

# AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 1980–2000



Comics, in either book or strip form, occupy a complicated place in American culture. Are they a commercial form of media? Are they art? Are they literature? Are they an inferior blend of both, or something greater than the sum of their parts? For a long time, if the fine arts world regarded comics at all, it saw them as fodder for reappropriation by “serious” artists.

Today a growing canon of comics has gained acceptance by critics, academics, and general readers. Works such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1992) or Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (2006) are taught as literature, often alongside more traditional prose texts. In the classroom, comics are often referred to as “graphic novels,” a term that emphasizes their narrativity and downplays their pop culture lineage.

The 1980s and 1990s saw cartoonists approach comics as an art form with great potential, while they also dealt with comics’ reputation as lowbrow. In its first two sections, this exhibition focuses on artists associated with the influential comics anthologies, *Raw*, edited by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly, and *Weirdo*, edited by Robert Crumb, Peter Bagge, and Aline Kominsky-Crumb. *Raw* promoted comics as ambitious, experimental art worthy of galleries and bookstores. *Weirdo* celebrated comics as an outsider form through self-disclosive and often self-critical narratives. Together, the two anthologies published early work by many artists who would go on to define art comics in the 1990s and 2000s. The exhibition’s final section presents work published by independent presses and alternative newspapers. As comics reinvented themselves, these artists sought new venues and new audiences.

Organized by the McMullen Museum, the exhibition is curated by John McCoy and Andrei Molotiu. Major support is provided by the Patrons of the McMullen Museum and Leslie and Peter Ciampi.

# AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 1980–2000



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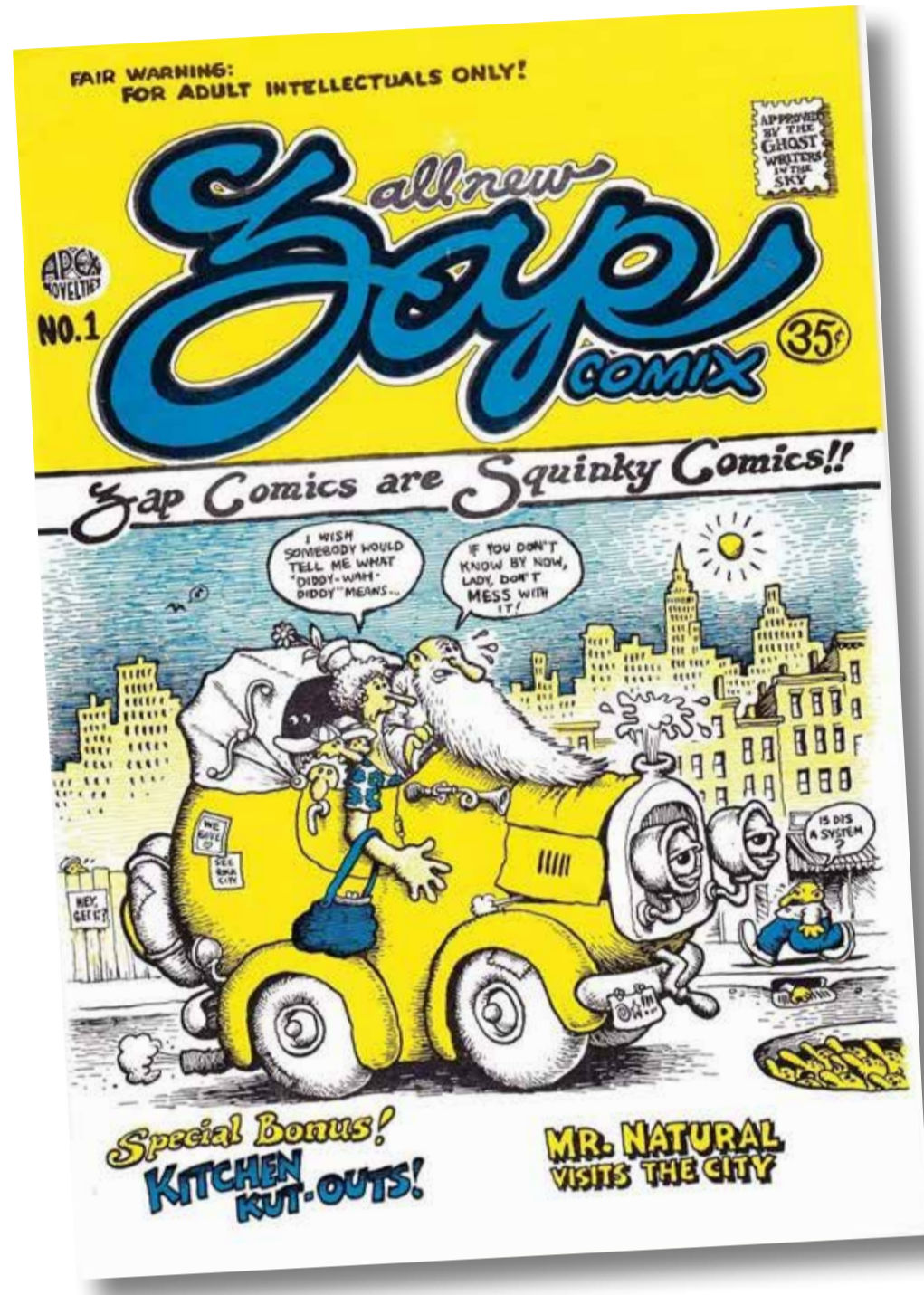
## **Interviews**

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## **Morrissey College Graduate School Interns**

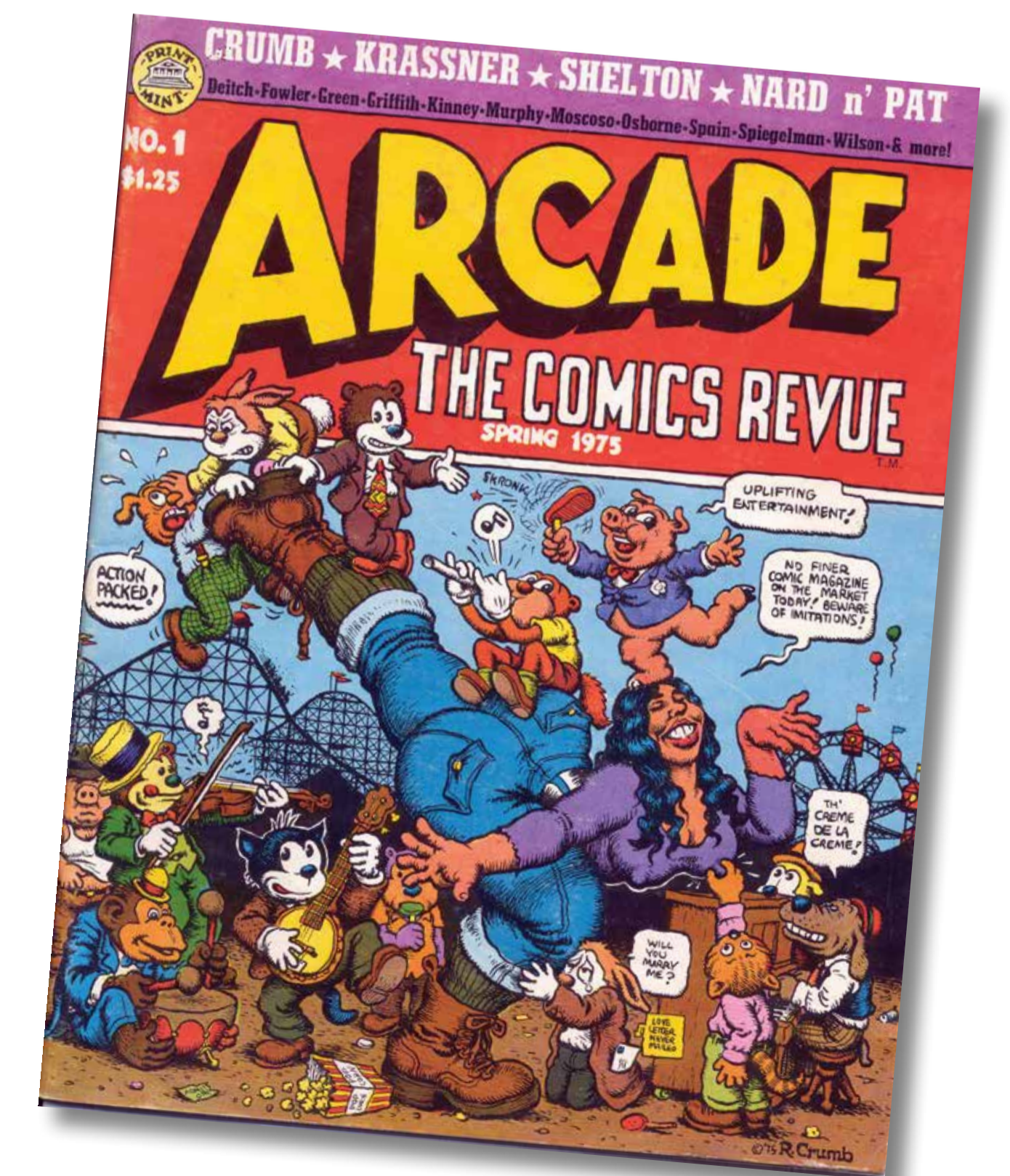
Alexander D'Alisera  
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# The decline of the undergrounds



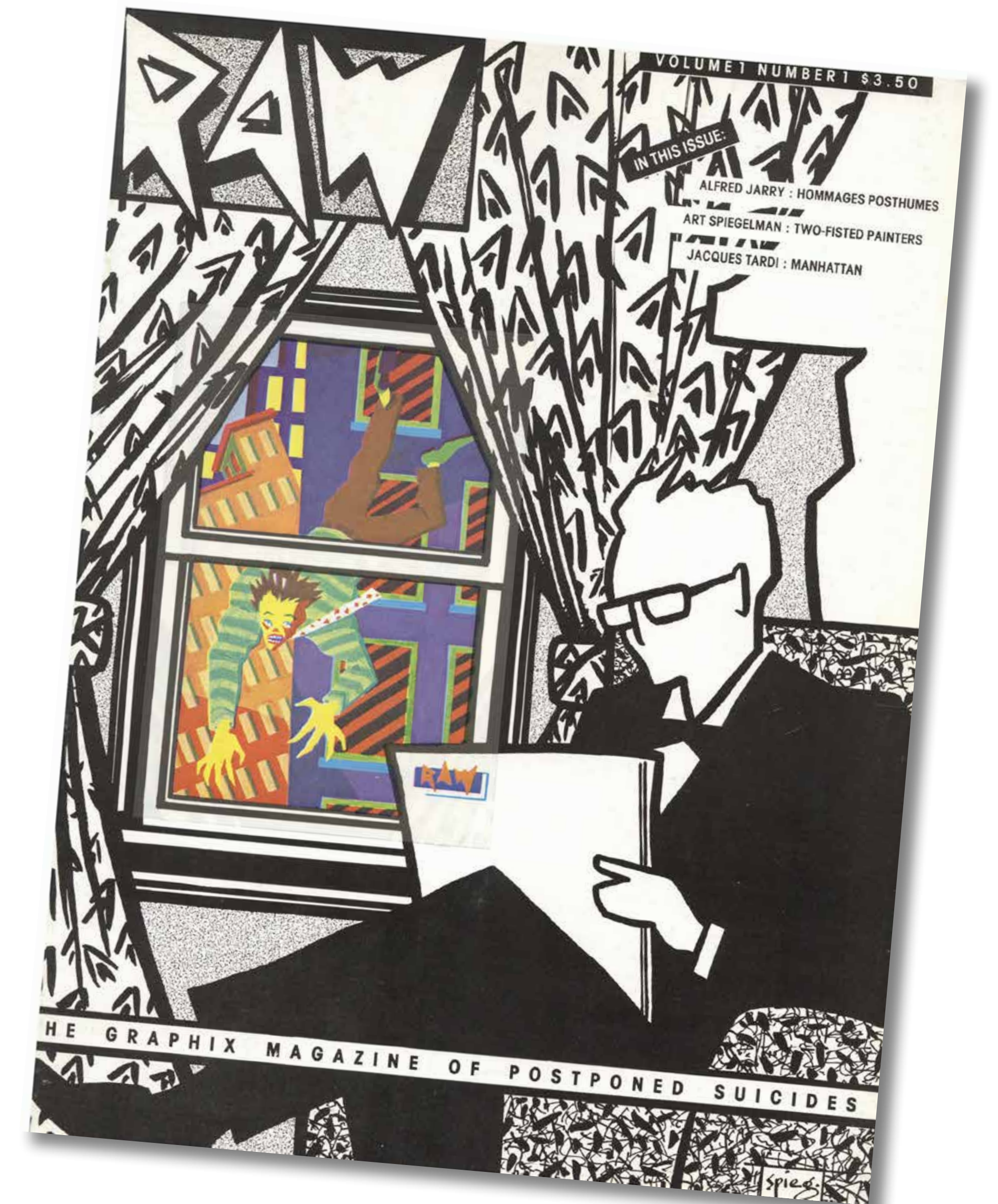
Underground comics (or “comix”) is a nebulous term applied to a style of comic art that emerged in the 1960s, published by small presses, alternative newspapers, or artists themselves. Associated with the counterculture of the sixties and seventies, these comic books, such as *Zap Comix*, were broadly satirical and provocative. The artists worked on characters and situations of their own creation, and retained copyright to their production. They also rejected the Comics Code of 1954, a set of standards that mainstream comic book publishers self-enforced.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the undergrounds had fallen on hard times. As their market shrank and the counterculture faded, fewer new titles were produced. One of the last, *Arcade: The Comics Revue*, co-edited by Art Spiegelman and Bill Griffith, attempted to reach a new audience with more ambitious content. While *Arcade* failed, it laid the groundwork for both *Raw* and *Weirdo*.



# *Raw* (1980–91)

The comics anthology *Raw* attempted to present comics in an upscale format to an high-end market. **Art Spiegelman** and **Françoise Mouly** deconstructed the dichotomy between low and high culture in *Raw* using postmodern techniques, juxtaposing modernist and punk visual styles with subjects and themes from popular culture.



In its oversized, flashy format *Raw* was designed to appeal to a sophisticated urban audience well-versed in popular culture. On one hand, issues of *Raw* featured such low-culture references as bubblegum cards, superhero parodies, and flexible vinyl records. On the other hand, in its style *Raw* was avant-garde with an emphasis more on formal elements like page composition and non-traditional media than on traditional narrative.

Most contributors to *Raw* were trained academically; especially prominent were artists from the New York School of Visual Arts (where Spiegelman taught), although many well-established European cartoonists were also included. *Raw* cartoonists included in this first section are **Mark Beyer**, **Charles Burns**, **Sue Coe**, **Ben Katchor**, **Kaz**, **Françoise Mouly**, **Mark Newgarden**, **Gary Panter**, **Richard Sala**, **R. Sikoryak**, **Art Spiegelman** and **Chris Ware**.



## Françoise Mouly (1955–)

As an editor, designer, art director, and publisher, Parisian-born Françoise Mouly has had a profound influence on the course of alternative comics. It was at her behest that her husband Art Spiegelman joined her in editing and self-publishing the comics anthology *Raw*. Responsible for much of the design of the magazine, she also solicited submissions from European cartoonists, publishing many for the first time in the US. In 1993, Mouly became art director for the *New Yorker* magazine, where she commissions covers and interior art by many notable alternative cartoonists. In 2008 she founded the publishing house Toon Books, producing comics for beginning readers.

**Françoise Mouly** (1955–)

“Industry News and Review No. 6,” *Raw* 1, no. 1, 1980  
Ink, collage, and border tape on Bristol board,  
Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

In 1977 Mouly purchased a used Multilith offset press. From her loft apartment she produced a series of maps, pamphlets, and comics under the imprint of Raw Books & Graphics, which eventually led to the publication of *Raw* in 1980.

This collage comic, repurposing trade publication graphics, explores Mouly’s struggles with finding meaning in life and work. Like comics, commercial printing is typically not seen as an art form, in spite of the technical and aesthetic expertise required. Mouly also calls out the gender norms that devalue women both as artists and craftspersons and proclaims her intentions to be productive in spite of obstacles.



Mouly at work on her Multilith press, Art Spiegelman at left



## Art Spiegelman (1948–)

An underground cartoonist since the late 1960s, Art Spiegelman grew frustrated with the genre's subject limitations. In the late 1970s he and fellow cartoonist Bill Griffith edited *Arcade*, an attempt at producing adult comics that would be distributed like a magazine. When it failed, Spiegelman swore to never edit again. His wife, Françoise Mouly, convinced him otherwise, and together they published *Raw*, an anthology dedicated to comics as art. Spiegelman's own comics tended toward the formalist and experimental—meta stories that deconstructed the comic's form. It is ironic, then, that his best-known work is the long-form comics memoir *Maus*, the story of his parents' imprisonment in Auschwitz and Spiegelman's own complicated relationship with his father many years later.

**Art Spiegelman** (1948–)

*Mom and Me in the Park (Maus Revenge)*, 1979  
Lithograph, Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

Spiegelman depicts himself and his mother as mice; in the background a cat hangs from a tree. The print is in the style that he would use in his best-known comic, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, the first chapter of which would be published in *Raw* in 1980.

Françoise Mouly procured a commercial offset lithography press in 1977, which she kept in their apartment. Spiegelman experimented with the press's potential for making traditional fine art lithographs by drawing directly onto the plate with a litho pencil.



**Art Spiegelman** (1948–)

*Comics as a Medium for Self Expression?*

Cover, *Print* magazine, May/June 1981

Watercolor, ink, and collage on paper,

Collection of Art Spiegelman

At the center of this collage-like painting is a cleanly rendered scene of a woman talking to a man. Its visual style and clichéd dialogue resemble a painting by the contemporary artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923–97) who reproduced uncredited panels from comic books. Here Spiegelman mimics the effect of pop art, transmuting “low” art into “high” art, but complicates the distinction through levels of artifice. The central panel sits askew over a scratchy picture in muddy colors, depicting a diminutive woman resting on the arm of a man wearing an artist’s beret and holding a cartoonist’s crow quill pen; the scene takes place in an iconic loft atelier where the traditional markers of high art are presented in a threadbare way.

In the central panel the woman holds a copy of *Raw* and scolds, “Comics as a medium for self expression? Oh John, you’re such a fool!” Thus, with humor and irony, Spiegelman both asserts the potential of his chosen art form and deflates the pretense of drawing strong distinctions between fine art and popular culture.

**Art Spiegelman** (1948–)

*Beau and Eros*, 1998

(Originally cover, *New Yorker*, August 25 and September 1, 1997)

Lithograph on paper, The Ohio State University

Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

In 1992 the *New Yorker's* new editor in chief Tina Brown, eager to make the magazine more trendy and irreverent, hired Spiegelman as a contributing artist. Spiegelman produced many cheeky and controversial covers like this one showing lovers kissing against a city backdrop, pierced suggestively by Cupid's arrow. Spiegelman made the original drawing into a limited edition lithograph the following year.

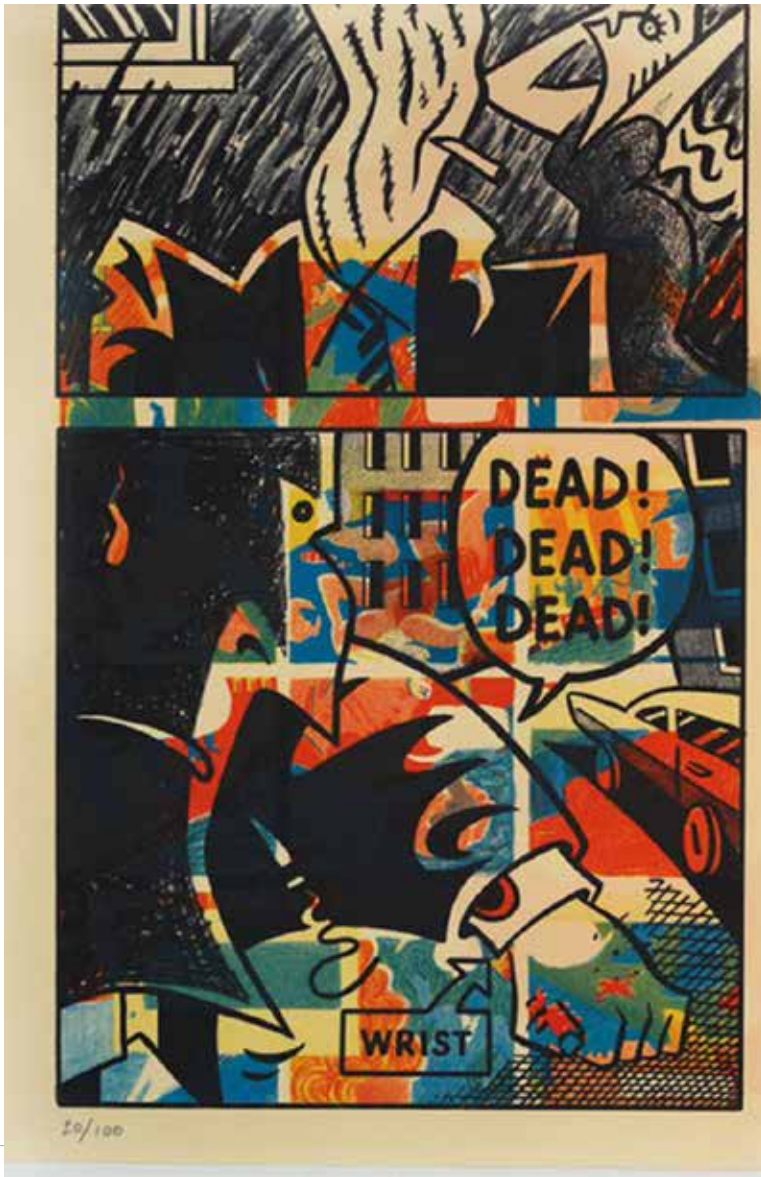
**Art Spiegelman** (1948–)

*Lead Pipe Sunday*, verso, 1990

Print on paper, The Ohio State University Billy  
Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

This complex image is a meditation on the birth of comics. It features characters from some of the earliest newspaper strips of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They crowd around two dead figures; the caption declares these are “art” and “commerce” and they have been killed by their “bastard children.” In this image Spiegelman acknowledges that comics have origins both aesthetic and commercial; however, they have transcended these to become something different. The title is a nod to the first color newspaper supplements introduced by William Randolph Hearst in the *Evening Journal*, which announced themselves as “eight pages of iridescent polychromous effervescence, that makes the rainbow look like lead pipe.”

This is the interior spread of a limited edition art print sized and folded to resemble a Sunday newspaper comics insert. Adopting the format of a throwaway publication, Spiegelman combines aspects of high and low art. Since the piece is printed on both sides, its exterior pages are not visible in this installation. They feature an abstract interpretation of Chester Gould’s newspaper strip, *Dick Tracy*.



Lead Pipe Sunday, recto

**Art Spiegelman** (1948–)

“Mouse Holes,” 1986

Print on paper, Jay Lynch Papers and Collection of Original Art,  
The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Spiegelman’s most famous work, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, tells the story of his father’s experiences as a Holocaust survivor and of Spiegelman’s relationship with him, using the anthropomorphic metaphors of mice and cats. This print, independent from the story, depicts a group of Jewish refugees (as mice) hiding from authorities.

Spiegelman, preferring for viewers to experience *Maus* in its published form, rarely displays his production sketches and drawings for the book. He has, however, produced *Maus*-related limited edition prints like this. This silkscreen was made in 1986, the year Pantheon published the collected first half of *Maus*; before that publication, the ongoing comic was only known to readers of *Raw*.



## Mark Beyer (1950–)

A self-taught artist from Pennsylvania, Beyer's first comics were published by Art Spiegelman in *Arcade*, though he is primarily known for his work featured in *Raw*. In 1987 Raw Books published his book, *Agony*. His alternative strip, *Amy and Jordan*, ran in the *New York Press* until 1996; Beyer's surreal, blackly humorous stories focus on anxieties of modern urban life. Since leaving comics, Beyer has focused on painting and other fine art works.

**Mark Beyer** (1950–)

Untitled, 1980s

Acrylic on fiberglass, Collection of Glenn Bray

In addition to cartooning, Beyer has had a long career producing paintings, prints, and even dolls for the fine art market. He painted this work in reverse on the back of a sheet of fiberglass, allowing for bright, saturated colors. In its unorthodox, flat perspective, it is not unlike Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. Human, animal, and anthropomorphic figures inhabit the painting. Some appear to swim through the blue; semi-transparent, ghostlike figures shuffle in front. Without the explicit narrative of his comic work, the painting also suggests a threatening anxious world.

In the 1980s, artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Kenny Scharf, and Julia Wachtel incorporated imagery drawn from comics in their work. Unlike the pop artists of the 1960s, these artists were not depicting comics ironically, but instead using them for their totemic potential. Beyer can be grouped into this era of neo-expressionists as either a cartoonist who makes paintings or a painter who makes cartoons.

**Mark Beyer** (1950–)

*Amy Tilsdale in They Hate Us*, 1979

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

Beyer is best known for his characters Amy and Jordan, who share an apartment in a strange city. Partners or just roommates, they inhabit a world filled with urban anxieties that range from the horrific to the banal.

This drawing marks an early appearance of the couple. Sometimes, as here, Beyer draws one of them larger than the other. Even if his figures and cityscapes are simple and idiosyncratic, his design sensibilities are sophisticated: he employs pattern and rhythm to great effect.



**Mark Beyer** (1950–)

*We're Depressed*, 1984

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

This is a page from a larger serialized story involving Amy and Jordan. The couple believed themselves to be dead, but a mysterious stranger explains they were deceived as part of an elaborate experiment. Beyer's plots often turn on sudden contrivances and preposterous coincidences. While these devices can be humorous, they also contribute to the feeling that his characters are adrift in an arbitrary and meaningless world.

**Mark Beyer** (1950–)

*Amy and Jordan*, 1992

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

In this example from the syndicated comic *Amy and Jordan*, Amy renounces materialism, much to Jordan's dismay. This strip demonstrates Beyer's decorative, rhythmic approach to page construction. Even, slanted panels suggest perspective, as if the reader were viewing a series of planes next to each other. In the margins, abstracted reclining figures observe the action, in a manner akin to illustrations in the margins of medieval manuscripts.

**Sue Coe** (1951–)

*Kaposi's Sarcoma*, 1994

Etching on paper, David A. Berona Collection of Wordless Books,  
The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Kaposi's sarcoma is a cancer of the skin that occurs as a common symptom for those with AIDS. In this image, Coe presents an emaciated AIDS patient having his lesions examined by a doctor, who touches him with bare hands. In the 1980s and 1990s, some doctors declined to treat AIDS patients due to worries of transmission. Coe's doctor literally "lays on hands." The dramatic shaft of light from the single window suggests this is a sacred image.

**Mark Beyer** (1950–)

*Amy and Jordan*, 1989

Pen and ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Beyer began his alternative newspaper strip *Amy and Jordan* in 1988. In a rare interview, he reflects on the change in format:

When I started doing my Amy and Jordan weekly strip I finally had the space and time to give the characters and the stories a much greater sense of complexity and depth. I tried to make their relationship more complex, subtle, and idiosyncratic, but in a surreal, dreamlike way. I also tried to make their relationship more ambiguous, and more mysterious.

Beyer's strips can be interpreted in many, often conflicting ways. His self-taught style can seem naïve or even childlike, but it also displays a sophisticated sense of rhythm and design. His characters are pathetic and sympathetic, but they are also petty and selfish. Are the horrible events that Beyer depicts supposed to be tragic or funny? This sequence has Amy and Jordan so impoverished that their only food is a single seed. While this might be the stuff of tragedy, Beyer's deadpan, stilted dialogue undercuts the misery.



## Sue Coe (1951–)

English political artist/satirist Sue Coe blurs distinctions between comics and other forms of fine art. Her bleak expressionist approach recalls both the British painter Francis Bacon (1909–92) and cartoonist Gerald Scarfe (1936–). While Coe's work was prominently featured in *Raw* and Raw Books published two solo books by her, she omits word balloons and panel arrangements. Although sequential, her work does not fit the traditional conception of comics. Her subjects reflect her politics, which in the 1980s and '90s were considered radical, including the injustice of apartheid, the humanity of AIDS victims, and the suffering of animals in food production.

**Sue Coe** (1951–)

*The Sticking*, 1989

Etching on paper, David A. Berona Collection of Wordless Books,  
The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

A passionate advocate for animal rights, Coe depicts here the violence of livestock slaughter as both disastrous for the cow and dehumanizing for the man performing the act. Coe visited slaughterhouses to inform her illustrated article in *Raw* titled “Porkopolis: Meat for Beginners,” on the realities of meat production. She later enlarged this project into a series of prints to which this piece belongs.

Coe claims as her influences expressionist artists Käthe Kollwitz and Chaïm Soutine, as well as Francisco Goya, whose graphic work was also unflinching in depicting horrific subjects.



Francisco Goya (1746–1828)

*Desgracias acaecidas en el tendido de la plaza de Madrid, y muerte del alcalde de Torrejón, 1815–16*

**Sue Coe** (1951–)

*The New World Order*, 1991

Copper print on paper, The Ohio State University  
Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Here Coe refers to President George H. W. Bush's use of "New World Order" to justify the Gulf War of 1991, which he claimed was necessary to accomplish lasting world peace.

Taking a dim view of Bush's words, Coe's "new world" depicts America's power as malign, overwhelming, and unstoppable. Overhead, the sky is almost entirely obscured by military aircraft. Below are countless tightly packed figures wearing gas masks. Only the central figure, a grieving woman wearing a hijab, is shown as humane. The costs of war appear to have been forgotten in the shadow of idealism.



## Ben Katchor (1951–)

Ben Katchor was one of the earliest contributors to *Raw*. His long-running alternative strip, *Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer*, has run in the *Forward* newspaper and elsewhere. With dry humor his work explores urban history, with a special emphasis on architecture and early twentieth-century Jewish life in New York. Initially working in delicate pen and wash, Katchor now works mostly digitally. He experimented with audio and video and collaborated with composer Mark Mulcahy on a series of performance pieces. Katchor is the recipient of both MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellowships.



**Ben Katchor** (1951–)

*Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer:*

*The Double Talk Artist*, 1994

Digital print, Collection of Ben Katchor

In this comic, a celebrity-owned restaurant struggles to keep its clientele in face of the owner's pending death. In comedy, "double-talk," dating back to vaudeville, refers to a routine in which the performer inserts nonsense words, or words used incorrectly, into a fast patter of speech. The fictional Noel Kapish of this comic is a performer from a bygone era.

Katchor's comics often are about fading culture, particularly that of Jewish New York. He is interested in the way the city still holds echoes of previous years. The conceit of a restaurant dedicated to an obscure practitioner of a mostly forgotten form is at once charming, absurd, and poignant. Katchor's dense brushwork, slanted compositions, and crowded word balloons require a reader to take the time to understand his comics.

In 1995, many of Katchor's *Julius Knipl* strips were adapted for radio by Sound Portraits Productions and aired on NPR's *Weekend Edition*. To hear the adaptation of this comic, please use this QR code. Audio © Hearing Voices, used with permission.



**Ben Katchor** (1951–)

“A Check-Room Romance,” *Metropolis*, 1998  
Digital print, Collection of Ben Katchor

In the late 1990s Katchor began a series of comics for the magazine *Metropolis*, each a self-contained story with an architectural theme. In this comic, character Marcus Yule becomes aesthetically enamored of check-rooms, which he sees as places of “communal mingling involving no physical contact.” Katchor’s own interest in the overlooked elements of buildings is reflected in Yule’s obsession.

The new venue for cartooning offered Katchor the opportunity for adding color by painting a photocopy of the underdrawing. The print displayed is the composite of these preparatory works. Katchor trained as a painter and here uses a limited palette of recurring colors, the blues and yellows particularly capturing the feeling of indoor lighting.

**Ben Katchor** (1951–)

*Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer:*

*The Radiator Musician*, 1995

Digital print, Collection of Ben Katchor

Freestanding cast-iron steam radiators are ubiquitous in New York apartment buildings. Katchor imagines a world in which their knocks and hisses are transformed into concert performance. Katchor's style jumps among characters and points-of-view.

In 1995, many of Katchor's *Julius Knipl* strips were adapted for radio by Sound Portraits Productions and aired on NPR's *Weekend Edition*. To hear the adaptation of this comic, please use this QR code. Audio © Hearing Voices, used with permission.



**Ben Katchor** (1951–)

*Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer:*

*The Remains of Dinner*, 1994

Digital print, Collection of Ben Katchor

A party of diners survey their table's leftovers. Here Katchor treats the mundane and the cast away table scraps as "revelations of the evening." Katchor's dry wit leaves it to the viewer to judge the profundity of the moment. The final two panels seem to indicate that enlightenment is tied to issues of class.

While Katchor originally made his *Julius Knipl* comics using pen and ink wash, he prefers to display these works as digital prints.

In 1995, many of Katchor's *Julius Knipl* strips were adapted for radio by Sound Portraits Productions and aired on NPR's *Weekend Edition*. To hear the adaptation of this comic, please use this QR code. Audio © Hearing Voices, used with permission.



**Ben Katchor** (1951–)

“A Date in Architectural History,” *Metropolis*, 1999  
Digital print, Collection of Ben Katchor

Raphael and Juliana, like Katchor, are fixated on architecture. Here they discuss the aesthetics of their planned meeting place. Juliana dislikes International Style; Raphael asks her to appreciate the building historically. Raphael, like Katchor, values locating himself in the story of his surroundings. The striking view of Raphael’s office building spans several panels, allowing the reader to consider the structure in its entirety.



## Kaz (1959–)

Kazimieras Gediminas Prapuolenis, who adopted the name “Kaz,” was a student at the School for Visual Arts in New York when he was invited by his teacher Art Spiegelman to submit to the first issue of *Raw*. Since then, Kaz has contributed to other anthologies, including *Weirdo*, and created his own alternative newspaper strip, *Underworld*. Kaz’s wacky style draws from the urban decay of New Jersey in his youth, the rough DIY aesthetic of New York’s punk scene, and newspaper strips of the 1920s and ’30s. He has worked as a storyboard artist for many popular children’s cartoons, including *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Phineas and Ferb*.

**Kaz** (1959–)

“Pussyfooting,” *Raw* 1, no. 2, 1980

India ink, white ink, and acrylic paint on illustration board, four pages, Private collection

This comic, depicting a frantic chase through a series of surreal backgrounds, is one of the earliest Kaz published. Of his work for *Raw*, Kaz says, “I was trying to do art comics. I was into Krazy Kat and all this avant-garde stuff. So I was gonna be the guy who would experiment with page design and layout. Trying to incorporate the narrative into strange page designs.” Instead of following the characters left-to-right through subsequent panels, the action is often continuous along winding paths that indicate motion through both space and time. No motivation is given for the events depicted, and the character styling is simple and cartoony, recalling the work of artists Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf, who were also students at SVA at the time.

**Kaz** (1959–)

*Underworld: Creep Rat, Bloody Battle*, 2010  
India ink and acrylic paint on paper, Private collection

Kaz's *Underworld* strips juxtapose urban squalor and disreputable characters with the form of a traditional gag strip like *Bazooka Joe* or *Nancy*. This playful deconstruction of the comic strip form shares similarities with Mark Newgarden whose work is displayed nearby; Kaz's deconstruction is less abstract and more intentionally zany.

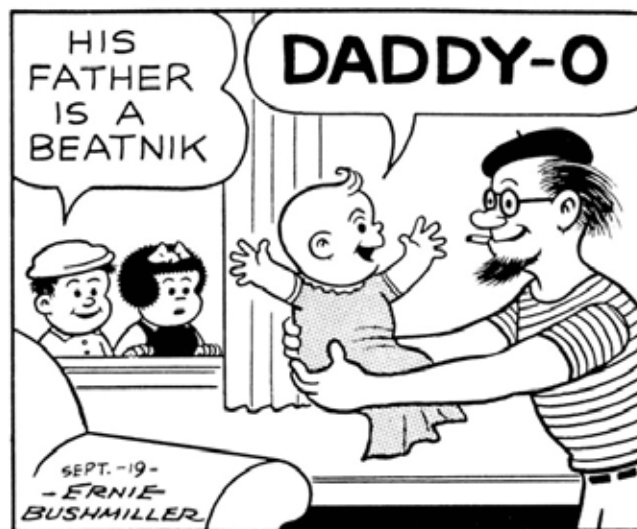


**Kaz** (1959–)

*Underworld: Creep Rat, Shoulda  
Woulda Buddha*, 2010

India ink and acrylic paint on paper, Private collection

Creep Rat's sunglasses, striped shirt, and cigarette are stereotypical attributes of a beatnik. This depiction was particularly common in Ernie Bushmiller's newspaper strip, *Nancy*. Bushmiller's pared-down, ideographic style, in which every element exists in service of the punchline, influenced many alternative cartoonists of the 1980s and '90s. Creep Rat's ears even resemble Nancy's prickly hair.



Panel from *Nancy* by Ernie Bushmiller



## Mark Newgarden (1959–)

Mark Newgarden was another of Spiegelman's students at New York's School of Visual Arts. Spiegelman not only published Newgarden's first comics in *Raw*, but also helped him secure a job at Topps Company, where the two worked together on the long-running *Wacky Packages* stickers, as well as the popular *Garbage Pail Kids*. Newgarden's dry and often inscrutable humor combines with his cleanly rendered, simple graphics to produce an unsettling effect. More recently, he and his wife, Megan Montague Cash, have produced a series of children's picture books.

**Mark Newgarden** (1959–)

“Imagine,” *New York Press*, June 9, 1989  
Tear sheet, Collection of Mark Newgarden

In works such as this, Newgarden created the genre of conceptual comics, of which he remains essentially the sole practitioner. His conceptual comics are the sequential-art equivalent of text-based conceptual art exemplified by artists like On Kawara and Jenny Holzer.

“Imagine” achieves a juxtaposition (between Samuel Beckett’s writing and Hank Ketcham’s *Dennis the Menace* comic strip) similar to Newgarden’s juxtaposition of Nancy and Bazooka Joe in “Love’s Savage Fury,” shown nearby. The difference here is that the juxtaposition takes place in the reader’s mind.

Newgarden’s strip can be seen to have provided a blueprint for such popular mash-up webcomics as *The Nietzsche Family Circus* or *The Family Sarnath* (which juxtaposed *Family Circus* images with quotes from Friedrich Nietzsche and H. P. Lovecraft, respectively).

**Mark Newgarden** (1959–)

“May,” *i-D*, 1993

Digital print, Collection of Mark Newgarden

“May,” organized as a page from a desktop calendar, is hardly recognizable as a comic. Using the grid of days as panels, Newgarden depicts a sequence of increasingly dangerous events befalling an iconic figure. The style recalls familiar safety and traffic signage, as well as Otl Aicher’s 1972 Olympic pictograms. This comic was produced for the British fashion magazine *i-D*, known for its innovative design in the 1980s and 1990s.

**Mark Newgarden** (1959–)

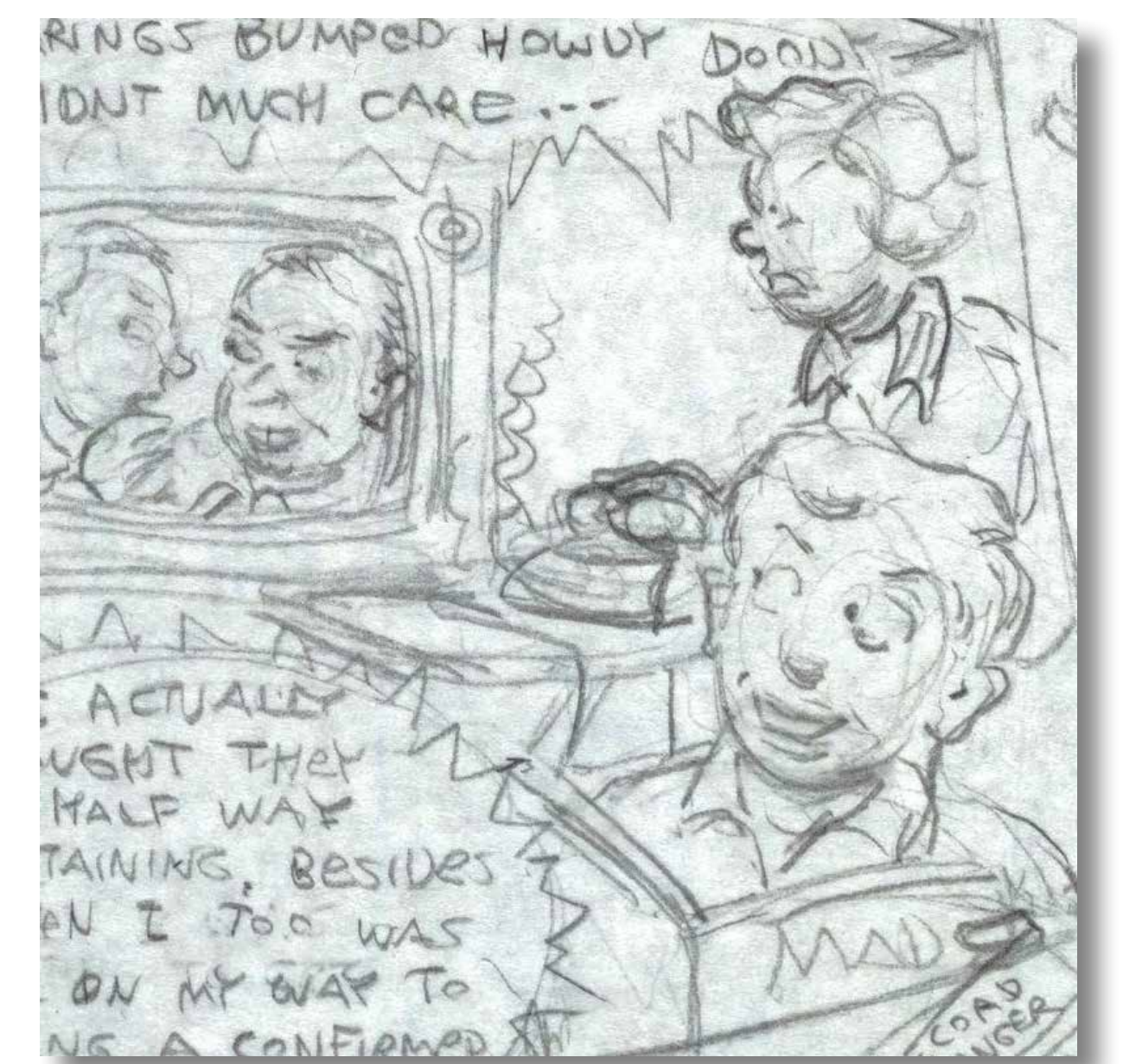
“Love’s Savage Fury,” *RAW* 1, no. 8, 1986  
Press sheet, 4 pages, Collection of Mark Newgarden

Here Mark Newgarden combines through collage three different elements: Ernie Bushmiller’s comic-strip character, Nancy; a *Bazooka Joe* strip; and typeset text appropriated from a missed-connection ad from the back page of the *Village Voice*. It remixes these ingredients to create an intertextual story of romantic attraction and loss on the subway. For much of the four-pager’s length, Nancy’s features are gradually transformed and jumbled, yielding by the end of the third page panels with Jackson Pollock-like textures that revert to a simple, Kazimir Malevich-like black square by the end of the fourth.

# What is comic art?

As an art form, comics are distributed as mechanically (or these days, perhaps digitally) reproduced works. Many cartoonists regard the final mass-produced product as the artwork itself, and see any by-hand drawings as preliminary. In addition to the question of what constitutes a unique work is that of what a discrete piece is. A single page is often only part of a longer story. An individual book or strip may also be part of an ongoing series, with its narrative developing over many years.

This exhibition displays primarily “original art” made by the artist’s hand. In most cases they drew in ink on Bristol board, with the intention of having the drawing photo-mechanically transferred to an offset press for reproduction. This reproduction process requires that the comics be designed as “line art” in black and white with clean edges. In the pre-digital 1980s and ’90s, cartoonists often made initial designs in a shade of blue pencil that does not reproduce when photographed. In addition to ink applied with pen and brush, artists used border tape, sheets of mechanical tone, photocopy, and collage; they might hand-letter their dialogue or tip in typeset text; they might correct using opaque white or paste over edits entirely. All of these artifacts of the creation process, along with marginal notes by the editor or printer, repay study. Original art is highly valued by collectors for both its relationship to the printed comic and its unique aesthetics.



This exhibition displays examples of “production art” used in various ways to prepare for printing and binding the finished comic. These include color separations to prepare the cyan, magenta, yellow, and black plates that together print in process color, as well as other planning documents and dummies.

# Mainstream comics in the 1980s

While this exhibition focuses on small press, creator-owned work, the 1980s and '90s saw significant changes in both the art and marketing of mainstream comic books. Developments in the commercial mainstream had profound effects on independent artists and vice-versa.

The collection and sale of vintage comics, which had its beginnings in the 1960s and '70s, brought about the direct market of comic book shops and conventions for fans. Driven in part by the nostalgia of aging readers and by speculators drawn to comics as investments, the direct market was economically crucial for small press publications, connecting them to distributors and readers.

In the 1980s and '90s many traditional venues for comic book sales carried fewer titles or none at all. Many commercial comic book companies went out of business, concentrating the industry into the major players of DC and Marvel. These companies saw a renaissance of their own, as ambitious authors and artists like Frank Miller, Alan Moore, and Neil Gaiman wrote complicated stories that pushed the boundaries of the genre. Nineteen eighty-six saw the publication of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen*, two series that deconstructed the idea of superheroes (while commercially revitalizing the form).



In 1992 several of Marvel's most popular artists, tired of not owning the properties they wrote and drew, founded a new publishing house, Image, which had major commercial success. Many artists, both those creating commercial comics and alternative comics, crossed over from one publisher to another as opportunities arose.



## Gary Panter (1950–)

In the early 1970s Gary Panter studied fine art under Lee Baxter Davis at East Texas State University. After graduation he became involved in the Los Angeles punk scene, drawing album covers and illustrations for *Slash Magazine*. In 1980 he published the *Rozz-Tox Manifesto*, eschewing avant-gardism for its own sake and advocating that artists produce commercially viable work. His comics for *Raw* focus on Jimbo, a kilt-wearing punk everyman who has adventures in a post-apocalyptic world. In the late 1980s he was hired as an art director and production designer for *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, for which he won three Emmys.



**Gary Panter** (1950–)

From “Jimbo Is Stepping Off the Edge  
of a Cliff,” *Raw* 1, no. 8, 1986, 26–27  
Ink on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

Here Panter depicts the aftermath of a nuclear explosion in the city of Dal-Tokyo. Jimbo, “running barefoot on fire with his clothes melted off,” encounters a horse seemingly flayed by the explosion, and ends up killing it in an act of mercy. The horse first appears, galloping through the post-apocalyptic rubble, in this double-page spread. Through his expressionistic brush- and pen-work, Panter makes the horse’s desperation palpable.

Panter’s indictment of nuclear war parallels Francisco Goya’s reaction to the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in his 1810 *Disasters of War* etchings. The desperation of Panter’s horse recalls that of Goya’s etching, in which a horse struggles against murderous canines.



Francisco Goya (1746–1828)

“Se defiende bien” [He defends himself well],  
*Desastres de la guerra*, 1810, plate 78

**Gary Panter** (1950–)

From “Jimbo Is Stepping Off the Edge  
of a Cliff,” *Raw* 1, no. 8, 1986, 28–29  
Ink on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

These pages, directly continuing from the previous double-page spread, show Jimbo’s first encounter with the burning horse. Freed from the post-cataclysmic rubble, the desperate animal plunges down a precipice, followed by Jimbo, “awed, blistered and curious.” Panter achieves here some of the most painterly effects in his comic art, through the combination of undiluted ink, brushed-on ink wash, and opaque gouache white.

**Gary Panter** (1950–)

*Dal Tokyo* 45 and 46, 1984

Ink on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

In sixty-three installments, from 1983 to 1984, Panter's *Dal Tokyo* strip tells an ambitious, interbraided tale of many inhabitants of the Martian city of Dal-Tokyo "a well-established planet-wide sprawl of a city that was founded by Japanese and Texans." While some of Dal-Tokyo's inhabitants appear to be human, other are ant-men, reptilians, or Smog Monsters. These two strips show the story's art beginning to collapse into abstraction as if to illustrate the uncontainable complexity of the plot.

Nabsig Sybig, a teenage Smog Monster, is sent out by his sister to buy a magazine from the newsstand. The remaining surfaces of both single-panel strips depict the bad neighborhood Nabsig has to cross on his journey, with its cacophony of street vehicles, neon signs, and shadowy and menacing figures, perhaps as seen through Nabsig's frightened imagination. Here Panter veers toward abstraction for expressionistic purposes, to indicate the character's state of mind.

**Gary Panter** (1950–)  
Untitled (abstract comic), 2000  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Panter's one-pager stood out strikingly among the other—representational and narrative—comics in *Legal Action Comics*, where it was originally published in 2001. Though sprinkled with cartoony figures, its overall effect is abstract, as also emphasized by its unreadable “title,” rendered in an asemic script.

As indicated by the lowermost layer of marks, drawn with a fine pen, Panter's original conception of the strip was closer to more “psychedelic” strips of the late sixties underground. Over this layer, Panter brushed on large areas of black ink, and then modulated those with opaque white gouache (essentially, Wite-Out) bringing the overall composition closer to abstract expressionism, and even to art brut. The comic establishes graphic echoes between panels, constructing a restless space within which is played out the unresolvable dialectic of cartooning and abstraction.

**Gary Panter** (1950–)

*Restaurant*, 1989

Acrylic on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

Panter is also a gallery artist. While most of his comic art is black and white, he explores color in his acrylic paintings. *Restaurant* shows Panter's signature combination of the "ratty-line" art style (typical of punk-inspired 1980s comics) with cubism and imagery from 1950s horror and science fiction B-movies. The faces of the two diners on the right are a perfect amalgam of these three elements.

**Gary Panter** (1950–)

Untitled, c. 1985

Ink on paper, Collection of Chris Oliveria

This drawing foregrounds Panter's interest in early twentieth-century modernism. While strong contrasts of black and white on the left derive primarily from German expressionist woodcuts, the guitar across the bottom echoes many such instruments in the cubist work of Pablo Picasso.

**Gary Panter** (1950–)

From *Jimbo* (Raw One-Shot 1), 1987

Ink and gouache on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

This double-page spread shows “the annual parade of the followers of Vex Prohias”—the only appearance of these characters in Panter’s *Jimbo* comics. The parade takes place while Jimbo, assisted by his friend Smoggo, attempts to disarm a thermonuclear device planted by a “ruthless gang of cutt-throat cock-roaches [*sic*]”—terrorists attempting to “receive access pertaining to financing & maintenance of the Radioactive Planetoid Burger Bar Corp.”

On the next page, Jimbo is shown failing to disarm the device, and a nuclear explosion will level Dal-Tokyo, leading to the storyline involving a horse seemingly flayed by the explosion, depicted in “Jimbo Is Stepping Off the Edge of a Cliff,” four pages from which are displayed nearby.

**Gary Panter** (1950–)

From “Jimbo’s House Is Gigantic, but  
Condemned,” *Jimbo: Adventures in Paradise*, 1988  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

Here Panter undertook an experiment that he later pursued more systematically in his 1990s *Jimbo* series published by Matt Groening’s Zongo Comics imprint. He began drawing the story in a simplified, seemingly naïve manner, using the “ratty line” associated at the time with punk comics as well as with other of Panter’s closest associates, like Groening and Lynda Barry. His style on this first page also shows distant echoes of “art brut” or, outsider art, with which his fellow *Raw* artist, Mark Beyer, was primarily associated. By the second page, the story already shows mastery of perspective and shading which is not in evidence here, and the art gets more and more complex as the narrative continues.





## Richard Sala (1959–2020)

Richard Sala studied literature at Arizona State University, intending to be a novelist, but eventually switched his major to art, continuing his studies at Mills College in Oakland, California. Sala was particularly inspired by pulp illustrators like Margaret Brundage (1900–76), whose mixture of weirdness and glamor runs through his own drawing. Beginning as an illustrator, he was convinced by an issue of *Raw* to turn to comics. Sala's works are filled with characters and incidents drawn from Universal monster movies, pulp fiction, and fairy tales. A major theme of Sala's work is mystery: the desire to uncover the truth, and the costs of doing so.

**Richard Sala** (1959–2020)

Cover, *Blab!* 6, 1991

Ink and watercolor on paper, Collection of Scott Eder

This image is the cover for an issue of *Blab!*, a comics humor anthology. Though a single image without dialogue, it suggests a narrative. Sala has populated the scene with types from thriller and horror films: a brutish thug; a besuited werewolf; a sophisticated, glamorous woman wearing a bell; and the mysterious death figure pouring her a drink.

Sala developed his early, highly detailed style for illustrating books and magazines. He combined work-for-hire with his personal cartooning throughout his career, working for projects as diverse as books by Lemony Snicket and videos by the underground rock band the Residents.

**Richard Sala** (1959–2020)

From “The Chuckling Whatsit,” *Zero Zero* 7, January/  
February 1996

Ink on paper, Scott Jonas Collection of Comics Art, The Ohio State  
University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Astrology columnist Irving Abacus becomes the latest victim of a mysterious serial killer known as the Ghoul. “The Chuckling Whatsit” was originally serialized in the anthology *Zero Zero*, running for seventeen issues. Sala’s stories most often feature complicated, meandering plots filled with myriad strange characters. While everything gets explained by the ending, Sala’s main interest is creating tension and mystery.

This page demonstrates Sala’s elegant design. The action may be brutal, but Sala’s penwork is delicate and precise. His love of the grotesque comes through in the Ghoul’s memorable design. The angular, titled backgrounds recall German expressionist cinema.

**Richard Sala** (1959–2020)

From “Peculia,” *Evil Eye* 3, 1999  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

The unflappable Peculia, who appears in many of Sala’s humorous short stories, faces down a trio of witches. Here Sala shows his taste for mannered theatricality. Each panel is composed as a miniature *mise-en-scène*, with the players carefully arranged. As Peculia reaches for the knife in the first panel, lines radiate above the action to draw the viewer’s attention.



## R. Sikoryak (1964–)

Sikoryak was brought on by Art Spiegelman as a co-editor for *Raw* in 1985 while still an undergraduate at the Parsons School of Design. He has a gift for mimicking styles, which he employs for humorous, ironic effect when reinterpreting canonical works of literature and art. For *Raw*, Sikoryak retold Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as a series of *Peanuts* strips, Dante's *Inferno* as a series of Bazooka Joe comics, and the paintings of Willem de Kooning as a series of *Garfields*. Sikoryak continues this approach in his fine art prints. Recent projects include a comics adaptation of quotes by Donald Trump and of the iTunes end-user agreement.

**R. Sikoryak** (1964–)

“Good Ol’ Gregor Brown,” *Raw* 2, no. 2, 1990  
Ink, pencil, and white paint with paste-ups  
on board, Collection of R. Sikoryak

R. Sikoryak, well-known for his parodic mash-ups of classic comics and literature, here retells the story of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* using the style and characters of Charles Schulz’s newspaper strip *Peanuts*. Sikoryak mimics Schulz’s style perfectly, from the artist’s variable line down to his distinctive lettering. While the combination is charming, “Good Ol’ Gregor Brown” is not simply an exercise in cleverness; the parts cast light upon each other. The reader is made to consider both the latent alienation of the *Peanuts* characters and the cartoonish humor of Kafka.

**R. Sikoryak** (1964–)

“Garish Feline I–VI,” *Raw* 2, no. 3, 1991

Ink, blue pencil, and white paint with paste-ups on photocopies and board, plus photostat, Collection of R. Sikoryak

Akin to his juxtapositions of classic literature and comics, here Sikoryak apposes newspaper strips and “high art.” He redraws Jim Davis’s *Garfield* in the style of abstract expressionist painter Willem de Kooning, in particular his nudes such as *Woman and Bicycle* (1952, right).

His text (pointedly countering art critic Clement Greenberg’s injunction against narrative and anecdotal content in painting) is a sarcastic take on what Sikoryak sees as the mediocrity and complacency of Davis’s strip.



**R. Sikoryak** (1964–)

*Little Dori in Pictureland*, 2008

Screen print, Collection of R. Sikoryak

Sikoryak's one-pager uncannily imitates the style of Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* Sunday comics (1905–14, 1924–27) to retell the story of Oscar Wilde's 1890 novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. McCay's Nemo, as "Little Dori," plays the role of Dorian Gray, while other characters from McCay's strip—the clown Flip and Doctor Pill—are cast, respectively, as Wilde's characters Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward.



**R. Sikoryak** (1964–)

*Jumbiliad*, 2017

Screen print, Collection of R. Sikoryak

In “Jumbiliad,” Sikoryak uses the format and style of the daily newspaper comics-page feature, *Jumble*, “That Scrambled Word Game,” to retell the story of Homer’s *Iliad*.

The puzzle solutions are:

ALL THE RAGE, GODSPEED, HECTORING, GATE-CRASHER,  
LAID BARE, PLAIN CRAZY, BREAKNECK, LIVING END



## Chris Ware (1967–)

Chris Ware first produced his precisely drawn, intricately composed comics for his student newspaper, the *Daily Texan*. His work caught the attention of Spiegelman and Mouly, who published revised versions of some of Ware's strips in *Raw*; eventually Ware produced the solo comic *The Acme Novelty Library* (1993–2010), a series with ever-changing formats. Ware's experimentation with panel arrangement and its depiction of time, and his ironic appropriation of comic book clichés make his work densely intellectual, but his stories of family dysfunction, alienation, and the passage of time are also heartfelt. Ware has contributed dozens of covers to the *New Yorker*; his work also appears in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, and *McSweeney's*.

**Chris Ware** (1967–)

“Rocket Sam,” *Acme Novelty Library* 7, 1996  
Ink on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

The shipwrecked space hero Rocket Sam creates a tiny robot that must remain tethered to its power source. Unfortunately, the automaton wants to leave the ship in order to pick flowers, with tragic results. Sam, the rocket, and the robot are drawn to look like characters from a 1930s science fiction serial. The device to which the robot is attached resembles a radio from the 1920s. Ware uses a mannered, performative style. Lacking dialogue, the panels are punctuated with interstitial words to indicate the passage of time. The narrative voice ranges from florid to banal.

Ware chose to use pantomime in this comic, but he is also well-known for his carefully constructed writing, a small sample of which can be seen in the highly ornamental circular title panel. At the bottom of the circle is a notice for a signing by cartoonists Dan Clowes, Garry Leib, and Doug Allen at Quimby’s Bookstore in Chicago.

## Chris Ware (1967–)

Cover, *Acme Novelty Library* 7, 1996  
Ink on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

This highly elaborate cover was for an oversized issue of *Acme Novelty Library*, subtitled “Book of Jokes.” The issue compiled new framing material with a variety of Ware’s past work from many sources, including strips he did for the Chicago alternative newspapers *Newcity* and *Chicago Reader* (including the “Rocket Sam” comic displayed nearby). Here Ware’s meticulous draftsmanship and love of antique hand-lettering have free rein. The page also showcases Ware’s whimsical, acerbic writing. One remarkable feature is the lack of any corrections; the page has neither correcting fluid nor paste-ups, only the blue pencil breakdown and the final ink.

While most comic book artists work hard to maintain a consistent design, Ware constantly played with *Acme Novelty Library*’s format (see examples in case behind). Because retailers had difficulty displaying the differently formatted books together, Ware designed an elaborate cardboard standing display; surviving samples are now collector’s items.



An *Acme Novelty Library* display

**Chris Ware** (1967–)

Untitled (“Quimby Mouse”), *Daily Texan*, 1989

Ink on Bristol board, mechanical tone, Collection of Chris Oliveria

The anthropomorphic Quimby the Mouse, often featured in Ware’s comics, recalls animation from the 1920s or ’30s. In this example his wordless adventures are presented as a complex matrix of panels, whose paths branch into past, present, and several possible futures. Here Quimby has two heads, one prematurely aged. The page depicts a complex series of remembered events, whose relative geography is shown in the top panel. Fragmentary moments in time are connected via personal objects and domestic spaces.

Ware produced this comic, as well as many of his early Jimmy Corrigan comics, for the University of Texas Austin’s student newspaper, the *Daily Texan*. Later, Ware would rework many of them into the first issues of his own comic book, *The Acme Novelty Library*.

**Chris Ware** (1967–)

Untitled (“Quimby Mouse”), *Daily Texan*, 1989

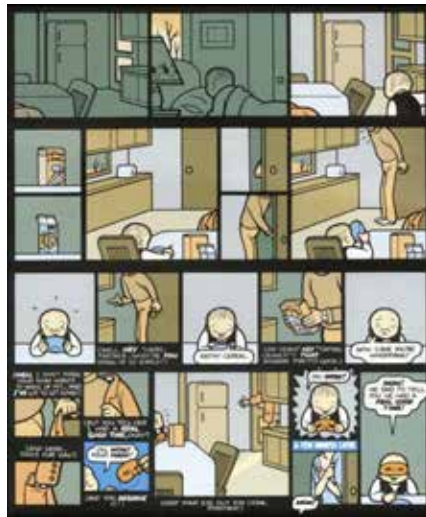
Ink on Bristol board, mechanical tone, Collection of Chris Oliveria

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**Chris Ware** (1967–)  
Untitled (“Jimmy Corrigan”), 1993  
Oil on canvas, Collection of Scott Eder

In this scene, young Jimmy Corrigan talks to a man who has spent the night with his mother. While he does not understand what has happened between the adults, Jimmy thinks that this man may be a superhero. Ware’s Jimmy Corrigan stories variously portray Jimmy as a child genius who has fantastic adventures, and as the shy and naïve son to a single mother. Most Jimmy Corrigan comics explore longing for an absent father, for whom the superhero figure is a substitute. This scene was originally part of a comic that ran in the University of Texas Austin’s student paper in 1991. Ware later modified the story for inclusion in the first issue of *The Acme Novelty Library* (1993). It is unclear why and when he executed this painting of this pivotal sequence.



The sequence as it appears in *Acme Novelty Library* 1

## **Chris Ware** (1967–)

Cover, *New Yorker*, November 27, 2000  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

This drawing depicts an interior in a futuristic New York. The Empire State and Chrysler Buildings are still visible in the skyline outside the window, but dwarfed by newer buildings. Curiously antique flying vehicles fill the sky. A lonely man suckles at a hookah-like device, presumably to enjoy the Thanksgiving dinner on his computer screen. The technology seems to be a combination of old and new, with pneumatic tubes and gauges protruding from a housing that resembles a console radio. This interest in depicting the future through the lens of the past is called *retrofuturism*, which is sometimes an attempt to recapture the optimism of earlier imagined futures, and other times an ironic examination of how technology has failed humans.

Ware is one of many alternative cartoonists who has contributed covers to the *New Yorker* during Françoise Mouly's tenure as art director. Several of his covers have been for Thanksgiving issues.



**Chris Ware** (1967–)

Untitled (“Superman”), *Acme Novelty Library* 7, 1996  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

In this comic a middle-aged superhero saves a cat, gets a movie deal, and makes and loses a fortune, all while a fickle public embraces and discards him. Like many of Ware’s comics, this story features retrograde content and style, specifically characters that recall mid-century cartoonists like Shazam’s C. C. Beck and such details as movie serials, tube televisions, and roadside diners. Ware subverts the comforts of nostalgia by complicating the remembered pleasures of the 1950s with a story filled with hardship and loneliness.

Ware calls his superhero character “Superman,” but unlike the famous Man of Steel, this character is full of faults.



## Charles Burns (1955–)

Instantly recognizable for his high-contrast, precisely lined inkwork, Charles Burns uses imagery derived from both horror and romance comics. His early works, published in *Raw* and European magazines such as *Métal hurlant*, were ironic and darkly comic interpretations of atomic age science fiction mixed with professional wrestling and other “weird stuff,” in his words. As his work matured, Burns explored themes of alienation, sexuality, and social status involving more complex plots and psychology, culminating in his most famous work, *Black Hole* (1994–2005).

**Charles Burns** (1955–)

“Thrilling Defective,” *Hard-Boiled Defective*, 1988  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Glenn Bray

Burns’s stories of El Borbah—a private investigator who attempted to solve mysteries in a strange underworld of robots, cultists, and mad scientists—were collected in a single volume, *Hard Boiled Defective*, for which Burns drew “Thrilling Defective” as a chapter title.

It exhibits Burns’s characteristic meticulous, sharp-edged inkwork, striking in its contrasts. Fine line work, like the hair on the figure to the left, seems to shimmer. Burns draws much of his iconography from low-budget horror. The work he produces is at once humorously ironic and genuinely unsettling. Of Burns’s style, cartoonist Lynda Barry writes, “It’s the kind of drawing that would have scared the pants off you in grade school ... because they are too perfectly done, and not good or evil enough for you to tell what you are supposed to think about them.”

**Charles Burns** (1955–)

“Dog Days,” *Skin Deep: Tales of Failed Romance*, 1992  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

This image was created for an anthology of several early stories by Burns. At the center is Dog Boy, whose heart was replaced with that of a dog. This procedure made Dog Boy affectionate and loyal; Burns draws upon clichés from 1950s and '60s romance comics in order to tell the story of a naïve man trying to find affection.

A recurring theme to Burns's work is horror that arises from our bodies being vulnerable to trauma, disease, and uncontrollable urges. Dog Boy's situation is absurd, but also reflects anxieties about medical procedures and self-identity.

**Françoise Mouly** (1955–), designer, and  
**Art Spiegelman** (1948–), illustrator  
Production art for *Raw Books*, 1979

Left: Unfolded, uncut sheets from *Work and Turn*

Center bottom: Bound copy of *Work and Turn*

Center top, right: Negative sheets for *Work and Turn*

Printed matter, Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

Produced shortly after Mouly's acquisition of her offset press, the pamphlet-sized *Work and Turn* was a comic drawn by Spiegelman and designed and printed by Mouly. The eight-page comic, which presents an amorous encounter between cubist figures, is named after the work-and-turn printing technique, in which both the front and back of a page are printed on the same sheet, which is then flipped left-to-right and fed through the same press again. The end result produces two identical two-sided pages, which may then be trimmed for binding. On display are loose pages before trimming and binding, negatives of the illustrations arranged on yellow sheets for photographic transfer to the printing plates, and a bound copy.

**Françoise Mouly** (1955–), designer, and  
**Art Spiegelman** (1948–), illustrator  
Production notebook for *Raw* 1, no. 5, 1983  
Mixed media, Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

For each issue of *Raw*, Mouly kept a production notebook in which she planned the comic's contents and design. This is the notebook for issue 5, with a humorous cover drawn by Spiegelman.

**Françoise Mouly** (1955–) and **Art Spiegelman** (1948–), designers  
**Mark Beyer** (1950–), illustrator  
Production art for *Raw*, 1980  
“City of Terror” cards  
Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

*Raw*'s editors sought to make each printed copy into a unique art object. Most issues included an unusual feature such as tipped in booklets, recordings on flexible records, or hand-torn covers. One of the more elaborate features was the “City of Terror” trading cards. Designed to look like a package of bubblegum cards (and including a stick of gum), these cards featured illustrations by Mark Beyer and text and design by Spiegelman and Mouly. Modeled after *Mars Attacks*, a series of trading cards produced in 1962, the “City of Terror” cards featured Beyer's characters Amy and Jordan navigating a sequence of urban horrors. Only eight cards were printed, but they were numbered to suggest that more might be collected.

**Françoise Mouly** (1955–) and **Art Spiegelman** (1948–), designers  
**Mark Beyer** (1950–), illustrator  
Production art for *Raw*, 1980  
“City of Terror” color separations  
Acetate, rubylith, and mechanical tone, Collection  
of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

While issues of *Raw* were printed by a commercial printing service, Mouly printed the “City of Terror” cards on her own offset press. This required color separations by hand, employing the same Ben Day dot technique that newsstand comic books used to prepare the four ink plates. Displayed here are some of her original separations, assembled on acetate using mechanical tone and *rubylith*—a red adhesive film that marks areas of solid color.



**Françoise Mouly** (1955–) and **Art Spiegelman** (1948–), designers

**Mark Beyer** (1950–), illustrator

Production art for *Raw*, 1980

“City of Terror” printing plates and finished cards

Etched aluminum; Printed cards, Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

These aluminum printing plates were used on Mouly’s press to print the “City of Terror” cards. The images are photographically etched where the ink will adhere. Since offset printing moves the ink from plate to roller to paper, reversing twice, the images are not mirrored as is the case with other printing processes.

*Raw* 1, no. 2, 1980  
Printed and bound material, Collection  
of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

Above is an open issue of *Raw* 1, no. 2 showing the “City of Terror” cards as included in the magazine with a stick of gum. Mark Beyer’s comic in this spread gives a fictional story of how the cards came to be.

Individual issues of *Raw* 1, nos. 1–8, 1980–86  
Printed and bound material, Collection  
of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

On display here are copies of the first volume of *Raw*, which ran in eight issues from 1980 to 1986. The first issue had a print run of forty-five hundred; its cover is black and white except for a small color scene of a man falling outside a window, which was printed separately and affixed by hand. Many of *Raw*'s issues required manual assembly or alteration.

*Raw*'s oversize format emphasized its comics visuals. Individual comics were often short and experimental. One (presented here in a chapter from *Raw* 1, no. 5, 1983) that had a substantial narrative was Spiegelman's *Maus*, which was printed in a smaller booklet form and attached to an interior page. Later, with some revisions, Spiegelman collected the comics from the earlier booklets and published them in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (volume 1: 1986, volume 2: 1991).

Each copy of *Raw* 1, no. 7 (1985) had the upper right corner torn off its cover. The torn corners were then shuffled and one apiece was taped to the interior of the comics, creating a unique copy. These alterations controvert the practice of collectors, who try to conserve comic books in a pristine state.

*Raw* 2, NOS. 1–3, 1989–1991  
Printed and bound material, Private collection

Following the breakout success of Spiegelman's *Maus*, which was originally serialized in *Raw*, the publication switched formats in 1989. Volume 2, published by Penguin, took the format of a literary journal and focused more on narrative.

Top: **Art Spiegelman** (1948–)

*Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

Raw Books/Pantheon, 1986, Private collection

Bottom: **Mark Beyer** (1950–)

*Agony*

Raw Books/Pantheon, 1987, Private collection

In 1986 Spiegelman and Mouly entered an arrangement with Pantheon to publish and distribute books under the joint Raw Books/Pantheon imprint. The first book so published was the initial volume of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, which collected the first six chapters of the story; on display here is a copy from its original printing. This publication proved a watershed moment for the validation of comics as an art form.

Other works followed in the Raw/Pantheon series. Shown here is Mark Beyer's *Agony*, which features his characters Amy and Jordan, who appear in several of Beyer's other works in this exhibition.

Left: **Jerry Moriarty** (1938–)  
*Jack Survives* (Raw One-Shot 3)  
Raw Books, 1984, Private collection

Right: **Gary Panter** (1950–)  
*Jimbo* (Raw One-Shot 1)  
Raw Books, 1982, Private collection

In addition to the anthology *Raw*, Spiegelman and Mouly published a series of standalone books called Raw One-Shots. In this series, contributors to *Raw* were given an opportunity to publish longer, standalone works. Jerry Moriarty's *Jack Survives* is a sequence of short, dryly humorous anecdotes about his father's life, set in the 1940s and 1950s. Gary Panter's *Jimbo* collects comics featuring the titular punk, framed with new material to form a loose narrative. He would eventually add more material and publish the finished story as *Jimbo: Adventures in Paradise* (Raw/Pantheon, 1988).

The Raw One-Shots often featured unusual book designs by Mouly and Spiegelman. The cover for *Jack Survives* has its black contours printed on a wraparound mylar dust jacket; the colors are printed on the cardstock beneath. *Jimbo* is printed on newsprint and its cover is two sheets of corrugated cardboard bound with black tape.



**Art Spiegelman** (1948–) and **R. Sikoryak** (1964–), editors  
*The Narrative Corpse*, 1995  
Bound and printed material, Raw Books/Gates of Heck

This experimental book was modeled after the surrealist “exquisite corpse” game. Collaborating artists each submitted three panels to the ongoing story; however, they were only allowed to see the previous contributor’s panels. The result was a stream-of-consciousness comic with a random, ever-changing plot. Sixty-nine cartoonists took part in the project. In this spread there is a passage by Mort Walker, creator of the long-running newspaper strip *Beetle Bailey*.

**Françoise Mouly** (1955–), designer, and  
**Sue Coe** (1951–), illustrator  
Maquette for *How to Commit Suicide in  
South Africa*, Raw One-Shot 2, 1983  
Mixed media, Collection of the Mouly Spiegelman Family

Sue Coe's *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* provides an overview and denunciation of apartheid, South Africa's institutional system of racial segregation and oppression that began in 1948. On display here is Mouly's maquette for Coe's volume, a hand-assembled dummy that demonstrates the desired composition of the printed and bound book.

**Chris Ware** (1967–)  
*The Acme Novelty Library*

Printed and bound material, 1995–2010

Chris Ware's continuing series *The Acme Novelty Library* was his primary vehicle for publishing comics. The style and content of the comics varied widely from issue to issue: some were humorous and ironic, some were somber and heartfelt. The unifying concept of the series was that it was a publication of the Acme Novelty Company, a fictional turn-of-the-century manufacturer of oddities. Initially published by Fantagraphics, *Acme Novelty's* first issue was sized like a comic book, but the publication thereafter took a variety of formats, as seen here. The smallest were pamphlet-sized, the largest were folio-sized; some were bound with staples, some were square bound. In 2005 Ware began self-publishing the comic and these comics are hardbound.

Many of *Acme Novelty's* stories featured the character Jimmy Corrigan (see Ware's painting on the wall behind you), who is initially portrayed as a child genius but whom Ware turned into a quiet, lonely man with a complex family history. Some of these later stories would be collected in Ware's first graphic novel, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (Pantheon, 2000).

Ware designed an “Amateur Secret Radio Decoder Outfit” as a promotional piece for the Public Radio International show *This American Life* in 2000. A Chicago native, Ware has collaborated with *This American Life* and its host Ira Glass on several projects.

# *Weirdo* (1981–93)

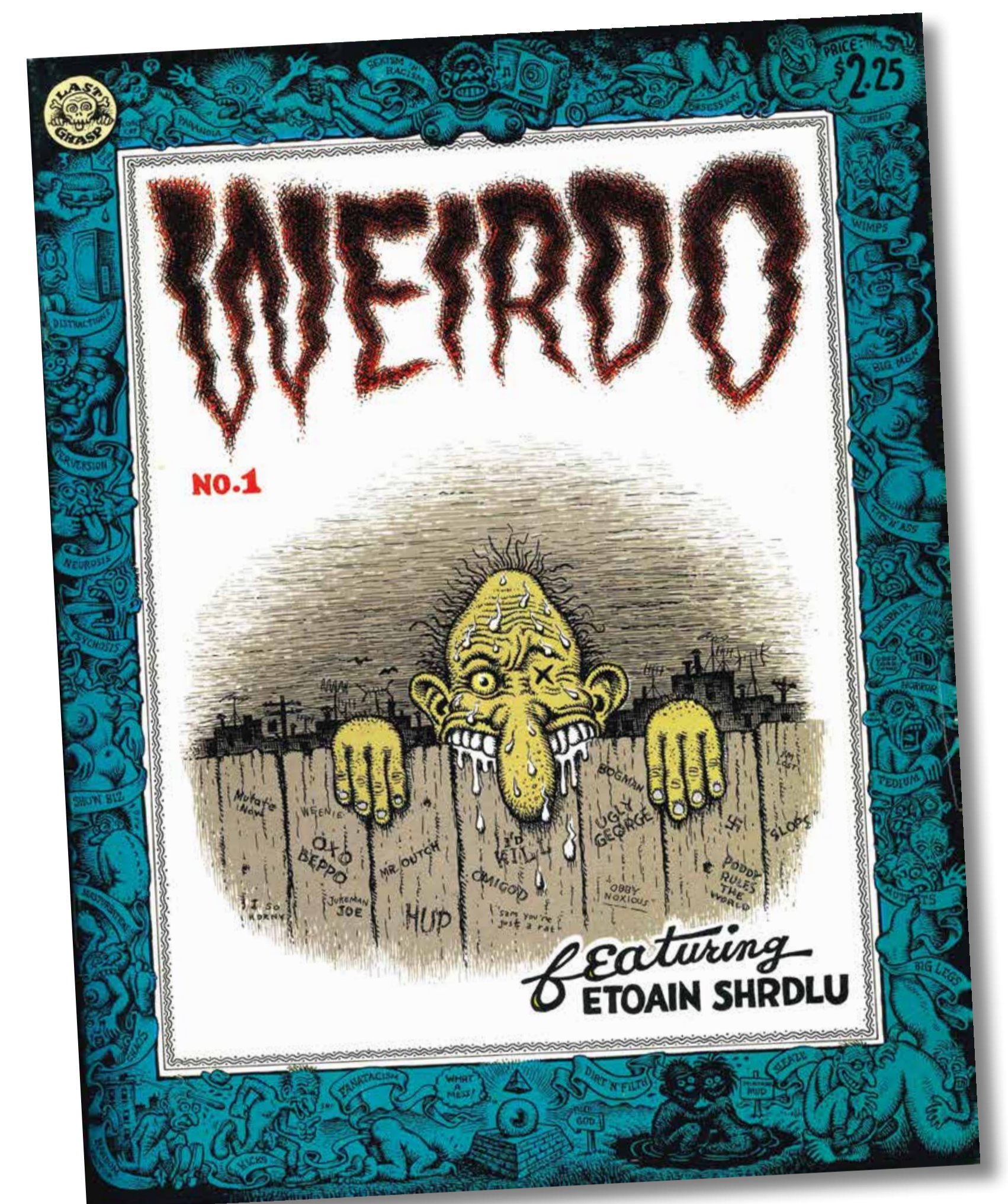
The comics anthology *Weirdo* took a different approach from *Raw*. Founding editor **Robert Crumb**, a central figure in underground comics, embraced the category of “low” art. Most contributors to *Weirdo* were self-trained and their comics often dealt with difficult subjects, albeit with a sense of humor. Crumb saw his own work for the anthology as in the tradition of folkways or peasant tales.

The first issues of *Weirdo* resembled the appearance and content of magazine comics from the 1970s. They contained an eclectic mix of comics and other features that reflected Crumb’s preferences for the bizarre and obscure. As the journal’s reputation grew, a wide variety of artists submitted work.

*Weirdo*’s second editor, **Peter Bagge**, was an up-and-coming cartoonist from New York who brought a punk sensibility and an emphasis on personal stories. *Weirdo*’s third and final editor, **Aline Kominsky-Crumb**, continued this trend by publishing longer-form memoir comics, including many by women cartoonists, who had been underrepresented in underground comics.

*Weirdo* cartoonists presented in this section are **Peter Bagge, Robert Crumb, Kim Deitch, Julie Doucet, Mary Fleener, Phoebe Gloeckner, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Krystine Kryttre, Carol Lay, Carol Tyler, and J. R. Williams.**

In spite of the different aesthetic preferences of *Raw* and *Weirdo*, numerous cartoonists contributed to both, and by the end of the 1980s the aesthetic lines between the two had become less stark.





## Aline Kominsky-Crumb (1948–)

Aline Kominsky-Crumb was the third editor of *Weirdo*. Her confessional stories, primarily about her own life, were an inspiration for a later generation of autobiographical cartoonists, especially women. The content of her work moves between the quotidian and the fanciful; her interior thoughts are depicted co-equally with the events happening in her comics. She often presents herself in an unflattering light for humorous effect. Her bold, self-trained style draws decorative elements from Henri Matisse and cubism. She maintains a career as a painter in addition to cartoonist.

**Robert Crumb** (1943–) and  
**Aline Kominsky-Crumb** (1948–)  
From “Aline ’n’ Bob In: ‘Our Lovely  
Home,’” *Weirdo*, no. 23, 1988  
Ink on Bristol board, The Ohio State University  
Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Crumb and Kominsky-Crumb had by the mid-1980s already produced a body of jointly drawn memoir comics. These are the first two pages of an eight-page story depicting a day in the domestic life of the couple and their young daughter during a house remodeling. In this story, the two artists draw themselves and write their own dialogue.

For many years both artists had depicted versions of themselves in their own comics, often overblown fantasies of the couple as bohemians at odds with normal society. Here, the two have succumbed to that most bourgeois aspiration of all: home ownership. They delight in depicting themselves in their least prepossessing moments. *Weirdo*'s large body of personal, confessional work, particularly strong under Kominsky-Crumb's editorship, would become an inspiration for 1990s memoir comics.



## Aline Kominsky-Crumb (1948–)

### *I'll Kill You! Get Back Animal!*, 1985

Acrylic paint on canvas, Scott Jonas Collection of Comics Art, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Kominsky-Crumb is both a cartoonist and painter. Here she combines her painterly love of abstract design with her unvarnished and confessional approach to comics. The scene, of a monstrous couple engaged in domestic strife, is presented in flat, bright colors and repeating patterns, reminiscent of the paintings of Henri Matisse. To the lower left, the man's foot turns in at an impossible angle, perhaps a nod to cubism.

The melodramatic dialogue and the cliché of the nagging wife in curlers make the image something of an archetype. Interestingly, Kominsky-Crumb included a drawing similar to this painting in the background of one of her comics (see below).



Kominsky-Crumb, from "The Schlep Set," *Weirdo*, no. 18



## Robert Crumb (1943–)

Robert Crumb is recognized as the most influential figure of 1960s and '70s underground comics, most famously for *Zap Comix*, begun in 1968. In 1981 he created and was the initial editor of *Weirdo*, which he envisioned as an eclectic collection of outsider artists' work. In the 1980s, Crumb's subjects and style became more varied, exploring forms such as comics essays, literary adaptations, and biographies.

**Robert Crumb** (1943–)

*Heroes of the Blues* (uncut sheet of cards), 1992  
Ink on board, mechanical reproduction, Mark J. Cohen  
and Rose Marie McDaniel Collections, The Ohio State  
University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Crumb depicts thirty-six performers of “country blues” music. Some of the first African Americans to be commercially recorded; their songs were sold as 78 rpm singles in the 1920s through the 1940s. At the time, record production and distribution were segregated, with Black artists relegated to specialty labels known as “race records.” By presenting these marginalized artists as trading card heroes, Crumb re-integrates them into mainstream American culture. For these drawings, Crumb is working from formal, posed photographic portraits. Crumb’s drawings simplify many details while his characteristic cross-hatching gives the still images a lively quality.

Although labeled “trading cards,” they came as a complete set in a box (finished copy in the display case nearby). As with *Raw*’s “City of Terror” cards, the set playfully repurposes the familiar form of the bubblegum card. Like comic books, bubblegum cards were traditionally thought of as meant for children but collected by adults.

## **Robert Crumb** (1943–)

From *Kafka for Beginners*, 1992  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

The *Introducing...* books are a series of highly illustrated texts that provide overviews to the work and lives of major thinkers, writers, and artists. For *Introducing Kafka*, Crumb illustrated sequences from Kafka's works as well as his biography. The text was by David Zane Mairowitz, but when the book was reissued in 2007 it was titled *R. Crumb's Kafka* and aimed more squarely at a comics audience.

In this illustration, Kafka confronts the changes brought about following the First World War when the First Czechoslovak Republic was created in 1918. Workmen remove a German sign from the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute, and replace it with a Czech sign. Kafka was employed by the partly state-owned insurance company at a time when Jews were usually banned from government employment.

After the establishment of the Czech Republic, the national language changed, but Kafka still was an outsider. Crumb effectively communicates the national transition and its links to Kafka's identity. Crumb's fascination with the early twentieth-century and Old World culture informed his engagement with Kafka's life. Likewise, the cartoonist and author share recurring themes of personal alienation and the dehumanization of industrialization in their work.

While Crumb's reputation as an underground artist began with a combination of broad satire and a style drawn from classic newspaper strips, by the 1980s and '90s he explored a wider variety of themes. Many of his comics for *Weirdo* were adaptations of biography, journals, or nonfiction.



## Peter Bagge (1957–)

Originally from New Jersey and a participant in the New York punk scene of the late 1970s, Bagge was a largely unknown cartoonist when Robert Crumb chose him to be his successor as editor of *Weirdo*. He is best known for *Hate*, a long-running series about slackers in Seattle. Since completing *Hate*, Bagge produced a variety of historical, biographical, and opinion comics, retaining his distinctive self-taught, rubbery, and exaggerated style.

**Peter Bagge** (1957–)

“A Warning,” *Weirdo*, no. 18, 1986

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Peter Bagge

Bagge’s farewell to *Weirdo*, written as he left his position of editor, demonstrates both his over-the-top visual style and his layered use of irony. Depicting himself as one of his caricatures, Bagge facetiously denounces the comic book for its offensiveness and nihilism, while playing lip service to a variety of disparate (and conflicting) ideologies. Bagge’s tongue-in-cheek conspiratorial ravings satirize both *Weirdo* and its detractors.

Many of the cartoonists represented in this exhibition also present a heightened, parodic version of themselves, bringing into question the ideal of authentic self-depiction. Bagge’s rough and rubbery, self-taught style draws inspiration from the unrefined do-it-yourself approach of punk culture.

**Peter Bagge** (1957–)

From *Hate* 25, 1996

Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Bagge's best-known character, Buddy Bradley, emerges from the New York subway. Bagge had originally drawn Buddy as one member of a dysfunctional New Jersey family, but in 1990 moved his character to Seattle in his new comic book, *Hate*. Seattle would soon become an epicenter for "slacker" culture, and Buddy became an icon of Generation X. At this point in the story, Buddy has returned to New Jersey and is attempting to carve out a living managing a nostalgia store. He is having an on-and-off-again relationship with his sometimes girlfriend, Lisa. He is looking for Lisa in "the worst place on earth": Brooklyn.

Like his protagonist, Bagge began his life in the New York suburbs, spent his early career in the city, and eventually moved to Seattle. Unlike Buddy, Bagge remained on the West Coast.

**Peter Bagge** (1957–)

From *Hate 6*, 1991, 6 (left) 15 (right)  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Peter Bagge

In these pages from the same story, Bagge's slacker protagonist Buddy Bradley, from working-class New Jersey, meets his girlfriend Valerie's wealthy suburban parents. Here we see that Bagge's style in the mid-1990s is still rubbery, kinetic, and exaggerated, but now more detailed and nuanced. Bagge continues to engage in slapstick, but in service of a complex set of characters and a developed narrative. These pages depict clashes between genders, generations, and political persuasions. Bagge uses salty language and provocative subjects; he lets the reader decide who makes the most compelling arguments.





## Krystine Kryttre (1958–)

Krystine Kryttre, the pen name of Kristine Lankenau, only worked in comics from 1985 until 1992, but her distinctive use of scratchboard and her combination of playfully drawn art and dark subjects made her one of the most recognizable artists of the San Francisco scene. She published first in *Weirdo* and later in *Raw*, and in a variety of publications including her collected volume *Death Warmed Over*. In the years since, Kryttre has produced paintings, taxidermy, and performance art that expands upon her styles and themes.

**Krystine Kryttre** (1958–)

*Self-Made*, 1993

Acrylic on Masonite, Private collection

The man-made monster, originally derived from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), is a recurring theme in science fiction and horror. In most versions of this trope the monster is assembled from parts of other bodies by a scientist who seeks control of life and death. In this painting, in an act of self-reliance, Kryttre's monstrous woman is sewing her own heart into her chest. Amidst the more typical surgical and chemical tools on the table are a tomato pincushion and spool of sewing thread.

Kryttre punctuates her gloomy scene with vivid, almost fluorescent colors, reminiscent of a black light poster. Most surfaces are mottled. Splotches of blue, purple, and pink create an iridescent effect on the monster's skin. Of this painting, Kryttre says: "This was an experimental painting, using gel mediums with acrylic paints and seeing what they do."

**Krystine Kryttre** (1958–)

*Cover color separations, Death Warmed Over*, 1992  
Scratchboard transferred to acetate and  
watercolor, Private collection

This cover art for a collection of comics demonstrates Kryttre's frantic, jagged scratchboard technique at its most elaborate. It also shows Kryttre's playful pairing of cute character design with her love of gothic subjects.

Like the *Love and Rockets 6* cover by Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez in this exhibition, this is a color separation. Here, the colors are executed as a single layer of watercolor photographed and converted into cyan, yellow, and magenta images for printing. This overlay of ink is called process color. The original scratchboard image is printed in black as line art, meaning it was printed as sharp lines and shapes. This complicated system was necessary to preserve the detail of the original black-and-white drawing.

**Krystine Kryttre** (1958–)

*Maxine*, 1996

Mixed taxidermy, Private collection

In 1992 Kryttre moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The relocation from a center of alternative comics publishing corresponded with her turn to producing art for galleries. Even in different media, Kryttre employs the same dark humor and cartoony design that characterize her comics.

One long-running project of the artist is her taxidermy series, begun shortly after her move. Kryttre says:

Taking parts of dead things, putting them together in new ways and bringing them back to life seemed like a really good idea at that time.... I went to thrift stores and found old beat-up taxidermy, fur coats, and sets of used dentures.... Bits and bobs of all kinds began to find their ways to me—teeth, claws, toes, hooves, horns, wings, tails...

Kryttre made *Maxine*, featuring a laughing box, for her husband.

## Krystine Kryttre (1958–)

From “*Bimbos from Hell*,” *Weirdo*, no. 22, 1988  
Scratchboard and ink, Private collection

This is the final page of a story in which Kryttre reflects on the recent death of her friend, fellow cartoonist Dori Seda, a regular contributor to *Weirdo*.

Kryttre was asked by *Weirdo*'s then-editor, Aline-Kominsky Crumb, to write a story about Seda. The published comic, “*Bimbos from Hell*,” chronicles the two artists' friendship and their shared life of excess. In this final page, Kryttre tells Seda's contrite spirit to not apologize.

Kryttre made most of her comics using scratchboard, which produces thick forms and heavy blacks, but for this final page she renders Seda and the mist around her with delicate swirling lines.



Dori Seda depicting herself, from “*How My Family Encouraged Me to Become an Artist!*,” *Weirdo*, no. 20, 1987



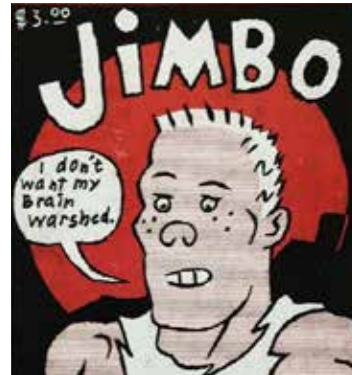
## J. R. Williams (1957–)

Trained in fine art at the Oregon College of Education, Williams's first comics were published in *Weirdo* by then-editor Peter Bagge. His wild and manic style recalls both the underground comics of the 1960s and such masters of the grotesque as Ed "Big Daddy" Roth and Basil Wolverton. Williams's comics are filled with crazy and often hyperkinetic humor; he also worked as an illustrator and storyboard artist for Will Vinton Studios. After a string of solo comic books published by Fantagraphics and others, Williams left the comics world to return to painting. Recently his fine art work has featured cartoon figuration drawn from hot rod and surfer imagery.

## J. R. Williams (1957–)

“Jumbo” (parody of Gary Panter’s “Jimbo”), 1984  
Ink on paper, collage (pages 1, 4); ink on  
paper (pages 2, 3), Private collection

Williams’s previously unpublished “Jumbo” comes from his never completed parody of *Raw* magazine, which he intended as a self-standing comic book. Besides parodying the installments of Gary Panter’s *Jimbo* (see the *Raw* section of this exhibition) that had appeared up to that point in *Slash* and *Raw*, it also references Panter’s 1979 comic, *The Asshole* (here parodied as *The Butthole*, while the art indicates the resemblance between Panter’s title character and Popeye the Sailor), and his 1980 punk-influenced essay, *Rozz Tox Manifesto* (here parodied as “*Razz Pox*”). Williams proves an uncanny imitator of Panter’s style, as well as a precursor of the parodic manner approach later taken in the pages of *Raw* itself by R. Sikoryak.



Gary Panter’s “Jimbo”



## Phoebe Gloeckner (1960–)

Phoebe Gloeckner became interested in comics after her mother took her to see a musical performance by Robert Crumb's band, the Cheap Suit Serenaders. While publishing in *Weirdo*, *Wimmen's Comix*, and elsewhere, Gloeckner also studied medical illustration, and many of her comics focus on embodiment, often through the lens of anatomy. In 2008 Gloeckner was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2010 she began a position as associate professor at the University of Michigan Stamps School of Art & Design. Her hybrid prose and comic work, *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, was adapted into a film in 2015.



**Phoebe Gloeckner** (1960–)

Cover, *The Atrocity Exhibition*, 1990

Watercolor and gouache on Bristol board, Private collection

*The Atrocity Exhibition* is an experimental novel by J. G. Ballard, originally published in 1970. It is less a cohesive narrative than a string of vignettes in which the narrator reimagines fictional accounts of famous events and persons. In 1990 the book was revised for publication by Re/Search with illustrations by Gloeckner, who was given free choice in how to interpret the abstract work.

A medical illustrator, Gloeckner often depicts the human body in a cutaway view, literally inviting readers into the interior of her characters. While her illustrations for *The Atrocity Exhibition* do not depict Ballard's text, they suggest the same concerns with the body as a fragile structure vulnerable to harm. Here, Gloeckner eschews the stereotypical eroticism of a naked woman by revealing the figure's anatomy.

Re/Search is a San Francisco publishing house specializing in books about underground culture including body modification, zines, cult films, and industrial music. In the 1980s and 1990s, Re/Search volumes were frequently sold in bookstores alongside alternative comics.

**Phoebe Gloeckner** (1960–)

*“Direction of American Youth,”* *Weirdo*, no. 2, 1982  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Phoebe Gloeckner

In this comic, a series of unnamed young adults discuss their life goals. Their aspirations are vapid, self-centered, materialistic, and ill-defined—the values of privilege. Each close portrait resembles a posed photograph, akin to an actor’s headshot.

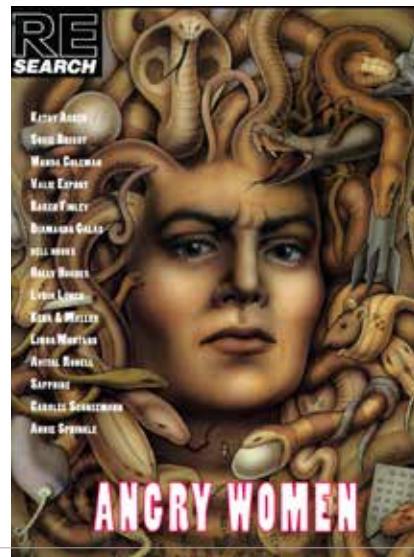
In the early 1980s, new industries and financial practices drew professionals away from the suburbs and into the cities. The term “yuppie,” an abbreviation of “young urban professional” first appeared in print in 1980. The stereotype of these mostly white, childless urbanites was that they were materialistic and selfish, and responsible for gentrifying working-class neighborhoods.

Gloeckner employs an unusual form in this early *Weirdo* comic. The seemingly random rotation of each panel and its caption is disorienting; the dialogue seems to respond to a missing question. The panels exist side-by-side but there is no action between them.

## Phoebe Gloeckner (1960–)

Watercolor and gouache on Bristol board,  
Collection of Phoebe Gloeckner

In the early 1990s, a new musical movement called Riot Grrrls, comprised of groups like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile, espoused female empowerment, anarchism, and sex-positivity. This book and *Angry Women* (1991) are collections of interviews with artists associated with the Riot Grrrl movement, as well as with established female performance artists. For both covers Gloeckner depicts a contemporary version of Medusa, the monstrous snake-haired woman from Greek mythology whose gaze turns one into stone. Wrapped in the writhing coils are musical instruments, microphones, and unidentified drug capsules. Significantly there are devices that point to digital production, including a power cord, a serial cable, a Macintosh ADB mouse, and a PC keyboard.



Gloeckner's cover for  
*Angry Women*, 1991

**Phoebe Gloeckner** (1960–)

From *“Fun Things to Do with Little*

*Girls,” Weirdo*, no. 28, 1993

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Phoebe Gloeckner

In this story, the adult Gloeckner, shopping for groceries, remembers a shocking event from childhood in which her stepfather served her and her sister wine, forcing them to become “little ladies” and saying that their mother “wouldn’t appreciate” the wine’s subtleties. Many of Gloeckner’s stories deal with girls facing the forced loss of innocence. Gloeckner is not an apologist for such behavior, but probes how childhood traumas can be successfully incorporated into the adult sense of self.

Here Gloeckner mixes her anatomical knowledge with exaggerated proportions and perspective that suggest a child’s point of view. All three panels are crossed by angles, creating a sense of unease and uncertainty. Gloeckner shows command of modeling in pen and ink using hatching, cross-hatching, and contouring.



## Kim Deitch (1944–)

Kim Deitch worked in underground comics from its earliest days. In the 1980s, Deitch's work transitioned into long-form, interrelating narratives. He published in both *Weirdo* and *Raw*. Deitch's father was a cartoonist and animator involved in leftist movements in the 1950s and '60s, and Deitch has incorporated memories of McCarthyism into several of his stories. He has created many memorable recurring characters, linking most of his comics in a meta-narrative.

## **Kim Deitch** (1944–)

Promotional image for *Hollywoodland*, 1985  
Ink on Bristol board, mixed media, Erwin and Alfred Bergdoll  
Collection of Underground Comics and Original Art, The Ohio  
State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Deitch was a major producer of underground comics in the 1960s and '70s. In the 1980s, his work became lengthier and more layered, engaging in world-building. He had long held a fascination with old Hollywood, especially the silent film era, and many of his extended narratives wove together historical fact with fantastical fiction. *Hollywoodland* is a labyrinthine story. A washed up actor, a television reporter, and a “psychic detective” uncover the truth about a comatose silent film actress and the mysterious “Tar Man,” a skeletal, burning figure who emerged from the La Brea Tar Pits. The drama spans from 1864 to 1985. This image shows a scene from 1954, where the Tar Man has come to life, destroying the carnival sideshow where he was on display. Detective Miles Mycroft has rescued actress Beverly Fairfax, lying in the foreground; she is in lifeless sleep unless wearing the amulet. *Hollywoodland* ran as a weekly serial in the alternative newspaper the *LA Reader* and was collected as a book in 1987.

This drawing is probably a promotional piece for the story. It was hand-colored by Deitch using watercolor and colored pencil. This practice is sometimes used by cartoonists when they expect the original drawing to be hung as a work of art. At the bottom is a dedication to Erwin Bergdoll, to whom Deitch sold many works; perhaps the work was colored for him.

## **Kim Deitch** (1944–)

“Little Kimbo in Pinkoland,” *Raw* 2, no. 1, 1989  
Ink on Bristol board, Erwin and Alfred Bergdoll Collection  
of Underground Comics and Original Art, The Ohio State  
University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

This one-page memoir was published as a coda to “Karla in Kommiland,” an ironic send-up of McCarthy-era politics. In that story, animated cartoon characters attempt to brainwash the heroine’s family into becoming communist. The “Little Kimbo” of this page is Deitch as a child; the comic humorously reflects on his experience of belonging to a liberal family during a conservative time.

Deitch’s comics often appropriate the styles and motifs of other eras; most typically, his character designs have been compared with those of Max Fleischer Studio animations. Near the top of this panel, Deitch portrays himself watching the Van Beuren Studios cartoon *Candy Town 91933* on television, perhaps as an homage to the early influence of animated cartoons on Deitch’s own work. The comic is also decorated with icons of cool mid-century hipster culture: abstract painting, traditional African art, 78 and 45 rpm records, and the *New Yorker*.

**Kim Deitch** (1944–)

Preliminary sketches for

“Little Kimbo in Pinkoland,” *Raw* 2, no. 1, 1989

Pencil and overlay on paper, Erwin and Alfred Bergdoll

Collection of Underground Comics and Original Art, The Ohio

State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

These pencil sketches for the finished comic reveals Deitch’s process. The cleanness of the drawing and the use of tracing paper suggest he traced these from an earlier version. These drafts may have been done in order to work out the text and its placement. Strangely, the final panel of one of these sketches is the design that was ultimately printed in *Raw*, but with different wording. It appears that Deitch worked simultaneously on several drafts and that the published work incorporated elements from at least two originals.



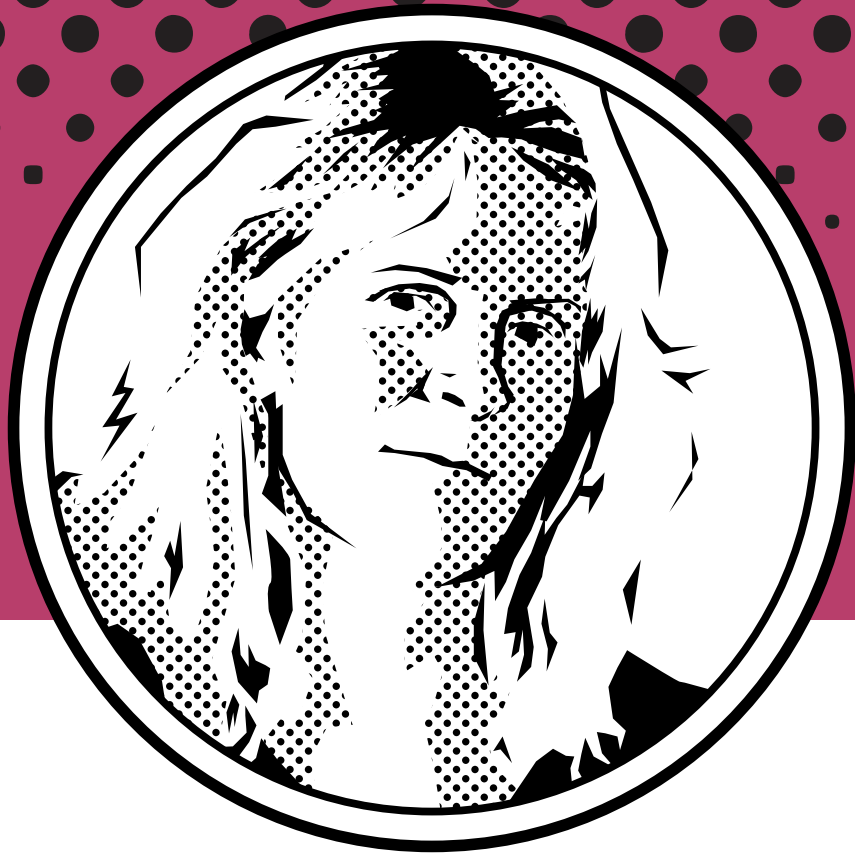
**Joel Rose** (1948–), author, and

**Kim Deitch** (1944–) artist

“The Molasses Gang,” *The Big Book of Thugs*, 1996

Ink on Bristol board, mixed media, Private collection

The distinction between “alternative” and “mainstream” comics is not absolute. In the 1990s, DC Comics branched out with publishing houses dedicated specifically to comics for an adult market. Paradox Press, one of their imprints, published a variety of comics on subjects geared toward alternative readership, including *The Big Book of Thugs*. It contained this comic, a humorous story depicting a curiosity of New York crime gang culture—“the Molasses Gang” was a favorite subject of newspaper stories in the 1870s. In this comic, Deitch uses more hatching (parallel lines that suggest shadows and modeling) than usual, perhaps in imitation of the wood engravings published in nineteenth-century illustrated papers before photography.



## Carol Tyler (1951–)

Carol Tyler was working toward a master's degree in painting when she became interested in underground comics. Upon relocating to San Francisco in the 1980s, she submitted comics to *Weirdo*, which first published her in 1987. Becoming friends with Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Tyler also wrote a parodic cultural and advice column for the anthology under the pseudonym "Lisa Lee." Her personal stories have been anthologized in many publications, and she drew a comics feature on music for *Pulse*, Tower Records' in-house magazine. Her recent work, *Soldier's Heart*, is a memoir about her World War II veteran father and her difficulties in coaxing him to disclose his story.

## **Carol Tyler** (1951–)

From “Gone,” *Drawn & Quarterly* 2, no. 4, 1995  
Ink and marker on Bristol board, Collection of Carol Tyler

This is the opening page to a longer story, in which Tyler muses on the transient nature of reality. In her comics, Tyler moves between points of view, dips in and out of flashbacks, and includes fragments of narrative that can seem unrelated. In this opening sequence, the artist draws herself at different ages, living in a house of memories. Past boyfriends, hairstyles, and beliefs become physical clutter. By the end of the story, Tyler announces that the final panel of the comic has also gone missing.

Tyler applies a strict grid system to this comic: each page is either two-by-two panels or two-by-three. Each panel is its own self-contained scene, and the action is rarely continuous. All of this contributes to a patchwork effect, which reinforces its themes.

**Carol Tyler** (1951–)

From *Soldier's Heart*, 2004

Ink and marker on Bristol board, Collection of Carol Tyler

Carol Tyler's major comics work is the graphic novel *Soldier's Heart*, which tells her father's story of military service during World War II, interspersed with scenes from her own life as she deals with financial, artistic, and family struggles. In its depiction of intergenerational trauma and a child trying to coax history from a parent, it resembles Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

This page exemplifies Tyler's storytelling at its most poetic and elliptical. It depicts Lay's father, Chuck, loading a sheet of plywood into his truck and driving it home. But this scene occurs amidst a meditation by Tyler on how no one would ever know that her father had experienced the horrors of war. Hidden in the signs, cars, cows, and sky that line the way to Chuck's house is the phrase, "not all scars are visible."

**Carol Tyler** (1951–)

“Blankie,” *Weirdo*, no. 21, 1987

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Carol Tyler

This single-page story, one of Tyler’s first, is based on an actual incident in the artist’s life when she left a blanket out for a month because it never dried between rains.

Like many other cartoonists in this exhibition, Tyler had academic training in painting, which informs her comic art. Her individual panels are carefully composed and balanced. Some are wordless landscapes. Tyler’s lines are supple and gestural with no orthogonals.



## Mary Fleener (1951–)

Mary Fleener has developed a striking geometric style she calls “cubismo” for her idiosyncratic stories of voodoo, jazz, and her life as a Southern Californian bohemian. A favorite theme is her relationship to her parents and the clash between their postwar mores and her 1970s counterculturalism. Fleener often breaks the fourth wall with dialogue or captions addressed to the reader, allowing her to editorialize. Fleener has also worked as a painter and printmaker, where her *cubismo* style can have fuller rein. A regular contributor to *Weirdo*, she has joined with several of the anthology’s other artists to contribute to the contemporary journal *Mineshaft*.

## Mary Fleener (1951–)

“Hipster Blues,” *How to Play Guitar* 4, no. 1, 1997

Cel vinyl paint on acetate, Scott Jonas Collection of Comics Art,  
The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Musicians performing are a common subject for Fleener, especially ones in smoky dive bars. Fleener herself has performed as a guitarist and singer in a rock band. In this image, drawn for an instructional guitar magazine, Fleener plays with cliché, from the dispassionate coolness of the performers to the young hipster in the audience, replete with beret, striped shirt, and cigarette. In spite of the broad caricature, Fleener does capture something of the rhythmic feel of live music in her shimmering, fractured image.

Fleener calls her style “cubismo.” Its most obvious model is synthetic cubism (c. 1912–14), marked by bold colors and simple forms. Fleener also draws from comics. She cites Chester Gould, creator of *Dick Tracy*, and Otto Soglow, creator of *The Little King* as influences; both drew broad, bold contours and abstracted characters into flat, geometric shapes.

**Mary Fleener** (1951–)

“As American as Mom, Apple Pie  
and Martinis,” *Blab!* 6, 1991

Ink on Bristol board, Scott Jonas Collection of Comics Art, The  
Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Fleener often depicts herself as a voice of reasoned observation commenting upon the characters of her drawn-from-life comics. Here she critically examines her parents’ abusive relationship with alcohol. Fleener’s comic addresses what she sees as the cognitive dissonance of legal but excessive alcohol consumption by the same generation that favored censorship and restrictions on other drugs.

While this comic does not employ the cubist stylings for which Fleener is known, it shows her strong command of heavy blacks and weighty contours. The conversational tone of Fleener’s words is heightened by the appearance of her face in each panel caption, inviting the reader into a chat among close friends.



**Mary Fleener** (1951–)

“Skin Art! In the Eye of the Beholder,”

*International Tattoo Art*, 1992

Cel vinyl paint on acetate, Scott Jonas Collection of Comics Art,  
The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

In the 1990s tattoos were a cultural marker of the alternative scene. Magazines like *International Tattoo Art* afforded Fleener opportunity to work in color, and her bold, flat colors match her striking graphic style, recalling late cubism. The colors look like an animation cel, because Fleener used the same materials to prepare the work for press. As the artist explains,

The original art was ink on Bristol and a transparency made of that. The paint was applied on the back side, so you had to color within the lines, but ... you could overlap the paint on the already painted area and it wouldn't show on the front side. USUALLY. These paints were chemically acrylic, so if you messed up you could clean it off with rubbing alcohol. If you look at the back it looks like an Impressionistic painting!



## Carol Lay (1952–)

Carol Lay got her start writing, illustrating, and coloring for a variety of large commercial comic book companies, including Marvel, DC, and Hanna-Barbera. In the 1980s she contributed to *Wimmen's Comix* and *Weirdo* before producing her own six-issue series, *Good Girls*. Her early stories combine ironic observation from a feminist perspective with art that mimicked mainstream comics. When she began her own weekly strip, *Story Minute*, Lay's art became looser and more idiosyncratic. These one-page stories also featured social commentary but paired it with mordant twist endings that reflected her childhood interest in *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*.

**Carol Lay** (1952–)

“Do You Come with the Car?”

*New Yorker*, April 24, 1994

Mixed media on paper, Private collection

This comic was published in the *New Yorker's* “Talk of the Town,” a long-running section traditionally featuring brief, topical profiles of people and events. Here, Lay reports on the goings-on at the 1994 New York International Auto Show. While the *New Yorker* has from its beginnings been famous for its single-panel cartoons, this sort of narrative, multi-panel comic was brought to the magazine by Françoise Mouly, who has held the position of art director since 1993.

Lay has worked in animation, and her color work shares aspects with that medium. In particular, her use of colored (instead of black) contour lines is a technique common in cel painting.

**Carol Lay** (1952–)

From “The Prince and the Art Girl,”

*Weirdo*, no. 27, 1990

India ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Lay’s early drawing style reflects the work she did on licensed characters such as Barbie and the Masters of the Universe for Mattel. In her personal work she combined this commercial style with subversive storytelling. This is the first page of a personal story about her glamorous French friend arranging for Lay to meet a visiting Arabian prince. Unlike a standard romance comic, Lay’s memoir becomes a pointed examination of power imbalances of class, gender, and nationality.

## Carol Lay (1952–)

Preliminary sketch, *Story Minute*:

“*Serial Romancer*,” 1994

Ink on paper, Private collection

In this comic, Lay imagines the famous rake Don Juan, unsatisfied with easy conquest, attempting to challenge his skills. This preliminary sketch provides insight into Lay’s process.

Working rapidly in pen and ink, with only a few corrections in opaque white, Lay breaks down and scripts a version that is close to the final version, with one major difference: the original is four panels high by three wide, and the finished piece (reproduced below) is three by four. Since Lay uses square panels in a grid, rearranging them is simple.



**Carol Lay** (1952–)

*Story Minute: “The Ace of Clubs,”* 1994

Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Punch and Judy is a traditional English puppet play that dates to at least the seventeenth century, based on earlier *commedia dell’arte* characters. Its plot is episodic, but usually features Punch mishandling their baby while Judy is away, Judy and Punch quarreling, and Punch beating both Judy and an investigating policeman with his stick. In this strip, Lay imagines that Judy is attempting to help Punch by making a new stick for him, only to have the stick once again turned on her. While the original Punch and Judy routines have been criticized for treating abuse as funny, Lay’s use of a puppet show within a comic creates distance and more complex irony.

In 1990 Lay was invited to contribute a five-week serial to the alternative newspaper *LA Weekly*. That experience proved successful, and she developed an ongoing feature, *Story Minute*, which ran from 1993 until 2008, eventually becoming syndicated to other papers and online at Salon.com. The example here features many of Lay’s hallmarks: a uniform grid system for her panels, flat blacks and geometric patterns, broadly exaggerated movement, and characters who lack lower jaws, their mouths drawn as wedges of teeth.



## Julie Doucet (1965–)

Québécois artist Julie Doucet began her comics career producing self-published minicomics in her native French. She submitted some of her stories to *Weirdo* and *Wimmen's Comix*, which published her in translation. From 1991 to 1998 Doucet produced short stories featuring herself as a constructed and transformed character. Eventually Doucet left the medium to become a collage artist. A collected edition of all her comics has recently been published and Doucet is the subject of much academic and critical examination, particularly by feminist scholars.

**Julie Doucet** (1965–)

“I Am Julie Doucet,” *Dirty Plotte* 7, 1993  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Here, Doucet presents herself as brashly bursting into a comic shop and demanding loudly to use the bathroom. Neither the confused store manager nor the entirely male patrons know who she is, in contrast to her projected self-important manner. The cluttered comics store is almost entirely given over to the sale of superhero titles—especially ones featuring Batman, whose popularity was at a zenith in 1993. The only alternative comic is a single issue of *Zap*, which is inappropriately being read by a young boy. Doucet here captures the strange coexistence of alternative and mainstream comics in the retail space.

While the artist describes herself as shy, in her comics, Doucet often depicts herself as a free spirit, prone to indulging her impulses. “Julie” is a humorous and self-critical portrayal of the cartoonist’s anxieties and desires. This comic is about the myth-making involved in self-depiction. As Doucet points out at the comic’s conclusion, “Note: This is fiction! OK?!”

Visually this is an example of Doucet’s late style, marked by shimmering blacks and whites and flattened isometric perspective, with details crammed into every available area.



## **Julie Doucet** (1965–)

From “Day in the Life,” *Dirty Plotte* 3, 1991, 4, 6  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Julie Doucet

In these two pages from the same story, Doucet depicts her daily routine as she attempts to make art while dealing with boredom, isolation, and lack of motivation. In contrast to many of her self-depictions, this “Julie” is hesitant to engage with the world. In the first page, she takes an excursion from her apartment to check her mail and buy some beer. She is distracted by a spoon that gives her an idea for a comic, and then she is interrupted by a ringing phone with a call from a person she anxiously avoids. Doucet’s life as constructed in this comic is repetitive and unglamorous, perhaps the opposite of what one might expect from a cartoonist known for her often transgressive work.

While memoir comics have been around since the earliest days of the medium, they took a central place in the alternative comics of the 1990s. Building on the work of artists like Justin Green, Robert Crumb, and Art Spiegelman, a new generation played with the conventions of memoir. These artists often worked with a meta-awareness of how self-depiction is also self-construction.

**Julie Doucet** (1965–)

*Beer Kiss*, 1992

Silkscreen, Scott Jonas Collection of Comics Art, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Doucet humorously depicts herself in an intimate relationship with a bottle of beer. Her comics often depict the cluttered interiors where her fictional self lives and works. With their flattened perspective, uneven floorboards, and humble furniture, Doucet's interiors are reminiscent of those painted by Vincent van Gogh. But they are also alive with bulbous household objects—dishes, cutlery, appliances—that move through the space. Sometimes they have playful arms and legs and talk to “Julie.” In this surreal vision of domesticity, the living space is an ecosystem unto itself, and belongings are constant companions and distractions.

Doucet designed this comic as a print edition: a work of art to be framed and hung on a wall. As such, the work demonstrates that the comics form is not limited to books or newspapers.

## *Weirdo*

San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1981–93

On display here are several individual issues of *Weirdo*. Edited by Robert Crumb, Peter Bagge, and Aline Kominsky-Crumb, all twenty-eight issues featured cover art by Crumb. *Weirdo's* aesthetic was intentionally lowbrow and outsider. Nonetheless, Crumb sees continuity with his work and traditional fine art. *Weirdo*, no. 4, above, features a cover referencing a painting by Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516).

The first issue of *Weirdo*, above, is an elaborate rendering of the graffiti “Kilroy Was Here.” During World War II, US servicemen would often draw “Kilroy,” a long-nosed man peeking over a wall, as a way to mark their advancement into enemy territory. By appropriating Kilroy, Crumb celebrates populist folk culture. The name “Etoain Shrdlu” is a reference to the first two lines of keys on a Linotype machine.

This copy of *Weirdo*, no. 21, is open to a story by Dori Seda, who passed away shortly before its publication. Seda, who drew humorous confessional stories about her life, was friends with the cartoonist Krystine Kryttre. In this same issue is Kryttre's story "Bimbos from Hell," a memorial to her friend. The original art for the final page of "Bimbos" is on display in this exhibition.

This is the back cover of *Weirdo*, no. 7. The bulbous, one-eyed characters in this comic are a reference to the work of painter Phillip Guston (1913–80), whose late paintings featured cartoonish cyclopean figures in squalid settings. Crumb is an admirer of Guston and the two artists' work are often compared.

**Robert Crumb** (1943–)  
*Heroes of the Blues*

Trading card set, Yazoo Records, 1980

Here is a cut and printed set of the  
*Heroes of the Blues* cards; an uncut  
sheet is on display nearby.

## **These videos repeat in sequence.**

### **Michel Gondry** and **Julie Doucet**

*My New New York Diary*, 2010, 17 minutes

© Partizan Films, shown by permission

In this film, director Michel Gondry inserts cartoonist Julie Doucet into her own drawn world. The result is a recursive depiction of self. In it, Doucet returns to the neighborhood in Brooklyn where she lived ten years before and that was the setting for her story “My New York Diary.” Doucet drew hundreds of drawings for this video and stars in both cartoon and live action form; nonetheless she feels the work is more Gondry’s.

### **Ben Katchor** and **Mark Mulcahy**

*The Imaginary War Crimes Tribunal*, 2014, 22 minutes

© Ben Katchor and Mark Mulcahy, shown by permission

Cartoonist Ben Katchor has collaborated with composer Mark Mulcahy on a series of theatrical works that combine his writing and drawing with a sung narrative, normally presented with live musicians and chorus. This video, with recorded audio, imagines a world in which the central character must stand trial for his actions in a video game.

### **Chris Brandt** and **Jim Woodring**

Outtakes from *The Illumination of Jim Woodring*, 2019, 14 minutes

© Chris Brandt, shown by permission

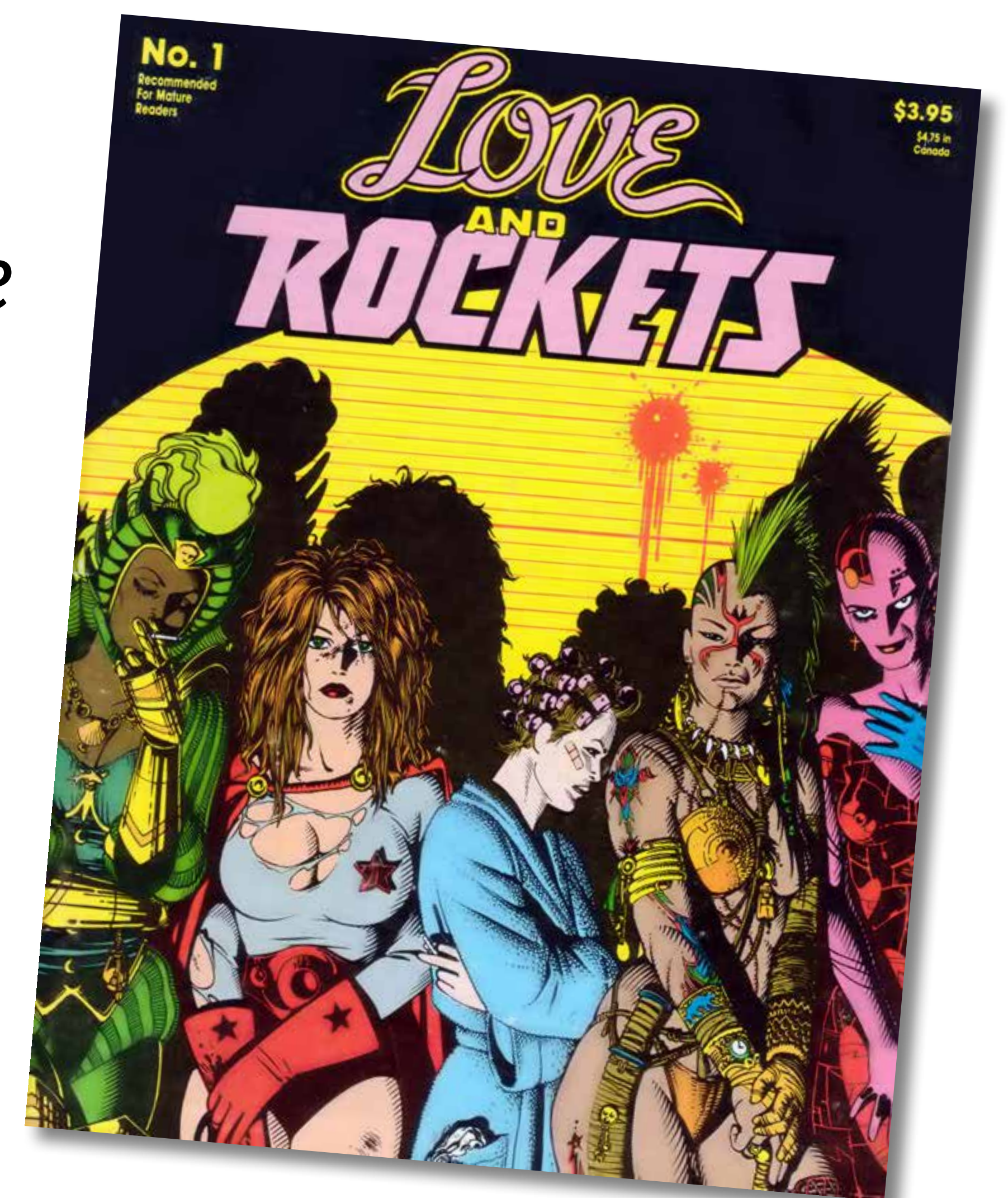
Chris Brandt spent years interviewing and filming Jim Woodring for his documentary exploring the cartoonist’s work and philosophy. Brandt made this short video for the McMullen Museum from mostly unused footage. It shows Woodring drawing the piece *Immigrants: Welcome to Our Shores*, which is on display in the back gallery.



## ...And beyond

The 1980s and '90s saw the rise of independent publishing houses like Seattle's Fantagraphics Books and Montréal's Drawn & Quarterly, which championed comics as art by publishing ongoing titles by idiosyncratic creators allowed to retain both copyright and creative control of their work.

In 1982 Fantagraphics began publishing **Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez's** influential comic book *Love and Rockets*, which continues to this day. Other cartoonists who produced long-running titles include **Daniel Clowes, Dame Darcy, Harvey Pekar, Adrian Tomine,** and **Jim Woodring**, shown in this section of the exhibition.



At the same time, alternative newspaper cartoonists pushed back against the limitations of mainstream syndication by making weekly strips that were ambitious, experimental, and focused on underrepresented experiences. Traditional newspaper strips were bound by format to a few panels and had shrunk in size since the 1960s, but alternative newspaper strips took a variety of formats. Cartoonists creating strips in this time include **Lynda Barry, Alison Bechdel, Matt Groening, Keith Knight,** and **Tony Millionaire**, on display in this section.

Serially published comic books or strips by singular artists allowed for long-form narratives, with complex themes and plots that spanned years or decades. These comics could be collected and bound in omnibus format. Other cartoonists conceived and published long-form comics as self-contained books. Two such artists in this section are **Ho Che Anderson** and **Kyle Baker**. Whatever their publishing history, bound, book-length comics became known as “graphic novels,” which proved a successful term for marketing comics in bookstores.



## Ho Che Anderson (1969–)

Born in London to Jamaican parents, Ho Che Anderson has produced comics in genres from science fiction to erotica, working for a variety of publishers. An experimenter with both style and media, Anderson moves from ink to paint and from caricature to realistic depictions within the same piece. His major work is *King*, a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that he worked on intermittently from 1993 to 2001. In recent years he has worked in feature films and animation as a director, writer, actor, and storyboard artist.

## **Ho Che Anderson** (1969–)

From *King 2*, 1999, 32

Ink on Bristol board with pasted text, McMullen  
Museum of Art, Boston College

In 1991, Fantagraphics Books, looking to expand into non-fiction comics, asked young cartoonist Ho Che Anderson to write and draw a comic biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Anderson titled the work *King*. Originally planned as a single volume, Anderson expanded it to three, working on the project through the 1990s to 2003.

Here the civil rights leader strategizes with his inner circle at the start of the 1963 Birmingham Campaign. Anderson created a fictional character, political organizer Caroline Longstreet, to be “a counterbalance to the King/Abernathy/Young boy’s club that formed the core of this story.” Anderson wished to portray King and his party as savvy and strategic; colorful dialogue conveys their worldliness.

Longstreet’s dress is patterned using mechanical tone, which is a printed sheet of adhesive film. The dialogue has been typeset and pasted in. At the top of the page in non-photo blue pencil, Anderson humorously notes the difficulties of producing so many pages.

## **Ho Che Anderson** (1969–)

From *King 2*, 1999, 33

Ink on Bristol board with pasted text, McMullen  
Museum of Art, Boston College

Anderson uses striking silhouettes and contrasting blacks and whites to provide visual interest to the lengthy dialogue between Wyatt Tee Walker and King. Walker was a founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a strategist for “Project C,” the plan for confrontation between activists and Birmingham officials. King and Walker discuss the tactics they can expect from Albert Boutwell, the new mayor of Birmingham, and Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene “Bull” Connor. The scene underscores Anderson’s characterization of King as a deliberative tactician.

In two of the silhouettes, the artist has drawn humorous faces in non-photo blue pencil, probably for his own amusement.

## Ho Che Anderson (1969–)

Untitled (King at podium), from *King 3*, 2000  
Mixed media on board, Ho Che Anderson  
Collection, The Ohio State University Billy  
Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Anderson depicts King at the podium, delivering his last speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” at the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee on the night of April 3, 1968. Across the top Anderson has written out several lines from the speech for reference. By 2003 Anderson composed his pages digitally. He recalls:

By the time I got to book three I had become invigorated by the idea of using Photoshop to composite the spreads, so I drew the individual panels in a large sketchbook I bought, and on some scraps of watercolor or typing paper or whatever.

Digital composition allowed Anderson greater freedom to experiment with individual panels while painting and then to crop and arrange them. The image below shows how the printed page looks.





## Alison Bechdel (1960–)

A dedicated draftsman as a child, Alison Bechdel went on to study at Oberlin College before moving to New York City. In 1983 she published the first weekly strip of the comic *Dykes to Watch Out For* in the feminist paper *WomaNews*. In 2006, Bechdel published her comic memoir *Fun Home* to critical acclaim; the book is regularly taught in literature courses. *Fun Home* was made into a Tony Award-winning musical in 2013. In 2014, Bechdel received a MacArthur Fellowship.

**Alison Bechdel** (1960–)

“Holiday on Ice,” *Dykes to Watch Out For*, 1999  
Ink on Bristol board, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland  
Cartoon Library & Museum, Gift of Alison Bechdel

Bechdel began her career in comics in 1983 with the long-running alternative newspaper strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*. At the time, the limited representation of homosexuality in mainstream culture tended toward pejorative stereotype. In her strip, Bechdel presented a wide range of gay women from different ages, ethnicities, careers, and political persuasions; the episodic comic followed these characters over the course of two decades until 2008.

This comic from 1999 shows Bechdel’s fondness for employing multiple story threads at once. The first three panels feature political activist Mo Testa and women’s studies professor Sydney Krukowski, whose on-and-off relationship was a series throughline. In the middle panels, Jezanna Ramsay, the manager of Madwimmin Books, contends with the new reality of online retail—Amazon was only a few years old when this strip was published.

**Alison Bechdel** (1960–)

From *Fun Home*, 2006

Pen and ink, watercolor, acetate overlay, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, Gift of Alison Bechdel

Bechdel had been working on *Fun Home* for seven years before she published the graphic novel. The book explores her complicated relationship with her father, her childhood in the family funeral home, her coming out as a lesbian in college, and her eventual discovery—only after his death—that her father was gay. As an intergenerational story, *Fun Home* recalls Spiegelman's *Maus*. In both narratives, the cartoonists depict their fathers' stories while also capturing their fraught relationships.

Bechdel literally embodied her characters' experiences: for almost every panel, she shot her own photo references using herself as a model, whether depicting her father, her mother, or herself. Bechdel also includes depictions of archival photos, maps, infographics, and illustrations (such as that of the circulatory system shown on this page).

In this sequence, young Alison is vacuuming the funeral home's offices; on the page that follows, her father calls her into the embalming room where he is preparing a corpse. Bechdel adopts a detached and objective tone in some of her most unsettling scenes.



**Alison Bechdel** (1960–)

From *Are You My Mother?*, 2011

Pen and ink, watercolor, acetate overlay, Jared Gardner and Elizabeth Hewitt Collection of Comic Art, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Ironically borrowing her title from the well-known author P. D. Eastman's picture book, Bechdel followed her father's story with a volume devoted to her mother. On this page, Bechdel depicts herself emotionally identifying her therapist with her mother, before presenting and analyzing a quotation on the therapeutic concept of transference. The panels jump from memory to the "present" and to annotation; all are equivalently weighted.

Both this page and that nearby from *Fun Home* reveal Bechdel's process for preparing her art for publication. She draws in non-photo blue pencil. Then she applies ink with a pen and a brush. Gray and red tones are overlays, with text the final overlay.



## Jim Woodring (1952–)

Jim Woodring published an enigmatic page in *Weirdo* before starting his own comic, *Jim*, in 1986. Attuned to what he calls “apparitions” from a young age, and a practitioner of Vedanta meditation, Woodring is fascinated by dreams and visions. Many of his early comics were transcriptions of his dreams. His major creation has been Frank, a cat-like character who navigates surreal and wordless comics. The breakout comic *Frank in the River* was published by the short-lived publishing house, Tundra, in 1992, featuring gorgeous, saturated colors not common in comics at the time.

**Jim Woodring** (1952–)

*Immigrants: Welcome to Our Shores*, 2015  
Charcoal on paper, Collection of Scott Eder

Since the mid-2000s Woodring has divided his time between comics for publication and drawings and paintings for gallery sale. While the latter are single scenes, they still embody narrative. In this meticulously rendered drawing, an enormous frog sits on a shoreline, disgorging a group of naked people; one smiling woman is about to set foot on land. The title indicates these figures are immigrants arriving on “our” shores, thereby inserting the viewer into the tableaux. Woodring happened to be filmed drawing this work; you may see this footage in the video theater.

Frogs are a central motif in Woodring’s personal symbology. In his youth, he had a vision of a cartoon frog with one eye closed appearing in the light of a slide projector at the end of a college lecture on ancient architecture. He went home and “drew that frog over and over again.”



The frog as depicted on the cover of *Jim* 1, 1986

## **Jim Woodring** (1952–)

From “Particular Mind,” Jim, 1989  
India ink on Duralene spray-mounted on  
drawing paper, Collection of Jim Woodring

In this page from a longer story Woodring draws himself as a hirsute, disheveled man in pajamas. He emerges from a dark tunnel in which he has done something so horrific the first two panels are left black. Despairing about his base impulses, he hears comforting words from a magnanimous voice. The speaker appears to Jim, who recognizes him, but remains hidden out of frame.

Many of Woodring’s early comics were transcriptions of the artist’s dreams. He called these his “autojournal”; he drew them without planning ahead or editing, freeing his mind of thought. His process is akin to the automatic writing espoused by surrealist André Breton. Like Woodring, the surrealists were interested in suppressing conscious thought to allow the subconscious mind to assume authority. In these stories, Woodring depicts himself variously as a well-meaning naïf, a grandiloquent buffoon, and even a loose cannon. Woodring renders these stories in supple, flowing pen strokes. To him:

A pen line is different from a brush,  
because it’s really connected to you.  
With a brush, there’s kind of a flexible  
shaft that gives you this kind of  
prosthetic smoothness. The pen just  
records every movement you make. And  
it’s so exciting to watch those things  
flow out of this nib...

## Jim Woodring (1952–)

Cover, *Frank 4*, 2001

Marker on illustration board, Collection of Scott Eder

This is the cover for the last issue of *Frank*. The titular hero holds aloft a detached eyeball; emerging from the frog's mouth is a writhing mass of brightly colored tendrils and organic forms. One of Woodring's most distinctive visual motifs is his conception of *jiva*—the metaphysical embodiment of being as described in classical Hindu teachings. Woodring most often depicts his *jivas* as personal animating forces, analogous to souls, which can emerge from a being's body in moments of trauma. Physically, they resemble top-shaped, flexible spindles from which may protrude other symmetrical features. It is unclear if the forms in the drawing here are a *jiva*, but they do emerge from within the frog, bursting with life in contrast to their sickly host.



Jim Woodring, *Jivas*, 2005

**Jim Woodring** (1952–)

From *Frank in the River*, 1992

Marker on illustration board, Collection of Jim Woodring

In these two pages, Woodring's mute protagonist Frank follows the enigmatic character Manhog into an underground waterway. It is the dead of night and Frank suspects that the Manhog is up to no good. The lush colors were achieved with markers and are highly sensitive to light. The comic garnered notoriety, winning two Harvey Awards for Best Single Issue and Best Colorist in 1993.

Woodring calls Frank a “generic anthropomorph,” a human-animal cartoon in its most typical form. Of note are Frank's oversized shoes and kid gloves, a feature he shares with other anthropomorphic characters such as Mickey Mouse.



## Daniel Clowes (1961–)

Clowes's cartoons are inspired by the cool irony of 1950s and '60s outsider culture: beatniks, exploitation films, hot rod art, and pre-Comics Code Authority comics. Clowes's solo anthology *Eightball* (1989–2004), featured short humor, parody, nightmarish serials, and eventually ambitious long-form stories that resist categorization, including his most famous work, *Ghost World*. Leaving serialization behind, in recent years Clowes has adopted a more naturalistic style and produced self-contained graphic novels published as single books.

**Daniel Clowes** (1961–)

From “The Gold Mommy,” Eightball 14, 1998  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Glenn Bray

“The Gold Mommy” is a short, mysterious story narrated by the one-off character, Yerkes. Clowes’s comic follows a dreamlike sequence of strange and unexplained events as Yerkes navigates a series of urban adventures.

On this page, Yerkes goes swimming at the *Statue of the Republic*, Daniel Chester French’s 1918 sculpture which recreates his earlier, much larger work for Chicago’s 1893 Columbian Exposition. Clowes was born and spent much of his life in Chicago and wrote an earlier comic about his ambivalent feelings toward the city. The inclusion of the real-life work by French, an icon of progress and modernity, throws the sordid action of the story into relief.



**Daniel Clowes** (1961–)

*The Strange Story of the Suicide*

*Machine* (after Jack Bilbo), 1998

Gouache on board, Collection of Glenn Bray

This colorful work interprets an earlier drawing (below) by German artist Jack Bilbo (1907–67) that appeared in his collection of writings and drawings, *Out of My Mind* (1946). In 1941, Bilbo established the Modern Art Gallery in London, which displayed artists like Kurt Schwitters and Pablo Picasso. Bilbo's own art featured absurd, fantastic creatures drawn in a childlike manner.

Clowes shares with Bilbo a curvilinear, flat style and a taste for the cartoonish and the grotesque. In contrast to Bilbo, Clowes uses bright, almost plastic colors, and cleanly defined surfaces; he streamlines and balances the image by omitting such elements from Bilbo as the two skeletons, and he re-proportions the figures and background. Clowes studied fine art at the Pratt Institute and incorporated painting into his cover designs on many occasions.



**Daniel Clowes** (1961–)

“A Preview of the Coming  
Apocalypse,” *Blab!* 4, 1989

Ink on Bristol board with mechanical  
tone, Collection of Scott Eder

In this opening spread, Clowes gives a dryly ironic take on the Rapture—an eschatological doctrine held by some Evangelical Protestants about the calamitous end of the world and ascension of believers into heaven. While these beliefs had been around in various forms for centuries, in the 1970s and 1980s they became more popular after the publication of the bestselling 1970 book *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey and the 1972 film *A Thief in the Night*. Clowes presents the fantastical narrative with flat credulity, turning it into a lurid disaster story. The screaming figure with the mark of the beast on his head could be from a grindhouse movie poster.

This early example of Clowes’s work shows many of his themes and influences. Clowes focused on short ironic pieces for many years. The cartoonist’s style borrows from mid-century modernism, with flat, mostly unmodeled forms and supple and precise linework.

**Daniel Clowes** (1961–)

Cover, *Eightball* 11, 1995

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Glenn Bray

Begun in 1989, *Eightball* was a free-wheeling anthology of stories by Clowes. During the comic's twenty-three-issue, fifteen-year run, Clowes's drawing and writing changed dramatically, becoming more ambitious in his themes, characters, and plotting, as well as more varied in style from story to story.

This cover shows Clowes at his wackiest, with eclectic one-off stories like the ribald "Happy Fisherman" (upper left) and "Ectomorph" (bottom right) starring Clowes himself ruminating on the woes of being too thin. While not depicted on the cover, it was this issue that presented the first story in the acclaimed "Ghost World" series that became the basis for a popular movie adaptation in 2001.



## Kyle Baker (1965–)

With one foot in mainstream commercial comics and another in independents, Kyle Baker's career has spanned superheroes, hip-hop videos, classic literature adaptations, thrillers, and a biography of Nat Turner. Baker began as an intern at Marvel Comics, then studied for two years at the School of Visual Arts in New York and briefly freelanced with graphic designer Milton Glaser. In 1991 he published *Why I Hate Saturn*, an ironic examination of 1990s hipster culture. An inventive artist, Baker was one of the first to compose his comics digitally.

**Kyle Baker** (1957–)

From *Why I Hate Saturn*, 1990

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of David Hughes

*Why I Hate Saturn*, written in the familiar style of a sitcom, was Baker's first graphic novel, for which he won the comics professionals' Eisner Award.

In this scene, cynical urbanites Anne and Rick are at a nightclub, discussing the band, other clubbers, and their lives. Baker borrows television composition in the close-ups, which allow him to focus on the ever-changing faces of his characters.

Baker is known both for his supple draftsmanship and elaborate compositions. For this page he pastes hand-lettered text to the drawing; he also uses decorative border tape which he highlights with painted opaque white. In the margin are three registration marks, used to align this image with a separate color plate.

**Kyle Baker** (1957–)

*Al Space*, 1990

Ink on Bristol board and pasted text,  
Collection of David Hughes

Baker produced a small number of *Al Space* comics, another attempt at an episodic feature that might be syndicated. Al is a smug spaceman who hands out questionable advice, in contrast to the wisdom one might expect from, say, Superman. Baker, like Chris Ware, ironically appropriates the trappings of a traditional superhero to parody such characters' moral certitude.

This page comprises many elements pasted together; the adhesive has caused the page to yellow. The header, featuring an apparent photo of a planet within the title letters, was produced digitally. Baker would go on to become one of the earliest comic artists to produce work in Photoshop; he also was an early adopter of Flash to produce digital animation.



## Adrian Tomine (1974–)

Japanese American cartoonist Adrian Tomine began self-publishing minicomics at age sixteen. His knack for understated, quiet storytelling made these limited printings highly sought after and attracted the attention of Drawn & Quarterly, which published an omnibus of his minis as well as Tomine's new regular title, *Optic Nerve*, produced by the artist while he was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley. He has achieved great success as an illustrator, particularly for the *New Yorker*, which frequently features his art on its cover.

**Adrian Tomine** (1974–)

From “Sleepwalk,” *Optic Nerve* 1  
(Drawn & Quarterly), 1995

Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

In this page, Mark receives a phone call from his ex-girlfriend on his twenty-third birthday. Tomine is known for his slice-of-life comics, which recall the short stories of Raymond Carver in presenting sharply observed character moments often without providing plot resolution.

In the top tier Mark moves from left to right in panels with a continuous space. In the second tier, the panel backgrounds are reversed as he returns to hang up his phone. This is analogous to a tracking shot in film.



**Adrian Tomine** (1974–)

*Optic Nerve* minicomics 1–3, 1991–94

Photocopied and stapled comics, Collection of Scott Eder

Print runs of minicomics are copied and bound by the artist personally. By the late 1970s, photocopiers using dry toner made affordable and high-fidelity copies of hand-drawn art possible. Before this, making an edition of comics required access to a commercial printing press; but now cartoonists could produce small runs by hand on a much smaller budget. The resultant minis were sold for a few dollars, traded, or given away. Many young cartoonists in this exhibition learned their craft this way, including Julie Doucet, Mary Fleener, Daniel Clowes, and Jim Woodring; drawn by its do-it-yourself ethos, even established artists dabbled in the form.

*Optic Nerve* featured short slice-of-life stories, often about young city dwellers dealing with bad jobs or troubled relationships. Many of his stories were Asian Americans. Over seven self-published issues, Tomine developed his skills, both artistically and as a writer.



## Matt Groening (1954–)

Matt Groening is best known for creating the impressively successful and long-running animated television series *The Simpsons*, but in the early 1980s he was an alternative newspaper cartoonist whose strip *Life in Hell* was self-published before being picked up by the *Los Angeles Reader* in 1980, and eventually syndicated. This led to Groening being tapped by James L. Brooks to create the series of animated shorts that eventually became *The Simpsons*. Groening was an early champion of Lynda Barry's work; in the 1990s Groening's own comic imprint, Zongo, published work by Gary Panter.

**Matt Groening** (1959–)

*Life in Hell: Dead Squirrel*, 1986

Ink on Bristol board and board, Scott Jonas  
Collection of Comics Art, The Ohio State University  
Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

In this comic, the one-eared rabbit Bongo has a crisis of faith. Groening uses the character of Bongo as a touchstone for the anxieties of childhood. Groening often examines the theme of youthful faith and doubt. Bongo's understanding here of mortality is naive, but still resonates with adult readers.

Groening varied the style of *Life in Hell* greatly, from one large drawing to a patchwork of tiny pictures and text. Here, Groening uses a 9 × 9 inch grid and the same stationary view for panels 2–8. Groening's approach to drawing is highly idiographic—simple design that tends toward the conceptual or symbolic. In the background, he draws a tree in its barest recognizable form; the ground is a series of swells. Bongo is also a character drawn to simply represent “rabbit.”

## Gary Panter (1950–)

Production sketch, *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*, 1986

Ink on paper, Collection of Glenn Bray

From 1986 to 1990, Panter worked as art director and set designer for the CBS Saturday morning show *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*. Along with other members of the production team, he won Daytime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Art Direction/Set Decoration/Set Design in 1987 and 1988. Panter wrote: “For the Pee-Wee sets we try to put the viewer in a three-dimensional collage of American kitsch and painting styles of many eras. Though the sets are very chaotic there are really many composed visual elements; color, texture, scale and material. We wanted to create a place where there are great objects and shape compositions everywhere the camera might point. We needed to make a place that would have room for the cast and crew to do their jobs and was exciting to be in.”



Completed set for *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*, 1986

After **Matt Groening** (1954–)  
Animation cell for *The Simpsons*, 1990  
Ink and paint on acetate, The Ohio State University  
Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

The long-running animated series *The Simpsons* began as a series of shorts on *The Tracey Ullman Show* in 1987. Groening originally planned to use characters from his comic strip *Life in Hell* (on display nearby). While waiting to pitch his ideas to producer James L. Brooks, Groening decided instead to create a new set of characters so that he could retain ownership of his old ones, and hurriedly sketched the Simpsons family. This cel is from season 1, episode 6, “Moaning Lisa.” In pre-digital production, a large number of artists contributed to the thousands of frames of painted art needed to film an episode. Production cels are highly sought after by collectors.

Left: **Will Eisner** (1917–2005)  
*Comics and Sequential Art*  
Poorhouse, 1985

Right: **Scott McCloud** (1960–)  
*Understanding Comics:  
The Invisible Art*  
Tundra, 1993

These two books were influential to cartoonists produced during the era examined in this exhibition. Both served as practical guides to the creation of comic art and as treatises for the academic field of comics studies.

Eisner is a cartoonist famous for his syndicated comic insert *The Spirit* (1940–51), credited with popularizing the term “graphic novel.” Eisner aimed his book at practitioners; his discussions of time, imagery, and framing, however, were seminal to later attempts at establishing a grammar for the comic form.

McCloud wrote his book for general readers and critics. He presents, in comic form, a series of essays discussing the definition, history, and methodology of comics, which he calls “sequential art.” Important concepts include visual literacy, iconic and realistic depictions, transitions between comic panels, and how the medium presents time, both within single panels and in sequence.



## Keith Knight (1966–)

Keith Knight's alternative newspaper strips, *The K-Chronicles* and *(Th)ink*, employ a loose cartoony style and breezy humor while dealing with complicated subjects of class, politics, and race. Often using incidents from Knight's own life, the fictionalized persona of his comics encounters systemic racism and grapples with personal identity while examining some chronic issues of inter-race communications. His comics have recently served as the inspiration for the Hulu series *Woke*, created and produced by Knight.

Left: **Keith Knight** (1966–)

*The K Chronicles: Nice Guys Finish Broke*, 1996  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Keith Knight

Knight depicts himself as a main character in most of his stories. The captions, as well, are in Knight's voice. This allows him to comment critically on his thoughts and actions in an amusing way. As with other self-depictions in this exhibition, such as those by Julie Doucet and Peter Bagge, this comic invites readers to consider how the character on the page is a construction whose correlation to the actual artist is complex.

Center: **Keith Knight** (1966–)

*The K Chronicles: Burning Man*, 1996  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Keith Knight

Burning Man emerged from various sources in the 1980s, but the annual festival as it is known today started in 1991 when it was first held in Black Rock City, Nevada, a temporary village that has been repopulated every year since. Originally an underground gathering of individuals, as Burning Man aged it became organized and increasingly represented by celebrity influencers. By 1996 when Knight made this comic, many "burners" complained that it had lost its fringe bona fides. By imagining an anti-Burning Man in which San Francisco's bohemians engage in mainstream culture, Knight playfully considers the dichotomy between insiders and outsiders.



Left: **Keith Knight** (1966–)  
*The K Chronicles: Boston*, 1996  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Keith Knight

Knight was born in Malden, Massachusetts, and spent his younger years in the Boston area. It is notable that the local cuisine he praises mostly consists of street and diner food. Knight's interest here, and in many of his comics, is in vernacular culture and how it creates a sense of place.

Right: **Keith Knight** (1966–)  
*The K Chronicles: Gallery Opening*, 1993  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Keith Knight

Knight wrote this comic, about the food and drink perks of gallery openings, while he was living in Boston. Knight finds comedy in the contrast between the aspirations of the gallery and the motivations of the attendees.

This is an early *K-Chronicles* comic, and Knight is still developing his style. His early work, like Jaime Hernandez's, features more hatched shading, while his later work is marked by heavier use of flat black.

Right: **Keith Knight** (1966–)  
*The K Chronicles: Caldwell*, 1995  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Keith Knight

Knight's comics often use silly, broad humor to explore difficult issues of race. Here, mime Milton Caldwell finds himself caught between racial tensions and expectations. Many of Knight's strips are reflections on how individuals are pressured to conform, both by their own social groups and by others.

Knight draws his comics using markers, which are a fit for his loose, rubbery approach to figures. The artist credits the animator Chuck Jones as an influence. Other of his childhood favorites include newspaper strip cartoonists Charles Schulz and Garry Trudeau.



## Jaime Hernandez (1959–)

Youngest Hernandez brother Jaime—who sometimes signs his work Xaime—has devoted his comics primarily to a series called “Locas,” which focuses on the lives of Maggie and Hopey, two punk Latinas from Southern California. Jaime’s early stories featured fantastical elements such as superheroes and lost worlds; over time, they became more naturalistic and focused on his characters’ complex web of relationships. Jaime is known for his dramatic use of blacks and whites and his expressive figures; his style draws from eclectic sources, including the work of cartoonists Hank Ketcham (*Dennis the Menace*) and Dan DeCarlo (*Archie*).

**Jaime Hernandez** (1959–)

From “Ninety-Three Million Miles from the Sun,”

*Love and Rockets* 1, no. 30, 1989

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Liam Otten

Penny Century is a larger-than-life figure who travels the globe adventuring. Here she is depicted in a straightjacket, a sign to readers that her manic lifestyle is not sustainable.

“Ninety-Three Million Miles from the Sun” is the distance between Earth and its star; a fact referenced obliquely at the end of the comic when the character Hopey asks, “Is that sun getting closer, or does it just seem like it is?”

An initial full-page panel with the comic’s title is known as a “splash page,” and such pages are highly sought by collectors, since they often stand alone well. This drawing shows Hernandez’s characteristic mastery of blacks and whites. The page is signed “the Fake Santa Claus,” one of Jaime’s joking pen names.

**Jaime Hernandez** (1959–)

From “Mechan-X,” *Love and Rockets* 2, 1982  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

This is a page from one of the first of Jaime’s comics about his characters Maggie and Hopey. Eventually these stories, collectively called “Locas,” would feature hundreds of characters and span decades. This fantastical story is told primarily as a series of diary entries by Maggie, a mechanic working in a strange world in which rockets and flying cars exist alongside naturalistic depictions of Latinx life in Southern California. Maggie has journeyed into a primordial jungle to work on a long-abandoned spaceship; she and her team have been commissioned by a mysterious client, there is an apatosaurus stuck in a tar pit nearby, and the fictional country of Zhato is on the verge of revolution. Into this roiling confusion appears Penny Century, Maggie’s sometimes friend who wants to be a superhero; she has adopted another dinosaur.

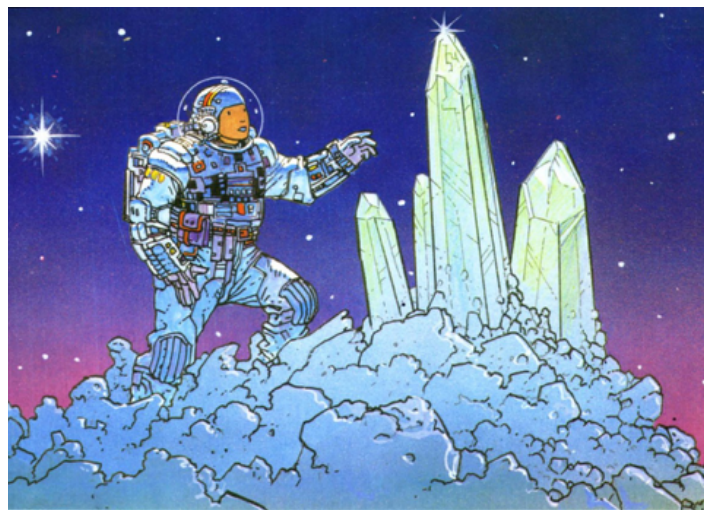
This page shows Jaime’s gift for figure drawing and his whimsical play between realistically drawn characters and incredible settings. In this early drawing Jaime employs hatching and stippling; eventually he limits himself to stark black and white.

## Jaime Hernandez (1959–)

From “Out o’ Space,” *Love and Rockets* 1, no. 4, 1983  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

This whimsical story features the space-adventurer Rocky and her robot Fumble. Here the two friends improbably jump from planetoid to planetoid, searching for one suitably large. The story is remarkable for its Black protagonist; unfortunately, African Americans were largely absent from mainstream comics of the time. The Hernandez Brothers are well-known for their diverse characters.

In content and style, this story suggests the short, surreal fantasies that appeared in the influential French magazine *Métal hurlant*, many of which would be reprinted in English in the anthology *Heavy Metal*. In particular, the cartoonist Moebius (Jean Giraud) is known for his elliptical, enigmatic, and dreamlike science fiction comics.



Drawing by Moebius

**Jaime Hernandez** (1959–)

From “Wigwam Bam, Part 3,”

*Love and Rockets* 1, no. 35, 1991

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Liam Otten

In this page, Izzy is obsessively cutting missing persons notices from the sides of milk cartons. One of the photos is of her friend (and major character) Hopey, who left town to tour with a punk band and has not been heard of in over a year. The bottom two panels feature Ray and Litos discussing their problematic relationships with women.

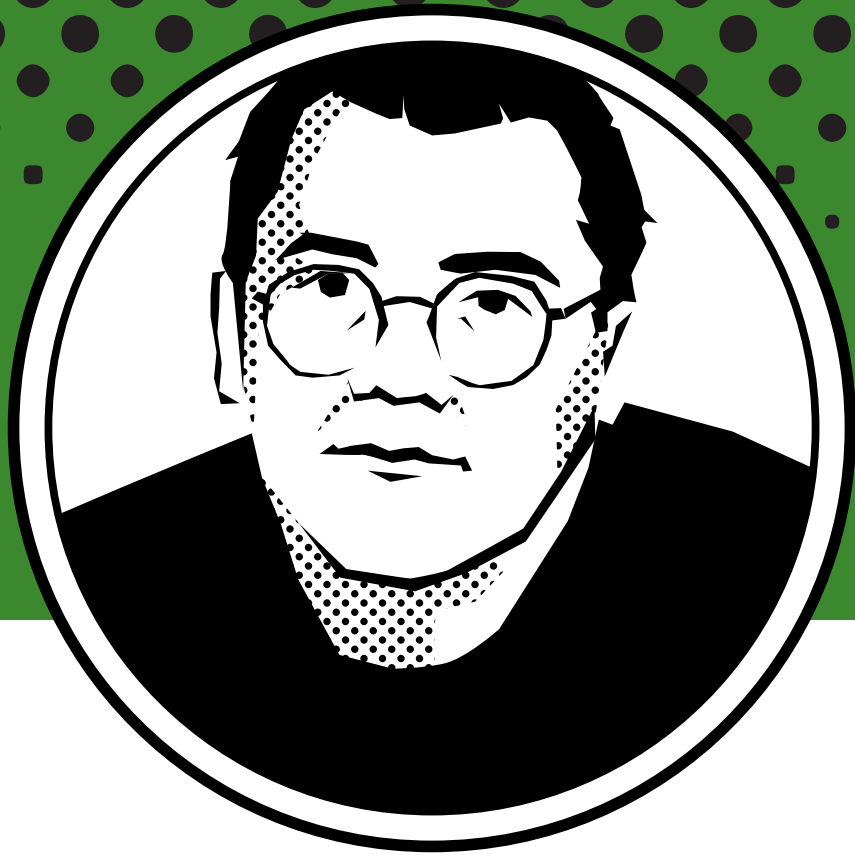
This page is most remarkable for its central panel, which reveals the depth of Izzy’s fixation. Scrutiny of Izzy’s silhouette reveals an earlier drawing in which she faces forward. Jaime seldom makes large changes like this to the inked page and so must have been dissatisfied with the earlier version. These sorts of artifacts of the drawing process would not show up in the printed comic and are one reason collectors value the original works.

Left: **Jaime Hernandez** (1959–)  
From “Wigwam Bam, Part 5,”  
*Love and Rockets* 1, no. 37, 1992  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Liam Otten

In the first panel, the character Nami Matsumoto despairs over ever winning the affections of Doyle Blackburn. In the other panels, Doyle discusses leaving town—perhaps by jumping a train—with his friend Ray.

This page demonstrates Jaime’s technique of maintaining the same point of view over several panels, analogous to a fixed camera in cinema. Ray and the bush to the left remain stationary while Doyle and the train move in the background. This creates a strong visual rhythm and also allows Jaime to exactly pace the dialogue and action.





## Gilbert Hernandez (1957–)

Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez (and occasionally their elder brother Mario) are known as Los Bros Hernandez. Since 1982, together they have produced the comic book *Love and Rockets*. Gilbert—also called Beto—is best known for his sprawling series of interrelated comics collectively called “Heartbreak Soup,” set in the small fictional town of Palomar, reminiscent of the isolated villages found in the writings of Gabriel García Márquez and Rudolfo Anaya. Gilbert’s expressive linework and dynamic, exaggerated figures borrow stylistic elements from cartoonists Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby.

**Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–)

From “Human Diastrophism, Part

6,” *Love and Rockets* 1, no. 26, 1988

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Liam Otten

On this page Heraclio walks home with his daughter Guadalupe; the two discuss another villager, Tonantzín, who has left Palomar. When Guadalupe mentions she thought she had seen Tonantzín under a tree in the village, Heraclio is taken aback: this is Pintor’s tree, under which ghosts appear to wave to the living. In the middle panels, Guadalupe is introduced to her baby sister by Heraclio’s wife, Carmen. Since Guadalupe was only recently in the story revealed to be Heraclio’s illegitimate child, the act of motherly acceptance by Carmen is significant. In the final panels, which take place in New York City, Americans Howard and Cathy react to news that a young woman has set herself on fire at a protest rally—it is left to the reader to make the inference that this is Tonantzín.

This page, from near the end of “Human Diastrophism,” demonstrates Gilbert’s elliptical approach to storytelling. Even a reader who is familiar with the characters and story up to now has to deduce the plot and tease out connections.

**Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–)

*Tonantzín*, 1991

Silkscreen, Private collection

In a desolate street in Palomar, Tonantzín Villaseñor leans against a wall. Tonantzín is a central character of indigenous heritage in many of Gilbert’s “Heartbreak Soup” stories. She is a working-class seller of fried babosos (slugs), a local delicacy. In early stories she is naïve and libertine, but she becomes politically radicalized after being assaulted; eventually she immolates herself at a political protest. By the time Gilbert made this print, his character had been dead for several years, a point familiar to regular readers. Tonantzín’s ghost has appeared in Palomar, and her portrayal here is poignant and ambiguous—is she alive or dead?

In making limited edition prints—Jaime made a companion piece at the same time— Los Bros Hernandez bridged the cultural gulf between comics and traditional “fine arts.”

**Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–)

From “Human Diastrophism, Part

2,” *Love and Rockets* 1, no. 22, 1987

Ink on Bristol board with pasted text,  
Collection of Liam Otten

In this sequence, the dapper Heraclio, music teacher for the small Central American town of Palomar, notices the artwork of Humberto, a poor, uneducated young man with natural talent. Heraclio, university-trained, has brought Humberto art books of modernist European masters: Klee, Miro, Kandinsky, and Modigliani. Humberto is left to wrestle with how his own work compares while Heraclio leaves, jealous of Humberto’s skills.

Palomar, not located in an identifiable country, is isolated and outside of time. A humble village, it is a magical place where supernatural events happen with regularity; it is similar to settings in works of magical realism. This page shows the introduction of cosmopolitanism and world culture to Palomar. It is unclear if Humberto will become a better or worse artist from his exposure to the canon.

**Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–)

From “Poison River, Part 2,”

*Love and Rockets* 1, no. 30, 1989

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Liam Otten

“Poison River” tells the complex childhood story of Luba, a major character in Hernandez’s “Heartbreak Soup” stories. In the two upper rows, young Luba discusses life goals with her blind aunt, Hilda. At the bottom, Luba’s cousin Ophelia rummages through the few inheritances left by Luba’s dead father.

In Gilbert’s world, characters can be noble and selfish in turn. Ophelia is an idealist who hopes to spread political revolution, but she is also resentful of Luba, who recently joined her household and who requires care. Long-time readers of the “Heartbreak Soup” stories know that in adulthood Luba will become the dominant one in the relationship between the cousins.

**Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–)

From “Poison River, Part 2,”

*Love and Rockets* 1, no. 30, 1989

Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Liam Otten

This page depicts the shocking aftermath of an attack. In the first panel, young Luba embraces her wounded cousin Ophelia, who has been left for dead by thugs who also assaulted and killed her friends for their communist beliefs. Their corpses are laid out for medical examination in the third panel. Ophelia writes a letter to her lover Rico explaining that she has run away to escape further violence.

While the “Heartbreak Soup” stories are not set in a specific country, politically motivated violence and civil wars were widespread and devastating throughout Central America in the 1970s and 1980s, with bloodshed in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Grenada.

**Peter Bagge** (1957–), author,  
and **Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–) artist

From *Yeah!*, 1999

Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

In the late 1990s, as father of a preteen girl, Bagge embarked on an all-ages comic book: *Yeah!*, the story of three young women from New Jersey who are famous rock stars on other planets, yet unknown at home. Gilbert Hernandez drew the series. Both he and Bagge fondly remembered the breezy Archie comics of their youth. *Yeah!* attempted to capture the same goofy charm, but with aliens. In this page the members of *Yeah!* sign autographs after playing their gig on Uranus.

For this comic, Hernandez uses a looser, more cartoony style than in his *Love and Rockets* work shown in the final section of this exhibition, with fewer blacks and no shading, since the comic was to be colored by Bagge's wife, Joanne. The alien that kisses a band member through the air bubble in the panel at bottom left is modeled on promotional images for Sea-Monkeys, a form of brine shrimp sold as pets. Through the 1960s and '70s, ads for Sea-Monkeys appeared in most mainstream comic books, depicting the creatures as fish-like humanoids.



1970s comic book advertisement for Sea-Monkeys

**Gilbert Hernandez** (1957–) and  
**Jaime Hernandez** (1959–)

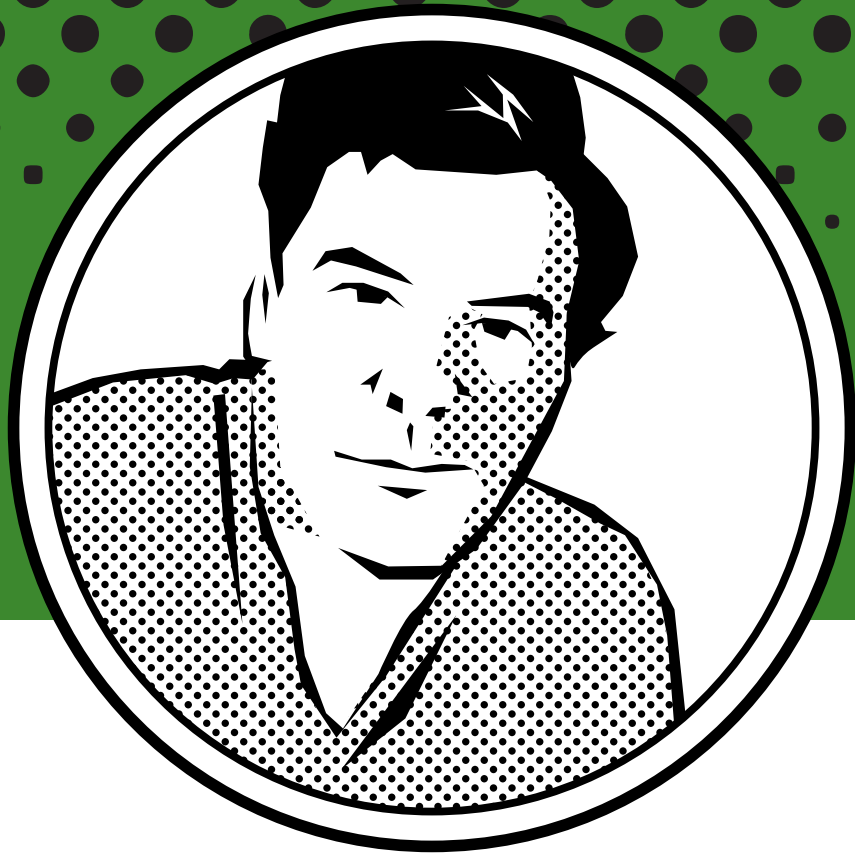
Cover color separations, *Love and  
Rockets* 1, no. 5, 1982  
Acetate overlays on board, Private collection

Most issues of *Love and Rockets* feature pictures by each brother on their cover. Here, Gilbert's back cover shows a fanciful sci-fi confrontation between two figures with mechanical features. Instead of weapons they hold popsicle sticks or emery boards. Many of Gilbert's early stories were one-off fantasies, influenced by the surreal stories appearing in *Heavy Metal* magazine. His signature resembles a graffiti tag.

Jaime's front cover depicts his character Maggie piloting a flying device. Jaime's early stories often featured robots, spaceships, and superheroes; a world in which Maggie often felt estranged and inadequate. In later years both brothers wrote more naturalistic stories, although they occasionally included fantastical elements.

This work comprises a set of *color separations*, preparatory designs used in color printing. The original drawing has been photographically transferred to the black sheet; the remaining sheets contain shades of transparent cyan, magenta, and yellow, which when overlaid produce various colors of the printed work.





## Tony Millionaire (1956–)

Born Scott Richardson, Tony Millionaire spent his early years in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he developed a taste for maritime subjects and Victorian styles. A major influence was the work of John Gruelle, the creator and illustrator of the *Raggedy Ann* series of books. He studied painting at the Massachusetts College of Art. In 1994, he began his long-running alternative comic *Maakies*, which featured the nautical adventures of Uncle Gabby (a monkey) and Drinky Crow (a crow). In his *Sock Monkey* comics, begun in 1998, Millionaire presented gentler, quieter versions of these characters as the titular Sock Monkey and Mr. Crow.

## **Tony Millionaire** (1956–)

From “The Hunters,” *Sock Monkey* 3, no. 1, 2000, 8, 11  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

Tony Millionaire’s *Sock Monkey* tells all-ages stories featuring the cartoonist’s favorite childhood toys, a sock monkey named Uncle Gabby and Mr. Crow, a plush crow with buttons for eyes. The stories are rendered in Millionaire’s trademark finely hatched pen style, inspired by classic children’s book illustrators as well as by the techniques of architectural rendering, which is one of Millionaire’s specialties.

In “The Hunters,” Uncle Gabby and Mr. Crow “go a-hunting,” yet after deciding they “shall not go after anything so ambitious as a tiger,” they set their sights on game “nearer to [their] own size,” namely salamanders. In the first page here, two soon-to-be-hunted salamanders are shown disrupting some genteel insects’ tea party.

In the second page, one of the salamanders along with insects and other small critters, caught by Uncle Gabby in a butterfly net, are brought home by the triumphant hunters.



## Dame Darcy (1971–)

Darcy Megan Stanger, who goes by the pen name Dame Darcy, is a musician, filmmaker, dollmaker, cabaret performer, and artist of the long-running comic book *Meat Cake*. She studied at the San Francisco Art Institute where one of her teachers was the video artist George Kuchar. Her macabre and humorous comics feature a cast of eccentric characters drawn from fairy tales and carnival sideshows. Her drawings feature fine pen lines, attenuated and unstable figures and are often compared to those of the artist/illustrator Edward Gorey (1925–2000).

**Dame Darcy** (1971–)

“The Days of the Week,” *Meat Cake* 2, 1994  
Ink on Bristol board, Private collection

These pages adapt a short story by Hans Christian Anderson in which the days of the week are depicted as a series of people. Anderson imagines each as a broadly drawn character whose duties and personalities are appropriate to the day personified. The original story draws upon folkways such as attributing Thursday to the Norse god Thor and the observance of the Irish custom of “Bachelor’s Day,” Leap Day, on which it was permissible for women to propose to men. In the opening caption, Dame Darcy references the English nursery rhyme “Monday’s child”: having been born on a Saturday, she is “destined to be a workhorse” despite her desire to be a “high steppin filly.”

Darcy’s comics are densely packed with thick hatching, decorative filigrees, and text that fills most of the available space. She rules neither her panel borders nor her lettering, which gives the effect of the graphic elements being unvariegated and equal. This comic features many of Darcy’s interests: folkways and the occult, humor mixed with the grotesque, and a love of Edwardian fashion.



## Harvey Pekar (1939–2010)

Harvey Pekar spent almost four decades writing comics about his life, often focusing on its most mundane aspects. His long-running comic book *American Splendor* was first published in 1976, but he gained notoriety and a national audience in 1986 with the publication of his comics by Doubleday and a series of appearances on *Late Night with David Letterman*. Eventually his comics would form the basis of an experimental and highly acclaimed movie, also titled *American Splendor* (2003). Unlike the other cartoonists in this exhibition, Pekar did not draw his own stories; rather, he worked with many high-profile artists.

**Harvey Pekar** (1939–2010), author, and  
**Robert Crumb** (1943–), artist  
“The Last Supper,” *American Splendor* 8, 1983  
Ink on Bristol board with mechanical  
tone, Collection of Scott Eder

In this comic Pekar depicts a humorous overheard conversation in the Veterans Administration Hospital filing department. Pekar captures the sounds and cadences of the speakers using transliteration. Crumb’s approach in his art is unhurried, drawing the action out over the page. The point of view shifts from panel to panel, imitating the way the character Rudy sometimes faces his coworkers and sometimes looks away.

Pekar often examines small moments in his stories. He is interested in how mundane events and exchanges provide insight and understanding. As he put it, “ordinary life is pretty complex stuff.”

**Harvey Pekar** (1939–2010), author, and  
**Robert Crumb** (1943–), artist  
Cover, *American Splendor* 5, 1980  
Ink on Bristol board, Collection of Scott Eder

A favorite story setting and subject for Pekar were the Veterans Administration Hospital, where he worked as a file clerk, and his interactions there with doctors and co-workers. On this cover Pekar talks with a doctor who wants to contribute jokes to the comic book. Pekar transliterates the doctor's thick Eastern European accent not to mock him but out of affection. His own parents were Jewish immigrants from Poland, and his first language was Yiddish. In the caption on the lower left, Pekar calls the doctor a tummler, a Yiddish word for someone who makes things happen, an entertainer who encourages audience participation—analogueous to a master of ceremonies.

This cover is illustrated by his close collaborator Robert Crumb, whose work appears earlier in this exhibition. Like Pekar, Crumb is attracted to the commonplace and mundane. He depicts the two conversationalists as disheveled and slouching.

**Harvey Pekar** (1939–2010), author, and  
**Val Mayerik** (1950–), artist

From “Hysteria,” *American Splendor* 12, 1987  
Ink on paper, Collection of David Hughes

In this comic Pekar is talking with an editor at an unnamed magazine about the profile they want to write about him. Worried that the magazine is only interested because he has published a collection of comics through the major publishing house, Doubleday, Pekar has second thoughts. Pekar’s stubborn commitment to his conception of authenticity is a common theme in his comics. In this, as in all aspects of his life, Pekar is self-aware and self-critical. Both Pekar the character and Pekar the autobiographer know that his principles are at odds with his interests.

“Hysteria” is illustrated by Val Mayerik, known for his fantasy stories for Marvel and *Heavy Metal*; he was the original artist for Marvel’s character Howard the Duck. This page shows his feathery use of contour lines and his gift for dramatic poses, even when drawing a phone conversation. This page was inked by another artist, James Sherman, who used a marker, which is not as colorfast as India ink: the lines have a slight purple hue from age.





## Lynda Barry (1956–)

Growing up in a working-class neighborhood in Seattle, Lynda Barry began cartooning in grade school. At Evergreen State College, Barry befriended fellow student Matt Groening, who published her work in the student newspaper without her prior knowledge. Those strips were the first version of *Ernie Pook's Comeek*, Barry's long-running alternative newspaper strip, which ran in the *Chicago Reader* starting in 1979. She is associate professor of art and Discovery Fellow at University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2019 Barry was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship.

**Lynda Barry** (1956–)

“Tawny Hill Trailer Park Tales: Mrs. Raguso,”

*Ernie Pook’s Comeek*, 1999

Ink on Bristol board, Lynda Barry Collection, The Ohio State University Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

This later example of *Ernie Pook* features Barry’s major creation, Marlys Mullen, the bossy, judgmental, and exuberant girl at the center of most of Barry’s comics. In her stories of Marlys and her sister Maybonne, Barry explores the internal experience of childhood. Many of the Marlys strips focus upon the uncertainty children have as they navigate new social situations, especially ones involving adults. Marlys’s observation that other adults do not like Mrs. Raguso either hints that she has an intuitive understanding, or that something is not quite right.

Barry deftly balances large blocks of text with even weighted drawings. Unlike the earliest *Ernie Pook* nearby, here she designs a page of interconnected panels within a decorative frame.

**Lynda Barry** (1956–)

“Modern Romance: The Trade-Off,”

*Esquire*, January 1988

Ink and watercolor on paper, Lynda Barry  
Collection, The Ohio State University Billy  
Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

In 1983, Barry began her “Modern Romance” feature in the mainstream commercial *Esquire* magazine, which was eager to tap into alternative culture. Using a full page and four-color printing, she turned to watercolor to achieve subtleties that line art alone could not achieve. By 1988, Barry had developed her more mature and personal style of drawing, and her narratives were more naturalistic. In this comic, an unnamed couple discuss the comforts of a quiet domestic life; however, the loss of youth weighs more heavily upon one of them.

**Lynda Barry** (1956–)

“True Comek,” *Ernie Pook’s Comeek*, 1981  
Ink on notecards, International Museum of Cartoon  
Art Collection and Records, The Ohio State University  
Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

This is one of the first *Ernie Pook* strips for the *Chicago Reader*. It shows off Barry’s early whimsical, surreal style influenced by the then-current Memphis Design movement: geometric shapes, repeated patterns, curves and squiggles, and a general playfulness that eschews form following function. Barry’s early strips featured generic, often unnamed, characters. Here the unnamed protagonist seems largely untraumatized by a home invader. She treats the potentially sinister encounter lightly and optimistically in her diary entries written in dainty cursive.

Cartoonists approach the arrangement of actions and panels on the page—sometimes called the “breakdown”—in different ways. Here, Barry simply draws her panels sequentially on separate cards, to be assembled later for printing.