

# UNDERSTANDING COMICS



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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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

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

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

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

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

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

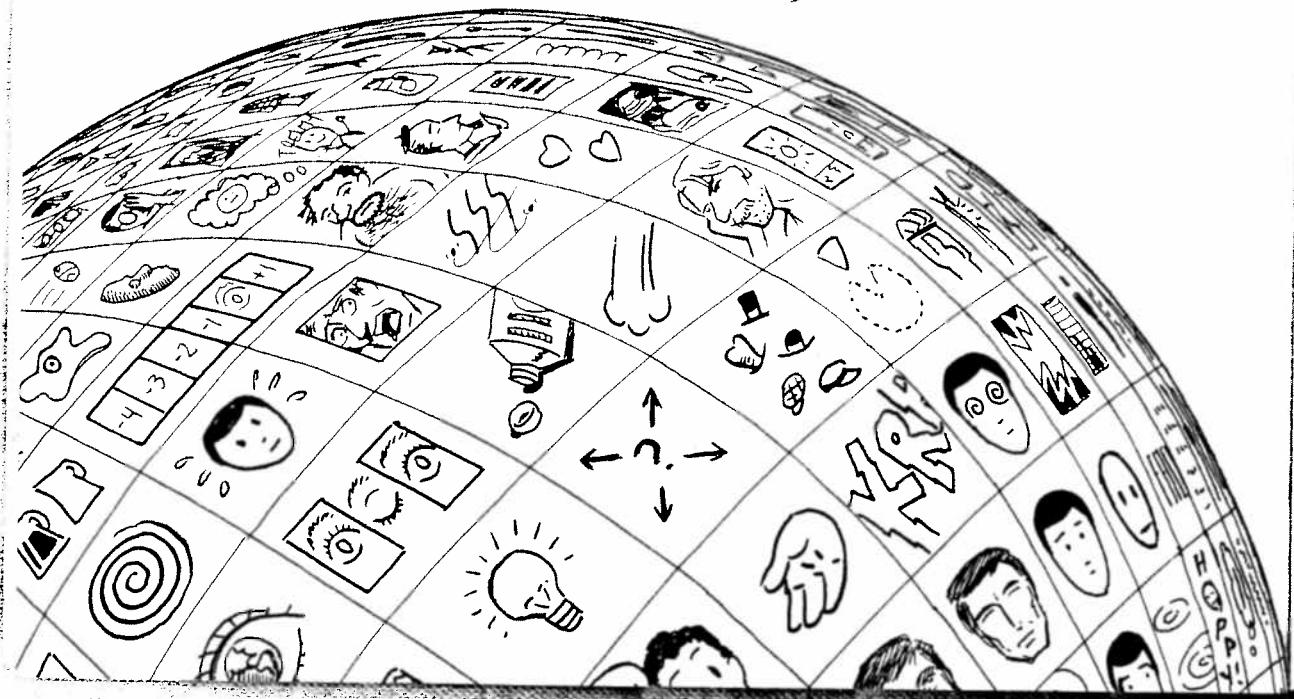
Without Kevin Eastman this book might have never seen the light of day. Thank you, Kevin.

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

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



Scott McCloud





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# INTRODUCTION

MY OLD PAL MATT FEAZELL CALLED THE OTHER DAY.

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



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



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?



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.

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

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

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

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

N'EST-CE PAS?

AND INDEED THIS IS NOT A PIPE.

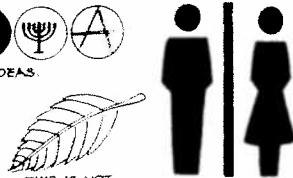
THIS IS A PAINTING OF A PIPE.

RIGHT?

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING?

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

SEE PAGE 216 FOR MORE INFORMATION.



THIS IS NOT A COMPANY.



**SPLAT!**

THIS IS NOT SOUND.



NOW, THE WORD  
ICON MEANS  
MANY THINGS.

THIS IS  
ICON ON  
PAPER



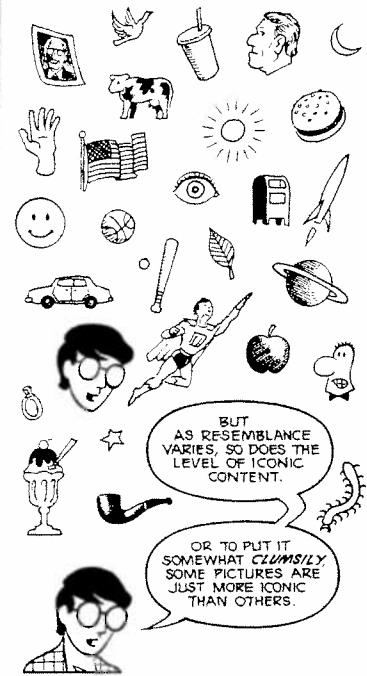
FOR THE PURPOSES OF  
THIS CHAPTER, I'M USING THE  
WORD "ICON" TO MEAN ANY  
IMAGE USED TO REPRESENT A  
A PERSON, PLACE, THING OR  
IDEA.

**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.



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



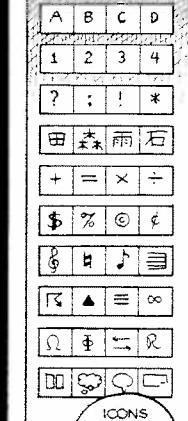
THE SORTS OF  
IMAGES WE  
USUALLY CALL  
SYMBOLS ARE  
ONE CATEGORY  
OF ICON, HOWEVER.



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



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

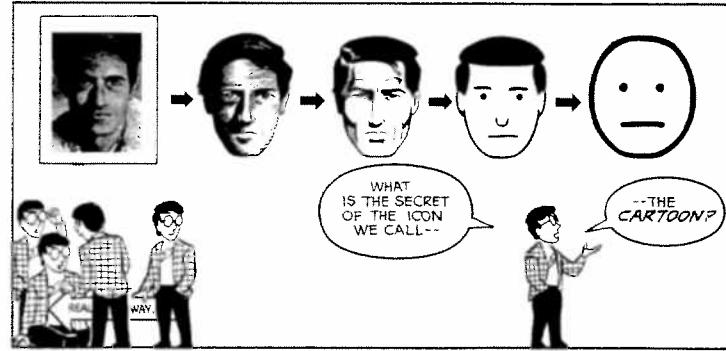
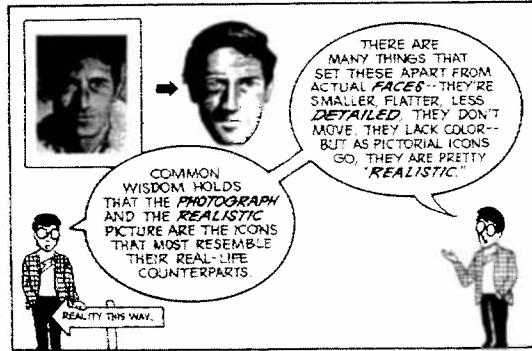
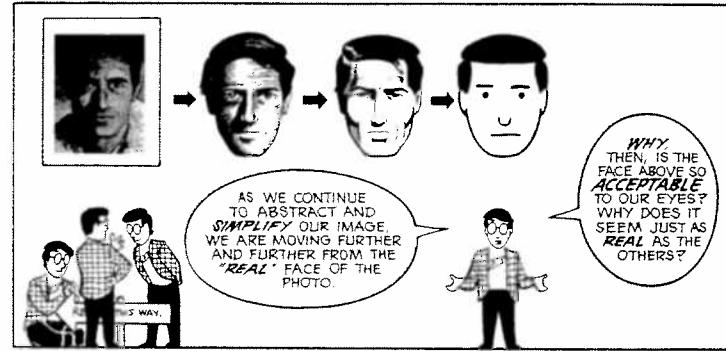
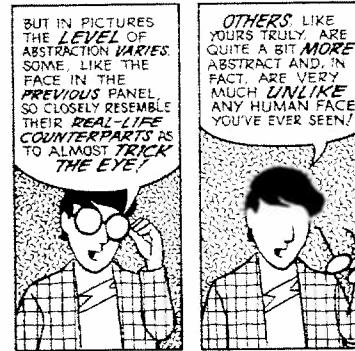
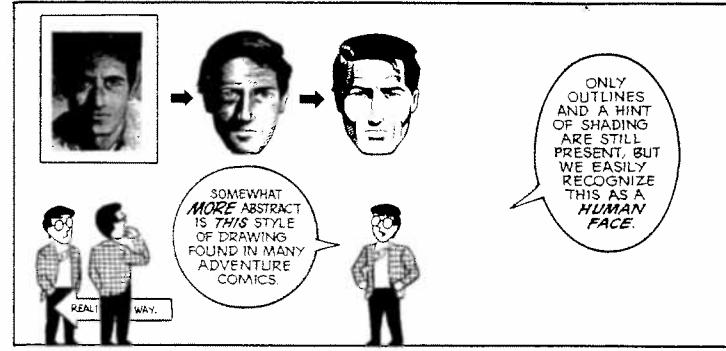
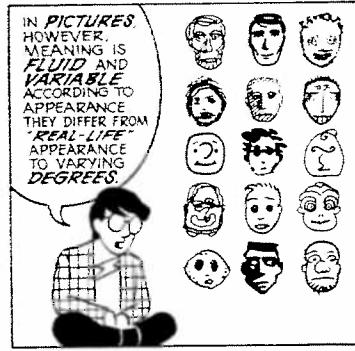
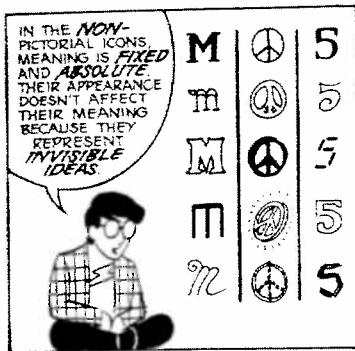


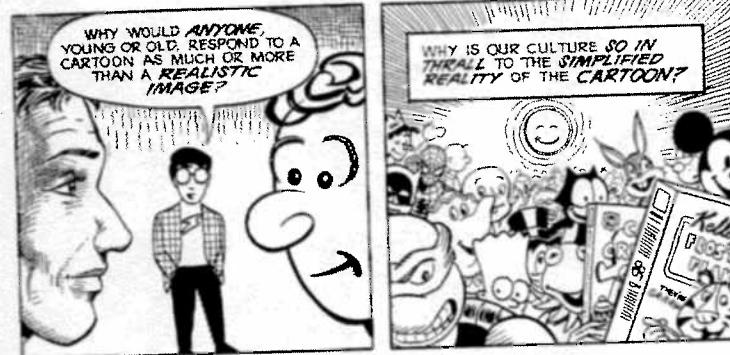
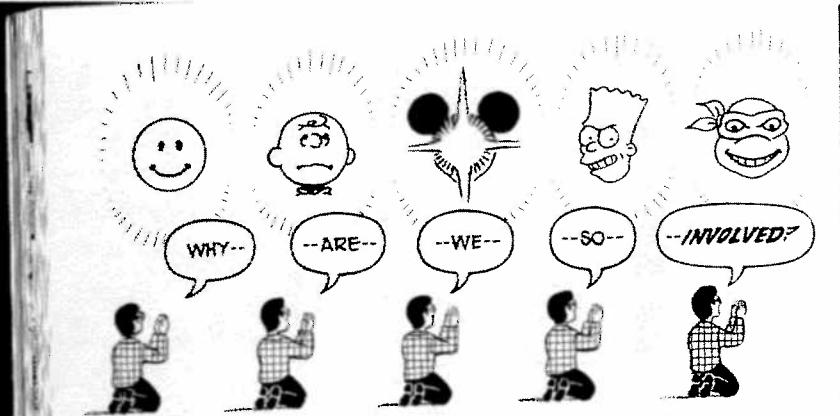
ICONS OF THE  
PRACTICAL  
REALM.



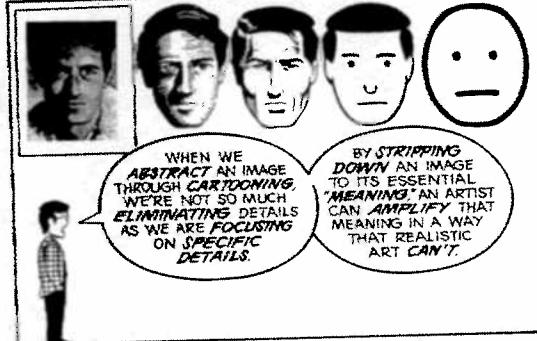
BUT  
AS RESEMBLANCE  
VARIES, SO DOES THE  
LEVEL OF ICONIC  
CONTENT.

OR TO PUT IT  
SOMWHAT CLUMSILY,  
SOME PICTURES ARE  
JUST MORE ICONIC  
THAN OTHERS.





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



30

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.



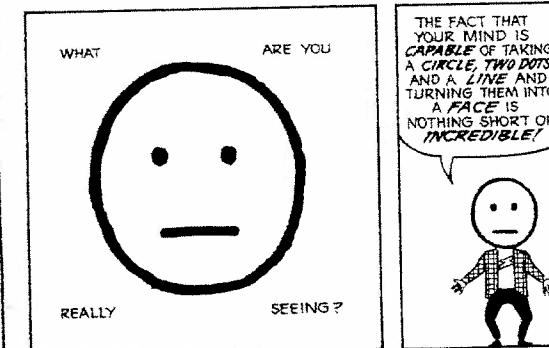
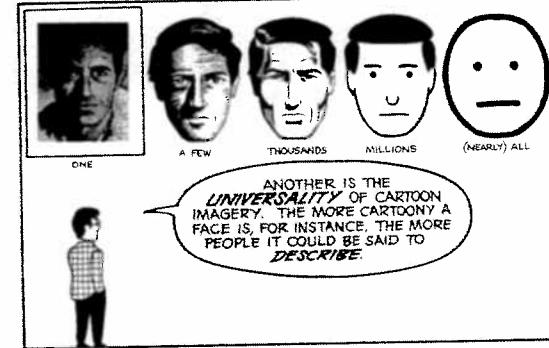
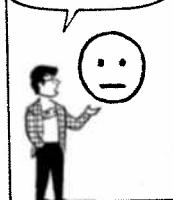
THOUGH THE TERM IS OFTEN USED **DISPARAGINGLY**, IT CAN BE EQUALLY WELL APPLIED TO MANY **TIME-TESTED CLASSICS**. SIMPLIFYING CHARACTERS AND IMAGES TOWARD A **PURPOSE** CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR STORYTELLING IN **ANY** MEDIUM.



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.



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.



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**!

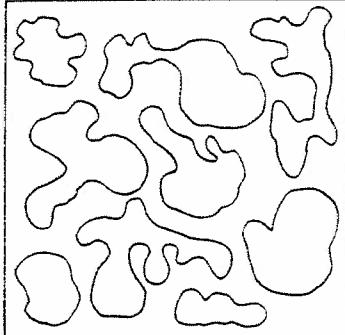


BUT STILL **MORE** INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU **CAN'T AVOID** SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T **LET YOU**!

31

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.

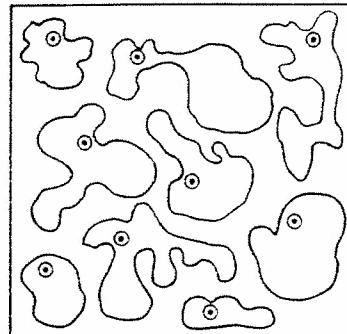
LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS



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



WE SEE OURSELVES IN EVERYTHING



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

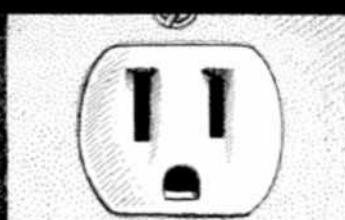


--FOR THIS?

WE ASSIGN IDENTITIES AND EMOTIONS WHERE NONE EXIST.

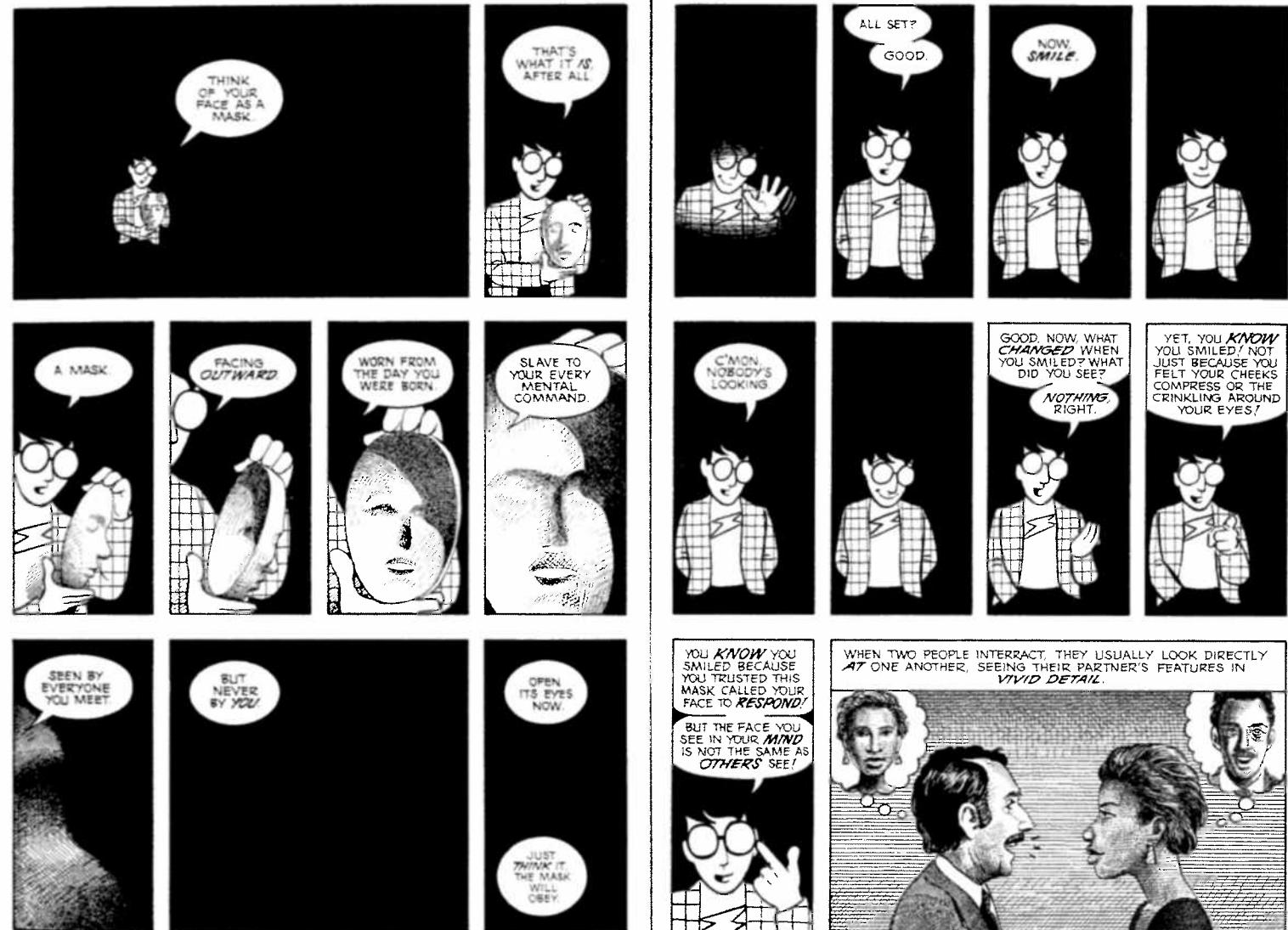


WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE



AND WE MAKE THE WORLD OVER IN OUR IMAGE.





EACH ONE ALSO SUSTAINS A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER CANDY 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.

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



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



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



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



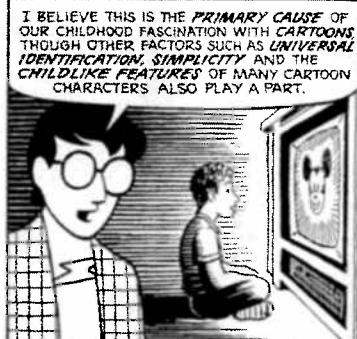
THUS, WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PHOTO OR REALISTIC DRAWING OF A FACE--



BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE CARTOON--



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.



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



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



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



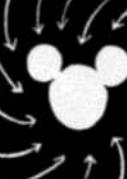
THAT'S THE THEORY, ANYWAY.



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!

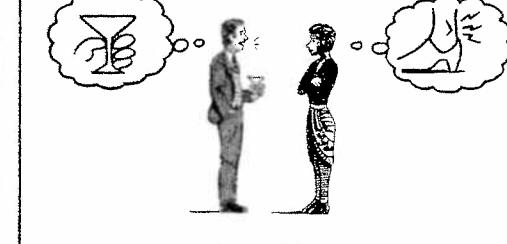
THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO DRAW MYSELF IN SUCH A SIMPLE STYLE.



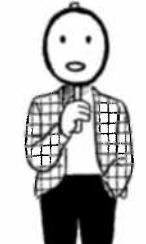
WOULD YOU HAVE LISTENED TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE THIS???

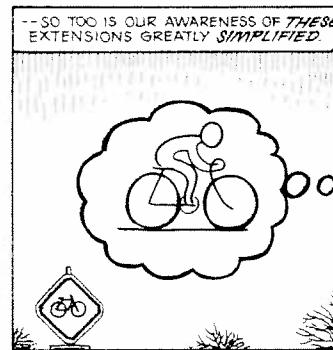
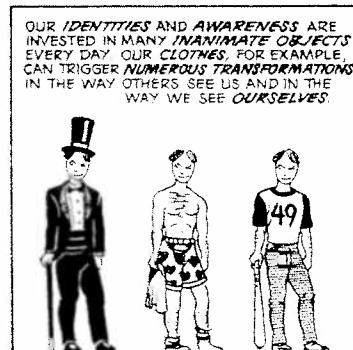
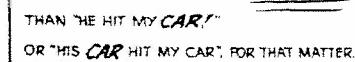
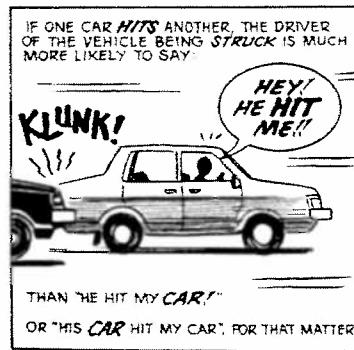
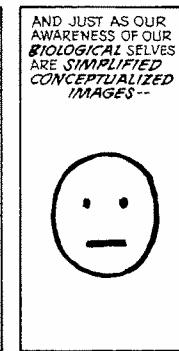
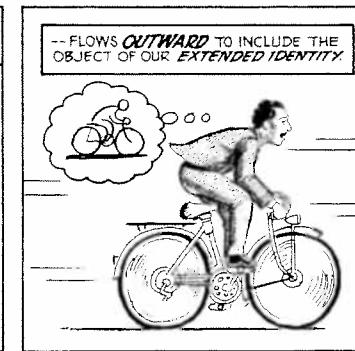
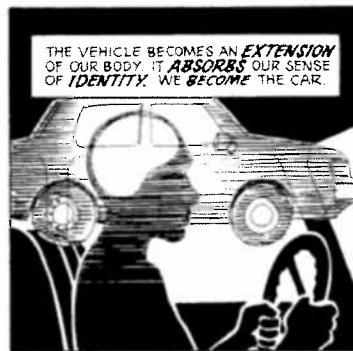
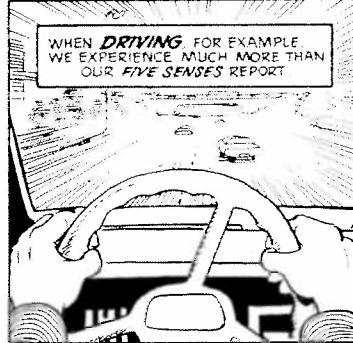
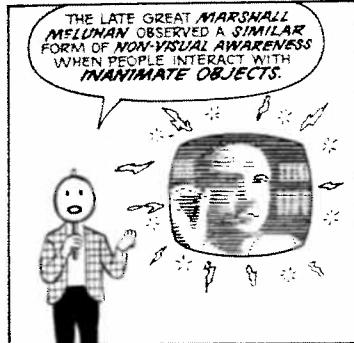


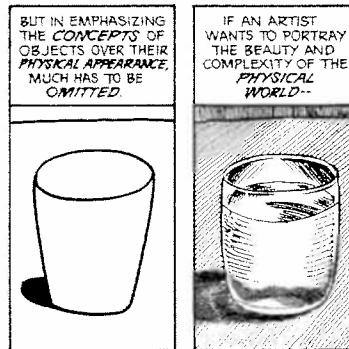
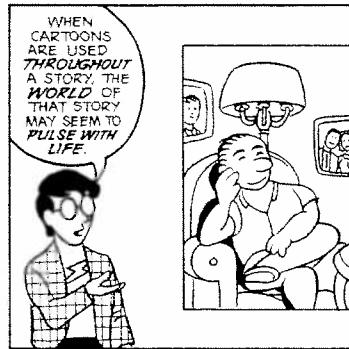
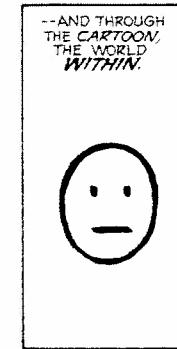
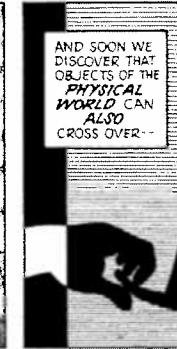
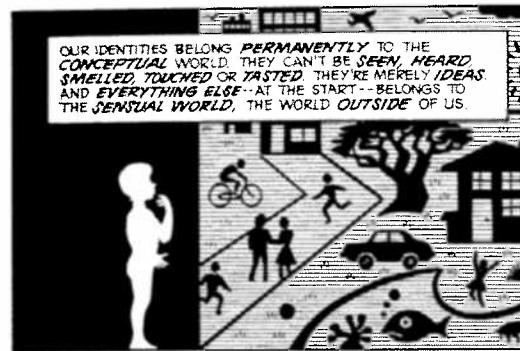
SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY DISCUSSED FACES, BUT THE PHENOMENON OF NON-VISUAL SELF-AWARENESS CAN TO A LESSER DEGREE STILL APPLY TO OUR WHOLE BODIES. AFTER ALL, DO WE NEED TO SEE OUR HANDS TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING?

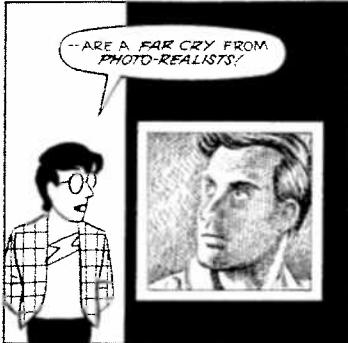
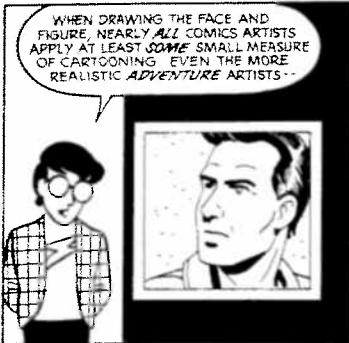


THERE'S MORE TOO!

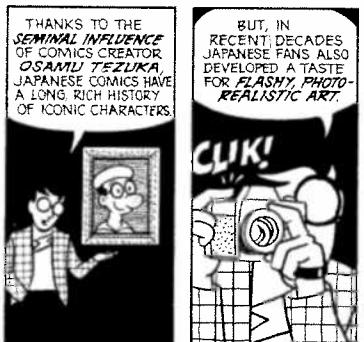
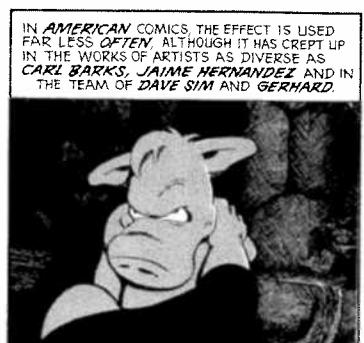
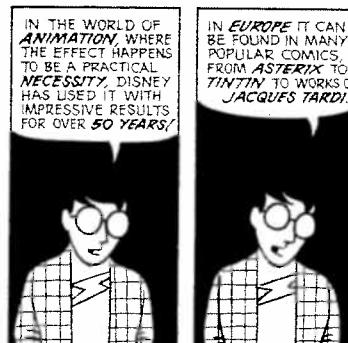
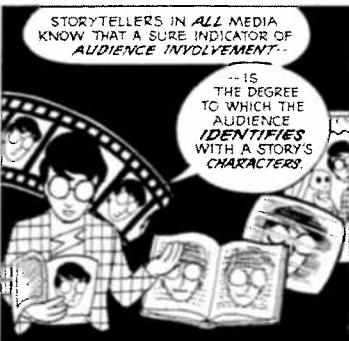


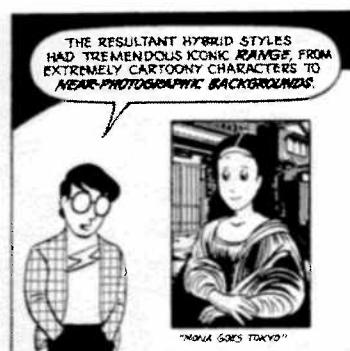






THIS COMBINATION ALLOWS READERS TO **MASK** THEMSELVES IN A CHARACTER AND SAFELY ENTER A SENSUALLY STIMULATING WORLD.





ART © MAUS AND CIRKUS

RE: PAGE 24 FOR DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION

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



— OTHER CHARACTERS WERE DRAWN MORE DETAILED IN ORDER TO OBJECTIFY THEM, THEIR OWNERSHIP 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!

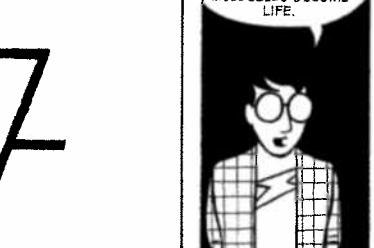


AS I WRITE THIS, IN 1992, AMERICAN AUDIENCES ARE JUST BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT A SIMPLE *STYLE* DOESN'T NECESSITATE SIMPLE *STORY*.



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.



ART © MAUS AND CIRKUS

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

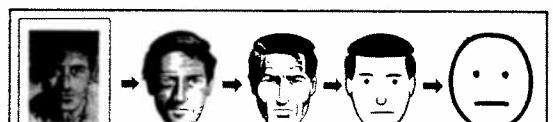
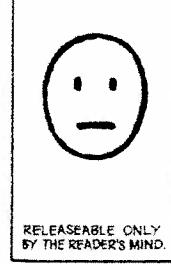
IN JAPANESE COMICS, THE SWORD MIGHT NOW BECOME VERY REALISTIC, NOT ONLY TO SHOW US THE DETAILS, BUT TO MAKE US AWARE OF THE SWORD AS AN OBJECT, SOMETHING WITH WEIGHT, TEXTURE AND PHYSICAL COMPLEXITY.

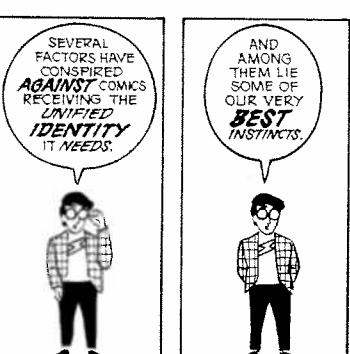
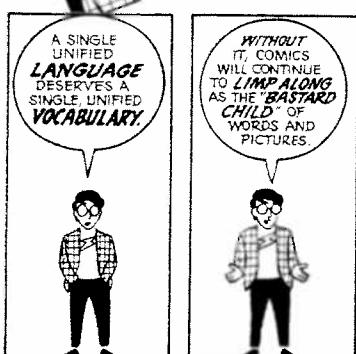
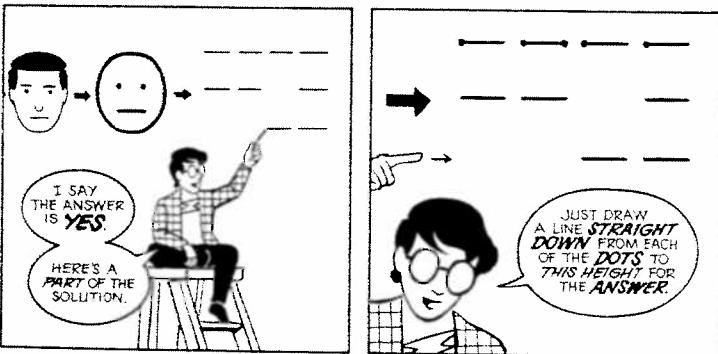
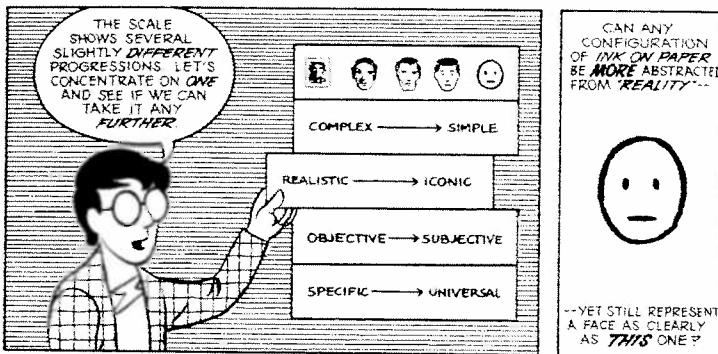
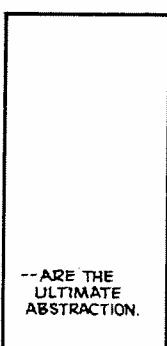
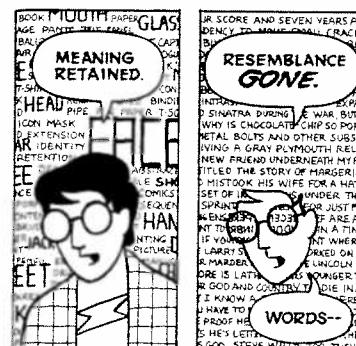
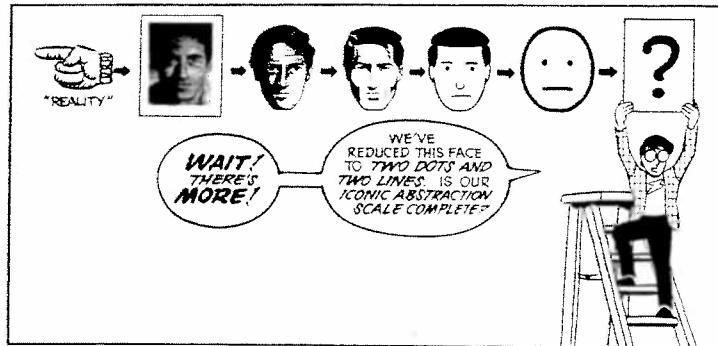


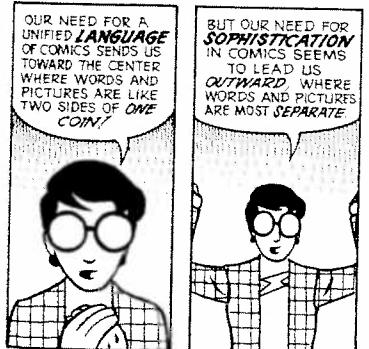
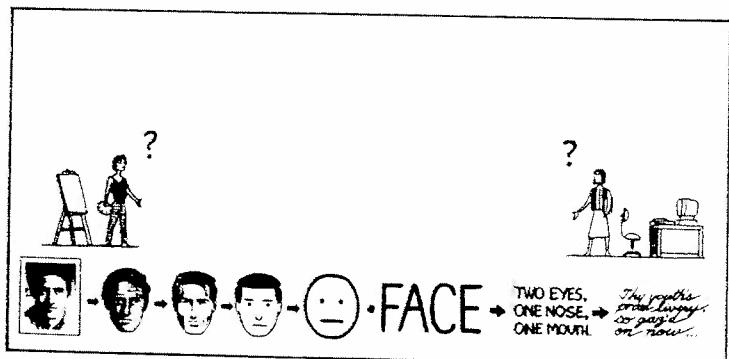
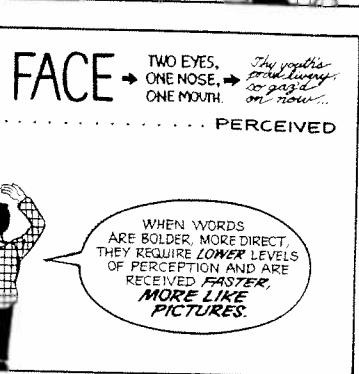
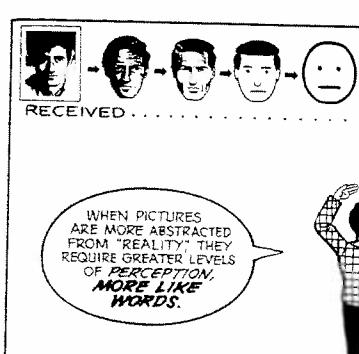
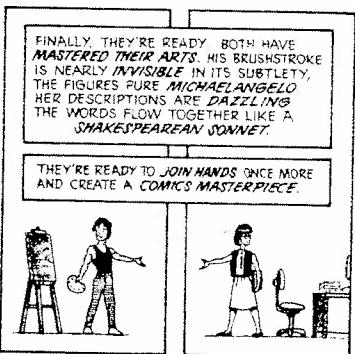
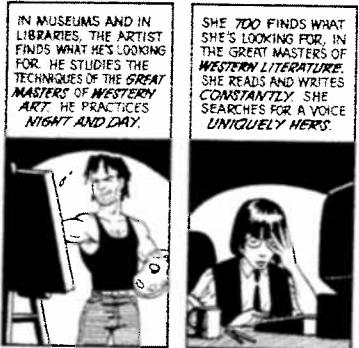
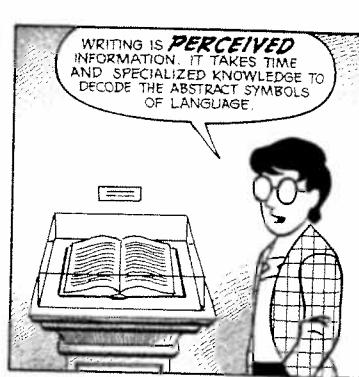
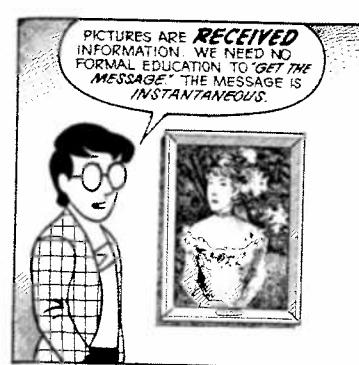
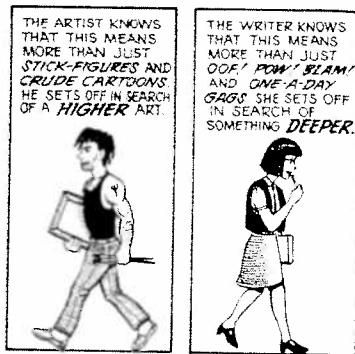
IN THIS AND IN OTHER WAYS, COMICS IN JAPAN HAVE EVOLVED VERY DIFFERENTLY FROM THOSE IN THE WEST.

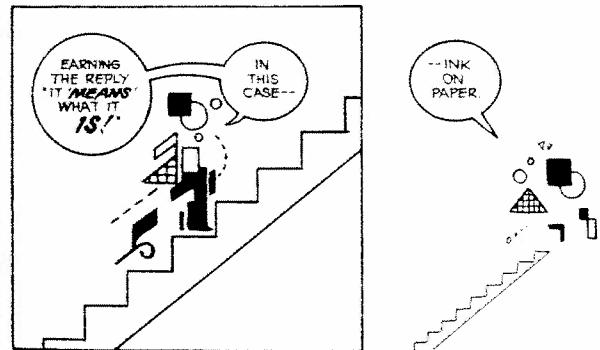
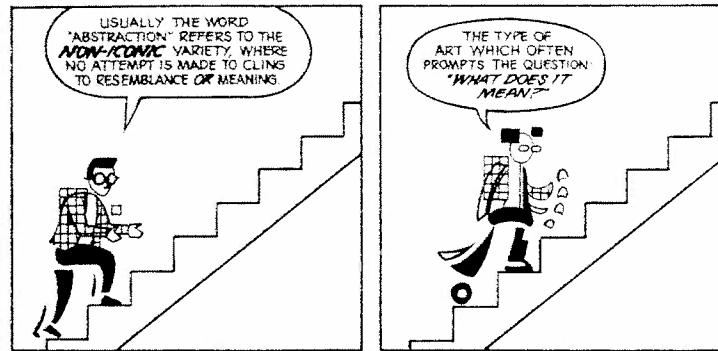
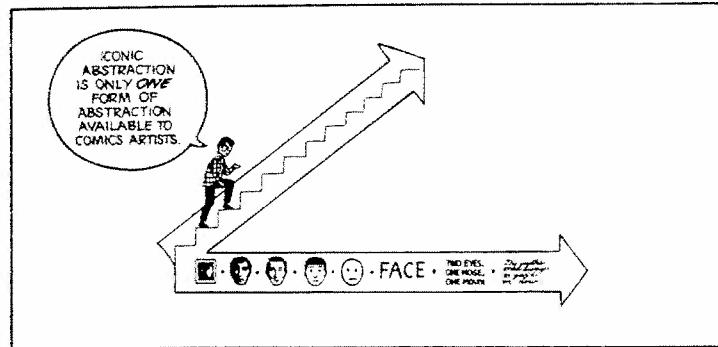
WE'LL RETURN TO THESE DIFFERENCES SEVERAL TIMES DURING THIS BOOK.

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

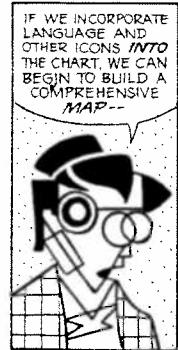
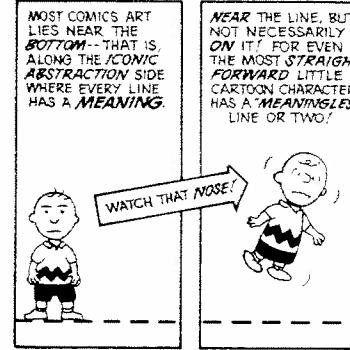
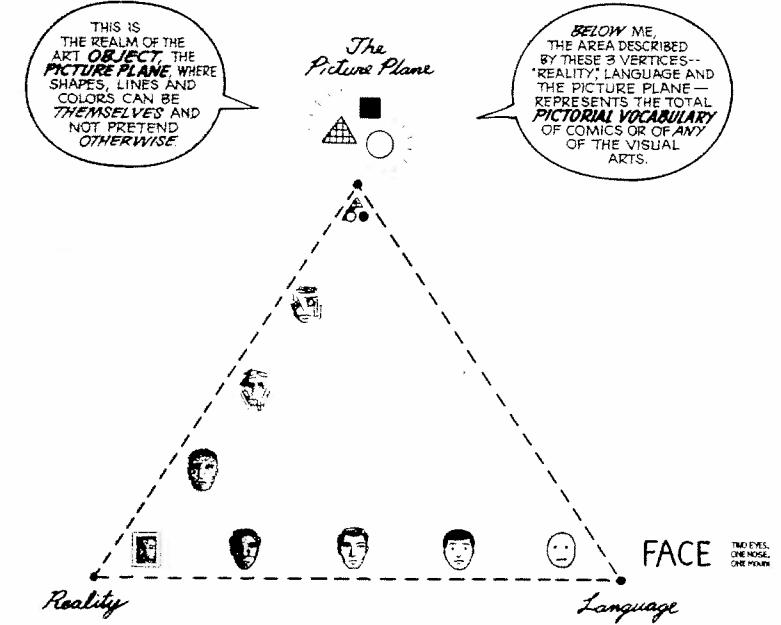








50



51

1. MARY PLEINER at her most abstract. 2. MARISCAL's Peter. 3. DAVE McKEAN employing one of the many styles found in his series GAGERS. 4. MARC HEMPEL's GREGORY THE MAMMOTH. 5. LARRY MARDER's *BEANWORLD*. 6. TALES OF THE BEANWORLD. "Reassuringly" nothing has moved since the day it was drawn. 7. LYNN STERK's *THE BEANWORLD*. 8. LYNN STERK's *THE BEANWORLD*. 9. CHARLES SUMNER's *BABY*. 10. (Whoops) CLIFF STERNETT. The character pictured here from POLLY AND HER PALS might belong a bit lower but Sternet's art, like Eisner's often heads above the line. 11. RON LEE's *PAUL*. 12. Neurhooper Features Syndicate, Inc. 13. SERGIO ARAGONÉS's *GROO*. 14. THE WANDERER. Simple, straightforward but with a strong gestural quality that always reminds us of the hand that holds the pen (also true of 15-18). 15. PETER BAGGE's *Church Boy* from NEAT STUFF. 16. ROB BROWN's *THE KITTIES*. 17. REA HYMAN's *THE SMYTHES*. 18. Field Karpasoff Syndicate. 19. STEVE WHILLIE's *Marty*. 20. PHIL YOUNG's *FRANK THE UNICORN*. 21. JERRY MORRATT's *Jack Sparrow*. Based closely on real world shapes. Similar abstracts are found in nos. 8, 11, 19, 20 and 34. 22. JEFF WIGGINS' art for Scott Rusek's *JAZZ*. 23. ROLF STARK's expressionistic *RAIN*. 24. SPAIN's *TRASHMAN*. 25. PHIL WILLETT's *THE KNIGHT REVERIES*. 26. ROB BROWN's *Concubine*. Batman created by Bob Kane. 27. WILLIAM MERRIMAN-CHESS's *Woburns MacAdam* from *JOURNEY*. 28. DOM SWIMPSON's *MEGATON MAN*. Beginning from a

realistic anatomical base. Simpson distorts and exaggerates M.M.'s features to the brink of abstraction. 29. MICHAEL CHERKAS from *SILENT INVASION*. 30. Charles and Hancock series. 31. RICK GEARY's *BOB BURDEN* and *Hancock*. 32. GARRY TRUMAN's *DOOMSDAY*. 33. LYNN STERK's *THE BEANWORLD*. 34. LYNN STERK's *THE BEANWORLD*. "Reassuringly" nothing has moved since the day it was drawn. Marder's beans walk the fine line to *mazing*. 35. MARDER's beans walk the fine line to *mazing*. 36. SAUL STEINBERG. 37. PENNY MORAH YANHORN from *THE LIBRARIAN*. 38. LORENZO LATTITTI in *FIRES*. 39. Editor's Note: *FAIRYTALES* is a comic book with iconic forms and strong, design-oriented compositions. In other words, he's a hard one to please. 40. ALINE Kominsky-Crume. 41. PETER BAGGE's *Church Boy* from NEAT STUFF. 42. ROB BROWN's *THE KITTIES*. 43. REA HYMAN's *THE SMYTHES*. 44. FIELD KARPASOFF SYNDICATE. 45. SERGIO ARAGONÉS from *BATMAN: YEAR ONE*. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 46. JOSE MUNOZ from "Mister Conrad, Mister Wico" © Munoz and Sampayo. 47. CAROL

## The Picture Plane

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

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

SWAIN. 48. CHESTER GOULD's *DICK TRACY* © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate, Inc. 49. LUCILLE BREWER © DC Comics. 50. BOB BURDEN © D.C. Comics. 51. PETER BAGGE's *Buddy Bradley* from *HATE*. Compare to 1. 52. SETH. 41. MARK MARYAN © D.C. Comics. 53. JULIE DOUCET. 43. EDWARD DOREY O' BRIEN. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's *Moewi* from *KELP*. 45. GOSBEK KOJIMA from *KOZURE OKAMI*. 46. (Wolf and Cub) © Kojima and Kojima. 46. EDDIE CAMPBELL's *ALEC*. Realistic in tone, but also gestural and spontaneous. The process of drawing is hidden from view. 47. ALEX TOTH. 48. ZORO © D.C. Comics. 49. AD © Walt Disney Productions. 50. BARRY JOHNSTON (McCullay). 44. HUGO PRATT's *CORTO MALTESE* © Casterman. Paris/Journal: 51. R. CRUMB's swing between realistic and cartoonish characters is a bit odd at first sight but occasionally ventures upward. 52. JULIE DOUCET. 53. NORMAN DOG. 54. VALENTINO's *NORMALMAN* sits a bit to the right and up from his current *SHADOWHAWK* whose weightiness makes him a harder to place. 55. ROZ CHASER. 56. JOHN SWARTZEN Anton Makasza. 57. ELCIE SEGAR's *POPEYE* © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 58. GEORGE HERRIMAN's "Offiss Papp" from *KRAZY KAT* © International Feature Service. 59. JIM WOODRING's *FRANK*. 60. NEAL ADAMS' art from *THE NEW Marvel Entertainment Group*. 61. (X-Men created by Stan Lee and Kirby). 62. GIL KANE from *ACTION COMICS* © D.C. Comics, Inc. 62. MILTON CANIFF's *STEVE CANYON*. 63. JIM LEE. 64. MARK MILLAR in *X-MEN* © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics. 65. JACQUES TARDI from *LE DEMON DES GLACES* © Dargaud Editeur. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZERES. Laureline Editeur from the *VALERIAN* series. 67. Dargaud Editeur. 68. BILL GRIFFITH's *ZIPPY THE PINHEAD*. 68. JOE MATT. 69. KYLE BAKER from *WHY I HATE SATURN*. 70. TRINA ROBBINS's

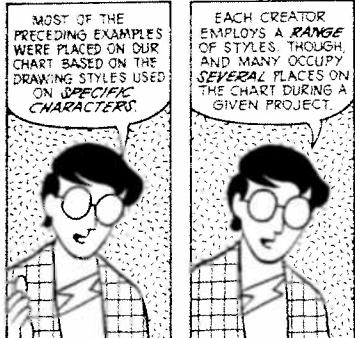
"Wolf and Cub" © Kojima and Kojima. 71. RYOKO IKEDA's *Oscar* from *THE ROSE OF VERSAILLES*. 72. GEORGE MACHADO's *BRINGING UP FATHER* © International Feature Service, Inc. 73. CHARLES SCHULZ's *Charlie Brown* from *PEANUTS* © United Features Syndicate, Inc. 74. ART SPIEGELMAN's *MAUS*. 75. MATT FRAZEE's *CYNICALMAN*. 76. The company logo. The *guitar* logo. 77. Title Logo. The word *object*. 78. Sound Effect. The word *sound*. 79. TOM KING's *SNOKKUMS*, THAT LOVABLE TRANSGESTITE. 80. (The *guitar*) © DREW FRIEDMAN. 81. DAVE STEVENS. 82. HAL FOSTER. 83. TARZAN created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. 84. ALEX RAYMOND's *Flash Gordon* © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 84. MILO MANARA. 85. JOHN BUSCEMA. 86. CAROL LAY © Van de Kamp from *GOOD GIRLS*. A bizarre character, but in a very straightforward style. 87. GENE HERNANDEZ. 88. JAIME HERNANDEZ. 89. COLIN UPTON. 90. KURT SCHAFENBERGER. Superboy © D.C. Comics. 91. REED WALLER's *OMAHA THE CAT DANCER*. 92. WALTER WORLEY. 93. WENDY PINE's *Skyscraper* from *ELVIRA*. 94. STEPHEN WILSON. 95. DAVE DE CARLO. 96. VERONICA © Archie Comics. 95. HAROLD TOWER. 97. THE NEW YORK TIMES Syndicate. 98. HERGE's *TINTIN* © Casterman. 99. FLOYD GOTTFREDSON. 100. GENE COVET © Walt Disney Productions. 101. JEFF SMITH's *SMALLVILLE*. 102. ROY DONAHUE's *A DISTANT SOIL*. 101. ROY DONAHUE's *A DISTANT SOIL* © NEA Service, Inc. 102. DANNY KELLY's *WAYNE*. 104. V.T. HAMMIL's *ALLEY OOP* © NEA Service, Inc. 105. CHESTER BROWN. 106. SHAH SAKAI's *USAGI YOJIMBO*. 107. DAVE SIM's *CEREBUS* THE AAROVARK. 108. WALLY KELLY's *POGO* & Baby Kelly. 109. RUDOLPH DUMBLEHANS & FRITZ © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 110. H.C. "BUD" FISHER's *Jeff from Mutt*. 111. JESSE McNaught Syndicate, Inc. 111. MORT WALKER's *HI AND LO* © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 112. OSAMU TEZUKA's *ASTROBOY*. 113. CARL BARKS. Scrooge McDuck © Walt Disney Productions. 114. CROCKETT & MASON's *Mister Potato* from *BARNABY* © Field Features Syndicate, Inc. 115. PAT BULLIVAN's *FELIX THE CAT* © Newspaper Feature Service. 116. UDERZO, ASTERIX by Goscinny and Uderzo © Dargaud Editeur.

"Reality"

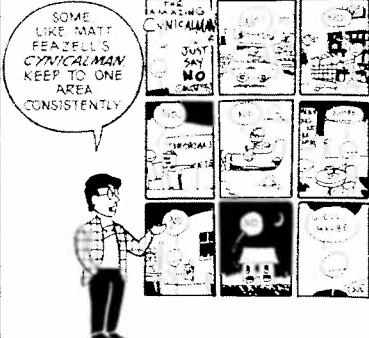
PLEASE NOTE: ARTISTS IN THIS CHART ARE NOT NECESSARILY CHOSEN FOR ARTISTIC MERIT. SOME VERY IMPORTANT CREATORS ARE NOT INCLUDED.



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

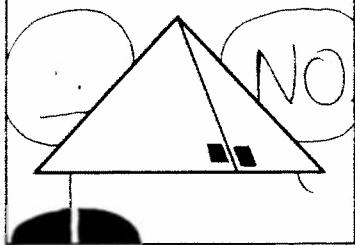


EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A RANGE OF STYLES, THOUGH MANY OCCUPY SEVERAL PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.



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

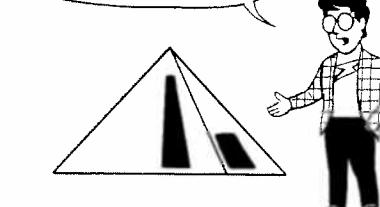
BUT OTHERS RANGE CONSIDERABLY FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER.



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



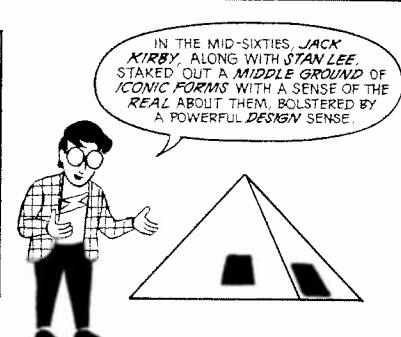
MARY FLEENER, ON THE OTHER HAND, VARIES ONLY SLIGHTLY IN HER LEVEL OF ICONIC CONTENT, WHILE THE LEVEL OF NON-ICONIC ABSTRACTION GOES NEARLY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM!



ART © MARY FLEENER



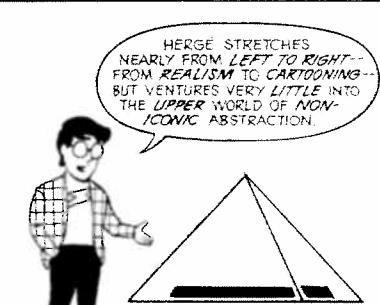
ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)  
SCRIPT: STAN LEE



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

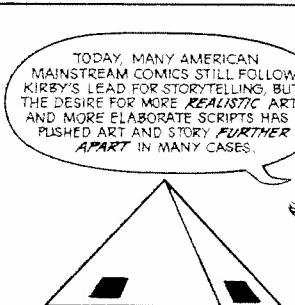


ART © EDITIONS CASTERMAN



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

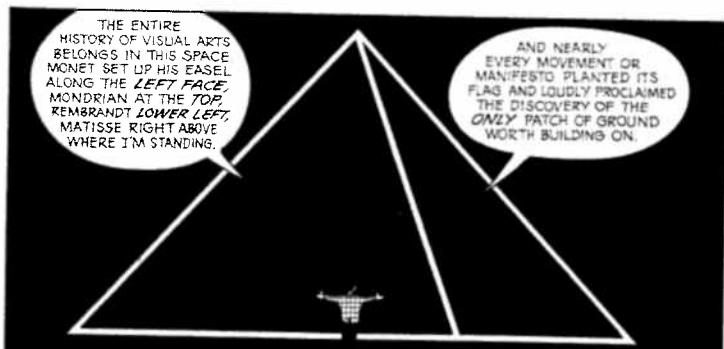
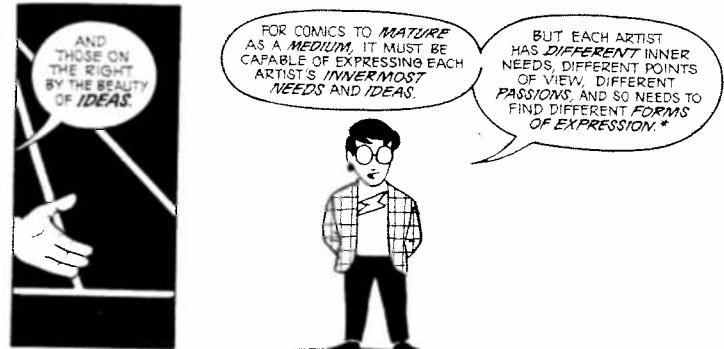
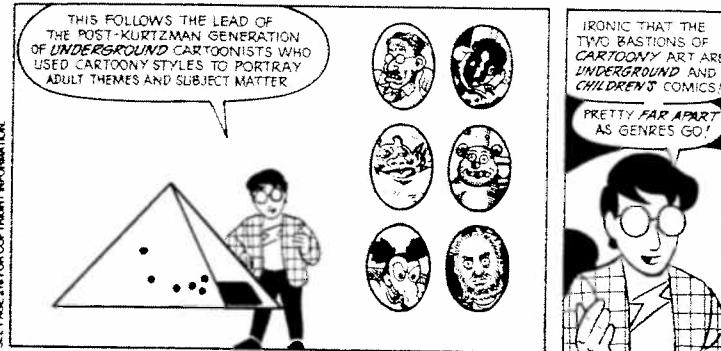
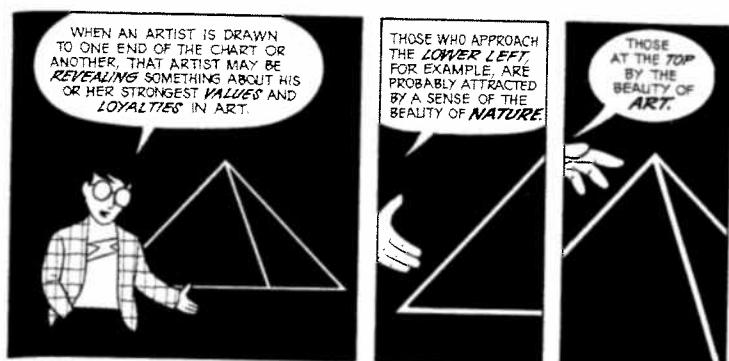
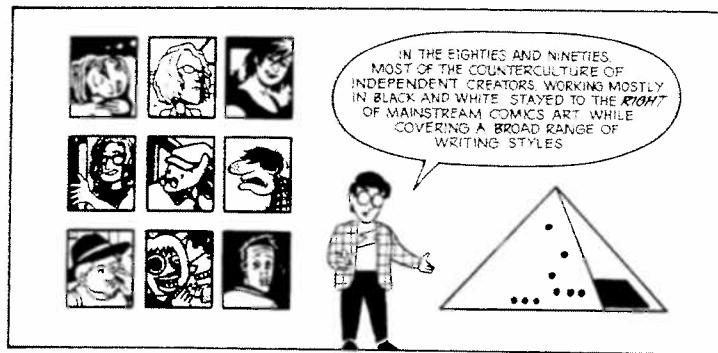


ART FROM COLOR PANELS TRADED FOR REPRODUCTION  
© MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.

55



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



SERGIO AND GROO © SERGIO ARAGONES

56

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

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

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

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

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58



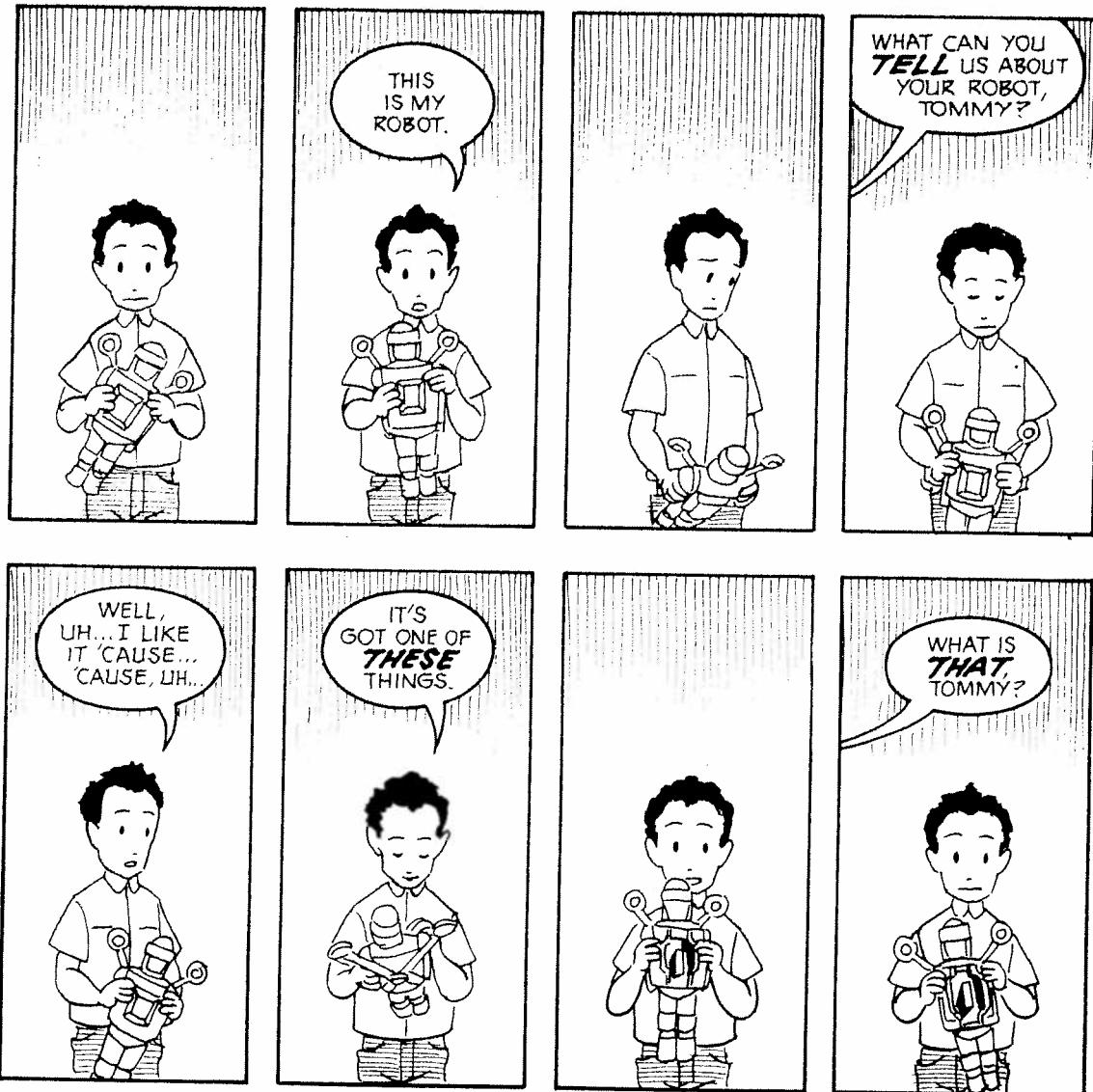
59

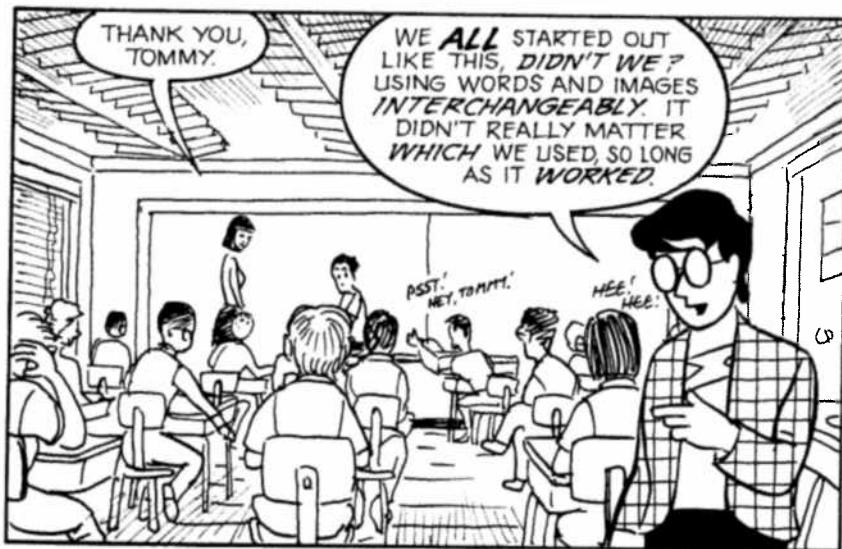
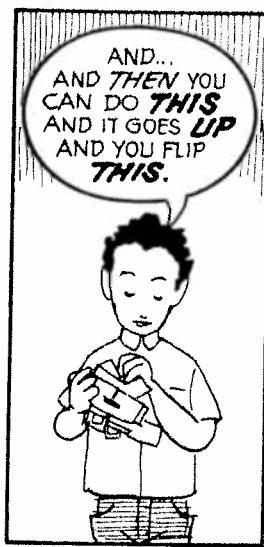
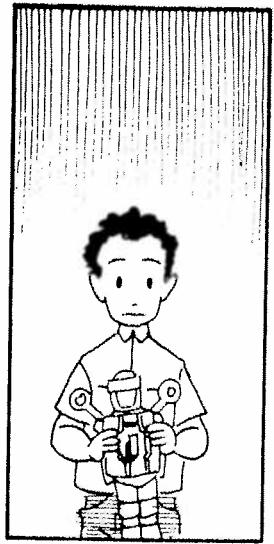
## CHAPTER SIX

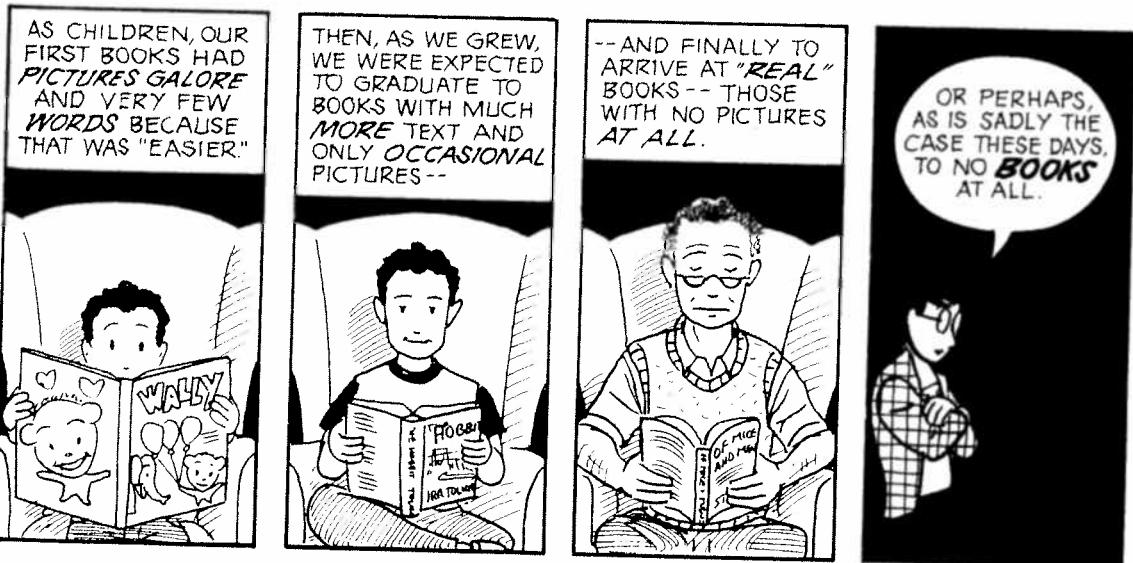
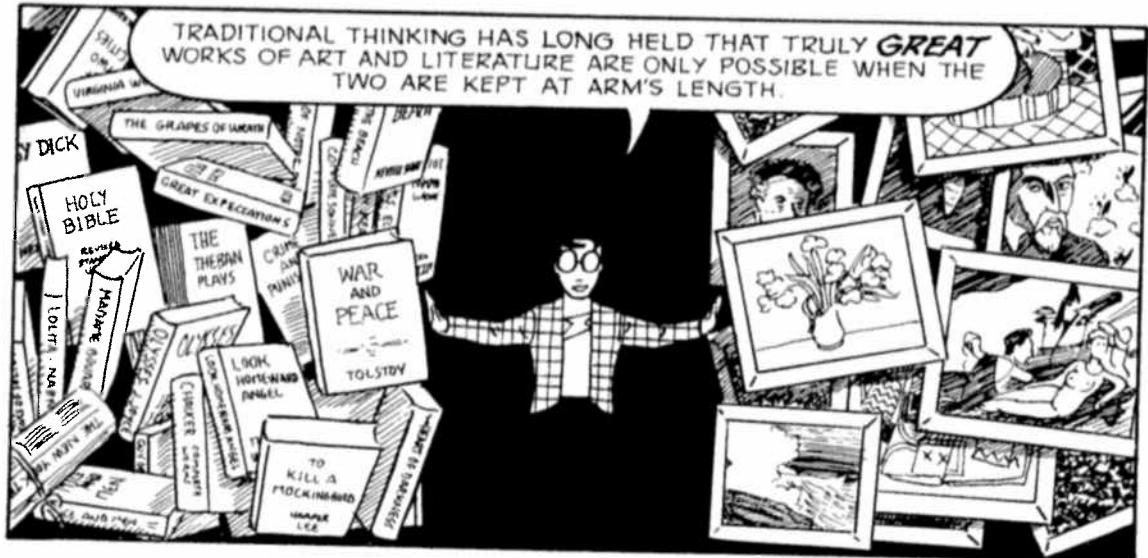
odhan  
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ea. ſtuijſ  
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zabt. ſahl  
me. ſbma  
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us: regnau  
manorū  
p. ſpypal  
ouen. ſmatoe. ſ

SHOW AND TELL.

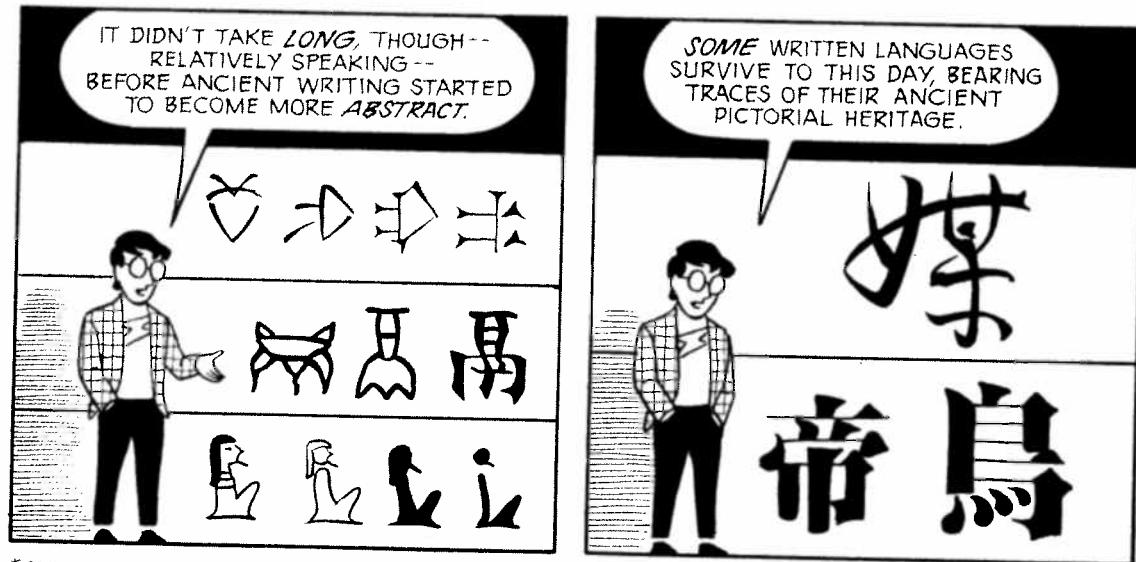
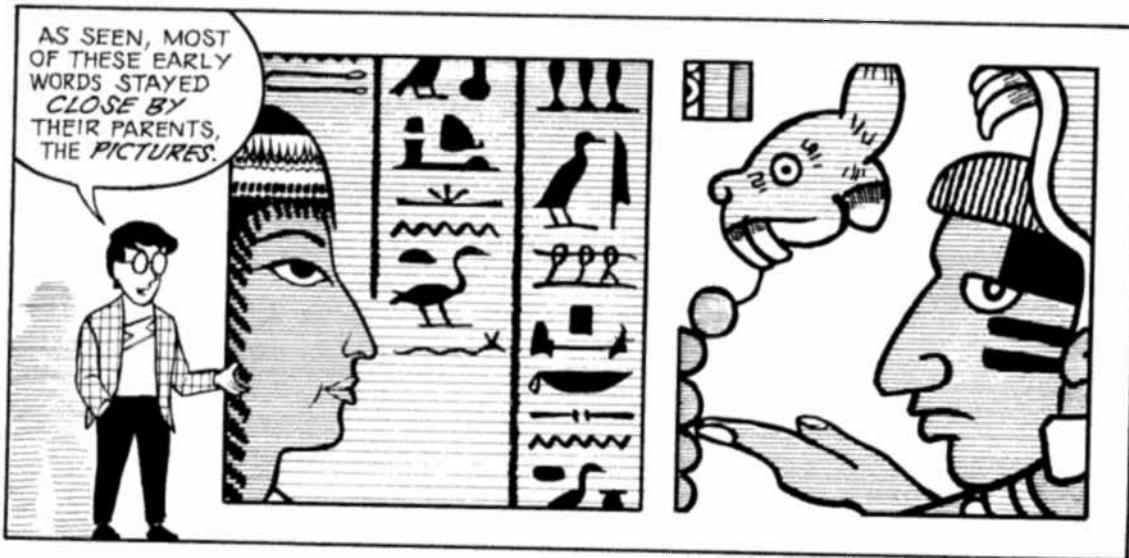
um. ſhamaan. ſto. ſp  
primogenitum. ſuun  
ſtbulum. et. a. ſam  
uecumq; et. a. ſad  
um. ſhui. ſam  
ead. et. ſu. et. a. ſam  
bul. et. geth. et. ſ  
genuit. ſam  
no. ſam











\* SEE PAGE 129.

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

لَكَلَلْ فَلَلَلَلْ حَيْلَلْ مَلَلْ

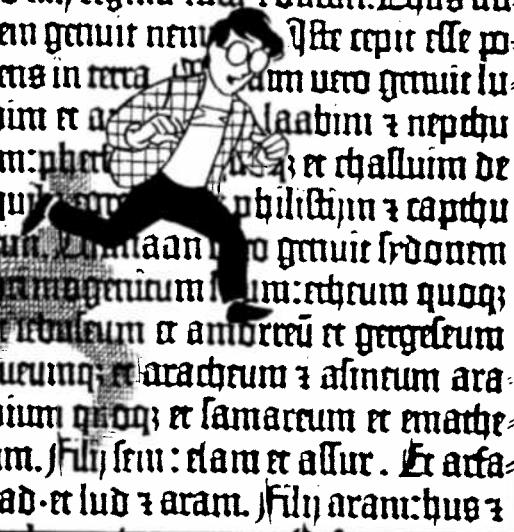
רְךָ אַתָּה יְיָ אֶלְהִיבָּרְךָ

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

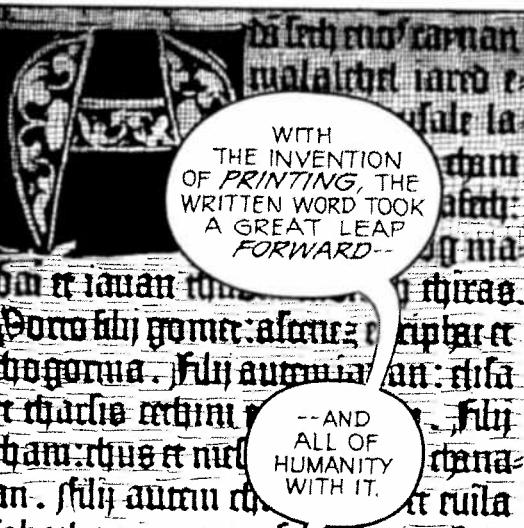
--AND ALL OF HUMANITY WITH IT.

BUT WHERE HAD THE PICTURES ALL GONE?

A cartoon character with glasses and a plaid shirt is pointing at a page of Latin text. The text is in a dense, medieval-style script. A speech bubble from the character reads: "WITH THE INVENTION OF PRINTING, THE WRITTEN WORD TOOK A GREAT LEAP FORWARD--" and "--AND ALL OF HUMANITY WITH IT."

Latin text (approximate transcription):

in fach en of carnal  
malalibet iam e  
dale la  
dami  
grana  
om in iauan  
Porto filij gomar: ascen  
mogorma. filij augem  
et thachis ethini  
cham: thus et n  
an. filij autem d  
t rula  
sabatha et regina et se sathaca. Por  
ro filij regina. sata et dadan. Thus au  
ten genuit nem. Vt cepit esse po  
tens in terra. Am uero genuit lu  
dim et a  
laabini et nepetu  
im: phe  
et chassulim de  
qui: sup  
abilis et capitu  
rum. Ia  
aan uero genuit sedouem  
ar magenitum. Iu: et heum quoq;  
et leonum et amoreu et gergeseum  
erumq; et arachenum et asinum ara  
dium quoq; et samarcum et emathe  
um. filij seiu: clam et assur. Et arfa  
ead. et lud et aram. filij aram: bus et

A cartoon character with glasses and a plaid shirt is pointing at a page of Latin text. The text is in a dense, medieval-style script. A speech bubble from the character reads: "WITH THE INVENTION OF PRINTING, THE WRITTEN WORD TOOK A GREAT LEAP FORWARD--" and "--AND ALL OF HUMANITY WITH IT."

Latin text (approximate transcription):

in fach en of carnal  
malalibet iam e  
dale la  
dami  
grana  
om in iauan  
Porto filij gomar: ascen  
mogorma. filij augem  
et thachis ethini  
cham: thus et n  
an. filij autem d  
t rula  
sabatha et regina et se sathaca. Por  
ro filij regina. sata et dadan. Thus au  
ten genuit nem. Vt cepit esse po  
tens in terra. Am uero genuit lu  
dim et a  
laabini et nepetu  
im: phe  
et chassulim de  
qui: sup  
abilis et capitu  
rum. Ia  
aan uero genuit sedouem  
ar magenitum. Iu: et heum quoq;  
et leonum et amoreu et gergeseum  
erumq; et arachenum et asinum ara  
dium quoq; et samarcum et emathe  
um. filij seiu: clam et assur. Et arfa  
ead. et lud et aram. filij aram: bus et

A cartoon character with glasses and a plaid shirt is pointing at a page of Latin text. The text is in a dense, medieval-style script. A speech bubble from the character reads: "BUT WHERE HAD THE PICTURES ALL GONE?"

Latin text (approximate transcription):

in fach en of carnal  
malalibet iam e  
dale la  
dami  
grana  
om in iauan  
Porto filij gomar: ascen  
mogorma. filij augem  
et thachis ethini  
cham: thus et n  
an. filij autem d  
t rula  
sabatha et regina et se sathaca. Por  
ro filij regina. sata et dadan. Thus au  
ten genuit nem. Vt cepit esse po  
tens in terra. Am uero genuit lu  
dim et a  
laabini et nepetu  
im: phe  
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aan uero genuit sedouem  
ar magenitum. Iu: et heum quoq;  
et leonum et amoreu et gergeseum  
erumq; et arachenum et asinum ara  
dium quoq; et samarcum et emathe  
um. filij seiu: clam et assur. Et arfa  
ead. et lud et aram. filij aram: bus et

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

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

A cartoon character with glasses and a plaid shirt is pointing at a page of Latin text. The text is in a dense, medieval-style script. A speech bubble from the character reads: "WORDS AND PICTURES DID STILL COEXIST AT THIS STAGE IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION.\*" and "BUT THOSE INSTANCES WERE BECOMING THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE."

Latin text (approximate transcription):

in fach en of carnal  
malalibet iam e  
dale la  
dami  
grana  
om in iauan  
Porto filij gomar: ascen  
mogorma. filij augem  
et thachis ethini  
cham: thus et n  
an. filij autem d  
t rula  
sabatha et regina et se sathaca. Por  
ro filij regina. sata et dadan. Thus au  
ten genuit nem. Vt cepit esse po  
tens in terra. Am uero genuit lu  
dim et a  
laabini et nepetu  
im: phe  
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qui: sup  
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ar magenitum. Iu: et heum quoq;  
et leonum et amoreu et gergeseum  
erumq; et arachenum et asinum ara  
dium quoq; et samarcum et emathe  
um. filij seiu: clam et assur. Et arfa  
ead. et lud et aram. filij aram: bus et

\*IN ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS, FOR EXAMPLE.



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



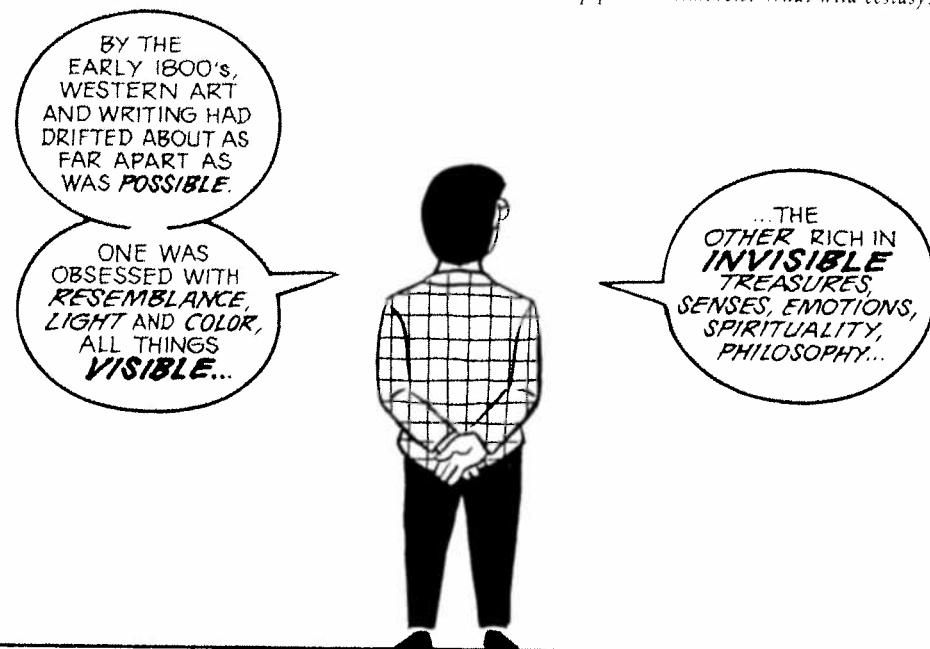
FACSIMILE DETAILS OF PORTRAITS BY DÜRER  
(1519) REMBRANDT (1660) DAVID (1788) AND INGRES  
(1810-15).



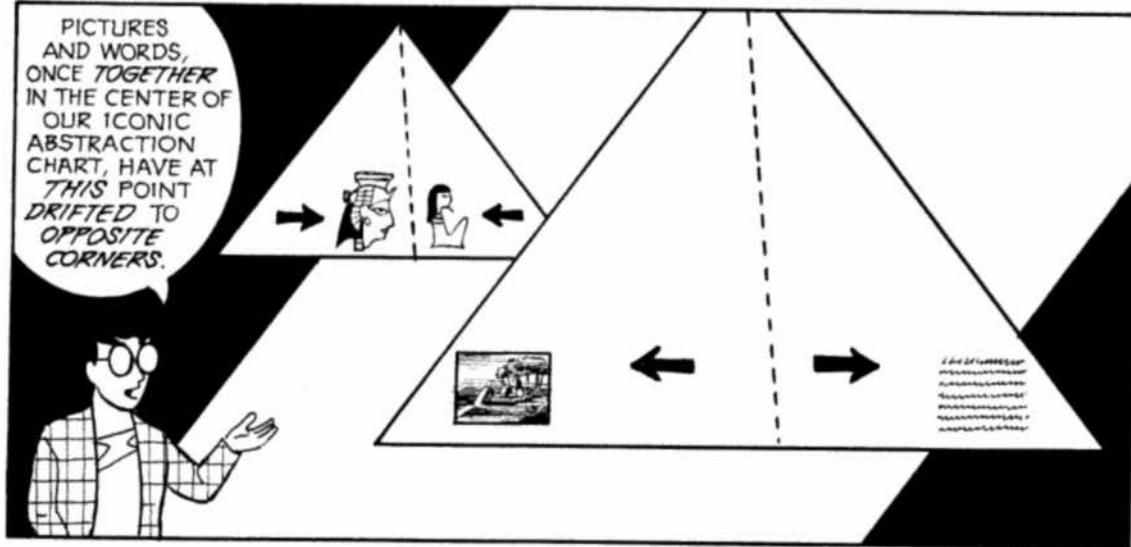
John Keats  
1819  
*Ode on a Grecian Urn*

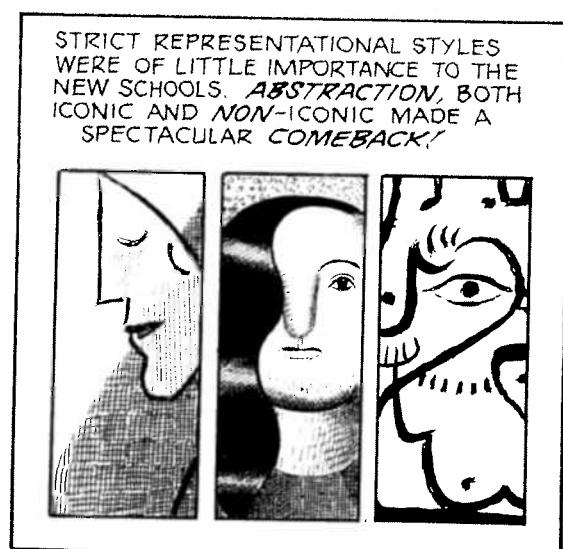
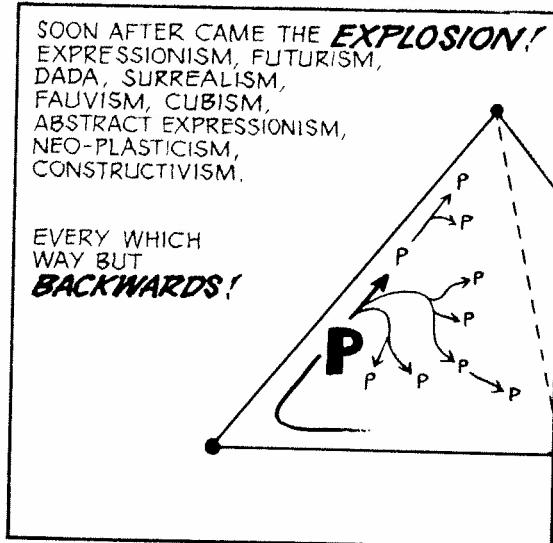
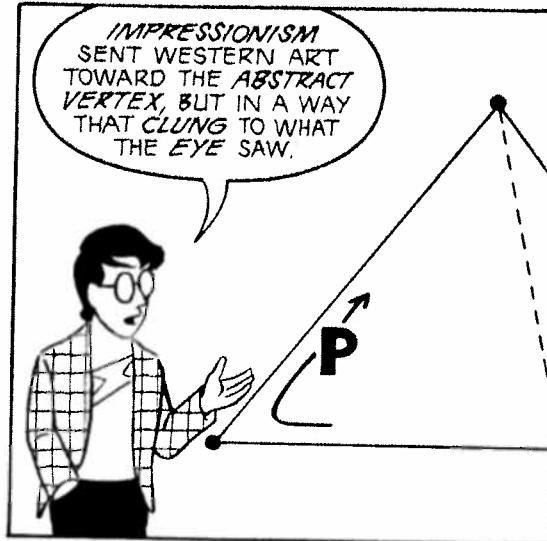
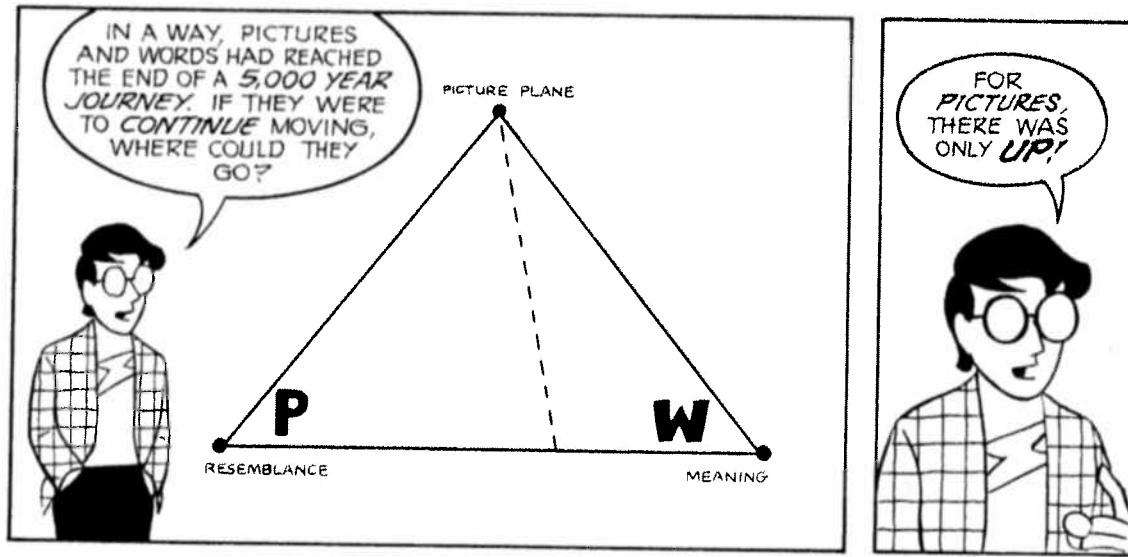
1

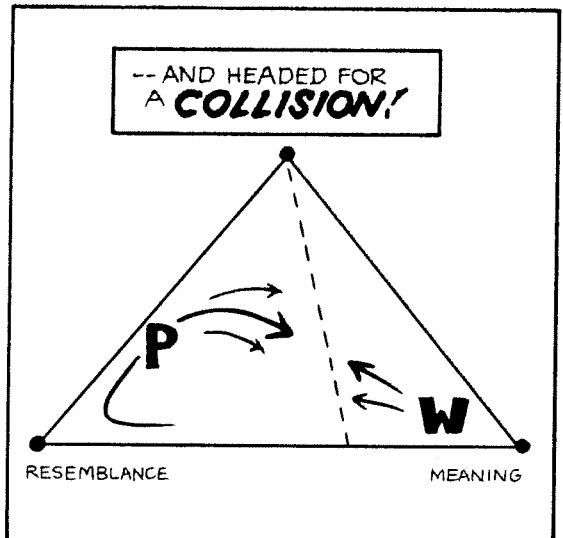
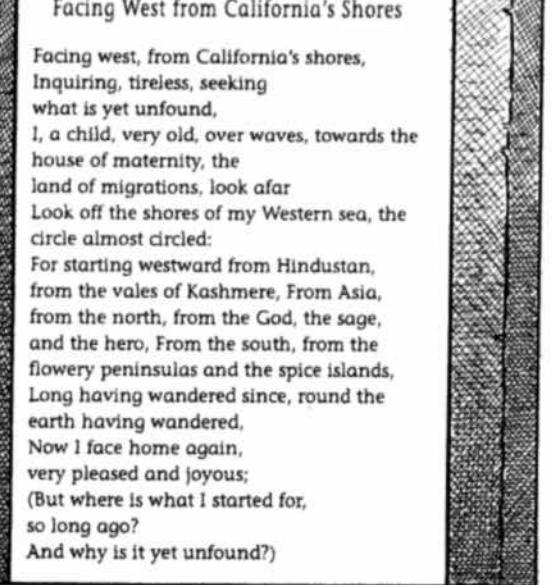
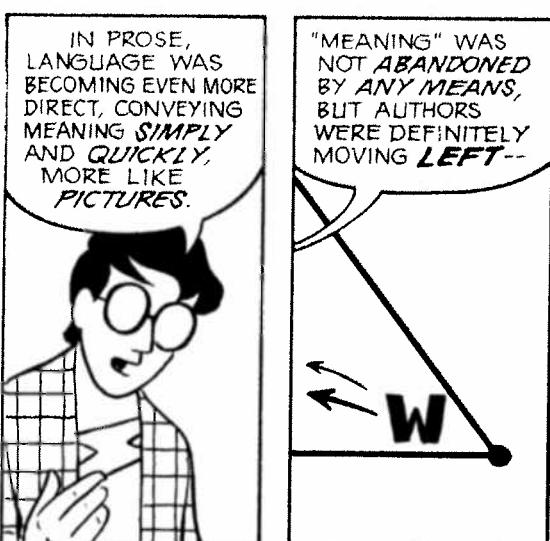
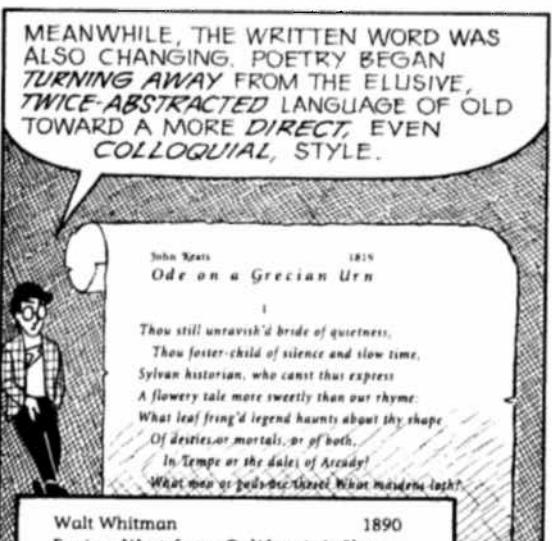
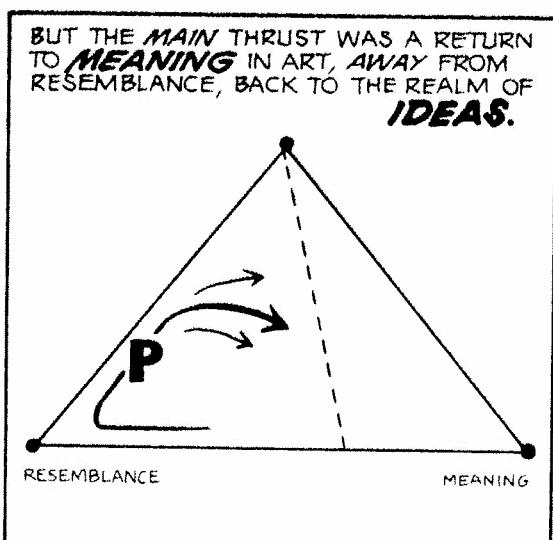
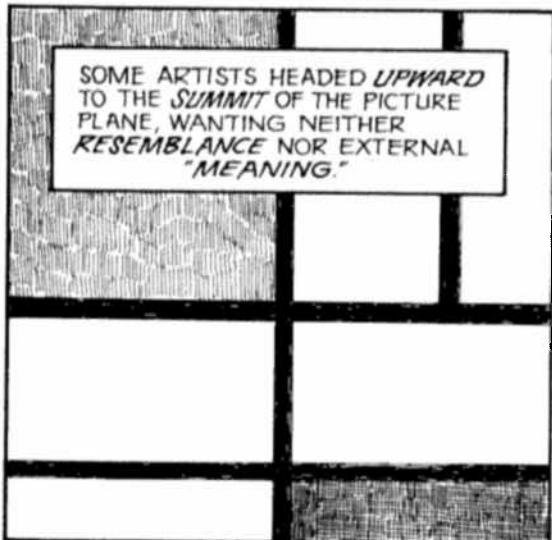
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  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



FIRST STANZA OF KEATS' POEM.







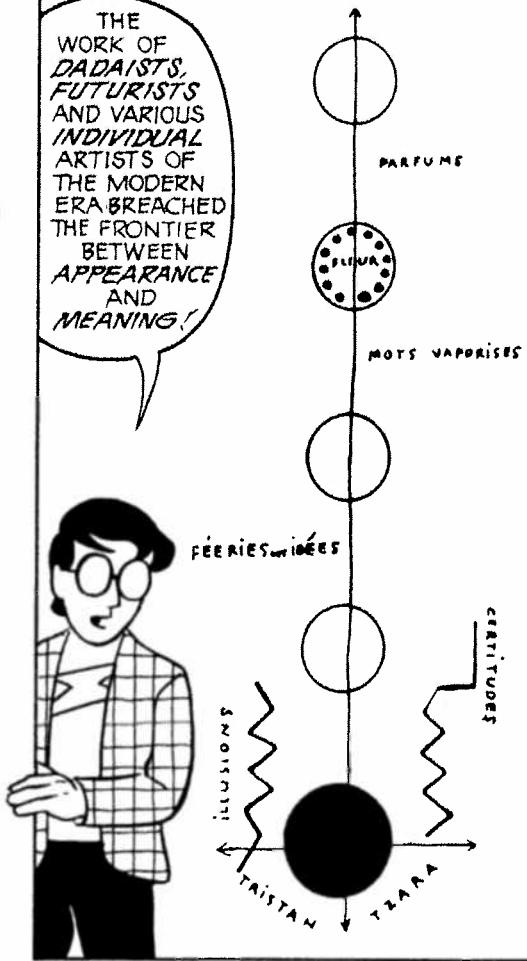


DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY  
"THE BEARDED HEART"

## Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

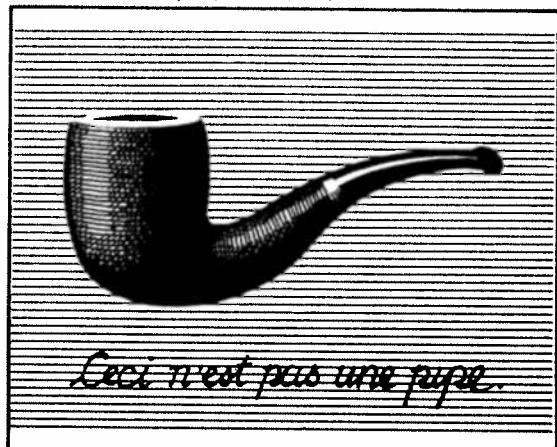
par  
FRANCIS PICABIA

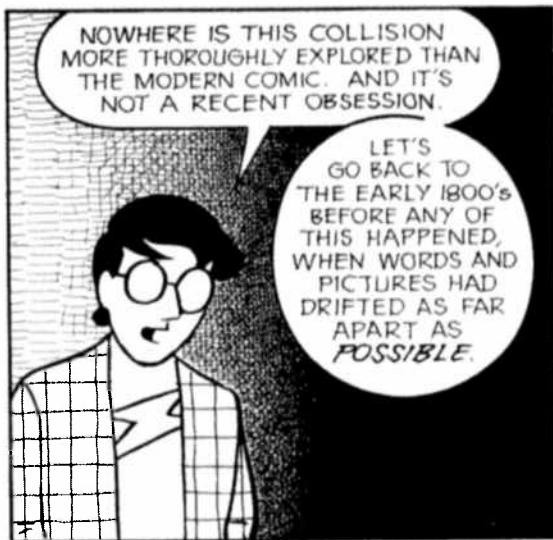
THE WORK OF  
DADAISTS,  
FUTURISTS  
AND VARIOUS  
INDIVIDUAL  
ARTISTS OF  
THE MODERN  
ERA BREACHED  
THE FRONTIER  
BETWEEN  
APPEARANCE  
AND  
MEANING!



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

FACSIMILE OF 'ORIENTAL SWEETNESS' (1938) BY PAUL KLEE.





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

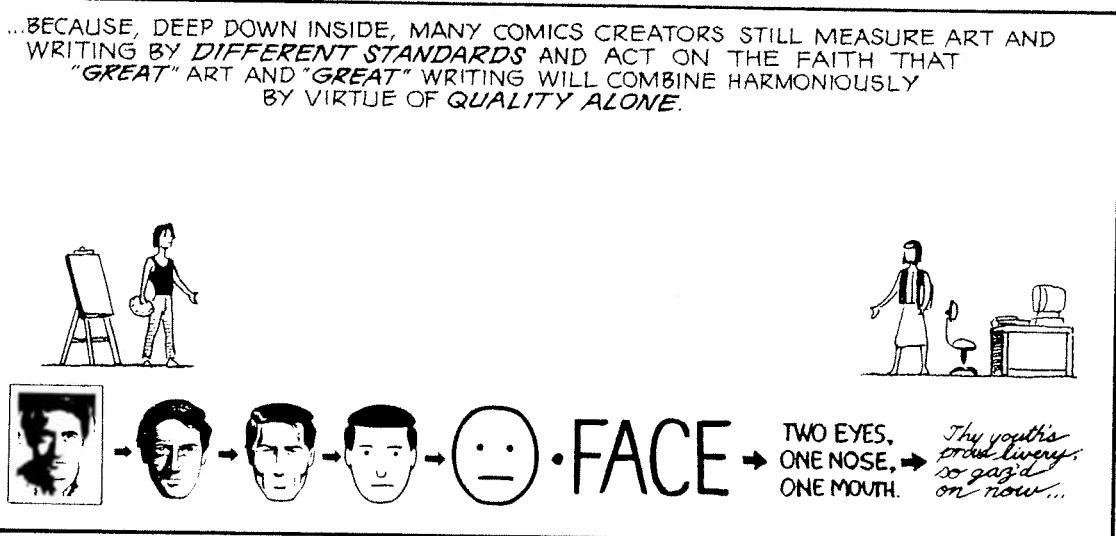
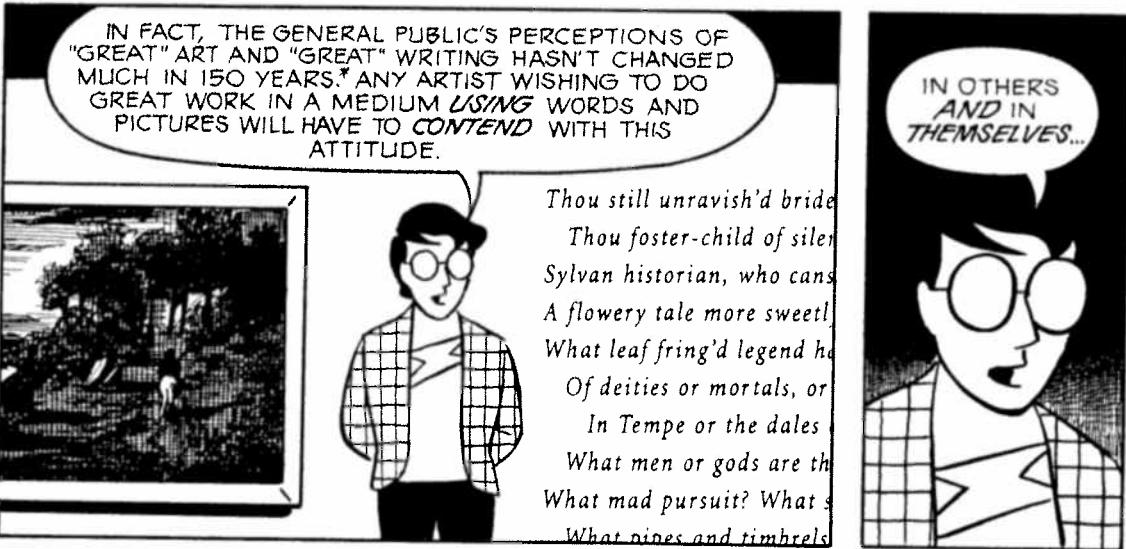
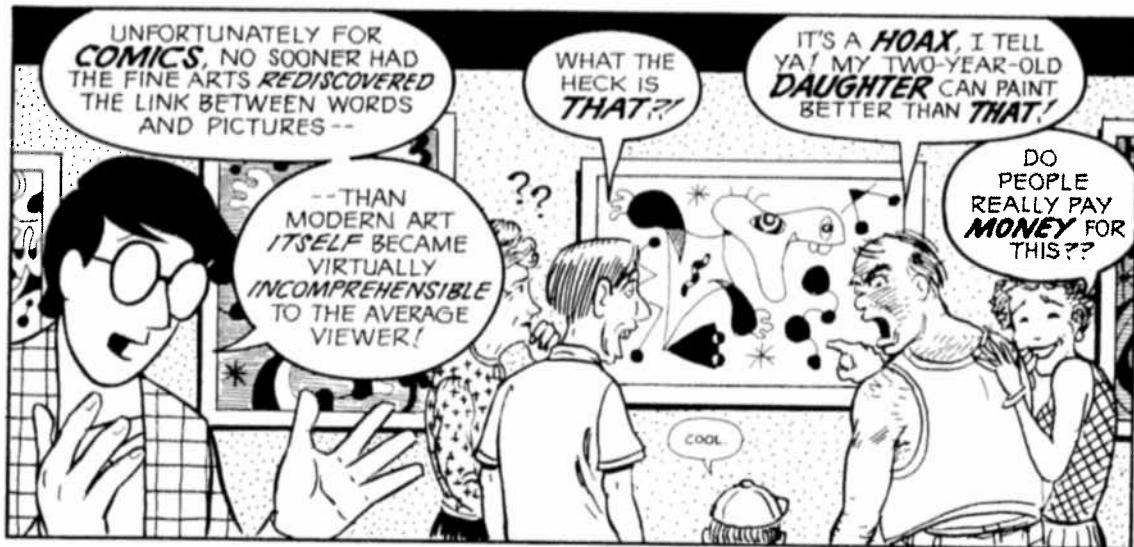
BUT AGAIN IT WAS *RODOLPHE TÖPFFER* WHO FORESAW THEIR INTERDEPENDENCY AND BROUGHT THE FAMILY BACK TOGETHER AT LAST.



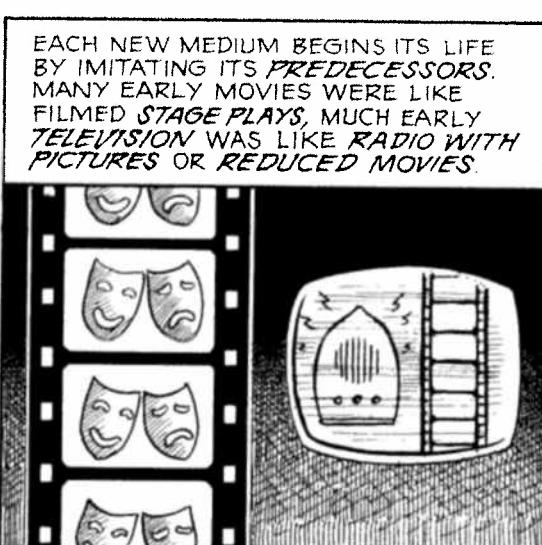
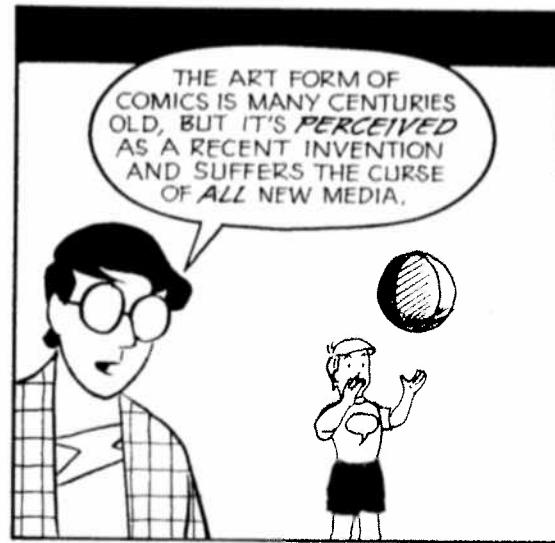
M. CRÉPIN ADVERTISES FOR A TUTOR, AND MANY APPLY FOR THE JOB.

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** (kom'iks) n. pl. -ics or -ic. a form, used with a singular verb, for a comic strip, comic book, or comic cartoon. Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey an idea, comment, or entertainment, and/or to produce an emotional response in the viewer.

2. Superheroes, comic book characters, comic book heroes, comic book villains, who want to save the world, in violent situations.

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

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

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

BIOGRAPHY  
ROMANCE

DADA

HORROR  
SURREALISM

HISTORICAL FICTION  
FOLK TALES  
EROTICA  
MYSTERY  
RELIGIOUS TOPICS

BLANK VERSE  
EPIC POETRY  
SOCIAL ALLEGORY  
ADAPTATIONS  
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS  
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.

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.



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



JUDY GAVE ME HER  
KEYS AND SMILED.



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



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



GRIM-FACED,  
GEORGE LIFTED  
HIS LOLLYPOP.



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

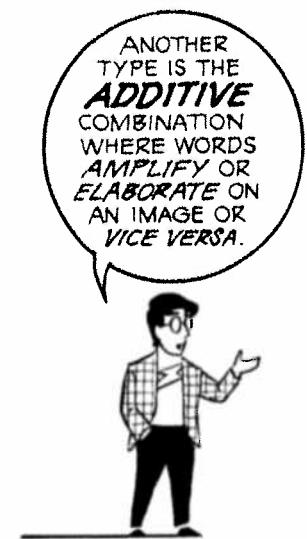
BLAST! HE  
DODGED MY PUNCH AND  
I STRUCK THIS **BRICK**  
WALL!

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!



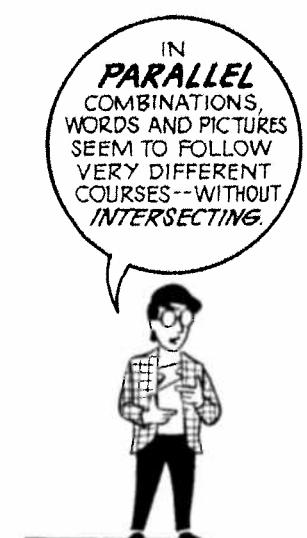
HOW D'YA LIKE MY NEW THREADS, BABE?



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."

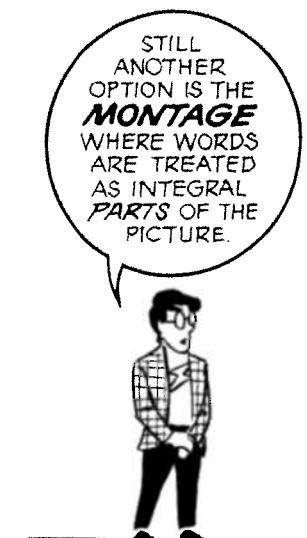
"REALLY? THAT'S GREAT!"

WELL...

PEPPER.  
CEREAL.

MILK.  
BUTTER.  
LIGHT BULBS.

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



CASH FLOW BOTTOM LINE ANNUAL REPORT

YAY!

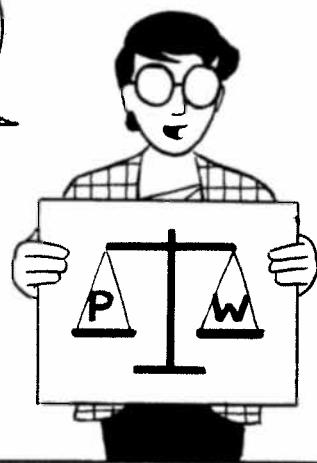
on the business in other office if object? any wit? items and seemed to be kept the supers' appears bind. caused by after spell is hot! saved by v. the t. spot. n.

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.



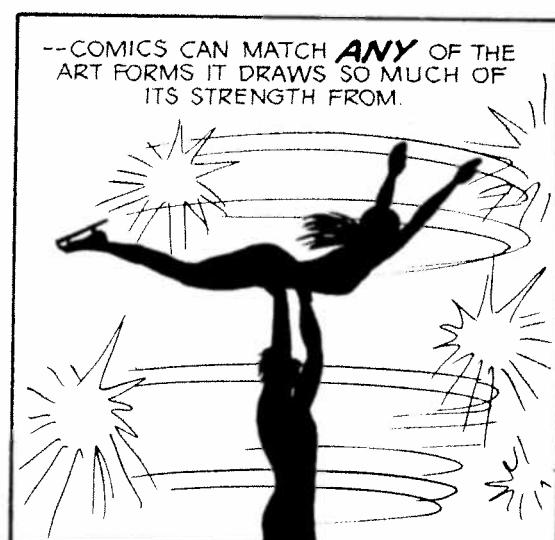
INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN EQUAL BALANCE THOUGH AND MAY FALL ANYWHERE ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

P  
—  
W

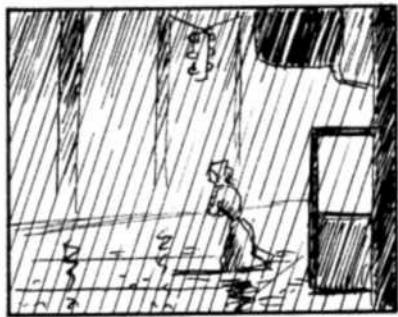
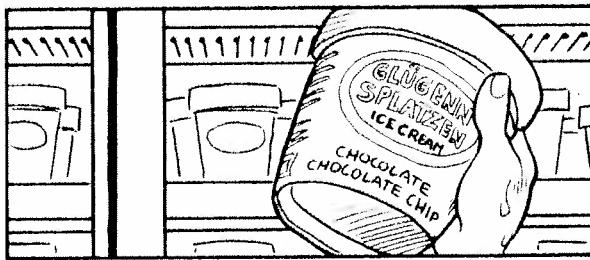
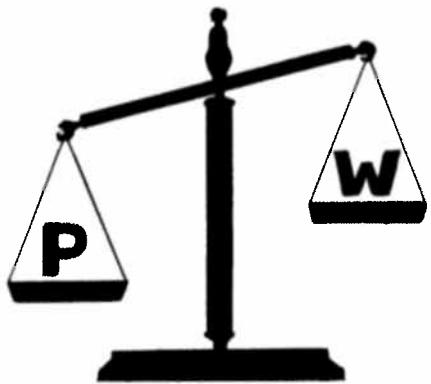


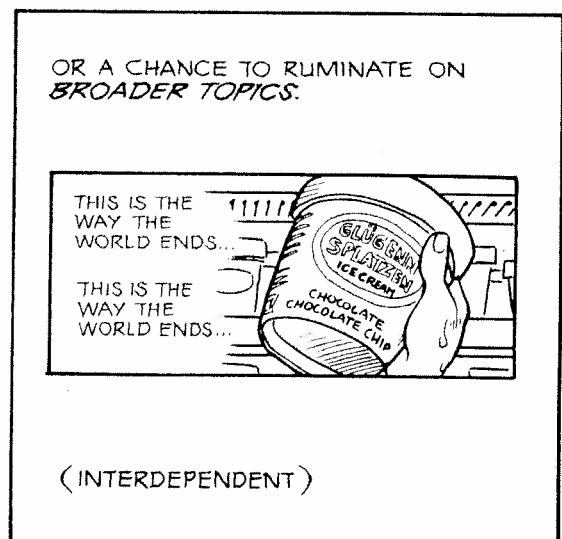
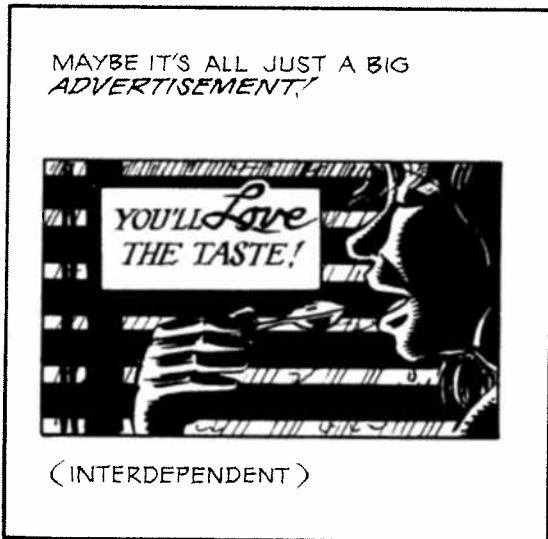
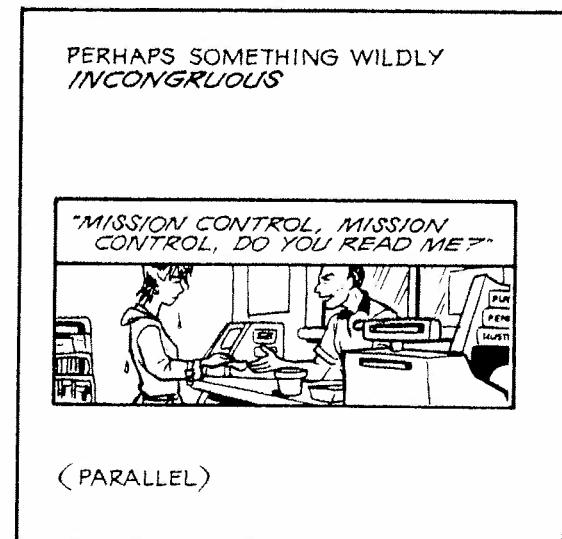
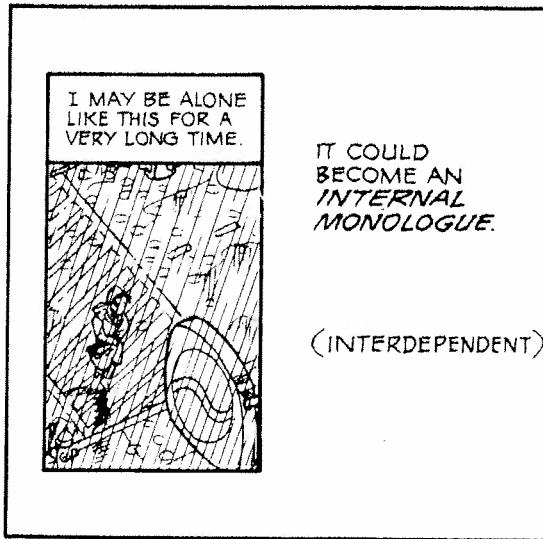
GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH WORDS, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO EXPLORING AND VICE VERSA.

W  
—  
P

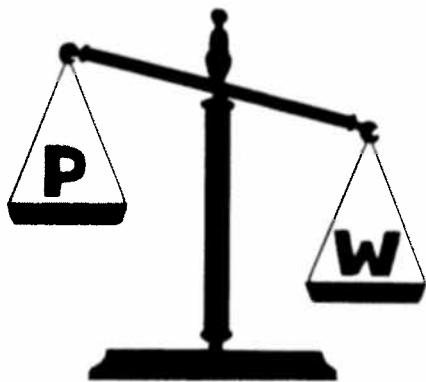


WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.

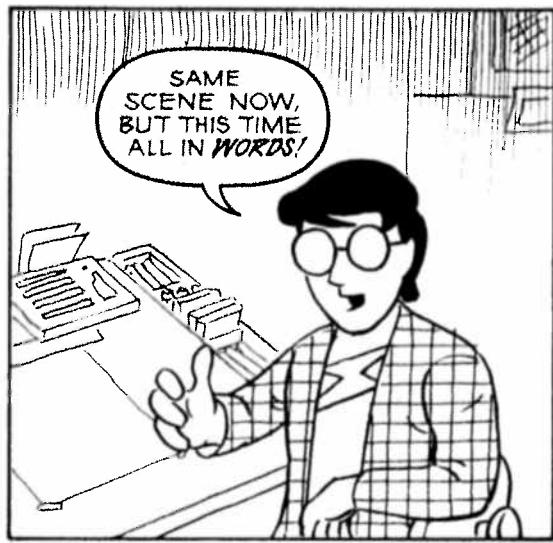




ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE **WORDS** LOCK IN THE 'MEANING' OF A SEQUENCE, THEN THE **PICTURES** CAN REALLY TAKE OFF.



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



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

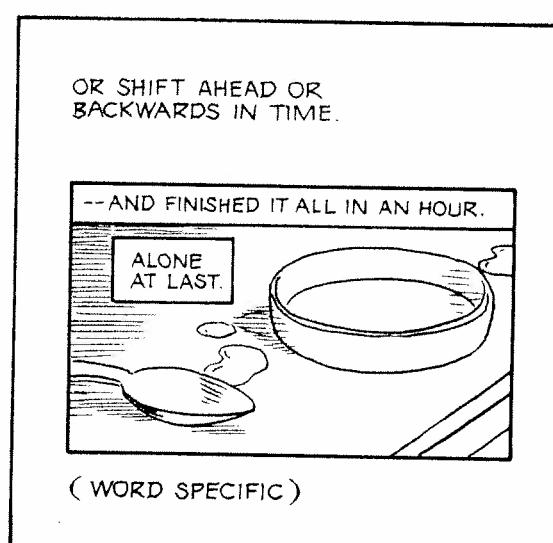
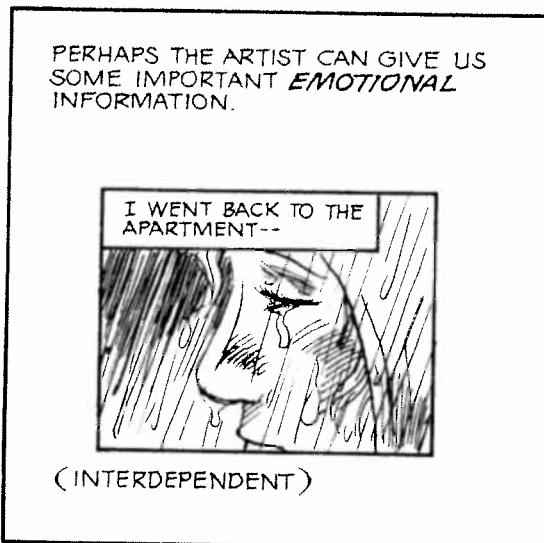
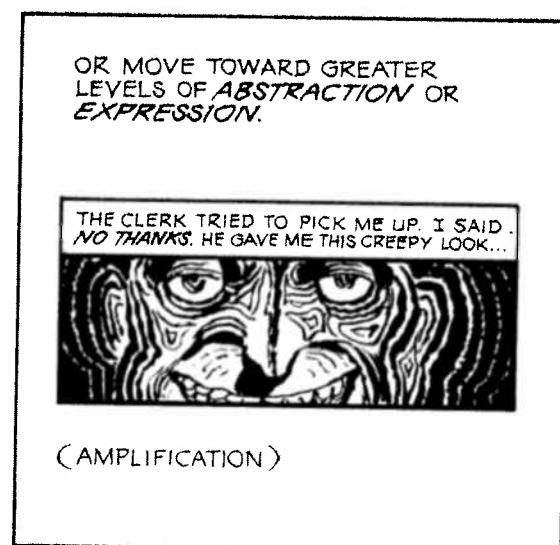
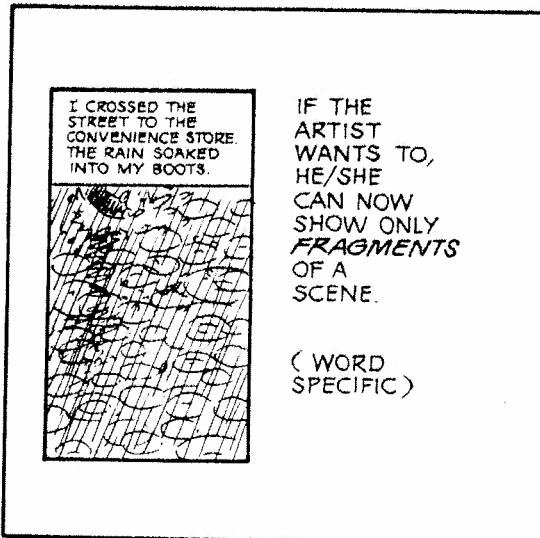
I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.

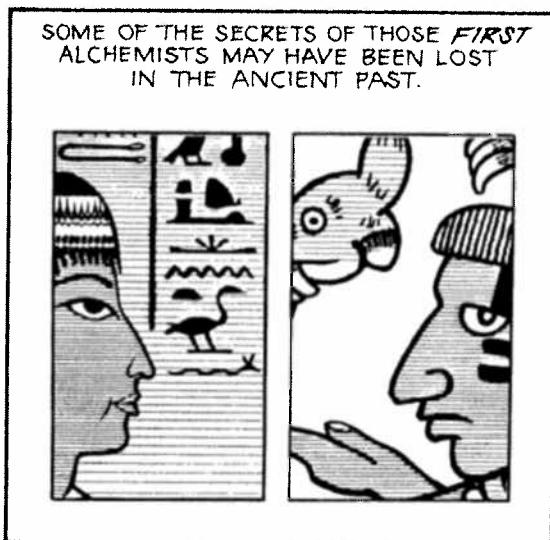
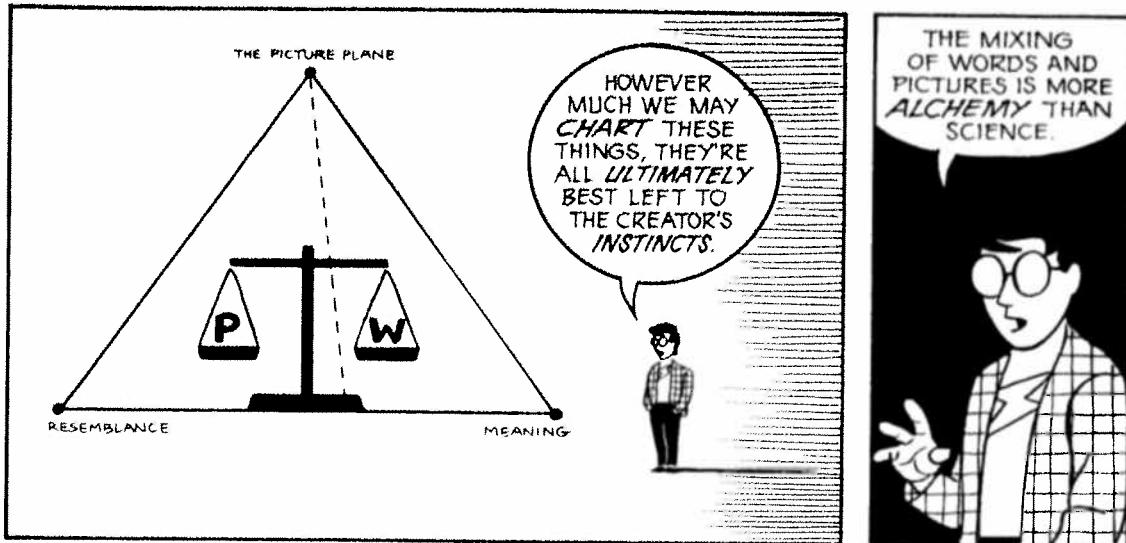
THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID *NO THANKS*. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

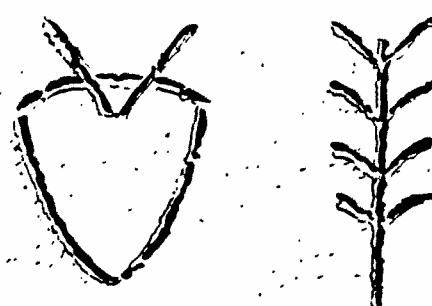
--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE  
AT LAST.





-- WHEN TO TELL WAS  
TO SHOW --



-- AND TO SHOW  
WAS TO TELL.