


UNDERSTANDING COMICS

A black and white comic book cover illustration. The title 'UNDERSTANDING COMICS' is at the top in a bold, stylized font. Below the title is a large, detailed eye with long, thick eyelashes. To the left of the eye is a close-up of a person's mouth, showing teeth and tongue. To the right of the eye is a person with short hair, wearing a plaid shirt, looking down. At the bottom of the cover is a grid of small comic panels, some showing characters and some showing abstract patterns.

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WRITING AND ART
SCOTT McCLOUD

LETTERING
BOB LAPPAN

**EDITORIAL ADVICE AND
SELECTIVE EGO-TRIMMING**
STEVE BISSETTE
KURT BUSIEK
NEIL GAIMAN
BOB LAPPAN
JENNIFER LEE
LARRY MARDER
IVY RATAFIA

EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS
WILL EISNER

EDITOR
MARK MARTIN

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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.

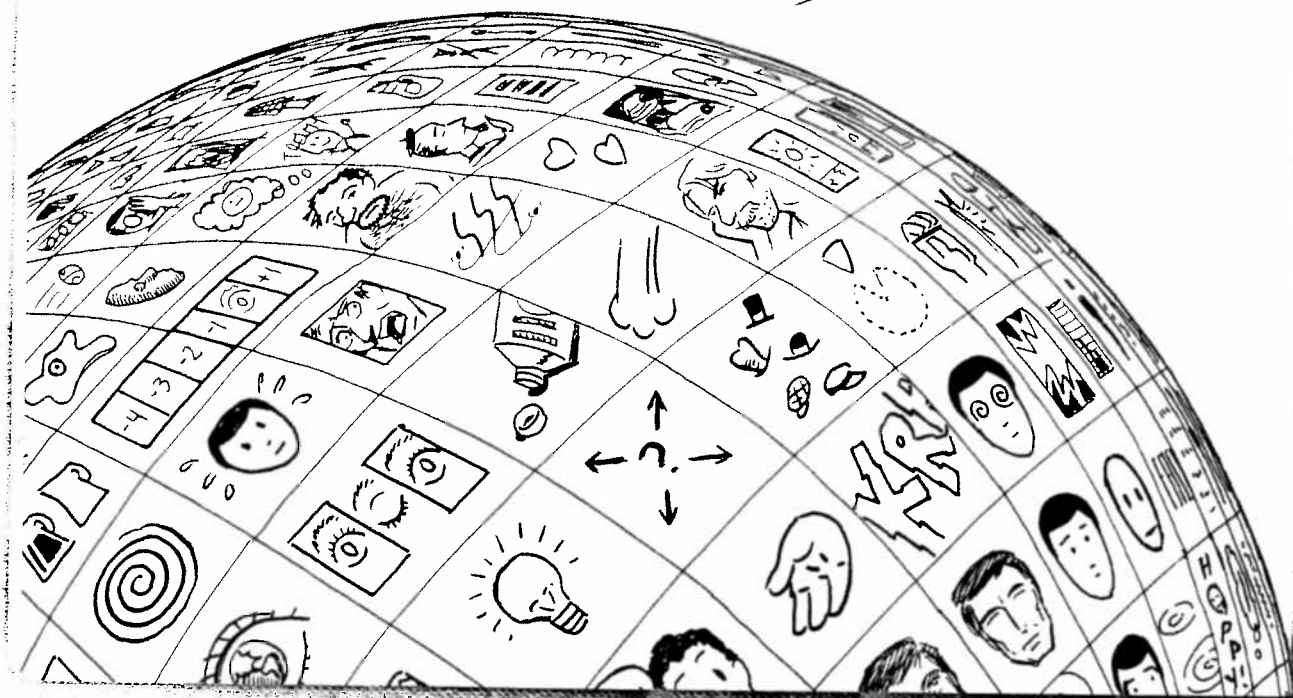
Without Kevin Eastman this book might have never seen the light of day. Thank you, Kevin.

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

Scott McCloud





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INTRODUCTION



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

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



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

YOU MEAN LIKE A **HISTORY**?



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



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



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



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



OH.

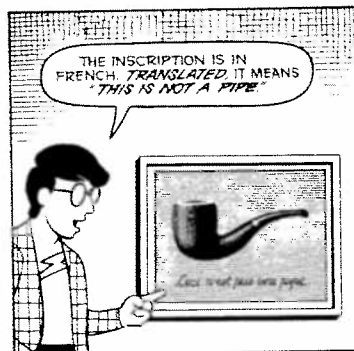


AREN'T YOU KIND OF **YOUNG** TO BE DOING THAT SORT OF THING?

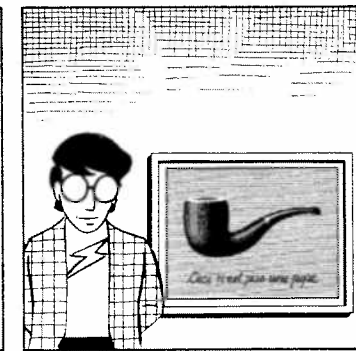
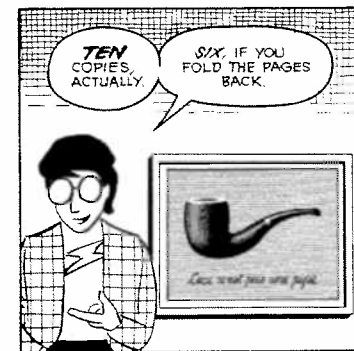
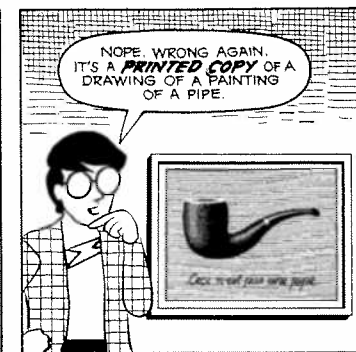
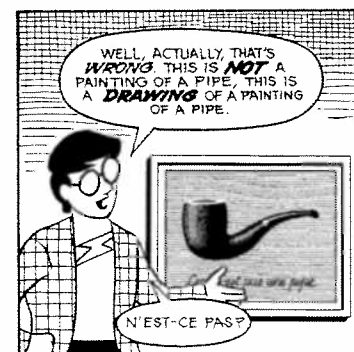


CHAPTER TWO

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 MUSIC.



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT SOUND



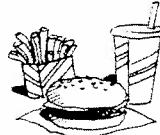
THIS IS NOT ME



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



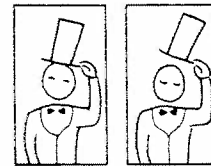
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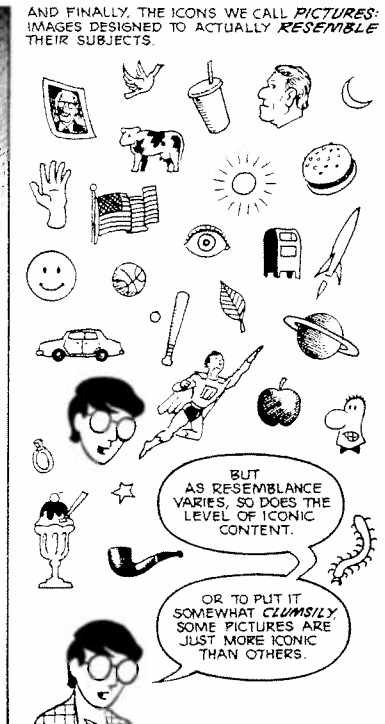
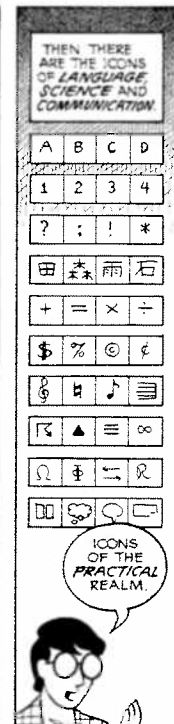
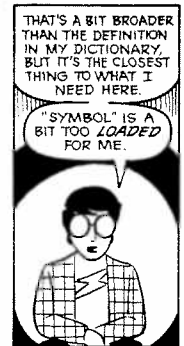
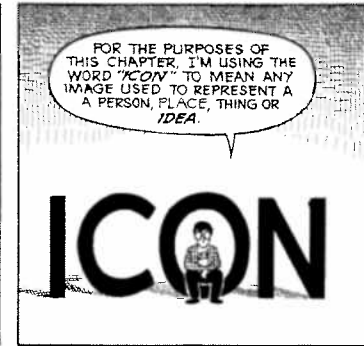
THIS IS NOT A COMPANY.



THIS IS NOT A FACE.



THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE MOMENTS.



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

M m M m M m

5 5 5 5 5 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**.

EYE

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

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

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

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

REALITY THIS WAY.

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.

REAL WAY.

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

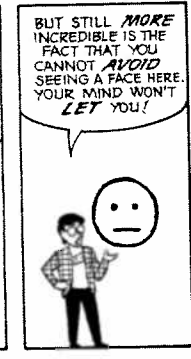
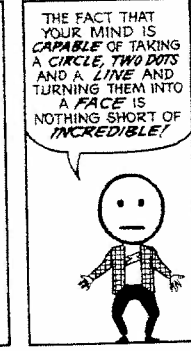
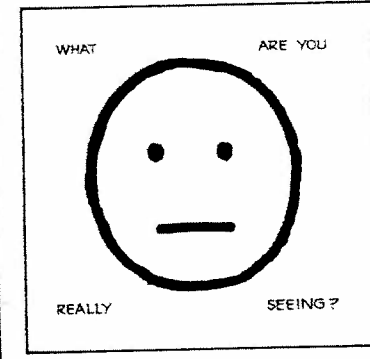
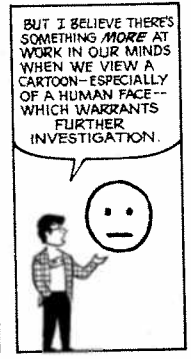
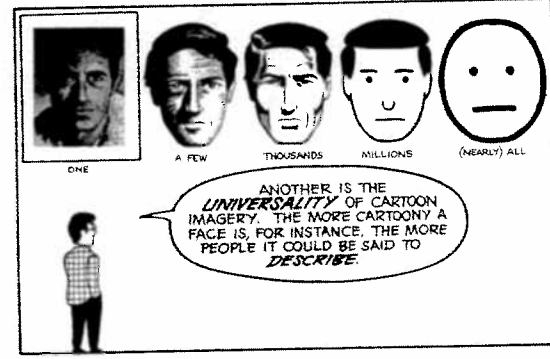
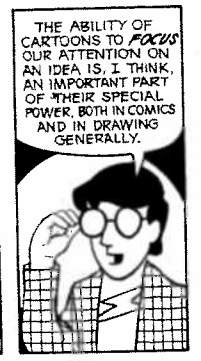
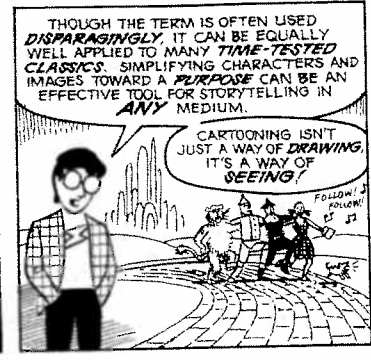
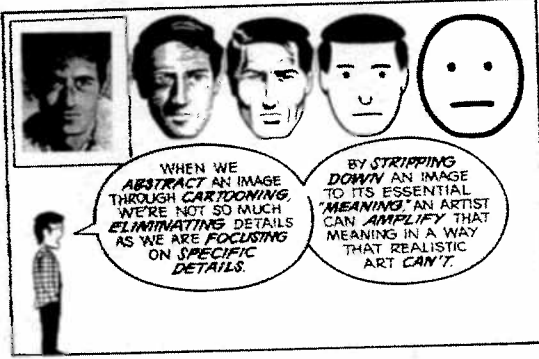
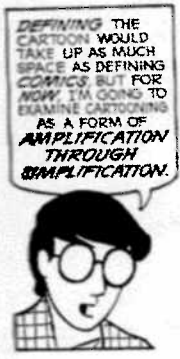
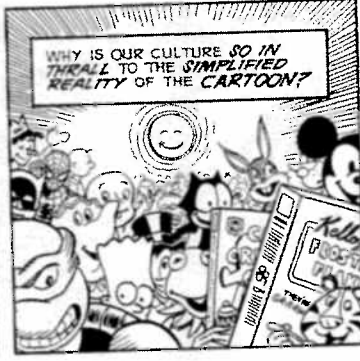
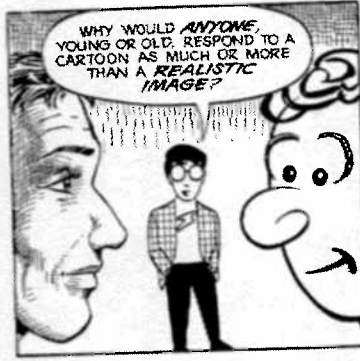
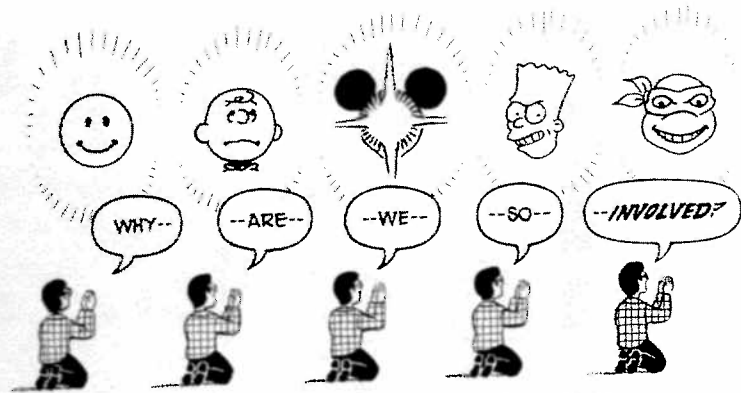
WHY, THEN, IS THE FACE ABOVE SO **ACCEPTABLE** TO OUR EYES? WHY DOES IT SEEM JUST AS **REAL** AS THE OTHERS?

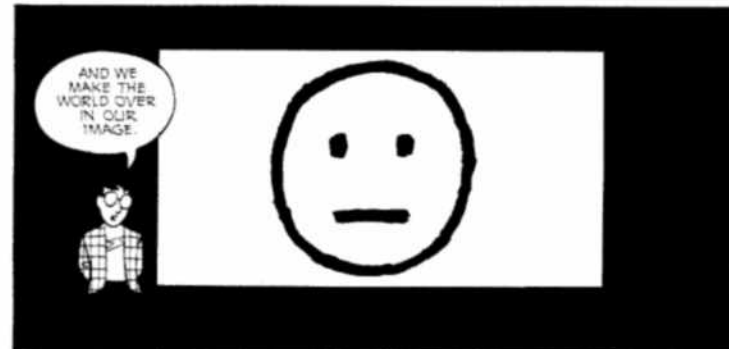
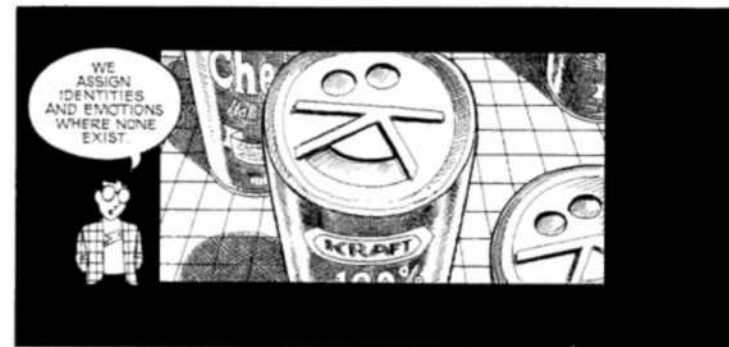
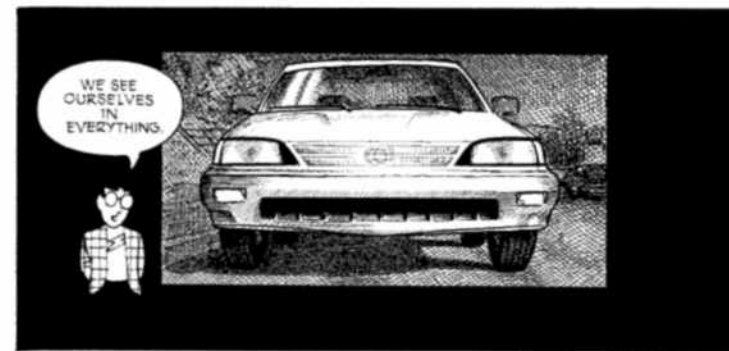
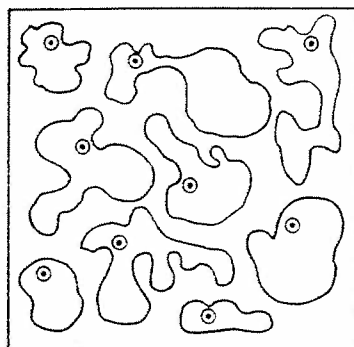
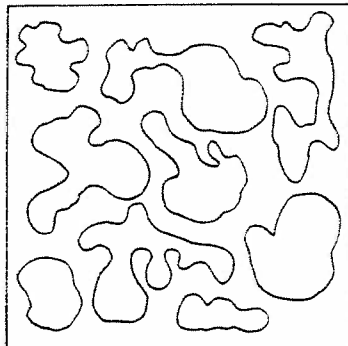
REAL WAY.

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF THE ICON WE CALL--

--THE **CARTOON**?

REAL WAY.





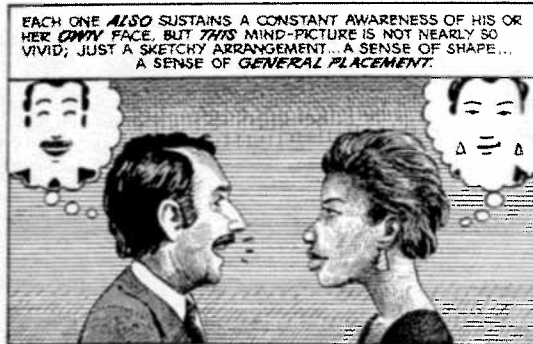


JUST THINK IT. THE MASK WILL OBEY.

34



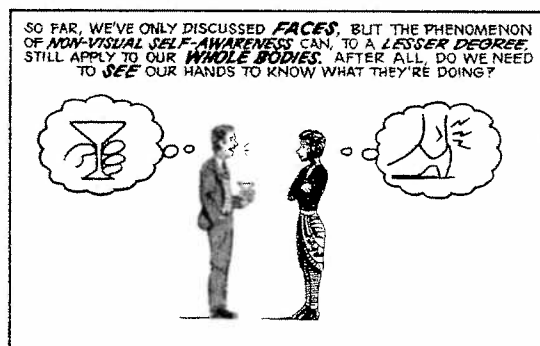
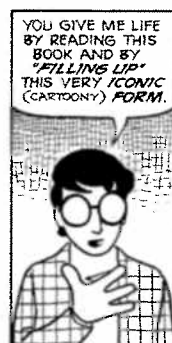
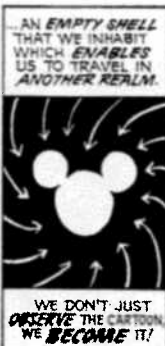
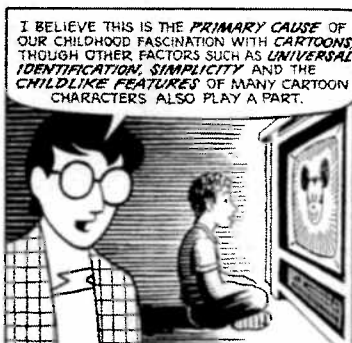
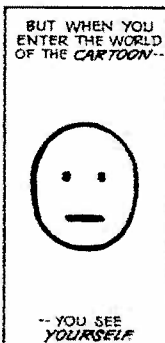
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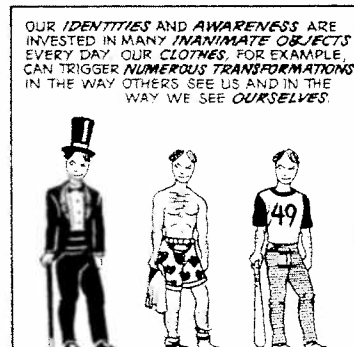
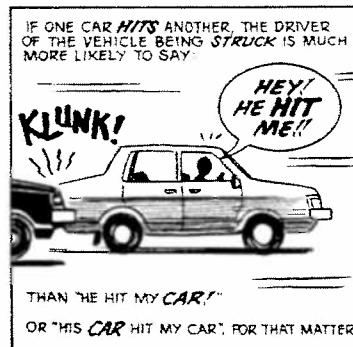
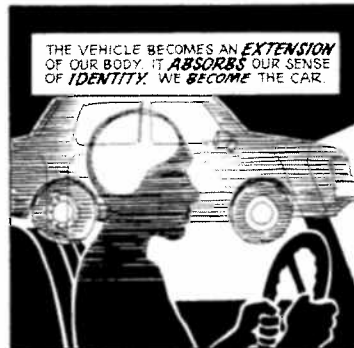
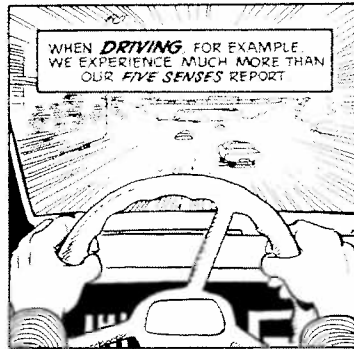
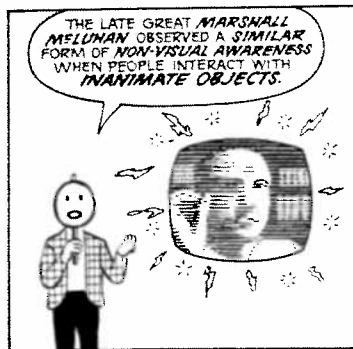


SOMETHING AS *SIMPLE* AND AS *BASIC*--

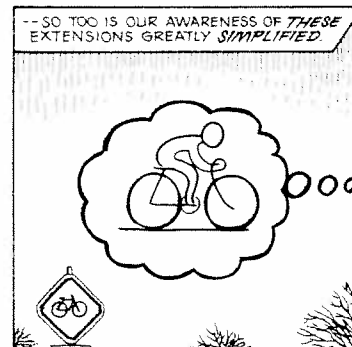
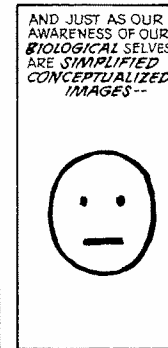
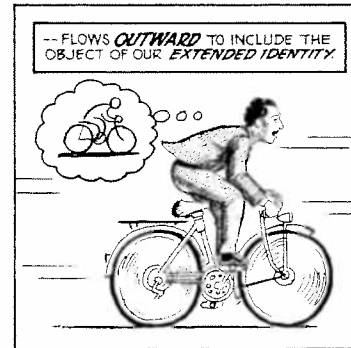


--AS A *CARTOON*.

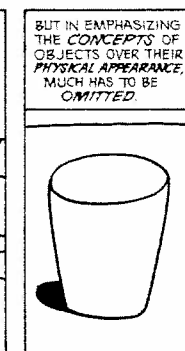
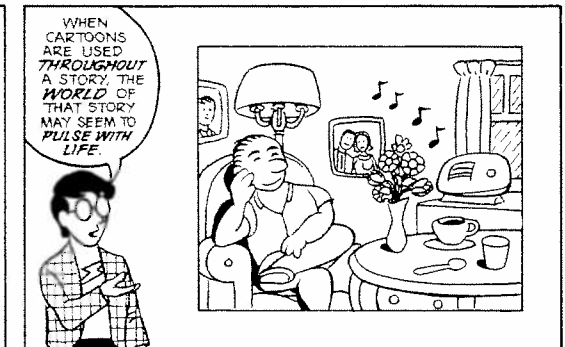
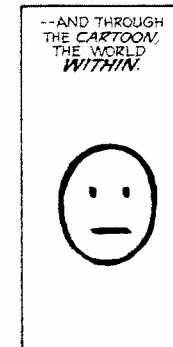
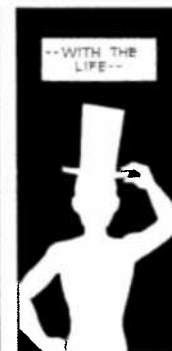
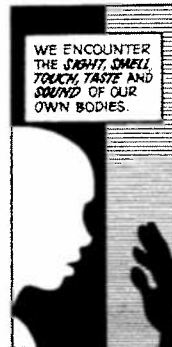
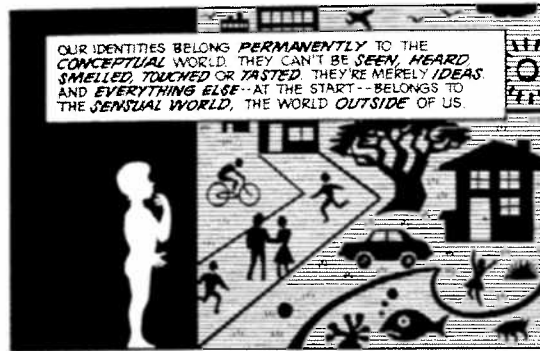


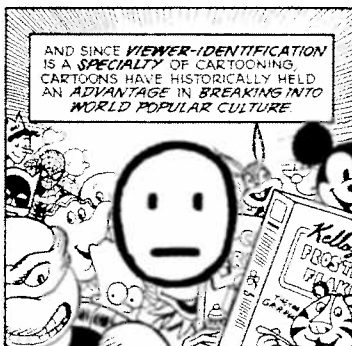
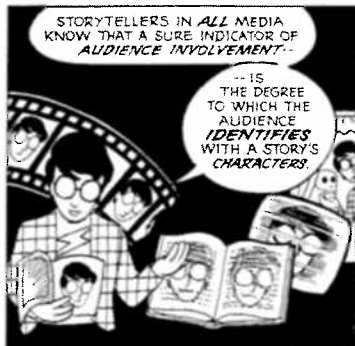
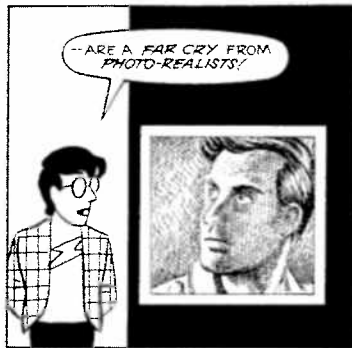
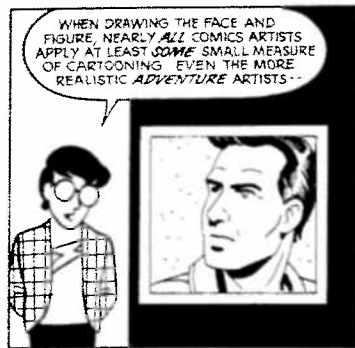


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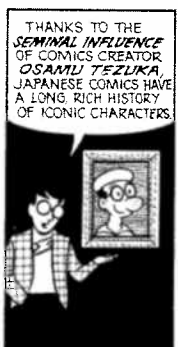
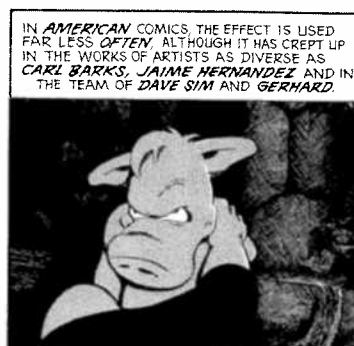


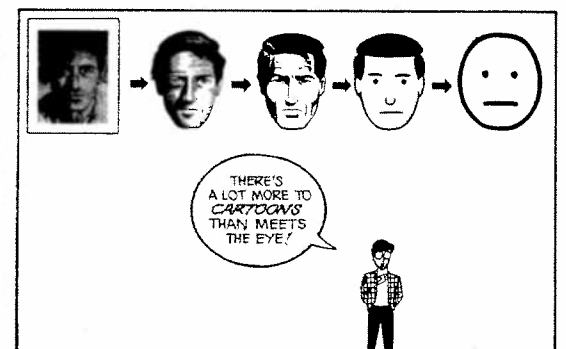
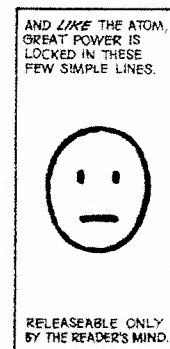
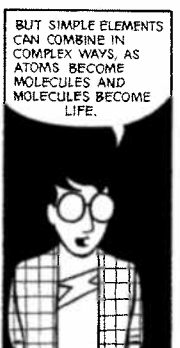
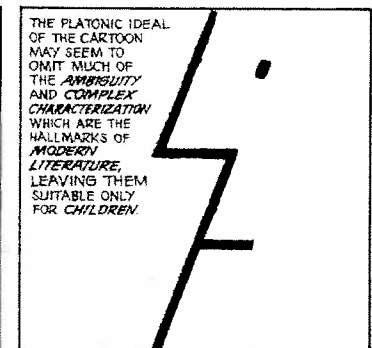
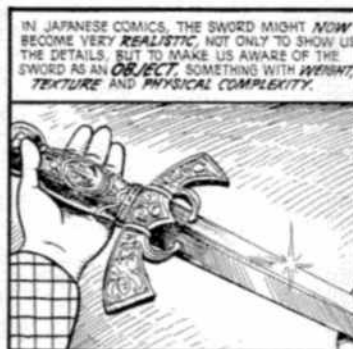
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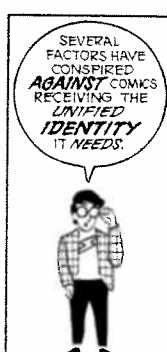
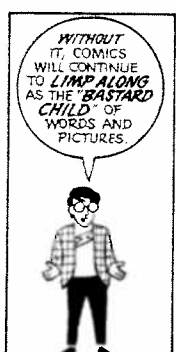
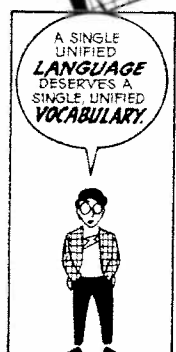
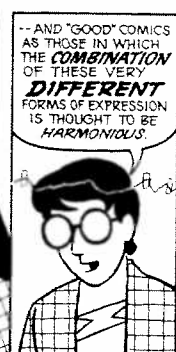
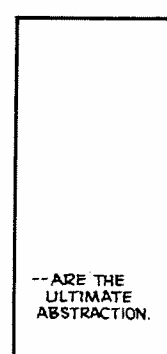
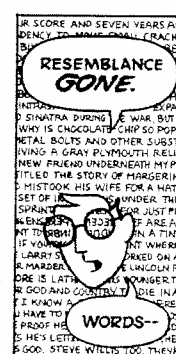
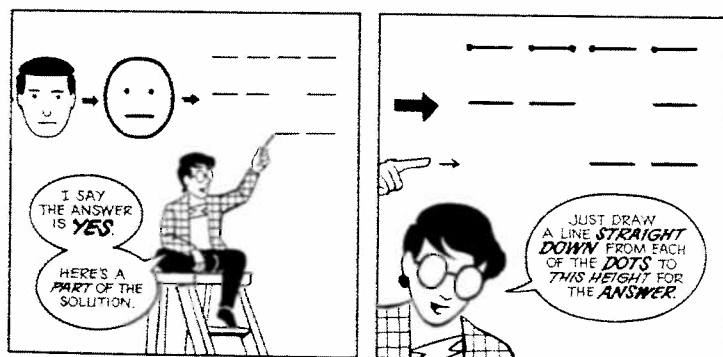
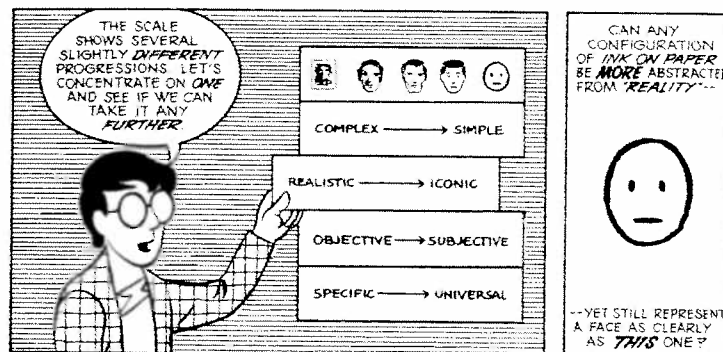
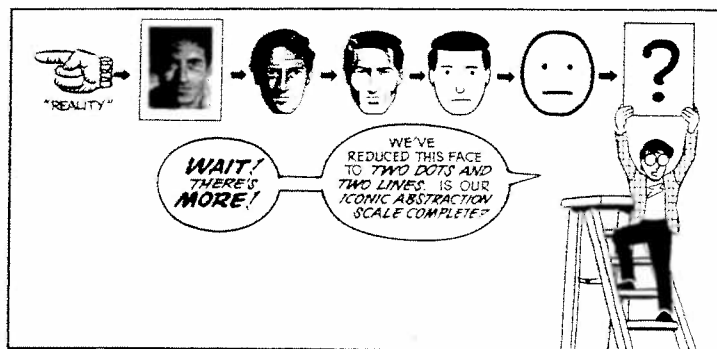


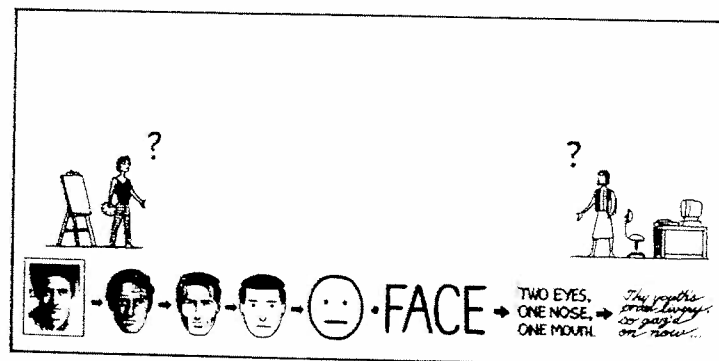
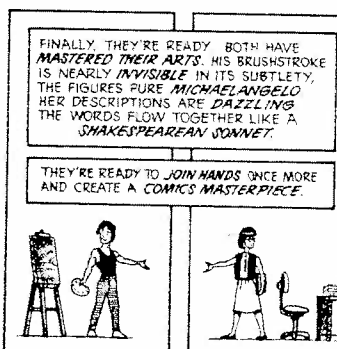


THIS COMBINATION ALLOWS READERS TO *MASK* THEMSELVES IN A CHARACTER AND SAFELY ENTER A SENSUALLY STIMULATING WORLD.

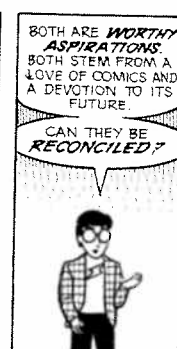
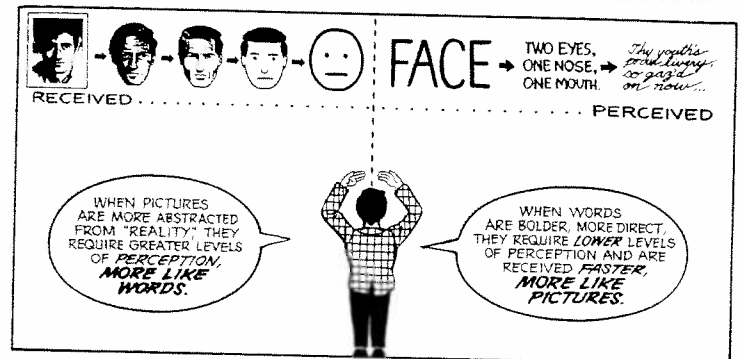
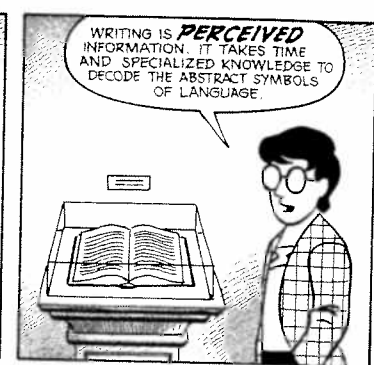
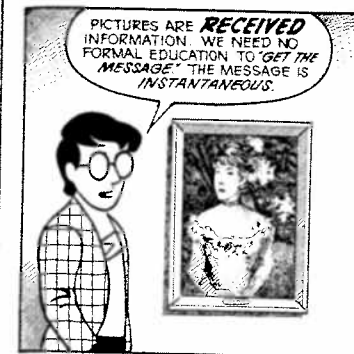




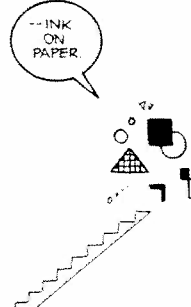
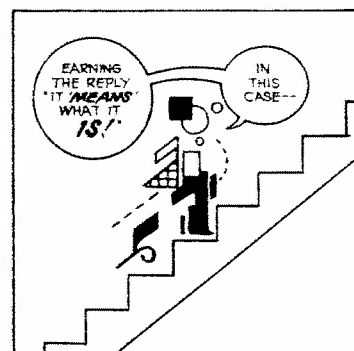
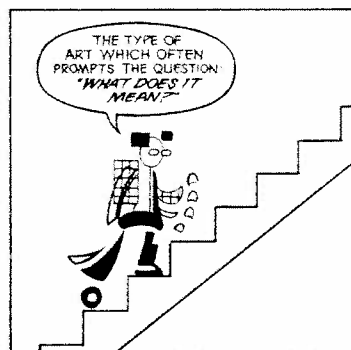
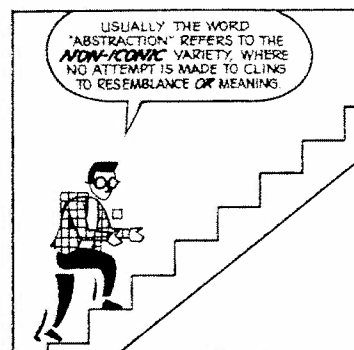
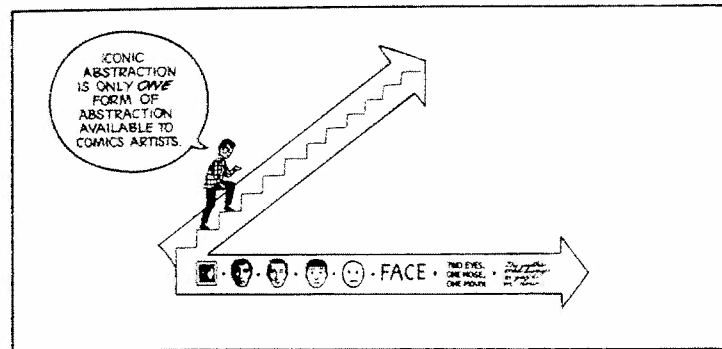




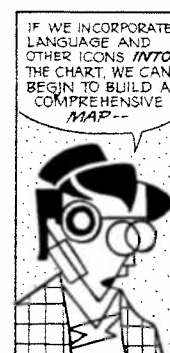
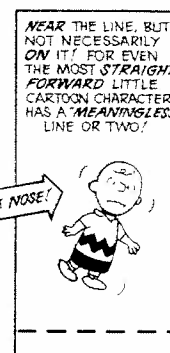
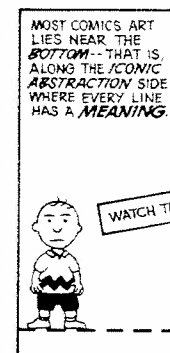
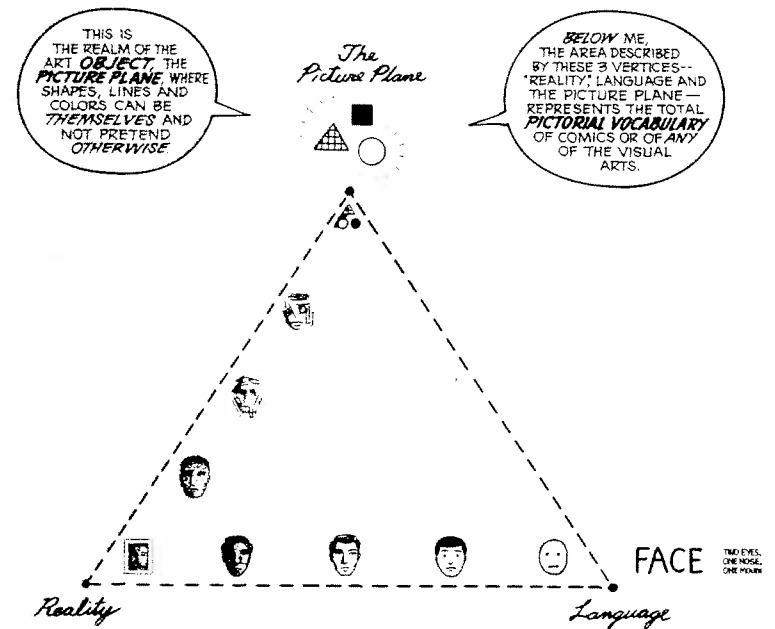
48



49



50



51

1. MARY FLEENER is her most abstract. 2. MARIBICAL's Plus. 3. DAVE MUEZAN employing one of the many styles found in his series CAGES. 4. MARC HEMPEL's GREGORY. 5. MARK BEYER. 6. LARRY HARRIS's Bessie from TALES OF THE BEANWORLD. "Reassembling" nothing ever seen (hence all the way to the right). Muezan's beans walk the line from design to meaning. 7. SAUL STEINBERG. 8. PERRY BOKMAN VAN NORN from THE LIBRARIAN. 9. LORENZO MATTOI in FIES (© Editions Alan Michel S.A.) combines deeply impressionistic lighting with iconic forms and strong design-oriented compositions. In other words, he's a hard one to place. 10. ALVIN KORNHASKY/CRUMB. 11. PETER BAGGE's Chudler-Bey from NEAT STUFF. Compare to 39. 12. KRISTINE KRYTTINE. 13. REA RYAN. THE SMYTHES © Field Newspaper Syndicate. 14. STEVE WILLIE's Moby. 15. PHIL YEN's FRANK THE UNICORN. 16. JERRY MORIARTY's "Jack Survives". Based closely on real world light and shadow, but decomposed into rough shapes. Similar effects are found in nos. 8, 18, 19, 20 and 34. 17. JEFF WONG's art for Scott Russell's JAZZ. 18. ROLF STARK's expressionistic "RAIN". 19. SPAIN's TRASHMAN. 20. FRANK MILLER's THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. Batman © D.C. Comics. Batman created by Bob Kane. 21. WILLIAM MERRINGER-LOEB's Wolfram's Macabre from JOURNEY. 22. DON MEMPON's MEGATON MAN. Beginning from a realistic anatomical base, Simpson distorts and exaggerates M.M.'s features to the brink of abstraction. 23. MICHAEL CHERKAS from SILENT INVASION. © Cherkas and Hancock. 24. RICK GARY. 25. PETER KUPER. 26. GARRY TRUDEAU's DOONESBURY. 27. LYNDA BARRY. 28. SAMPE'S RERATO. 29. CHARLES BURNER'S BIG BABY. 30. 1/2. (Whisper) CLIFF STEWERT. The character pictured here from POLLY AND HER PALS might be a bit lower, but Starred's art, like Fleener's often heads upward toward the witty abstract. P.A.H.P. is a © Newspaper Features Syndicate, Inc. 30. SERGIO ARAGONES's GROSS THE WANDERER. Simple, straightforward but with a strong gestural quality that always reminds us of the hand that holds the pen (also true of 14, 28, 31, 41). 31. ROBERTA GREGORY's Baby Bach from NAUGHTY BITS. 32. DAVID MAZZUCHELLI from BATMAN YEAR ONE. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 33. JOSE MUNOZ from "Master Conrad, Master Wicor". © Munoz and Sempayo. 34. CAROL

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

"Reality"

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

The Picture Plane



SWAIN. 35. CHESTER GOULD'S DICK TRACY © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate, Inc. 36. JACK KIRBY's Darkseid. © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's Rocco Vargas from TRITON. 39. PETER BAGGE's Buddy Bradley from NATE COMPARE to 11. 40. BETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCET. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's Mowgli from King's THE JUNGLE BOOKS. Russell's characters are as finely observed and realistically based as Hal Foster's or Dave Stevens' but with an unparalleled sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Lately, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 45. GOSBEKI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI

(Wolf and Cub) © Koko and Koko. 46. EDDIE CAMPBELL's ALEC. Realistic in tone, but also gestural and spontaneous. The process of drawing isn't hidden from view. 47. ALEX TOTI. 20m © ZoroProductions, Inc. Art © Walt Disney Productions. (Zoro created by Johnston McCullay). 48. HUGO GORDON CORTO MALTESE © Castelman, Paris-Tourma. 49. WILL EISNER from TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. 50. DORI SEDA. 51. R. CRUMB swings between realistic and cartoony characters, usually staying about the high but occasionally venturing upward. 52. STEVE DITKO. 53. NORMAN DOG. 54. VALENTINO's NORMALMAN sits a bit to the right and up from the current SHAGDOHAWK (whose iconic mask made him a bit harder to place). 55. ROZ CHAST. 56. JOOST SWART'S Anton Makasser. 57. ELZIE SEGAR's POPEYE © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 58. GEORGE HERRIMAN's "Officer Pupp" from KRAZY KAT. © International Feature Service, Inc. 59. JIM WOODRING's FRANK. 60. NEAL ADAMS from X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. (X-Men created by Lee and Kirby). 61. GIL KANE from ACTION COMICS © D.C. Comics, Inc. 62. MILTON CANIFF's STEVE CANYON. 63. JIM LEE. Nick Fury appearing in X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics, Inc. (Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster). 65. JACQUES TARDI from LE DEMON DES GLACES © Dargaud Editeur. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES. Laureline from the VALERIAN series. © Dargaud Editeur. 67. BILL GRIFITH's ZIPPY THE PINHEAD. 68. JOE MATT. 69. KYLE BAKER from WHY I HATE SATURN. 70. TRINA ROBBINS's

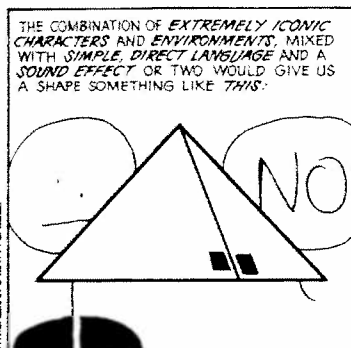
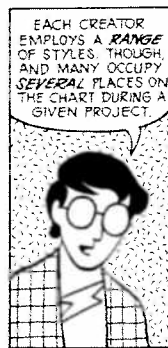
71. MISTY © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 72. RYOKO IWEDA's Oscar from THE ROSE OF VERSAILLES. 73. GEORGE MOMANUS BRINGING UP FATHER © International Feature Service, Inc. 74. CHARLES SCHULZ's Charlie Brown from PEANUTS © United Features Syndicate, Inc. 75. ART SPIEGELMAN from MAUS. 76. MATT FEZZELL's CYCICALMAN. The company Logo. The picture as symbol. 77. The Logo. The word as object. 78. Sound Effect. The word as sound. 79. TOM KING. SHOOKUMS, THAT LOVABLE TRANSVESTITE. A photo-comic. 80. DREW FREEDMAN. 81. TARZAN created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. 82. ALEX RAYMOND. Flash Gordon © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 83. MILO MANARA. 84. JOHN BUSCEMA. The Vision © Marvel Entertainment Group. 85. CAROL LAY's Irene Van de Kamp from GOOD GIRLS. A bizarre character, but drawn in a very straightforward style. 86. GILBERT HERNANDEZ. 87. JAMIE HERNANDEZ. 88. COLIN UPTON. 89. KURT SCHAFFENBERGER. Superboy © D.C. Comics. 90. JACK COLE's PLASTIC MAN © D.C. Comics. 91. REED WALLER's OMAMA. THE CAT DANCER © Walter and Wolter. 92. WENDY PINK'S Skyline from ELFOQUEST. © Warp Graphics. 93. DAN DE CARLO. Veronica © Archie Comics. 94. HAROLD GRAY's LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE. © Chicago Tribune. New York News Syndicate. 95. HERGE's TINTIN © Editions Castelman. 96. FLOYD GOTTFREDSON. Mickey Mouse © Walt Disney Productions. 97. JEFF SMITH's BONE. 98. Smile Dammie. 99. COLLEEN DORAN's A DISTANT SON. 100. ROY CRANE's CAPTAIN EASY © NEA Service, Inc. 101. DAN CLOWES. 102. WAYNO. 103. V.T. HAMLIN ALLEY OOP © NEA Service, Inc. 104. CHESTER BROWN. 105. STAN SAKAI's USAGI YUIMBO. 106. DAVE SIM'S CEREBUS THE AARDVARK. 107. WALT KELLY's POGO © Sally Kelly. 108. RUDOLPH DIRKS's HANDS AND FRITZ © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 109. M.C. "BUD" FISHER's Jeff from MUTT AND JEFF © McNaught Syndicate, Inc. 110. MORT WALKER's HI AND LOSE © King Features Syndicate, Inc. 111. OSAMU TEZUKA's ASTROBOY. 112. CARL BARKS. Scrooge McDuck © Walt Disney Productions. 113. CROCKETT JOHNSON's Mister O'Malley. 114. BARNABY © Field Newspaper Syndicate, Inc. 115. PAT BULLIVANT's FELIX THE CAT © Newspaper Feature Service. 116. UERZO. ASTERIX by Goscinny and Uderzo © Dargaud Editeur.

COMICS

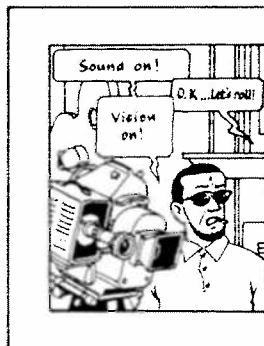
SPLASH! FACE

AAAH! READ IT LATER.

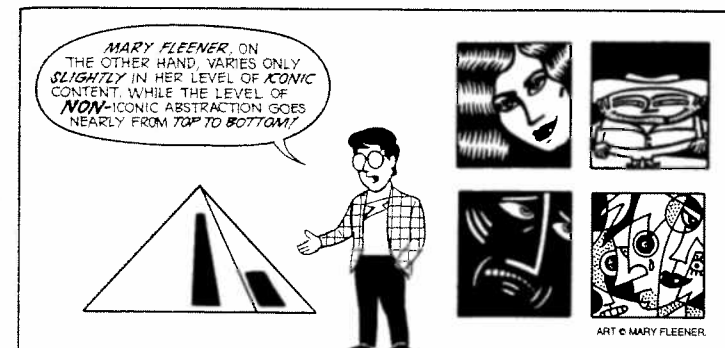
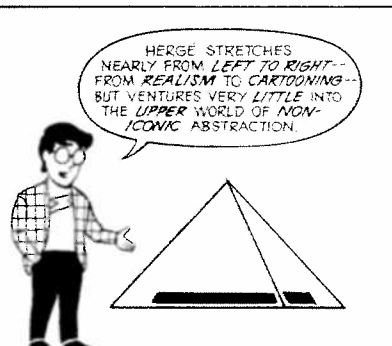
Meaning



CYNICALMAN © MATT FEAZELL



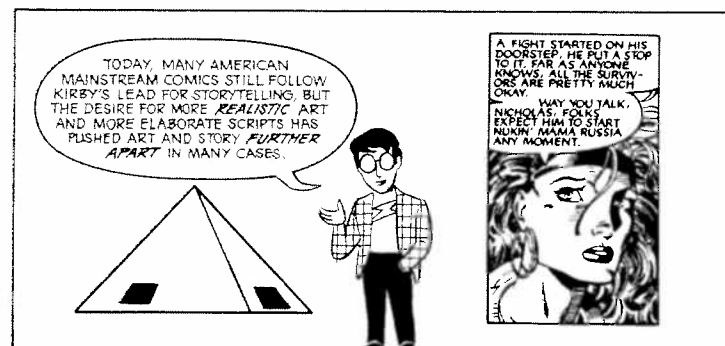
ART © EDITIONS CASTERMAN



ART © MARY FLEENER

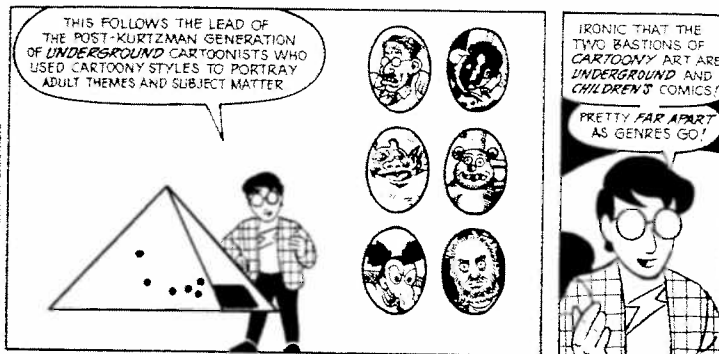
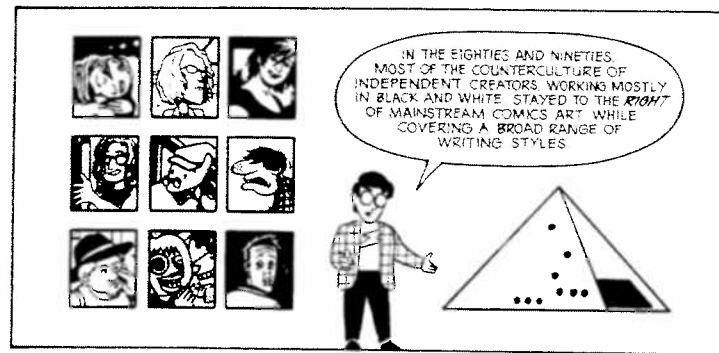


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE



ART FROM COLOR PANELS TRACED FOR REPRODUCTION
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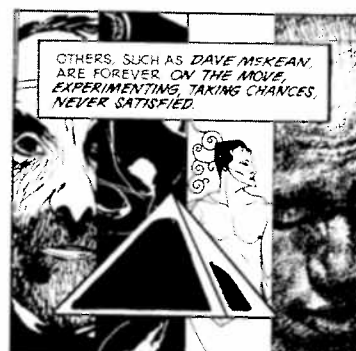
ART: JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS (FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: CHRIS CLAREMONT



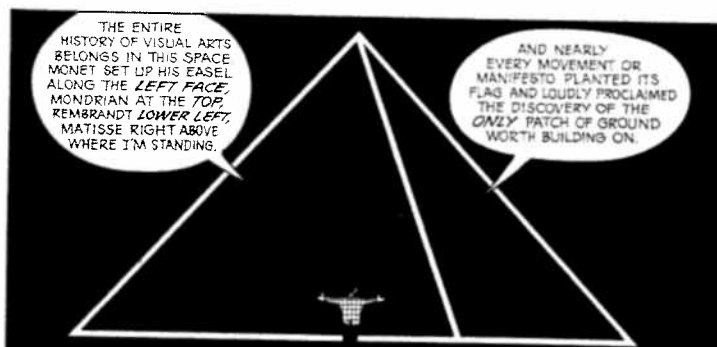
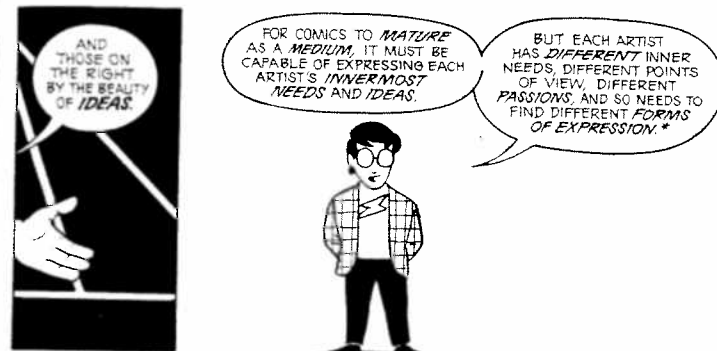
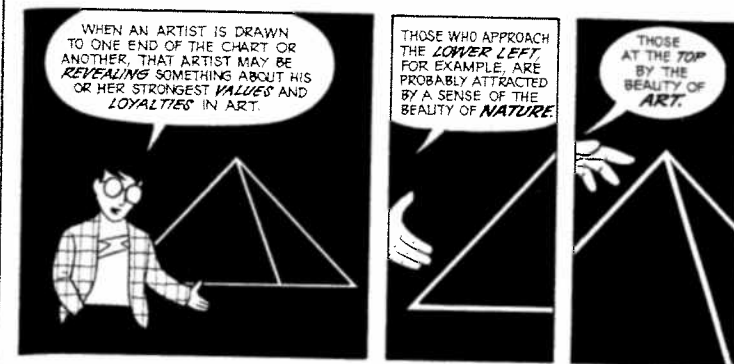
SEE PAGE 218 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



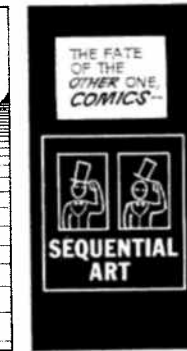
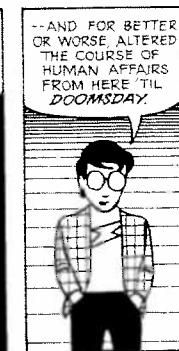
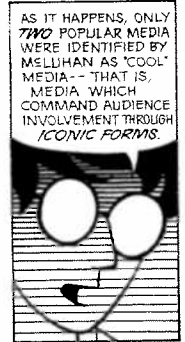
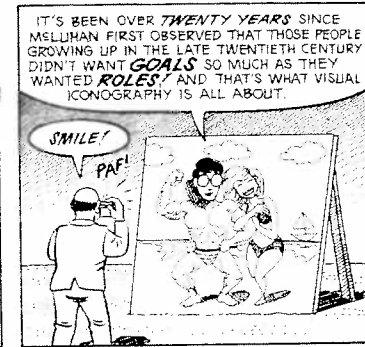
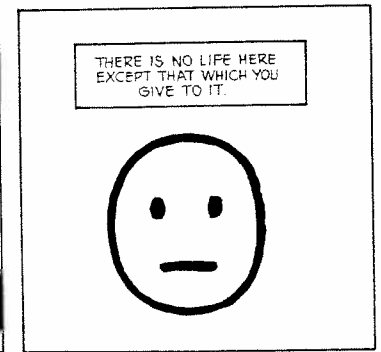
SERGIO AND GREG © SERGIO ARAGONES



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



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



CHAPTER SIX

SHOW AND TELL.



THIS
IS MY
ROBOT.



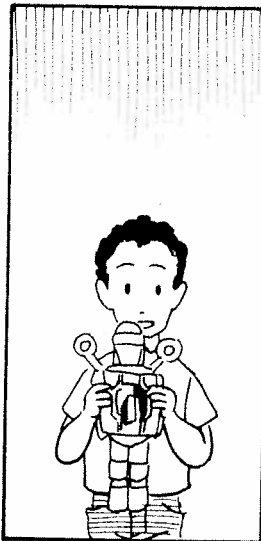
WHAT CAN YOU
TELL US ABOUT
YOUR ROBOT,
TOMMY?



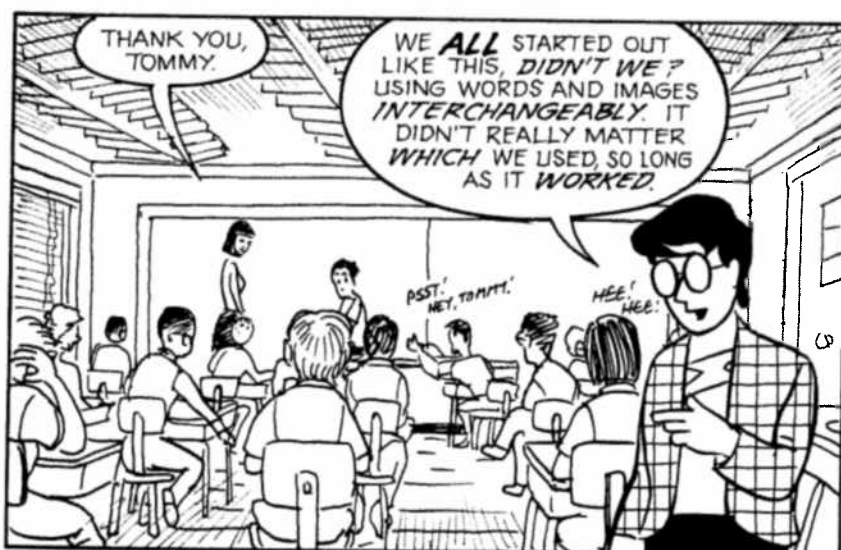
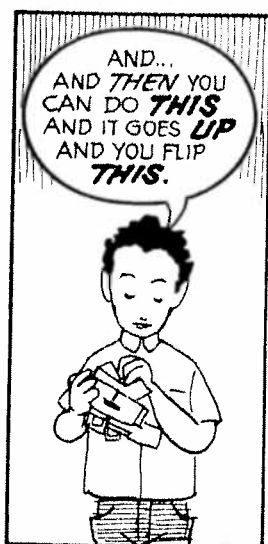
WELL,
UH... I LIKE
IT 'CAUSE...
'CAUSE, UH...

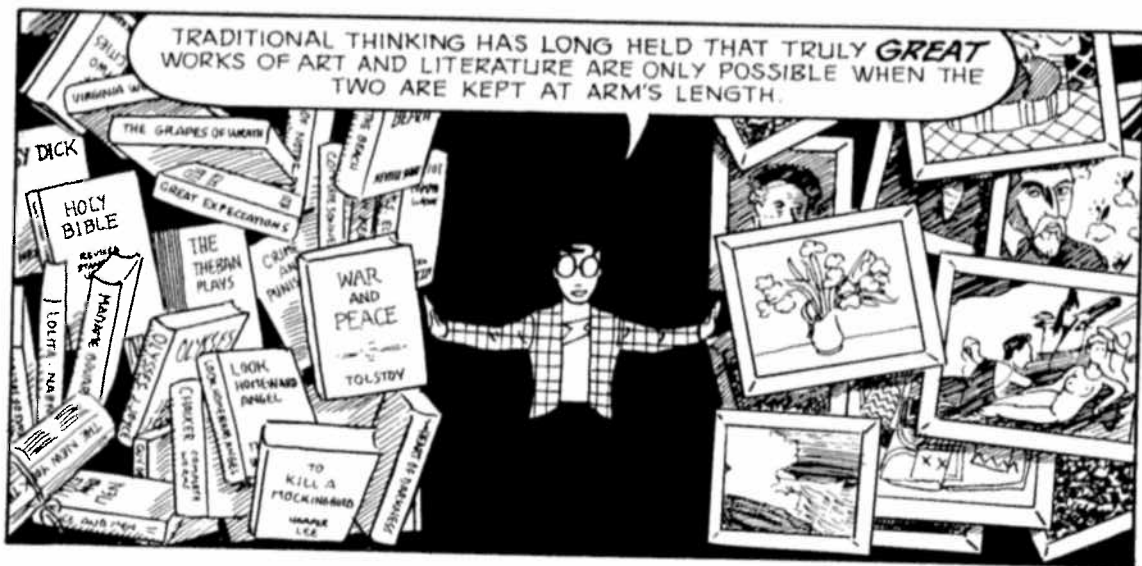


IT'S
GOT ONE OF
THESE
THINGS.



WHAT IS
THAT,
TOMMY?







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



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



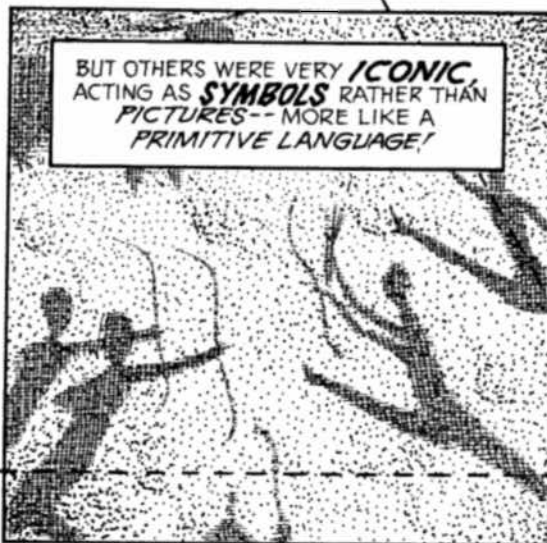
THE ROOTS OF THIS ATTITUDE RUN PRETTY *DEEP*.



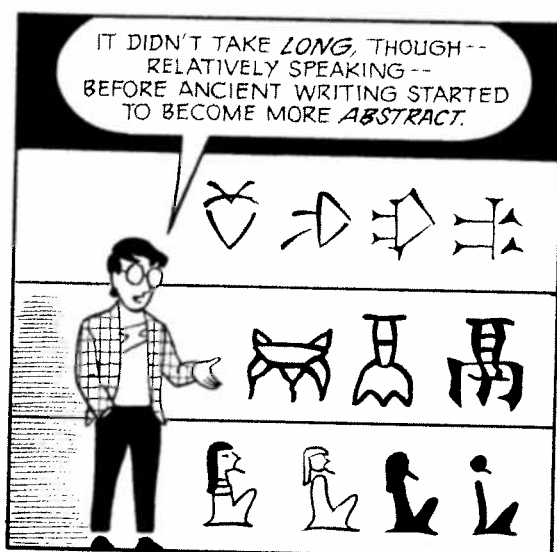
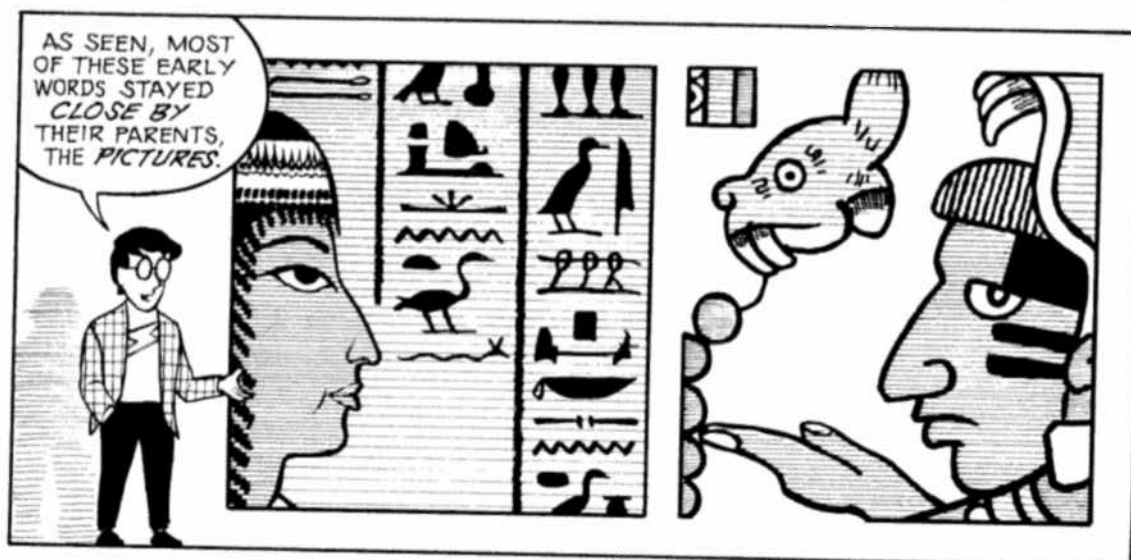
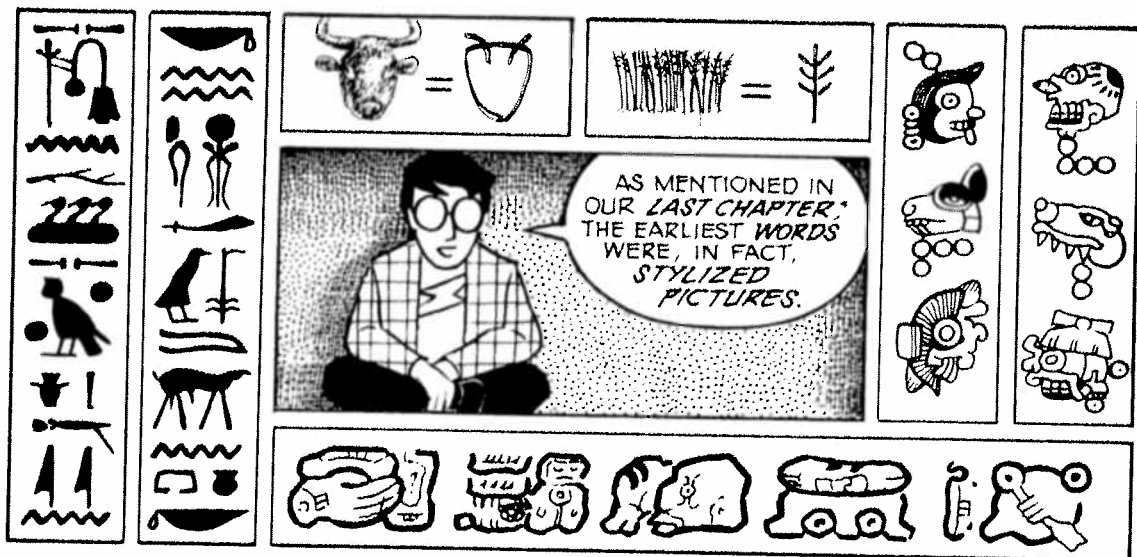
AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, PICTURES *PREDATE* THE WRITTEN WORD BY A *LARGE MARGIN*. HERE ARE SOME BIG HITS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF CAVE PAINTING, ABOUT 15,000 YEARS AGO.



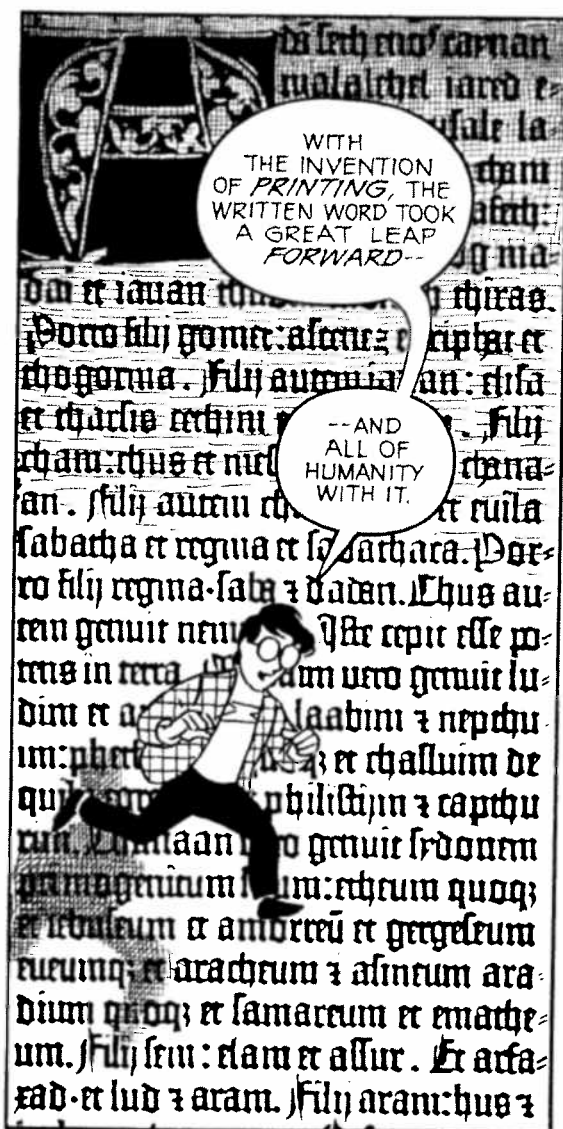
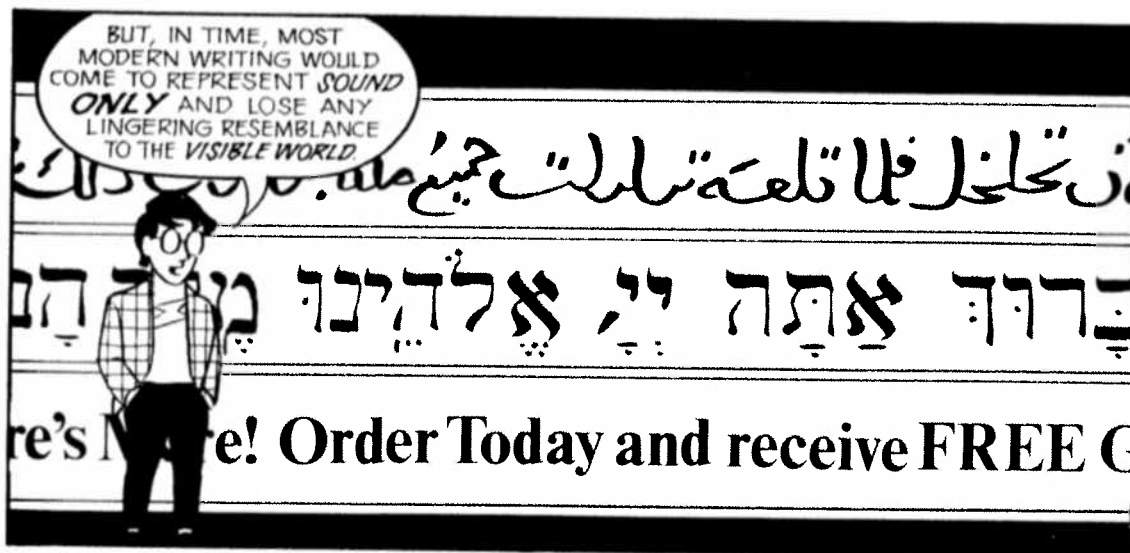
SOME OF THIS ART SHOWS CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO *DETAIL*, VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH *PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION*.



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



* SEE PAGE 129.





John Keats

1819

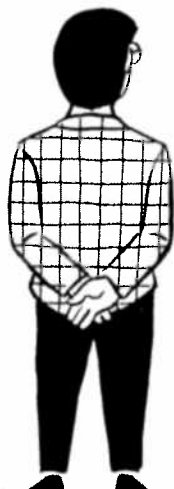
Ode on a Grecian Urn

1

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

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

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



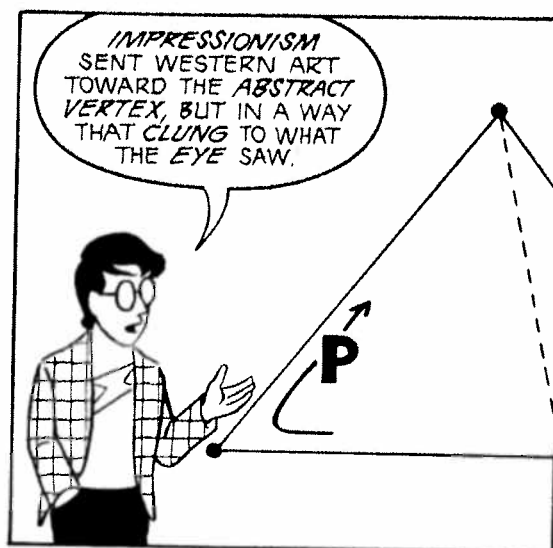
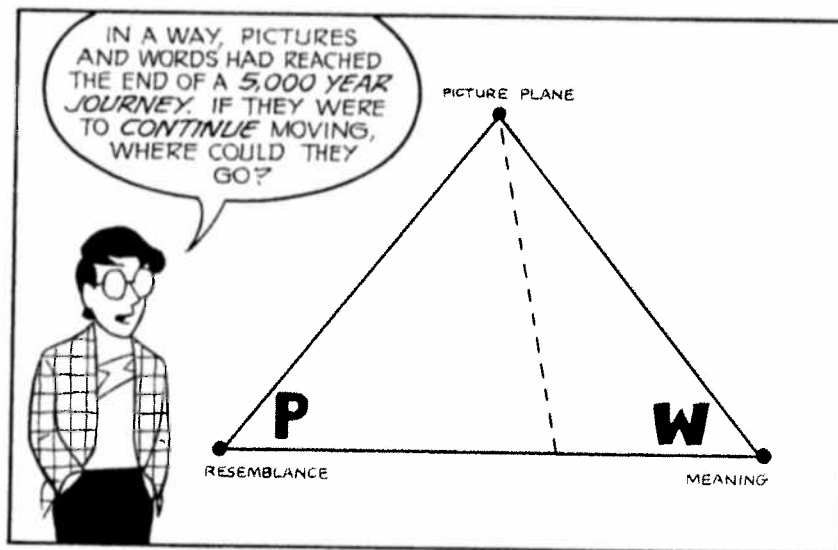
...THE
 OTHER RICH IN
INVISIBLE
 TREASURES,
 SENSES, EMOTIONS,
 SPIRITUALITY,
 PHILOSOPHY...

FIRST STANZA OF KEATS' POEM

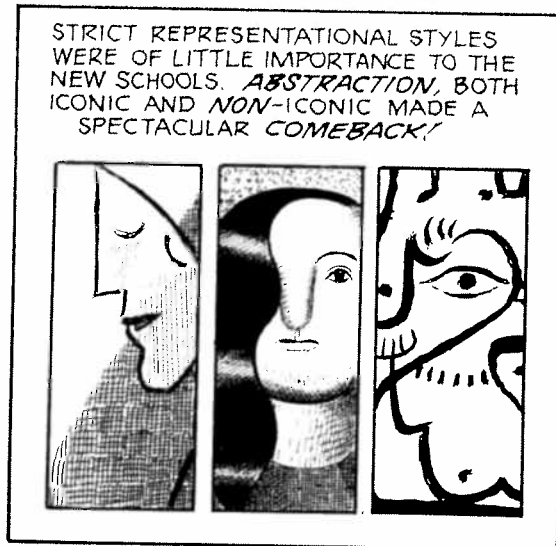
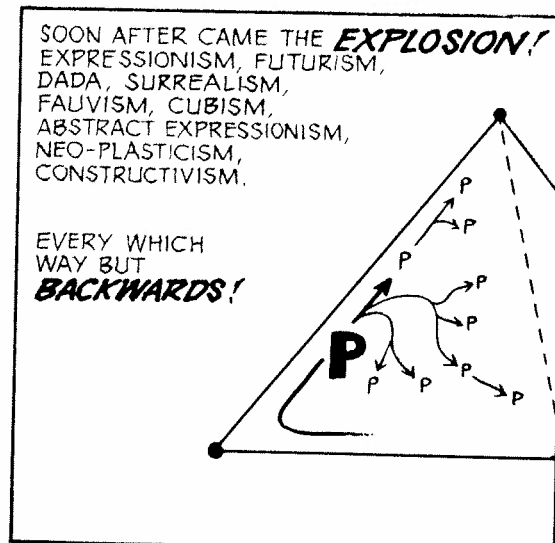
PICTURES
 AND WORDS,
 ONCE **TOGETHER**
 IN THE CENTER OF
 OUR ICONIC
 ABSTRACTION
 CHART, HAVE AT
 THIS POINT
 DRIFTED TO
 OPPOSITE
 CORNERS.



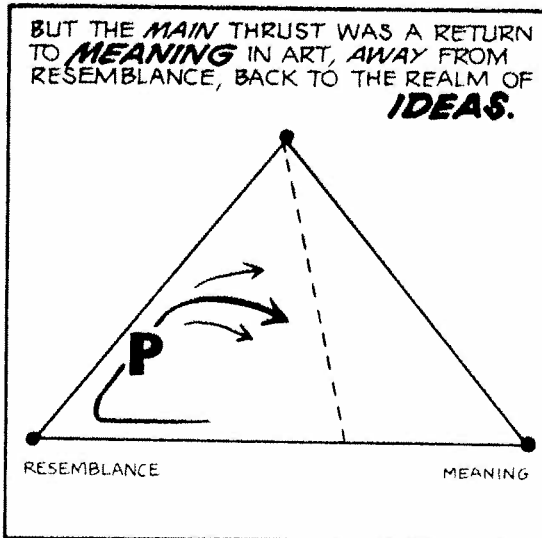
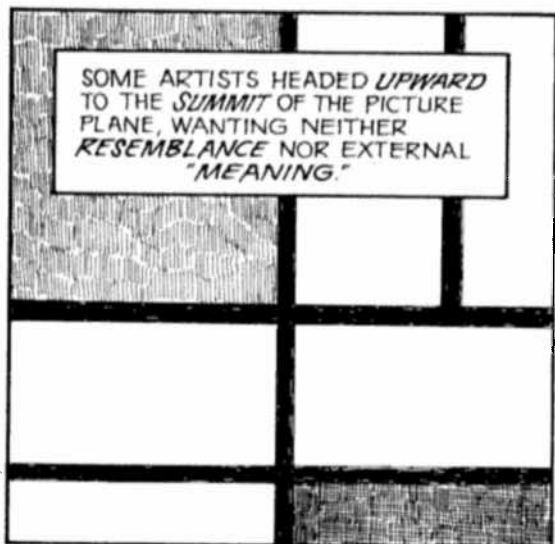
THE **INVISIBLE**
 TREASURES,
 SENSES, EMOTIONS,
 SPIRITUALITY,
 PHILOSOPHY...



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



FACSIMILE DETAILS OF PORTRAITS BY PICASSO, LEGER AND KLEE.



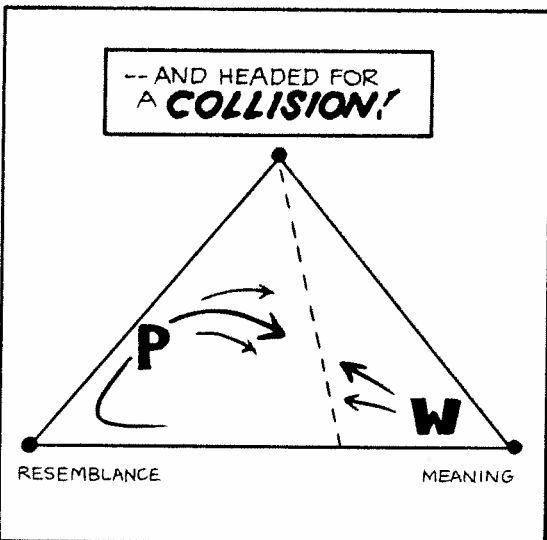
MEANWHILE, THE WRITTEN WORD WAS ALSO CHANGING. POETRY BEGAN *TURNING AWAY* FROM THE ELUSIVE, *TWICE-ABSTRACTED* LANGUAGE OF OLD TOWARD A MORE *DIRECT*, EVEN *COLLOQUIAL*, STYLE.

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 deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dale of Arcady?
What men or gods or beasts thy shape is fond to seek?

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?)



H'atre MICHEL 40 rue des Mathurins

SOIRÉE

DU CŒUR

une semaine
prolongée
au 7 juillet

ORGANISÉE PAR TCHÉREZ

Location :

Barbès Jean, 25, Bd de la Madeleine
Durand, 4, Place de la Madeleine
Pavlovsky, 15, Rue Soufflot
Au Sans Pareil, 27, Avenue Kléber
Rin, 5, Avenue Lovendal
Paul Godefrume, 65, Rue de Bédou
Librairie Morvan, 27, Bd Montparnasse
Paul Soumberg, 21, Rue de Bédou
et au Théâtre Michel, Tél. : Oct. 65-20

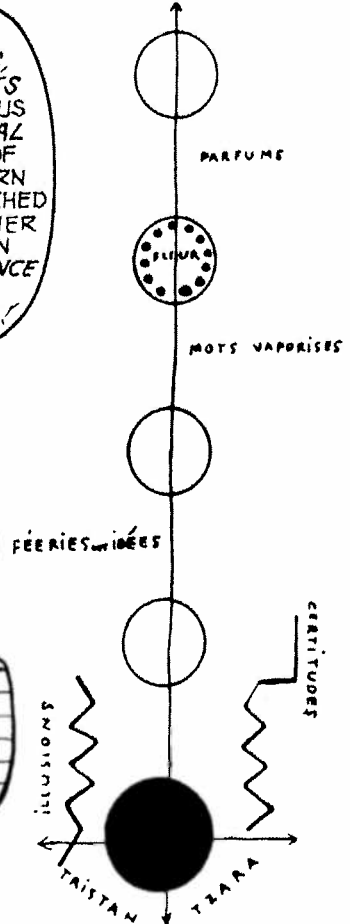
no place de legs 50 fr.
samedi d'orchestre 25 fr.
samedi de balon 15 fr.
samedi de balon 15 fr.

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!

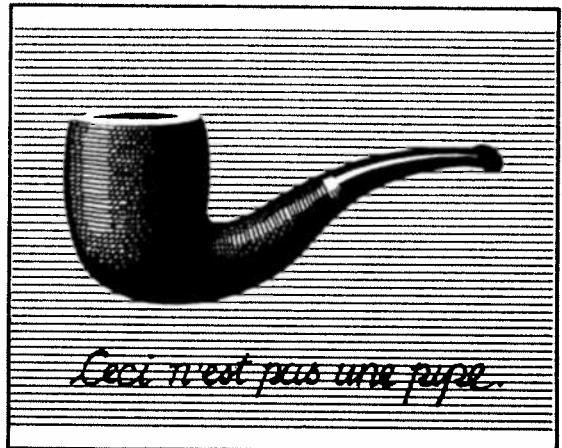


FACSIMILE OF "ORIENTAL SWEETNESS" (1938), BY PAUL KLEE.

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



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





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

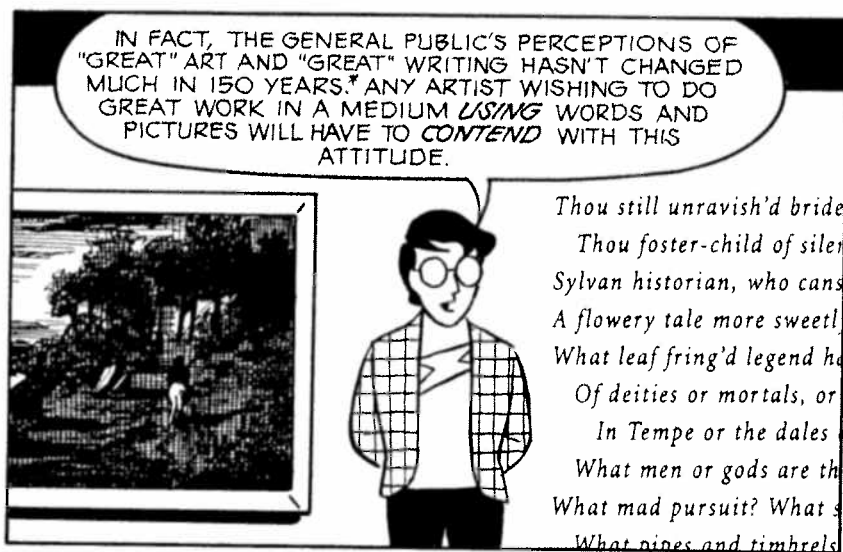
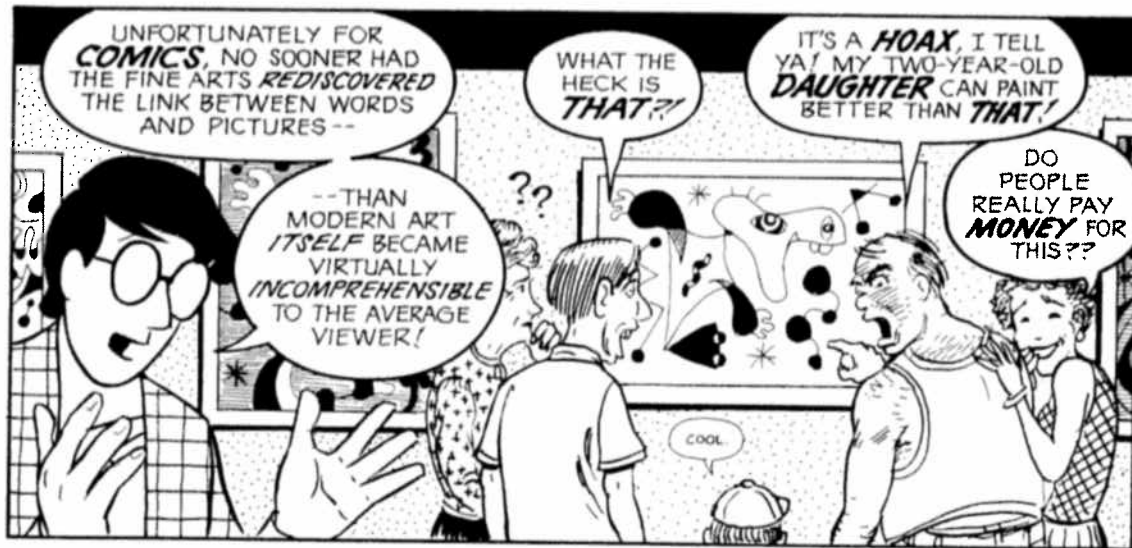
BUT AGAIN IT WAS *RODOLPHE TÖPFFER* WHO FORESAW THEIR *INTERDEPENDENCY* AND BROUGHT THE FAMILY *BACK TOGETHER* AT LAST.



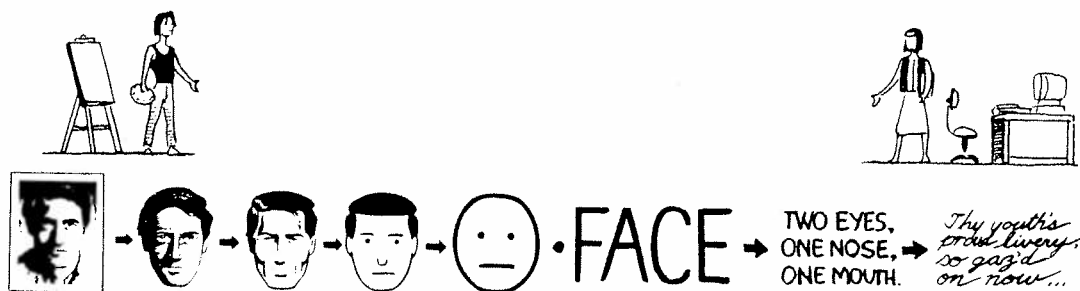
M. CRÉPIN ADVERTISES FOR A TUTOR, AND MANY APPLY FOR THE JOB.

TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE.

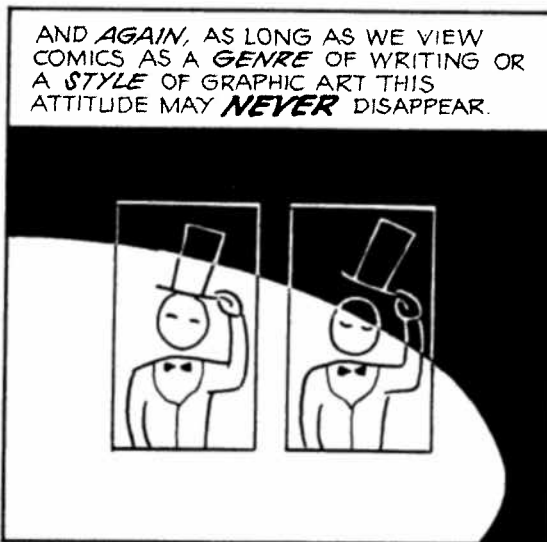
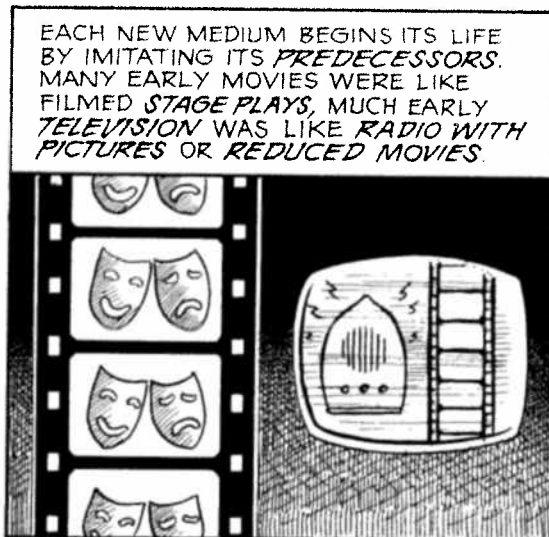
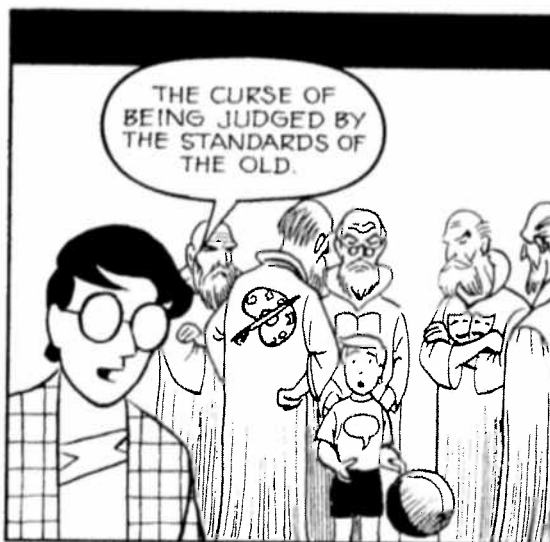
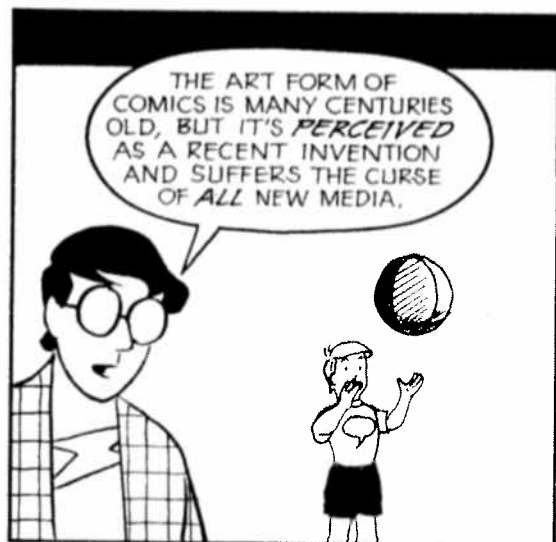




...BECAUSE, DEEP DOWN INSIDE, MANY COMICS CREATORS STILL MEASURE ART AND WRITING BY *DIFFERENT STANDARDS* AND ACT ON THE FAITH THAT "GREAT" ART AND "GREAT" WRITING WILL COMBINE HARMONIOUSLY BY VIRTUE OF *QUALITY ALONE*.



* 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. a form, used with a singular, of a series of juxtaposed pictorial images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey an action and/or to produce a specific response in the reader. 2. Superheroes in costumes, fighting villains who want to take over the world, in violent scenes.

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



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

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



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

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

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



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



JUDY GAVE ME HER
KEYS AND SMILED.



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



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



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



GRIM-FACED,
GEORGE LIFTED
HIS LOLLYPOP.



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

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



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?



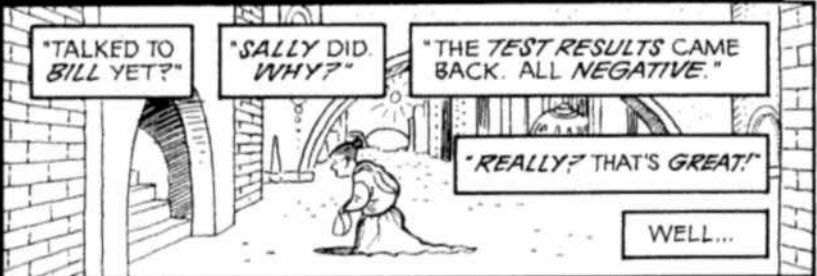
IS THIS THE SAME **JUPITER** OF MY YOUTH?



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



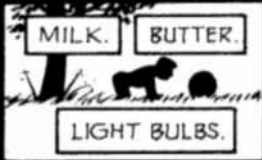
"TALKED TO **BILL** YET?" "SALLY DID. **WHY?**" "THE **TEST RESULTS** CAME BACK. ALL **NEGATIVE**." "REALLY? THAT'S **GREAT!**" WELL...



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



HAPPY!



...the business... object... with... and... to be... the... super... appear... and bind... by... after... not... by v...

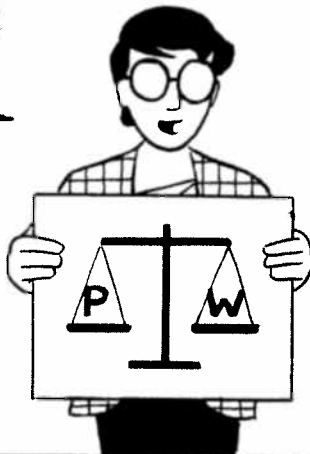


PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF WORD/PICTURE COMBINATION IS THE **INTERDEPENDENT**, WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES GO **HAND IN HAND** TO CONVEY AN IDEA THAT NEITHER COULD CONVEY ALONE.



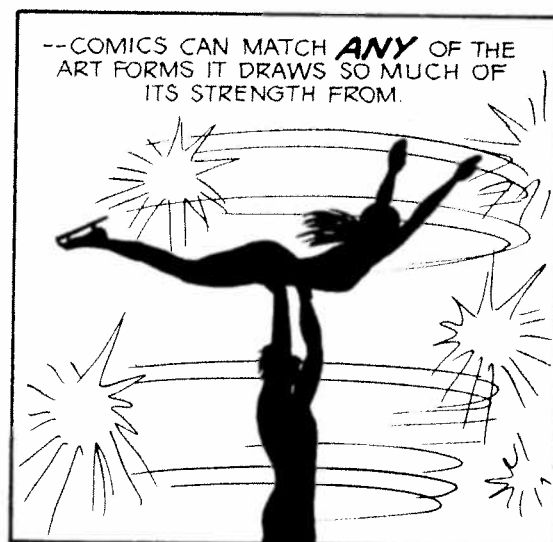
INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN **EQUAL BALANCE** THOUGH AND MAY FALL **ANYWHERE** ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

P
—
W

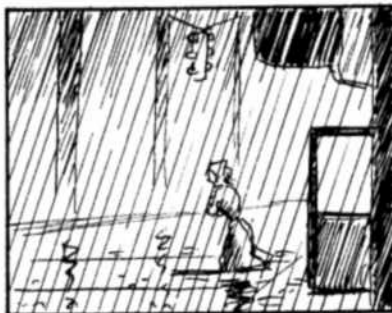
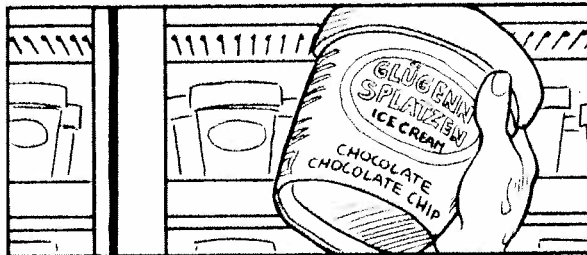
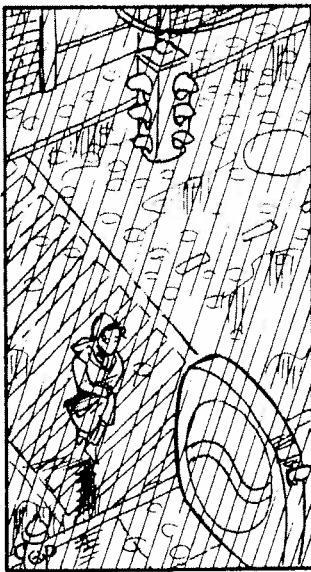
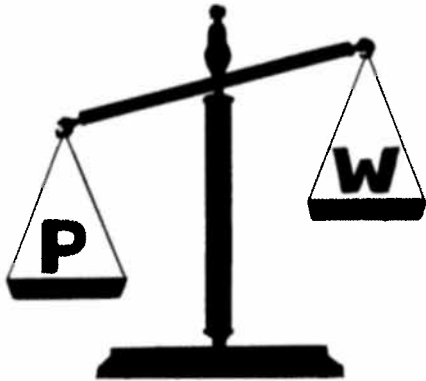


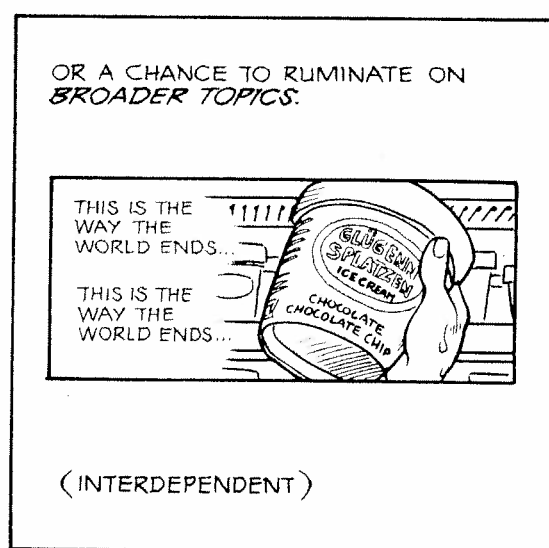
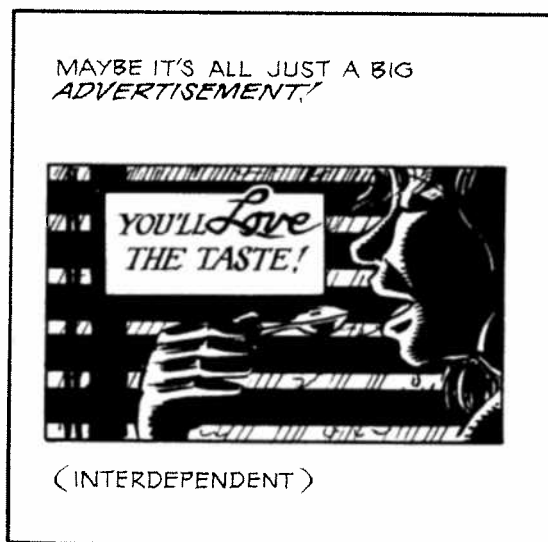
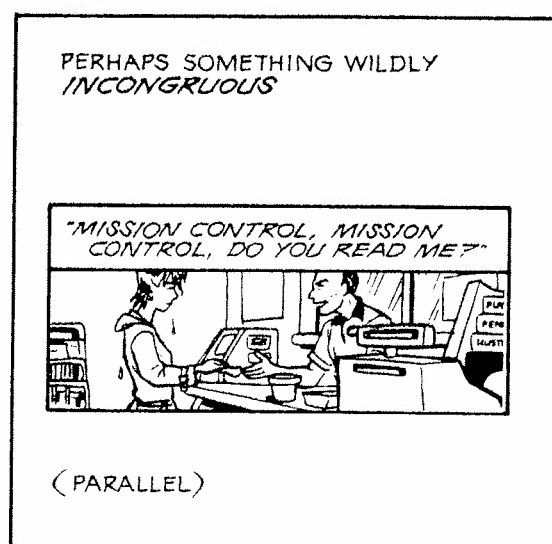
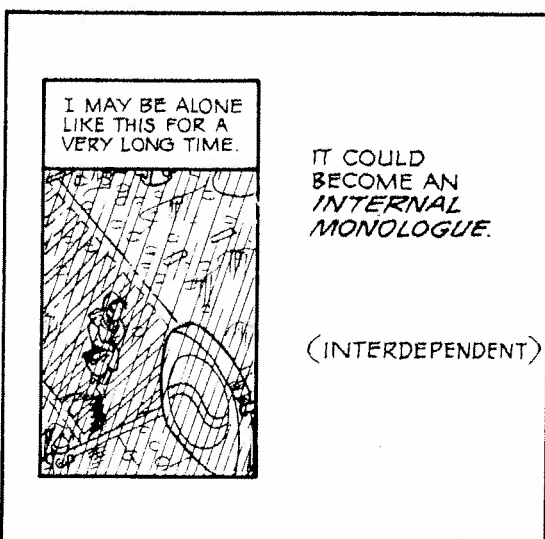
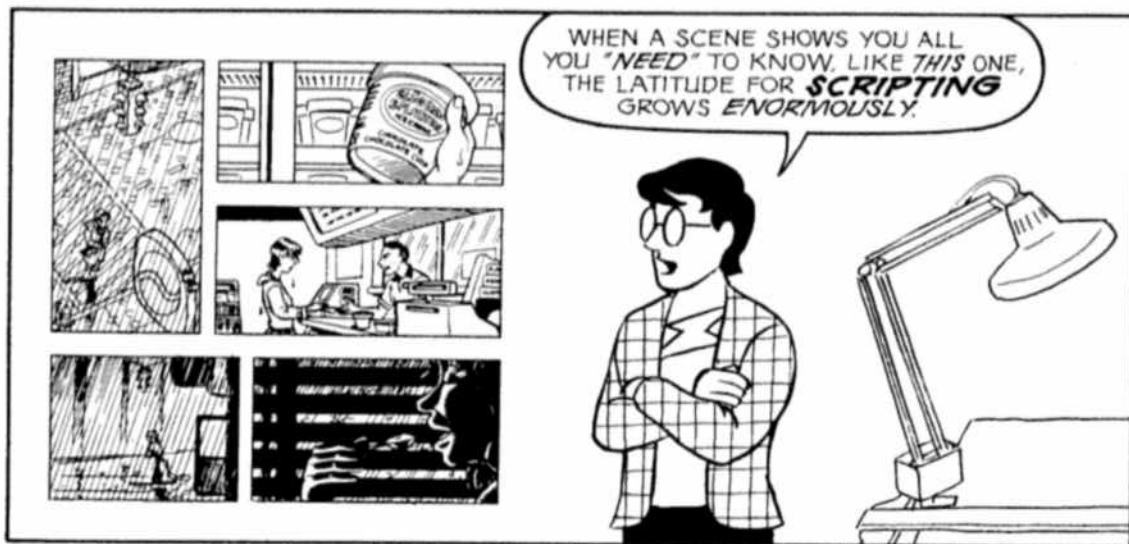
GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH **WORDS**, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO **EXPLORING** AND **VICE VERSA**.

W
—
P

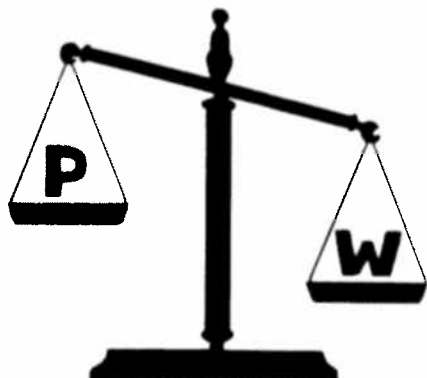


WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.





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



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

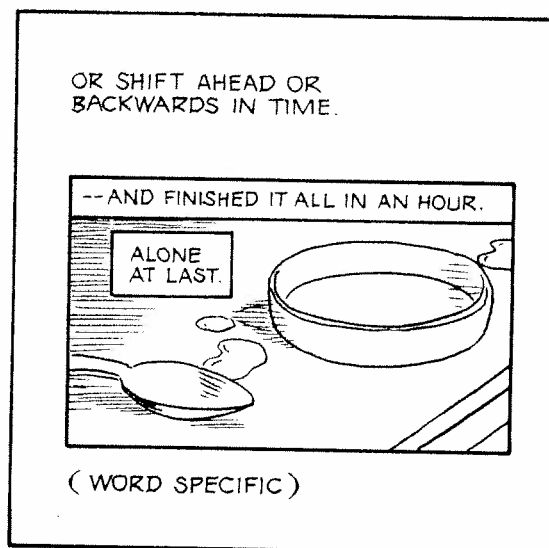
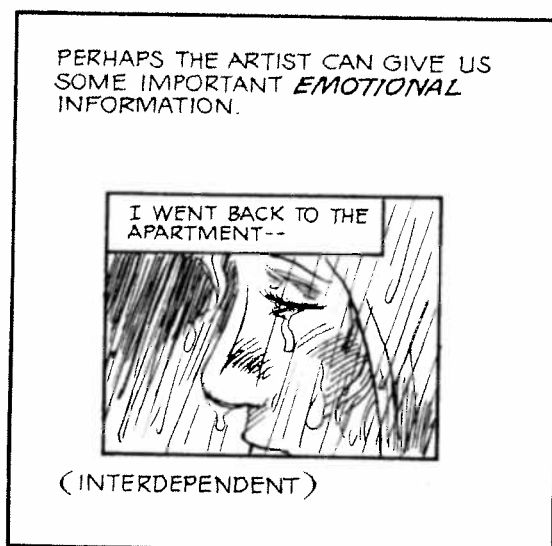
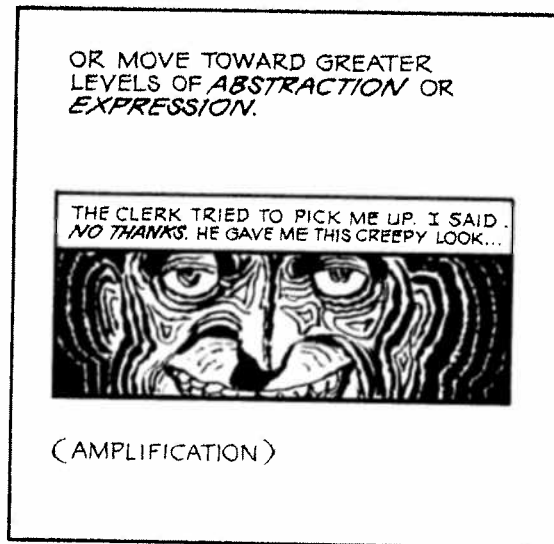
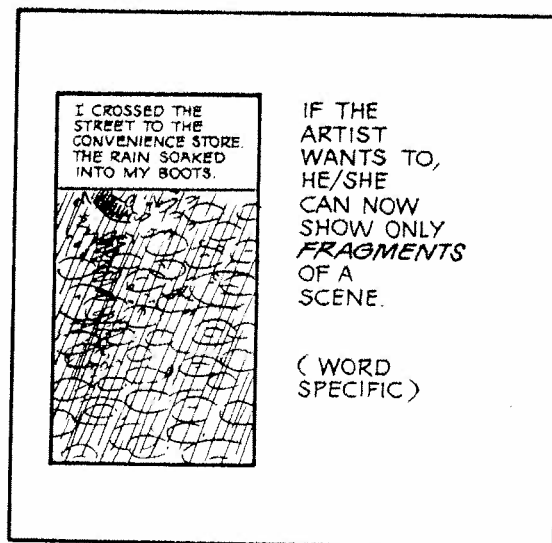
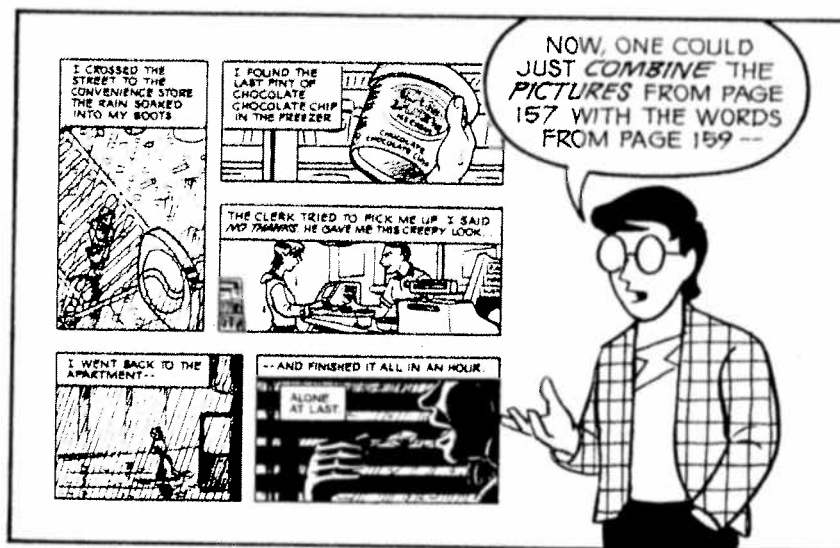
I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHIP CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.

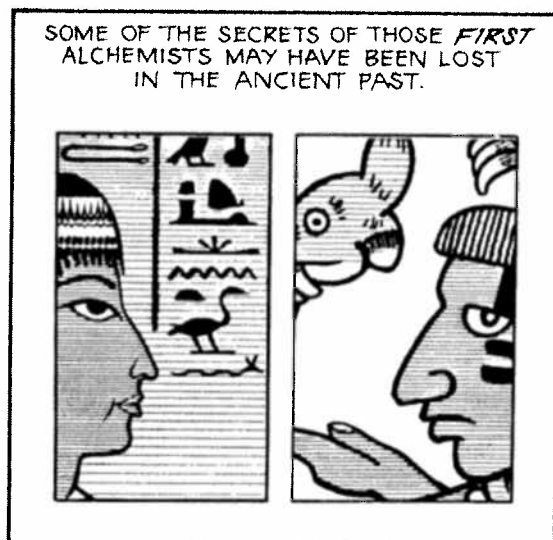
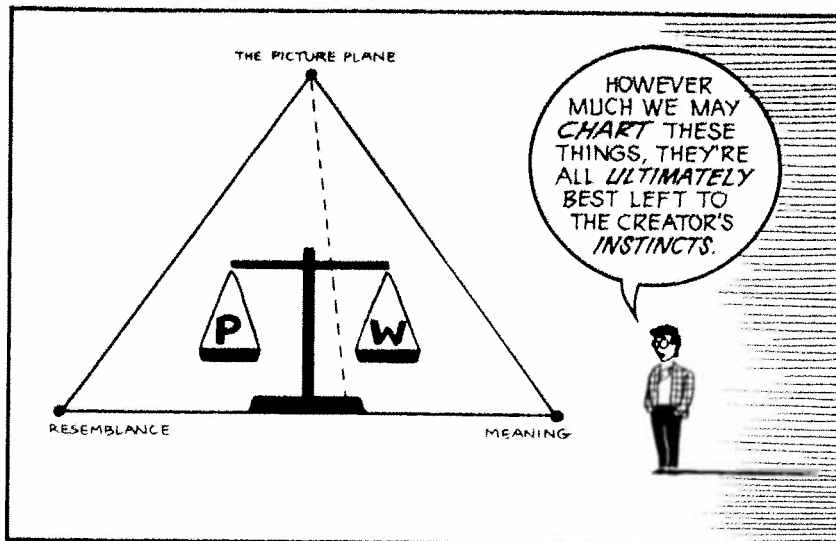
THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID *NO THANKS*. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

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*.