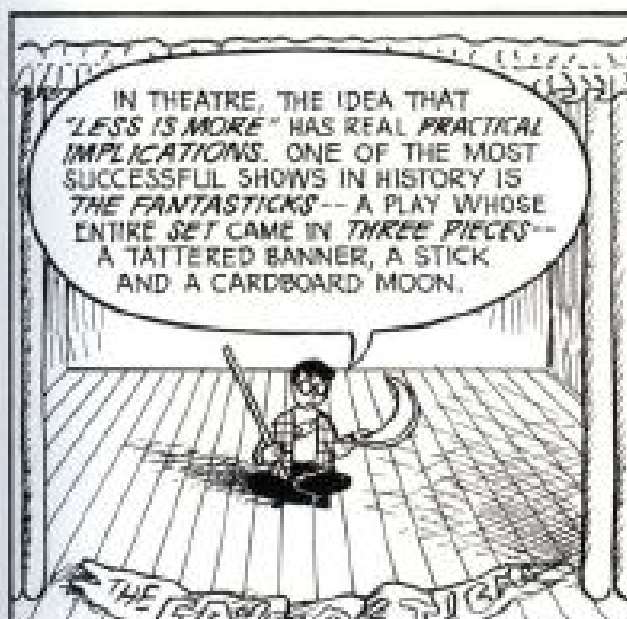




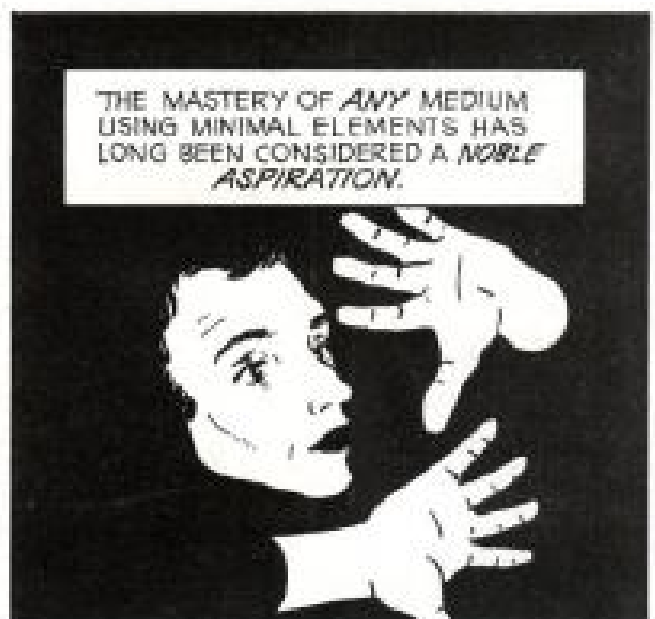
THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS IN WESTERN ART UPON THE PRIMACY OF *FOREGROUND* SUBJECTS AND *CONTINUOUSNESS* OF *TONES* GAVE WAY TO *FRAGMENTATION* AND A NEW AWARENESS OF THE *PICTURE PLANE*.



FACSIMILE  
OF "FIGURE"  
BY PABLO PICASSO  
1948

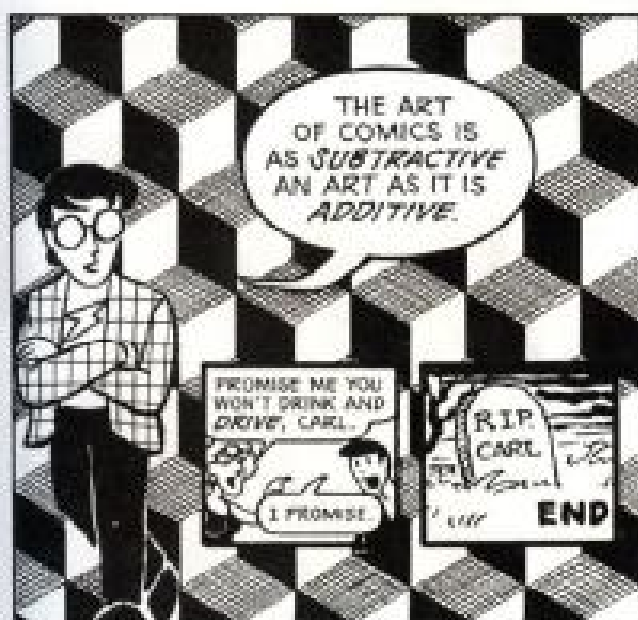


\*ANSWER: "THE BIG N"  
(SEE PAGE 216)



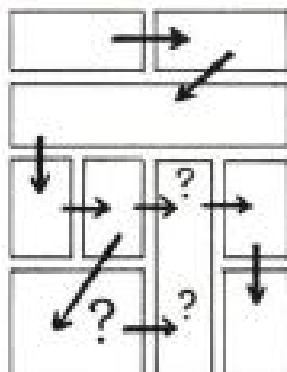


\* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FRABELL



*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.

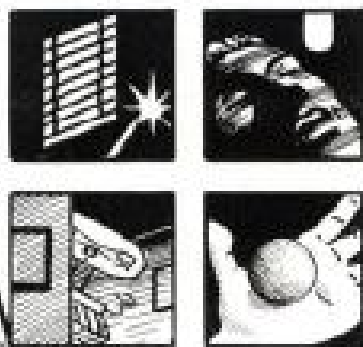


AS CLOSURE **BETWEEN** PANELS BECOMES  
MORE INTENSE, READER INTERPRETATION  
BECOMES FAR MORE **ELASTIC.**



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!

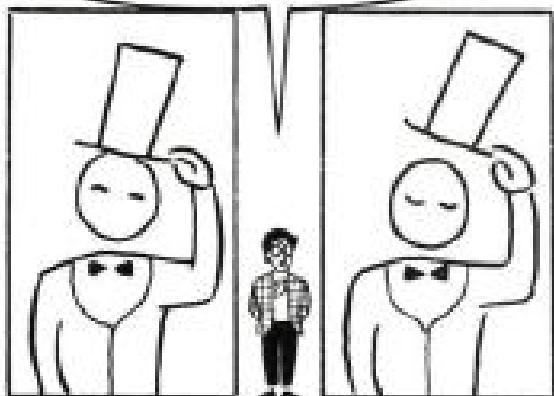
*Ding! Ding!*

**OW!**

*Ding! Ding!*

**OW!**

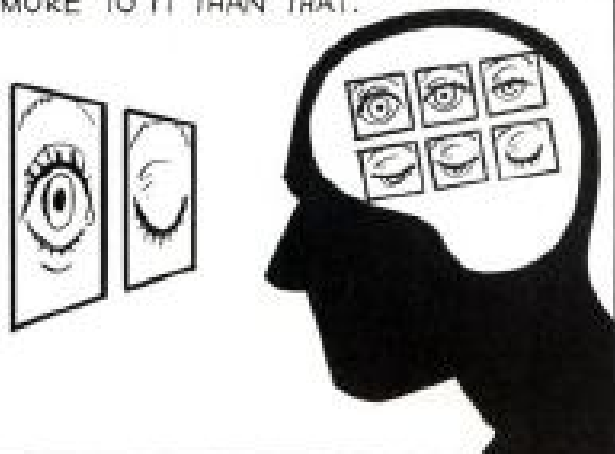
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES *WITHIN* EACH PANEL, IT'S THE POWER OF CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST INTERESTING.



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

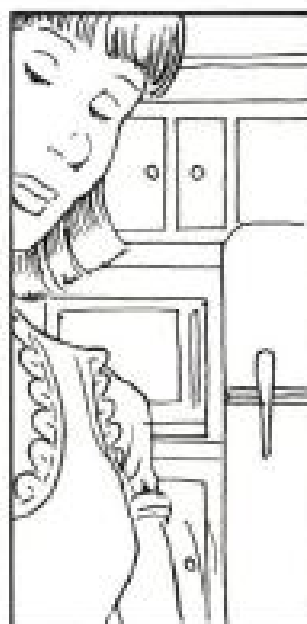
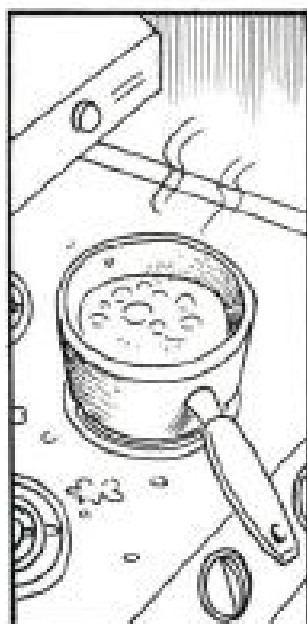
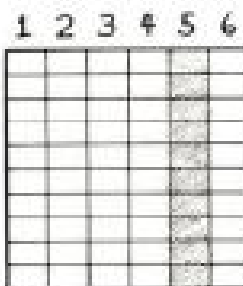


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF *IN-BETWEENER*-- FILLING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR* MIGHT-- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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 **SOUND** THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS **WORD BALLOONS**.

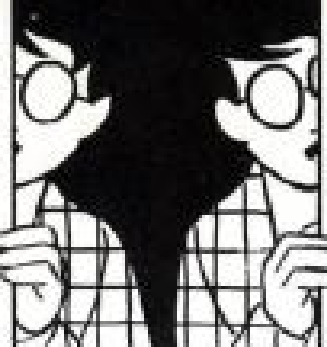


BUT ALL IN ALL, IT IS AN **EXCLUSIVELY VISUAL** REPRESENTATION.

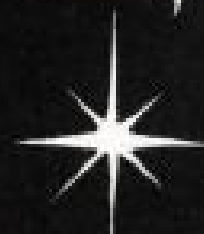
**WITHIN** THESE PANELS, WE CAN ONLY CONVEY INFORMATION **VISUALLY**.



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



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



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



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



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



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




--THAT THE READER MIGHT LEARN TO *FLY?*



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




DO THESE AFFECT CLOSURE?



I THINK THE ANSWER IS *YES*.



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



IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER *SEAMLESSLY*.

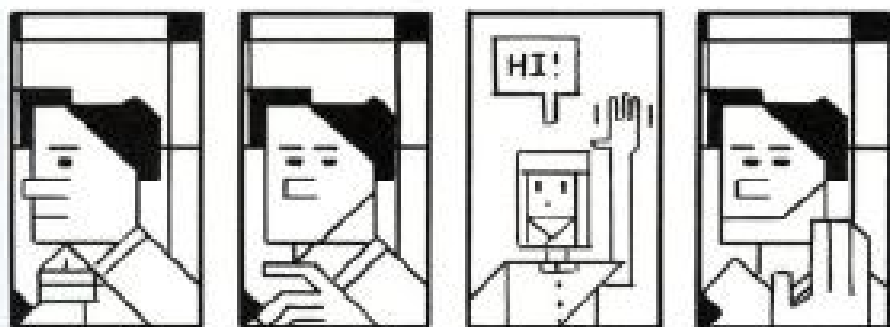
BUT *REALISTIC* IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY *VISUAL* EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



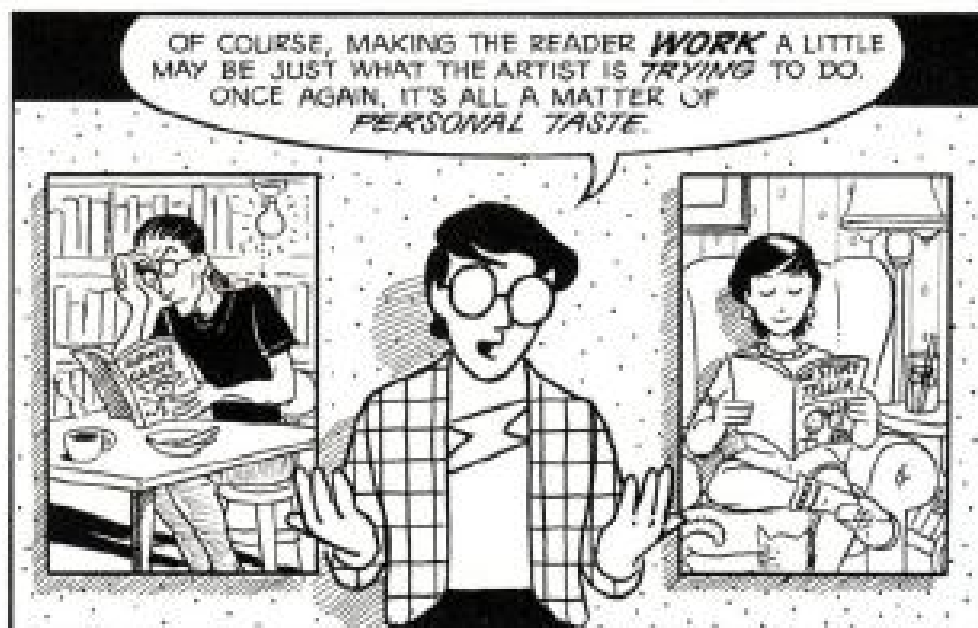
AND SO, WHAT SEEMED LIKE A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF MOMENTS IN THE LAST EXAMPLE, HERE LOOKS A LITTLE MORE LIKE A SERIES OF *STILL PICTURES*...

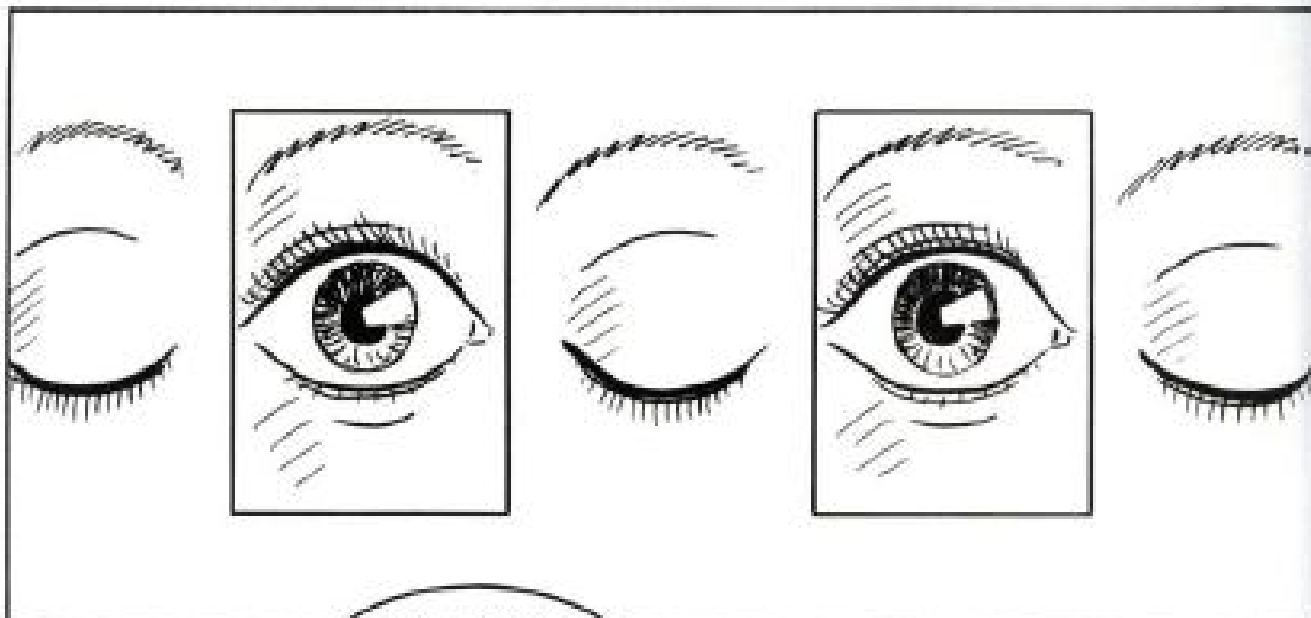


SIMILARLY, I THINK WHEN COMICS ART VEERS CLOSER TO CONCERNS OF THE *PICTURE PLANE*, CLOSURE CAN BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, THOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.



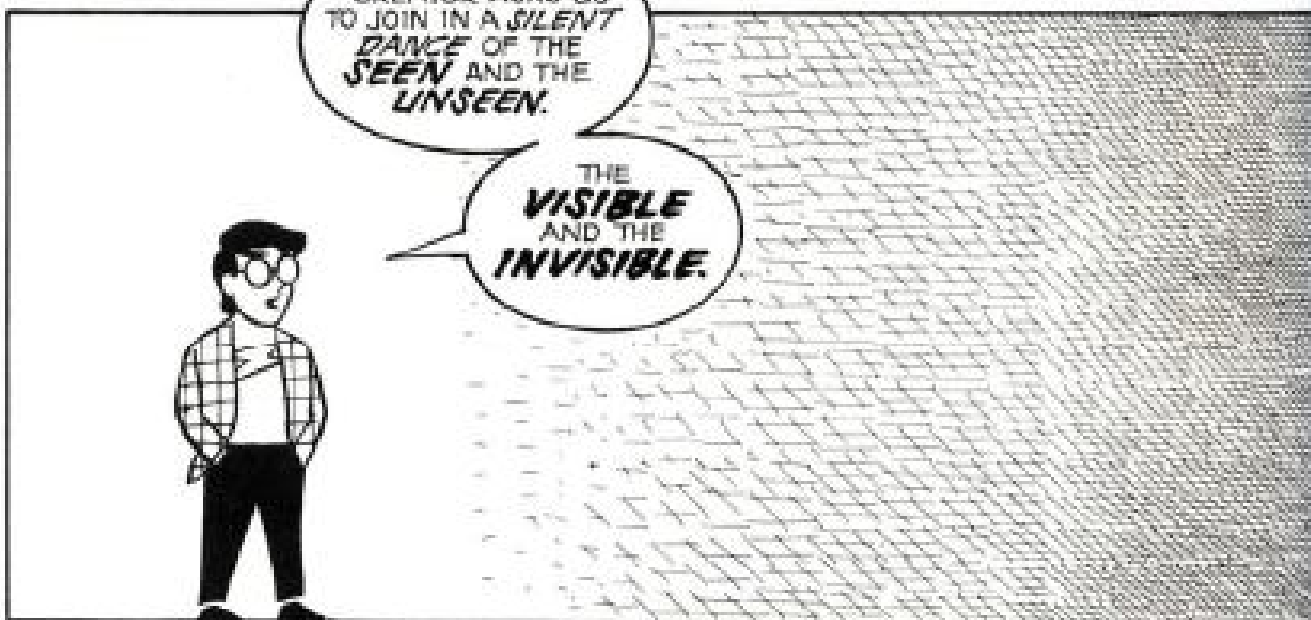
NOW IT'S THE *UNIFYING PROPERTIES OF DESIGN* THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A *WHOLE*, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE *PANELS*.





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

THE  
*VISIBLE*  
AND THE  
*INVISIBLE*.

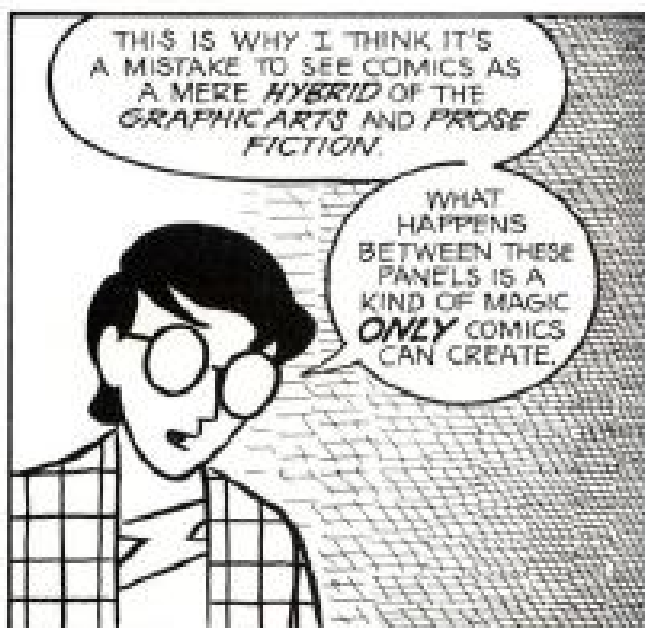


THIS DANCE IS *UNIQUE*  
TO COMICS. NO OTHER ARTFORM  
GIVES SO MUCH TO ITS AUDIENCE  
WHILE ASKING SO MUCH  
*FROM* THEM AS WELL.



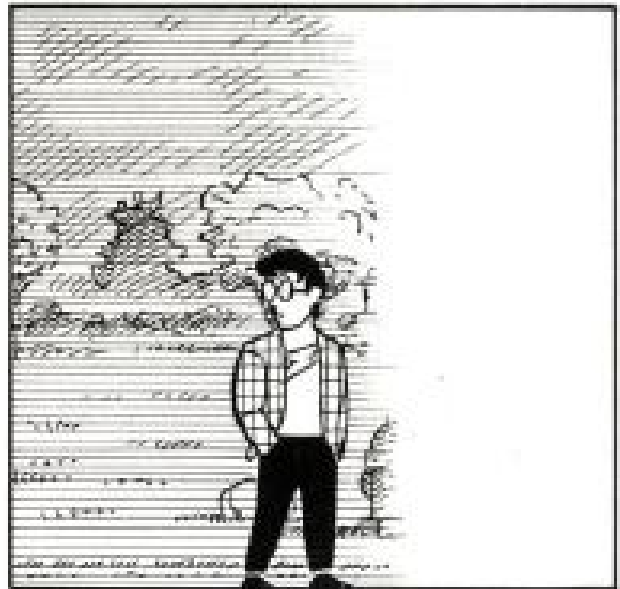
THIS IS WHY I THINK IT'S  
A MISTAKE TO SEE COMICS AS  
A MERE *HYBRID* OF THE  
GRAPHIC ARTS AND PROSE  
FICTION.

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





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

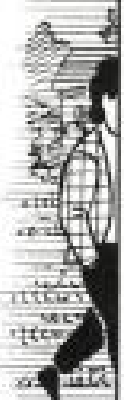


--JUST AS WE *ALL* ASSUME, *EVERY DAY* THAT THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN MEETS THE EYE.



ALL I ASK OF YOU IS A LITTLE *FAITH*--

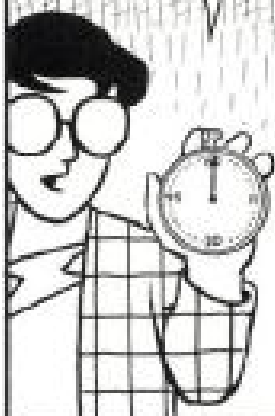
--AND A *WORLD* OF IMAGINATION.



## 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**.

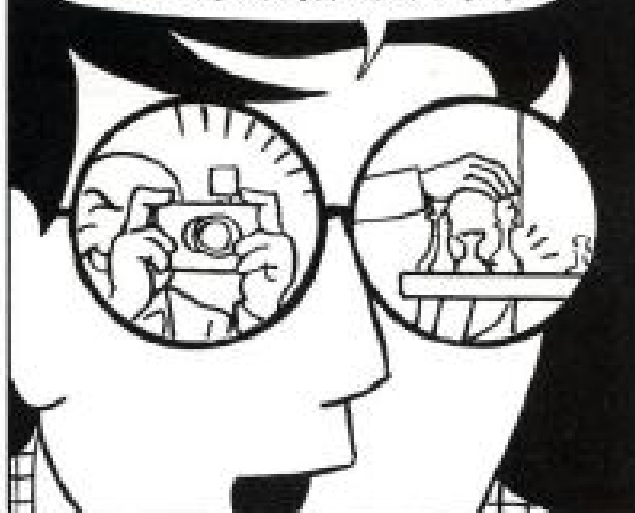




*BUT HOW COULD THIS BE ANYTHING BUT A SINGLE MOMENT? OUR EYES HAVE BEEN WELL-TRAINED BY THE PHOTOGRAPH AND BY REPRESENTATIONAL ART TO SEE ANY SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE AS A SINGLE INSTANT IN TIME.*



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 TURNS*.



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

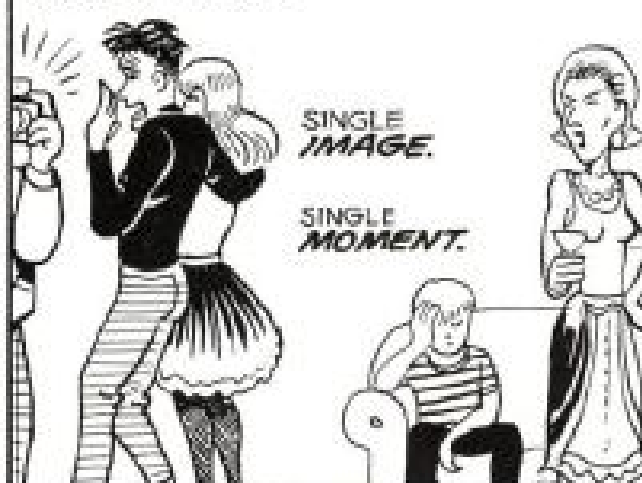
*SMILE!* *AAGH!* THAT FLASH IS BEING TAKEN, UNCLE HENRY! *PAF!* *HEE-HEE!*



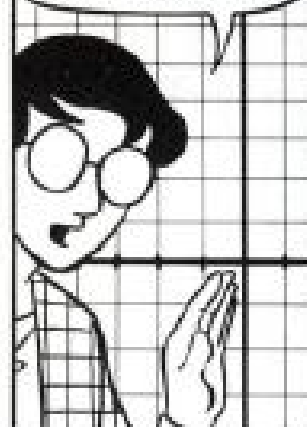
--THOSE FIGURES, FACES AND WORDS ARE MATCHED IN *TIME* AS WELL.



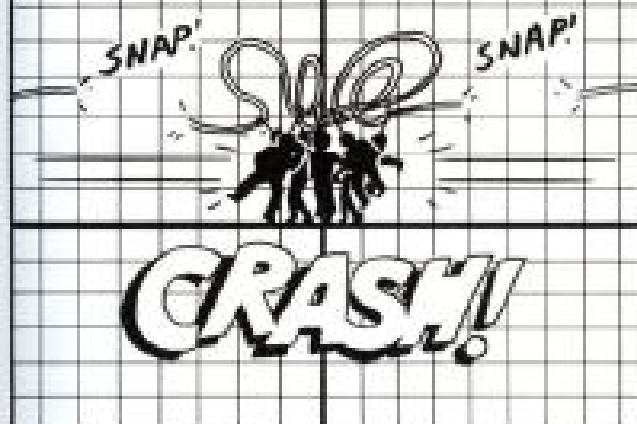
THE PROPERTIES OF THE SINGLE CONTINUOUS *IMAGE*, MEANWHILE, TEND TO MATCH EACH FIGURE WITH EVERY *OTHER* FIGURE.



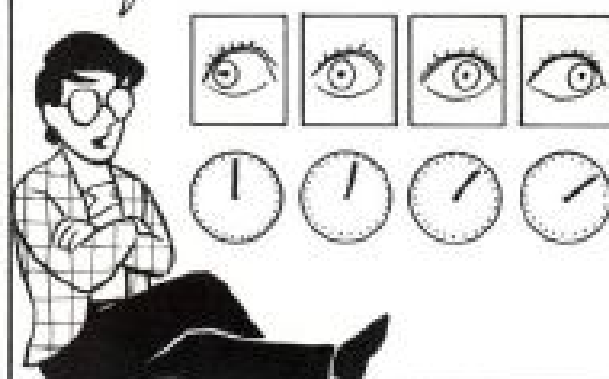
PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING *LEFT TO RIGHT*. THIS PUTS ALL THE *IMAGES* ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



AND *TANGLES UP TIME* BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!



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



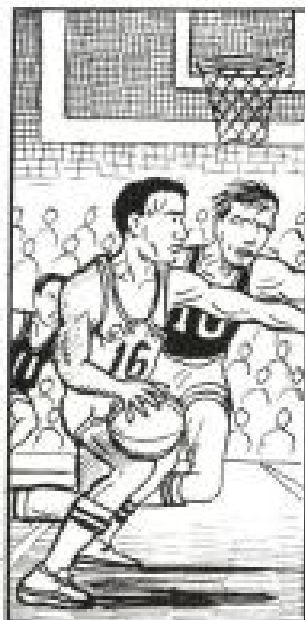
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM *LEFT TO RIGHT* IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL "*READ*" THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT *TIME SLOT*.



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

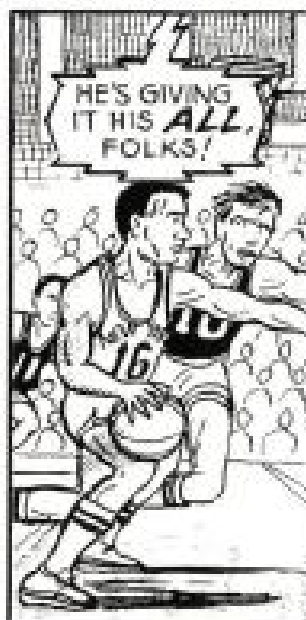


*ONE* PANEL, OPERATING AS *SEVERAL* PANELS.



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

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



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



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



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



ALL EXCEPT *ONE*.

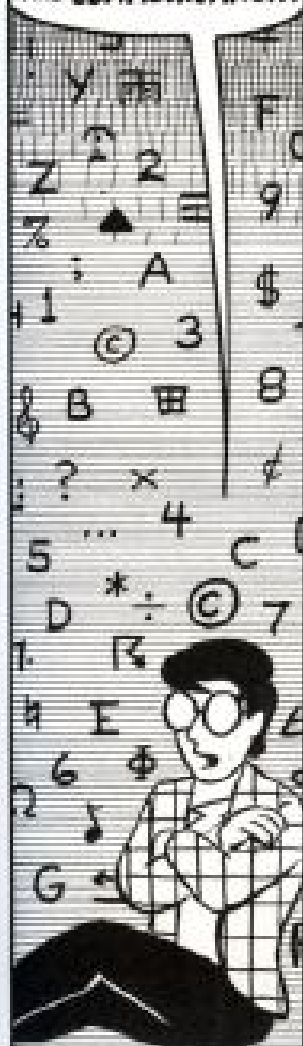


FOR JUST AS THE BODY'S LARGEST ORGAN -- OUR *SKIN* -- IS SELDOM *THOUGHT OF* AS AN ORGAN --



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

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**.



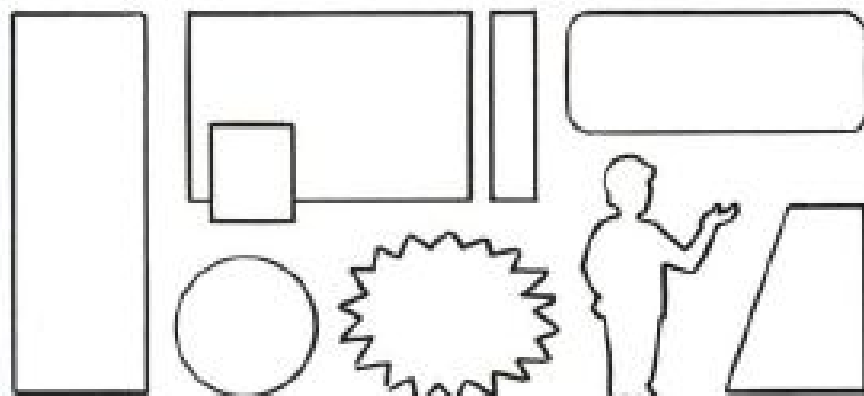
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT **TIME** OR **SPACE** IS BEING **DIVIDED**.



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**.

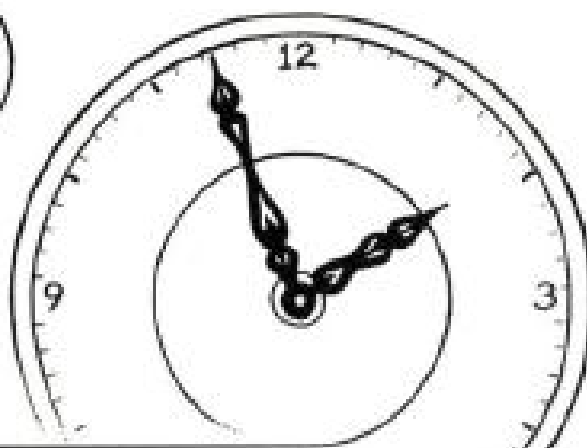


WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN **TIME** AS **DEPICTED** IN COMICS, AND **TIME** AS **PERCEIVED** BY THE **READER**.



\* BERNER, DISMISSES THIS DIVIDE THE MEANING "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*.



0 1 2 3 4 5 6

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 DO FOR GILLIGAN.



I GUESS.



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





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



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

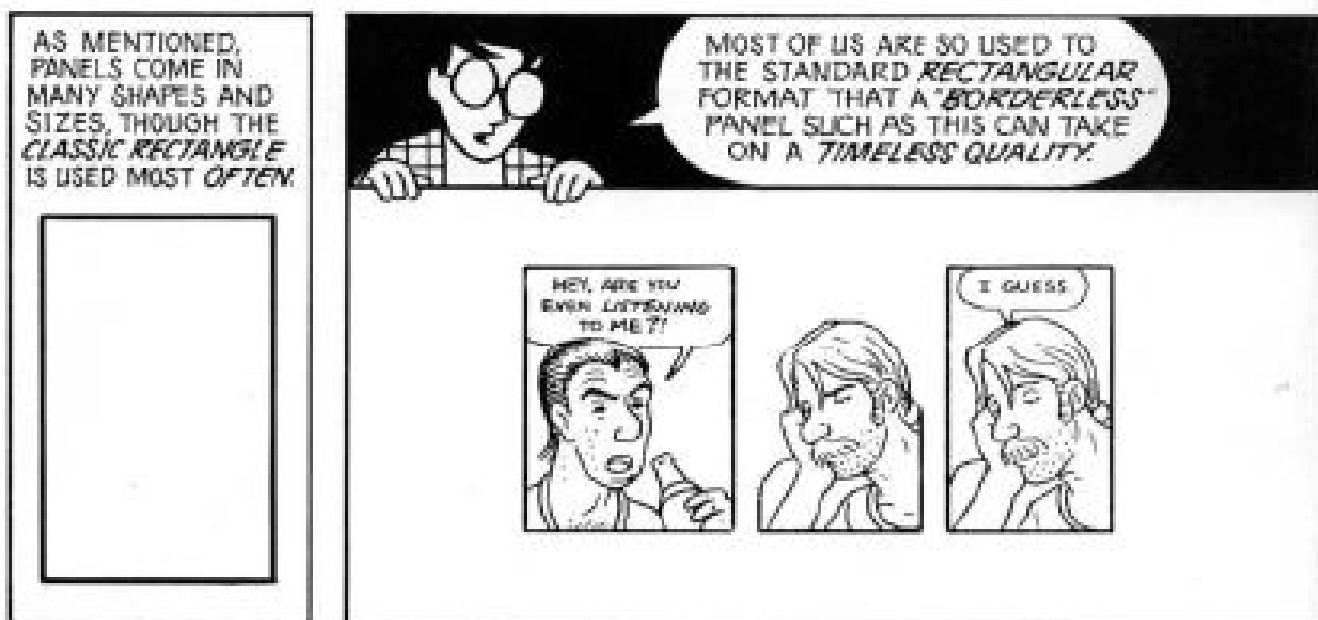
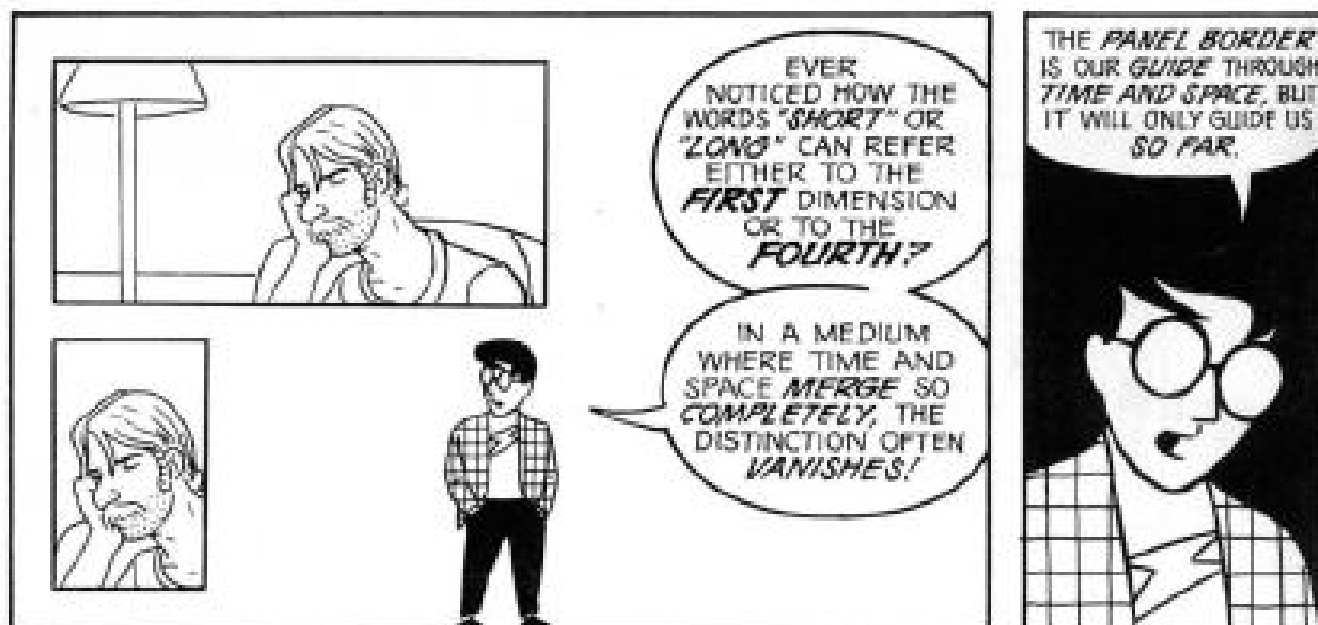


WE'VE SEEN HOW TIME CAN BE CONTROLLED THROUGH THE *CONTENT* OF PANELS, THE *NUMBER* OF PANELS AND CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS, BUT THERE'S STILL *ONE MORE*.



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

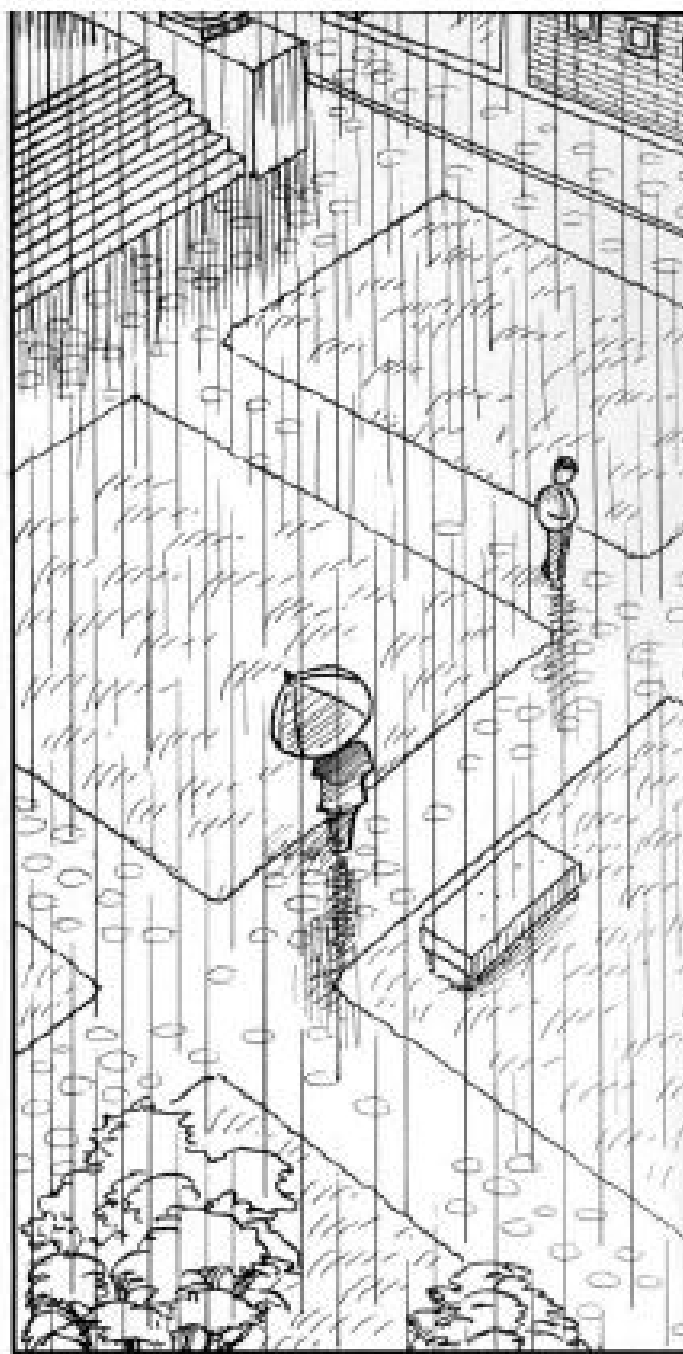
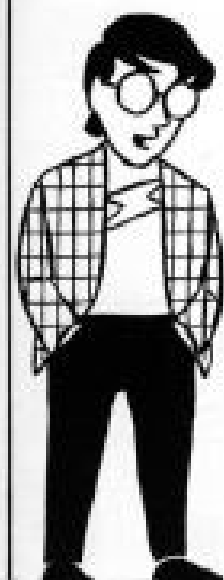






WHEN  
*"BLEEDS"* ARE  
USED -- I.E.,  
WHEN A PANEL  
RUNS OFF THE  
EDGE OF THE  
PAGE--THIS  
EFFECT IS  
COMPOUNDED.

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

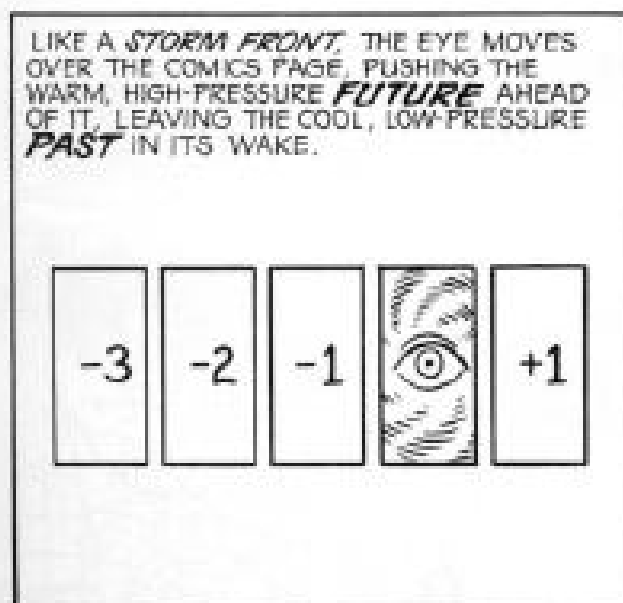


SUCH  
IMAGES CAN  
SET THE MOOD  
OR A SENSE OF  
PLACE FOR WHOLE  
SCENES THROUGH  
THEIR LINGERING  
TIMELESS  
PRESENCE.



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



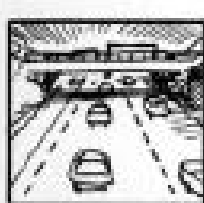
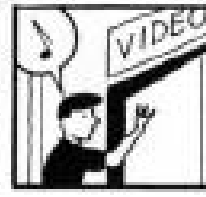





YET WE SELDOM **DO** CHANGE DIRECTION, EXCEPT TO **RE-READ** OR **REVIEW** PASSAGES. IT'S **LEFT-TO-RIGHT, UP-TO-DOWN, PAGE AFTER PAGE.**



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



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

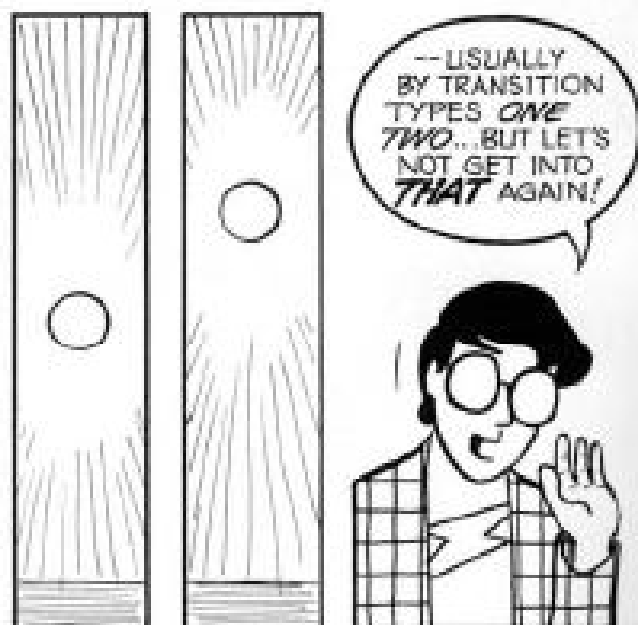
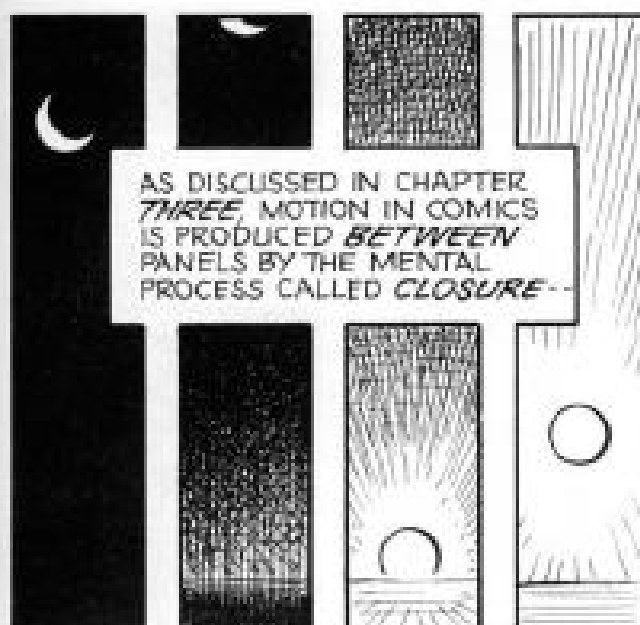
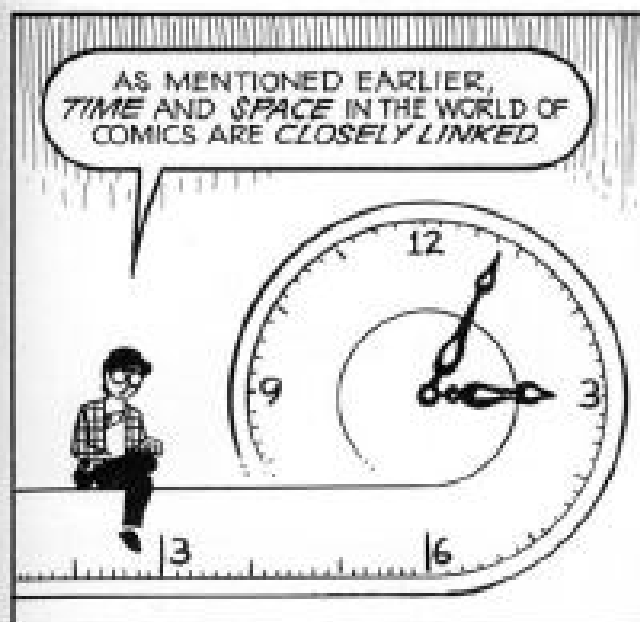


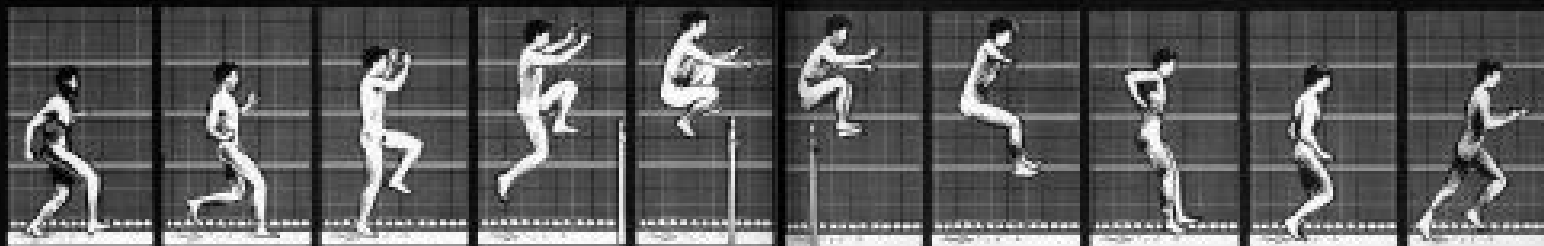
CONDITIONED AS WE ARE TO READ **LEFT-TO-RIGHT** AND **UP-TO-DOWN**, A MISCHIEVOUS CARTOONIST CAN PLAY ANY NUMBER OF **TRICKS** ON US.



THE INCRECIBLE MR. SPOT  
BROKE AGAIN!  
I'LL JUST BORROW SOME MONEY FROM MYSELF IN THE FUTURE!  
NOW I CAN GO OUT TO DINNER!  
HEY!







COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

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

BY 1888, INVENTING THE WORLD OVER WHEN THAT "MOVING PICTURES" WERE JUST AROUND THE CORNER, EVERYONE WANTED TO BE FIRST!

MY STROBOSCOPE IS SUPERIOR IN EVERY WAY TO THE DISCRETE ZODIAC!

BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOGRAPH! THEY ARE ALL BUT HERE COME NEXT TO THE AWESOME PHANTOMOGRAPH!

TRADES ALL? MY ZODIOPRAXINOSCOPE WILL!

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



IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A WORLD—

—FILLED WITH MOTION—

—THEY'VE GOT TO BE PREPARED TO PAINT MOTION!

DUCHAMP, MORE CONCERNED WITH THE *IDEA* OF MOTION THAN THE *TECHNIQUE*, 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 DISCOVERED THE IDEA THAT MOTION COULD BE DEPICTED BY A *SINGLE* IMAGE ON CANVAS.

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



Self Portrait on a Bicycle by Boccia



Bicycle Wheel by Duchamp

IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!



DUCHAMP SOON HEARD OK, THE FUTURISTS SUBMITTED AND FINE ARTISTS GENERALLY GOT INTERESTED IN THE *OTHER* TYPE OF MOVING PICTURE.

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

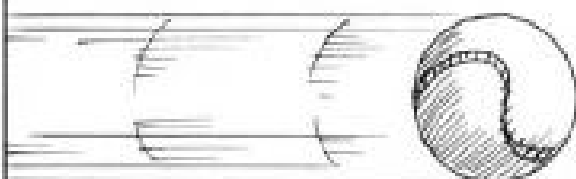


I'M SURE YOU CAN ALL GUESS WHICH MEDIUM I MEANT!





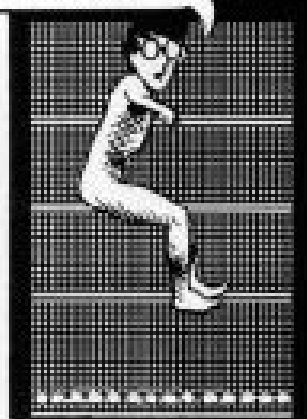
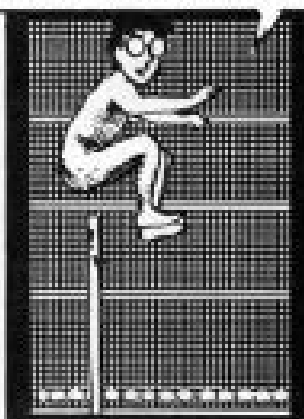
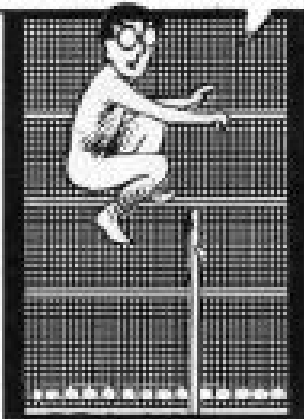
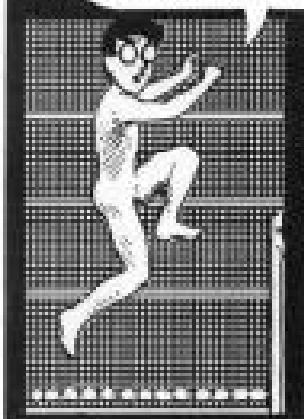
FROM ITS *EARLIEST DAYS*, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A *STATIC MEDIUM*.



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



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



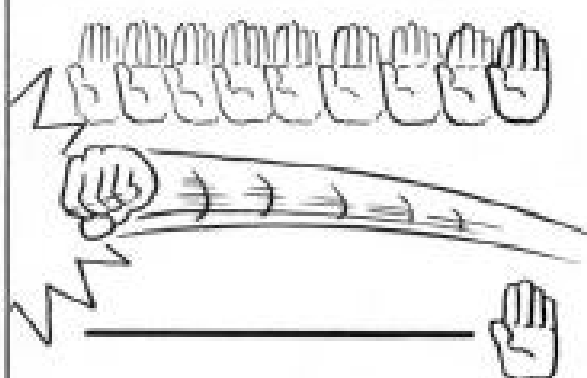
BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A *SPAN* OF TIME THROUGH *SOUND*--



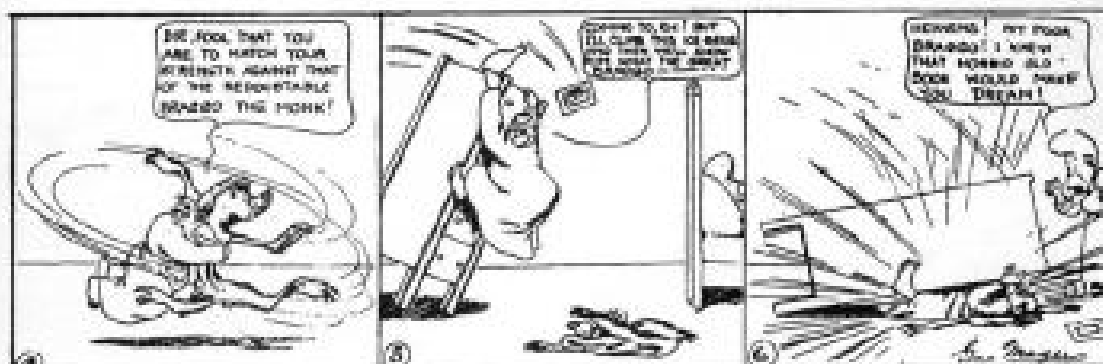
--SO TOO CAN A SINGLE PANEL REPRESENT A *SPAN* OF TIME THROUGH *PICTURES*!



SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE FUTURISTS' *DYNAMIC* MOVEMENT AND DUCHAMP'S DIAGRAMMATIC *CONCEPT* OF MOVEMENT LIES COMICS' *'MOTION LINE.'*



IN THE BEGINNING, MOTION LINES--OR "ZIP-RIBBONS" AS SOME CALL THEM--WERE *WILD, MESSY*, ALMOST **DESPERATE** ATTEMPTS TO REPRESENT THE PATHS OF MOVING OBJECTS THROUGH SPACE.



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**--



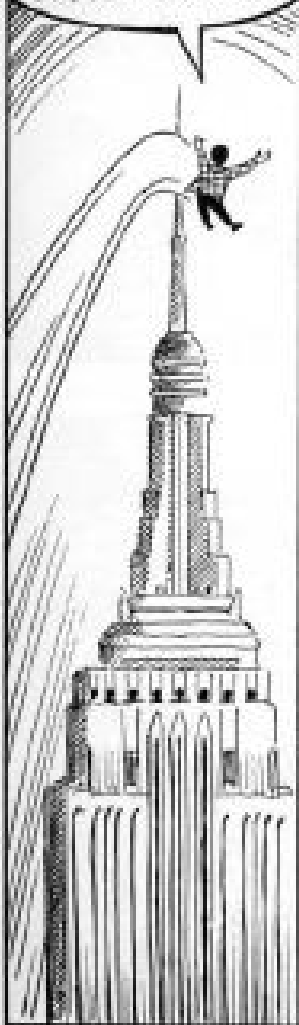
--THOSE SAME LINES BECAME **SO** STYLIZED AS TO ALMOST HAVE A *LIFE* AND *PHYSICAL PRESENCE* **ALL THEIR OWN!**







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 KRISTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

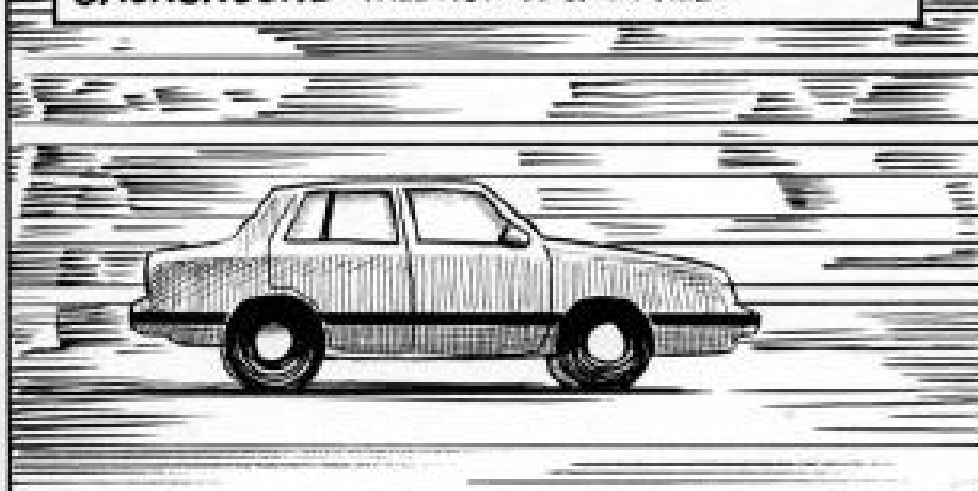
COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*, WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE, AN INTERESTING *BLURRING* EFFECT OCCURS.



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



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



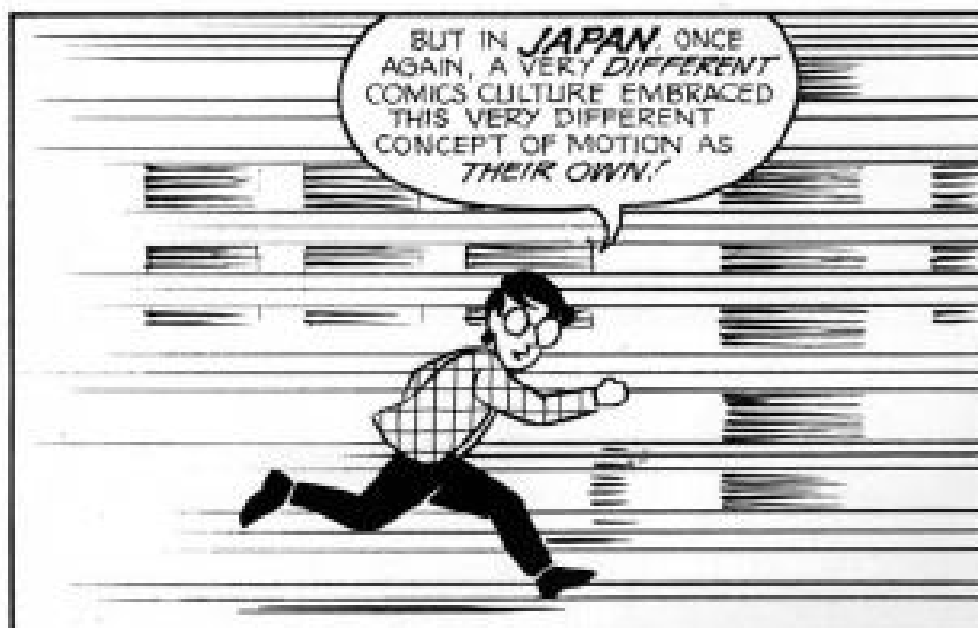
**AMERICAN** COMICS ARTISTS TOOK LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THIS KIND OF *PHOTOGRAPHIC TRICKERY*.



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



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



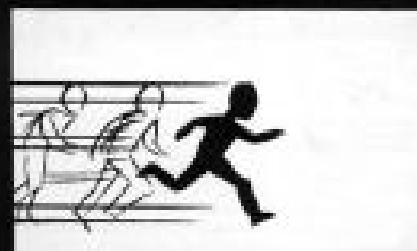
"SUBJECTIVE MOTION," AS I CALL IT, OPERATES ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IF OBSERVING A MOVING OBJECT CAN BE INVOLVING, *BEING* THAT OBJECT SHOULD BE *MORE* SO.

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

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

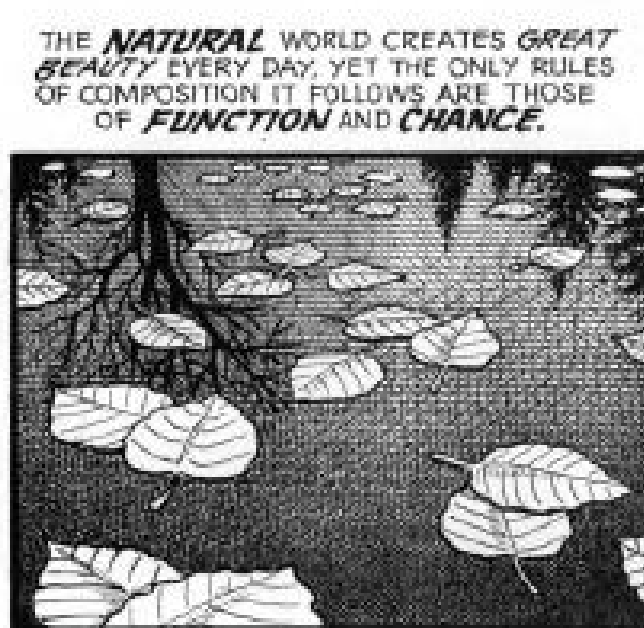


© 1994 SHOGUN

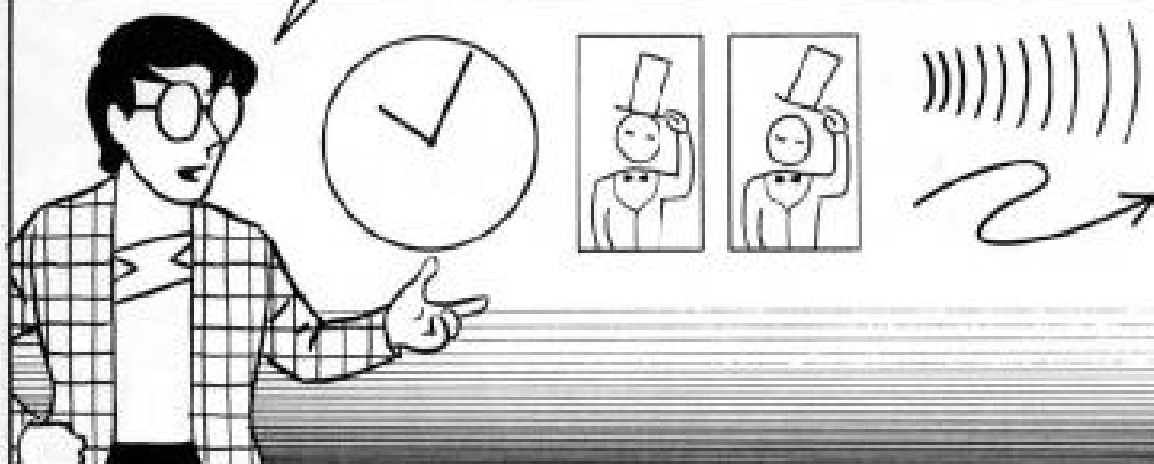


ARE THESE THE *ONLY* WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A *SINGLE PANEL*? THINK ABOUT IT.





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



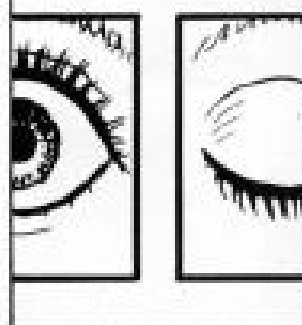
*SOUND* BREAKS DOWN INTO *TWO* SUBSETS: ***WORD BALLOONS*** AND ***SOUND EFFECTS***.



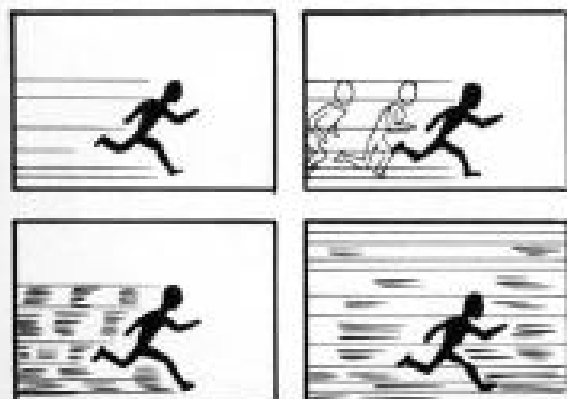
BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE ***DURATION*** OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF *SOUND ITSELF* AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF ***ACTION*** AND ***REACTION***.



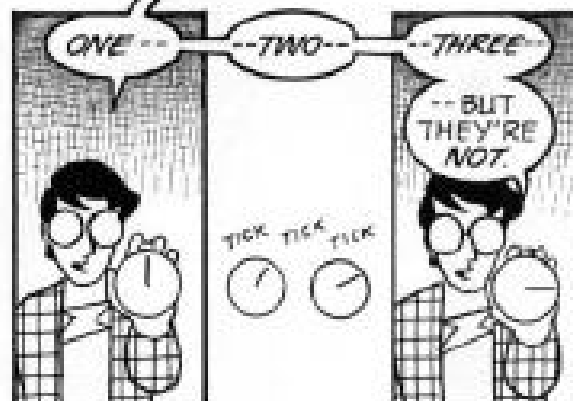
*MOTION* ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO *TWO* SUBSETS. THE ***FIRST*** TYPE-- ***PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE***-- WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN CHAPTER.



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



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



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

SNAP! SNAP!  
**CRASH!**

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

--THE FACE  
IT PRESENTS TO  
THE *READER*--

-- IS ONE  
OF SIMPLE  
*NORMALITY*.

CLAK

OR THE  
*ILLUSION* OF IT,  
ANYWAY.

ALL  
DEPENDS ON  
YOUR *FRAME*  
OF MIND.

## CHAPTER FIVE

LIVING IN LINE.

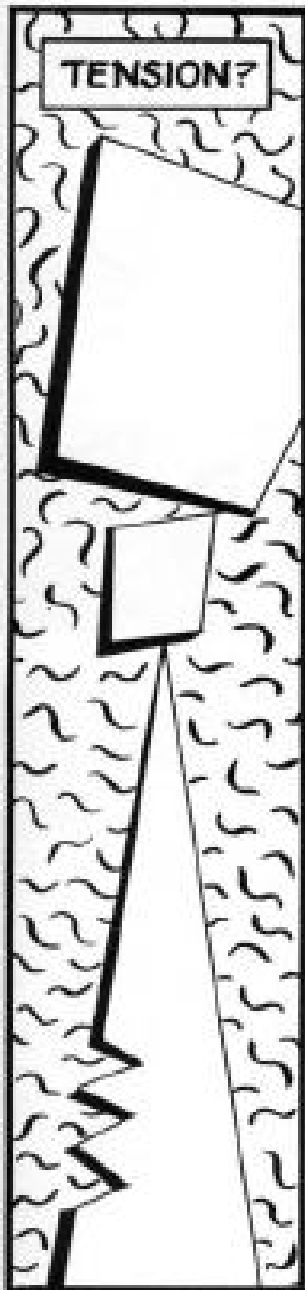
CAN  
EMOTIONS  
BE MADE  
*VISIBLE?*

IS THIS **ANGER?**

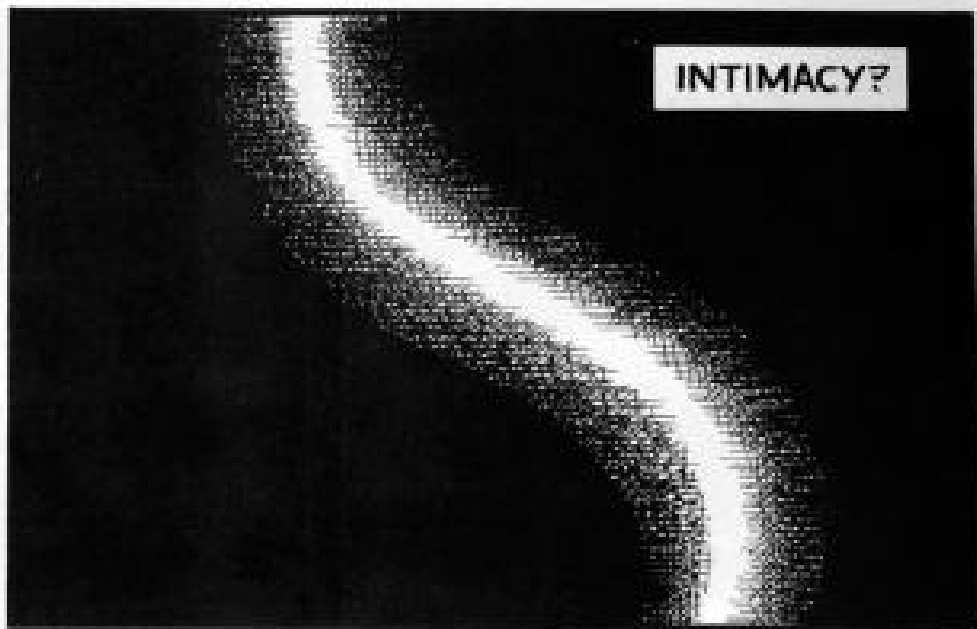
**JOY?**

**SERENITY?**

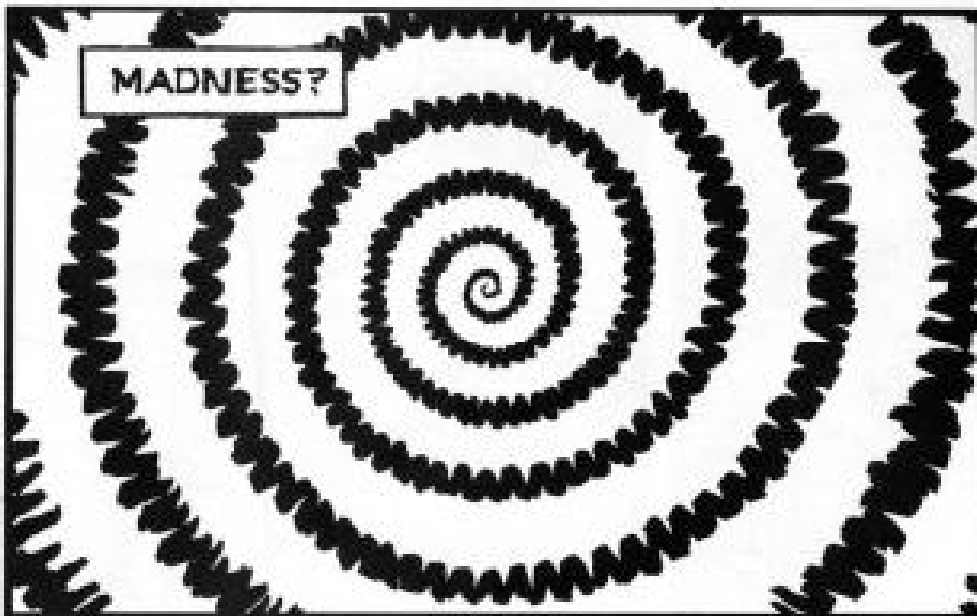
TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?



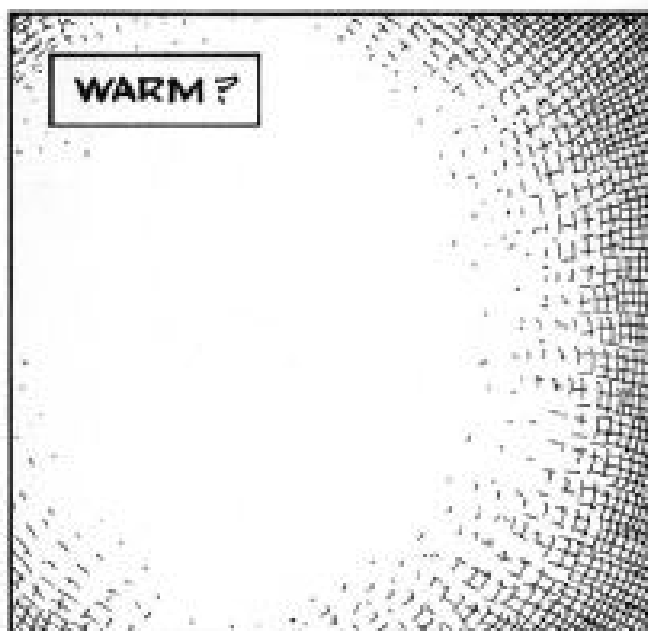
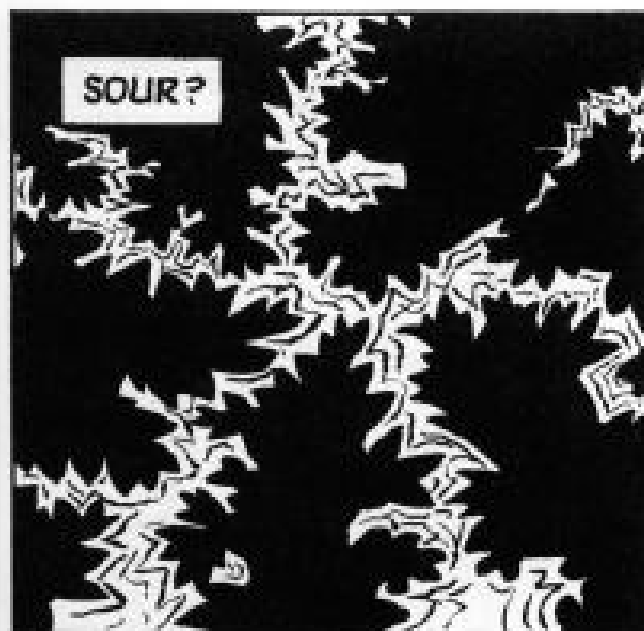
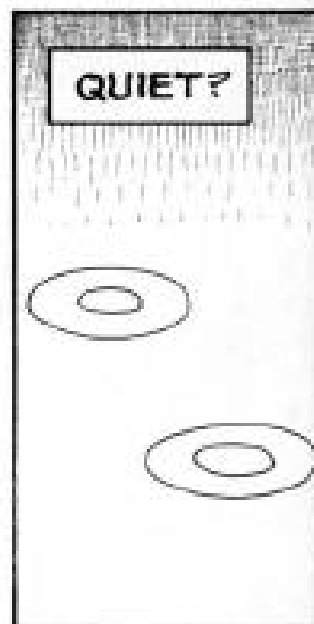
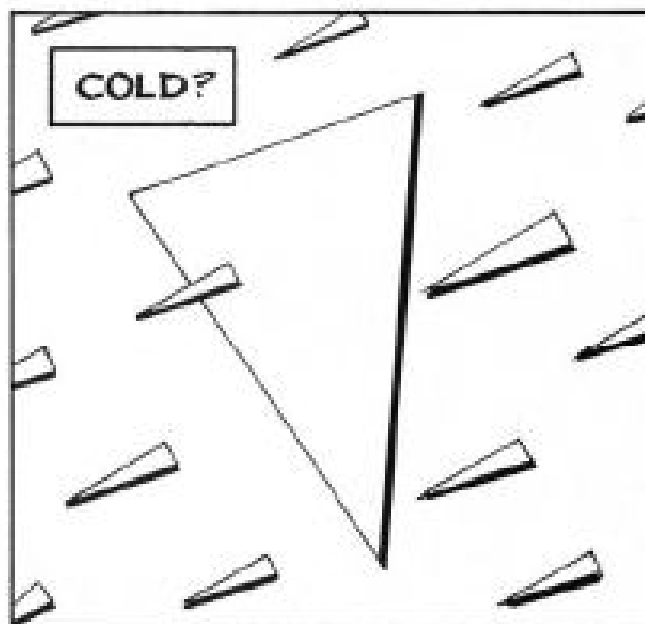
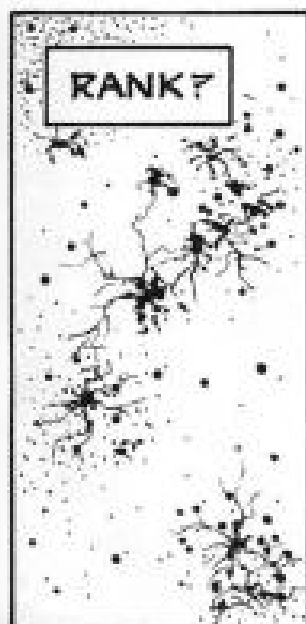
PRIDE?



ANXIETY?

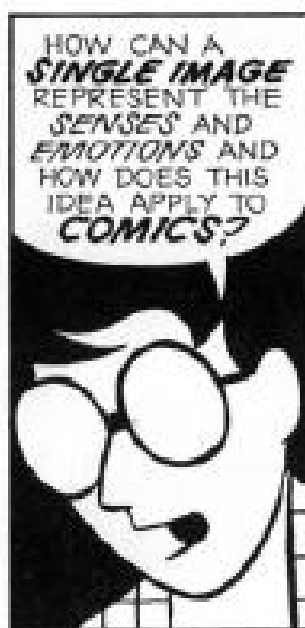








SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS.





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



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



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



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



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



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



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

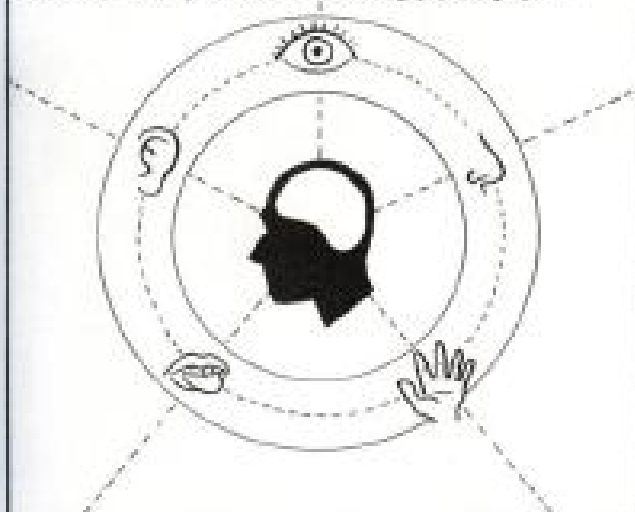


ANGRY REDS...  
PLACID BLUES...  
ANXIOUS TEXTURES...  
LOUD SHAPES...  
QUIET LINES...  
COLD GREENS...

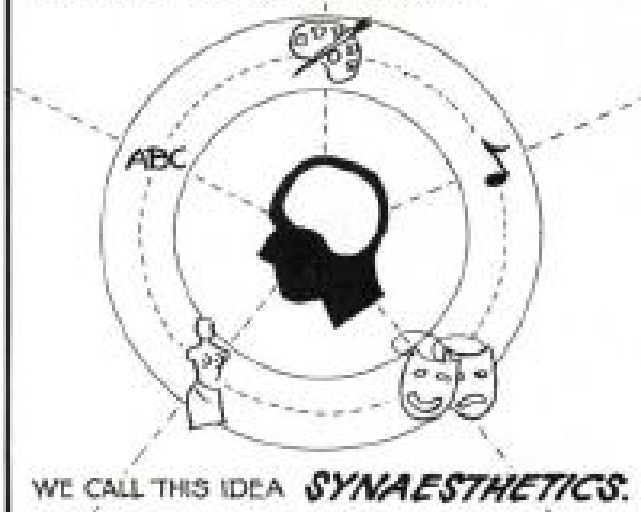
THESE WERE  
STRANGE IDEAS  
IN 1912!



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



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



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



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

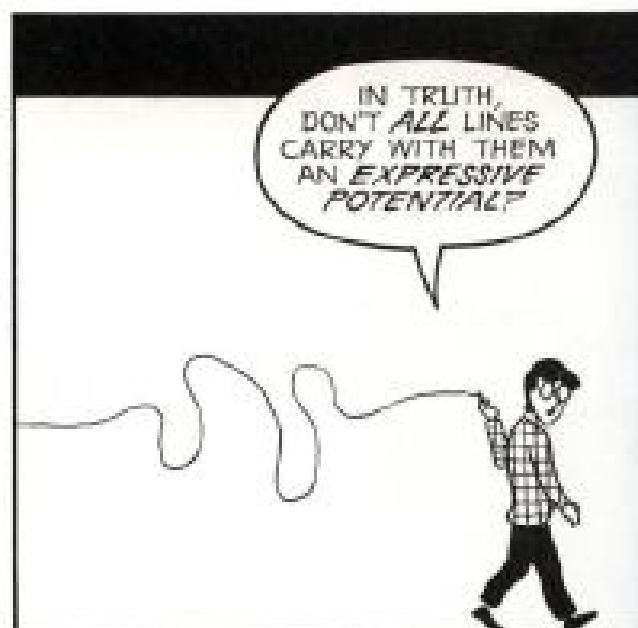
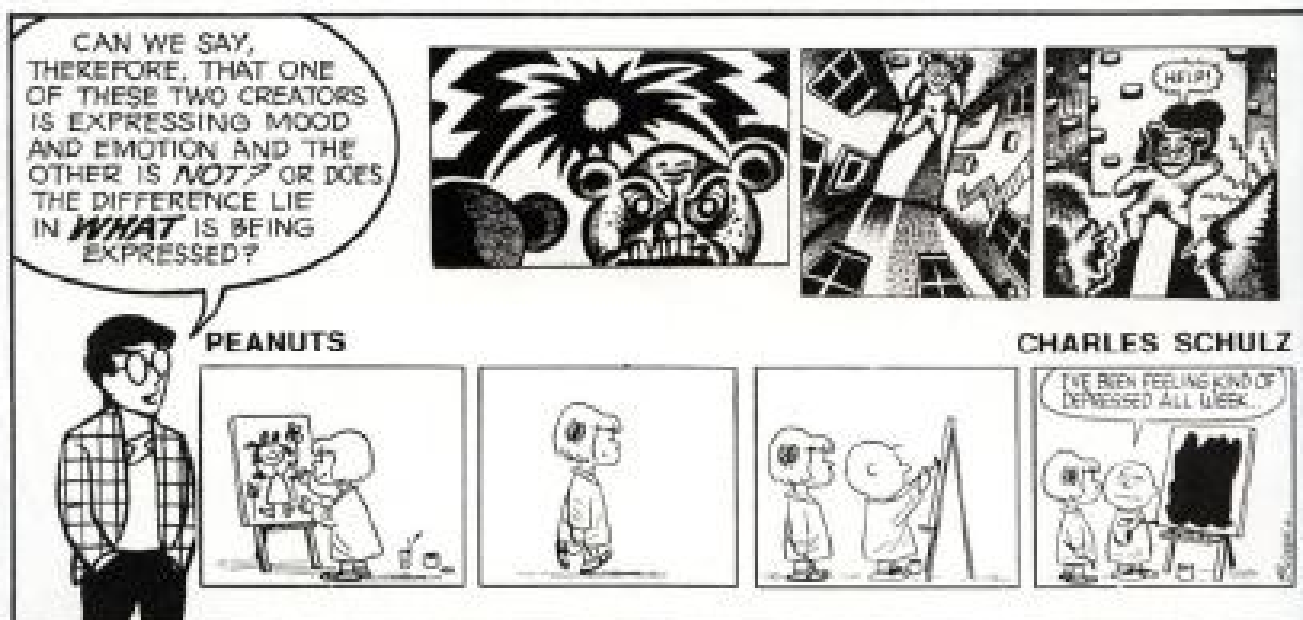
-- PAUL KLEE  
PAINTER,  
TEACHER,  
CARTOONIST.



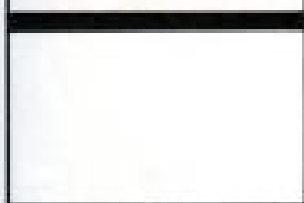
ART HISTORIANS HAVE GENERALLY HELD THAT WHILE *PAINTERS, MUSICIANS* AND *POETS* HAVE GRAPPLED WITH SUCH IDEAS, PRACTITIONERS OF THE "LOW" ART OF *COMICS* HAVE REMAINED *BLISSFULLY IGNORANT* OF THEM.

BUT  
HAVE  
THEY?

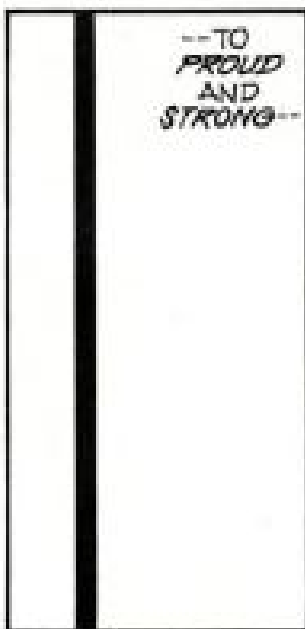
1880 1890 1900 1910 1920



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



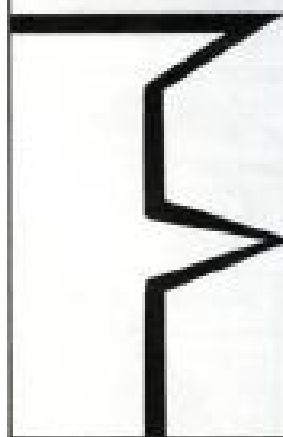
--TO  
PROUD  
AND  
STRONG--



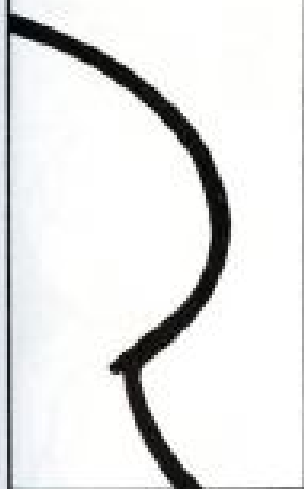
--TO  
DYNAMIC  
AND  
CHANGING!



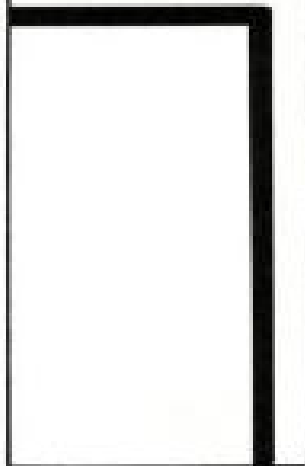
BY ITS  
SHAPE, IT  
CAN BE  
UNWELCOMING  
AND SEVERE--



--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 QUILL-LINES** OF **MODERN ADULTHOOD**, AND LEFT **PAINFULLY OUT OF PLACE**--



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



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



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



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



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



IN *JOSE MUÑOZ'S* WORK, **DENSE PUDDLES OF INK** AND **FRAYING 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**.

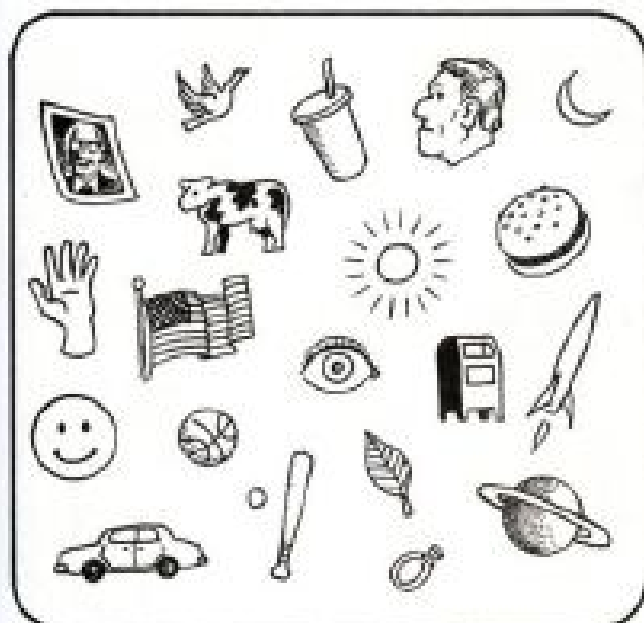


IN *SPIEGELMAN'S* "**PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET**," **DELIBERATELY EXPRESSIONISTIC LINES** **DEPICT A TRUE-LIFE HORROR STORY**.



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





A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4
?	:	!	*
田	森	雨	石
+	=	×	÷
\$	%	©	¢
♩	♪	♫	♬

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 LIVES**  
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**--



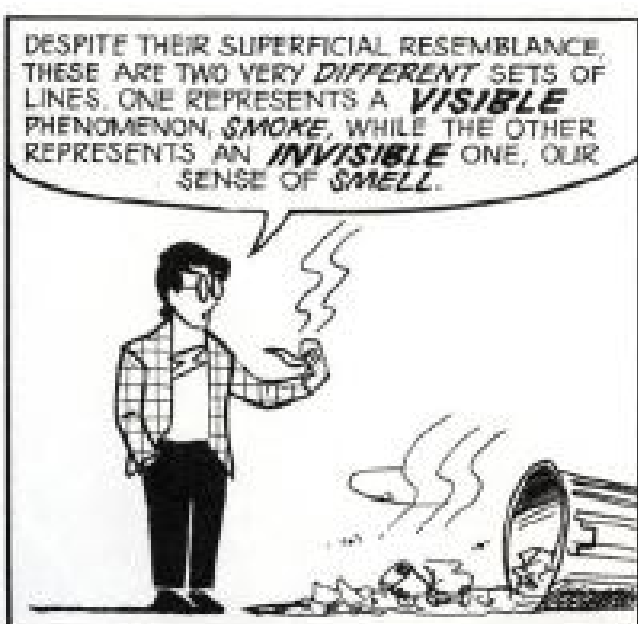
--ASSUMING  
IT **IS** A  
PIPE--



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







NOW, YOU'LL NOTICE  
*COUGH!* *ANEM!*  
YOU'LL NOTICE A  
FEW *WAVY LINES*  
RISING FROM THE  
PIPE.

THIS IS THE ARTIST'S  
*CARTOONY* WAY OF  
TELLING YOU THERE'S  
*SMOKE* COMING FROM  
THE PIPE. YOU'VE  
ALL SEEN IT BEFORE,  
RIGHT?

NOW, LET'S SUPPOSE  
THAT MY PIPE AND I  
HAVE GONE FOR A  
LITTLE *WALK*--

--AND  
COME ACROSS  
AN *OVERTURNED*  
*GARBAGE*  
*CAN*.

THE STRONG SMELL  
OF *ROTTEN GARBAGE*  
CAN'T BE *SEEN*,  
YET HERE'S *ANOTHER*  
PRETTY SIMILAR  
SET OF *WAVY*  
*LINES*.

DESPITE THEIR SUPERFICIAL RESEMBLANCE,  
THESE ARE TWO VERY *DIFFERENT* SETS OF  
LINES. ONE REPRESENTS A *VISIBLE*  
PHENOMENON, *SMOKE*, WHILE THE OTHER  
REPRESENTS AN *INVISIBLE* ONE, OUR  
SENSE OF *SMELL*.

NOT REALLY A  
*PICTURE* ANYMORE,  
THESE LINES ARE  
MORE A *VISUAL*  
*METAPHOR*--  
A *SYMBOL*.

AND  
SYMBOLS ARE  
THE BASIS OF  
*LANGUAGE!*

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*.

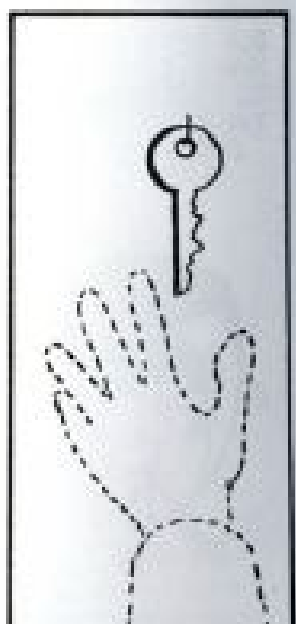
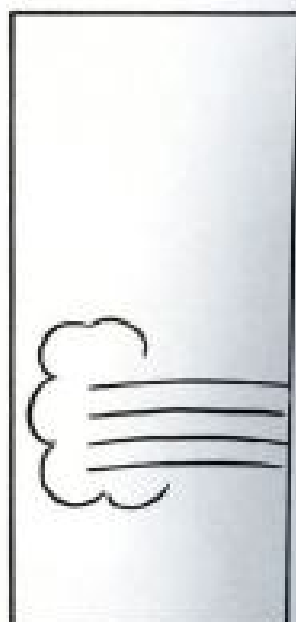


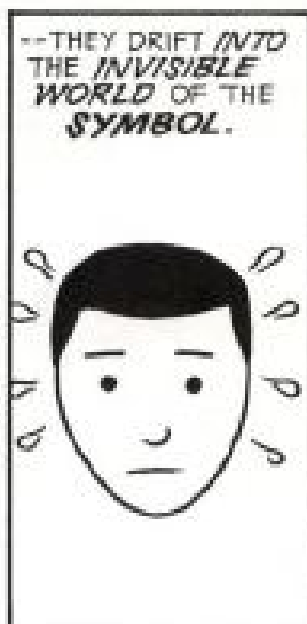
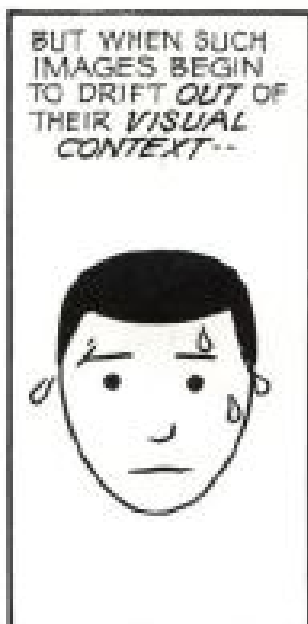
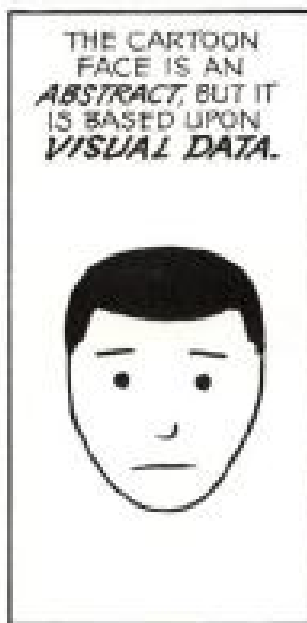
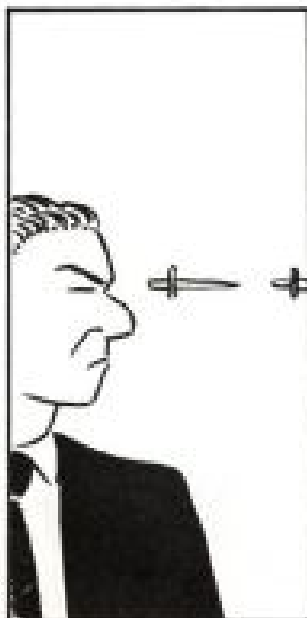
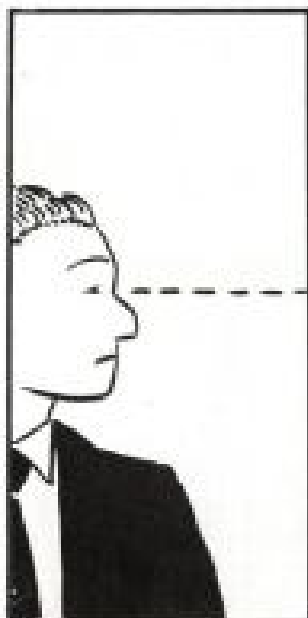
WHENEVER AN ARTIST  
INVENTS A NEW WAY  
TO *REPRESENT THE*  
*INVISIBLE*, THERE IS  
ALWAYS A CHANCE  
THAT IT WILL BE  
*PICKED UP BY*  
*OTHER ARTISTS*.



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

--AS MANY  
*HAVE* THROUGH  
THE YEARS.





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

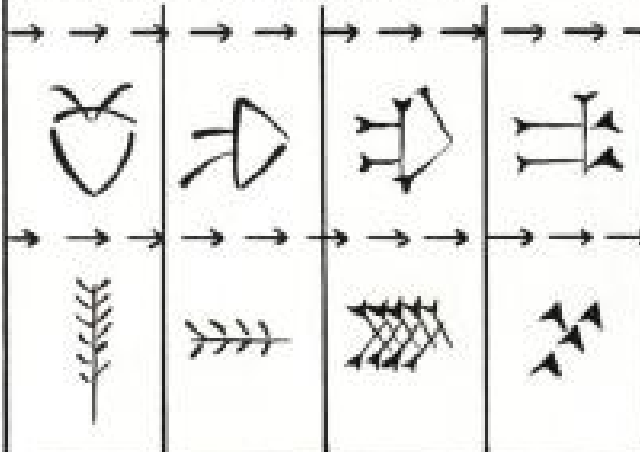


OX



GRAIN

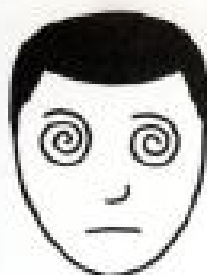
THESE FIRST SYMBOLS -- *CARTOONS*, REALLY -- GRADUALLY EVOLVED AWAY FROM *ANY* RESEMBLANCE TO THEIR SUBJECT, TOWARD THE HIGHLY ABSTRACTED FORMS OF MODERN LANGUAGES...



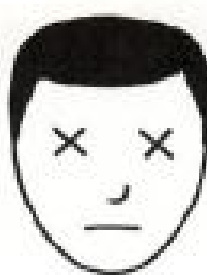
...AND EVENTUALLY TO OUR *TOTALLY* ABSTRACT *SOUND-BASED* SYSTEM.



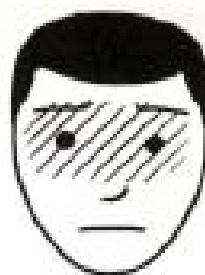
THE LONGER ANY FORM OF ART OR COMMUNICATION EXISTS, THE MORE *SYMBOLS* IT ACCUMULATES.



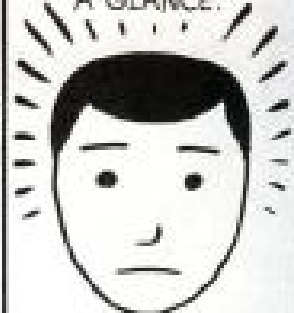
THE MODERN COMIC IS A YOUNG LANGUAGE, BUT IT ALREADY HAS AN *IMPRESSIVE ARRAY* OF *RECOGNIZABLE* *SYMBOLS*.



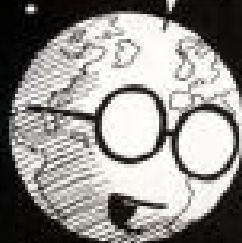
AND THIS *VISUAL VOCABULARY* HAS AN *UNLIMITED* *POTENTIAL* FOR *GROWTH*.



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



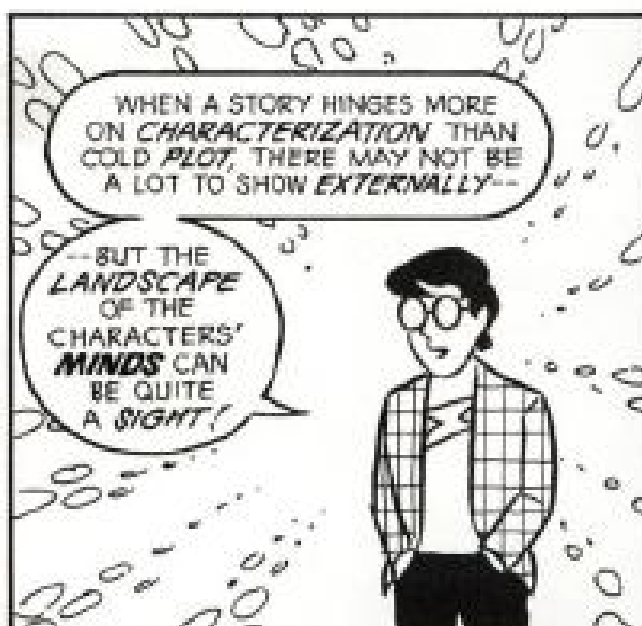
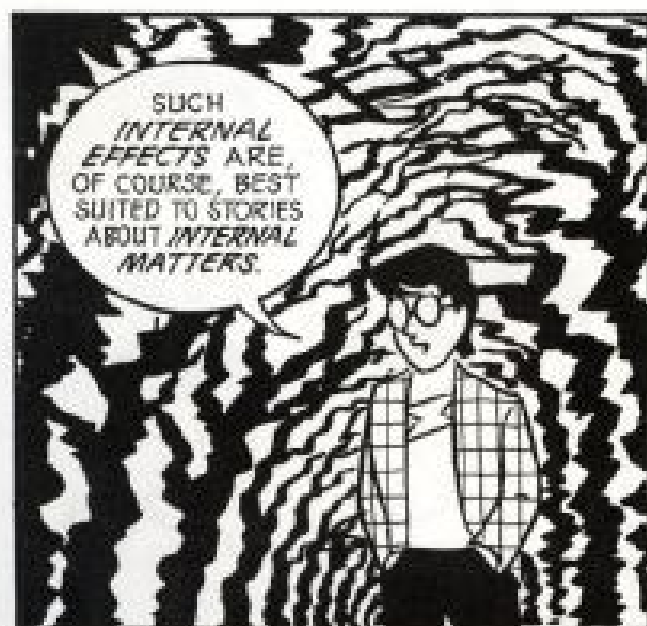
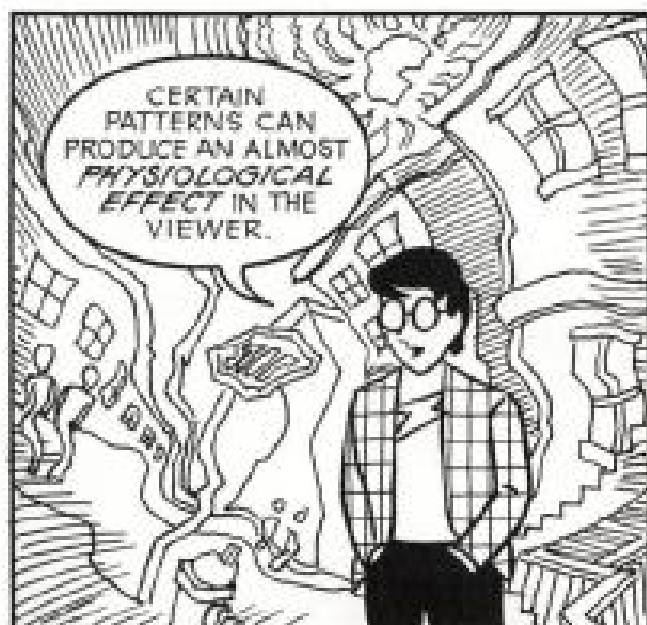
DEMENTIA



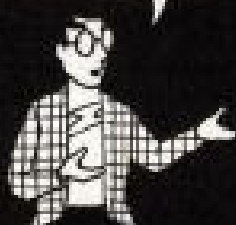
SLEEP



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*.



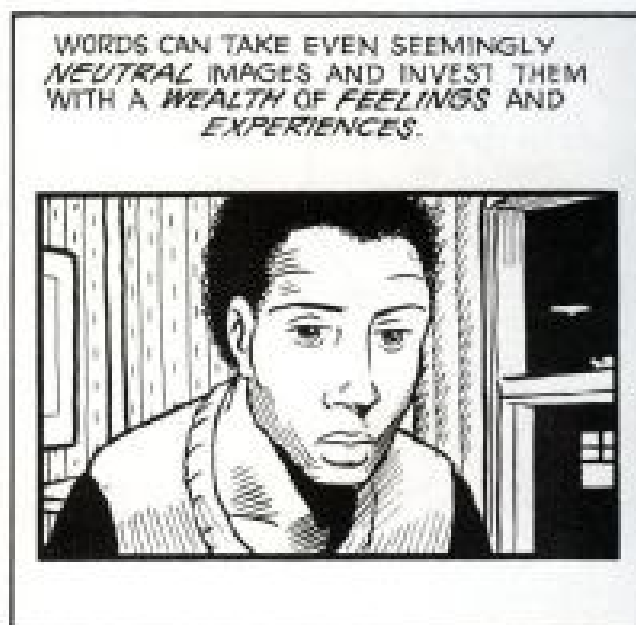
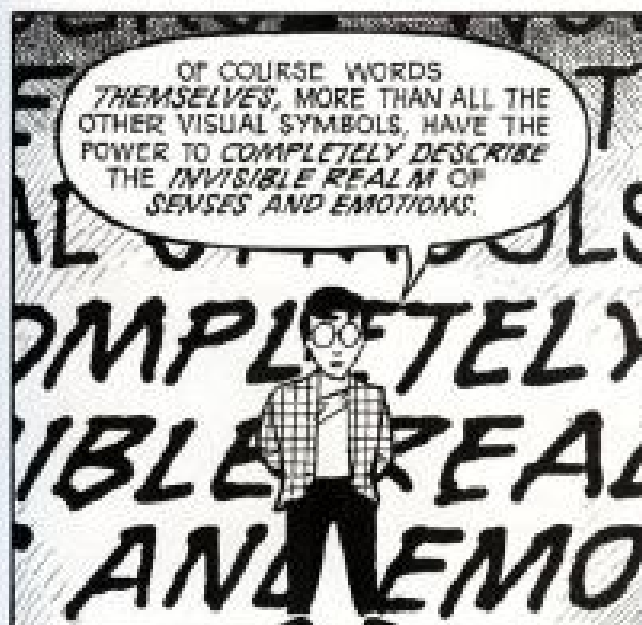
CREATORS WHO  
USE THESE EFFECTS  
MAY NEED TO *CLARIFY*  
WHAT IS BEING SHOWN,  
HOWEVER.



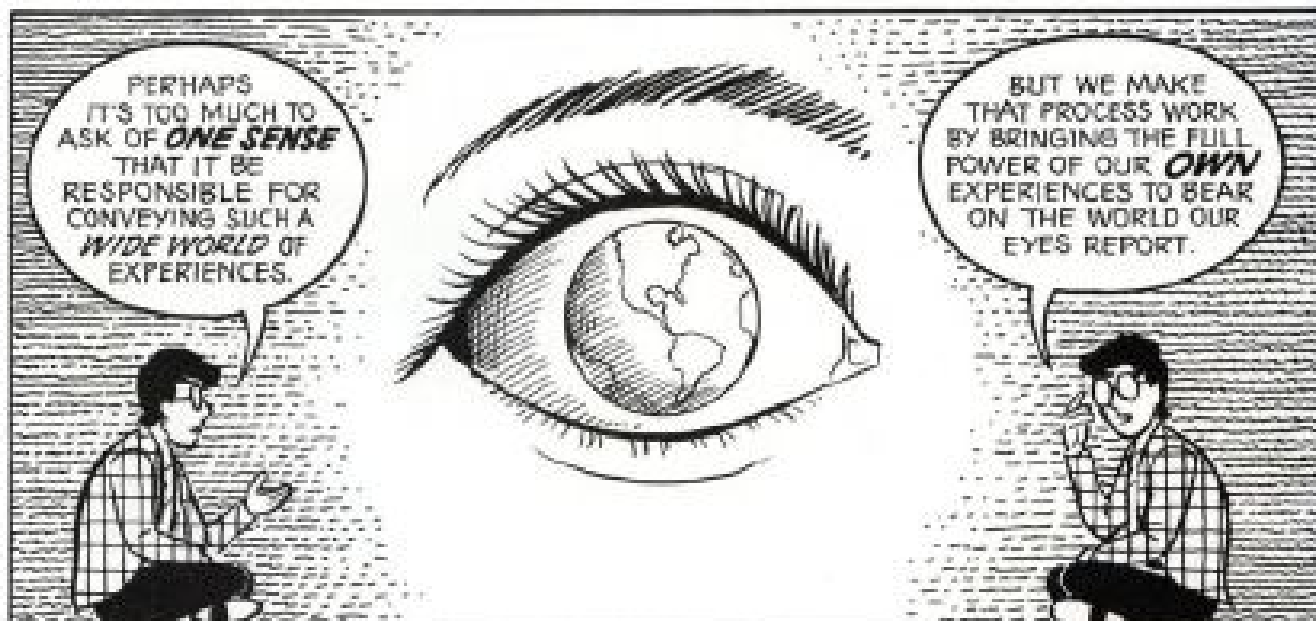
EITHER THROUGH  
THE *CONTENT* OF  
*SURROUNDING SCENES*  
OR, OF COURSE,  
THROUGH *WORDS*.



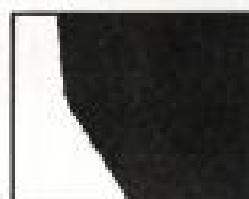
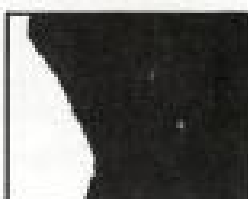
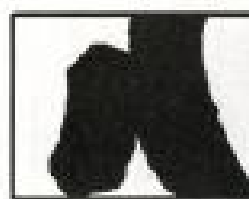
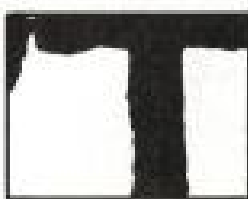
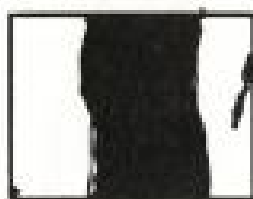
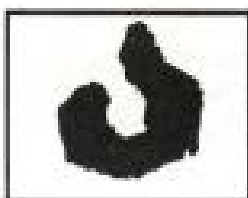
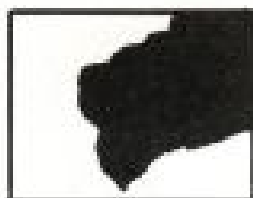








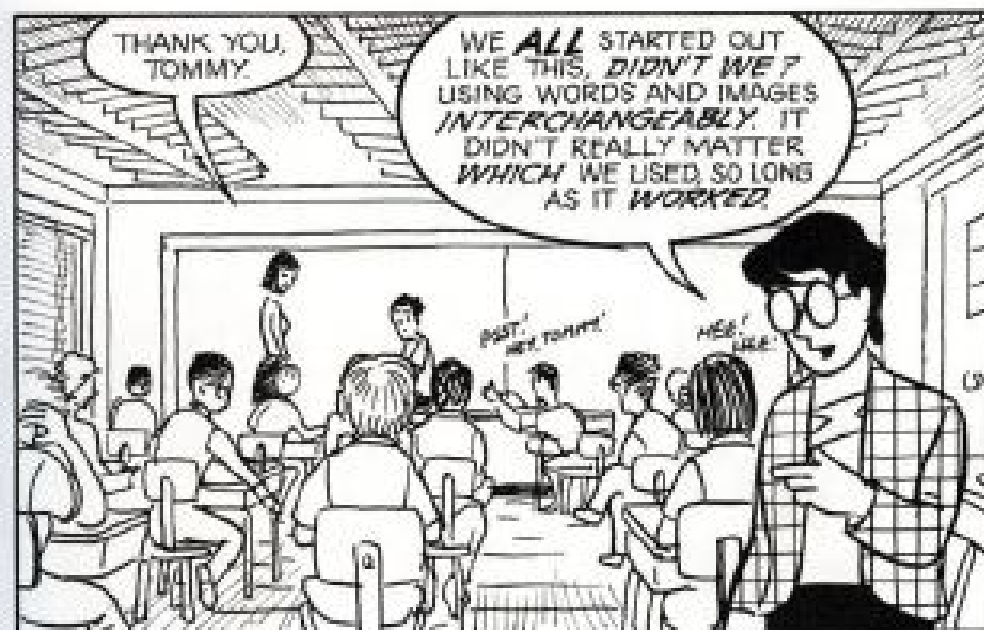
IN THE  
END, WHAT  
YOU **GET** IS  
WHAT YOU  
**GIVE.**



## CHAPTER SIX

### SHOW AND TELL.





[illegible]

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



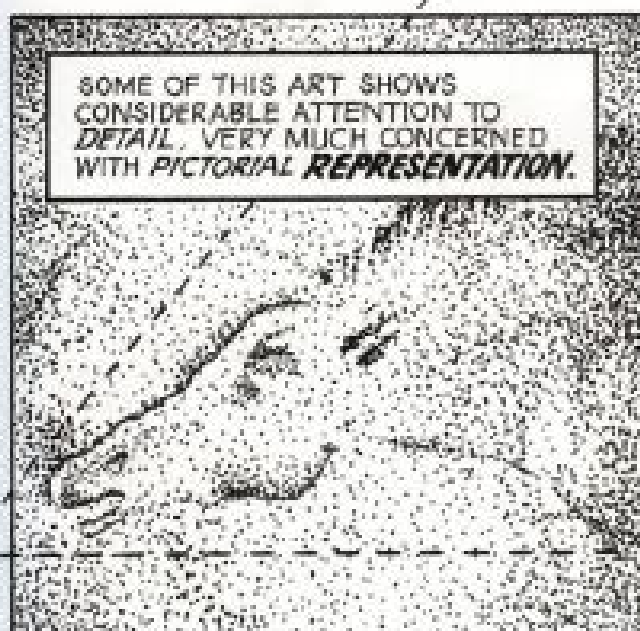
THEN, AS WE GREW,  
WE WERE EXPECTED  
TO GRADUATE TO  
BOOKS WITH MUCH  
*MORE* TEXT AND  
ONLY *OCCASIONAL*  
PICTURES--

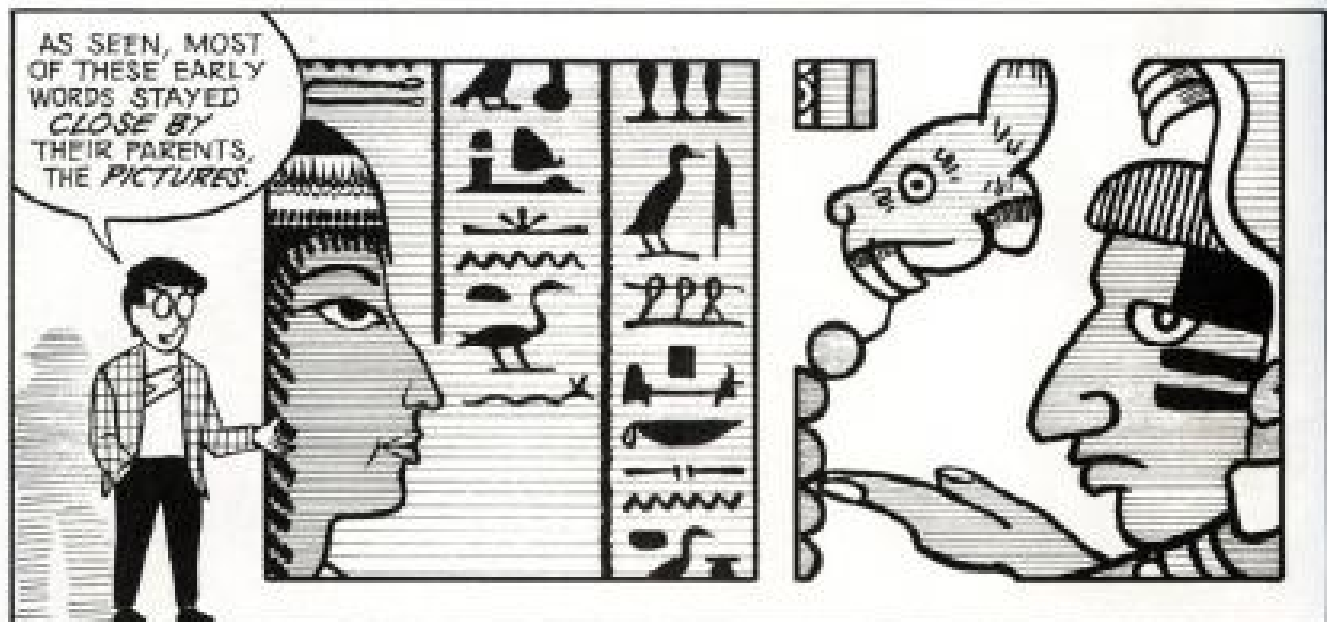
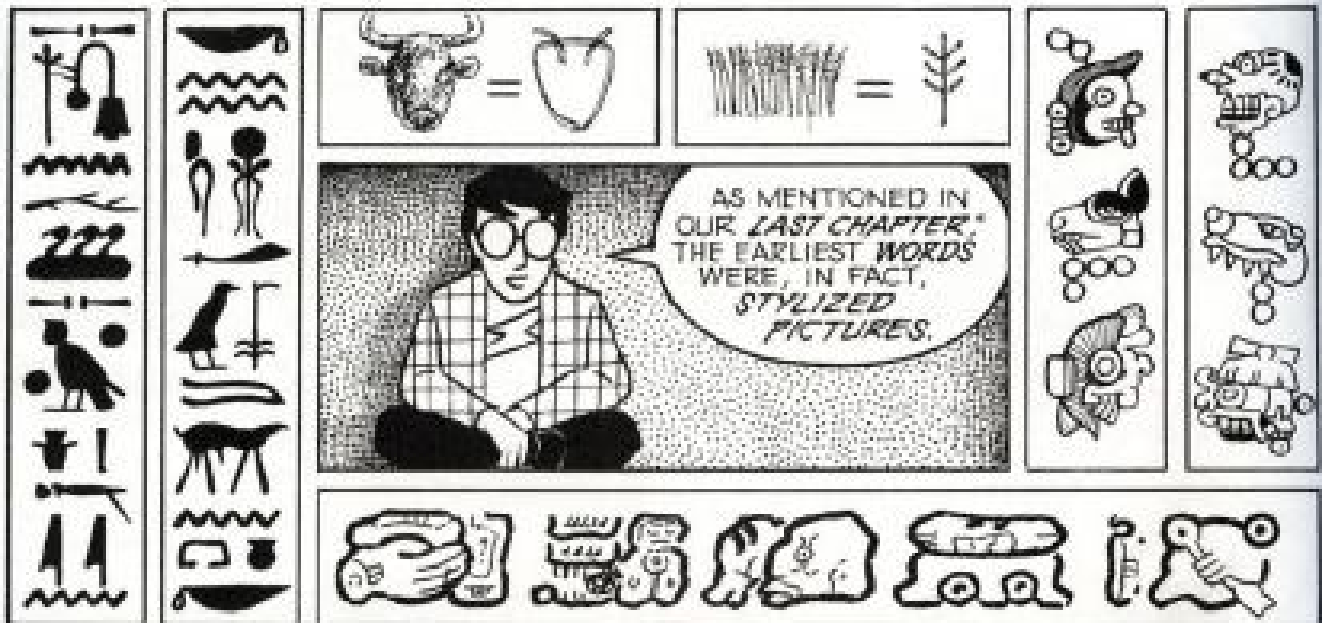


--AND FINALLY TO  
ARRIVE AT "REAL"  
BOOKS-- THOSE  
WITH NO PICTURES  
AT ALL.


A black and white illustration of a man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a sweater over a collared shirt, sitting in a large armchair and reading a book. The book's cover has the words "THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL" visible. The man has a thoughtful or perhaps bored expression.

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





<sup>\*</sup> SEE PAGE 129.



من تخلخل فلما قلعه تزلزلت جميعه

בְּרַחֲמֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן הַהֵם

**Here's More! Order Today and receive FREE C**

--AND  
ALL OF  
HUMANITY  
WITH IT.

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

--AND ALL OF HUMANITY WITH IT.

BUT WHERE HAD  
THE *PICTURES* ALL  
GONE?

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

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





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



FACSIMILE DETAILS OF PORTRAITS BY DÜRER (1519) REMBRANDT (1660) DAVID (1788) AND INGRES (1819-18).



John Keats

1819

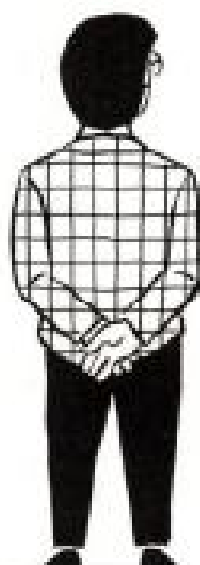
# *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

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 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...**



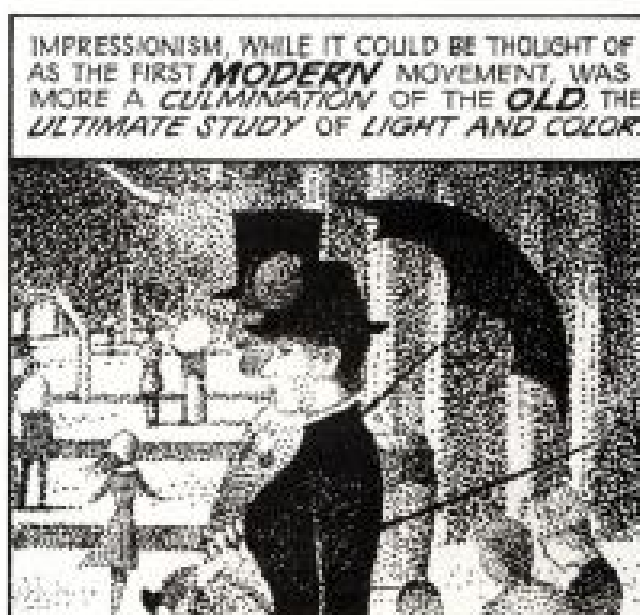
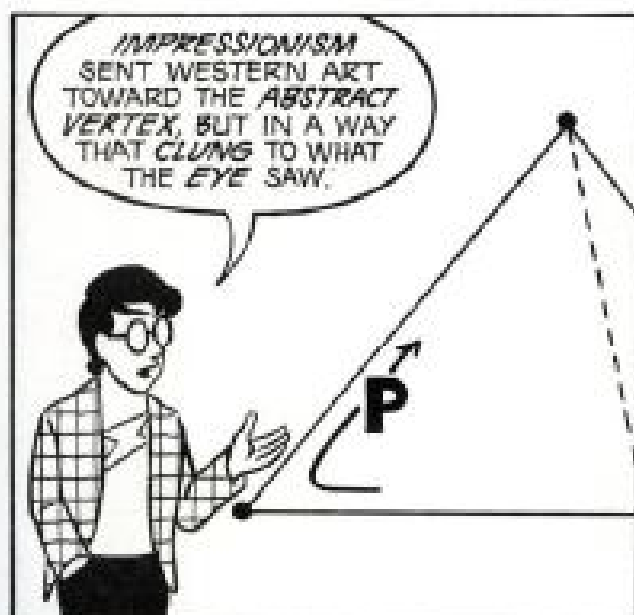
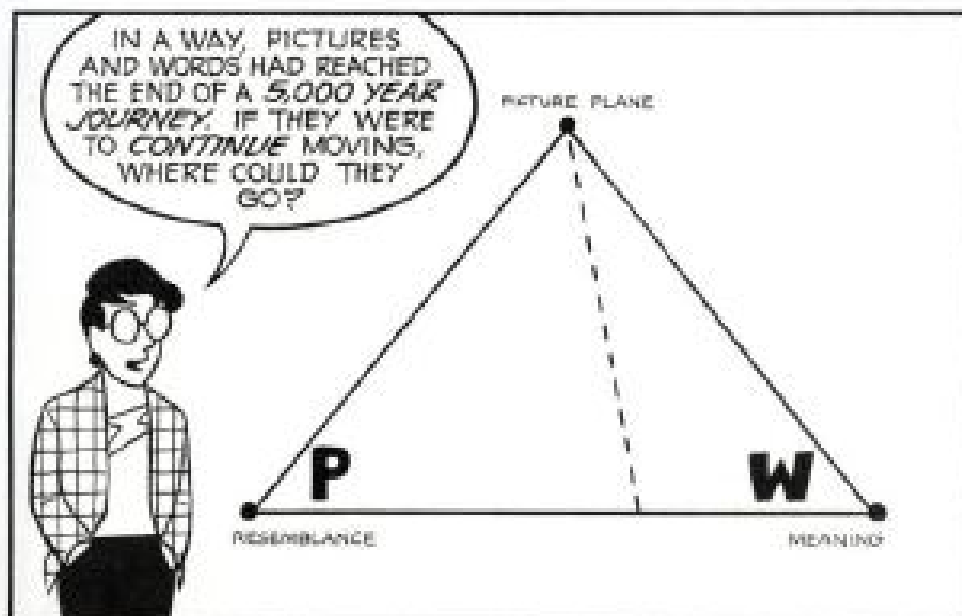
...THE  
 OTHER, RICH IN  
**INVISIBLE**  
 TREASURES,  
 SENSES, EMOTIONS,  
 SPIRITUALITY,  
 PHILOSOPHY...

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

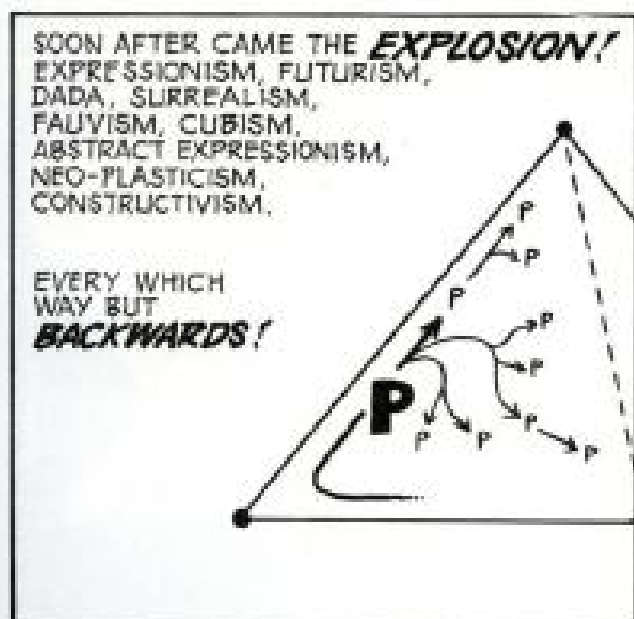


A PICTURE OF  
 A GREEK TEMPLE  
 A PICTURE OF  
 A GREEK TEMPLE  
 A PICTURE OF  
 A GREEK TEMPLE  
 A PICTURE OF  
 A GREEK TEMPLE





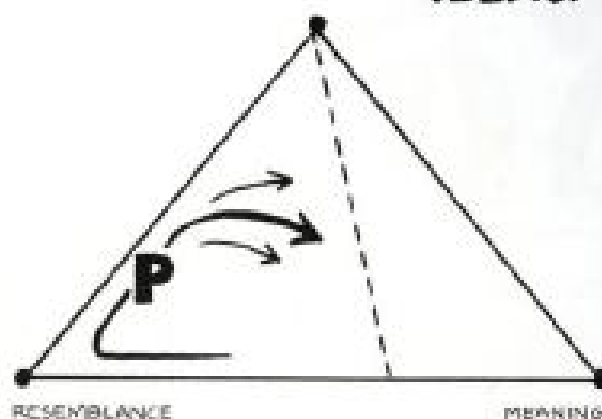
FACSIMILE DETAIL OF "A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE" BY GEORGES BERNINI.



FACSIMILE DETAILS OF PORTRAITS BY PICASSO, LEGER AND KLEE.

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

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 *desolate* *marble*, or of *stone*;  
In *Tram* or the *dale* of *Arcady*;  
What men or *girls* or *ghosts* or *things* that *live*?

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?)

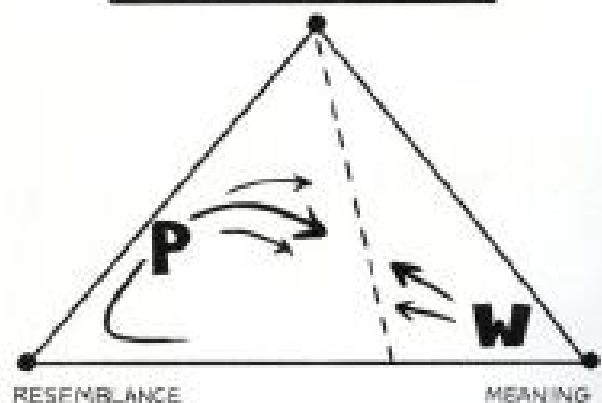
IN PROSE, LANGUAGE WAS BECOMING EVEN MORE DIRECT, CONVEYING MEANING *SIMPLY* AND *QUICKLY*, MORE LIKE *PICTURES*.



"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

une semaine  
prolongée à  
sa 7<sup>e</sup> soirée

CHERZ A RBE

canisée

Location :

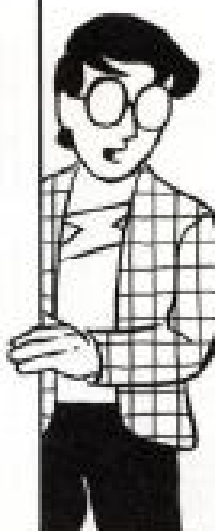
Bernheim Avenue, 24, 26 de la Madeleine  
Journé, 4, Place de la Madeleine  
Perrault, 18, Rue Soufflot  
de Rue Pouch, 27, Avenue Kléber  
N° 4, Avenue Lavoisier  
Paul Grollmann, 24, Place de la Madeleine  
Laurier Avenue, 27, de la Madeleine  
Paul Koenig, 24, Place de la Madeleine  
et de la Madeleine, 24, 26 de la Madeleine

DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY  
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

par  
FRANCIS PICABIA

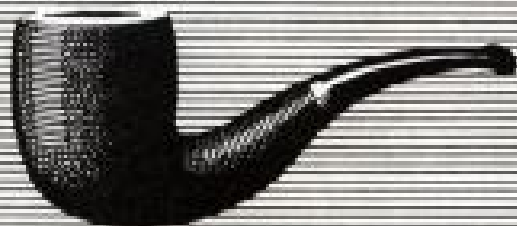
THE  
WORK OF  
DADAISTS,  
FUTURISTS  
AND VARIOUS  
INDIVIDUAL  
ARTISTS OF  
THE MODERN  
ERA BREACHED  
THE FRONTIER  
BETWEEN  
APPEARANCE  
AND  
MEANING!



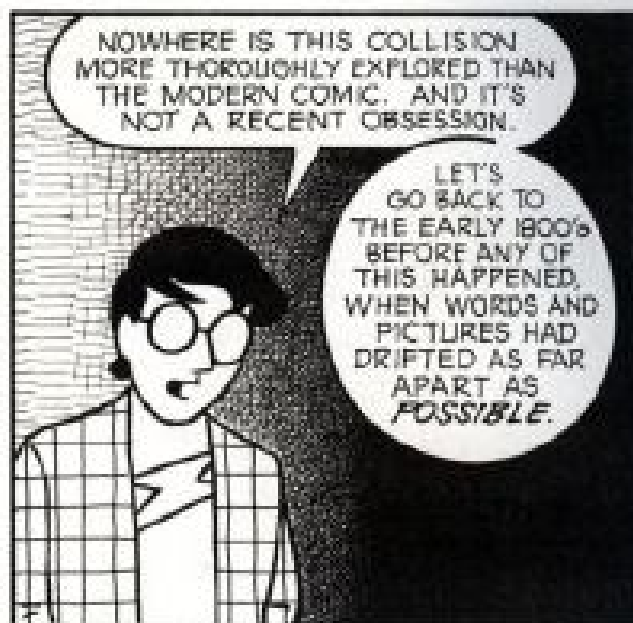
PAINTINGS INCREASINGLY TOOK ON  
SYMBOLIC, EVEN CALLIGRAPHIC,  
MEANINGS...



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



Ceci n'est plus une pipe.



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

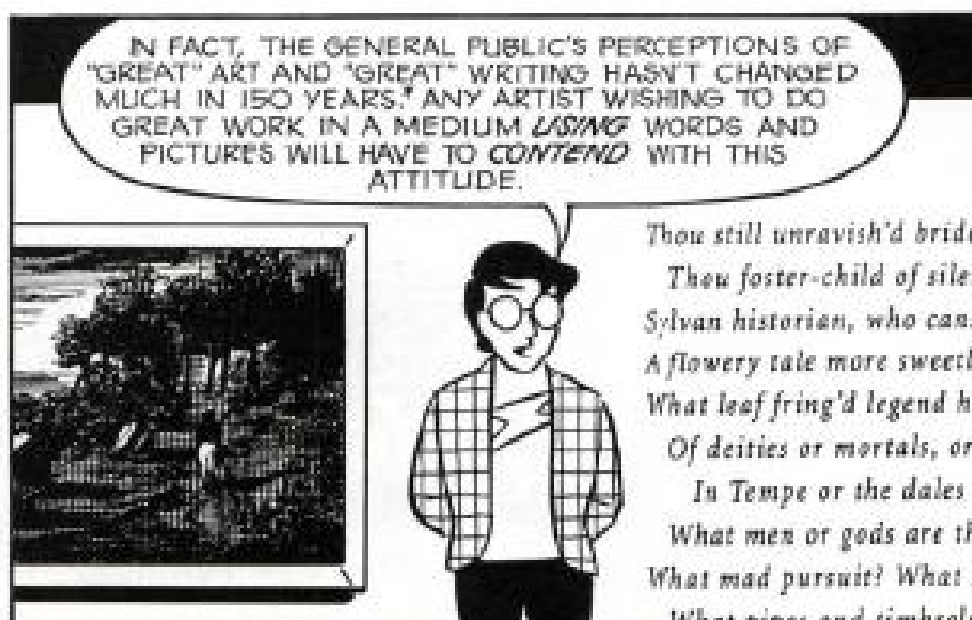
BUT AGAIN IT WAS *RODOLPHE TOPFFER* WHO FORESAW THEIR *INTERDEPENDENCY* AND BROUGHT THE FAMILY BACK TOGETHER AT LAST.



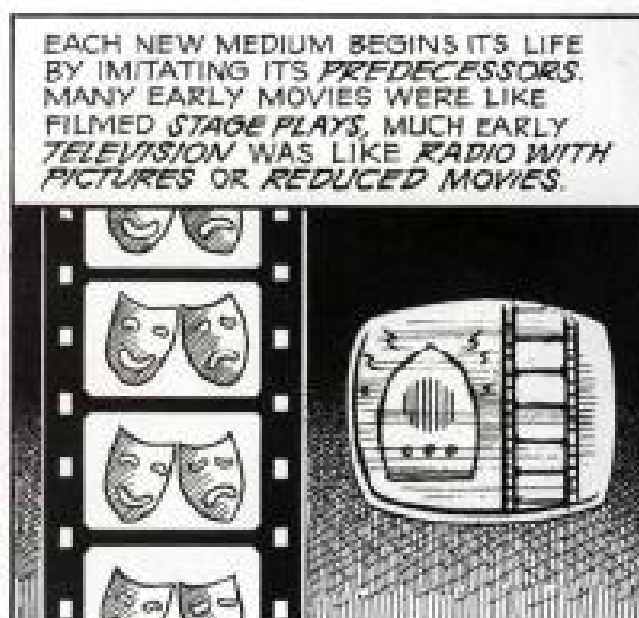
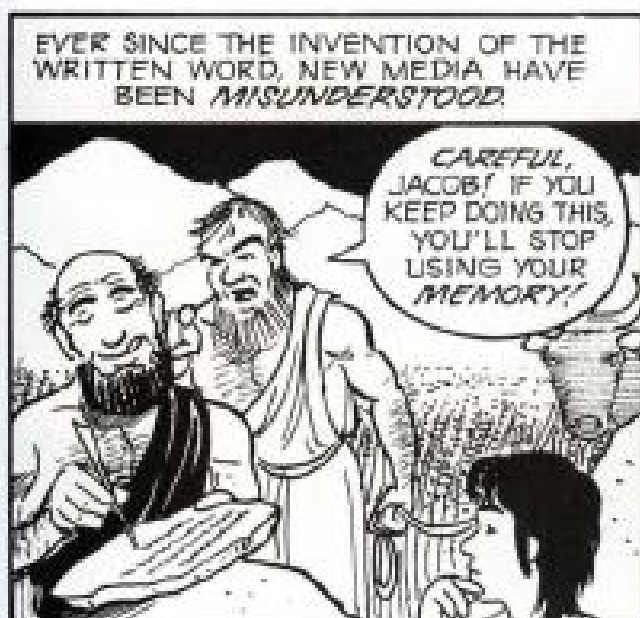
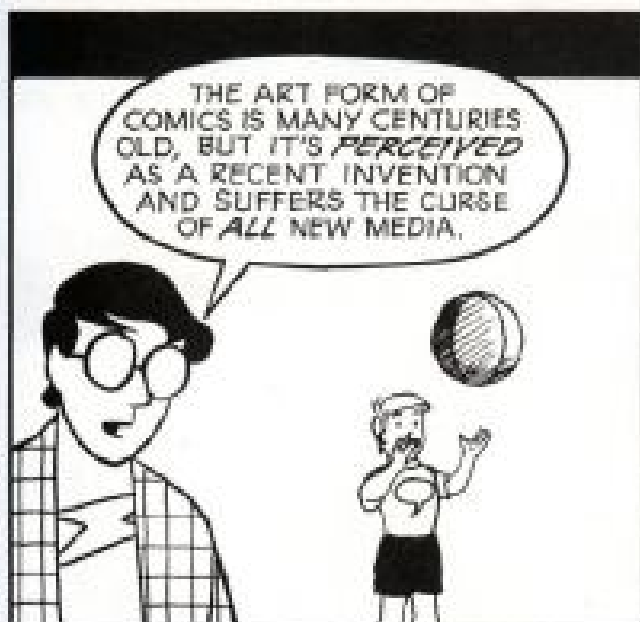
M. CRÉPIN ADVERTISES FOR A TUTOR, AND MANY APPLY FOR THE JOB.

TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE





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





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

**com·ics** (kóm'iks) *n.* pl. a form, used with a singular verb, of juxtaposed pictorial and verbal images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce a desired response in the reader. **2:** Superheroes, costumes, fight villains who want to rule the world, or violent sex.



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



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



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



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



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.



HE  
DID  
IT!



AMMM...

AMMM...

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.



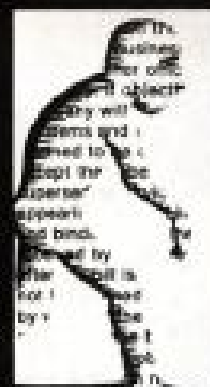
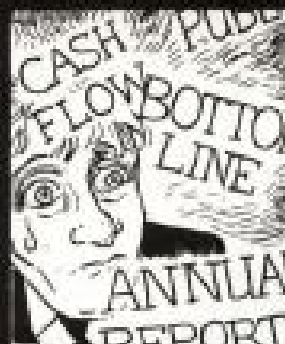
MILK.

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.

UH-HUH.



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



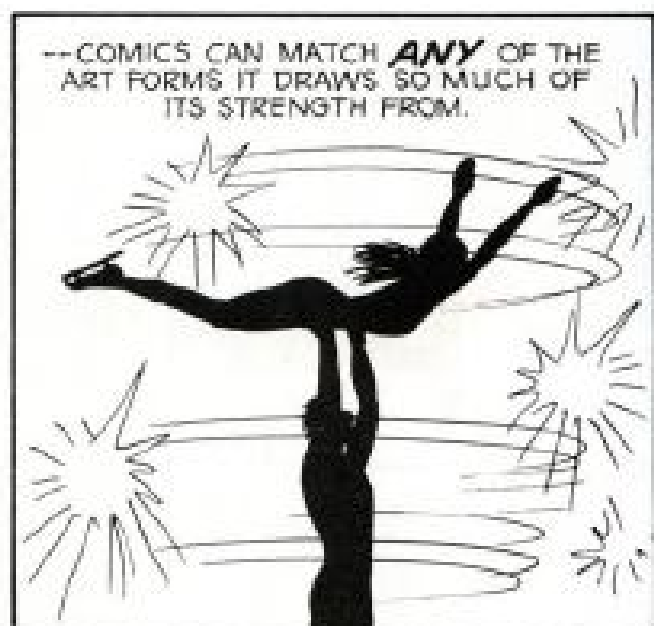
INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN **EQUAL BALANCE** THOUGH AND MAY FALL **ANYWHERE** ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

**P**  
—  
**W**



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

**W**  
—  
**P**

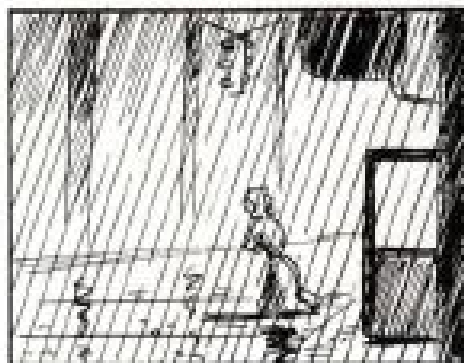


WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.



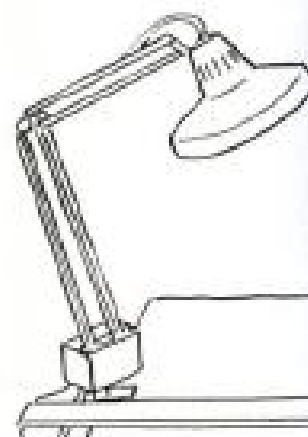
LET'S SAY I SHOW YOU A WOMAN WALKING ACROSS THE STREET IN THE RAIN, BUYING A PINT OF ICE CREAM AND EATING IT IN HER APARTMENT--

--ALL IN PICTURES.

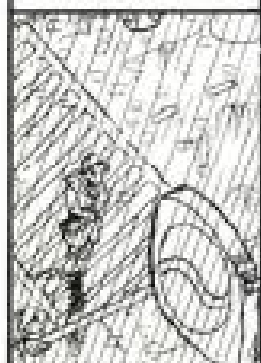




WHEN A SCENE SHOWS YOU ALL YOU "NEED" TO KNOW, LIKE THIS ONE, THE LATITUDE FOR **SCRIPTING** GROWS *ENORMOUSLY*.



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



IT COULD BECOME AN *INTERNAL MONOLOGUE*.

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY *INCONGRUOUS*

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



(PARALLEL)

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



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON *BROADER TOPICS.*

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



(INTERDEPENDENT)

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



SAME  
SCENE NOW,  
BUT THIS TIME  
ALL IN **WORDS!**



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

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

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

I WENT BACK TO THE  
APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE  
AT LAST.





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--

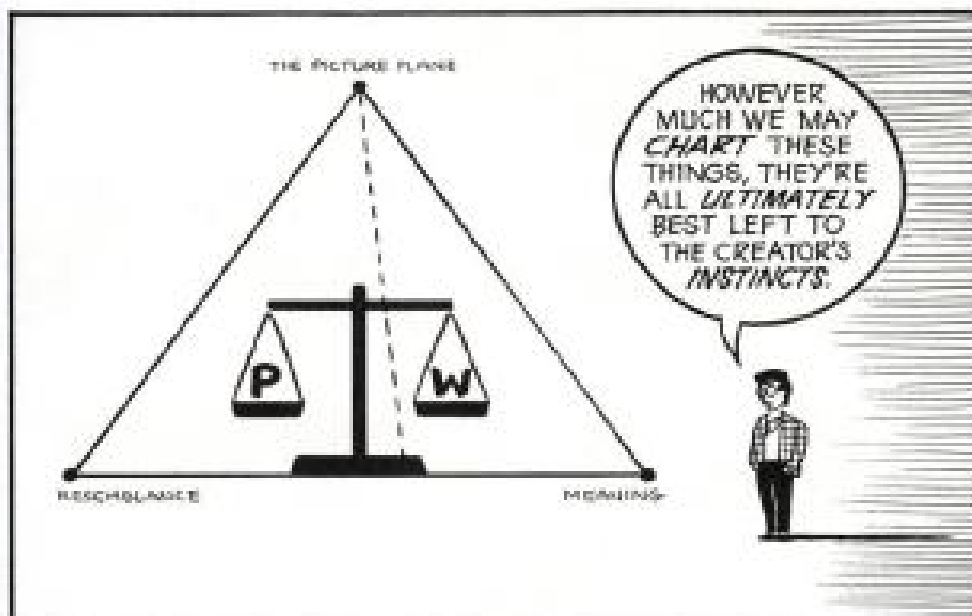
(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.

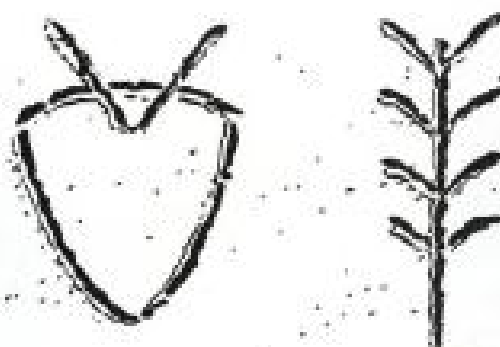
--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.

(WORD SPECIFIC)



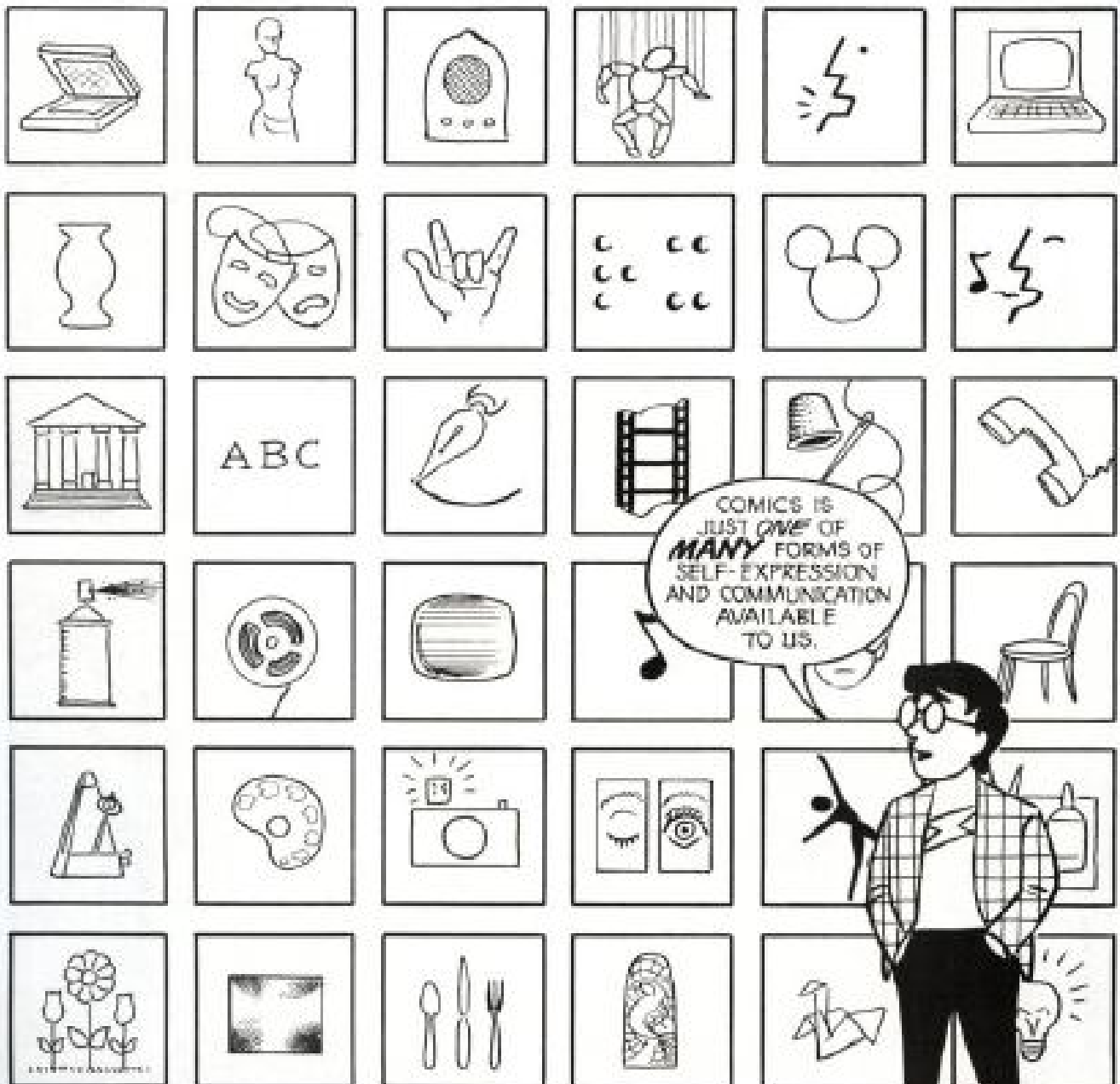
-- WHEN TO TELL WAS TO *SHOW*--



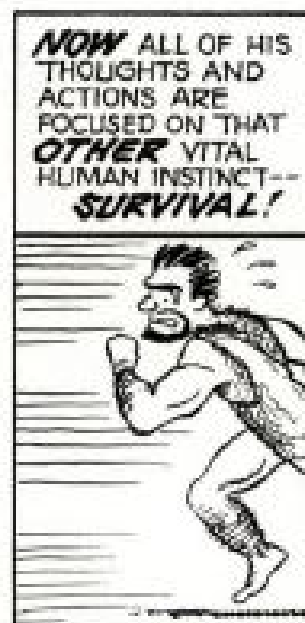
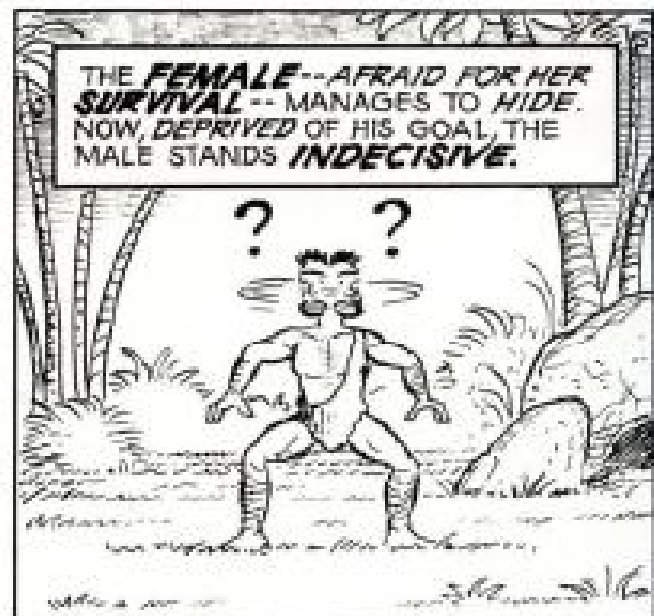
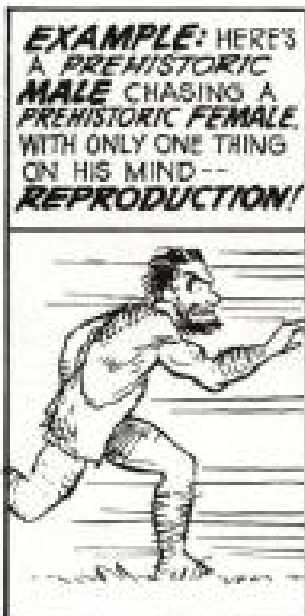
-- AND TO SHOW WAS TO *TELL*.

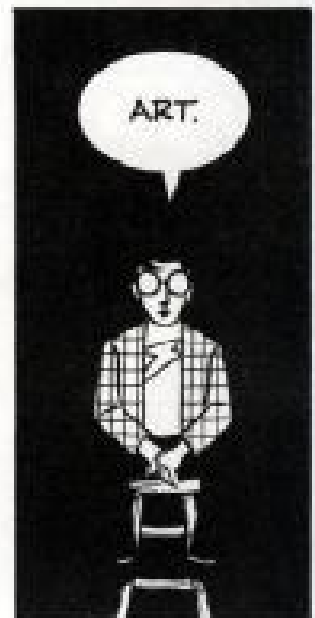
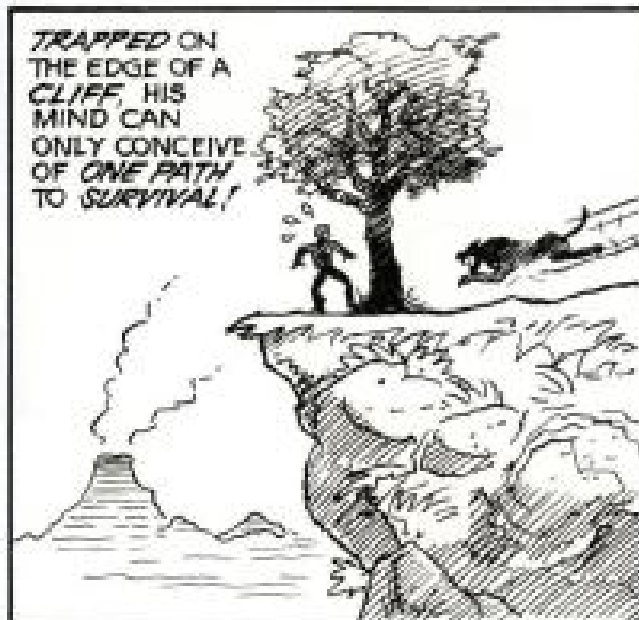
## CHAPTER SEVEN

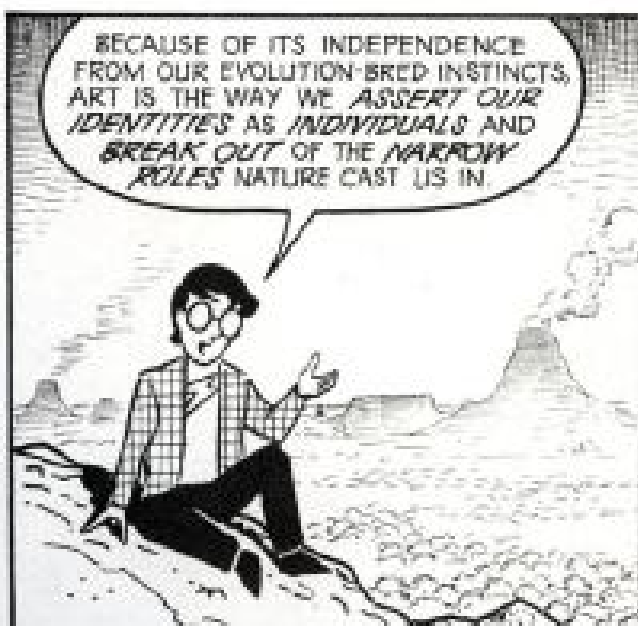
### THE SIX STEPS.











**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.

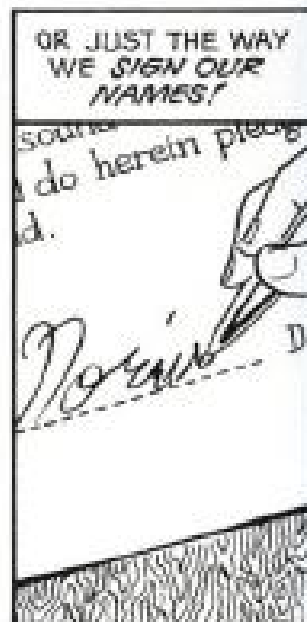


THE PROCESSES ARE MORE *COMPLEX* NOW, BUT THE INSTINCTS\* REMAIN THE *SAME*. *SURVIVAL AND REPRODUCTION* STILL HOLD THE *UPPER HAND*.



\* ALONG WITH THEIR MANY RELATED FEELINGS AND CUSTOMS.





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



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



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

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



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



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



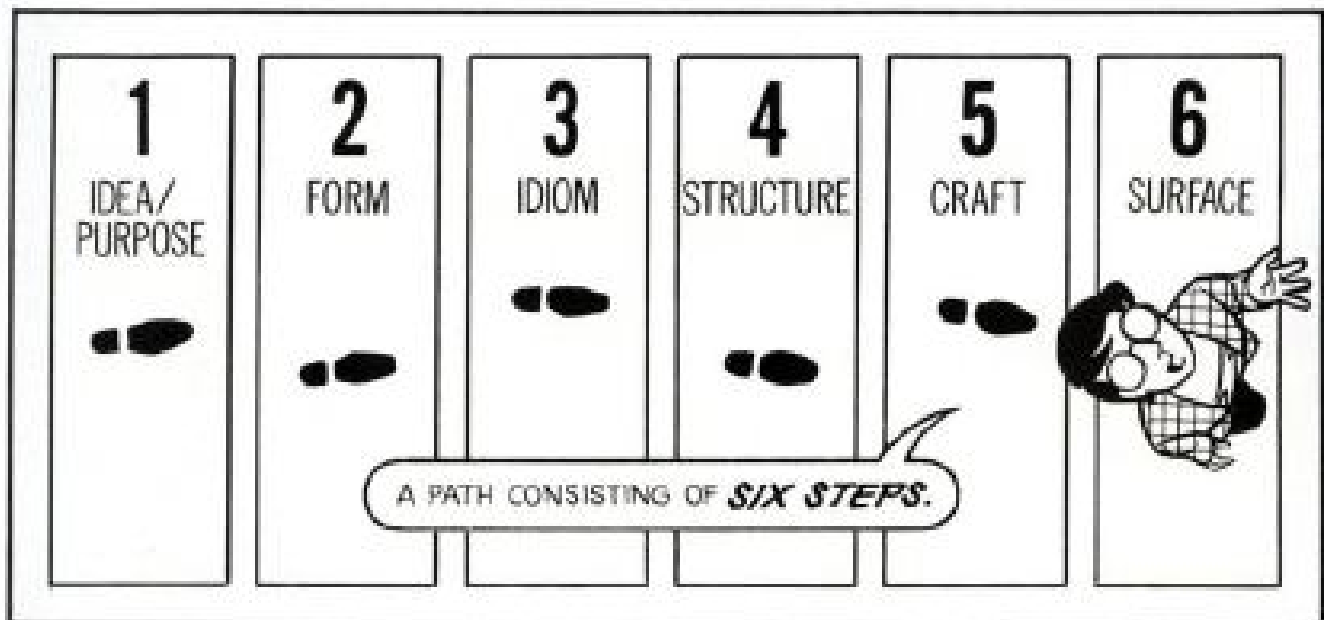
"**PURE**" ART IS ESSENTIALLY TIED TO THE QUESTION OF **PURPOSE**-- OF DECIDING WHAT YOU *WANT* OUT OF ART.



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



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



**1**

IDEA/  
PURPOSE




**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.



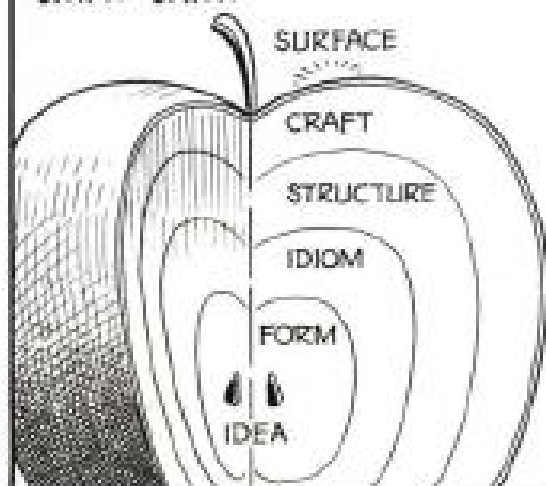
**6**  
SURFACE



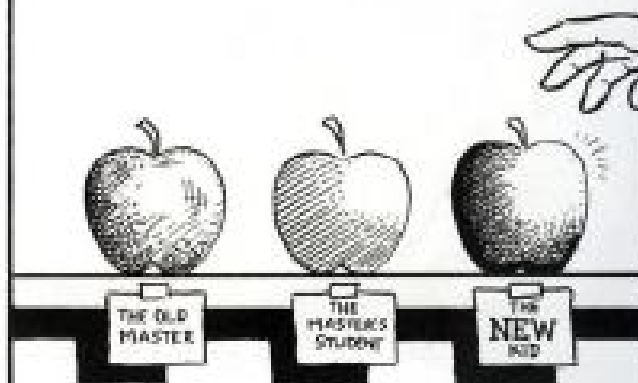
**SIXTH:**  
PRODUCTION  
VALUES, FINISHING—  
THE ASPECTS MOST  
APPARENT ON FIRST  
SUPERFICIAL  
EXPOSURE TO  
THE WORK.



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**--

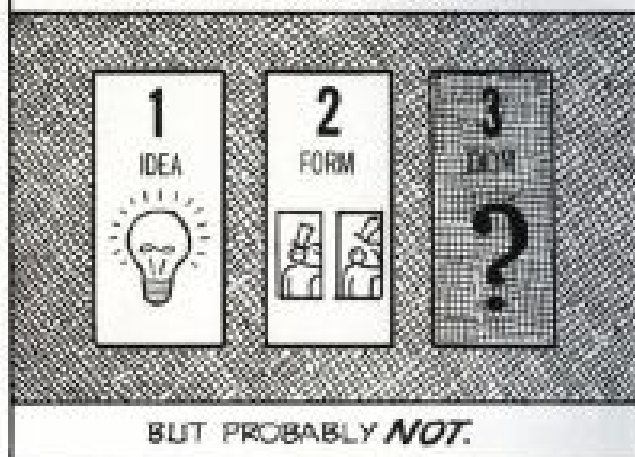
-- AND THAT THOSE SKILLS CAN BE **LEARNED!**



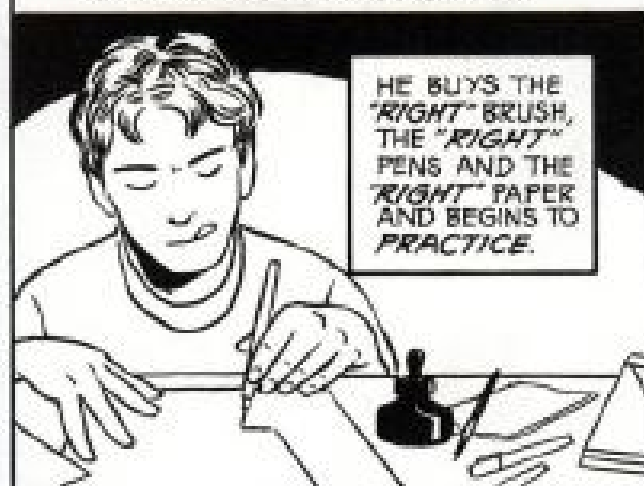
ONE OF THEM--FULL OF *BIG IDEAS*--  
MAKES THE *BIG DECISION*.



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.



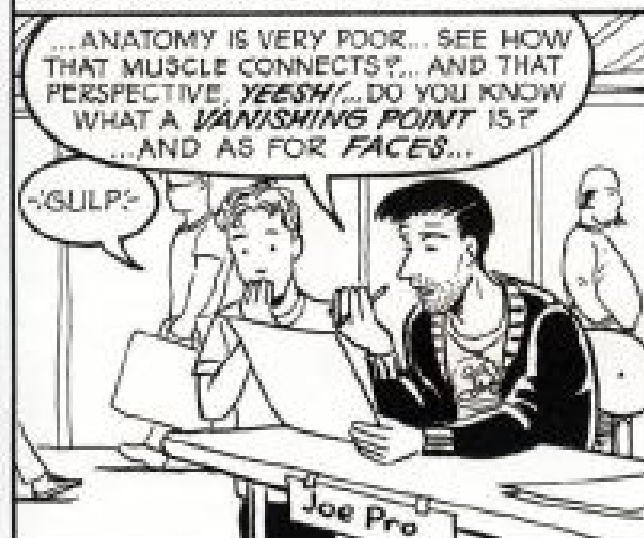
MORE LIKELY HE *POSTPONES* HIS OWN  
IDEAS AND BEGINS TO STUDY THE *CRAFT*  
OF *OTHER* ARTISTS IN HIS ATTEMPT TO  
BECOME A *PROFESSIONAL*.



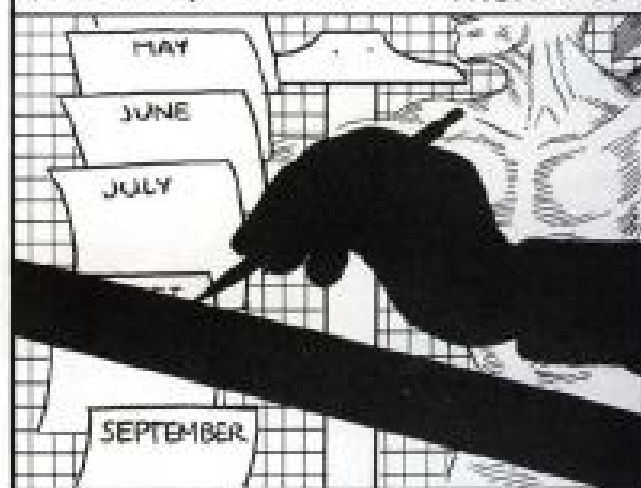
EVENTUALLY...



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



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



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



-- HE LEAVES HIS DREAMS OF MAKING COMICS *BEHIND*.



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

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



SHE'S A *GOOD, HARDWORKING* STUDENT.



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

< THIS IS *VERY* GOOD >

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

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



< GULP! >

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



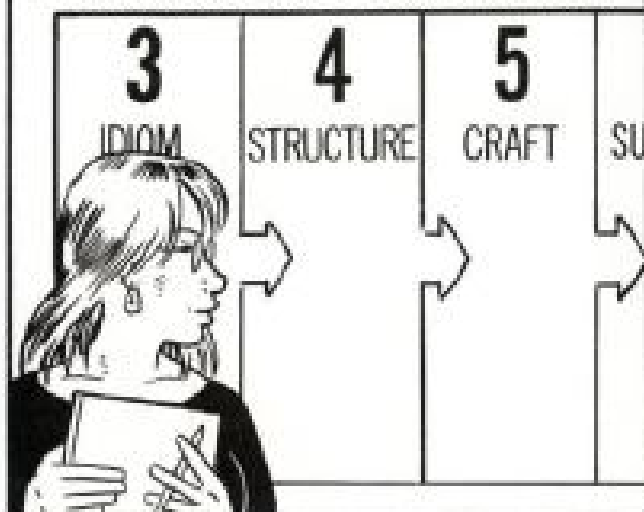
SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE**-- SOME **PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**-- THAT SHE **STILL** HASN'T FOUND.



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*.




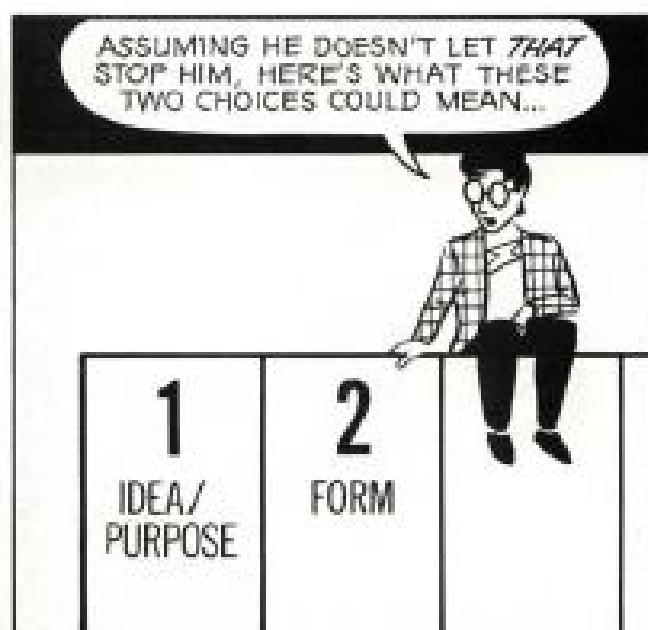
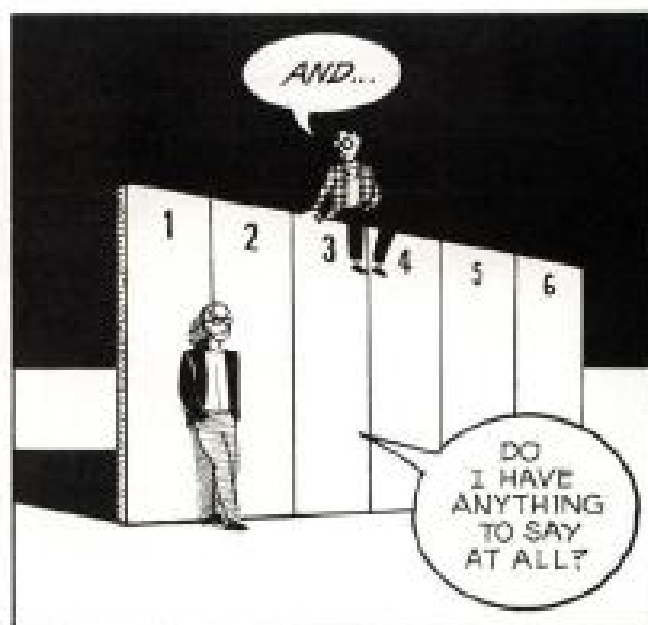
BUT *ELSEWHERE*, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS *DISSATISFIED*. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY *IMPORTANT* HAS BEEN *NEGLECTED*...



...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:



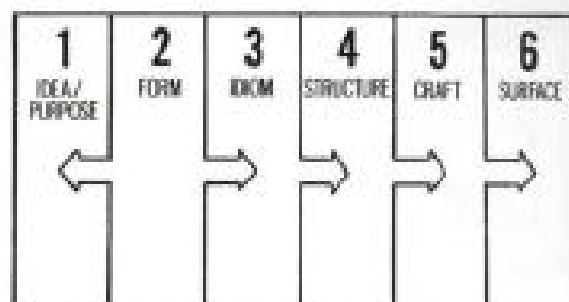
1 IDEA/ PURPOSE	2 FORM	3 IDIOM	4 STRUCTURE	5 CRAFT	6 SURFACE
					



## 2 FORM



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.

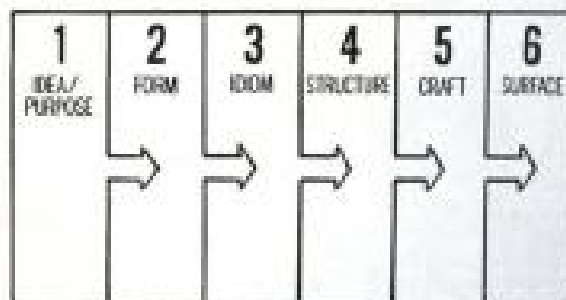


(IN **OTHER** ART FORMS: STRAVINSKY, PICASSO, VIRGINIA WOOLF, ORSON WELLES, ETC.)

## 1 IDEA/ PURPOSE

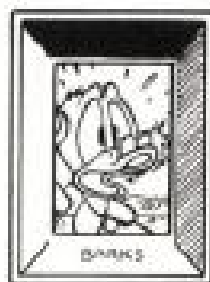


NOW "**TELLING THE STORY**" (OR IN THE CASE OF **NON-FICTION**, "**DELIVERING THE MESSAGE**") TAKES **PRIORITY** OVER **INVENTION**.

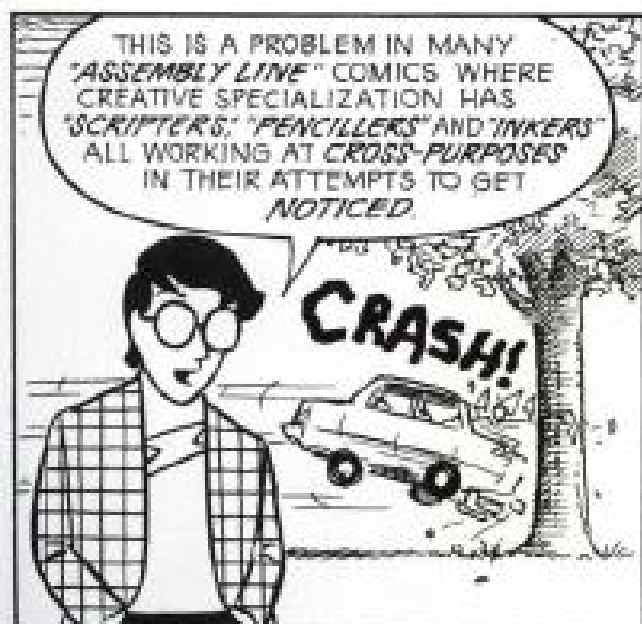
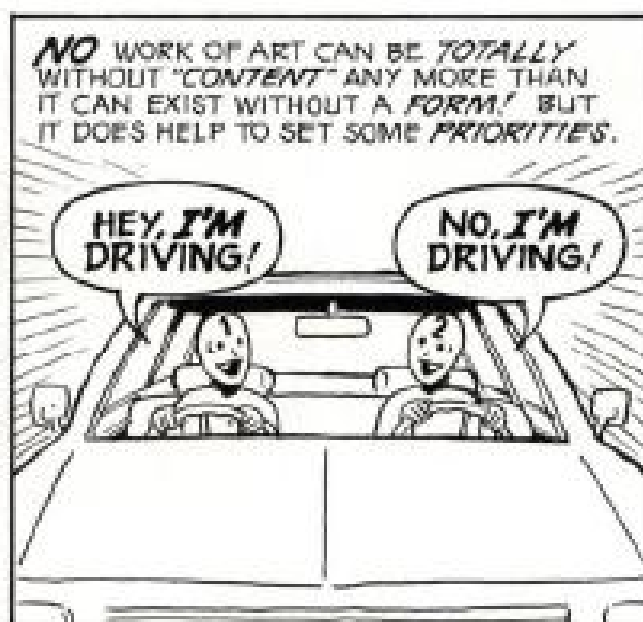


BUT TELLING A STORY AS **EFFECTIVELY** AS POSSIBLE MAY **REQUIRE** SOME **INVENTION**. IT OFTEN **DOES**.

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



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



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

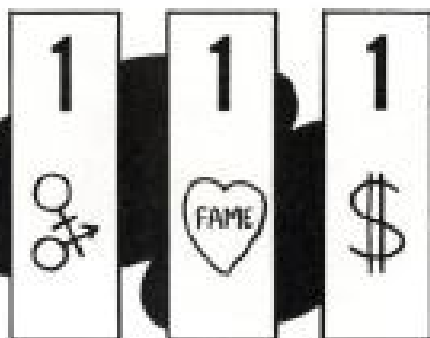


## 1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



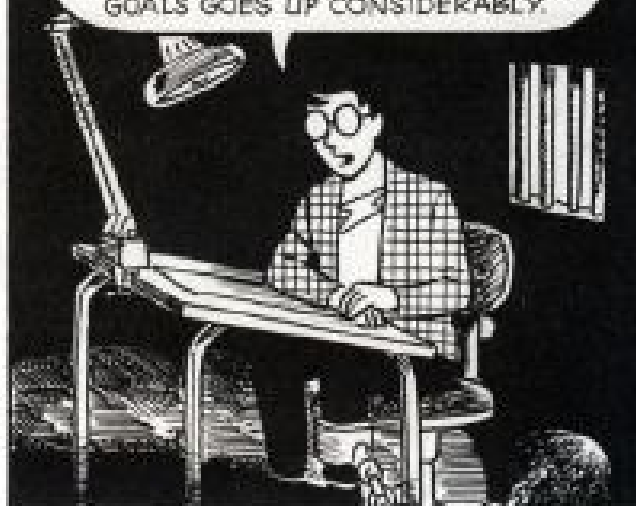
ART AND SCRIPT © ART SPIEGELMAN

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



SURVIVAL → REPRODUCTION

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



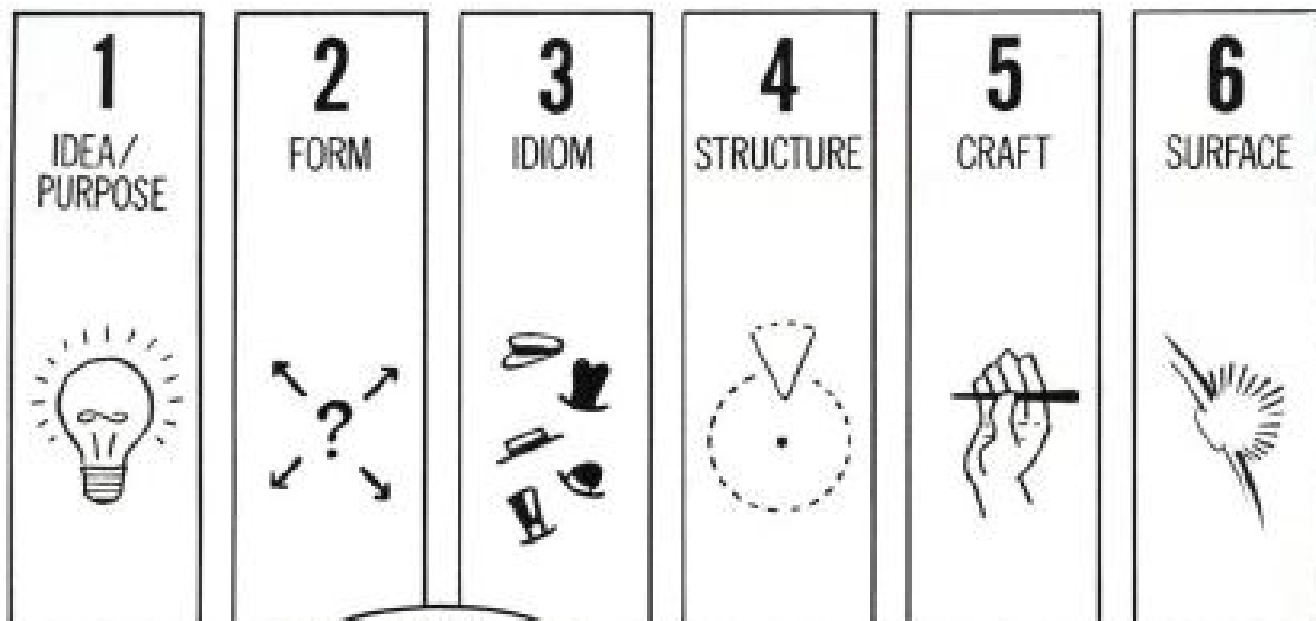
BUT EVEN IF WE TAKE LIFE'S *DISTRACTIONS* INTO ACCOUNT, IT'S STILL AMAZING HOW MUCH *TIME* AND *EFFORT* IS SPENT BY COMICS CREATORS TRYING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT OUT OF COMICS --

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



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





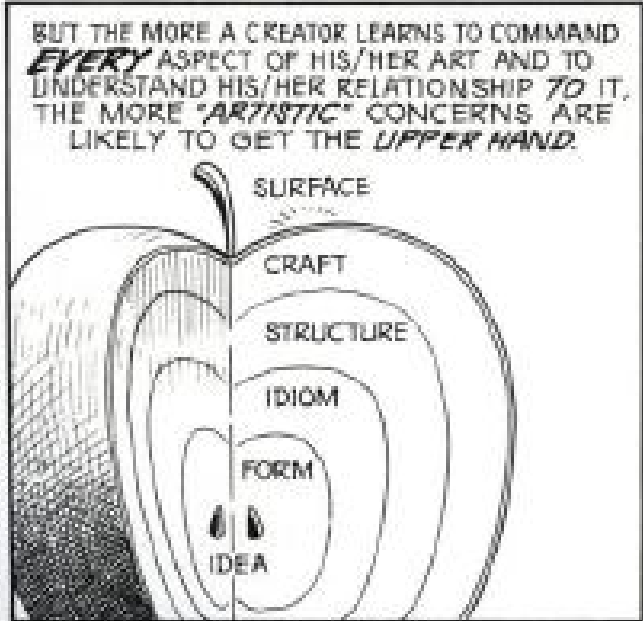
**ANY** ARTIST CREATING **ANY** WORK IN **ANY** MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW THESE **SIX STEPS** WHETHER THEY REALIZE IT OR **NOT**.

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.



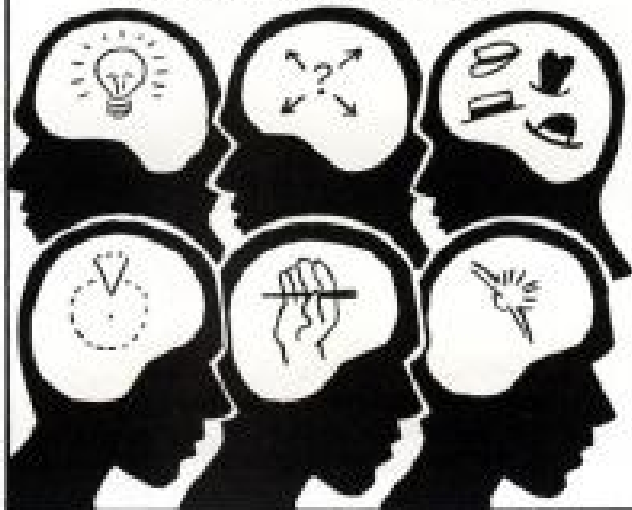
THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF **"ART."**



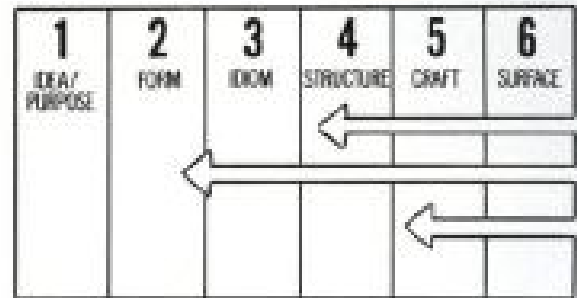
THE **ORDER** OF THE SIX STEPS IS **INNATE**. LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT OF BONES IN A **DINOSAUR'S SKELETON**, THEY CAN BE **DISCOVERED** IN **ANY ORDER**, BUT WHEN **BROUGHT TOGETHER**, THEY WILL ALWAYS FALL INTO **PLACE!**



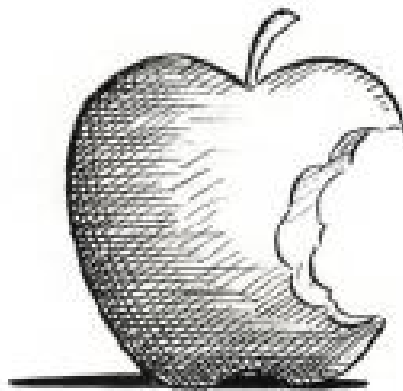
IN *PRACTICE*, **ANY** ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.



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



FROM *SURFACE* TO *CORE*.

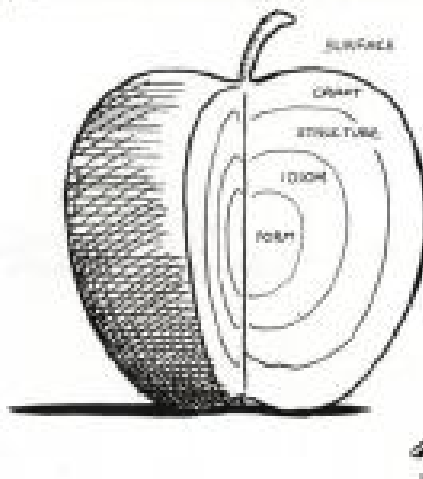


AND IT'S AT THE **CORE** OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:

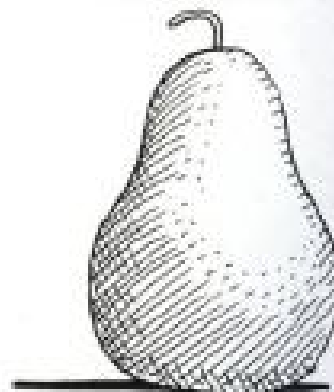
1	2
IDEA/ PURPOSE	FORM

**"WHY AM I DOING THIS?"**

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

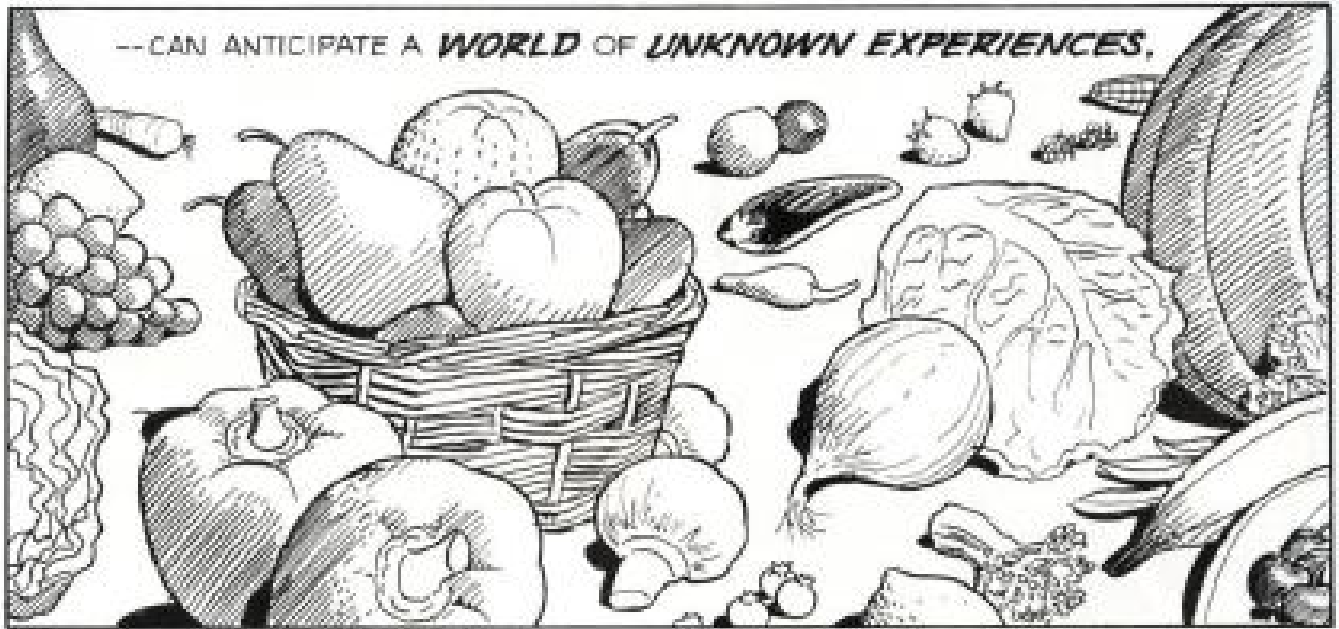


BUT SUCH WORKS DON'T TAKE THE **SHAPE** OF ART FOR GRANTED AND BY QUESTIONING OUR **FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS**--





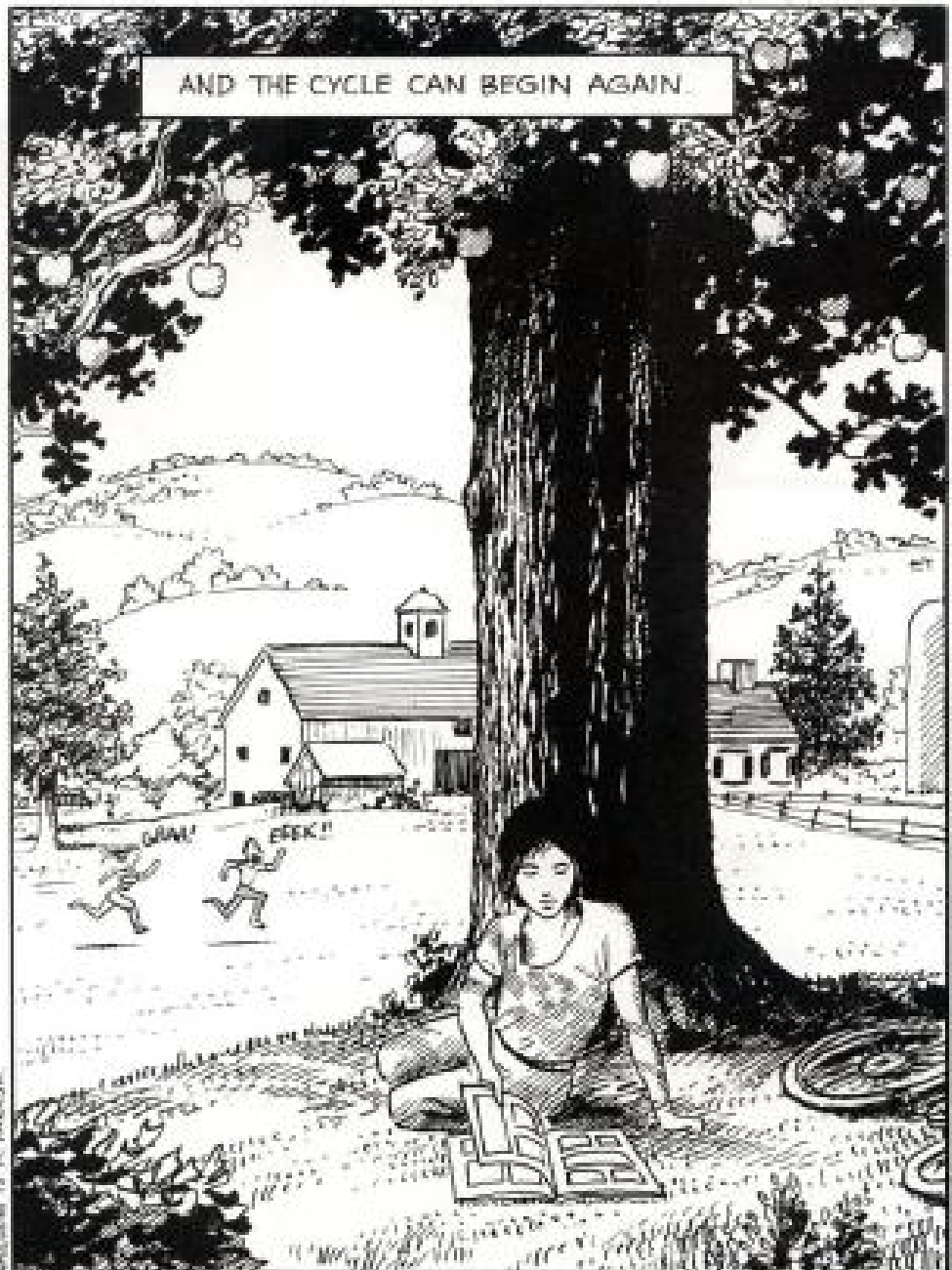
--CAN ANTICIPATE A *WORLD OF UNKNOWN EXPERIENCES.*



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



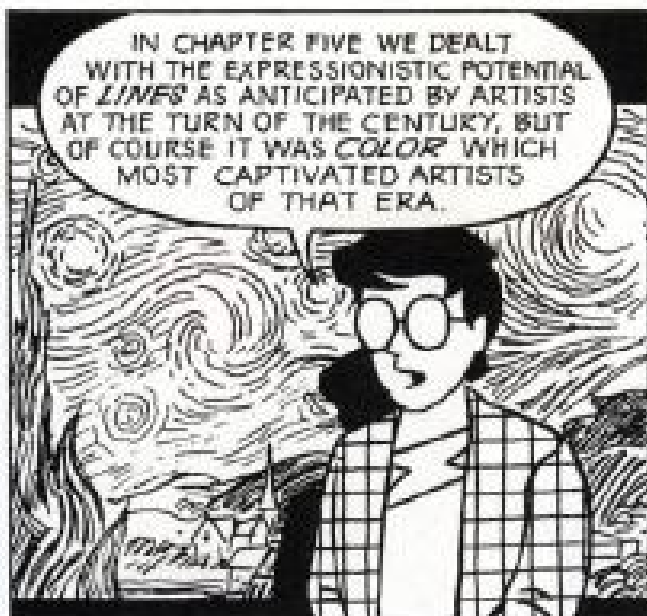
AND THE CYCLE CAN BEGIN AGAIN.



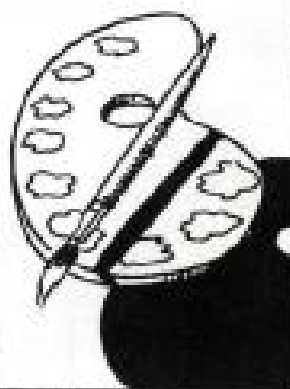
## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A WORD ABOUT COLOR.

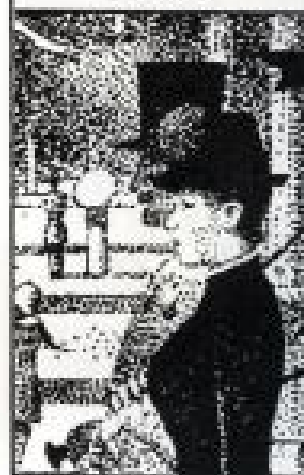
IN CHAPTER FIVE WE DEALT WITH THE EXPRESSIONISTIC POTENTIAL OF *LINES* AS ANTICIPATED BY ARTISTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, BUT OF COURSE IT WAS *COLOR* WHICH MOST CAPTIVATED ARTISTS OF THAT ERA.



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



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



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



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

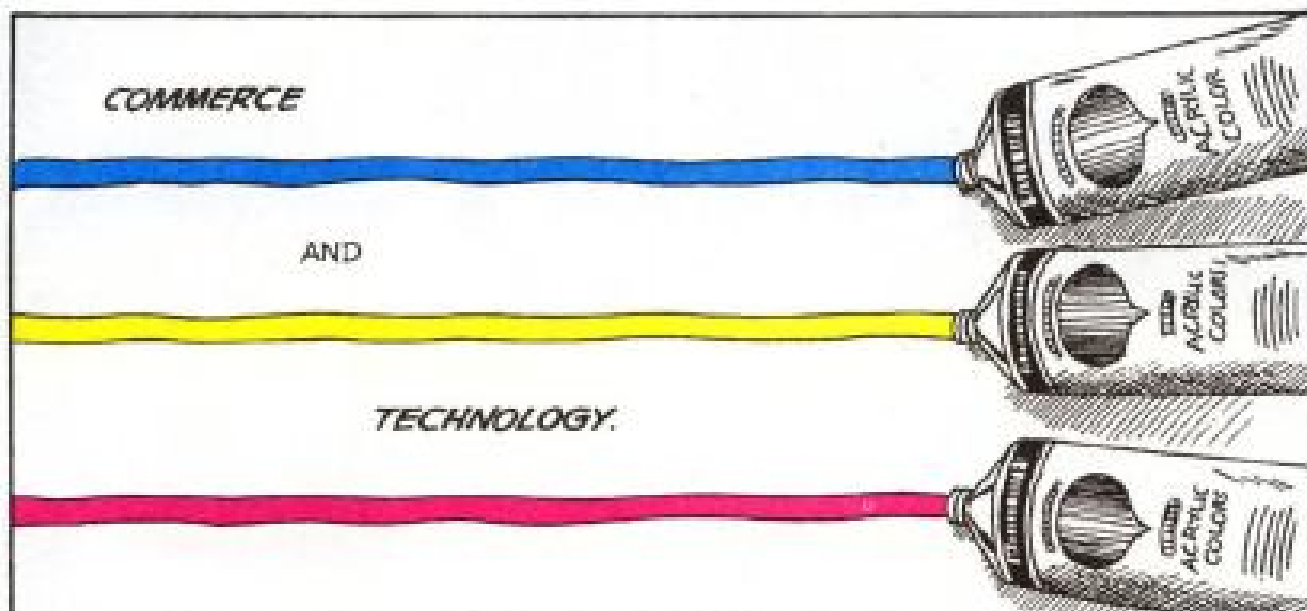


YET IN *COMICS* THE CAREER OF COLOR HAS BEEN, WELL... A BIT "*SPOTTY*."



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





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

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

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

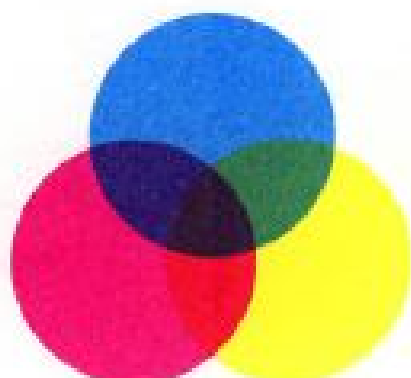
THESE COLORS -- ROUGHLY, **RED, BLUE AND GREEN** -- WHEN PROJECTED TOGETHER ON A SCREEN IN **VARIOUS COMBINATIONS**, COULD REPRODUCE EVERY COLOR IN THE **VISIBLE SPECTRUM.**

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

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

\*WHOM I DON'T HAVE A PICTURE OF.

**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 **PRINTERS' INK!**



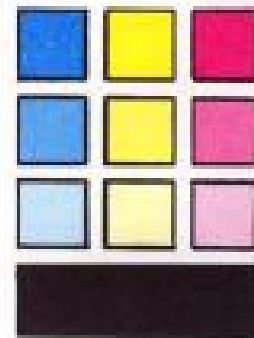
COLOR COMICS HIT THE **NEWSPAPER** INDUSTRY LIKE AN **ATOMIC BOMB!**



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.



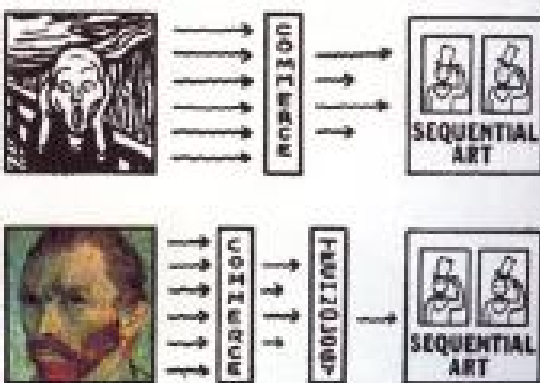
THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO **100%, 50% AND 20%**, USING **BLACK INK** FOR THE LINE WORK.



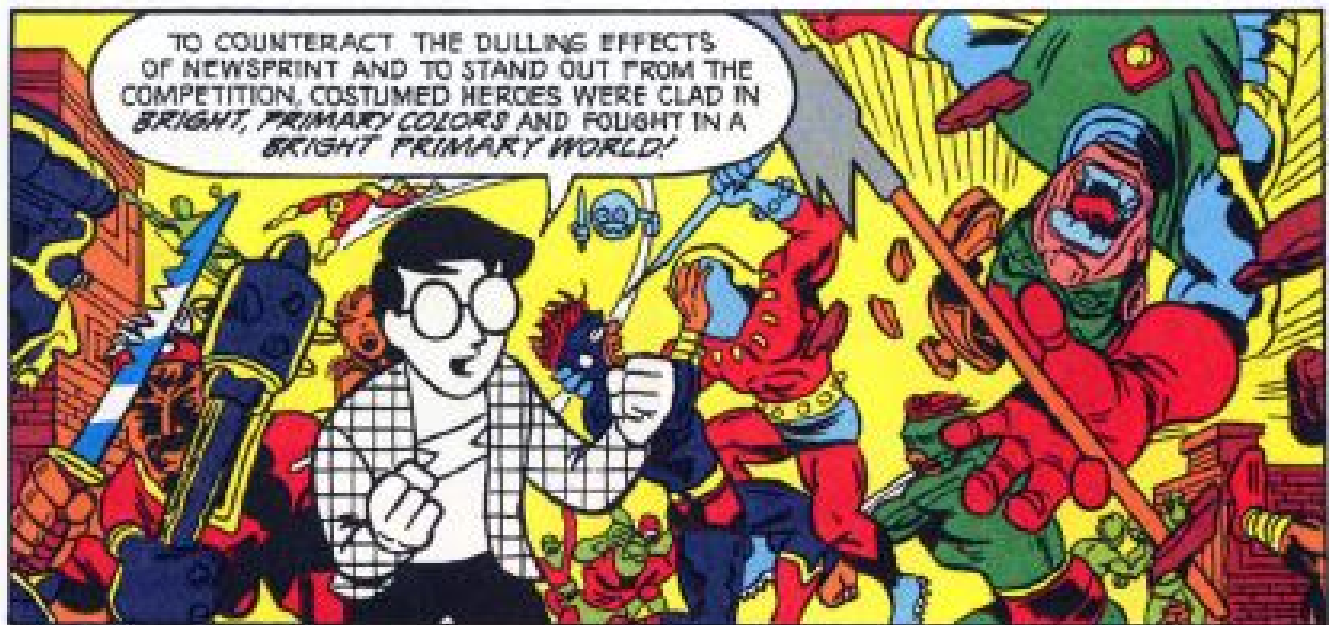
THE LOOK OF THESE COLORS, HELD BY **BOLD, SIMPLE OUTLINES**, AND REPRODUCED ON **CHEAP NEWSPRINT** EVENTUALLY BECAME THE LOOK OF COMICS IN AMERICA.



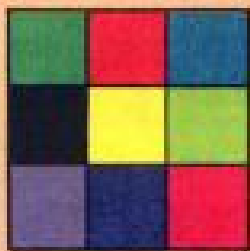
SO, WHILE THE EXPRESSIVE ART OF **LINE** WAS SUBJECTED TO THE **SUBTRACTIVE FILTER** OF **COMMERCE** ON ITS WAY TO COMICS, **COLOR** WAS SUBJECTED TO THE FILTERS OF BOTH **COMMERCE** AND **TECHNOLOGY**.



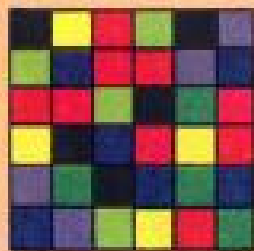
\* FOR OPAQUE PIGMENTS: RED, YELLOW AND BLUE.  
I KNOW, IT'S TOTALLY WEIRD.



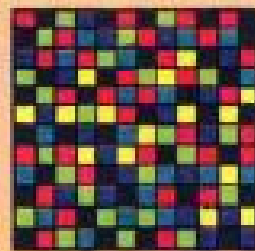
THE COLORS WERE PICKED FOR *STRENGTH* AND CONTRASTED STRONGLY WITH ONE ANOTHER, BUT ON MOST PAGES NO ONE COLOR *DOMINATED*.



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



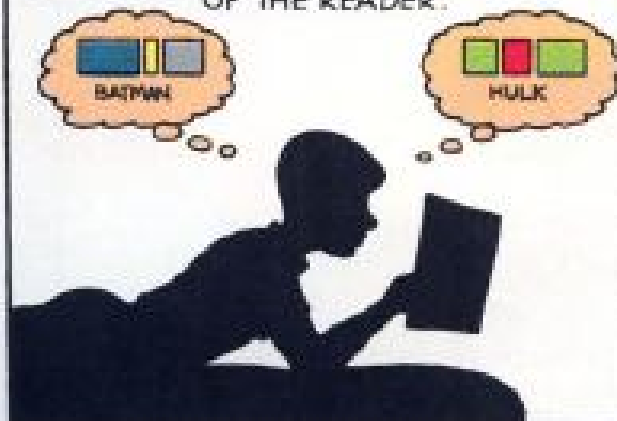
-- WAS OFTEN CANCELLED OUT TO AN *EMOTIONAL GREY*.



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



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

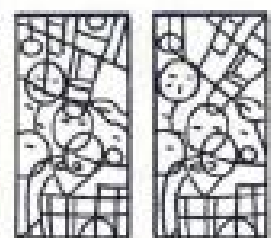


MANY SEE THE SUPERHERO AS A FORM OF *MODERN MYTHOLOGY*. IF SO, THIS ASPECT OF COLOR MAY PLAY A PART.

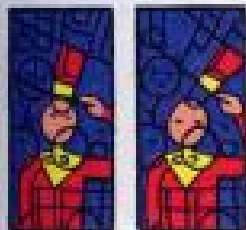
SYMBOLS ARE THE STUFF OF WHICH *GODS* ARE MADE.



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



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



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

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



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



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



KIRBY.



MECAY.



COLE.



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

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

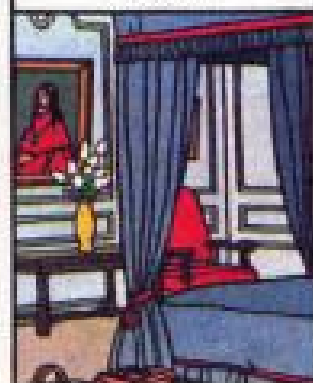




IN EUROPE HERGE CAPTURED THE MAGIC OF SUCH FLAT COLORS WITH UNPRECEDENTED SUBTLETY.



HERGE 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 70s, INSPIRING MANY YOUNG ARTISTS TO LOOK *BEYOND* THEIR FOUR-COLOR WALLS.



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



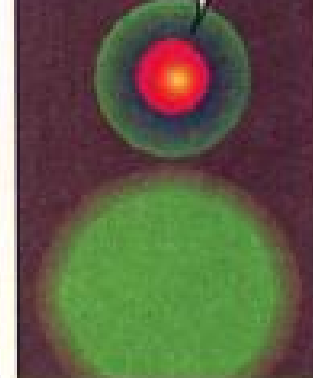
COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.

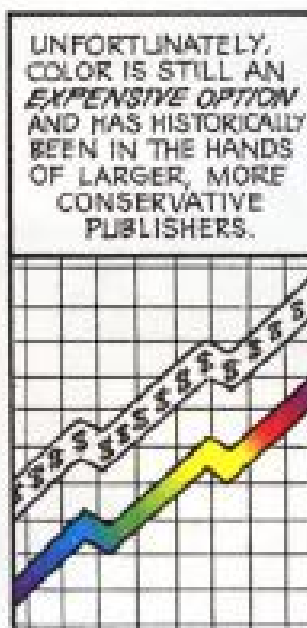


TONES AND MODELLING COULD ADD DEPTH.



WHOLE SCENES COULD BE VIRTUALLY ABOUT COLOR!









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



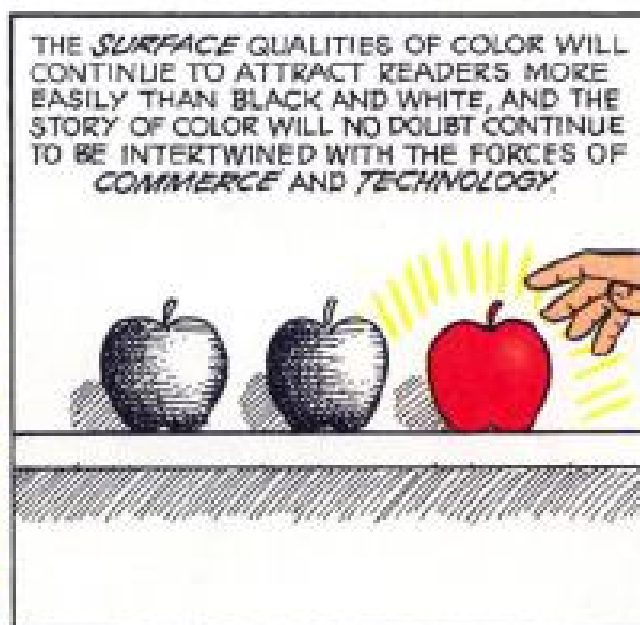
IN BLACK AND WHITE, THE IDEAS *BEHIND* THE ART ARE COMMUNICATED MORE *DIRECTLY*. MEANING TRANSCENDS FORM. ART APPROACHES *LANGUAGE*.



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



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



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



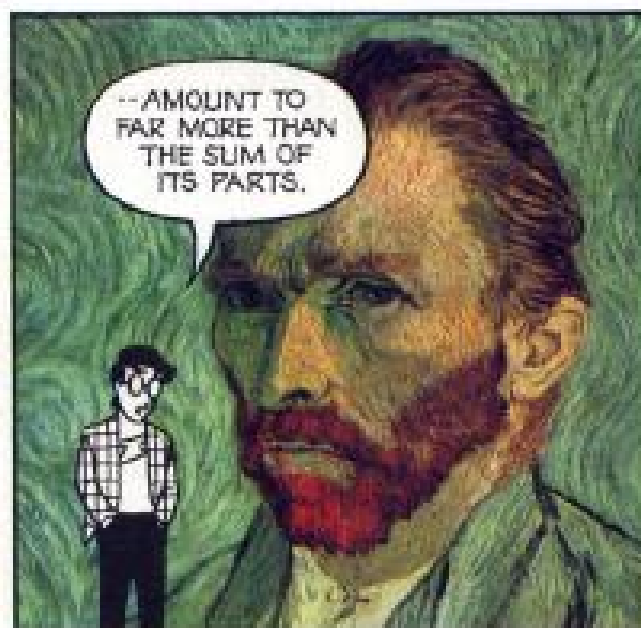
WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF *COLORS*, NOT JUST *BLACK AND WHITE*. COLOR COMICS WILL ALWAYS SEEM MORE "*REAL*" AT FIRST GLANCE.



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



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



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

## CHAPTER NINE

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.

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



## SEQUENTIAL ART

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



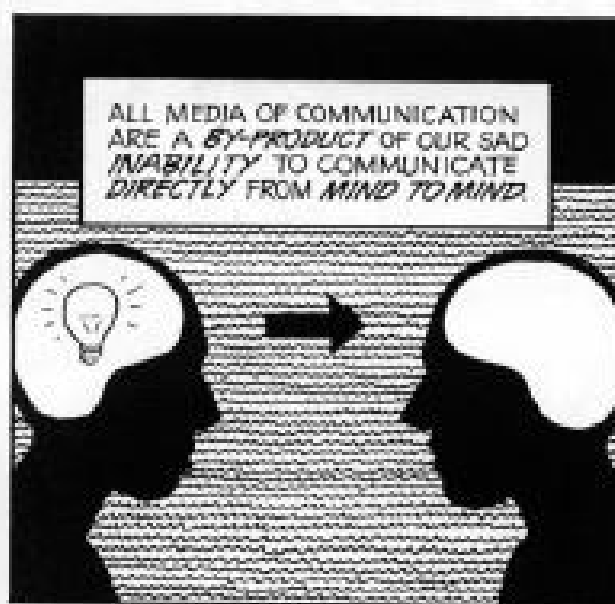
WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF  
*PROFOUND ISOLATION.*



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

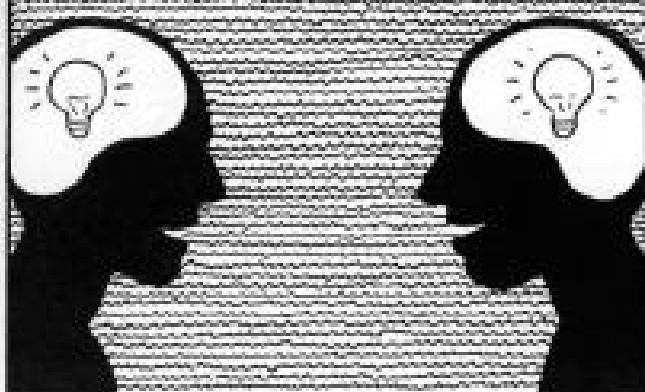


AND NO AMOUNT OF *REACHING  
OUT TO OTHERS* CAN EVER MAKE  
THEM FEEL EXACTLY WHAT  
*YOU* FEEL.

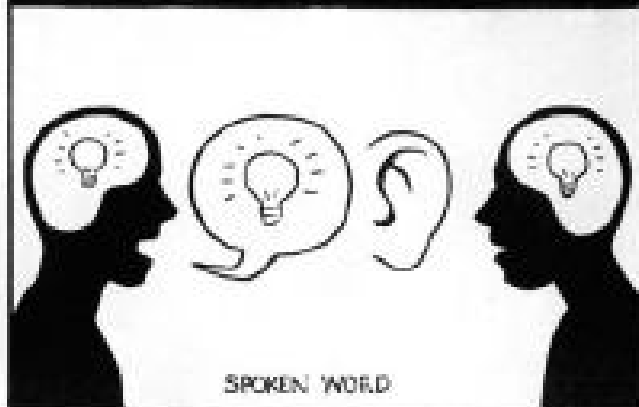


ALL MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION  
ARE A *BY-PRODUCT* OF OUR SAD  
*INABILITY* TO COMMUNICATE  
*DIRECTLY* FROM *MIND TO MIND.*

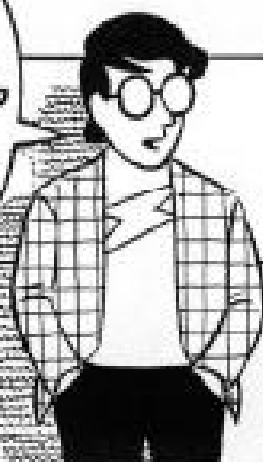
SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY *STEM* FROM THAT INABILITY.



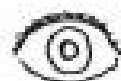
EACH *MEDIUM* (THE TERM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD MEANING *MIDDLE*) SERVES AS A BRIDGE *BETWEEN* MINDS.



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



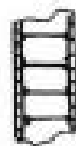
ABC



WRITTEN WORD



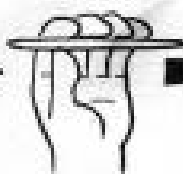
MUSIC

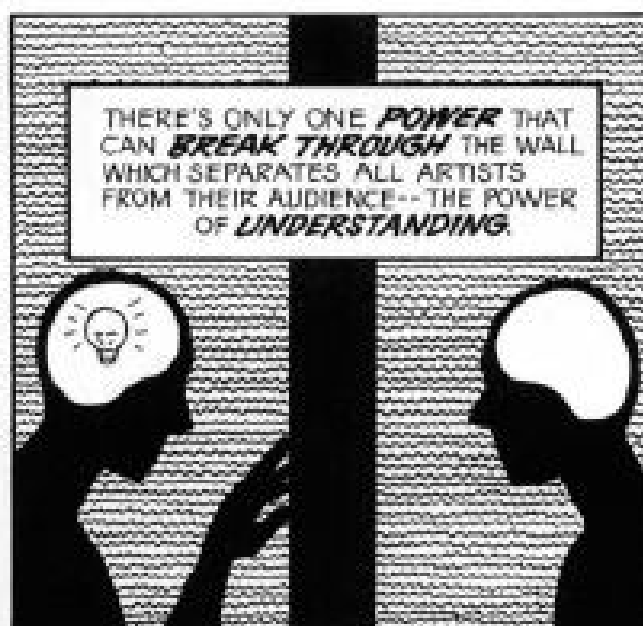
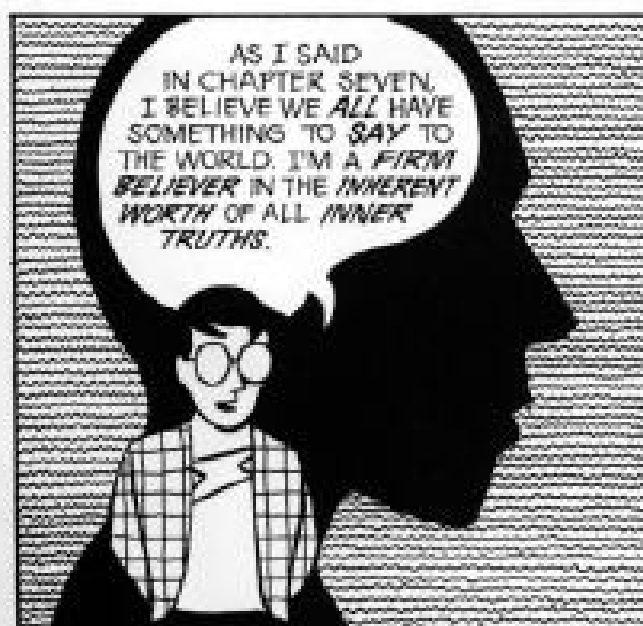
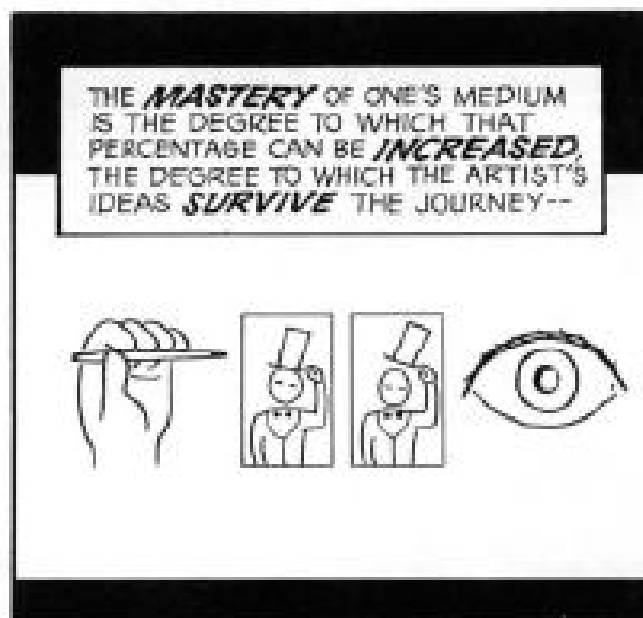


CINEMA

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

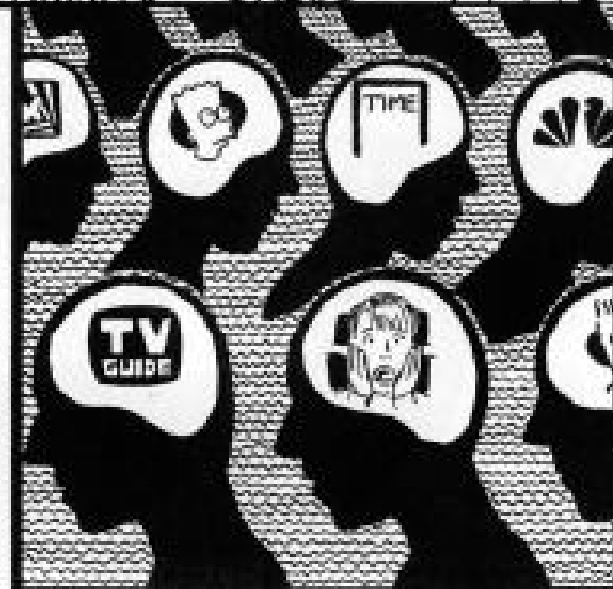
IDEALLY THE ARTIST'S "*MESSAGE*" WILL RUN THIS GALILET WITHOUT BEING *AFFECTED* BY IT, BUT IN *PRACTICE* THIS IS RARELY THE CASE.





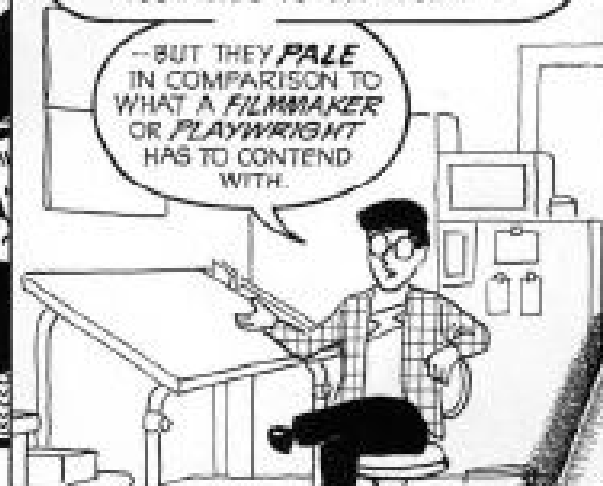


TODAY, COMICS IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW FORMS OF *MASS COMMUNICATION* IN WHICH *INDIVIDUAL VOICES* STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO BE *HEARD*.

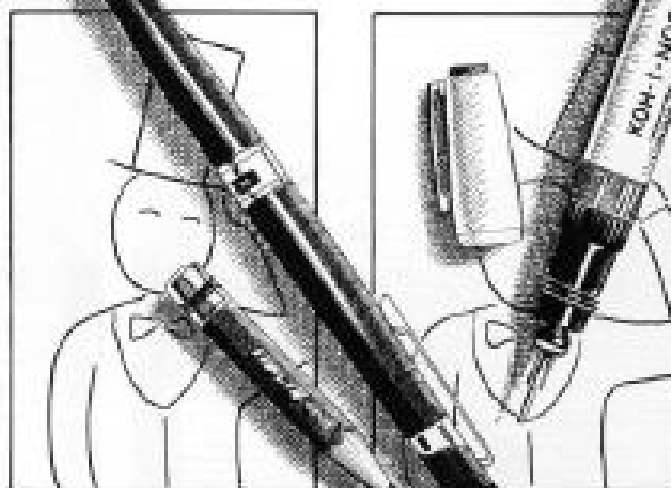


THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE *BUSINESS* OF COMICS HAVE MANY OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME--

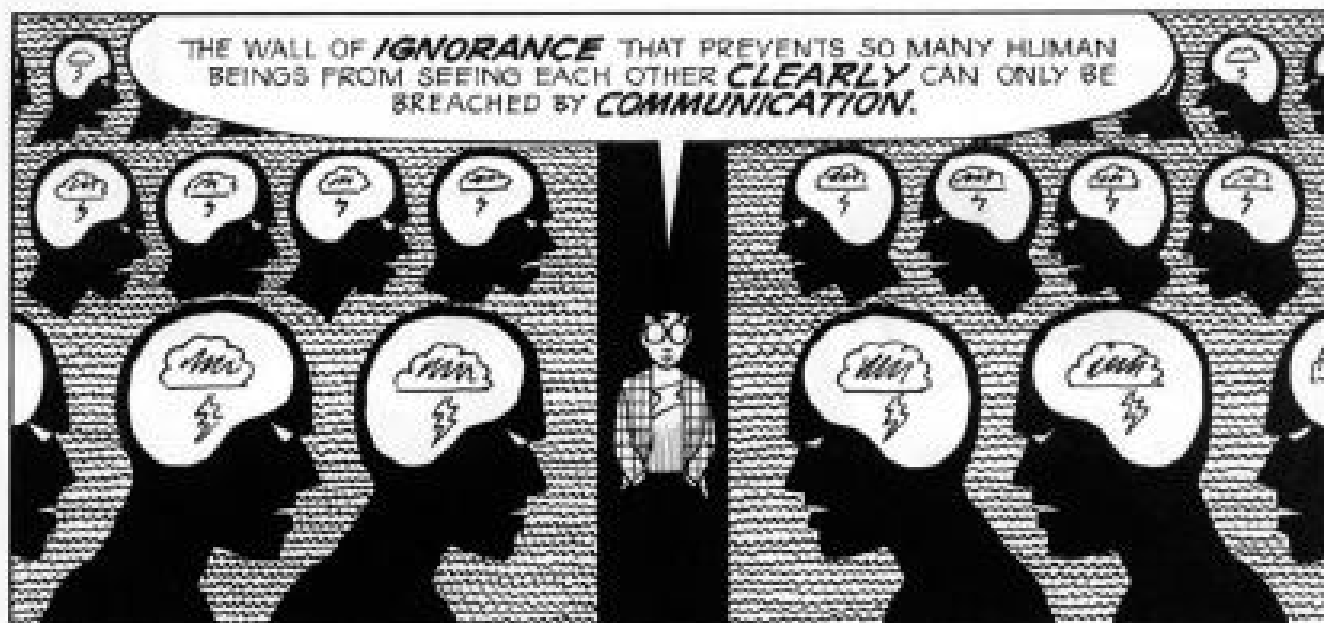
--BUT THEY *PALE* IN COMPARISON TO WHAT A *FILMMAKER* OR *PLAYWRIGHT* HAS TO CONTEND WITH.



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



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

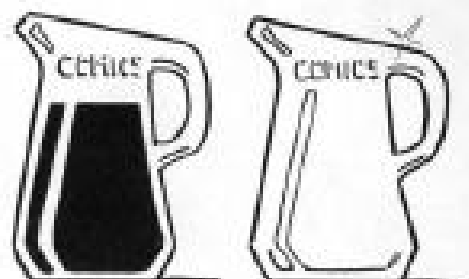


SEE PAGE 213 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

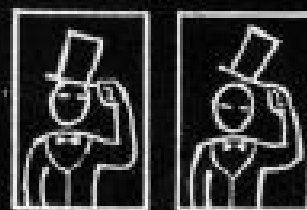
THE FIRST STEP IN ANY SUCH EFFORT IS TO CLEAR OUR MINDS OF ALL PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT COMICS.

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!**

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

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..."

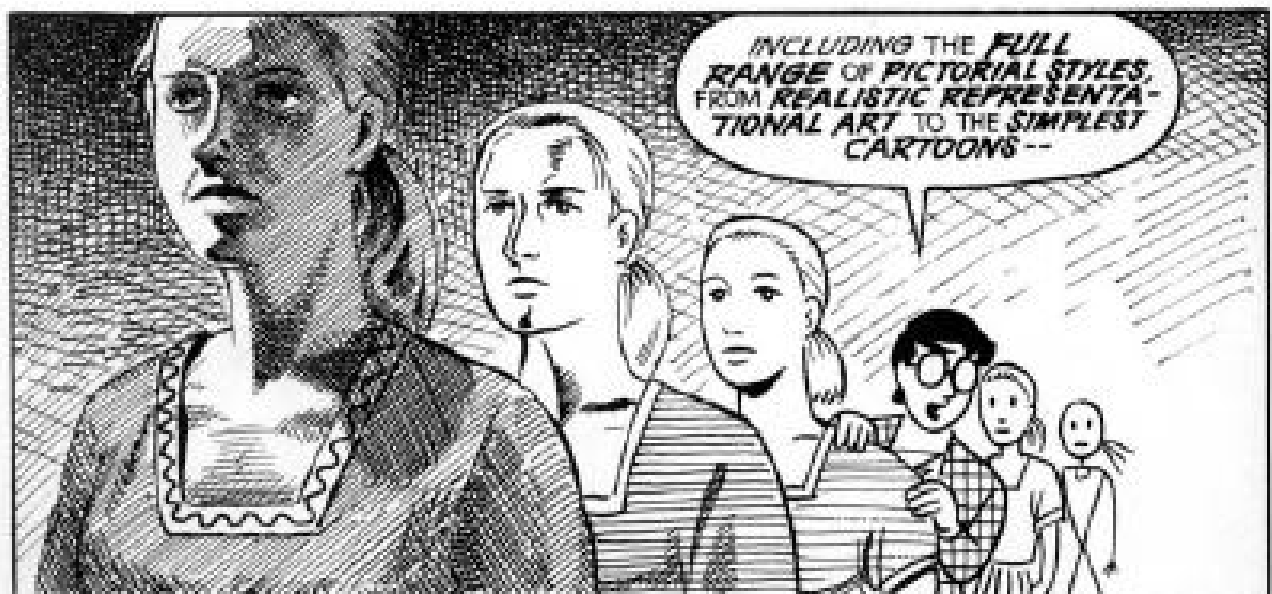
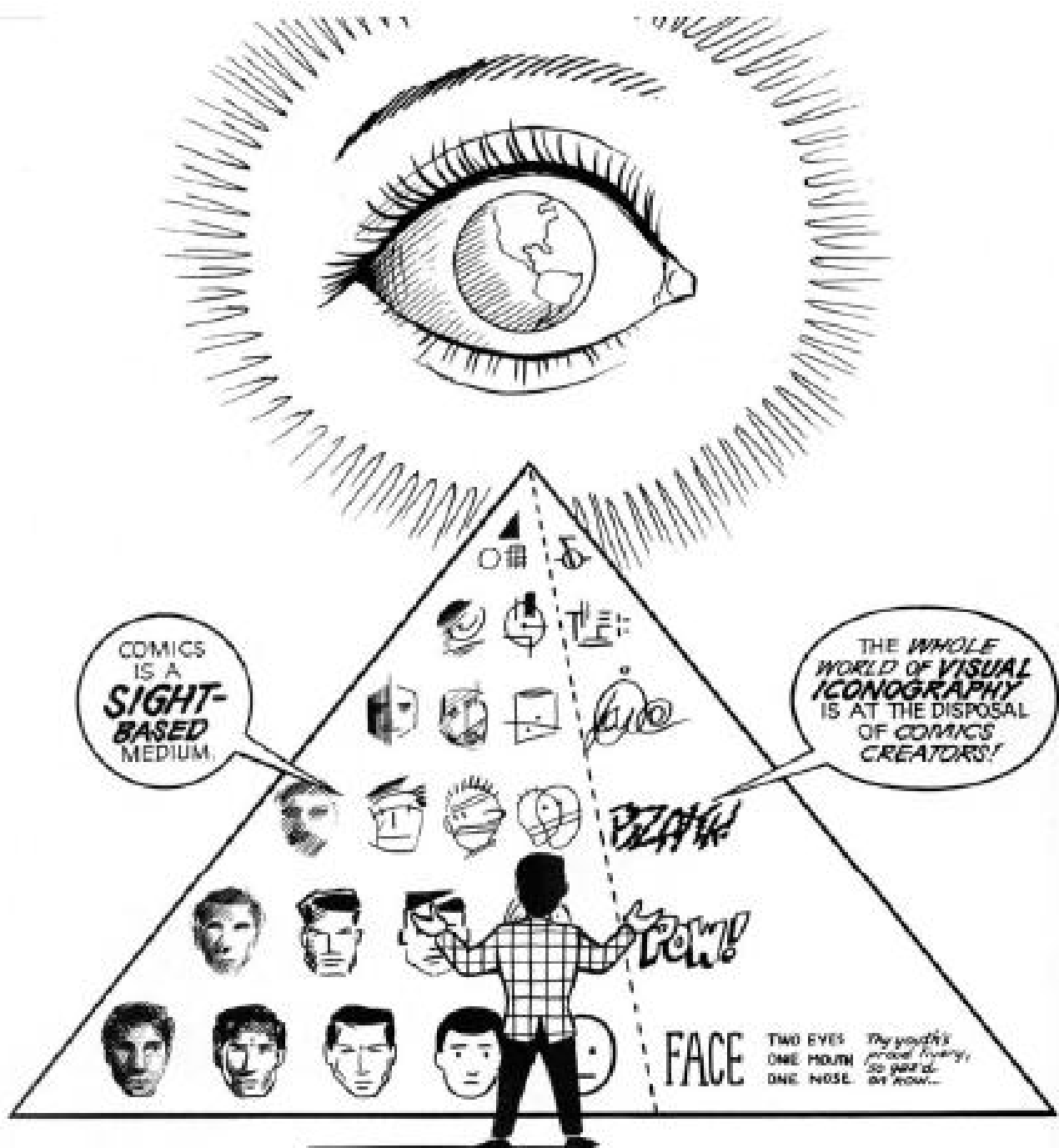
Rudolphe Topffer  
1845

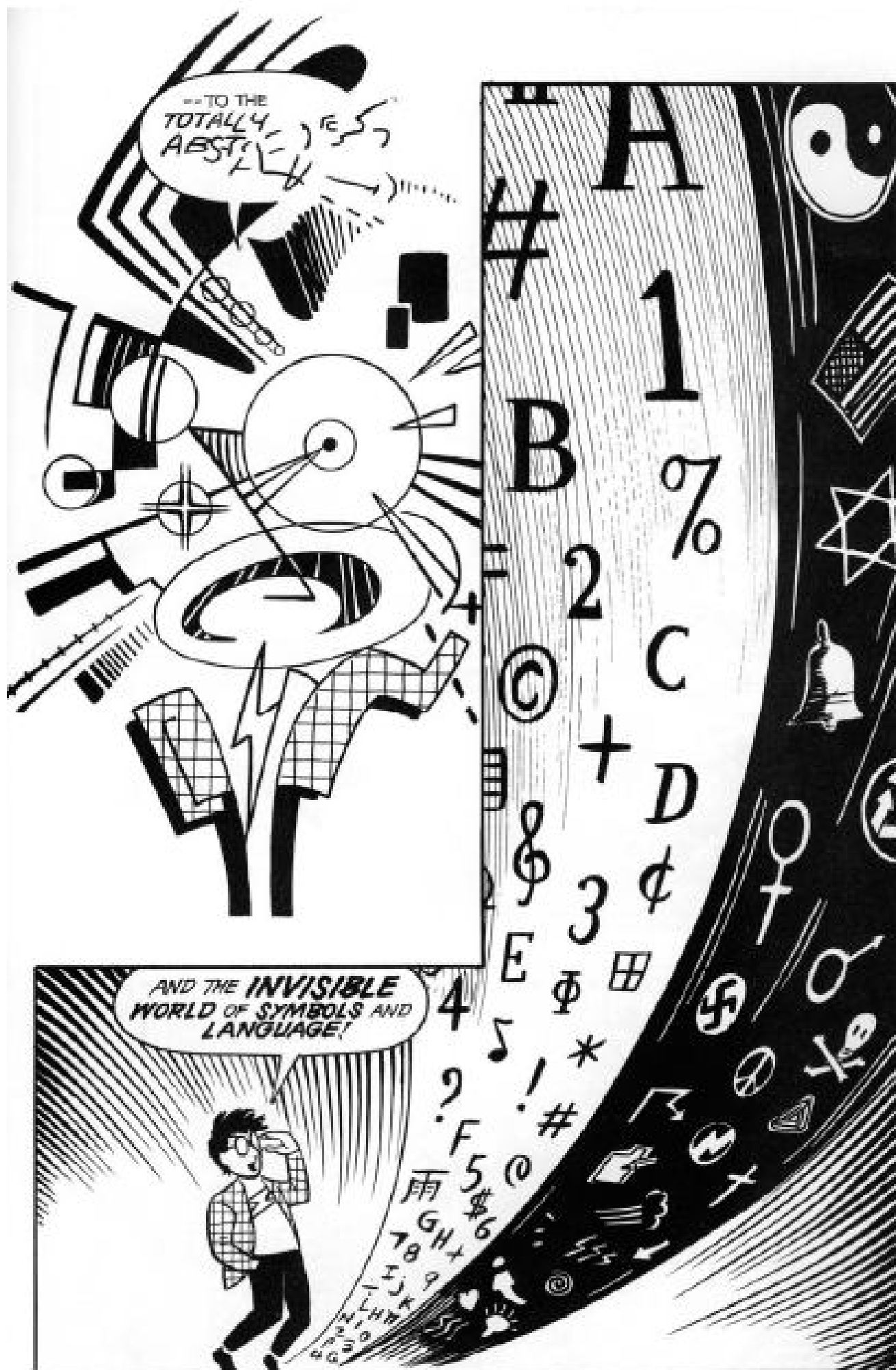
TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE

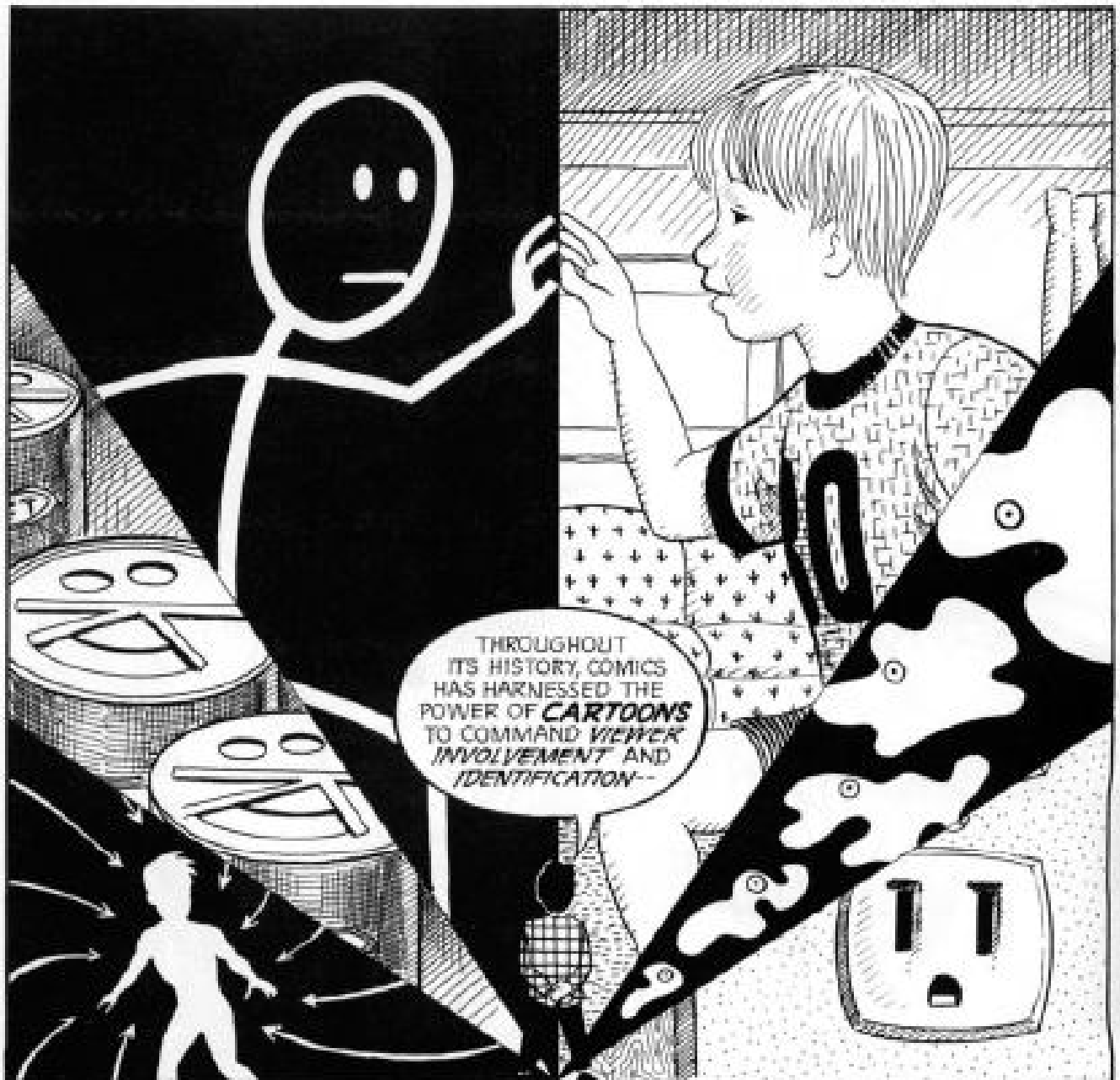
...ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED SOME OF  
MODERN COMICS' MOST *PROMISING* ARTISTS  
TO BE *SEGREGATED* FROM THEIR *MUCH-*  
*MALIGNED* COUSINS.

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

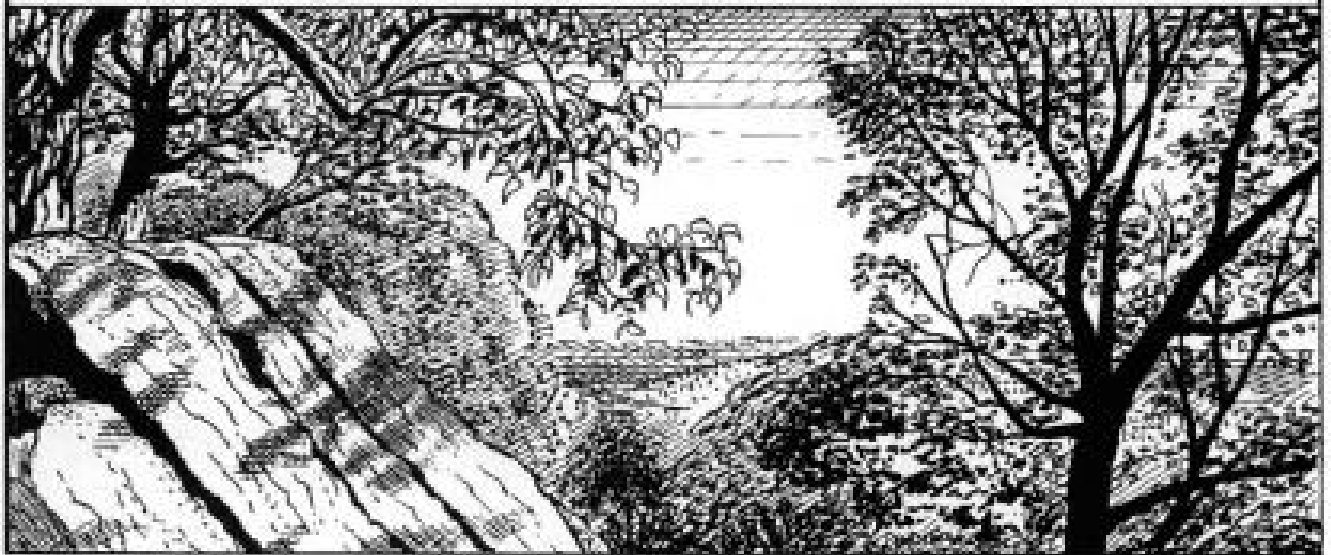


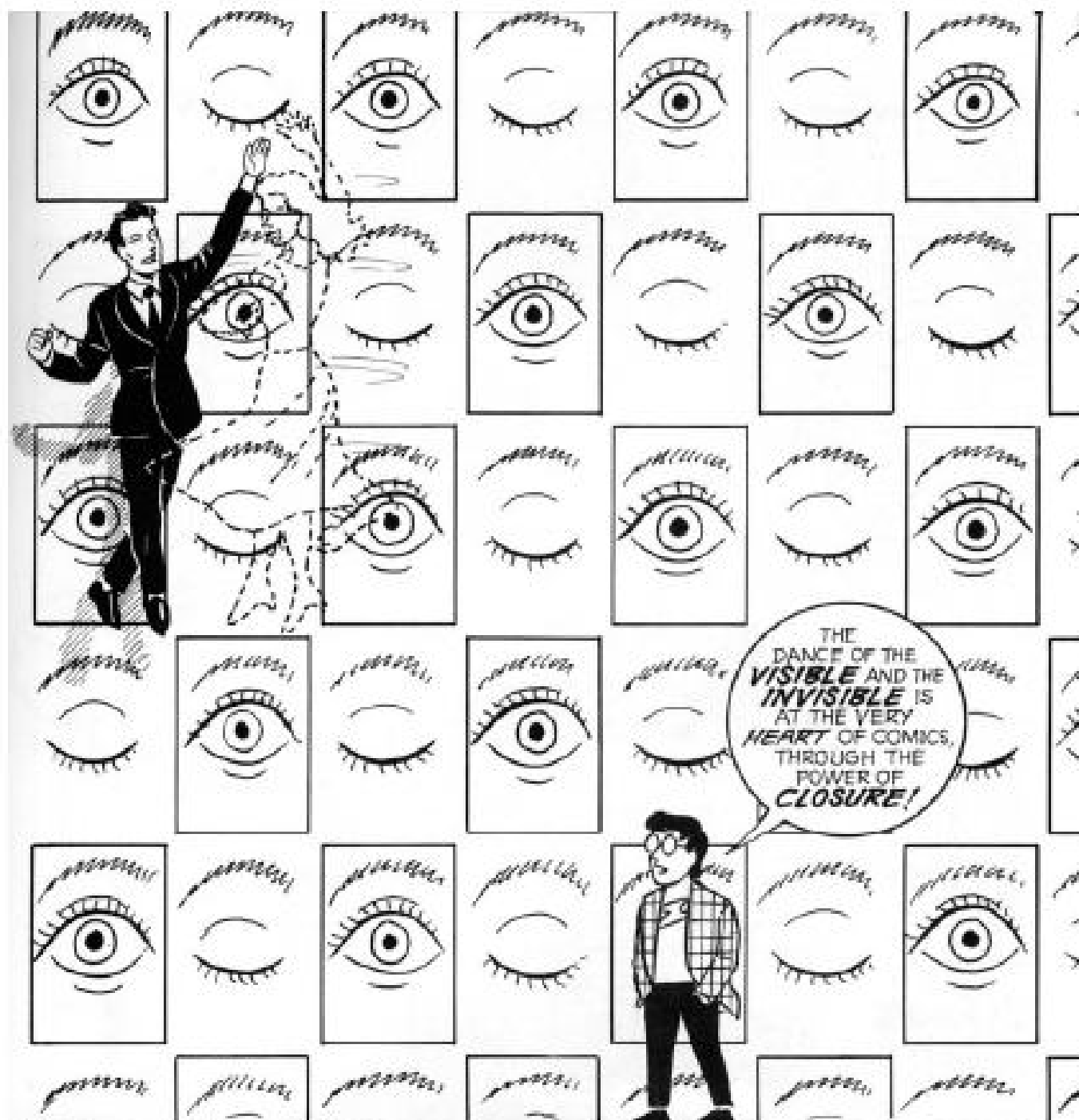






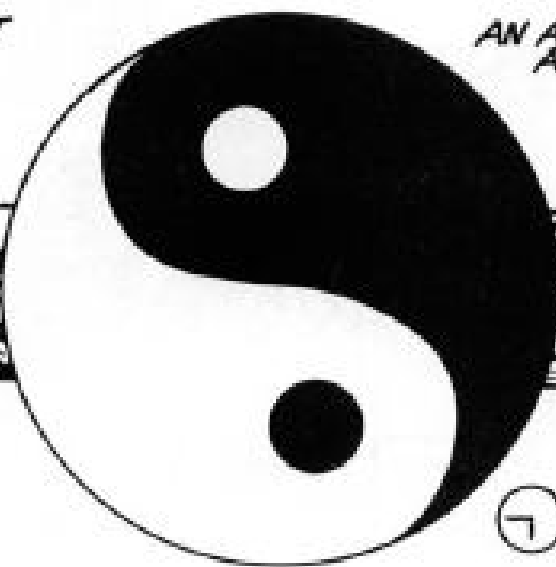
--AND **REALISM** TO CAPTURE THE *BEAUTY AND COMPLEXITY* OF THE *VISIBLE WORLD*.



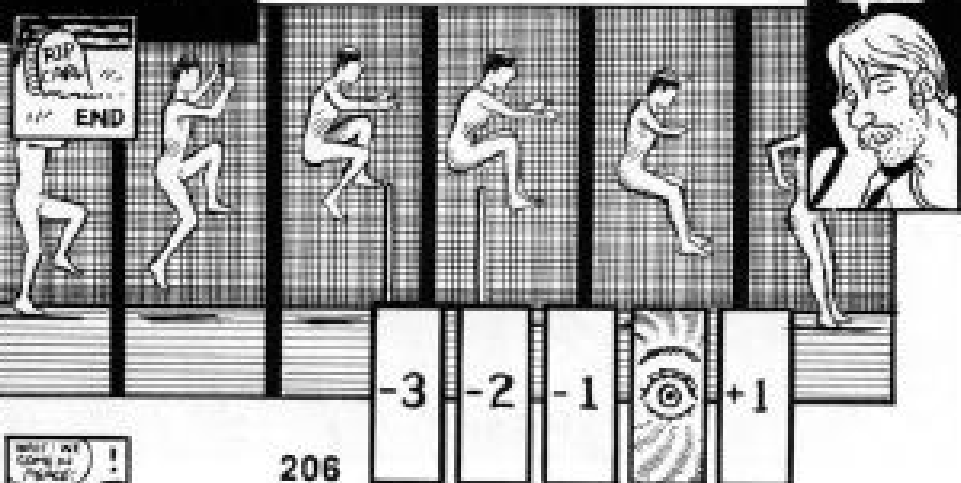
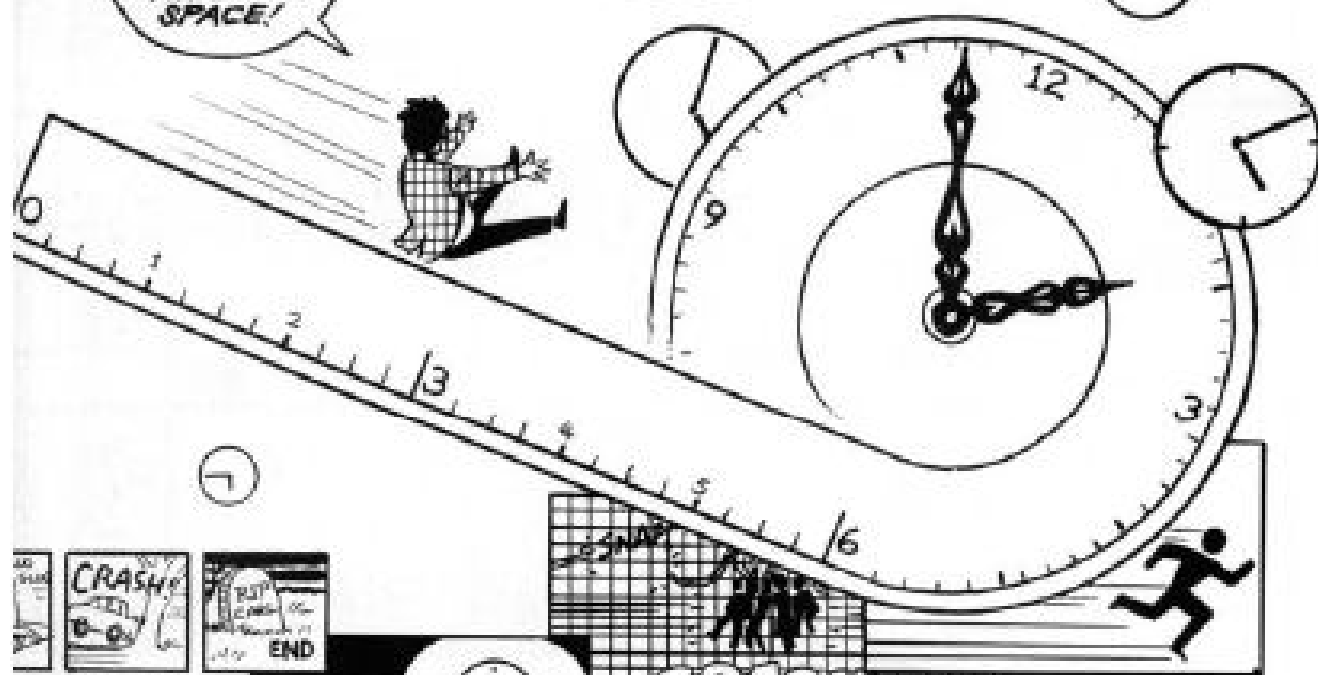


COMICS IS A GREAT  
BALANCING ACT.

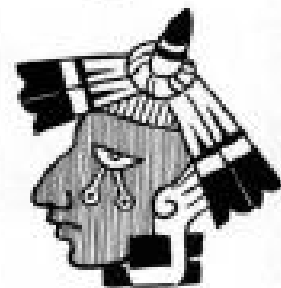
AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE  
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



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



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



eto getuut lu  
ini ⁊ nepthu  
challum d  
ipin ⁊ capth  
uit sydonen

all unwashed  
old of silence  
n, who consist to  
re nocently the  
'd legend from  
monks, of the  
or the tales of  
gods are these

# FACE

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



— BEGIN  
IN EARNEST  
OVER 5,000  
YEARS AGO —



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



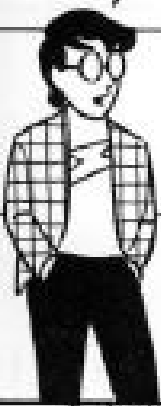
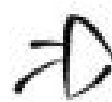




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--AS ALL  
LANGUAGE  
MUST  
EVOLVE--



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

THE SEEDS OF  
*EXPRESSIONISM*  
AND  
*SYNAESTHETICS*.

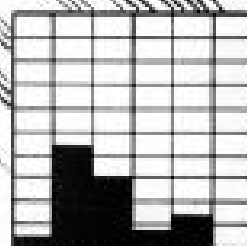
BUT EVOLUTION IS A TRICKY THING. SPECIES EVOLVE DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT CLIMATES.



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



COLLAGE



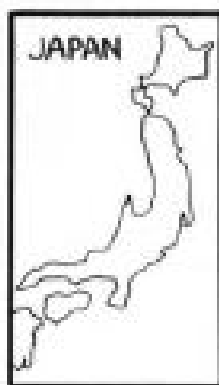
STORYTELLING



EXPRESSIONISM



WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



JAPAN



FORMATS



SUBJECTIVE MOTION



ICONIC CHARACTERS

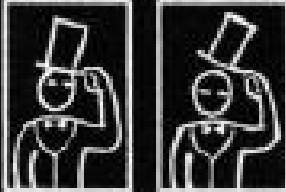


THE "MASKING" EFFECT





COMICS OFFERS  
*TREMENDOUS  
RESOURCES TO  
ALL WRITERS  
AND ARTISTS:  
FAITHFULNESS,  
CONTROL, A  
CHANCE TO BE  
HEARD FAR AND  
WIDE WITHOUT  
FEAR OF  
COMPROMISE...*



**SEQUENTIAL  
ART**

IT OFFERS  
*RANGE AND  
VERSATILITY  
WITH ALL THE  
POTENTIAL IMAGERY  
OF FILM AND  
PAINTING  
PLUS THE  
INTIMACY  
OF THE  
WRITTEN  
WORD.*

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

1

2

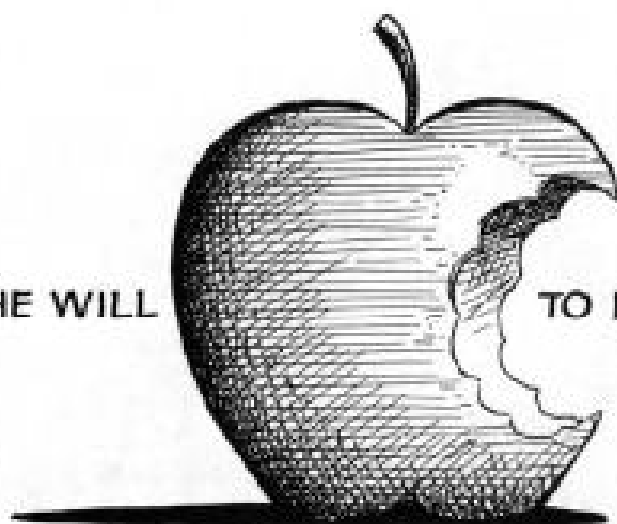
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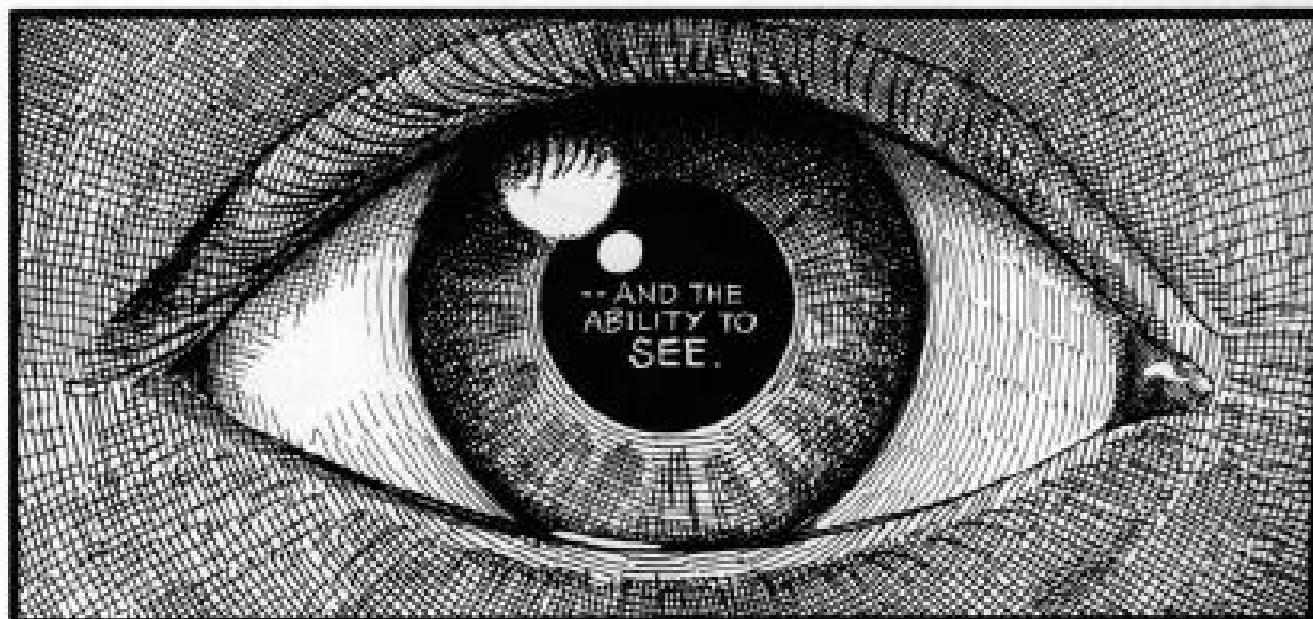
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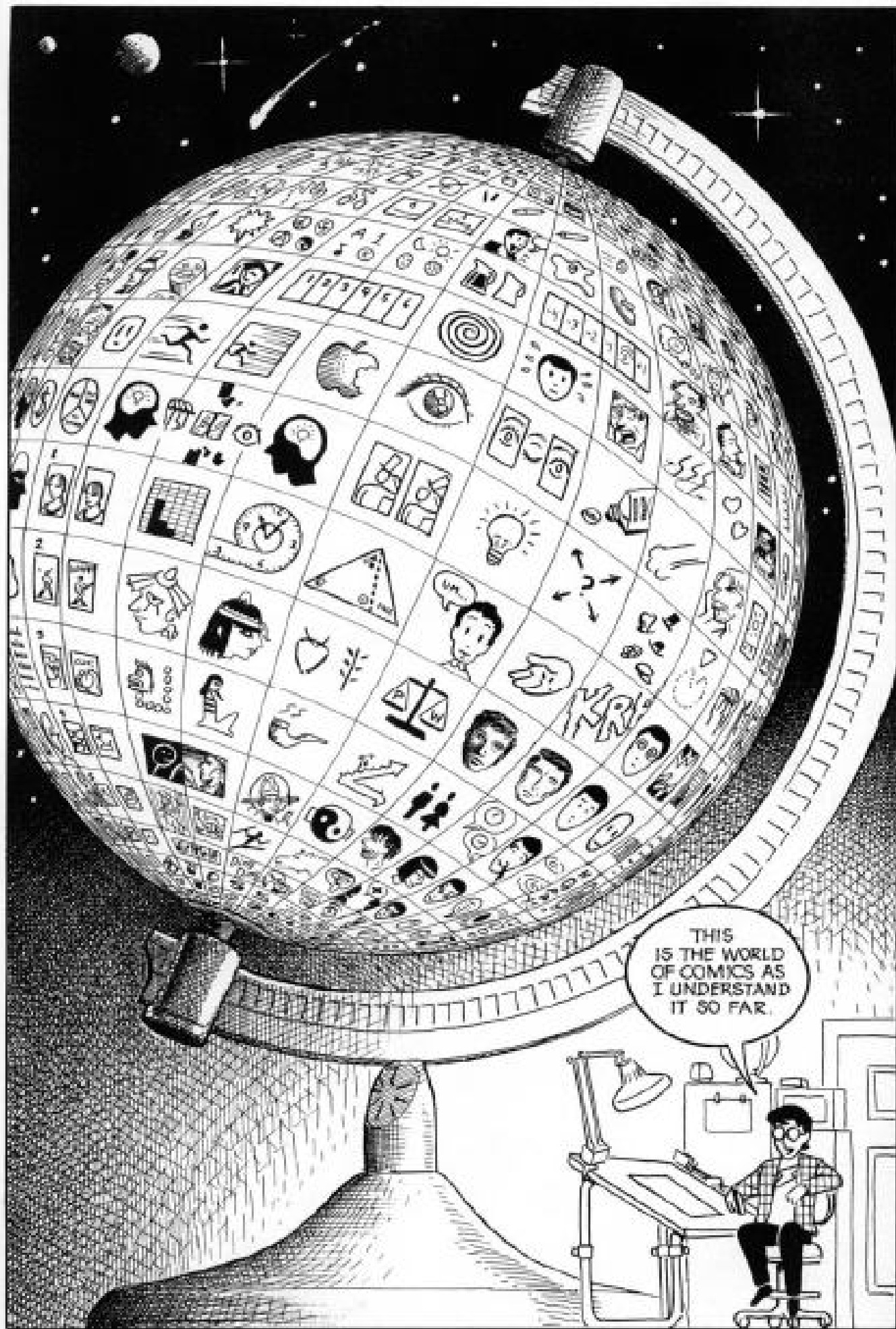
6

--THE WILL



TO LEARN--





THIS  
IS THE WORLD  
OF COMICS AS  
I UNDERSTAND  
IT SO FAR.



col  
'92



## Selected Bibliography.

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Eisner, Will: *Comics and Sequential Art* (Princeton, W: Kitchen Sink Press, Inc., 1992).

Kunzle, David: *The Early Comic Strip* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

McLuhan, Marshall: *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964).

Schwartz, Tony: *Media: The Second God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983).

Wiese, E., editor, translator: *Enter: The Comics--Rodolphe Topffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crepin* (Lincoln, Ne: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

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

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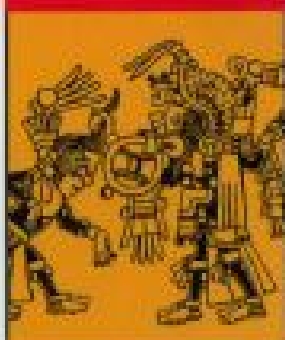
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TAKE A MAGIC CARPET RIDE  
THROUGH THE HIDDEN WORLDS  
OF COMICS STORYTELLING.

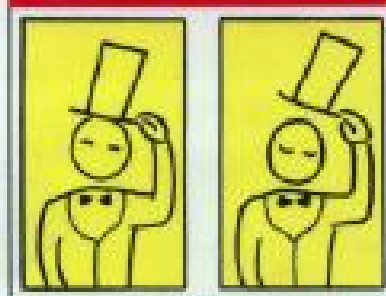
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A CAREER IN *HIGH FINANCE*."



WITNESS A HISTORY MORE  
THAN 3,000 YEARS OLD.



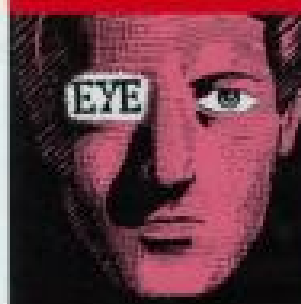
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