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...tious they're going to be rapped on the  
nuckles, so they draw jumpy.

### Things Are Different Now

Taboos have crumbled. Audiences are more sophisticated. The most exciting fine art be-

### Raw Magazine: Inner Necessity vs. the Getting of Yoks

There is nothing else in comics quite like *Raw*. This oversized New York publication, put together by the most analytical of the underground cartoonists, Art Spiegelman, and his artist wife Francoise Mouly, is a showcase for the best new-style virtuosos in the world. Dismissing the sloppy, loose young cartoonists, *Raw* presents the slickest, tightest, and most intense of the new artists, such as France's Pascal Doury and Bruno Richard. *Raw* also regularly runs strips by Gary Panter, Charles Burns, Drew Friedman, and Mark Beyer, along with painstakingly executed cartoons and art by lesser-known pen-wielding cartoonists.

The humor in *Raw*, when it exists, is weighted with irony and is rarely funny, but that's not what the magazine is after. *Raw* is mainly evidence in the ongoing crusade to consider cartoons as Serious Art, to push the techniques of painting and cartooning closer together, and to offer an irrefutable argument (in its tightly controlled and ambitious design) that this is significant stuff we're perusing here. While most cartoons exult in their lowbrow, cornball crudity, the art in *Raw*, both in content and execution, demands solemn consideration. It's worth the hefty cover price even without the snickers. *Raw*'s latest offering is the most harrowing cartoon book I've seen. *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, by Sue Coe and Holly Metz, presents the hellish history of apartheid in South Africa with unrelenting statistics and some of the most tortured graphics ever printed. The book works both as a political and artistic document—or maybe not. For whatever reasons—its political stance or extremely bleak appearance—*How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* has been picked up by few distributors, and so

ing made today is inspired by cartoons. The boundaries are ignored, the clashes are entertaining, the Japanese and the Europeans and the Americans are all showing off for each other, sending cartoons through the mails, making an as-yet-unnamed cartoon/art movement that will have increasing repercussions in the hip graphics that we will all pore over

far is unavailable in Los Angeles. It deserves your attention, in part because the book is a landmark in the history of illustration, and most of all because of its ghostly, painful reportage.

When *Raw* magazine masterminds Francoise Mouly and Art Spiegelman were in Los Angeles a few months ago on a working vacation, I interviewed them. Brief excerpts from our rambling conversation follow.

**Groening: How did *Raw* magazine come about?**

**Art Spiegelman:** We're gluttons for punishment.

**Francoise Mouly:** We had a lot of great work to look at.

**Spiegelman:** And we'd have people over to the house, and they'd say, hey, isn't this great, look at this. And eventually we'd have this big pile of stuff on the table, and it took a real long time to clean up—so it was easier to put in one place, a magazine. There wasn't any other magazine where all this work could appear.

**Mouly:** When we did the first issue, we didn't really think of it as an ongoing thing.

**Spiegelman:** It's real fun to design and think about magazines; it's real hell to make them happen.

**There's definitely a *Raw* style, or look.**

**Spiegelman:** Part of it was not wanting to get pegged as an underground comic, because it isn't.

**Mouly:** We try to balance very graphic work with some narrative work.

**Spiegelman:** *Raw* ends up being its own best definition. It's hard to explain why we like something—taste is quirky. Right now, there's this tendency for painting and comics to be moving closer and closer together. . . .

People usually approach painting with a certain head-set. Theoretically, at least, you're doing it out of inner necessity rather than solely to get a yok out of somebody or to give

than ever—GARTNER has to be the greatest scan in the history of comics—but intelligent weirdness has snuck in here and there in the form of Nicole Hollander's "Sylvia" (the oddest looking strip in the dailies), Jim Unger's "Herman" (which would have been rejected in the past for the ugliness of its eyeless characters alone), and Gary Larson's "The Far

...t five years. The change has come at all levels, from the daily strips to kiddie comic books to the underground. Daily newspaper strips have loosened up considerably; dropping dozens of fresh taboos (such as jokes about snakes, death, and body odor), to name three of the most important). Sure, the most popular strips are simpler

angry letters saying, "Police cars are black, red, and green. Do not color them pink again." I didn't last too long.

**How do you divide up your duties?**

**Spiegelman:** I usually go shopping. She does the cleaning.

**Mouly:** I do all the production work. We do all the editorial work together, deciding what is going to go in. Art is, more than me, always on the lookout for material, scouring around in European magazines and everywhere, looking for people doing interesting work.

**Spiegelman:** Dealing with the artists usually falls on my shoulders, too.

**Mouly:** I don't have the patience.

**What kind of directions do you give to artists?**

**Spiegelman:** The European stuff is usually taken cold. In the translation we can usually make strips better. Don't print that—well, it's OK, I guess—if you print that it will still be in English, so they won't know we're making their strips better in translation.

**Who does the translating?**

**Spiegelman:** If it's in French, Francoise does a literal translation, then I do a stylistic translation. If it's another language, then it gets complicated.

**Who does the lettering?**

**Spiegelman:** Different people. We do the lettering in the style of the original strip. We trace the lettering sometimes, to get the same line thickness and quality.

**Mouly:** We never commission anything.

**Spiegelman:** The work has to come out of some inner urgency, somebody obsessed with something.

**What's next for *Raw*?**

**Spiegelman:** This is the first issue we've put out where we haven't said we're quitting after the magazine comes out. We've said that consistently from the first issue to the fourth. Since we haven't quit yet, we don't think it's worth bothering to say now. It's just such hell doing

somebody just a cheap thrill. I think it's fair to say that most of the comics that appear in *Raw* were borne out of that same set of impulses.

And because of the costs of format and production, another set of criteria come into play. The paper is so expensive that the strips have to be compact—you have to get a lot of mileage out of each sheet of paper. And another thing is the size of *Raw* (11½" x 14")—it became necessary that the comics have a certain resiliency, so they can stand up to that size.

**What do you think of superhero comics?**

**Mouly:** To a certain extent, I'm glad that Marvel comics and *Heavy Metal* exist because they take care of a whole range of appetites.



Art Spiegelman and Francoise Mouly

photograph by Jim Drougas