







GUEST CURATORS JAMES P. DANKY AND DENIS KITCHEN WITH J TYLER FRIEDMAN AND PAUL BUHLE

MUSEUM OF WISCONSIN ART



SUDDENLY HE WILL PEE ON THE BACK OF YOUR LEG.



LOVES TO GROWN UPS IT EVEN TO



KNOWS MANY DIRTY FINGER SIGNALS AND FREAKS YOU WITH THEM



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SASS BACK S. SHE DOES YOUR MOM



WANTS YOU TO STEAL CIGS FROM YOUR MOM OR SHE WILL HIT YOU.



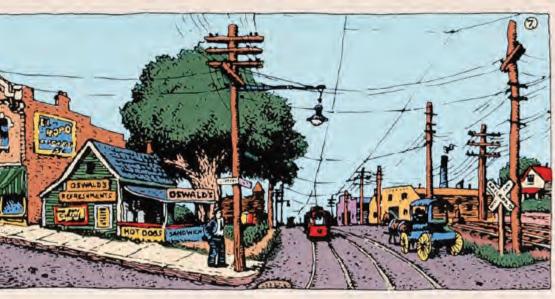
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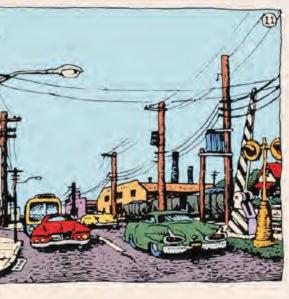


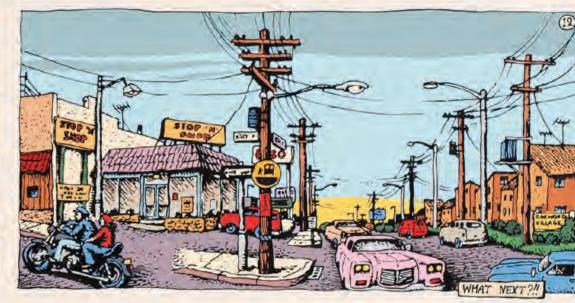










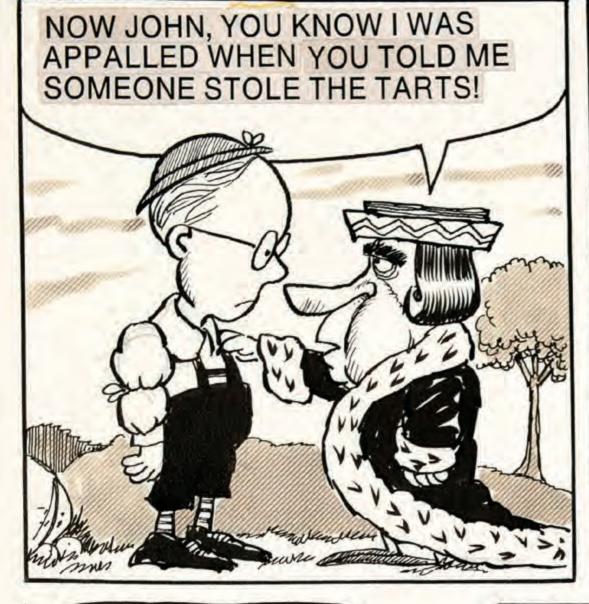












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EY BISCAYNE
E CONSTRUCTION
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THE SECRET SERVICE ASSURED ME IT WAS NECESSARY FOR SECURITY!



T HUSH MONEY!



REALLY? I THOUGHT YOU SAID WE HAVE A DANCER THAT'S A HONEY!

















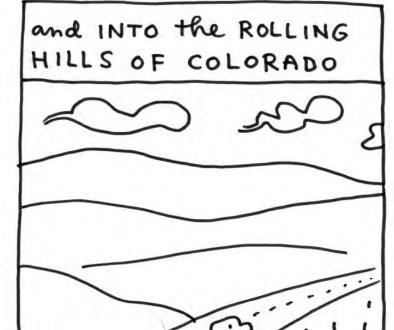


LONG STORY SHORT, I
DECIDED TO MOVE TO
DENVER. IT WAS SO
CHEAP I COULD AFFORD
TO CONCENTRATE ON
MY ART, and IT WOULD
BE A NEW START TO
THINGS...











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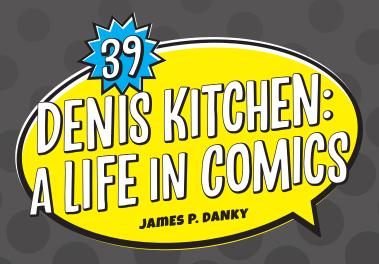
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FOREWORD

Wisconsin Funnies: Fifty Years of Comics is a defining exhibition for the Museum of Wisconsin Art and one with significant national implications. The museum's goal was to develop a comprehensive exhibition that would tell the story of Wisconsin's seminal role in the creation of the underground comics movement in the United States. The exhibition was originally conceived to take place in conjunction with the 2020 Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee; the strong social and political content of so many of the comics suggested a timely connection.

What we did not know at the outset was that our lives—all of us everywhere—would soon be plunged into a worldwide pandemic, seismic social unrest fueled by centuries of racial inequity, and a presidential election destined to engage generations of future historians. The analogy of a child's top spinning out of control comes readily to mind. Yet, day by day, as the exhibition took shape under trying circumstances, it became apparent that the comics had value not simply for their quick, raw humor—sometimes, you just gotta laugh—but for their lasting and poignant commentary about the human condition. Whether through the lens of an abusive childhood, the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights, Nixon-era political corruption, social injustice, unlikely relationships, or the constancy of human foibles, the comics in this exhibition are about us. They are about what makes us human, for better or worse.

This groundbreaking exhibition and the beautiful catalogue that accompanies it stand as a testament to an extraordinary team of artists and scholars who contributed to the project in ways too numerous to recount. Special thanks go to Paul Buhle, James P. Danky, Denis Kitchen, and Peter Poplaski, whose contributions belong to a history of comics now in its second century.

At MOWA, this exhibition could not have happened without the tireless dedication of Associate Curator of Contemporary Art J Tyler Friedman. His vision for the exhibition and catalogue are present throughout. MOWA is proud to present this pioneering, fundamental study of Wisconsin comics; its timing now is more meaningful than we ever could have imagined.

LAURIE WINTERS

The James and Karen Hyde Executive Director Museum of Wisconsin Art

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with James P. Danky and Denis Kitchen on this project, which opened doors from Wisconsin to Massachusetts to the south of France. Danky contributed an exceptional essay on Denis Kitchen, his longtime friend and comics collaborator, and Kitchen was an indispensable partner from the earliest stages of the project.

We are grateful to Paul Buhle for his insightful essay that so thoroughly articulates the national role of Wisconsin comics. Peter Poplaski designed and drew the striking cover image of this publication and, along with Rika Deryckere, hosted a memorable Bastille Day dinner for which I am also grateful. Thanks to colorist Maria Hoey, who brought the original black-and-white cover drawing to vibrant life.

As for the dedicated team at the Museum of Wisconsin Art, Director Laurie Winters, as always, has provided valuable guidance and feedback. Others deserving special mention for their work on this project are Erik Hansen, Graeme Reid, Andrea Waala, Ally Wilber, and Heidi Wirth. Special thanks must also be extended to our institutional partner at the Saint Kate—The Arts Hotel, Milwaukee, for hosting the MOWA|DTN portion of *Wisconsin Funnies* and helping to ensure that MOWA's first multilocation exhibition is a success.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the many artists and lenders who agreed to loan the works in their possession. We are especially grateful to those whose participation was rendered all the more difficult by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Wisconsin Funnies has been generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Wisconsin Humanities Council, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, James and Karen Hyde, Pick Heaters, and the Wisconsin Arts Board. Their assistance during these economically trying times is especially appreciated.

This book has been realized with the help of longtime MOWA partners. Steve Biel's design shows off fifty years of comics to best effect. Thanks, finally, to editor Terry Ann R. Neff who by listing last I wish to convey special gratitude and respect.

J TYLER FRIEDMAN

Associate Curator of Contemporary Art Museum of Wisconsin Art Our first thanks go to Executive Director Laurie Winters for inviting us to help introduce Wisconsin comics to the Museum of Wisconsin Art's audience. The project could never have been realized without MOWA Associate Curator J Tyler Friedman. The museum's installations and programming in West Bend and Milwaukee have made this small-scale art accessible to new visitors.

The chance to reunite our cartooning gang was irresistible. Special thanks to Paul Buhle, Dan Burr, Paul Hass, Stacey Kitchen, Jim Mitchell, Peter Poplaski, and Christine Schelshorn for their help with this project. And we mutually are grateful to each other for a half-century (!) of friendship and collaboration.

JAMES P. DANKY AND DENIS KITCHEN



INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifty years, Wisconsin has been fertile ground for activities that facilitated the birth of underground comics and other industry-altering ways in which "sequential art" looks, sounds, and is distributed. Four major spheres of activity characterize this half-century in the state: publishing, distribution, preservation, and popular education.

The emergence of underground comics in the late 1960s freed artists from the restrictive eye of the Comics Code Authority, which was instituted in 1954 amid allegations of a connection between comic books and juvenile delinquency. By acting independently to produce and publish their work, underground artists twisted free of censorship and created a platform for cultural critique, political comment, and autobiographical reflection.

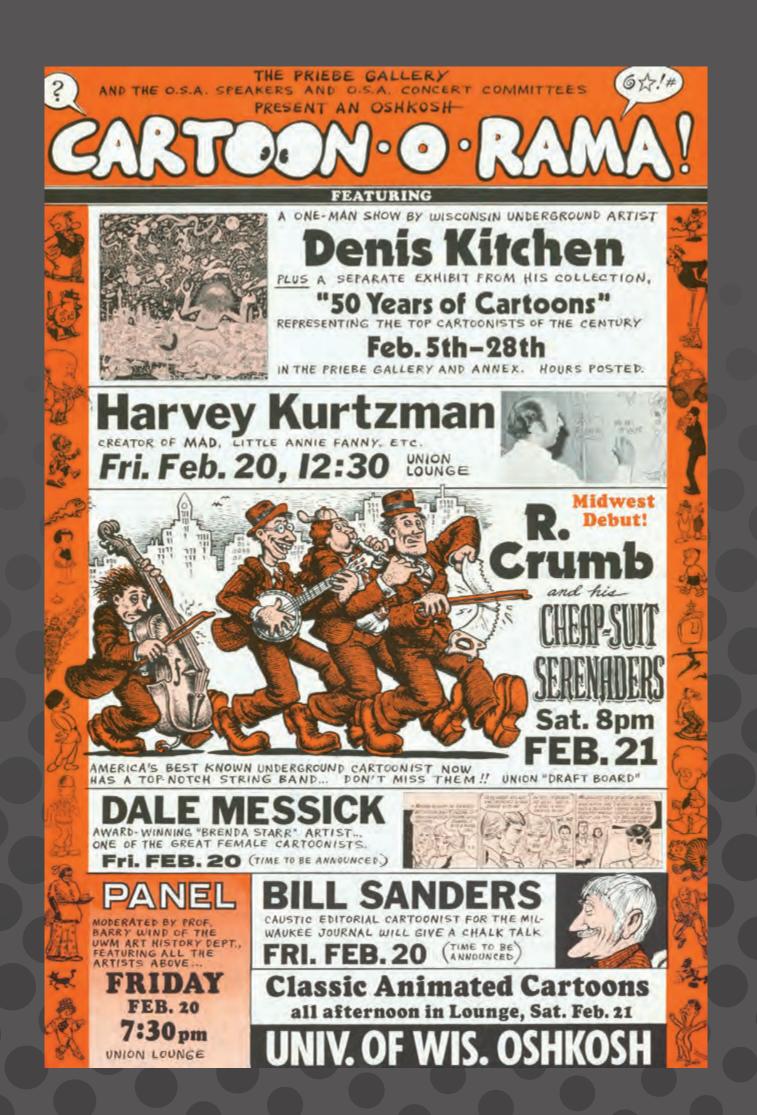
This radical freedom depended on broad-minded businessmen. The creative and commercial genes came together in the self-described "half artist, half normal" Denis Kitchen, whose initial foray into comics publishing was in 1969 with his own *Mom's Homemade Comics #1*. Kitchen, as an artist himself, put artists' interests first, which won him the allegiance of a growing cohort of creatives, initially from the Midwest but soon expanding across the nation. In 1973, Kitchen purchased a farm in Princeton, Wisconsin, which he repurposed for publishing. While neighbors raised cattle and grew grain, several harvests of comic books sprouted annually from Kitchen's unassuming farm.



Denis Kitchen, 1969 Photograph Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Wisconsin has been a key distribution center for comics since the early 1980s; for a few years, Madison's Capital City Distribution was the largest comics distributor in the nation before it was absorbed by a competitor in 1996. On a smaller but significant scale, Beloit-based artist John Porcellino still runs Spit and a Half, a mail-order zine distribution company that he founded in 1992. Its website offers more than five hundred hard-to-find zines from around the world.

Beyond the creation and dissemination of comic art, Wisconsin has played a noteworthy role in the recognition of alternative media such as underground comics, zines, and alternative newspapers. It has embraced them as both valuable cultural artifacts and effective forums for diverse voices and perspectives. A combination of cultural short-sightedness and the perishability of paper has relegated many alternative publications to the trash bins of history. Preservation,



thankfully, is a pervasive theme in the story of comics in Wisconsin. In the 1980s, Kitchen Sink Press published lavish reprints of classic strips such as *Nancy, Terry and the Pirates, Steve Canyon, Li'l Abner*, and *The Spirit*, ensuring their place in the comics canon. The urge to archive is also exemplified by the life's work of James P. Danky, who, in his thirty-five years at the Wisconsin Historical Society, acquired more than 75,000 works for future generations. The Queer Zine Project (QZAP), cofounded in 2003 by zinesters/collectors Milo Miller and Christopher Wilde, is a more recent institution. Operating out of Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood, the archive contains more than 2,500 zines focused on queer culture.

Popular education is a newer role for comics, and Wisconsin has been at the forefront. Early on and rather strangely, Kitchen Sink Press' 1975 comic book *Consumer Comix* was underwritten by the federal government's Office for Economic Opportunity and the Wisconsin Department of Justice to instruct high school students on how to avoid predatory business practices. Madison-based historian Paul Buhle has authored and edited many graphic works about the history of the political left, including an adaptation of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* and a history of the Industrial Workers of the World. Graphic Classics, published out of Mount Horeb, uses the comic book format to offer an accessible introduction to classic literature. Lynda Barry brings a comics aesthetic to the university classroom to liberate the latent creativity of people who believe that they can't draw and have no stories to tell.

Finally, and with the contributions of many seminal figures mentioned above, the presentation of these works at MOWA, an art museum, underscores their visual merit as well as their cultural context. Technical mastery, distinctive individual vision, and rich historical tradition are self-evident. Unburdened by the expectations of "fine art," these comics hold up a mirror to culture, reflecting its fantasies, desires, and foibles.

J TYLER FRIEDMAN

Opposite:
Cartoon-o-Rama!, 1976
Poster
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen





omic art occupies a unique historical niche in Wisconsin. Neither the venerable publishing center of Greater New York nor the bohemian Bay Area that saw the birth of a new comic genre at the end of the 1960s, nor yet Chicago with its newspaper empires, Wisconsin has mostly played a quieter role. Or rather, multiple roles.

Wisconsin—considered for a moment as an entity—is responsible for bringing much remarkable and highly successful work into print, as part of the pulp empire for mass reading. It has, intermittently, done things that amaze and amuse. And even educate. It has sent its best onward and outward. Such is the case for its contributions to the story of comics.

Pictorial art can be found on ancient cave walls, but for this story, its origins are linked to the rise of newspaper empires in the nineteenth century. These sudden giants created both space and opportunity for comic art of a fresh, new kind. By the 1890s, daily drawings were capturing the rapt attention especially of those readers who saw the paper as entertainment more than "news."

In the years after World War I, these "comics"—a sequential series of panels rather than the single panel of the editorial cartoon—had secured a vast audience. Newspaper barons sponsored or chose (and stole from other papers) their favorites. Soon the "family entertainment" style strip developed "continuity"—a day to day, week to week, unfolding of the story line. The Sunday color version offered a broader platform for artistic skills. No one needed to be reminded that newspaper comics had been created for the purpose of selling a commercial product with advertising at the center. All the same, this art reached vastly more sets of eyes than any other.

Peter Poplaski

Krupp Comic Works Postcard,
1978 (detail)

Postcard

Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

PROLOGUE: THE EARLY YEARS

A few comic artists from Wisconsin had already made a name for themselves in the early years. Reedsburg native Clare Briggs (1875–1930) is among the most accomplished, his work the most long-lasting in scholarly memory, for at least two distinct reasons. His *A. Piker Clerk*, about a maddening railroad clerk, led him to further strips but also humorous lectures on the Vaudeville circuit and animation of silent films. Briggs's classics *Real Folks at Home* and *The Days of Real Sport* presented recollections of small-town and rural days in the spirit of James Whitcomb Riley's wildly popular poetry about Indiana life of the late nineteenth century (fig. 1). Rural nostalgia for big-city readers, Briggs's vignettes were among the first comic art to describe parts of American history, whittled down to kindly stereotypes. Briggs's *How to Draw Cartoons* (1926), an early guide to the art and a testament to his own place in the burgeoning field, was published a few years before his death.



Fig. 1
Clare Briggs
The Days of Real Sport, 1913
Sunday strip
Published in Oh Skin-nay!
The Days of Real Sport
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Two other artists, one of them Wisconsin-born, drove the comics endeavor forward across the country and perhaps even into the world of daily newspapers outside the United States. They also invented a version of the daily comic strip so popular that it lasted beyond their lifetimes, gradually fading with lesser artists but still attracting an aging audience sticking with its favorites, decade after decade.

The first, Sidney Smith (1877–1935), was a native of Bloomington, Illinois, who landed in Lake Geneva after he found success at the *Chicago Tribune*, already a powerhouse of American journalism, if a deeply conservative one. The publisher, Colonel Robert McCormick, had chosen former socialist Joseph Medill Patterson as the paper's coeditor. The genius of Patterson was to discern the public craving for comics and to coach young artists, actually proposing characters and story lines. He struck gold with the invention or refinement of strips that carried an ongoing story line, akin to a novelistic treatment.

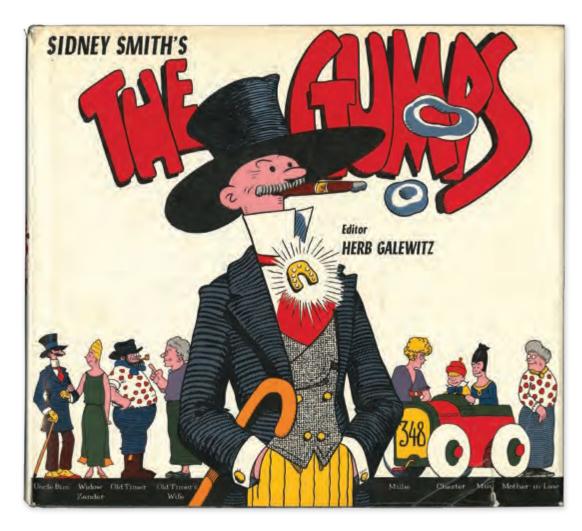


Fig. 2
Sidney Smith
The Gumps (edited by Herb
Galewitz), 1974
Dust jacket
Published by Charles Scribner's Sons
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Smith's *The Gumps* was neither quite the first "continuity" comic nor Smith's own first stab at drawing a strip, but it proved phenomenally successful (fig. 2). Following its February 1917 launch, it emerged as a driver of the paper's circulation until the *Tribune* became known as the "Andy Gump paper." Andy had his own presidential campaign in 1924 (decidedly iconoclastic, it lasted only one night—in Lake Geneva), a radio show, and an animated version. The artist enjoyed the largest salary in the comics world. Chinless Andy's adventures or misadventures, his near-miss to a plotting would-be spouse prior to a happy marriage, and his travels abroad, drew fans eager to open the paper to the comics page.

Sadly, Smith was killed in an automobile accident in 1935. Mediocre imitators carried on the strip—its continuation in other hands yet another first in comic strip history. A Gump statue can still be seen on Wrigley Drive in Lake Geneva. A boutique named after Min, his long-suffering wife, is long gone.

Smith's truest successor had by 1930 already won larger fame, with a higher form of comic strip art. Frank O. King (1883–1969) from Tomah, Wisconsin, traveled to Chicago for art school and there joined the *Tribune* staff, sitting at a drawing board next to that of Smith. After some brief Sunday funnies features and a spin-off daily effort, King invented (under the guidance of Patterson, or so the mogul would later claim) the genre-setting *Gasoline Alley*, which debuted in February 1921. Americans were buying cars by this time, and the moment was perfect.

The automobile repair garage was itself a comics innovation: a blue-collar workplace in a genre that knew mostly white-collar office work, if any employment location at all. To the close reader, the streets outside resembled a small town setting more than Chicago's Washington Park neighborhood where King lived with his family. Never mind: the strip soon turned to the home life of the main characters, above all the plump Walt Wallet, suitable protagonist for a bachelor who acquires a wife and family, including an adopted son who had first appeared in a basket, abandoned on a doorstep. Unlike Smith's *The Gumps* menagerie, King's world was generally no more than mildly humorous. Its affect was closer to the wholesome family dramas that developed in regional theater of the time and moved to hugely popular film series of the 1930s–40s, such as *Andy Hardy*.

The essential premise of a father helping to care for a baby and then developing a relationship with a growing son, arguably proved the most novelistic or productive of the early domestic plot lines in the daily strips. The "family entertainment" in comics, with King and a growing number of others, would remain central to the genre, outside of the exotic adventures, crime dramas, and the surviving "gag" strips whose stories started and stopped on the same day.

King showed his real talent in the Sunday version, where he experimented with naturalism and even surrealism—the advanced art modes of the time. He could abandon the standard set number of panels of a Sunday page for creative layouts that included aerial views. Likened by later historians to Japanese paintings and prints, these innovations could be better seen as the result of an artistic insight that comics readers were drawn to pictures more than words (fig. 3). But no other comics artist would depict a visit to the Art Institute of Chicago and the emerging wonders of modernism.

The high profile 2005 *Masters of American Comics* exhibition shown in Milwaukee as well as Los Angeles and New York thus placed King at the head of the developing genre, along with *Krazy Kat*'s George Herriman (1880–1944)—the secretly African-American artist whose work appeared alongside that of King in the *Tribune*, joined by the likes of *Dick Tracy* and a host of others (fig. 4). Some scholars claim that King actually taught American audiences how to read comic art in a different narrative way, and artists how to create for that audience. For fellow Chicagoan Chris Ware (b. 1967)—one of the most admired American cartoon artists of the early twenty-first century—King had created a world within a world and thereby transformed the possibilities of comic art. King's picturesque nature scenes, especially of autumn, in the Sunday pages could easily have been memories of childhood in the Kickapoo Valley outside of Tomah.

Another popular Wisconsin artist, Art Young (1866–1943), found his calling in more distant places. Raised in Monroe, Wisconsin, Young had traveled to Chicago for art school a generation earlier than King, made himself into a newspaper sketch artist, and gone on to New York. He emerged as the leading visual agitator, so to speak, of the rising socialist movement, as well as the master of cross-hatching's gift to the depth of the comics page.

Young became the senior artist and editorial collaborator in the famed bohemian-radical magazine better known for its Ashcan artists, *The Masses* (1911–17), suppressed by federal authorities for antiwar leanings. In later decades, Young emerged as a leading satirist in popular, high-quality humor magazines like *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life*, and took on serious projects including versions of Dante's *Inferno* transplanted to a hellified twentieth-century USA (fig. 5).

Fig. 3
Frank O. King
Gasoline Alley, 1922
Sunday strip
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Chicago Sunday Tribune.



























March 5, 1922 - 85



His actual comic strips are relatively few, confined to the early 1920s when he published his own little magazine, *Good Morning*, but his visual commentary, as an artist with a jaundiced view of supposed progress, remains large in the history of American vernacular art. Indeed, his hometown visual memories of 1880s–90s Monroe and its local characters are bittersweet—another insightful look at a time slipping away.

From the end of the Depression almost to the end of the 196Os, the Wisconsin comic story might be better told from the standpoint of mass production. Racine, a veritable pulp capital, was home to the Big Little Books of juvenile comics in cheap, hardcover editions, many Westerns like Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, but also popular newspaper strips, greatly edited to fit the small half-text/half-image format.



The same printing plant, Western Printing and Lithographing, produced Disney comic books, among others, under the Dell imprint, thus home (of a sort) to artistic giant Carl Barks (1901–2000) of *Donald Duck* and his family. On a side note, the otherwise obscure Milwaukee newspaper illustrator Erwin Hess (1913–1999), who had collaborated on several years of the comic strip *Captain Midnight* (adapted from the children's radio serial) during the middle 1940s, spent the bulk of his long career turning out one-panel drawings, *The Good Old Days*, in the tradition of Clare Briggs's earlier work (fig. 6). Taken together, the work of Briggs, Hess, and Young demonstrate a collective reflection upon a Wisconsin past.



Fig. 4
Opposite:
George Herriman
Krazy Kat, 1937
Sunday strip
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Fig. 5 Art Young Comic (possibly intended for The Masses), date unknown Unpublished Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Fig. 6Erwin Hess *The Good Old Days*, 1979
Daily strip
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen























THE NEW WORLD OF THE 1960s

A fresh chapter of comic art arrived with the social crises of the 1960s, and with them, the notorious Generation Gap, a response in part to the shut-down sensibility of the Cold War 1950s. The Comics Code of America (CCA) of 1954, devised by major comics publishers following Congressional hearings on the supposed dangers of comics for juvenile readers, devastated some of the most creative comic book lines, including EC, publishers of *Mad*. Wisconsin comics

fans had their own particular social pressures. Comics were burned in a religious-based rally in small-town Stone Bank, and measures were proposed (but not passed) in the state legislature to censor or suppress comics distribution. This homegrown McCarthyism, in Joe McCarthy's own state, passed with the senator himself, but left unexpected effects.

Rebellious comic art in the 1960s–70s should be seen, in part, as retaliation against the imposition of the Comics Code. Younger artists unattached to the comics industry found a new wave of publishers, just coming into existence by the very late 1960s, determined to permit no limits on their expression. Thus the "underground" comic was born, mainly an offshoot of the posters for concerts, produced by some of the same Bay Area artists and printers, and also for the new "head shops" that sold local tabloid "underground" newspapers along with drug paraphernalia like bongs and rolling papers. For nearly a decade, these "comix" sometimes sold wildly, though never in numbers comparable to the parts of the comic industry that survived the Comics Code.

Wisconsin saw its first example in 1967 in *Connections*, the widely read underground newspaper of the turbulent University of Wisconsin–Madison. Artist Nick Thorkelson, grandson of a former UW business manager, was a UW undergraduate and off-campus musician. For *Connections*,

he devised "The Day I Set My Gangsters On My Freaks," a vivid commentary on police bad behavior (fig. 7). Thorkelson would later become a standout comic artist in the nonfiction, historical genre.

Madison's importance blossomed with one of the very first of the genre of "underground comix," a twenty-four-page black-and-white comic full of incendiary sentiment, published as *Radical America Komiks* in 1969 (fig. 8). It owed almost everything to soon-to-be famed Gilbert Shelton (b. 1940), who briefly drifted through town. As artist but also as editor of other artists, he put together what might properly be seen as a small anthology of peacenik, pro-marijuana satire with a hint of Jesus returning to Earth to warn against human bad conduct. *Radical America* itself, parent publication of the "komiks" ("comix" had not quite yet emerged as the preferred term), was published by the present author for the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

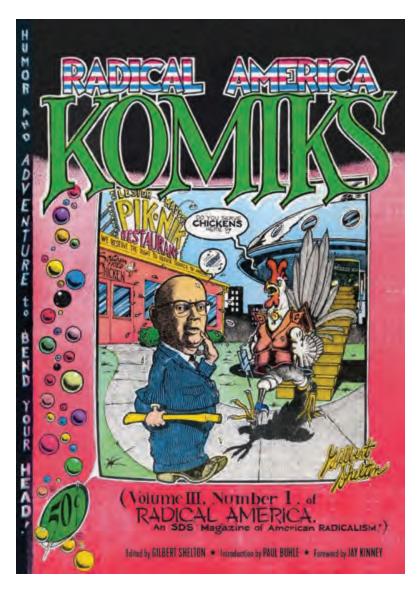


Fig. 7

Opposite:
Nick Thorkelson
The Day I Set My Gangsters on
My Freaks, 1967
Published in Connections
(Madison, Wisconsin)
Image courtesy of Nick Thorkelson

Fig. 8

Gilbert Shelton

Radical America Komiks, 1969

Cover

Image courtesy of Paul Buhle

The big Wisconsin story, meanwhile, was just about to happen in Milwaukee, where energetic local Denis Kitchen (b. 1946) was embarking on a comic art empire. Kitchen's *Mom's Homemade Comics* (1969), sold on the street until banned, led to the comics-oriented weekly *Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American* (pl. 91), for which he was also the art director. Weekly strip contributors to the *Bugle* besides Kitchen included Don Glassford, who created the first 3-D underground, *Deep 3-D Comix* (pl. 85), and Jim Mitchell, who created the series *Smile* (pls. 133–36) and would have no doubt been a more major figure had he not ended up in a Mexican prison for several years. With *Mom's*, Kitchen initiated a nearly twenty-year stint of Wisconsin comics production. On the national level, these were the salad years for underground comix. By the end of the 1970s, creativity had ebbed; production remained in the Bay Area, with a slow trickle eastward toward the traditional pulp magazine center in Greater New York.

Those frantic counter-cultural years saw additional developments in Wisconsin's comics production and understanding. Capital City Distribution, run out of Madison by Milton Griepp and John Davis, operated a veritable empire of comics distribution, specializing in a sort of secondary market of alternative or offbeat work. Capital Comics—the distributor's publishing arm—put out the first few issues of *Nexus* (pls. 175–79) (co-created by Mike Baron and Steve Rude) and *Badger* (pls. 60–71) (also created by Baron and drawn by various artists including Jeff Butler). Capital Comics suspended operations in 1984, but *Nexus* and *Badger* found new publishers and enjoyed long-lasting success. Squeezed out by the monopolies in the 1990s, Capital City Distribution had literally made a different kind of comic art available to local emporiums that opened in storefront locations. Don and Maggie Thompson, meanwhile, pioneered comics fanzines and for decades edited *The Buyers' Guide to Comic Fandom* from little lola, Wisconsin. In 2019, this accomplishment earned a Harvey Award, named for *Mad* magazine founder Harvey Kurtzman. In Port Washington, printer Bill Schanen Jr. made himself famous—or infamous—for bringing out underground and then alternative weeklies that no other shop would touch. He became the printer of Kitchen Sink comics and eventually earned the Press Freedom Award.

Kitchen and his team found ways to bring the contemporary generational and personal rebellion closer to the mainstream. Smoking marijuana was certainly illegal, but not a moral crime. Gay identity had come to stay. Consumer Comics was even contracted by Wisconsin's Department of Justice in 1975 (pls. 98–100). Added to the mix was Kitchen Sink's oddball or novelty marketing, which included greeting cards, T-shirts, trading cards, and buttons. A 3-D comic about Milwaukee came with cardboard red-and-green glasses. A limited-edition serigraph and popular poster of Robert Crumb's A Short History of America revealed in a microcosm the lamentable changes in American life (pl. 78). It was, at moments, an almost unbelievable blend of new social values and older civic virtues adapted to contemporary conditions. One result was the establishment of a sense of history in a genre whose past had been perpetually neglected and forgotten. Kitchen Sink brought back a handful of the comic masters, of those forgotten, most notably Kurtzman of Mad magazine fame (pls. 106–109), Ernie Bushmiller, the enigmatic artist of Nancy (pls. 57–59), and Will Eisner, considered the cinematic stylist of 1940s comic art (pls. 79–82). Twenty-seven volumes of Al Capp's Li'l Abner (pls. 73–75), six volumes of Alex Raymond's Flash Gordon, and nearly thirty collections of Milt Caniff's Terry and the Pirates (pl. 72) and Steve Canyon were among others tapped by Kitchen Sink reprints.

The adventures of Kitchen Sink ended with a downturn in the comics market and a doomed merger with Tundra, a sinking comics company, in the late 1990s. Kitchen abandoned Wisconsin

for western Massachusetts in 1994. He would continue on, minus Kitchen Sink, in a small-scale way, much of it devoted to the work of Kurtzman and Crumb.

Back in Wisconsin, another modest venture emerged out of a barn near Madison, on the outskirts of Mt. Horeb. The *Graphic Classics* series—designed, edited, and published by Tom Pomplun—published titles such as *African American Graphic Classics* or *Native American Graphic Classics*, which broadened the field with fresh ways to look at history and literature. They offered younger and especially non-white artists and storytellers—such as New Jersey's Leilani Hickerson (pls. 86–90) and South Dakota's Marty Two Bulls Sr. (pls. 195, 196)—opportunities to make important statements in comic art.

In Madison proper, Wisconsin Historical Society librarian James P. Danky had been hard at work since the 1970s assembling a collection of the alternative press, including comics, exceeding any other collection elsewhere. It was an archival achievement that helped bring comic art into adulthood.

ENTERING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The new century brought a very different way of seeing comic art. Newspaper strips had never fully recovered from being downsized to save newsprint for the war effort—paper drives along with can collecting helped to engage the civilian population while providing raw materials for the military. But for newspaper comics, this reduction in space was a disaster that meant that the glories of full pages of *Prince Valiant* and more would never return. Radio had never seriously competed with the papers, but television marked the path leading to the next technology, the Web. Toward the end of the twentieth century, papers were dying rapidly, taking jobs for comic artists with them. Something had to happen. It did—and it keeps happening.

A scholarly collection of interviews with MacArthur Fellowship winner Ben Katchor (b. 1951), the first comic artist to win this "genius" award and a comic arts teacher, highlights startling insights into the quiet and mostly unseen shifts within the field during the last decade or so of the twentieth century. Young artists, young people intending to become artists, had increasingly seen gallery work as a dead end, little more than a showing for investors and the idle rich to take a risk on something apparently new and different. Once-rigid barriers, already breeched somewhat by Pop art but also from a different direction by *Raw* magazine, wavered and headed toward collapse.

"Alternative comics" as a sales category following the demise of underground comix had never been much more than a catch-all term anyway, and self-publication by artists themselves, as well as comics publication by micro-publishers, became steadily more common. Zines and minicomics exemplify this do-it-yourself approach to content creation and distribution. There is doubtless much overlap among zines, minicomics, and underground comix; but, generally speaking, zines and minicomics are a smaller format than traditional comics and are often reproduced on a photocopier. Stylistically, contemporary zines and minicomics often treat autobiographical or esoteric subject matter in an informal tone that reveals the influence of punk culture. The Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP), located in Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood, was founded in 2003 by zinesters Milo Miller (pls. 117–24 and Christopher Wilde (b. 1966).

The archive boasts more than 2,500 queer zines, some six hundred of which have been digitized and made accessible for free online. Beloit-based John Porcellino has self-published the autobiographical *King-Cat Comics and Stories* since 1989 (pls. 161–65), although collections of his work have also been published by the prestigious Montreal house Drawn & Quarterly. Concurrently with creating *King-Cat*, Porcellino runs Spit and a Half, a distribution company that offers more than five hundred zines and minicomics from around the world.

A harbinger of comics' new stature took place in 1994 when Art Spiegelman was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the Holocaust comic *Maus*, followed by an exhibition of the book's art at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Even the work of celebrities like 1950s radio-and-TV personality Al Capp had not carried this aura.

The *Masters of American Art* exhibition along with a lavish catalogue published by Yale University Press was another milestone. Ironically, together, these established the legitimacy of comic art on museum walls, just as younger artists had moved away from gallery aspiration to comics! Subsequent exhibitions—most notably *Underground Classics* launched by Denis Kitchen and James P. Danky at the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Chazen Museum of Art in 2014, which traveled to the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne—contributed to the picture of comic art as it moved forward in the new century. Comics were now seen as an art form, and would need to be taken seriously by art critics.

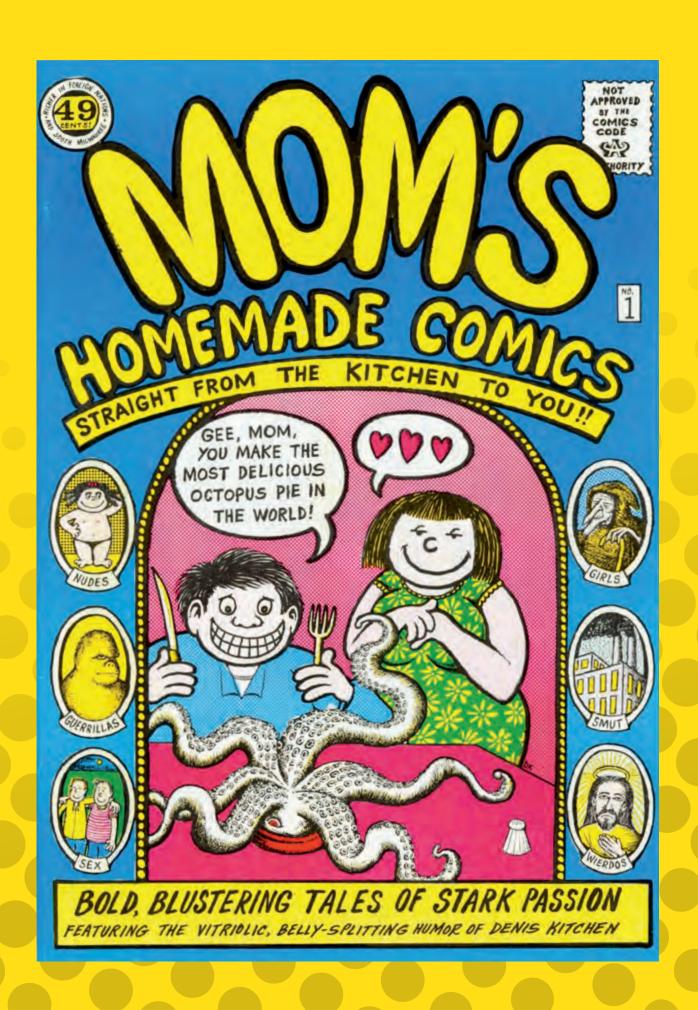
As comics attained this new stature, it should have been no surprise to see them as the hottest new assignment in college classes: in history and ethnic and regional studies. There was also an internal academic logic to this: comics essentially followed, by several decades, the emergence of film art as the latest interest, and not only of the undergraduate. Today, a handful of university presses have begun publishing scholarly essays on comic art oriented generally toward the traditions of literature and film. Looking back, Spiegelman's *Raw* magazine, published with his wife, Françoise Mouly, had done its work, with ripples far beyond its final issue in 1991. As Katchor quipped, *Raw* convinced critics that comics had actually derived from the avant-garde of European art and literature, its own form of modernism. *Raw* prompted a fresh look and a younger generation of artists to try their luck, from books, commercial and self-published, to online comics. That superhero comics provided characters and story lines for some of Hollywood's biggest international mega-hits could not fail to have a side effect, especially upon the burgeoning "Comic Cons."

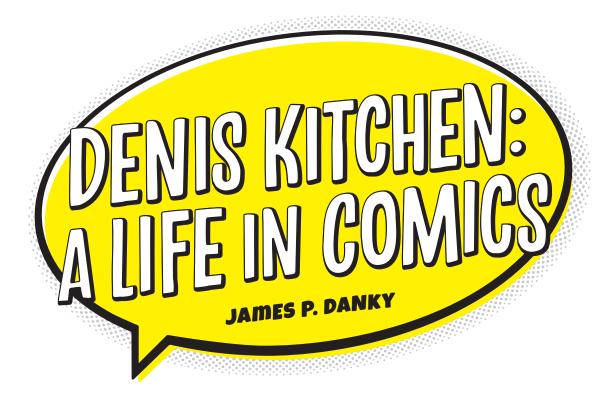
For a handful of Wisconsinites, this shift signaled the possibility of comics in a newish vein: popular education. Comics could serve as a platform to present history and even classical literature. The contribution of the "Wisconsin School" of US history, tracing its origins to the socially critical writing of the historian William A. Williams and others, blossomed after the turn of the new century. Comic biographies, many edited or coedited by this present author, showcased the likes of political activist Emma Goldman, dancer Isadora Duncan, and Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara in the first decade of the new century, followed by graphic adaptations of Howard Zinn's influential book *A People's History of the United States* and Pulitzer Prize—winning author Studs Terkel's oral history *Working*. My frequent editorial collaborator, Harvey Pekar, was himself said to have introduced to global audiences a new way to look at comics. Whole sections of neglected histories, the worlds of Bohemians and Beatniks, could enter the libraries of young people, along with the saga of the Industrial Workers of the

World (headquartered nearby in Chicago, during its glory years) and its finest orator, activist and presidential hopeful Eugene Victor Debs of Terra Haute, Indiana—who had issued his own book of favorite socialist cartoons in 1909. Milwaukee-based Susan Simensky Bietila has used the immediacy of self-publishing comics online to weigh in on current events and write history in real time. Her "Art as Activism" blog takes on the controversial arrival of Foxconn in Wisconsin, the shackling of incarcerated women while giving birth, and the 2016 presidential election (pls. 21–28).

Outside of Wisconsin and its influences, the prizes awarded and large-scale distribution of the three-volume biography of civil rights hero John Lewis, *March*, arguably showed that graphic history could become hugely successful as well as artistic. Madison hometown artist Nick Thorkelson added to this category of historical exploration with his Herbert Marcuse comic for the distinguished City Lights Press, home of the American Bohemia, in 2019. Thorkelson, who had in the meantime drawn short comics about UW–Madison professor George Mosse, a prominent historian of the Gay Holocaust, and also about the 1960s in Madison (for the fiftieth anniversary of the class of 1968), thus perhaps completed his own circle (pls. 187–94). Lynda Barry, a Wisconsin native in her childhood and a returnee in mid-life, in 2019 won a MacArthur Fellowship to add to her Wisconsin Visual Arts Lifetime Achievement Award and induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame. Barry has been as much educator as artist. Applying her artistic vision to the classroom, she embodies what comic art may do in society (pls. 1–20).

The industry is unlikely ever to return to the era when comic books led the pulp market with millions sold every month, and ordinary Americans turned first to the funny pages in their daily newspaper. But comics endure, and in new venues attract a variety of audiences from artist to fancier.





here are times when the culture experiences undeniably seismic change, and the late 1960s and early 1970s was such a time. The abrupt shift from the stereotypical staid portrait of America in the 1950s to the "Age of Aquarius" has in some ways been oversold and oversimplified, but something profound and indelible did happen in a relatively short period. New ways of thinking, startlingly different lifestyles, political upheaval on multiple levels, and—most apropos to this present exhibition—radically different forms of artistic self-expression all emerged.

These changes are usually thought of broadly as coastal phenomena, linked in particular to the West Coast, but the real story is more complex. By 1960, the media—whether television, magazines, newspapers, or music—had become thoroughly national. No matter how remote the village, it was possible in 1964 to watch the Beatles on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, as simultaneously almost every radio market listened to the music, and young men's hair grew longer across the continent. It was likewise impossible to avoid the war in Vietnam, with its images of horror broadcast into homes nightly. There was something in the air, and it wasn't just the increasingly common whiff of marijuana.

Comic books, a distinctly American aspect of world popular culture, was yet another part of the national media to be caught up in the swirling cultural landscape of the late 1960s. The conservative nature of newsstand comics prior to the cultural upheavals mirrored the all-American family films and the popular music of the times as well as the primacy of largely lightweight network TV sit-coms and variety shows. Comic books had already undergone an internal purge:

Fig. 1 Denis Kitchen Mom's Homemade Comics #1, 1968 Cover Self-published Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

publishers by the middle of the 1950s, under heavy political and social pressure from Congress and parental groups, created the self-censoring Comics Code Authority. Comics still available on racks in the early and mid-1960s mostly consisted of bland superheroes, gung-ho war stories, mushy romances, Archie, and Walt Disney products. There were important exceptions, such as *Mad* magazine, and Stan Lee and key Marvel artists like Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko who had begun revitalizing superheroes with fresh slants. But mostly the spinner racks represented a creative desert for readers interested in contemporary art and issues.

Underground newspapers appeared first in 1964 with the *Los Angeles Free Press*. Within a few years, they were published in virtually every state and city, frequently in towns with colleges and universities. These tabloids grew out of the changed cultural and political ethos to serve a youthful audience that the other media ignored. Coverage of rock music, for example, was nonexistent in most daily papers. The alternative papers also gave voice to radical cultural and political views that would have frightened away advertisers at traditional newspapers.

The underground weeklies capitalized on recent dramatic developments in printing. Modern offset lithography, perfected in the 1950s, allowed for limited circulation newspapers to be printed economically. The new technology also made it easy for papers to adopt inventive layouts that would have otherwise been very expensive at the high circulation dailies employing conventional relief presses. Offset, accessible and cheap, lowered the bar for production. Suddenly, ideas that had previously been tightly controlled could flow quickly and easily into the emerging youth culture. The creators of underground papers reveled in experimental graphics, typography, and psychedelic color. Offbeat comics were also welcomed at the papers—even the occasional political cartoonist like the early standout Ron Cobb (b. 1937). New York's *East Village Other* briefly even spawned a series of all-comics tabloids called *Gothic Blimp Works*. The same practical attributes of offset printing and the emerging subculture provided new cartoonists and their publishers with a divergent format and avenue going forward.

Underground or alternative comics (often spelled "comix"), like their brethren in the underground or alternative press, have origin stories that usually begin in San Francisco or New York, though Austin gets a mention. Yet even New York, after *Gothic Blimp Works* expired in 1969, was only a short-lived hub of alternative comics activity. The origin archetype is Robert Crumb and his first wife, Dana, in 1968, hand-selling the first issue of *Zap* out of a baby carriage in Haight-Ashbury. And while the Bay Area was the indisputable Mecca of underground comics, many may be surprised to learn where the second-largest and most prolonged concentration was located.

Milwaukee's incipient contribution, *Mom's Homemade Comics*, was the brainchild of cartoonist Denis Kitchen, a 1968 journalism graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (fig. 1). It was originally planned as the second issue of *Snide*, a campus humor magazine that Kitchen and a fellow student cofounded in 1966. But when his colleague absconded with the magazine's treasury in late 1967, *Snide* #2 was effectively stillborn. The cartoonist decided to self-publish what he'd already begun assembling, and to aim for a wider audience. Publication was delayed when Kitchen was drafted into the army in late 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War. But after serving only several weeks at Fort Campbell in Kentucky, he received a medical discharge and returned to Milwaukee. He fine-tuned the content, changing the name to *Mom's Homemade Comics* in order to set up the subtitle slogan "Straight from the Kitchen to You."

The Cream City, as Milwaukee was known, was changing in the late 1960s, and changing rapidly. In 1967, John Kois and others founded *Kaleidoscope*, which would become Wisconsin's best-known underground paper, especially through Kois's many public fights with authorities of all sorts over issues ranging from obscenity to street-corner sales. Milwaukee, deeply segregated, suffered a race riot in 1967 and experienced ongoing civil rights marches led by Father James Groppi in the late 1960s. The city was also developing a homegrown psychedelic music scene, exemplified by The Velvet Whip, with whom Kitchen worked closely to create

promotional graphics. That was the contextual environment for his debut comic, one of the earlier efforts nationally. *Mom's Homemade Comics* became the cornerstone of underground comics in Wisconsin.

Though Kitchen had shown the initiative to self-publish a hectographed satirical publication called *Klepto* as early as grade school in Caledonia and continued it into high school in Racine, he had no formal business training or any role model for larger-scale publishing. His narrow dream was to be a cartoonist. In early 1969, he took the camera-ready content of Mom's #1 to a small Milwaukee print shop, where the owner, looking skeptically at the material and at Kitchen's long hair and hippie attire, declared, "No credit. Payment up front" (fig. 2). Kitchen built his meager savings till he was able to get four thousand inexpensive copies in exchange. The twentytwo-year-old entrepreneur then proceeded to take stacks of his publication to every prospective retailer on Milwaukee's "hip" East Side and also to a few used and new bookstores downtown and near the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The head shops, bookstores, and hippie-friendly gift stores—including the pharmacist at Oriental Drugs—were willing to take the local comic on consignment. Kitchen, his younger brother James, and a roommate, Bill Kauth,

hawked *Mom's* at the downtown Great Circus Parade on July 4 until a police officer scrutinized a copy, observed nipples, and instructed the salesmen to cease and desist. But to Kitchen's pleasant astonishment, the serious hustling to retailers paid off: virtually every outlet sold out, reordered, and then reordered again. By the end of July, three thousand copies had sold in just one section of the city—an impressive feat. In August, Terry Shaw, another of Kitchen's roommates, drove to the Woodstock music festival in New York with five hundred copies to sell, intending to split the revenue. Shaw and a companion dutifully lugged the heavy boxes to the congested festival site, but there, caught up in the spirit of Woodstock and under the influence of LSD, Shaw proceeded to give all the copies away free to grateful attendees. Kauth, meanwhile, decided to drive west, not east. He delivered the last five hundred copies of *Mom's* #1 to Gary Arlington's San Francisco Comic Shop, arguably the first such store in America. Arlington quickly sold out and ordered more. The first printing was exhausted, but Kitchen told him to hold on: he explained that *Mom's Homemade Comics* now had a new publisher.

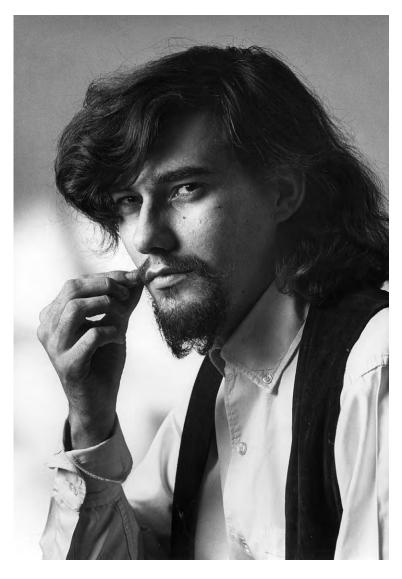


Fig. 2 *Denis Kitchen*, 1971

Photograph

Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

In early July, Kitchen had sent a sample to the Print Mint in Berkeley, the publisher of *Zap Comix*, *Yellow Dog*, and numerous psychedelic rock posters, asking if they'd be interested in taking on *Mom's*. They readily agreed. Print Mint bumped Kitchen's 49-cent retail price to a conventional 50 cents, upgraded the matte cover stock to glossy, and Kitchen replaced a few local ads with new comics. By September, the fresh version was already printed and getting national distribution. Thrilled to have a "real" publisher, he threw himself into the second issue. He also paid a visit to Bill Sanders, the widely admired editorial cartoonist at the *Milwaukee Journal*. Kitchen wanted honest professional advice. Sanders looked carefully at Kitchen's samples, commented favorably on certain elements, but then said, "What are you drawing with?" The young artist replied that he used ballpoint and felt-tipped pens. Sanders wrinkled his nose, reached into a drawer, and said, "The *Journal* won't miss these." He gave Kitchen two expensive sable brushes, and said, "Master these and you'll never turn back." The brushes profoundly affected Kitchen's increasingly distinctive style.

By December 1969, *Mom's* #2 was also in print. Kitchen excitedly shared advance copies with Jay Lynch and Skip Williamson, his new friends and underground comrades in Chicago. They had previously produced four issues of their *Bijou Funnies* anthology for the Print Mint; it was the premiere comix anthology after *Zap*.

But trouble was soon brewing. The details of Kitchen's publishing deal were opaque. At the very beginning of 1970, Kitchen wrote to Bob Rita, a partner at the Print Mint, reminding him to send details of their arrangement: how many copies were printed, his percentage, and so forth. But no one at the company responded. Shortly thereafter, the artist received a check in the mail, but without a royalty statement or any cover letter. Kitchen called Rita and expressed frustration that no accounting was forthcoming, despite several inquiries. Rita offered no explanation and defensively said, "Are you calling me a crook?" Unimpressed by the response, Kitchen resolved to return to self-publishing. He had already shown that he could sell thousands of comics in his own neighborhood, and his profit margin would be higher without a middleman.

Kitchen shared his decision with Lynch and Williamson, and learned that they were similarly frustrated with the Print Mint. "It was a raw deal. We weren't getting hardly any dough from these dudes," Lynch later wrote of the experience. The duo had seen no alternative to their predicament, but then Lynch unexpectedly asked Kitchen if he would consider publishing *Bijou*. Without a moment of thought or hesitation, he responded: "Sure, why not? Two's as easy as one." They shook hands. At that moment, very early in 1970, Kitchen became a bona fide comics publisher.

America's mainstream comic book industry, born during the Great Depression, was based on churning out droves of low-grade but colorful pulp adventures for a largely juvenile audience. Comic books retailed for decades for a mere 10 cents, providing slim revenue margins, but the most popular titles sold hundreds of thousands and sometimes a million or more copies every month in that pre-television age. It was a business that commanded no respect and was dominated by chiselers, cheapskates, and cutthroats. The publishers set the rules and the hungry artists and writers, desperate for work, were in no position to bargain. Publishing houses owned all rights to the works produced mostly by freelancers who were paid miserly rates on a piece-work basis. The original art, for decades viewed simply as a worthless by-product of publishing, was commonly trashed by publishers after the publications went to press. The ranks

of comic book publishers had been thinned during the 1950s censorship purge, but with few exceptions, the same business model was still in place when underground cartoonists began to establish their presence in the late 1960s.

The new generation of underground cartoonists, most born in the mid-1940s, grew up loving comic books, especially the EC brand and a few other standouts such as Atlas and Dell. They were also the first to have a sense of the medium's relatively short and tawdry history. They were acutely aware that Jerry Siegel (1914–1996) and Joe Schuster (1914–1992), the youthful creators of *Superman*, had been forced by DC Comics to sign away all their rights in the late 1930s. They knew that Harvey Kurtzman, the creator of *Mad*, and a genuine cultural hero, had zero equity in his brainchild and didn't see a dime when his publisher sold the high-circulation magazine for a fortune. They saw that Carl Barks (1901–2000), the genius creator of *Uncle \$crooge*, wasn't even allowed to sign his work. Ditto for John Stanley (1914–1993), who produced the beloved *Little Lulu* series. Virtually all of the comic book creators the

young artists grew up admiring had been victims of a system that ruthlessly exploited talent, offering meager rewards, no benefits, and no back end. The politically sensitized and rebellious young cartoonists, caught up in anti-Vietnam War sentiment and the simultaneous movements for women's rights, civil rights, gay rights, and the legalization of pot, were united in wanting things done very differently in their chosen field.

Kitchen had learned firsthand from his bad experiences at *Snide* and with the Print Mint. He pledged that his Kitchen Sink Enterprises (later Kitchen Sink Press) would apply the Golden Rule: he would treat all artists like he would want himself to be treated. That meant thoroughly upending the old industry business model. Underground cartoonists would possess their own copyrights. If they created a character or a series that could be trademarked, they would own the trademark. Original art would remain the property of the artist. And creators would be paid an advance against a royalty, not a flat page rate, based on the literary world's model where roughly 10 percent of the cover price went to the author on every sale. Further, if there were translation or ancillary right opportunities that the publisher was authorized to arrange, such revenue would be shared fairly.



Not long after Kitchen's handshake with Lynch and Williamson, the next big development in 1970 followed a visit from Robert Crumb, already the star of the emerging genre (fig. 3). Crumb's first issues of *Zap* comix had an explosive impact; his *Fritz the Cat* and *Head Comix* collection, issued by major publishers, had bookstore exposure. That, together with his early association with Harvey Kurtzman's *Help!* magazine, gave him a brand identification. Crumb and Kitchen had corresponded earlier, but when Crumb, a fanatical collector of 78rpm records, saw Kitchen's vintage 1940s Wurlitzer jukebox, their bond was solidified. Before leaving Milwaukee, Crumb offered him his next comic, *Home Grown Funnies*. That title, delivered in early 1971, turned out to be Kitchen's all-time best-selling comic book, eventually totaling 160,000 copies.

Fig. 3Denis Kitchen and Robert Crumb in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 1970
Photograph
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

The year 1970 was exceptionally busy. Kitchen juggled three distinctly different tasks. Foremost remained Kitchen Sink and the steadily growing comic book business. He discovered and befriended other local cartooning talents: Jim Mitchell (pls. 125–37), Don Glassford (pl. 85), Wendel Pugh (pls. 166–69), and Bruce Walthers (pls. 197–202) were all eager to join the burgeoning underground comics scene. Kitchen enticed Mitchell and Glassford in particular to join the loose cooperative called Krupp Comic Works in 1972, where they promised to edit and contribute to new comix titles, but also to help him move and ship product. New comic books, ten thousand at a time, were being printed in nearby Port Washington and picked up in Kitchen's 1954 Cadillac hearse. They then had to be hauled, one carton at a time, up two flights of steps to the temporary "warehouse" in the attic of Kitchen's duplex—a highly inefficient and thankless task.

That same year, Kitchen, still only twenty-three, was also an unlikely candidate for lieutenant governor of Wisconsin on the Socialist Labor Party ticket. Comfortable enough with capitalism to start a company at the snap of his fingers, he was simultaneously a card-carrying socialist. While navigating these arguably contradictory waters, he was pressed into the candidacy by the state's aging socialist membership, eager to push forward one of the few members of their own "youth movement." The nomination required some public speaking and added party activity, but it wasn't as big a distraction as Kitchen's daunting next venture.

In early 1970, Kitchen was also conspiring with three fellow UW–Milwaukee journalism graduates, Dave Schreiner, one of his closest friends, plus a married couple, Mike and Judy Jacobi. The four had worked together on the staff of the weekly *UWM Post* a few years earlier. Caught up in the countercultural swirl and excited by the rapid growth of underground papers, these four idealists, joined by a fifth partner, Mike Hughes, made the commitment mid-year to start a new Wisconsin-based newspaper. With woefully inadequate start-up capital of \$5,000, the *Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American* was launched that September, initially headquartered on State Street in Madison (pl. 91).

The other four partners gave up comfortable journalism jobs to devote full time to the new venture. The already overloaded Kitchen committed three days a week to this parallel enterprise, splitting his week between Milwaukee and Madison. He art-directed the new tabloid, frequently created covers, illustrations, and ads. At the end of the third full day in Madison, at dawn, following the paste-up crew's all-night marathon, he drove the paper's mechanicals to the same Port Washington printer that produced his other entity's comic books. The regimen ended when the *Bugle-American* partners, after a few perilous months on the financial brink, abruptly departed Madison. The weekly newspaper competition was fierce in the state's capital, but Milwaukee seemed starved for a less radical alternative to *Kaleidoscope*.

Relieved of the stressful commute, Kitchen focused his *Bugle-American* time increasingly on coordinating the full page or more of topical and spacey comic strips created by Mitchell, Glassford, Pugh, Walthers, and himself. All five artists created cover art as well. The comics page was a feature unique among all underground papers. The perceived vacuum in the alternative newspaper market did not go unaddressed by Krupp. A new division, the Krupp Syndicate, overseen by Mitchell, mailed large proof sheets of the *Bugle-American*'s strips and covers to about fifty subscribing alternative and university weeklies. The regular strips doubtless entertained countless new readers coast to coast, but the side venture failed after a few months. Very few of the subscribing papers paid the syndicate's invoices.

Against all odds, the Bugle-American (its title eventually shortened to The Bugle) lasted eight years and 316 issues and had a significant impact on Milwaukee and the state's counterculture. But Kitchen found it increasingly difficult to share his time between the separate entities, especially after marrying his first wife, Irene Nonnweiler, in 1971. By 1972, Kitchen had ceased committing major time to it; he returned full-time to his true love, comic books. He did contribute cover art and illustrations till the Bugle's very end, including delivering a music column logo an hour before the paper's Bremen Street office was destroyed by a firebomb in 1975 (fig. 4).

Despite long hours building both Krupp/Kitchen Sink and the Bugle during their formative years, Kitchen had drawn no salary from either. All revenue from sales went to artists, printers, overhead, and future projects. By squeezing in freelance illustration jobs, he managed to survive "the starving publisher" period. But Krupp and its Kitchen Sink comics imprint were rapidly growing, along with its counterculture audience. Head shops, its primary distribution base, were flourishing. Demand for underground comics exceeded the supply, a situation

artists parted ways to pursue other opportunities.

that an untrained businessman could especially benefit from. By late 1971, its first full-time employee could be hired. Tyler Lantzy, a recent Notre Dame graduate (and writer of Dirtball Funnies), became Kitchen's business manager, freeing Kitchen to focus on the editorial and promotion sides, with help from Glassford and Mitchell until both

By January 1972, when his first child, Sheena, was born, Kitchen was finally on the payroll, along with a few other employees, including staff artists Peter Poplaski and Peter Loft, who, with Kitchen, formed The Cartoon Factory, a commercial art studio that also produced Krupp's wholesale and mail-order catalogues as well as other advertising materials. The company's sales were soaring. Kitchen Sink published twenty different comic books that year, including Robert Crumb's XYZ Comics with an initial print run of fifty thousand copies, four issues of Bijou Funnies, Richard Corben's Fever Dreams, and Mitchell's Smile (pls. 133–36). Stalwart anthologies like Death Rattle and Snarf began, and Bizarre Sex #1, featuring Kitchen's iconic "Giant Penis That Invaded New York," was continually reprinted (fig. 5). The company finally had real offices: a large full floor above a dry-cleaning business on East North Avenue, with adjoining warehouse space. With well-organized inventory and dedicated shipping clerks, fulfillment ran smoothly. The company even bought a step van to directly distribute its products to Chicago and much of Wisconsin.

Expanding beyond print, Krupp's new Ordinary Records label produced a surprisingly popular 78rpm vinyl by R. Crumb & His Keep-on-Truckin' Orchestra, featuring "Wisconsin Wiggles" on the flip side. The company opened its own head/comics shop, Strickly Uppa Crust, on Brady Street, Milwaukee's hippest destination (fig. 6). The Krupp Mail Order division, overseen

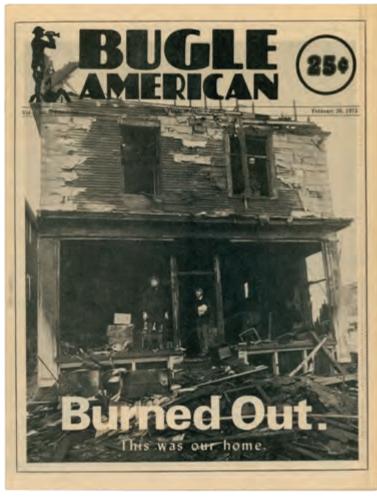


Fig. 4 The Bugle #193, 1975 Cover Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

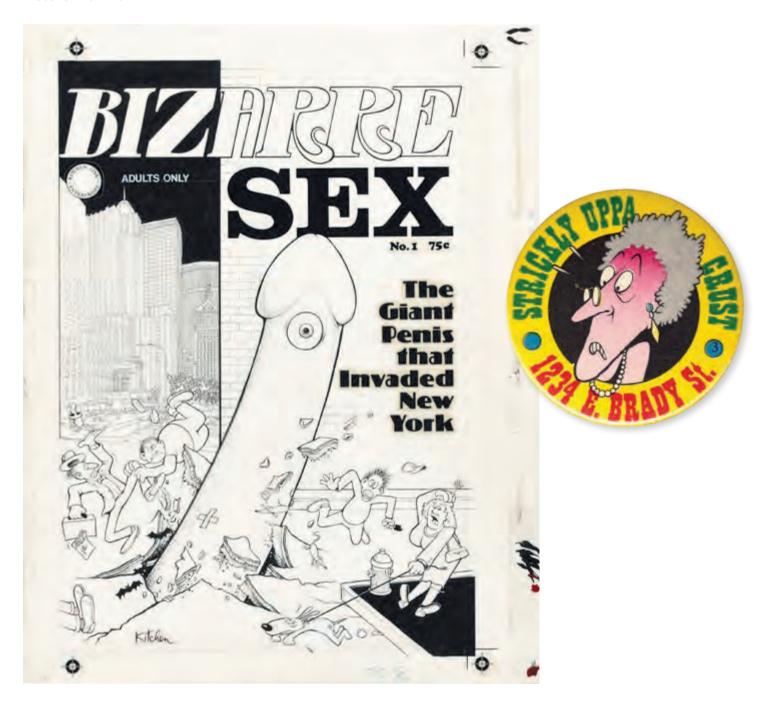


Fig. 5
Denis Kitchen
Bizarre Sex #1, 1972
Cover
Ink on illustration board
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Fig. 6

Denis Kitchen

Button for Strickly Uppa Crust,
1971

Button

Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

by Lantzy's wife Terre, continually expanded as well, offering pipes, clothing, and other products in addition to the core comics. Gross sales in 1972 exceeded \$250,000 (1.5 million in today's dollars), and Lantzy projected that revenue would double again in 1973.

Irene Kitchen, insistent on joining the growing "back-to-the-land" movement, persuaded her husband to leave the big city he loved. In January 1973, Denis, one-year-old Sheena, and Irene, pregnant with their second daughter, Scarlet, moved to a ten-acre farm they bought in Princeton, about an hour and a half northwest of Milwaukee (fig. 7). (Princeton lacked a venue for comics, and the nearest bookstore was in Oshkosh.) Again Kitchen found himself commuting, with half his week spent working intensely in Milwaukee and half at the farm, with its outbuildings needing attention and, for a while, chickens and pigs as well.

The year began as briskly as anticipated, with more than a dozen Kitchen Sink comics produced, including an impressive full-color *Bijou* #8, in which the cartoonists, inspired by *Mad*, parodied

each other's characters. The guest cover was by none other than *Mad's* creator Harvey Kurtzman. Kitchen also persuaded another comics legend, Will Eisner, to draw a guest cover for *Snarf* #3, along with permission to publish two comics featuring his classic *Spirit* (pls. 79, 82). The quirky *Pagfeek Papers* by Madison's Mark Morrison was also released in 1973 (pls. 138–42). Among Morrison's admirers was Art Spiegelman (b. 1948), years before his *Maus* fame. Deviating from its core again, the company published "Libido," an erotic half-puzzle/half-game by Dutch artist Willem Holtrop (b. 1941), and embarked on its first line of "Kruppcards," irreverent greeting cards aimed at pot smokers. But by mid-year, growth groaned to a halt: a double-whammy hit the entire comix industry, and hit hard.

Head shop managers who were savvy and/or whose fans ordered disproportionate quantities of Crumb creations, *Freak Brothers*, *Bizarre Sex*, and other proven titles they knew, moved most briskly. But many other retailers, for whom comics were widgets, might simply order "two dozen of each." Since undergrounds were sold on a non-returnable basis, numerous retailers found their shelves or spinner racks gradually overflowing, with certain dog-eared titles selling slowly if at all. But the "Big Four" publishers continued to push new product into the market,



Fig. 7
Doreen Riley, Holly Brooks,
Denis Kitchen, and Peter Poplaski
in Princeton, Wisconsin, 1981
Photograph
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

some arguably amateurish and of marginal appeal. With increasing indications of a glut, re-order activity was sharply down. And even the smart retailers, managing their inventory well, were affected when the next hammer fell.

In June 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on Miller v. California, a case with far-reaching implications. Suddenly obscenity was redefined. The often-bawdy undergrounds were immediately caught up in the ensuing confusion and crossfire. America's high court laid down three criteria in determining whether something was legally obscene: If an "average person, applying contemporary community standards" found a work "taken as a whole" appealed to his or her "prurient interest"; if the work depicted sexual conduct in a particularly offensive way; and if the work, "taken as a whole," lacked serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. Underground comics creators and publishers, quickly on the defensive, were adamant that their work had serious literary and artistic value. And how exactly could "prurient interest" be applied to drawn comics, especially works of satire and fantasy?

But philosophical arguments did not carry the day in the months immediately following the ruling. Head shops were already viewed with disdain in many communities for selling drug paraphernalia, so the embattled owners' widely shared new fear was that local officials would apply the court's community standards clause to the now vulnerable comics, thereby shutting down their stores. The easiest solution was to stop selling controversial comics.

As the partner in charge of business, Tyler Lantzy was a scrupulous number cruncher. He enjoyed maintaining a large sales chart behind his desk in Kitchen Sink. For all of 1972 and the first months of 1973, the chart's bold line headed steadily upward. But in mid- and late summer, a downward curve soon became precipitous. One day, Kitchen walked into the business office and Lantzy, to dramatize the trend, had taped sheets of paper to the wall so the chart's line literally hit the floor. His point was made.

Kitchen Sink and Krupp's salvation came via an unexpected route. Denis Kitchen, beginning with his first self-published issue of *Mom's*, was in contact with Stan Lee (1922–2018), co-creator of many famous superheroes and the high-profile editor of Marvel Comics (pl. 158). Lee, amused and impressed by Kitchen's correspondence and creative output, periodically called and wrote offering Kitchen an editorial position in Marvel's New York bullpen. But Kitchen, though an early fan of Marvel, persistently demurred: he loved owning his own business and having complete freedom. But with "The Crash of '73" weighing heavily, and a growing family to feed, when Lee called him late that year, he signaled that he might be receptive. In early 1974, Lee flew Kitchen to New York to discuss how the two might work together.

Lee had recently become Marvel's publisher when the company's founder, Martin Goodman, retired, so he had significantly expanded authority. Lee's public profile was also expanding: he was speaking at colleges and getting national press. Kitchen sensed that the middle-aged comics veteran with a healthy ego increasingly wanted to be seen as "hip and with it" by younger audiences. If Marvel could find an accommodation with the underground talents, it would be a feather in Lee's cap. Sensing some leverage, Kitchen stressed that his generation of artists were accustomed to owning their own copyrights. "Okay, we'll just take first rights," Lee conceded. "They also expect to keep their original art," Kitchen said. "What do I want with their art?" Lee replied sarcastically. Kitchen also made clear that he did not want to leave Wisconsin, which

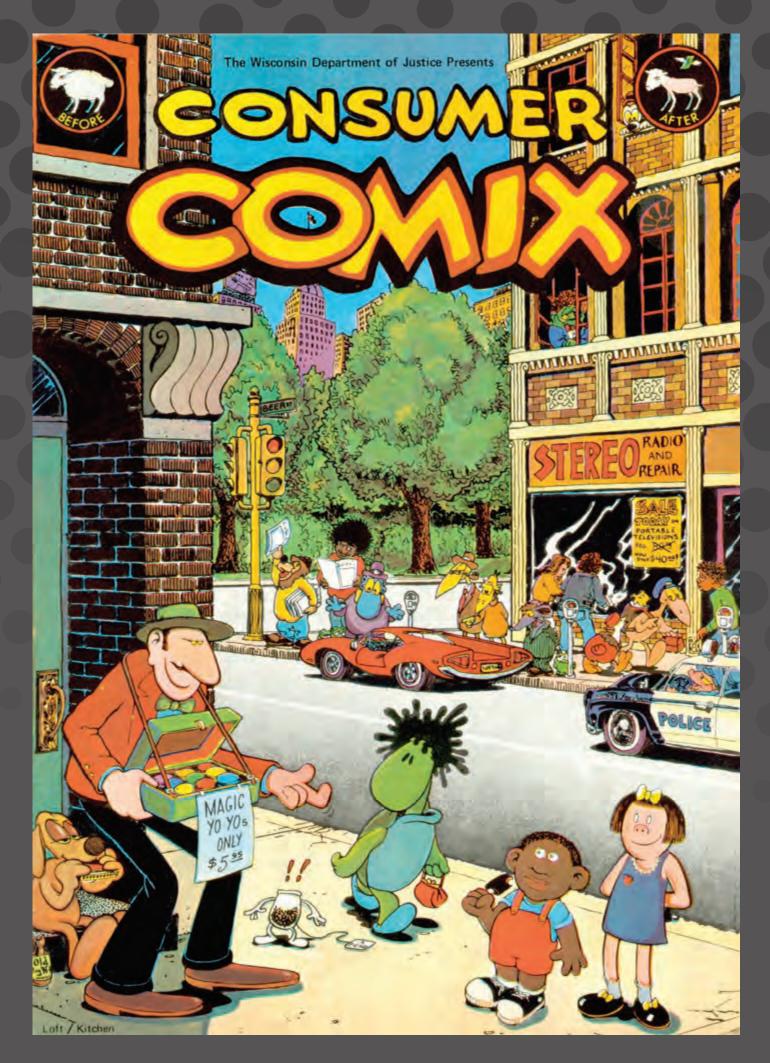
mystified the lifelong New Yorker, but Kitchen insisted he could reliably assemble a periodical from afar. Lee accepted the proposition. He also promised a light hand on suppressing the content of Kitchen's submissions. After establishing a budget that paid contributors four times their normal underground page advance, the two sealed the deal. Kitchen's yearly salary for editing a single quarterly was \$15,000 (nearly \$90,000 today). The new magazine, called *Comix Book*, was soon underway in the Princeton studio at #2 Swamp Road.

Denis Kitchen's personal life was dramatically disrupted mid-year when Irene abandoned him and their daughters, aged one and two. She never returned. Solo parenting complicated matters, but the magazine stayed on schedule. Peter Poplaski, a studio fixture, had a hand in *Comix Book*, including drawing the first cover (pls. 149, 150). Four other "cheeseheads" contributed: Peter Loft, Bruce Walthers, Don Glassford, and Kitchen's old mentor Bill Sanders (pls. 180–83), together with Kim Deitch, Justin Green, Trina Robbins, Harvey Pekar, Skip Williamson, Basil Wolverton, Sharon Rudahl, Art Spiegelman, and others. Even S. Clay Wilson, the *enfant terrible* of undergrounds, received checks from Marvel. Meanwhile, with a significantly reduced schedule in 1974, and with Kitchen no longer on Krupp's payroll, Lantzy could keep the mother ship afloat, especially with *Strickly Uppa Crust* and the mail-order business still profitable. *Comix Book* took only a portion of Kitchen's time, so he remained almost as active as ever in his own enterprise while being paid by Marvel.

Marvel printed 200,000 copies of each issue of *Comix Book*, far more than undergrounds, and it was circulated on national newsstands alongside *Mad* and *National Lampoon*, reaching far more readers—and new readers—than the patchy head-shop network. But before long, Kitchen learned that Marvel's regular contributors were not happy when they learned of his "sweetheart deal." The special arrangement that permitted *Comix Book*'s contributors to keep their original art, to get away with cursing and even some nudity in their contributions, and to retain their copyrights did not sit well with Marvel veterans who operated under the old, highly restrictive contracts. Stan Lee suddenly realized he had inadvertently opened a Pandora's box. As Trina Robbins summed it up, "This was the big time! Five issues later Stan Lee woke up, exclaimed, 'Good grief, what have I done?' and canceled the book."

After pulling the plug on *Comix Book*, Lee offered Kitchen a less controversial new job: editing *Crazy*, Marvel's imitation of *Mad*. But with his own company stable again, Kitchen had no interest in the proposal. Implausibly, and even ironically, Lee had subsidized Kitchen Sink for over a year, allowing Kitchen and Lantzy to survive the market crash. Lee also graciously allowed Kitchen to publish the final two issues of *Comix Book* that had been assembled but not printed. Lee, a sometimes polarizing and self-aggrandizing personality, was not universally loved in comics circles, but Kitchen has always insisted that Lee was a gentleman, and without his timely intervention the odds of Kitchen Sink/Krupp's survival would have been considerably slimmer.

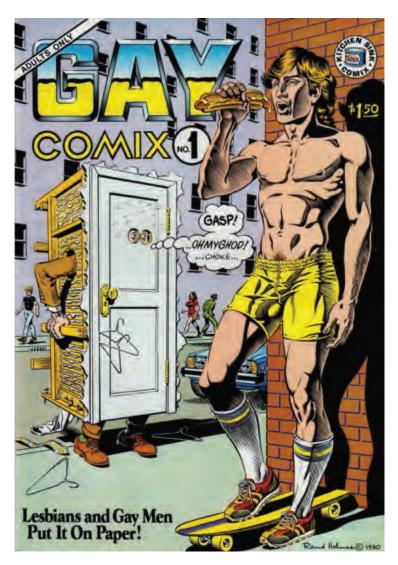
Returning to full independence, Kitchen Sink undertook an unlikely project in 1975: *Consumer Comix*, an educational comic book produced by The Cartoon Factory for Wisconsin's Department of Justice, funded by the federal government's Office of Economic Opportunity just before President Richard Nixon axed it (fig. 8). Drawn equally by Poplaski, Loft, and Kitchen, the comic was circulated to Wisconsin's high-school seniors to alert them to scams aimed at young adults (pls. 98–100). At a time when comic books were still derided by educators, the unusual format received national publicity, and reprints were authorized for several other states.



The Lantzys decided to move to Colorado ski country in 1975, forcing a breakup of the business. After their Brady Street comics/head shop had a going-out-of-business sale, the partners negotiated a friendly separation that gave Lantzy 90 percent of Krupp Mail Order while Kitchen kept 90 percent of his namesake publishing company, along with Krupp Distribution and The Cartoon Factory. Kitchen brought in Mike Jacobi, a previous partner in the *Bugle*, to become business manager and a minority partner. Conveniently, Mike and his wife Judy were also Princeton back-to-the-landers. In late 1976, Kitchen and Jacobi with a third partner, Rick Maki, started a new weekly paper, *The Fox River Patriot*, very similar in format and tone to *The Bugle*, but focused on ecology, gardening, and local history, and aimed at a rural Wisconsin audience (pl. 103). As with the *Bugle*, Kitchen contributed frequent covers, illustrations, and personalized

ads, as did Poplaski. On occasion, cartoonists such as Robert Crumb, Jay Lynch, and Bob Armstrong provided guest covers and strips. Kitchen and Jacobi subsequently purchased *Yesteryear*, a pre-existing regional antique monthly, gave it a facelift, and expanded its Midwest distribution.

During the remainder of the 1970s, the rejuvenated Kitchen Sink Press continued its proven anthologies and began a popular new one, Dope Comix, as well as a surreal spin-off of Snarf called Mondo Snarfo, and plums like Crumb's newest Mr. Natural and Spiegelman's Sleazy Scandals of the Silver Screen. A highlight of Mondo Snarfo was Buddha Crackers (pls. 143-47) by Michael Newhall, a resident of the growing Princeton complex. Newhall's versatility included surreal oil paintings and fine art prints, as well as intricate scrimshaw drawings on ivory (pl. 148). Leonard Rifas was hired as an editor to oversee Corporate Crime Comics and other publications (pls. 112, 153-57). As the decade was coming to a close, Kitchen reached out to Howard Cruse, a regular in the company's anthologies as well as his solo Barefootz series. Kitchen invited Cruse, who was gay, to edit a new series by gay and lesbian cartoonists. After some hesitation, because he was professionally closeted at the time, Cruse agreed, and the long-running and influential Gay Comix was born (fig. 9).



In a development with long-ranging implications, Will Eisner ended his arrangement with newsstand publisher James Warren in 1977 and offered his *Spirit* magazine to Kitchen. The company published two dozen issues of the popular magazine. Eighty-seven monthly *Spirit* comic books followed, reprinting the classic 1940s Sunday newspaper insert in chronological order for the first time. Other spin-offs included a *3-D Spirit*, ten issues of pre-war *Spirits*, and a new magazine called *Will Eisner's Quarterly*. The relationship with Eisner profoundly enhanced Kitchen Sink's trajectory in a rapidly changing marketplace.

By the late 1970s, the demand for underground comix was waning. Head shops increasingly were being pushed out of business by restrictive local ordinances. Hippies were getting haircuts

Fig. 8 Opposite:

Denis Kitchen and Peter Loft
Consumer Comix, 1975
Cover

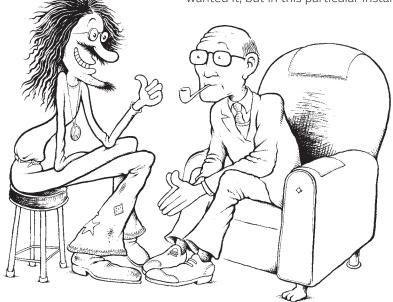
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Fig. 9

Rand Holmes
Gay Comix #1, 1980
Cover
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

and jobs. Overlapping this trend was the growth of specialty comic book shops and a "direct market" distribution system, pioneered by Phil Seuling, that bypassed traditional newsstand distributors and allowed retailers, very much as Krupp Distribution had done for years, to order all manner of comics on a non-returnable basis at a much better discount.

Will Eisner, influenced by the freedom of underground comix and the autobiographical work of artists like Justin Green, told Kitchen he was beginning a radical new project (fig. 10). Kitchen wanted it, but in this particular instance Eisner felt the work-in-progress needed to come from



"a publisher on Park Avenue, not #2 Swamp Road." A Contract with God, launched in 1978 by Baronet Books in New York, profoundly impacted the comics industry—and before long publishing at large. The semi-autobiographical work, the first to be marketed as a "graphic novel," was square-bound like a "real" book and contained stories of varying lengths (pl. 80). Eisner, in his own words, had "literary pretensions," and his book strongly signaled that the old ways of making comics were again about to be upended. Other inspired creators followed. Art Spiegelman's Maus and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's Watchmen were among the graphic novels following on Eisner's heels. A sea change in the industry was underway.

Fig. 10
Denis Kitchen
My First Meeting with Will Eisner,
in 1971, 2005
Ink on illustration board
Published in Comic Book Artist
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

Kitchen and Jacobi parted ways in 1980, with Kitchen retaining Kitchen Sink Press, Krupp Distribution, and the art studio, and Jacobi taking the *Fox River Patriot* and *Yesteryear*. Kitchen also married Holly Brooks that year, and a crew of employees and friends extensively remodeled his large barn to accommodate the business move from the old Muk-Luks factory in downtown Princeton. Underground comix still had life as the growing comic shop network replaced the dying head shop system. Titles in a risqué spirit, including feminist-targeted *Omaha the Cat Dancer*, a long-running erotic saga kicked off in 1981 by Kate Worley and Reed Waller. Steadily, Kitchen Sink Press evolved to reflect the growing market tastes and new formats.

Determined to focus on publishing, Kitchen sold Krupp Distribution in 1982 to Capital City Distribution in Madison, owned by his old friends Milton Griepp and John Davis. Kitchen Sink Press increasingly produced square-bound books. Deluxe editions of Kurtzman classics like *Jungle Book, Goodman Beaver*, and *Hey Look!* were especially satisfying to the publisher who had grown up entranced with that groundbreaking cartoonist (pls. 106–109). Ambitious sets of classic newspaper strips became a new trademark: *Flash Gordon* (six volumes), *Alley Oop* (four volumes), *Nancy & Sluggo* (five volumes), and others, punctuated by encyclopedic compilations of Milton Caniff's *Steve Canyon* (twenty-six volumes) and Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* (twenty-seven volumes). Kitchen Sink's growing reputation for quality production and accurate reporting made obtaining the rights much easier.

But Kitchen was thoroughly caught up in the graphic novel revolution too, and sought original new work to augment the company's reprint series. In 1983, his oldest friend and *Bugle* cofounder Dave Schreiner was brought on board as editor-in-chief and charged with developing new series. Eisner, following his brief fling with Baronet, returned and remained loyal to Kitchen Sink, which

inherited the rights to his seminal *A Contract with God*. Beginning in the early 1980s, the company published another dozen of Eisner's acclaimed graphic novels, including *A Life Force* and *To the Heart of the Storm*, his most overtly autobiographical work. Among the graphic novels Kitchen and Schreiner were most proud of was *Kings in Disguise*, written by James Vance and illustrated by Dan Burr of Milwaukee. Six serialized comic books were reissued in book form and swept the prestigious Harvey and Eisner industry awards (pls. 41–49).

Another new series, *Xenozoic Tales* by Mark Schultz, also won numerous industry awards, was collected several times, and spawned both merchandise and a CBS Saturday morning animated show, "Cadillacs and Dinosaurs." Kitchen had studiously avoided the popular superhero genre, but couldn't resist publishing *Megaton Man*, a hilarious spoof of Marvel and DC characters by a new talent, Don Simpson, who soon left his Detroit base for private lodgings in the four-floor complex that was once Kitchen's barn. A comics legend from *Mad*, Will Elder, contributed a guest cover for *Snarf* #10 in 1987. To parody the dying hippie subculture, Elder used the shipwrecked sailors of his favorite painting, Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*, as a visual

metaphor (pl. 84). Kitchen also began utilizing offsite book packagers to assemble publications, such as Chicagoan Monte Beauchamp, who produced the superbly designed and long-running *Blab!* anthology, and J. D. King, who assembled the edgy *Twist* anthology from upstate New York. In 1987, Holly and Denis divorced, and Kitchen's younger brother James came on board to oversee production.

Entering the 1990s, Kitchen experimented with a new strategy. In a deal brokered by George Lucas's licensing division, Kitchen Sink produced a series of full-color *Grateful Dead Comix* on recycled paper that, tongue-in-cheek, was described as acid-free (fig. 11). (Jerry Garcia, a longtime comics fan, promised to provide anecdotes and band stories for adaptation, but drug addiction cut short his personal involvement.) Distribution via the huge audiences at the band's performances was the primary attraction for Kitchen, giving the company a promising alternative to the increasingly congested

comic shop network. But that opportunity was blocked when Fillmore impresario Bill Graham, who controlled venue sales, became involved in litigation with the band, and *Grateful Dead Comix* fizzled after nine issues.

The company increasingly expanded into comics-related merchandise and art products, highlighted by R. Crumb's boxed Devil Girl Choco-Bars ("It's Bad for You!") and Devil Girl Hot Kisses in round tins. Freak Brothers "Munchies" and Betty Boop candy bars also proved popular, along with tin signs, a wide array of boxed trading cards, Nancy and Sluggo Italian silk neckties, and other improbable products. The high-end line included limited-edition serigraphs signed by Eisner, Crumb, and Schultz. While the ongoing books, comics, and merchandise were mostly profitable, Kitchen found his relatively small company increasingly vulnerable in a specialty



Fig. 11Jerry Garcia with Denis Kitchen,
1991
Photograph
Courtesy of Denis Kitchen

market dominated by shops that catered principally to fans of superhero comics supplied by large publishers like Marvel and DC Comics. The big companies continually pushed to expand their already dominant market shares. Kitchen Sink Press had grown to twenty employees and seemed prosperous enough, but Kitchen, for the first time since the distant Crash of '73, was nervous about his company's future.

On a wintry Sunday afternoon in late 1992, Kitchen was at home watching a Packers game with friends when the phone rang. ("Who would call in the middle of a game?" Kitchen recalls harrumphing.) It was Kevin Eastman, co-creator of the enormously popular Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles franchise. "How you doing out there?" Eastman asked as a generic opener. Kitchen recalls sardonically answering, "I'm burning my awards to keep warm." After the pair laughed, Eastman said, "I've got a proposition for you. It will either be your dream come true, or your worst nightmare." In short, he proposed a merger of his own publishing company, Tundra, located in Northampton, Massachusetts, with Kitchen Sink Press. Eastman would purchase 51 percent of Kitchen's company, but Kitchen would remain in control and Eastman pledged to invest heavily in the combined operation.

After a few weeks of visits back and forth, many conference calls, and intense soul-searching, Kitchen determined that the move was the best way to assure the survival of Kitchen Sink Press. It was also a way for him to personally cash in, to some degree, after laboring nearly a quarter-century in the turbulent waters of independent publishing. Kitchen trusted Eastman and felt that his new partner's deep pockets would protect the company as competition intensified. They entered into a formal agreement. In the spring of 1993, semi trucks were backed up at the barn complex. Kitchen found himself doing two things he never thought he would do: selling a majority stake in his company, and leaving Wisconsin.

Kitchen, a half-dozen employees from Wisconsin, including James Kitchen, and close to twenty holdovers from Tundra threw themselves into consolidating and marketing an impressive combination of talents and projects. With generous advances, Eastman had already attracted creators such as Alan Moore (*From Hell*), Scott McCloud (*Understanding Comics*), James O'Barr (*The Crow*), and even Frank Frazetta (*The Pillow Book*) to his imprint. Kitchen Sink Press' enlarged lineup in 1993 resulted in an unprecedented forty Harvey Award nominations (and five winners) in 1994, significantly more than any other publisher, including the giants. Editorially, things looked better than ever, but ominous dark clouds were appearing.

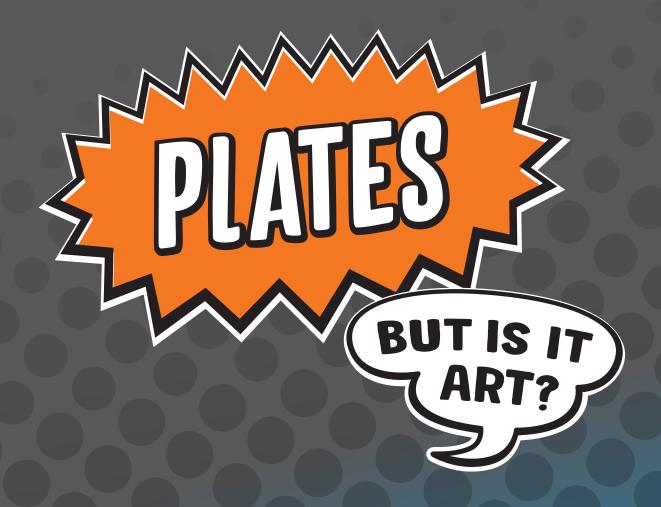
Eastman's promised infusion of working capital was slow in coming. By year's end, he confessed to Kitchen that his Ninja Turtles empire had reached the end of its cycle and his personal resources and holdings were rapidly diminishing: he could not make the promised investment. They needed to find a white knight. Since Eastman controlled the critical majority of stock, he spearheaded the search. An arrangement was made with Ocean Capital, a Los Angeles-based investment-banking firm. In 1995, in return for a substantial investment, they took control, further reducing both Eastman's and Kitchen's shares. The overall comics industry went into a turbulent period the following year, and the impatient Ocean Capital bailed. After an effort to regain control and revive his company with a new partner, Kitchen finally gave up. At the end of 1998, Kitchen Sink Press quickly expired.

The "dream come true" move to Massachusetts had indeed become his "worst nightmare." But, in retrospect, Kitchen now regards the ending of Kitchen Sink Press as a blessing in disguise. Free of the stresses of incessant deadlines, weekly payrolls, and corporate politics, he reinvented himself in 1999 and now wears several hats: literary and art agent, book packager, exhibition curator, author, and—coming full circle—cartoonist. He lives in western Massachusetts, a place he has come to love, but he remains a cheesehead at heart: loyal to the Packers and Brewers and a regular visitor to America's Dairyland. He's happily married to his "third and final wife" Stacey (Pollard); their daughter, Violet, is an aspiring cartoonist and writer.

Denis Kitchen began as a social critic, employing art and commentary to describe the foibles of the world around him. When he went to college, he planned to major in art as a route to becoming an editorial cartoonist for a major metropolitan daily. He soon was instructed that such creatures were born in schools of journalism, not in art departments. Much like Kitchen's near accidental avenue to publishing, Kitchen shifted his disciplinary focus. Today we can view that most ephemeral and undervalued form, the comic, on the walls of museums. That cultural shift has many progenitors, but none more important than Denis Kitchen. *We know it's art because it's in a museum*.

Exactly.





LYNDA BARRY



1 The Good News, 1984. Ink, watercolor, and colored pencil on paper. 21 x 15 1/2 in. Published in Esquire Magazine. Courtesy of Adam Baumgold Fine Art.











The Real vs. The Ideal, 1989. Ink, watercolor, and colored pencil on paper. 21 x 14% in. Published in Esquire Magazine. Courtesy of Adam Baumgold Fine Art.





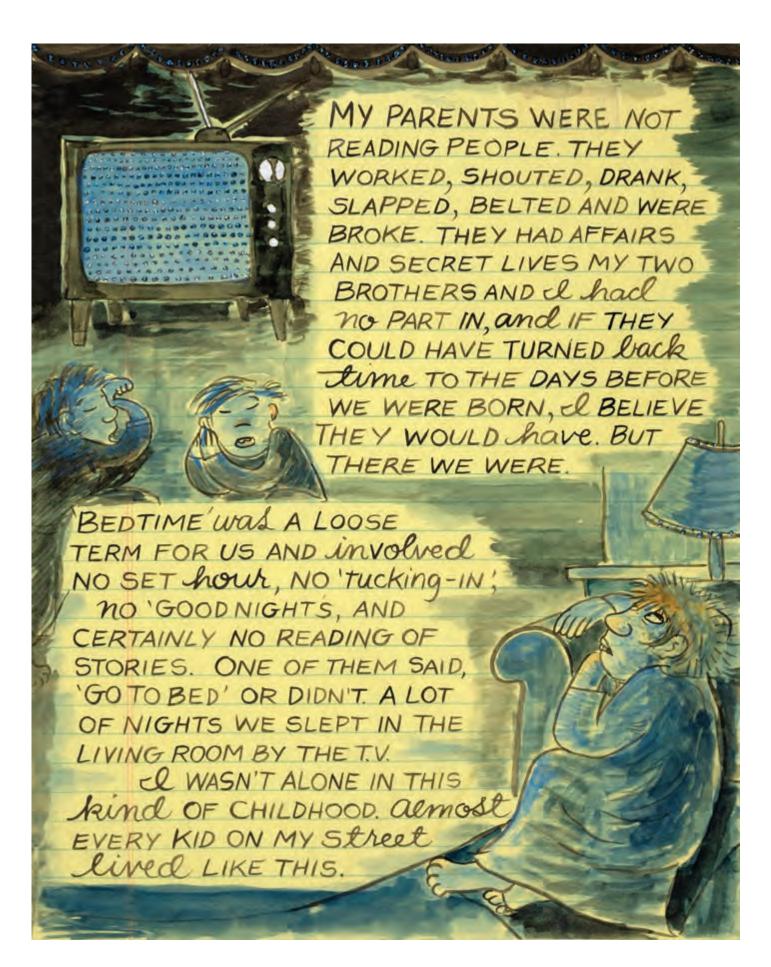






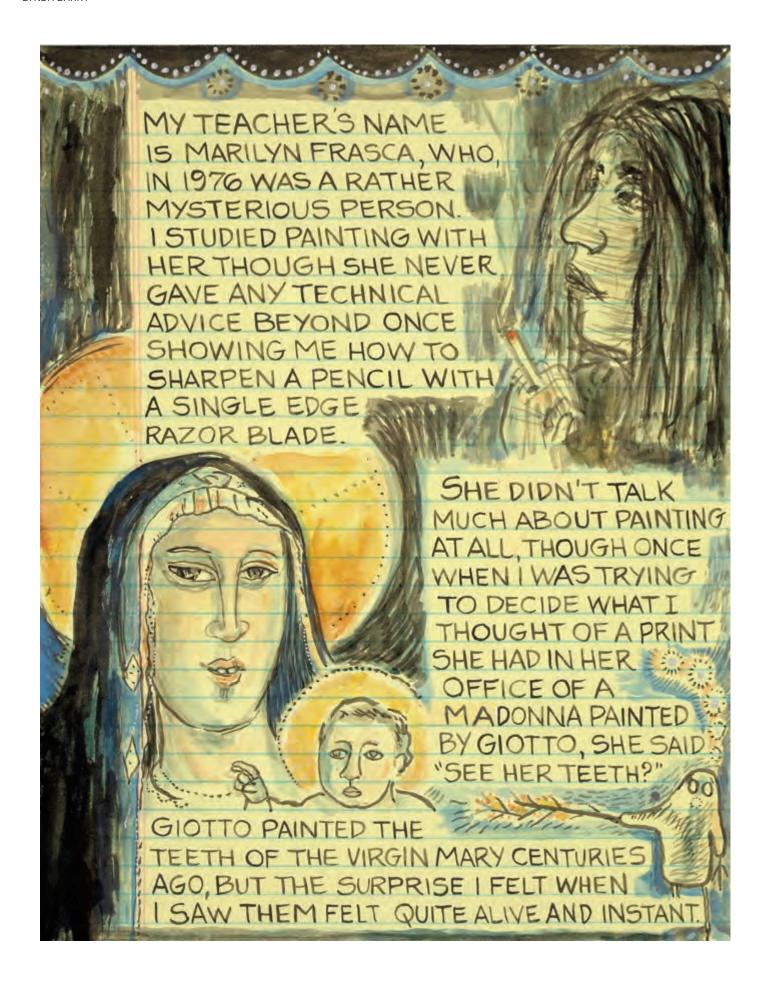
11 What It Is, 2008. P. 25. Ink, gouache, collage, glitter, and mixed media on paper. 11 x 8 ½ in. Published by *Drawn* & *Quarterly*. Courtesy of Adam Baumgold Fine Art.

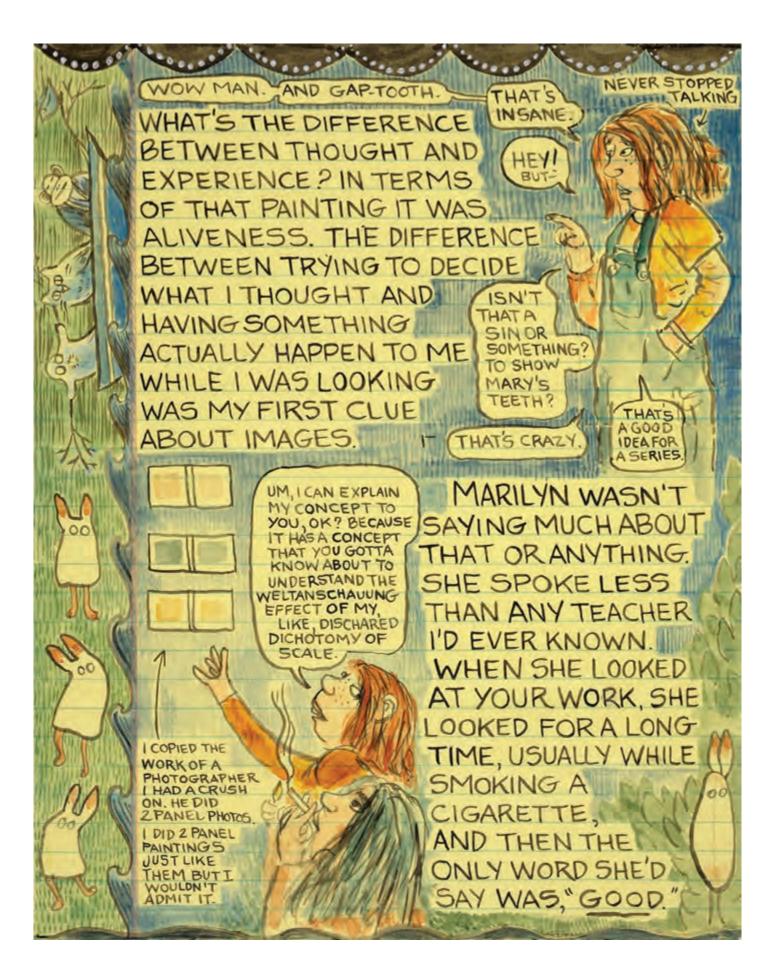
What It Is is a foray into Lynda Barry's past and the questions that orient her art and philosophy. Of humble materials and ornamented with baroque doodles, Barry's probing work aspires to liberate readers' creativity. The book won the Eisner Award for Best Reality Based Graphic Novel and the Wisconsin Library Association's R.R. Donnelley Award.







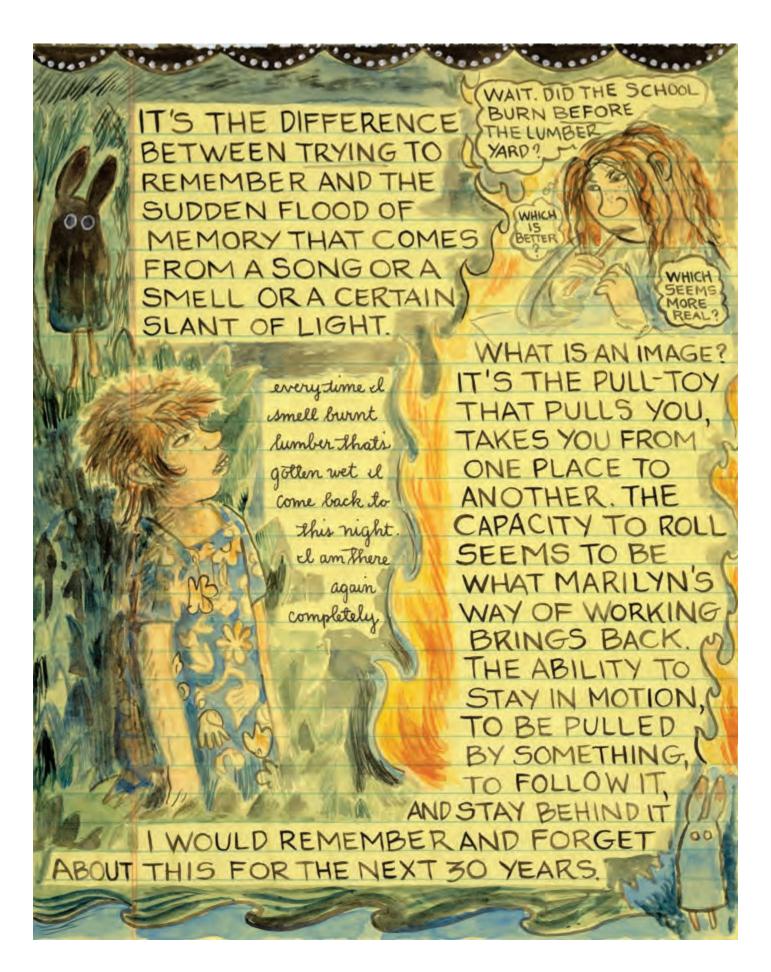




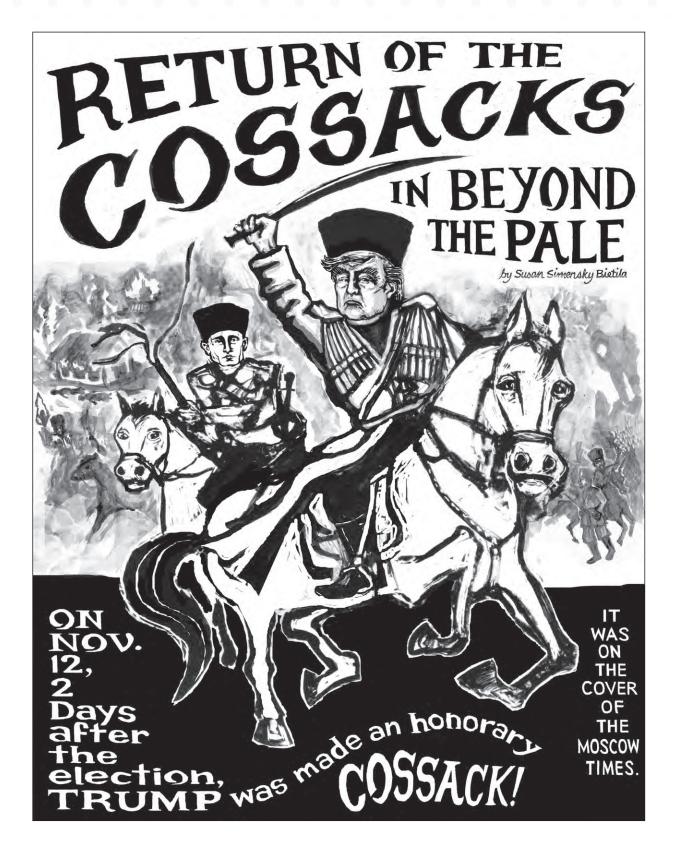








SUSAN SIMENSKY BJETJLA









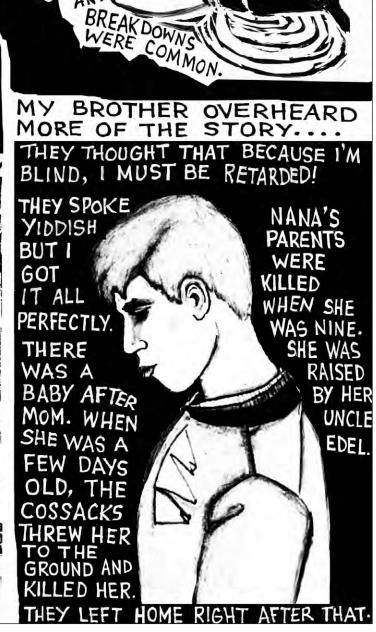


Return of the Cossacks, 2017. 8 pp.

GRIEF, ANGER

DEPRESSION





WE LIVED IN PUBLIC HOUSING. A DIASPORA GHETTO. THEY TOO WERE

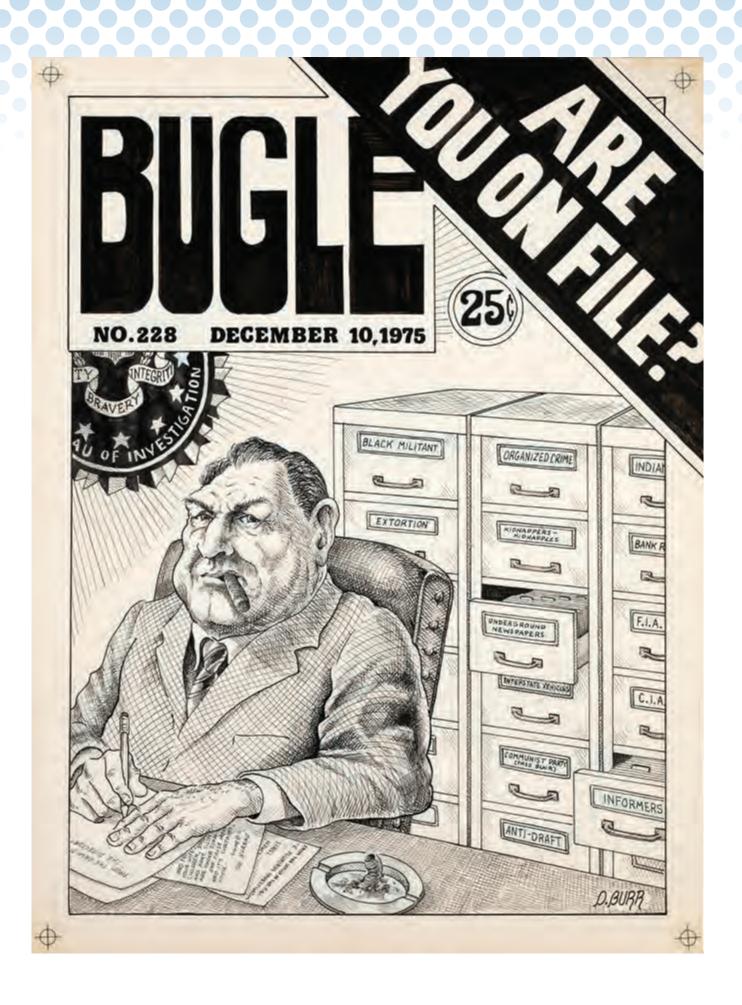
SILENT ABOUT THE POGROMS.





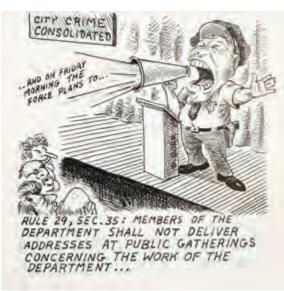
DAN BURR











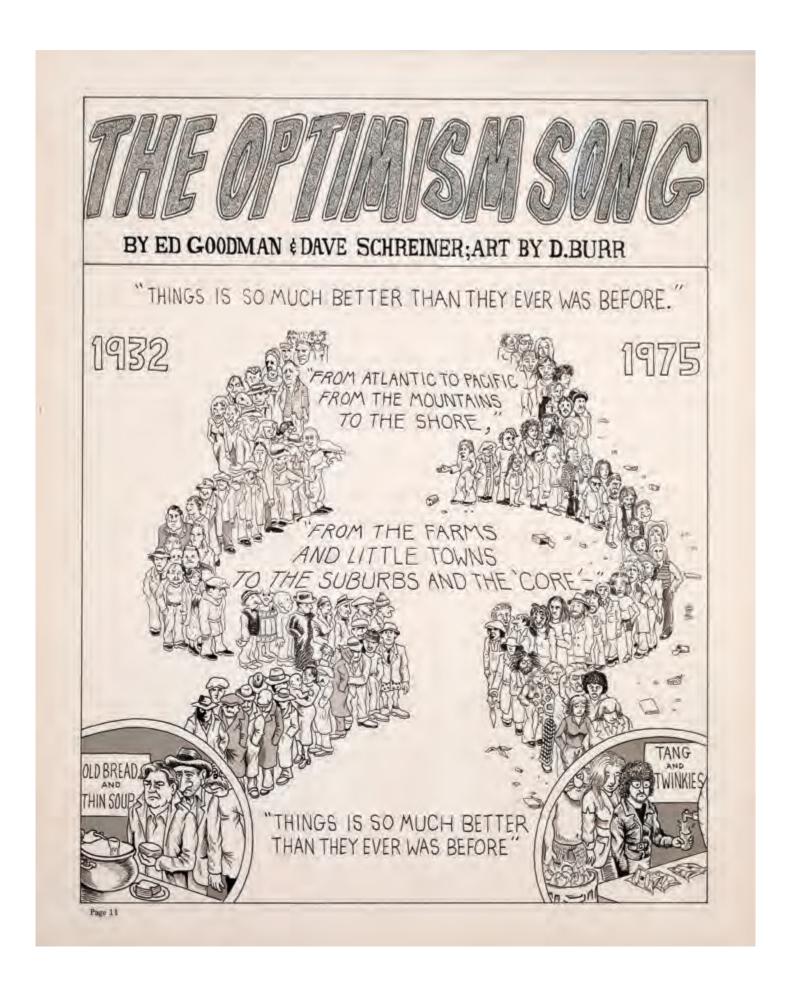


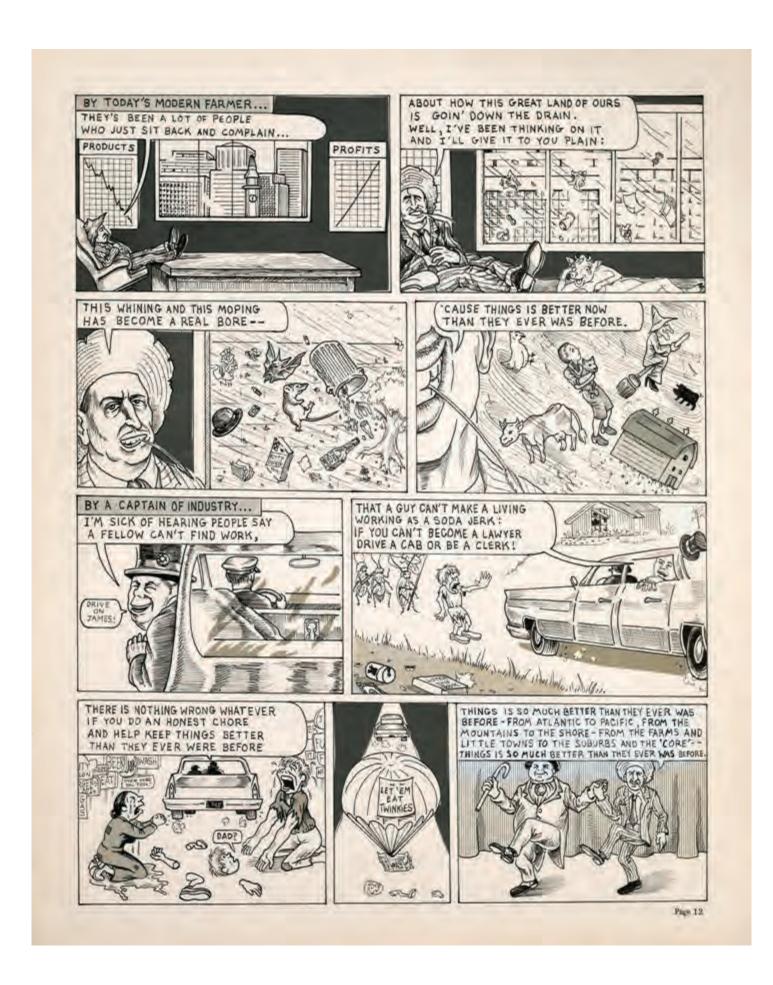
RULE 30, SEC. 28: WHEN A POLICE OFFICER
IS OPPOSED OR RESISTED IN MAKING AN
ARREST AND NO OTHER OFFICER IS WITHIN
CALL, HE MAY, IF NECESSARY, IN THE NAME
OF THE STATE, DEMAND THE AID OF
ANY BYSTANDER OR CITIZEN, WHO MUST
RENDER SUCH ASSISTANCE WHEN DEMAND—
ED OR BE HIMSELF ARRESTED AND PUNISHED.



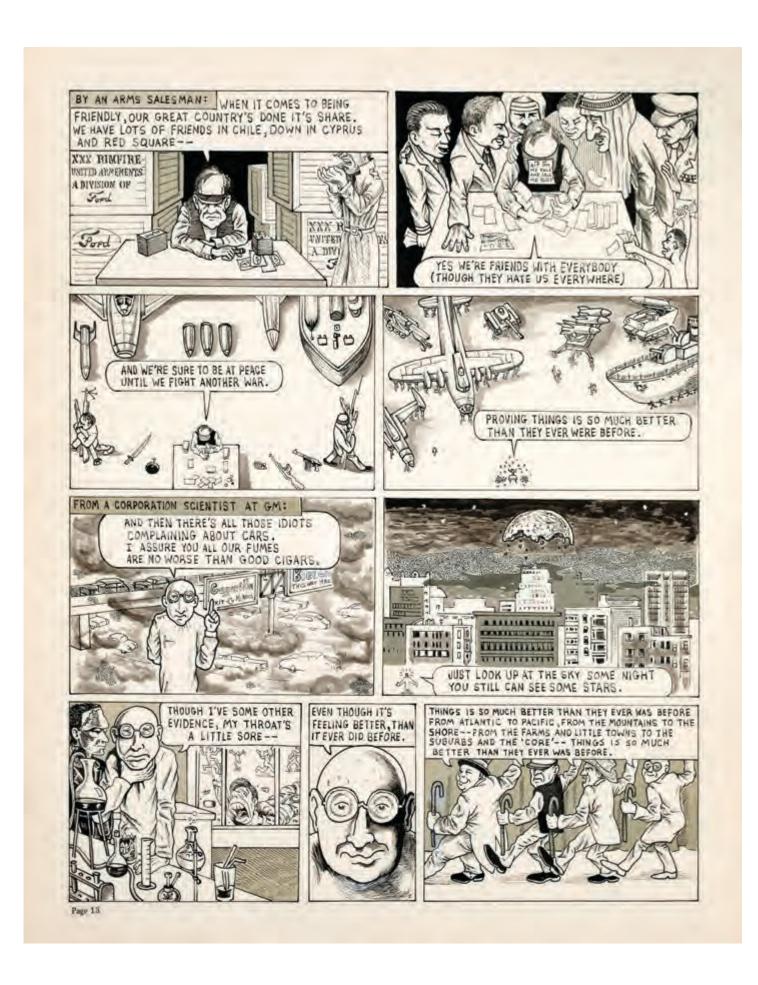
RULE 30, SEC. 40: POLICE OFFICERS, WHEN SERVING WARRANTS, MAKING ARRESTS ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE, OR WHEN ORDER-ED TO MAKE ARRESTS, MUST NOT APOLO-GIZE BY STATING THAT THEY ARE SORRY THAT THEY HAVE TO TAKE SUCH ACTION...

31–35 Milwaukee Police Department Handbook Spot Illustrations, 1976. Ink on Bristol board. 3 % x 4 in.; 4 ½ x 4 in.; 4 x 4 1/2 in.; 4 1/2 x 4 1/2 in.; 5 x 4 in. Published in the Bugle. Courtesy of the artist.

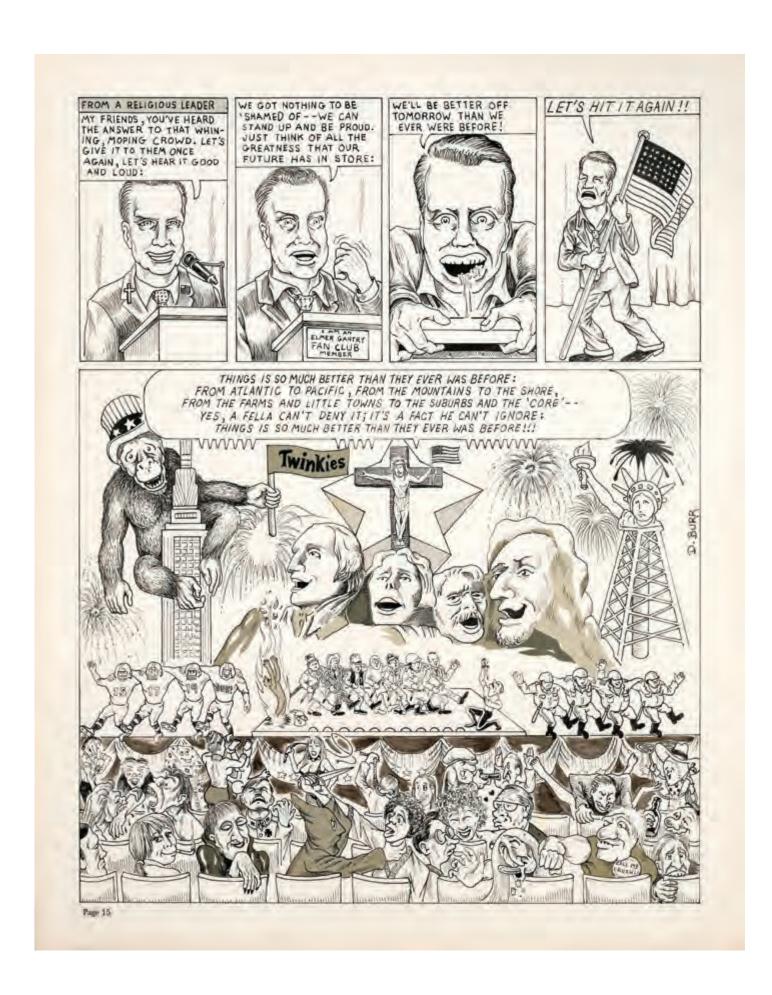




37 The Optimism Song (written by Ed Goodman and Dave Schreiner), 1975.

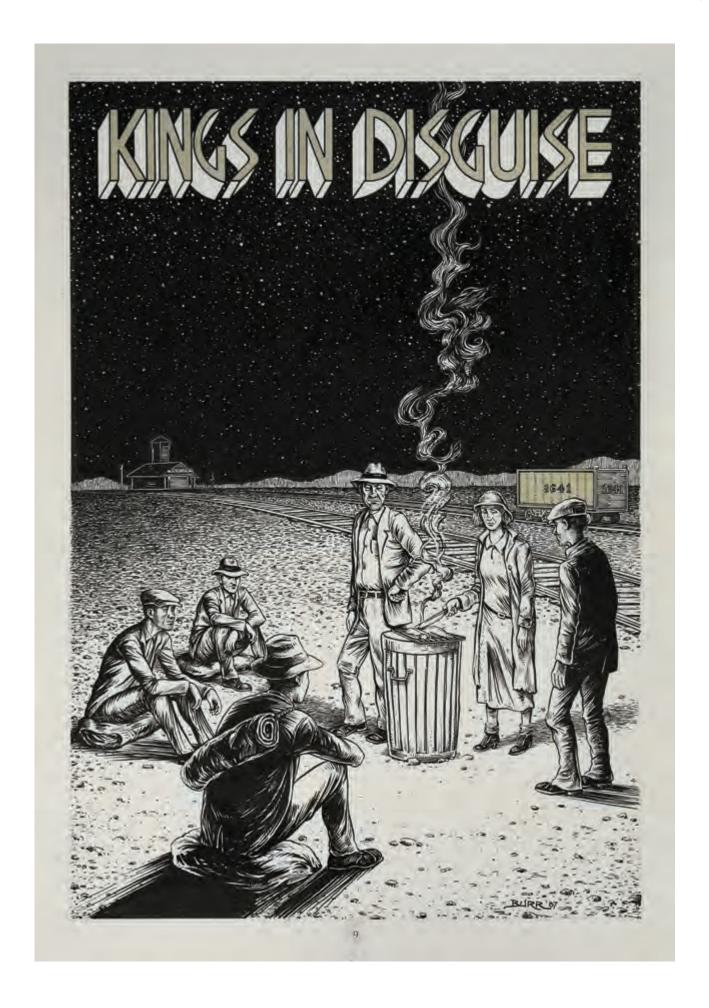




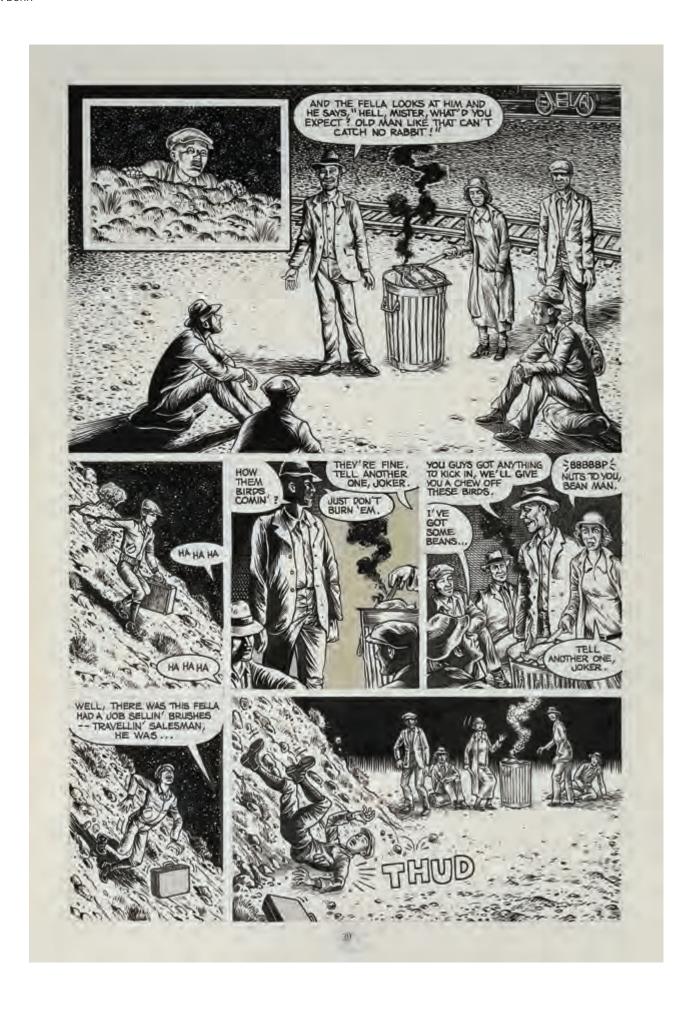




Kings in Disguise (written by James Vance), 1988. Pp. 1, 2, 22–28. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board. 18 x 11 % in. Courtesy of the artist.



Kings in Disguise (written by James Vance), 1988. Pp. 1, 2, 22–28.



Kings in Disguise (written by James Vance), 1988. Pp. 1, 2, 22–28.

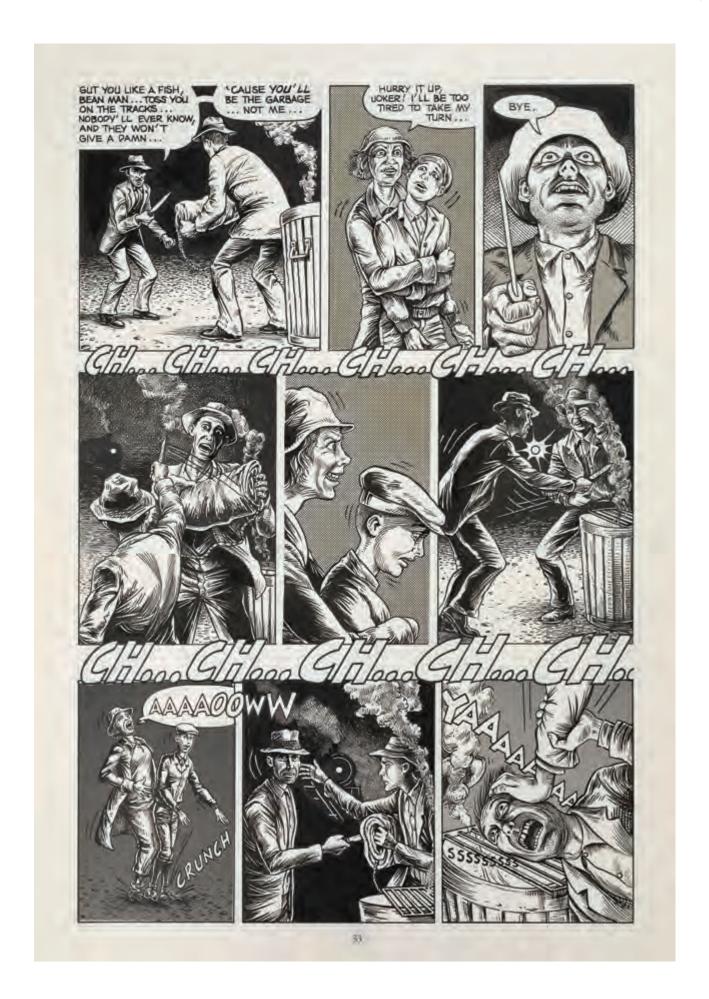






45, 46 *Kings in Disguise* (written by James Vance), 1988. Pp. 1, 2, 22–28.

Kings in Disguise is a Depression-era tale of thirteen-year-old Freddie Bloch who opts to be a hobo when his family unit falls apart. The first of Dan Burr and James Vance's six-issue series won several prestigious industry awards in 1989. The collection was subsequently published as a graphic novel that has been hailed by luminaries including Alan Moore (Watchmen), Art Spiegelman (Maus), and Will Eisner (A Contract with God).

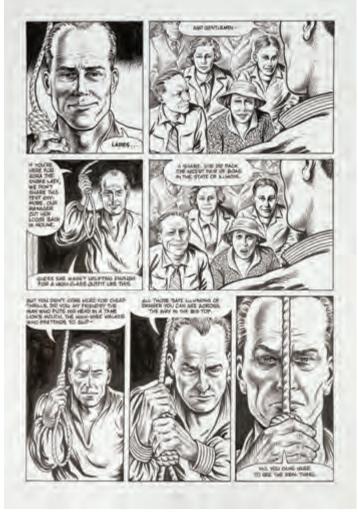


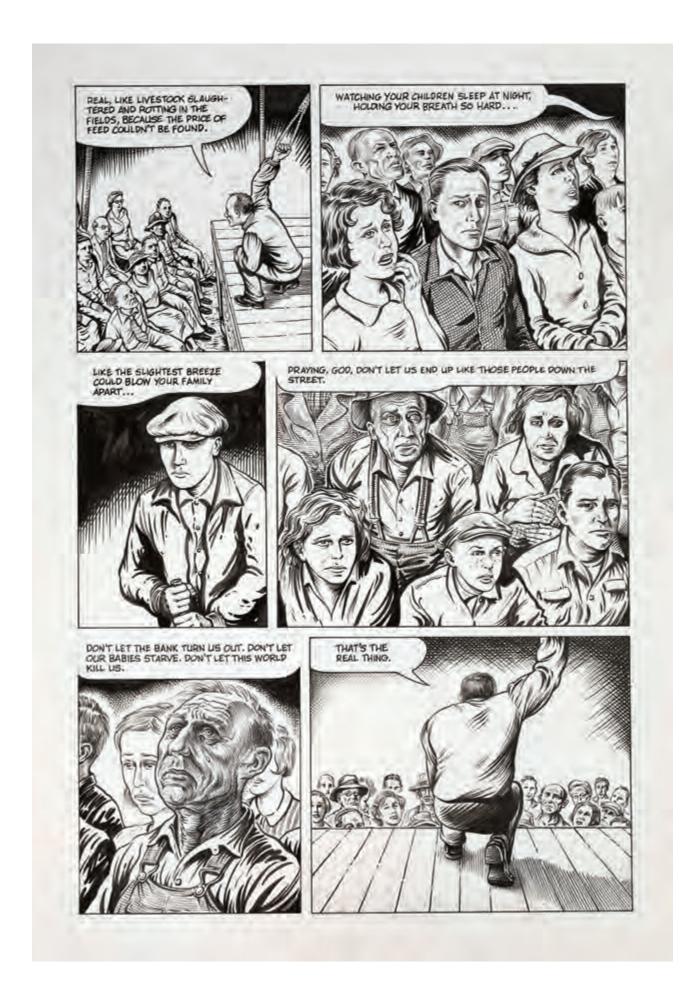


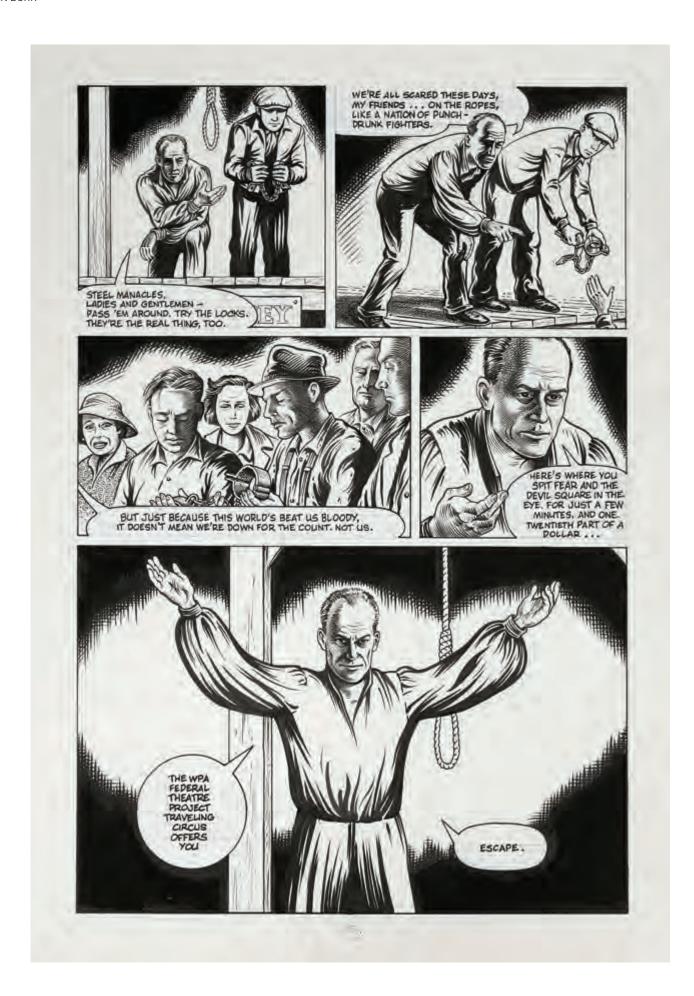
Kings in Disguise (written by James Vance), 1988. Pp. 1, 2, 22–28.











On the Ropes (written by James Vance), 2013. Pp. 2–8.





On the Ropes (written by James Vance), 2013. Pp. 2–8.



On the Ropes (written by James Vance), 2013. Pp. 2–8.





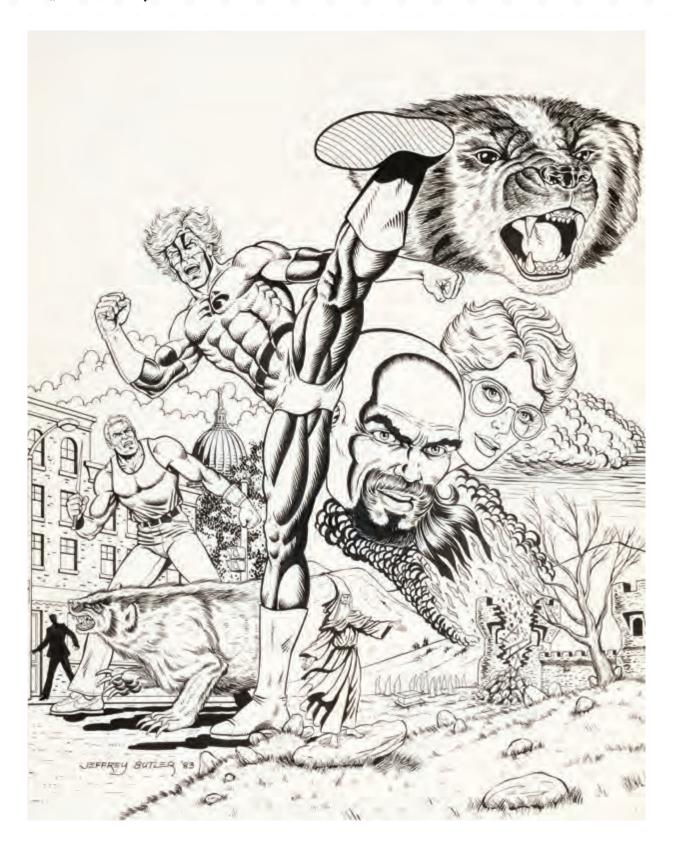


- **57** Nancy—Horror Comic Book, 1944. Daily strip. Ink on Bristol board. 5 ½ x 19 ½ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.
- 58 Nancy—Lie Detector, 1946. Daily strip. Ink on Bristol board. 7 x 21 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

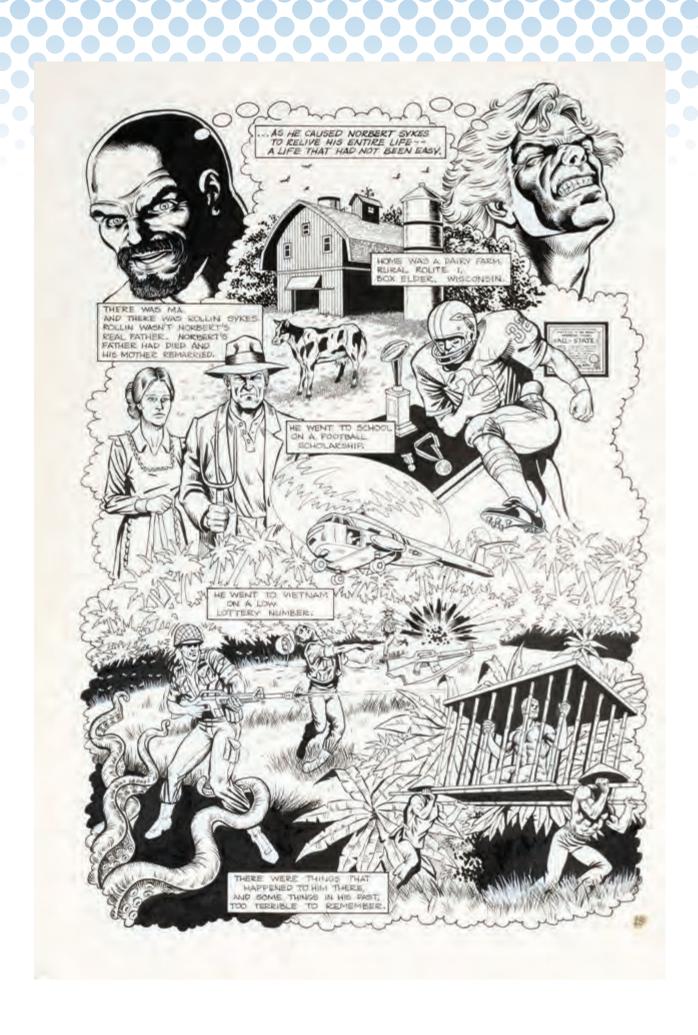
Ernie Bushmiller is an unlikely icon for the counterculture. His long-running gag-strip *Nancy* is thoroughly inoffensive and sufficiently mainstream to illustrate the entry for "comics" in the *American Heritage Dictionary*. Nevertheless, the understated elegance, formal perfection, and surreal aftertaste that *Nancy* often leaves has made Bushmiller a cult figure.



LIEFF BUTLER



Badger #1, 1983. Splash page (full-page panel). Ink on Bristol board. 14 x 11 in. Courtesy of Mike Baron and the artist.



61 Badger #1, 1983. P. 15. Ink on Bristol board. 14 x 11 in. Courtesy of Mike Baron and the artist.



62 Badger #4, 1984. Cover. Ink on Bristol board. 20 x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Courtesy of Mike Baron and the artist.



 $\textbf{63} \ \textit{Badger \#17}, 1985. \ \textit{Pp. 1-3}, 5, 7, 13-16. \ \textit{Ink on Bristol board}. \ 17 \times 11 \ \textit{in. Courtesy of Mike Baron and the artist}.$



Badger #17, 1985. Pp. 1–3, 5, 7, 13–16.





Badger #17, 1985. Pp. 1–3, 5, 7, 13–16.





Badger #17, 1985. Pp. 1–3, 5, 7, 13–16.





Badger #17, 1985. Pp. 1–3, 5, 7, 13–16.



MILT CANIFF



72 Terry and the Pirates, 1945. Sunday strip. Ink on Bristol board. 30 ¾ x 24 ¼ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.





73 Li'l Abner—Marryin' Sam/Snake Oil, 1942. Sunday strip. Ink on Bristol board. 28 x 23 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

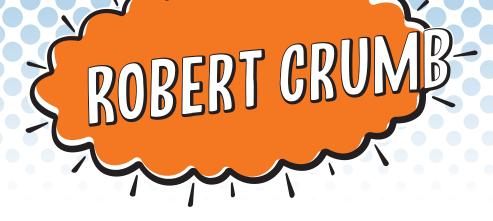




74 Li'l Abner—A Shmoo Lays Eggs, 1948. Daily strip. Ink on Bristol board. 10 x 26 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

In late 1948, Al Capp introduced a new species, the shmoo, into his strip *Li'l Abner*. Shmoos delight in serving humanity, even to the point of self-sacrifice as food. Various theories—political, environmental, even philosophical—have been put forth to parse the allegorical meaning of the creatures.

75 Li'l Abner—Horned Pappy Yokem, 1954. Daily strip. Ink on Bristol board. 7 x 23 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.







o, how bout this Harvey Kurtz-man, huh? Hey, I love this guy! I really do! I'll never forget the moment I first sow the cover of Mad number eleven...! think it was one of the most important events in my life... and therefore the history of the world... No, but seriously, I just warna tell.

thinh it was one of the most important events in my life, and therefore the history of the world. No, but seriously, I just warms tell world. No, but seriously, I just warms tell world. No, but seriously, I just warms tell to make the work work (circs late firties) by the guy who gove us the great early "Mad" comics and other EC masterpieces such as "Two-Fisted files." Frontline Combat (the only two Liberal war comic books ever published), some of the EC Science Fiction stories, and this guy is so pure of heart. I'm not kidding... that he was plagued by guilt feelings because the EC Korror and Crime comics, the biggest sellers in the EC line, supported the books that he worked on the was also the credtor and main thrust behind the greatest satire magazines this country's ever seen, or ever will see most likely, starting with the first seven issues of Mad Magazine then Trump (two issues, bocked by Hefner), and Humburd (only eleven issues), as intense little magazines that didn't sell very well at all, bock in the late fifties. After this succession of miserable failures, he tried a more commercial approach with "Help" Help was middly successful, being mostly photos with humbood caption, Kurtman pot all his creative energy at this time into his collaborations with humbood caption, Kurtman collaborations with humbood caption, Kurtman collaborations with Will Elder, his lifetion parener, on the Goodman Beaver stories, which were the best thing about Help" all the other artists from the group having one their separate ways in search of paying mork. The Goodman Beaver series was Kurtumin 3 lost attempt to produce settire on his own terms. Then came Little Annie Ennny and Editor-Publishor Hugh M. Heiner: Hurtiman and Elder have been turning out Little Annie Ennny and Editor-Publishor Hugh M. Heiner: Hurtiman and Elder how been turning out Little Annie Ennny and editors.

All the early strips here in reprinted first appeared in various schlock comic books of the late forties, when Kurtuman versilons and publishers, onl

Ten years later, when I was a been age Burtanan fanatic, I used to root through stacks of these third rote comics, stuff like "Millie the Model,"

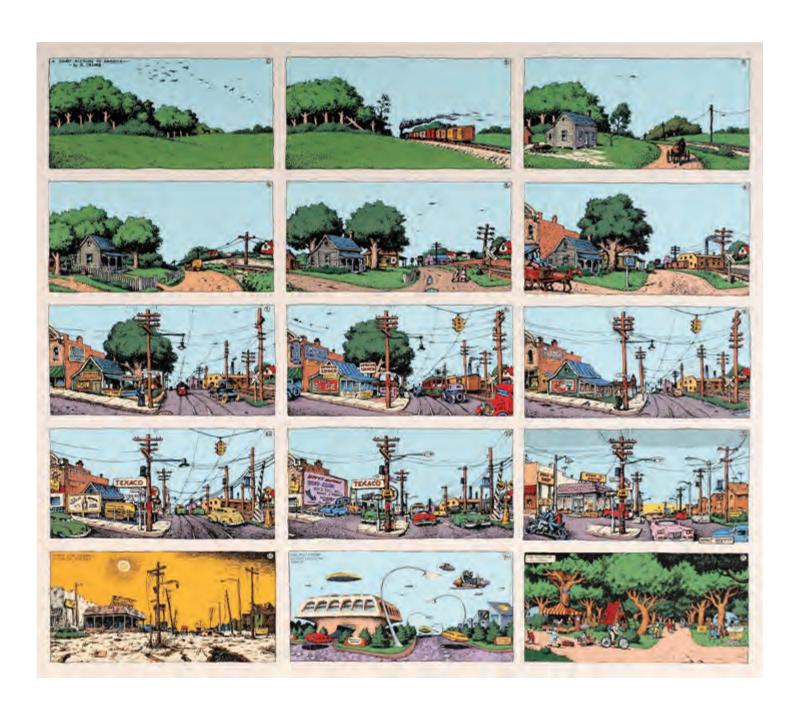
Ten gers later, when I was a ben-age Kurtsman faratic, I used to root through stacks of these third rote comics, stuff like "Millie the Model," gearching for early Kurtsman gems. I loved Aragthing by him." And I still do, actually!

I remember once telling Karvey that I thought it was a shame that he didn't do more solo work, because I resily loved his artwork, and thought it was greet in it's own muht. "Yeah, you and my mother!" he replied. The goty doesn't have any self-confudence. Well, that's not entirely true... I once watched him take command of a party full of inhibited, standard ordyly by leading the whole group in a sing-along of old corny college drinking songs!" That loosened em up! I couldn't believe my syes! This was a side of Harvey Kurtzman I'd never seen before! But he does have a tendency to down, grade his own, drawing, which, as you can see in this book, it as good as any cortonist in history that I know of. Some of his greatest stuff was dome in a little ballantine. Rocket book called "Karvey his truttman drouble. Book, published around 1959 or 60. Kurteman did all the drawing as well as the writing. It was a commercial thilure, of course. I have some body will reprint it comeany in its entirety on good paper, as I'd like to own a copy. This succession of commercial flops has certainly not helped to improve Kurtzmans confidence m his work, obviously, which is why he now finds him self in the tarturous and artistically vexacious position of having his work respencialled by Mr. Befrer Corrects Kurtzmans work for a testing output. Before corrects Kurtzmans work expenditude, etc etc... Kurtzman output to be free from such crass restrictions... Output to be the from the suggest to be., but that's the way the first rough pencilled does, the first rough pencilled output. The pury has a family to support. Well, its still better than Russia... You're not allowed to drow a tit in that owner, even if yource planning to find a few day they were drawn, as you'll see for yourself!

--- R. CRUMB 1976

SUBTIZMAN KOMIN. Published by Kitches Self Enterprises, a service of Kropp for Stopy of the Principles of the Self Stopy of the Self Stopy









79 Snarf #3: The Spirit Busts Milwaukee Underground, 1973. Cover. Ink on paper. 13 x 9 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

Will Eisner met Denis Kitchen in 1971 and the two worked together until the eighty-eight-year-old Eisner died in 2005. Stimulated by the freedom of the underground environment, Eisner produced some of his most ambitious work in his later years. In this example, his iconic characters the Spirit and Commissioner Dolan burst in on a group of sewer-bound (that is, underground) cartoonists.



A Contract with God, "Street Singer," 1978. P. 17. Ink and graphite on Bristol board. 11 x 8 ½ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

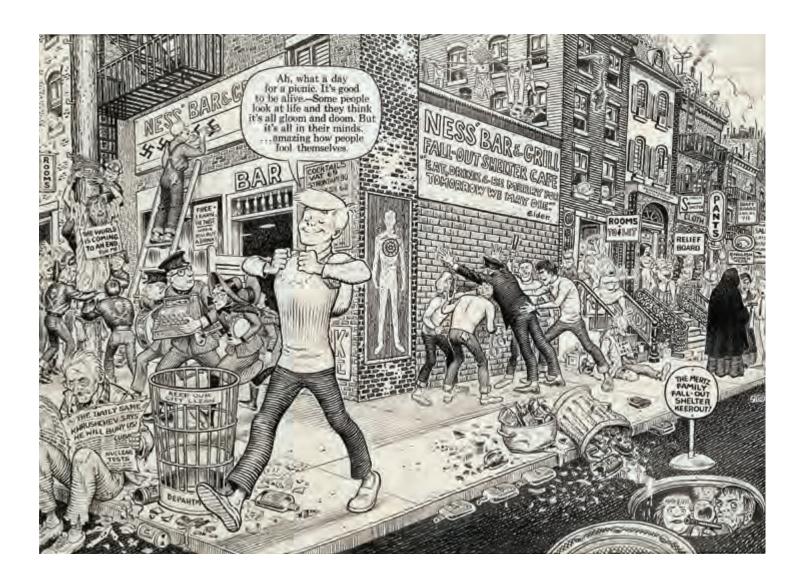


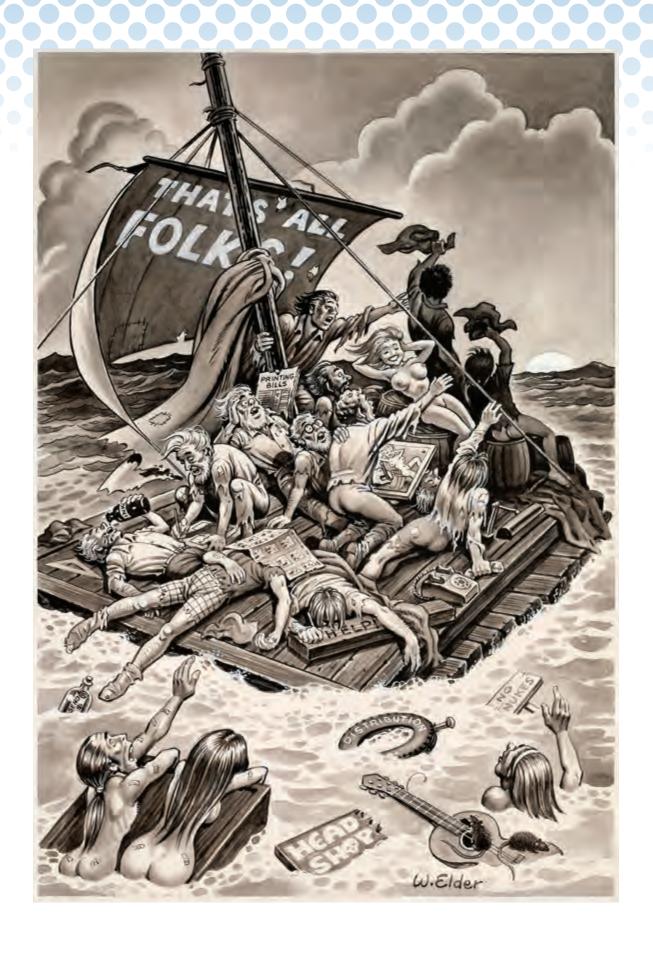
Will Eisner and Denis Kitchen. *The Spirit Jam*, 1981. P. 1. Ink on Bristol board. 14 x 11 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



The Spirit in Kitchen Sink Press' Archive Room, 1983. Ink on paper. 14 x 11 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.







84 Snarf #10, 1986. Cover. Ink and wash on illustration board. 20 x 12 ½ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

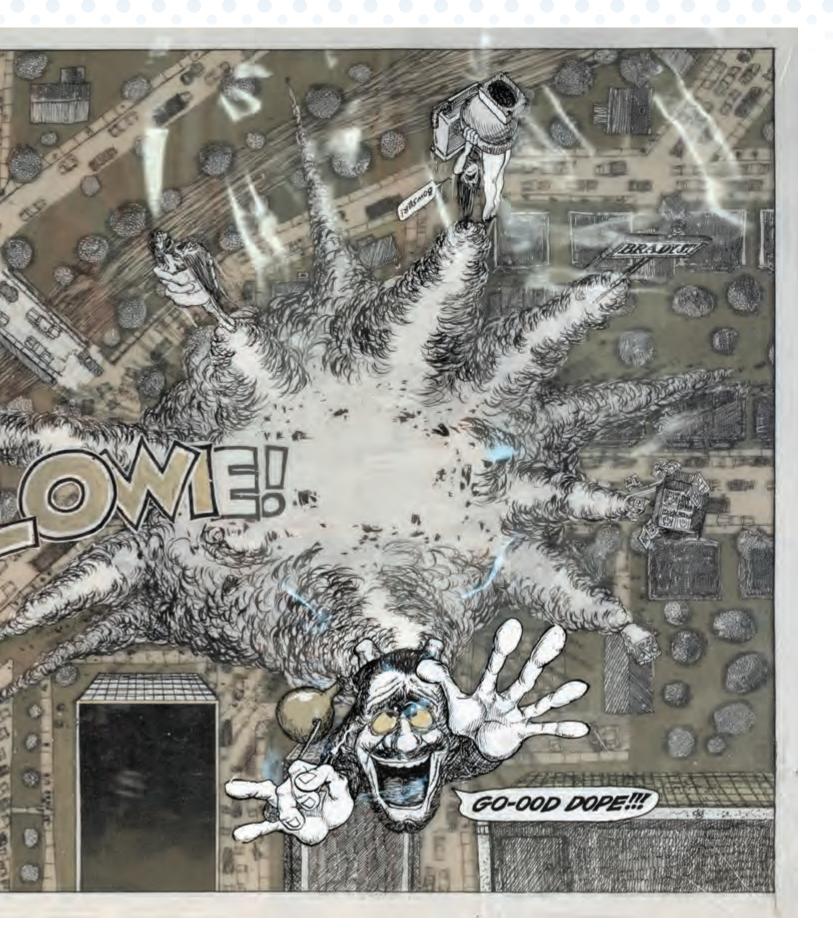
Will Elder's contributions to *Mad* and *Help!* magazines solidified his stature as one of comic art's great parodists. While his targets were usually chosen from popular culture, Elder's cover for *Snarf* #10 parodies the French Romantic artist Théodore Gericault's historical painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19)—with underground cartoonists in place of the shipwrecked sailors.

DON GLASSFORD

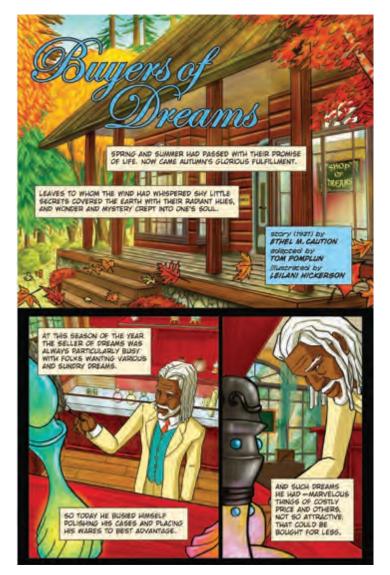
E ENTIRE EAST SIDE

85 *Deep 3-D Comix*, 1970. Centerfold. Ink on acetate. 18 x 27 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

Don Glassford drew almost the entirety of *Deep 3-D Comix* #1—the first underground comic in 3-D—including this striking centerfold scene located in the neighborhood of Milwaukee's East Side. Like much of the first issue, the gag is drugs-oriented, but the humor had such appeal that the issue went through three printings.









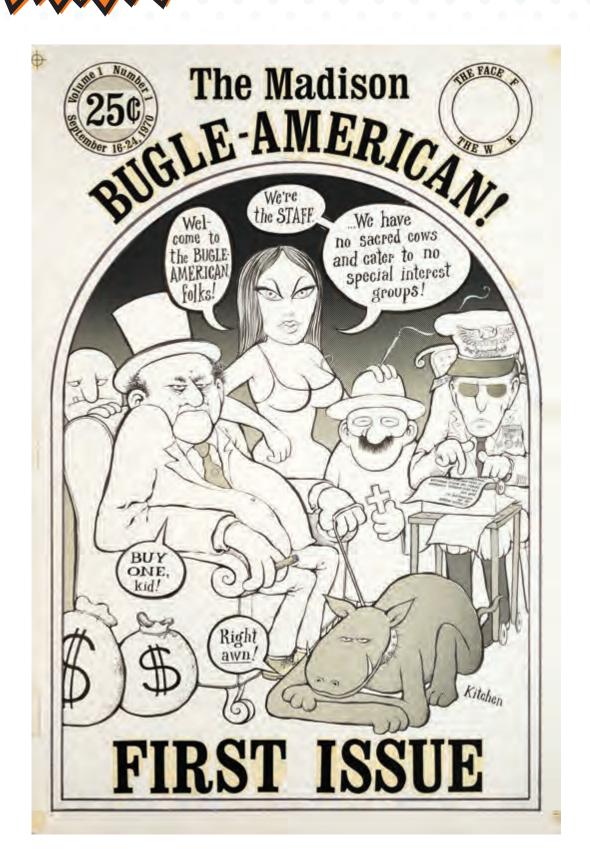




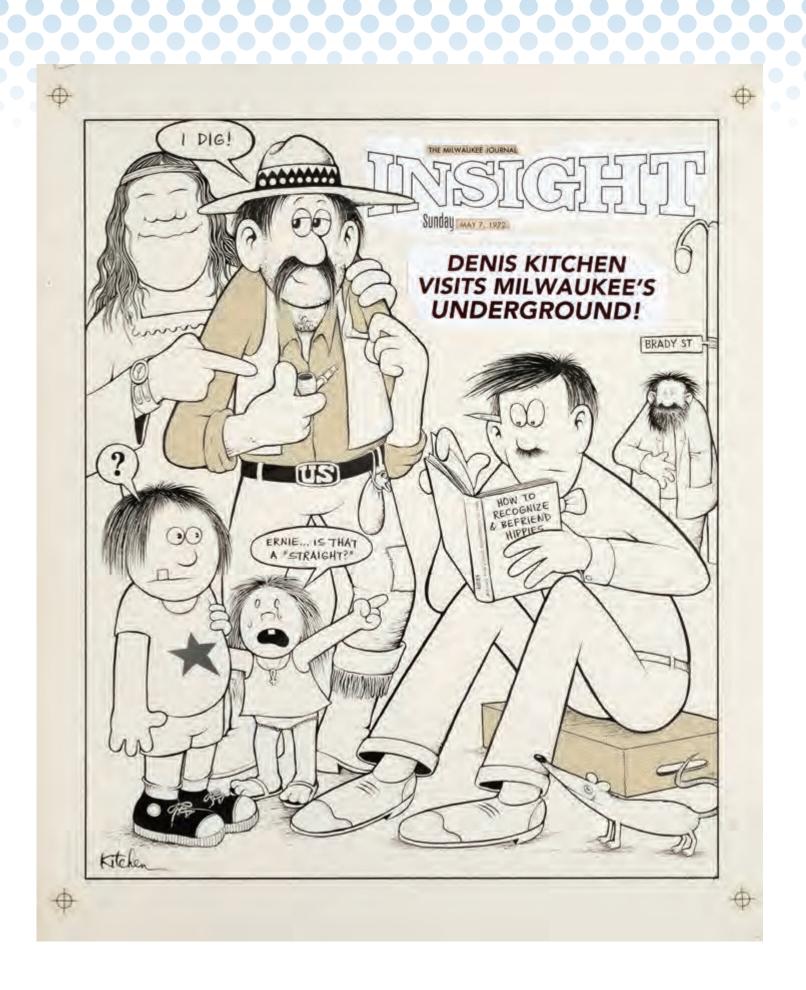
Dreams, 2011. 5 pp.



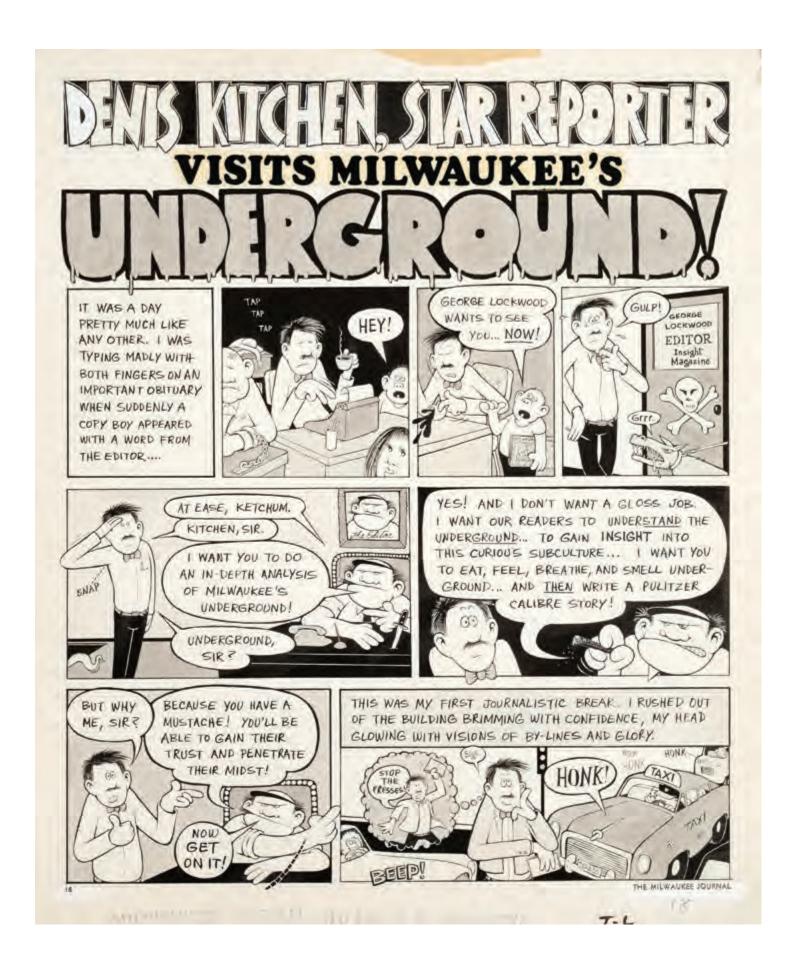
DENIS KITCHEN



91 The Bugle #1, 1970. Cover. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board. 17 x 11 ½ in. Courtesy of the artist.



92 Denis Kitchen Visits Milwaukee's Underground, 1972. 5 pp. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board. 14 ½ x 12 in. Courtesy of the artist.









Interview with Denis Kitchen

In the following interview judy Jacobi asked Denis Kitchen a few questions. He chose, characteristically, to answer in cartoon form.

Q. Now that you're rich and famous, why do you still do Bugle work?



Q: In the early months of the Bugle's existence you used to drive the paste-up from the Madison office to the Milwaukee printer at dawn, after working all night. Several times you fell asleep at the wheel and had "near misses." What went through your mind as you saw disaster staring you in the face?



Q: In retrospect, do you think the original Bugle founders were naive??



Q. If you had to choose between reliving that first year on the Bugle and receiving a 1951 Hudson Hornet in mint condition, which would you do?



Q: Describe your sex life in detail during the Bugle's second year.



Q: Did you ever rely on drugs to help you meet deadlines, or use them for inspiration?



@ 1075 Kitchen

Q: Do you feel you've grown as an artist from the first issue of the Bugle five years ago? Give us an example of a 1970 Kitchen drawing and a contemporary one.



1975

Q. Is the Bugle really a staff-run cooperative?

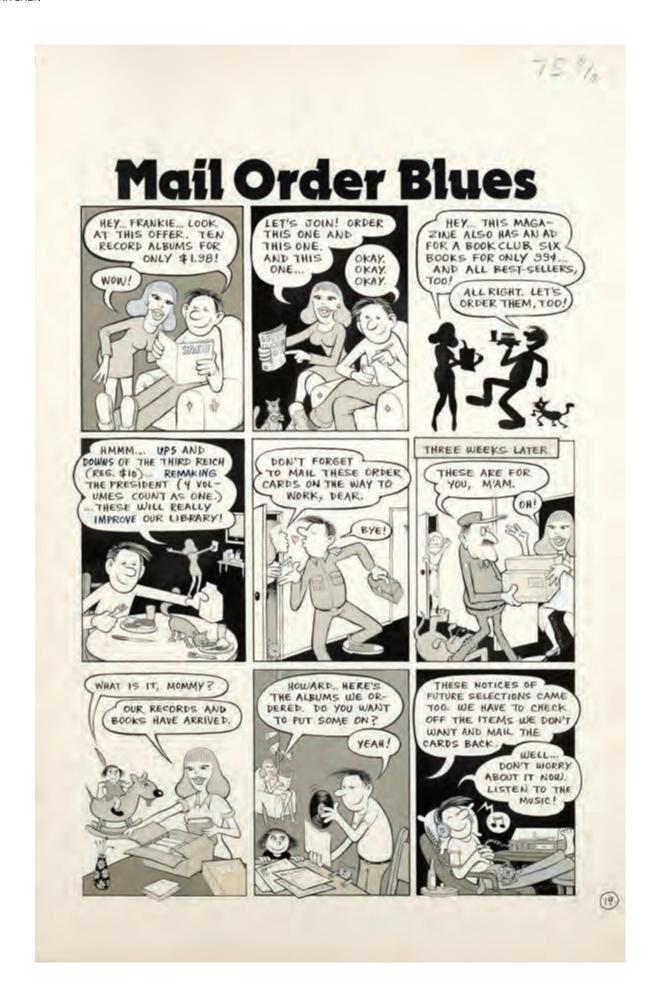


Q: The Bugle for the first year or two had the unique feature of a regular comix page drawn by several local cartoonists. What happened to all those artists, and what are you doing these days?

A: I guess I'll have to deviate from pictures for this one. Don Glassford, who did the "Studley" strip is still in Milwaukee doing nice T-shirt designs that are distributed nationally. Bruce Walthers, who did "Oscar Kabibbler," now lives near Boston, freelances, and daydreams a lot. Wendel Pugh ("Fenster Sitzen") left for Colorado three years ago. The last I heard he was living on a mountaintop. Jim Mitchell ("Smile") is a tragic case. He was busted in Mexico almost two years ago on a drug charge (with circumstan-tial evidence). He has been languishing in a Mexico City prison cell ever since, and has yet to be tried or sentenced. The level of corruption there is incredible. As for myself, I'm living in the country and still publishing and drawing underground comix, although I am told they died two summers ago.

September 17, 1975





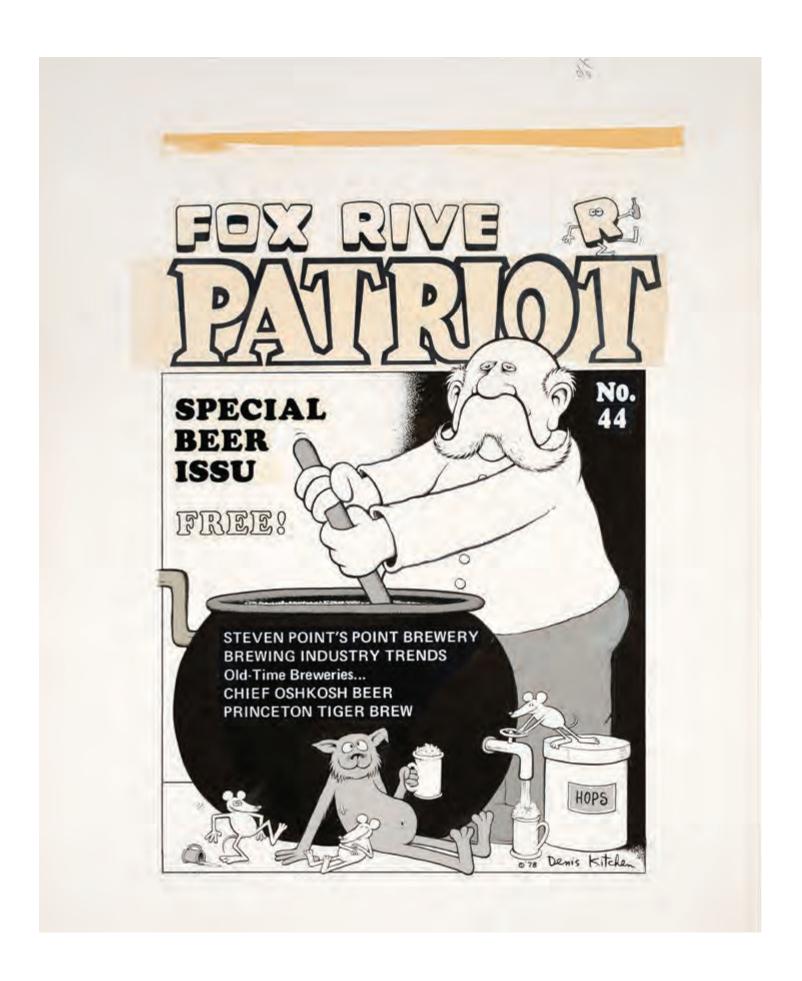




101 *Major Arcana*, 1975. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board. 15 x 15 in. Courtesy of the artist.

As a favor to his brother who had joined the Milwaukee-based band Major Arcana, led by poet/musician Jim Spencer, Denis Kitchen spent ninety hours on this image. It served as an album cover—now highly sought by collectors—and, several years later, as the point of departure for a surreal three-page story in *Mondo Snarfo*, published by Kitchen Sink.

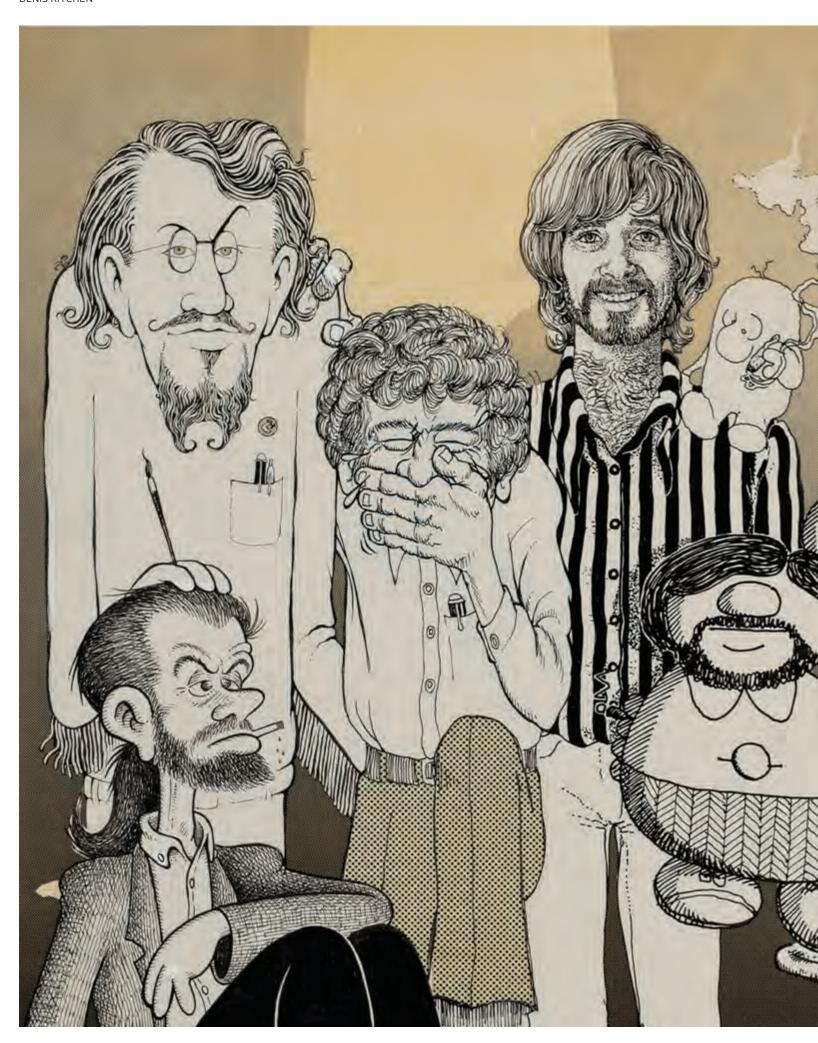




103 Fox River Patriot #44, 1978. Cover. Ink on illustration board. 18 x 15 in. Courtesy of the artist.



 $\textbf{104} \ \textit{Spacey Cheesehead Comix}, \textbf{2014. Cover. Ink on illustration board. 20 x 16 in. Courtesy of the artist.}$





105 Denis Kitchen, Don Glassford, Jay Lynch, Jim Mitchell, Wendel Pugh, Bruce Walthers, and Skip Williamson. *Group Self-Portrait*, 1971. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on Bristol board. 9 x 11 ¾ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

Like musicians, cartoonists use the term "jam" to describe an informal, collaborative creative activity. Jams often devolve into anarchy, but this jam portrait of the core group of midwestern underground cartoonists is a successful outcome.

HARVEY KURTZMAN



106 The Grasshopper and the Ant, 1960. 4 pp. lnk and wash on illustration board. 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

Harvey Kurtzman was celebrated by the counterculture for his mordant wit and inimitable draftsmanship showcased in seminal publications such as *Mad* magazine and *Harvey Kurtzman's Jungle Book*. Readers rarely had an opportunity to see work that Kurtzman himself colored until the publication of *The Grasshopper and the Ant*, in which he used delicate washes to describe the change of seasons.



The Grasshopper and the Ant, 1960. 4 pp.



The Grasshopper and the Ant, 1960. 4 pp.

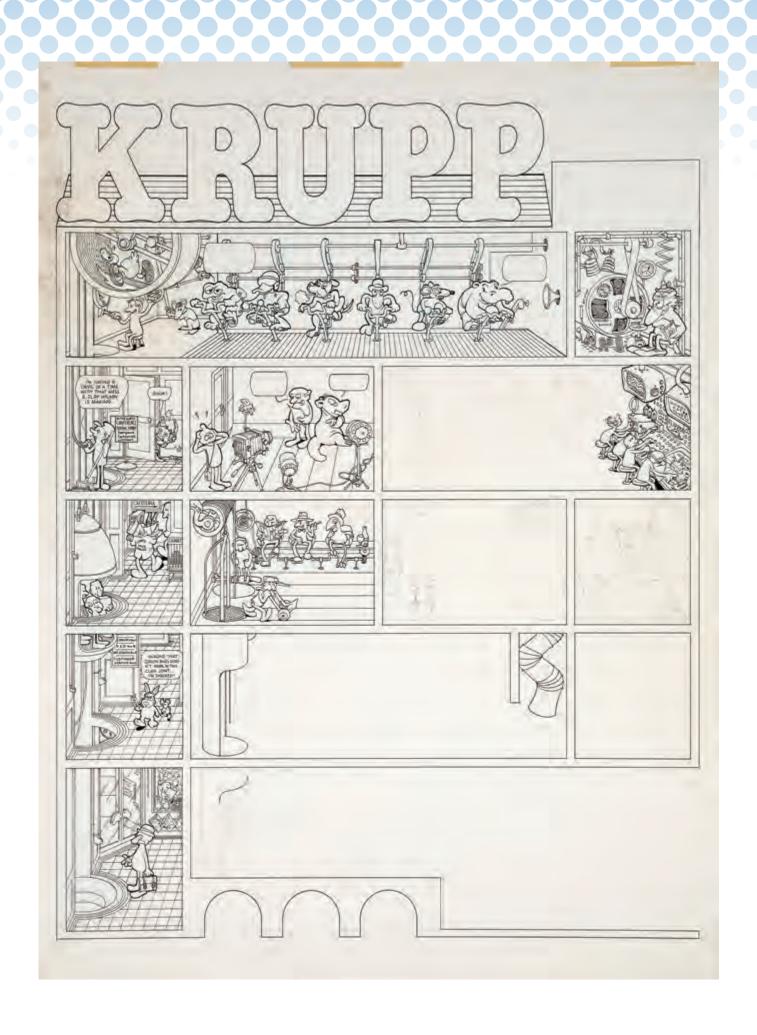


The Grasshopper and the Ant, 1960. 4 pp.

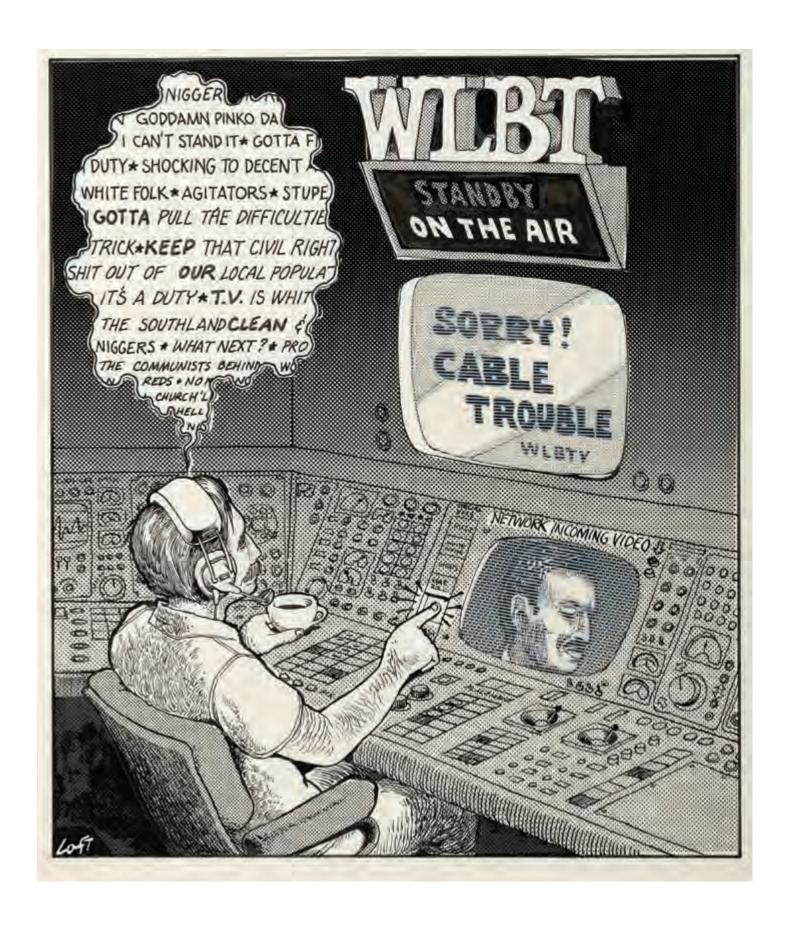




110 Butzford, 1975. Ink on illustration board. 15 x 20 in. Published as centerfold in Comix Book #4. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

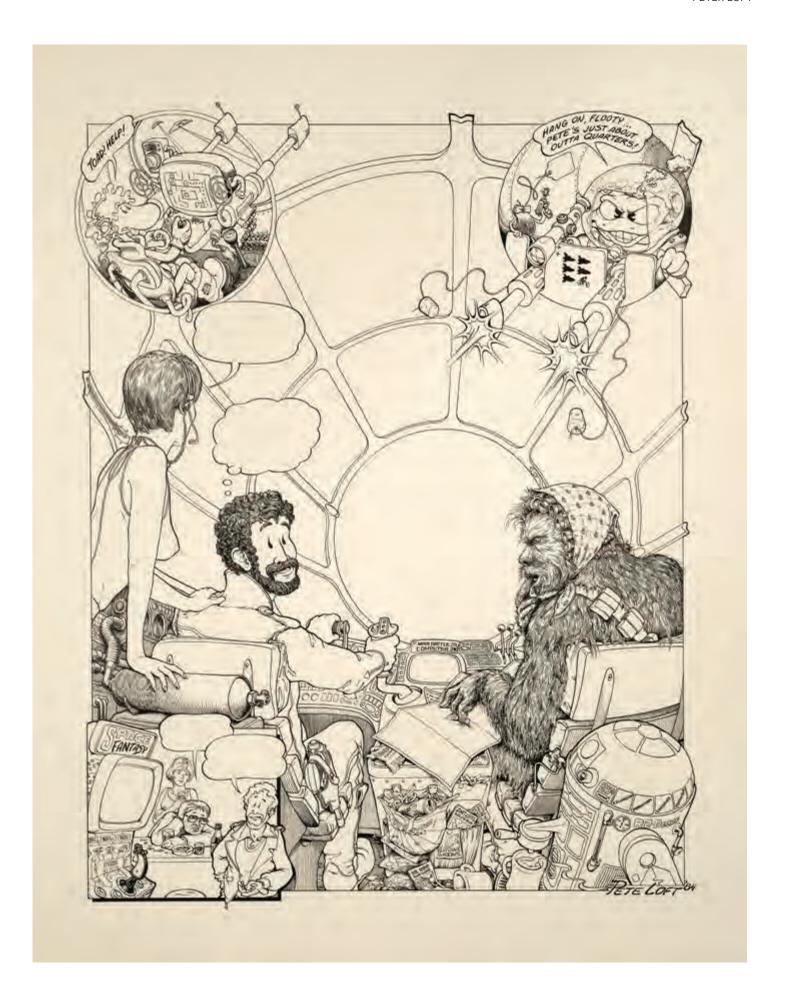


111 Unfinished Krupp Mail Order Catalog, 1975. Cover. Graphite and ink on illustration board. 20 x 15 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



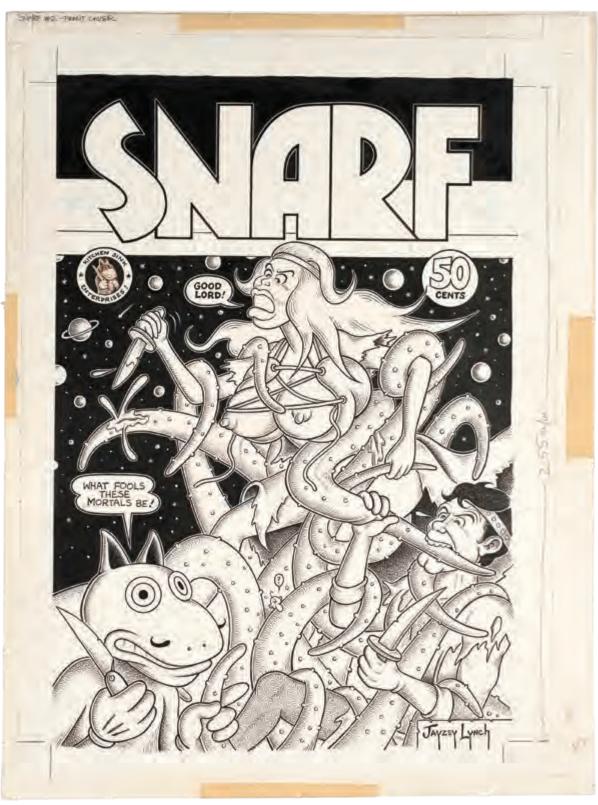
112 Racist TV Station, 1977. Ink and type on Bristol board. 7 ½ x 6 ½ in. Published in Corporate Crime Comics. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

Peter Loft's *Racist TV Station* pertains to Jackson, Mississippi's WLBT, which engaged in blatantly racist practices. When NAACP counsel Thurgood Marshall was interviewed in 1955, the station cut it off with a sign reading "Sorry Cable Trouble." After multiple complaints, the FCC revoked WLBT's license and awarded control to the community, which appointed William Dilday as station manager, the first African American to hold the role in the nation.

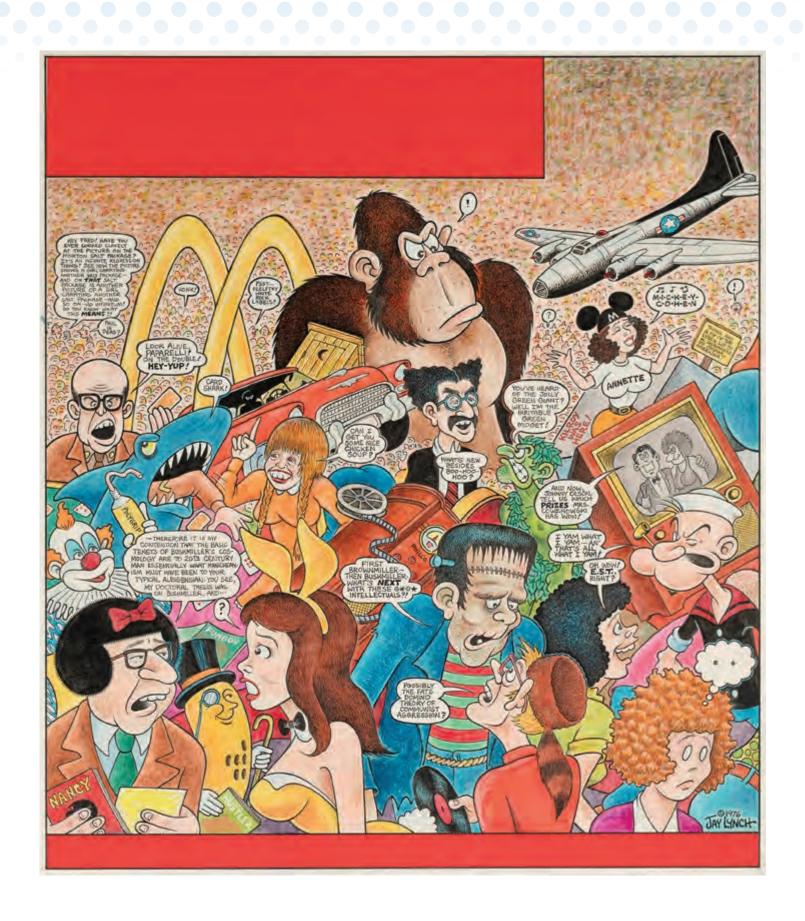


113 Star Wars Parody, 1977. Ink on illustration board. 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

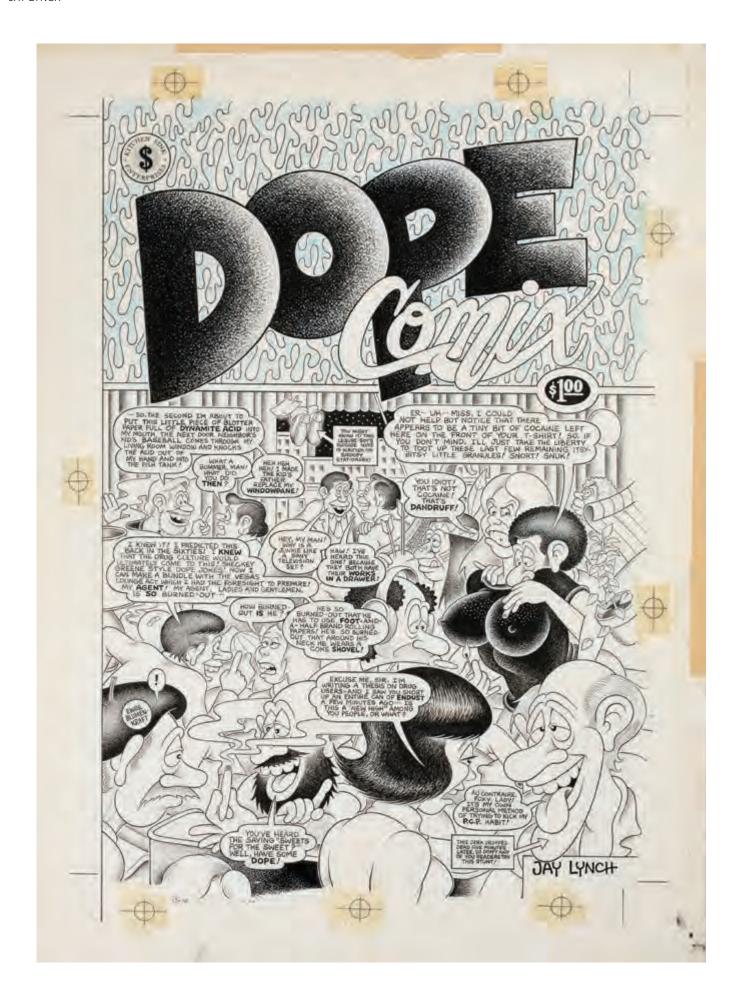




114 Snarf #2, 1972. Cover. Ink on Bristol board. 16 x 12 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



115 Chicago Sun-Times Sunday Magazine, 1976. Cover. Ink and colored pencil on illustration board. 19 x 16 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



116 Dope Comix #3, 1979. Cover. Ink on Bristol board. 16 x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.





117 Why Make Zines in Times of Strife (and calm?), 2016. Printer ink on paper. 11 x 17 in. Courtesy of the artist.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, zinester and archivist Milo Miller was asked to write about zinemaking as self-care and resistance for online resource zinelibraries.info. Miller later turned the essay into a sixteen-page mini-zine featuring appropriated imagery. When printed, folded, and flipped on the short edge, this zine emerges in toy book format.



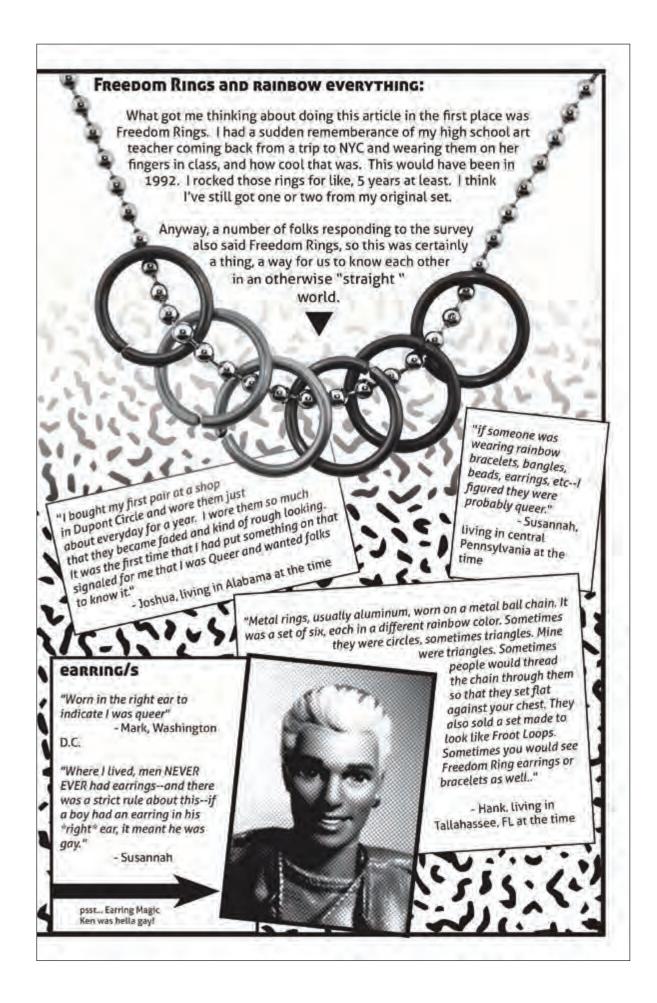


When I started thinking about queer signifiers I had a few certain things in mind. But before I get there, let me just say that in this case signifiers is a term that pretty much does what it says on the tin. For the sake of this piece, signifiers are the signs and symbols that we (we = queers) used to signal that we were of the same persuasion/orientation/what-have-you in a time when lots of folks were still hiding in the closet. Since I was thinking about

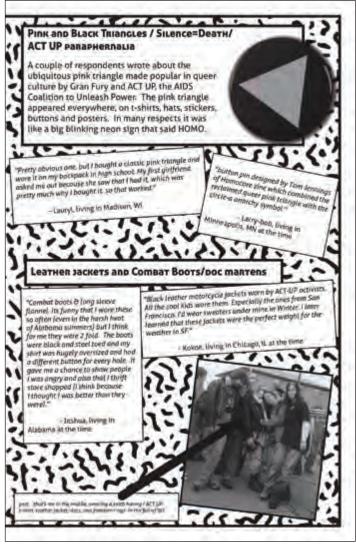
certain signifiers, I decided that I wanted to hear from other folks that I knew, or maybe didn't know about what those were in their communities. So I made a little survey, and got a bunch of results, most of which I'm sharing here either as synopses or as actual quotes.

One of the things I didn't anticipate was just how much urban privilege I was assuming. I grew up and came out in Milwaukee, which is a medium sized city. I lived in or near both New York and San Francisco at some point in the decade, and traveled mostly in urban spaces, though not exclusively. So I certainly had that perspective. A lot of the folks who participated in the survey also had that, whether they were from Toronto or D.C. or Tallahassee, FL. But a handful of folks decried my urbanism and told stories of there not being obvious signifiers. In more rural areas and parts of the U.S. (and elsewhere for sure) it just wasn't safe

to signal difference. For some *NOT* flagging was a way of not getting ones ass kicked or worse. This camouflage isn't relegated to 'the sticks', but could happen everywhere. At the same time, in places we might not think of as being part of The Gayborhood, folks would have an accessory, or an item of clothes, or a favorite record or movie, and those would tell folks who were paying attention OUR12-2QT2BSTR8. So join me over the next couple of pages time-trippin' back to the 90s and visit with some queer signifiers of yore.



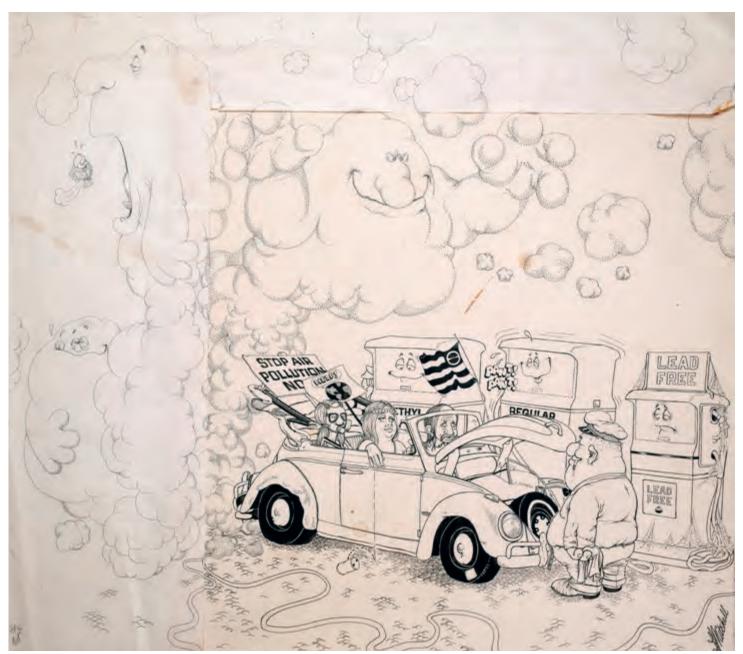


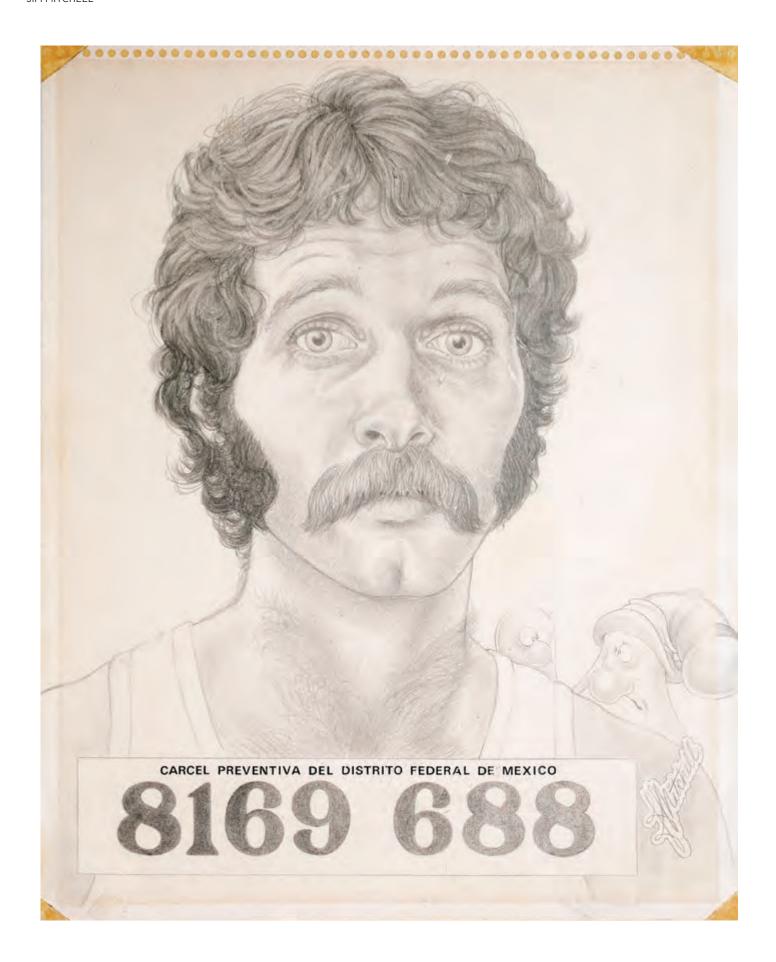






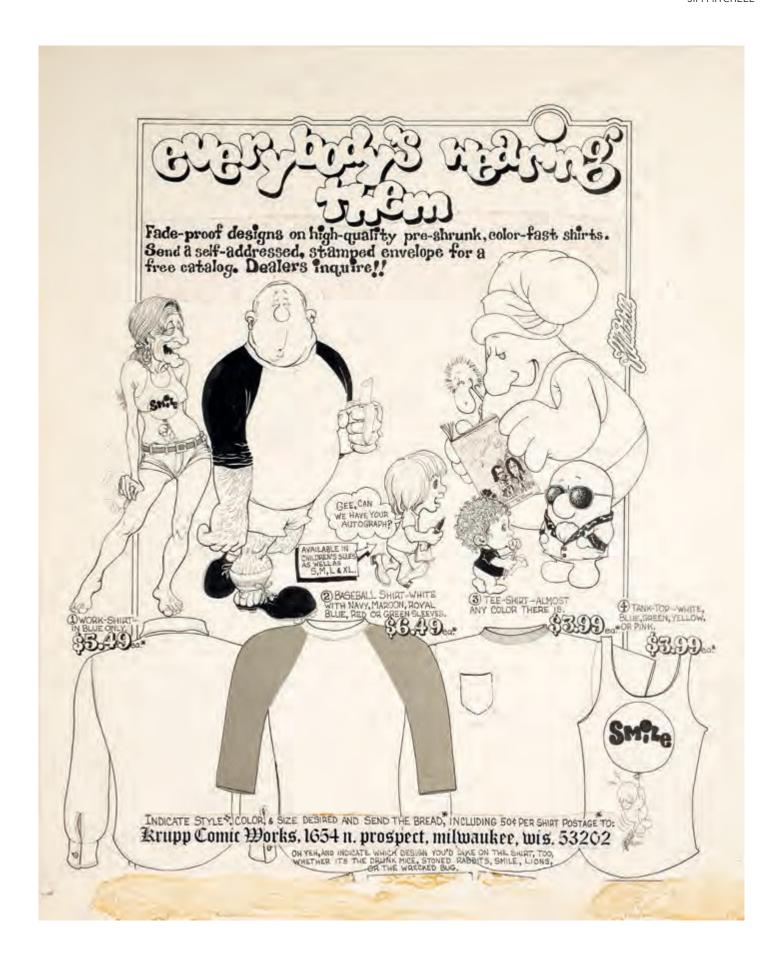






126 Self-Portrait, 1973. Graphite and ink on paper. 14 x 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. Courtesy of the artist.

Jim Mitchell is one of the most technically gifted of underground artists, equally adept at caricature and realism. He was arrested in Mexico for possession of cannabis in the early 1970s and spent several years incarcerated. This sober self-portrait, drawn shortly after his arrest, served as a cover for an issue of the *Bugle* that reported on his plight.









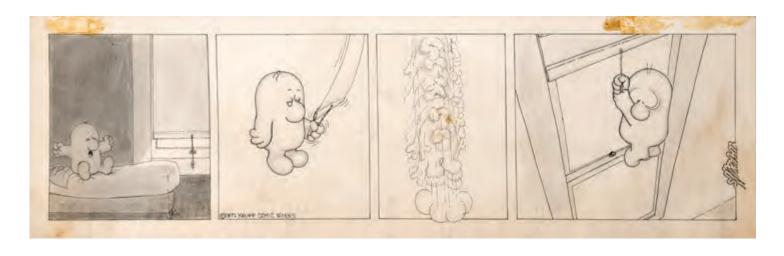


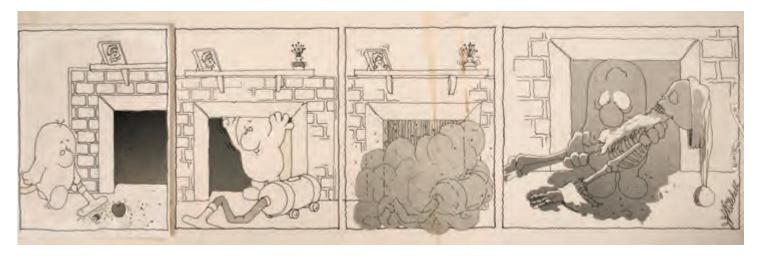






- 133 Smile—Dracula, 1971. Weekly strip. Ink on Bristol board. 10 3/4 x 19 in. Published in the Bugle. Courtesy of the artist.
- **134** Smile—Dead Dad, 1971. Weekly strip. Ink on Bristol board. 5 x 15 in. Published in the Bugle. Courtesy of the artist.





Smile—Opening Window, 1971. Weekly strip. Ink on Bristol board. 5 ¾ x 18 ¾ in. Published in the *Bugle*. Courtesy of the artist.

Smile—Santa in Chimney, 1971. Weekly strip. Ink on Bristol board. 6 x 15 ¾ in. Published in the Bugle. Courtesy of the artist.



137 *Vote*, 1971. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on Bristol board. 16 $\frac{3}{2}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Courtesy of the artist.

MARK MORRISON









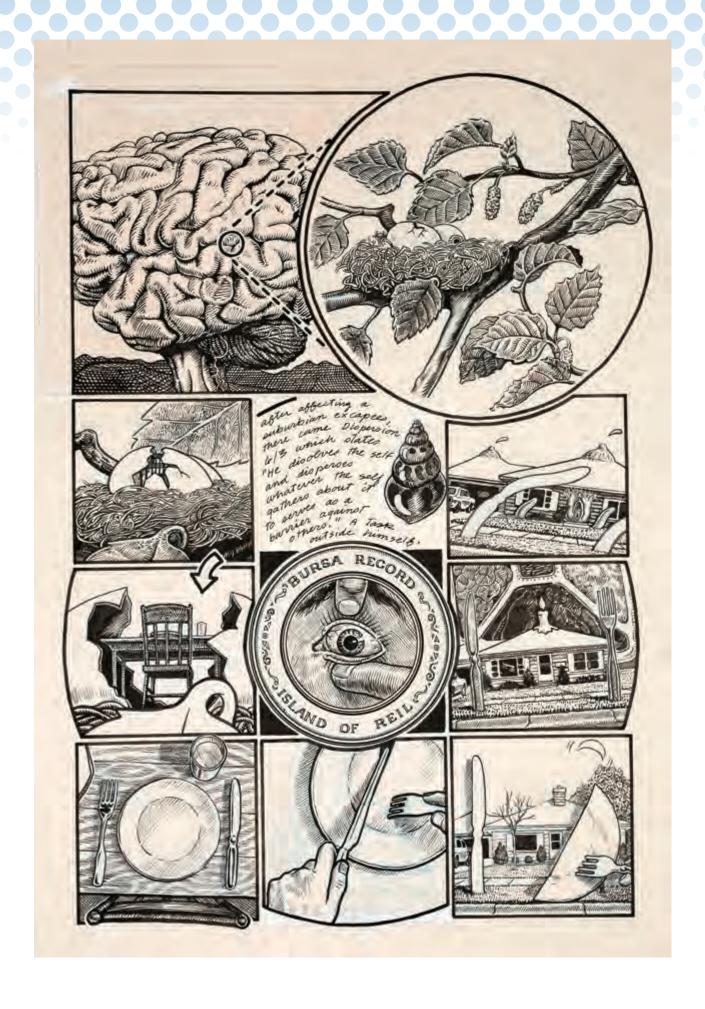
Pagfeek Papers #1, 1973. 5 pp.



MICHAEL



Buddha Crackers, 1977. 5 pp. Ink on Bristol board. 19 ½ x 15 in. Published in Mondo Snarfo. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

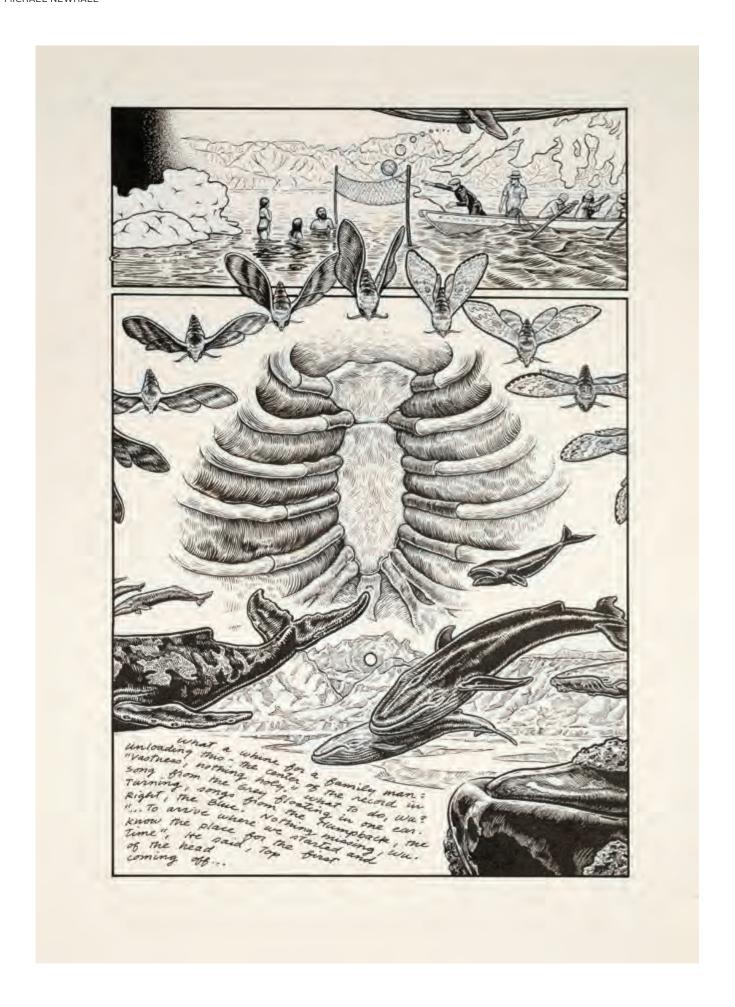


Buddha Crackers, 1977. 5 pp.



Buddha Crackers, 1977. 5 pp.

















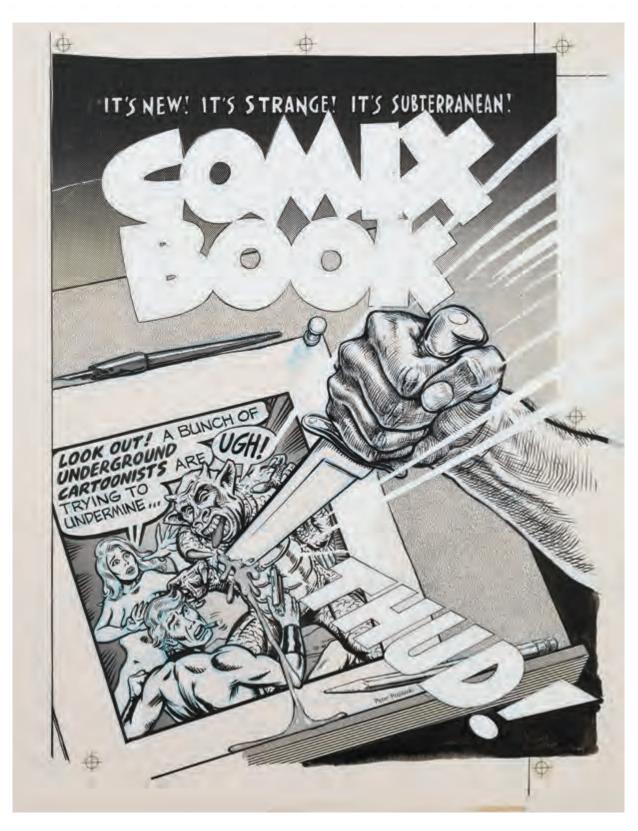




148 Famous Composer Scrimshaw Series, c. 1980. 8 pieces. Ink on ivory. 2 x 1/2 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

In 1976, Michael Newhall moved to Princeton, Wisconsin, where three years earlier Denis Kitchen had joined the back-to-the-land movement. His rent at Kitchen's farm was only \$50 per month, but the perpetually cash-poor artist asked to work out a swap: in lieu of rent, Newhall created a scrimshawed portrait of a composer on antique ivory piano keys. He completed fifty-five different composers before moving to California.

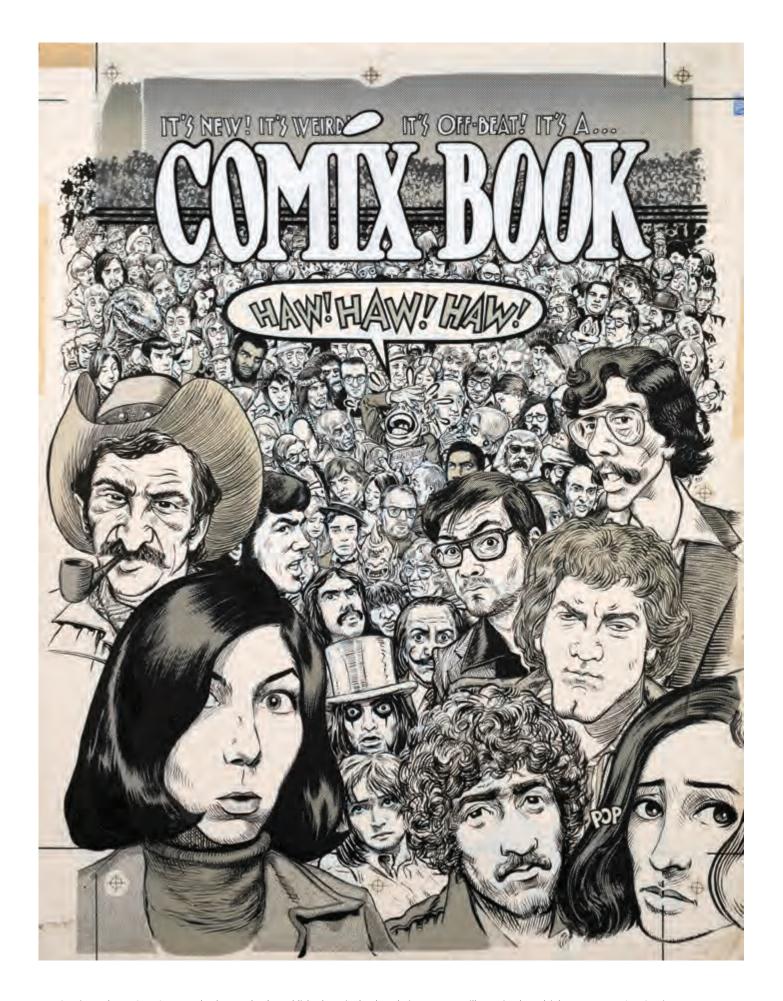
PETER POPLASKI



149 *Comix Book #1*, 1974. Cover and color overlay (published version). Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board; ink on acetate. 16 x 13 ¼ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



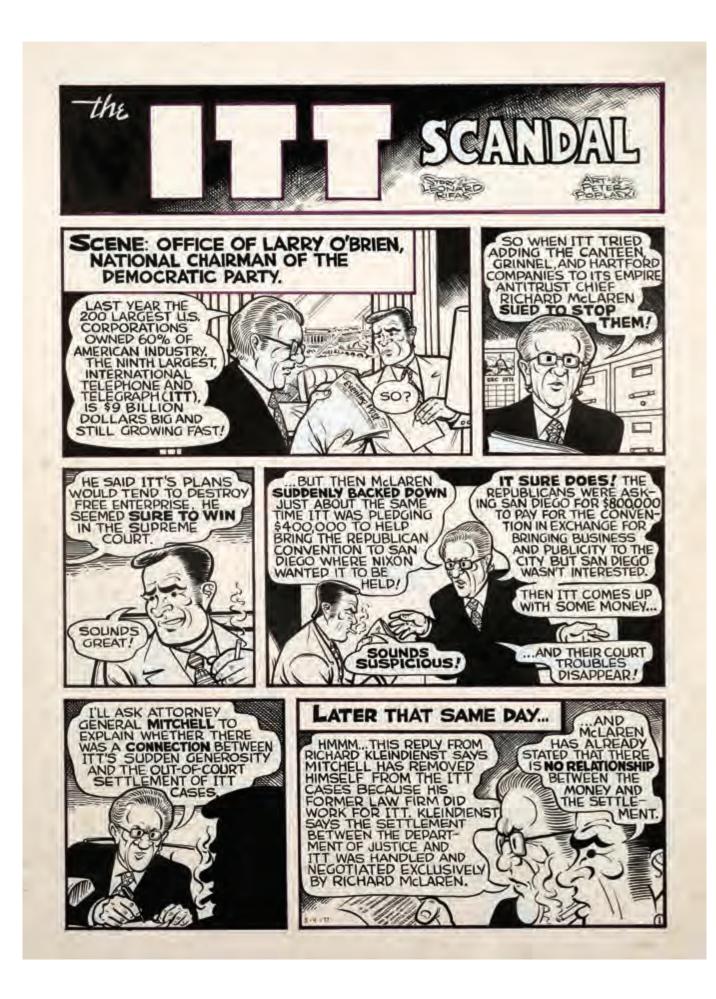
150 Comix Book #1, 1974. Cover and color overlay (published version).



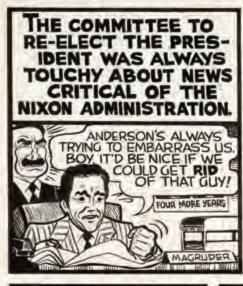
151 Comix Book #1, 1974. Cover and color overlay (unpublished version). Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board; ink on acetate. $16 \times 13 \%$ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



Comix Book #1, 1974. Cover and color overlay (unpublished version).













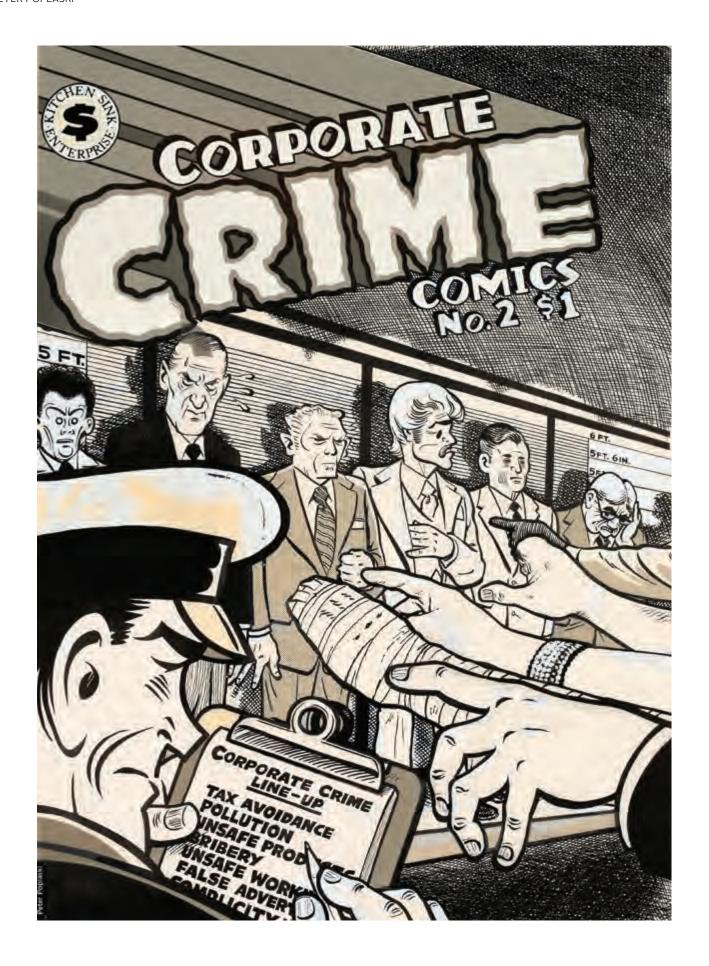




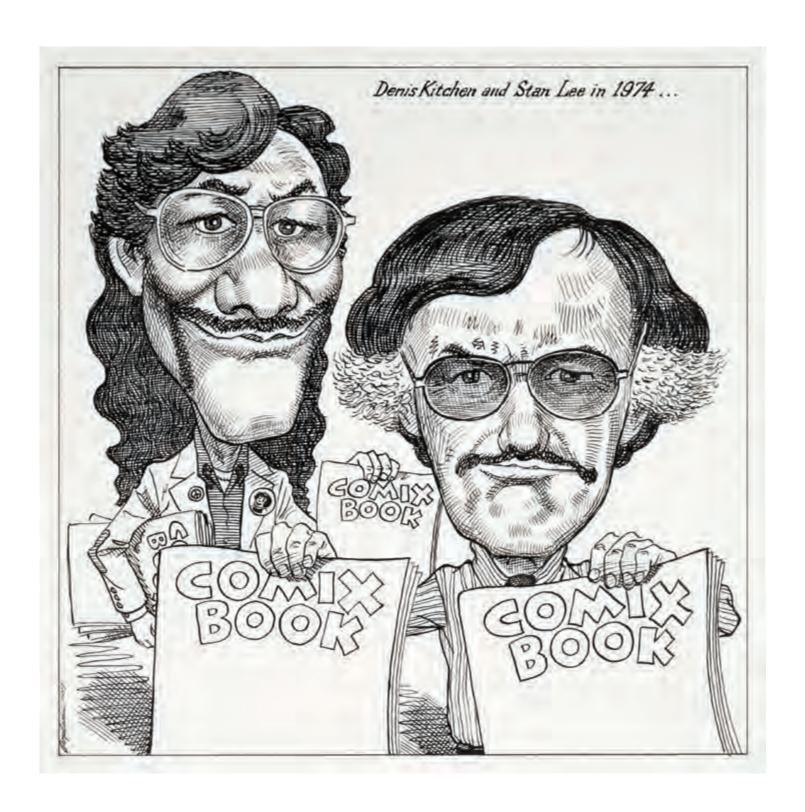


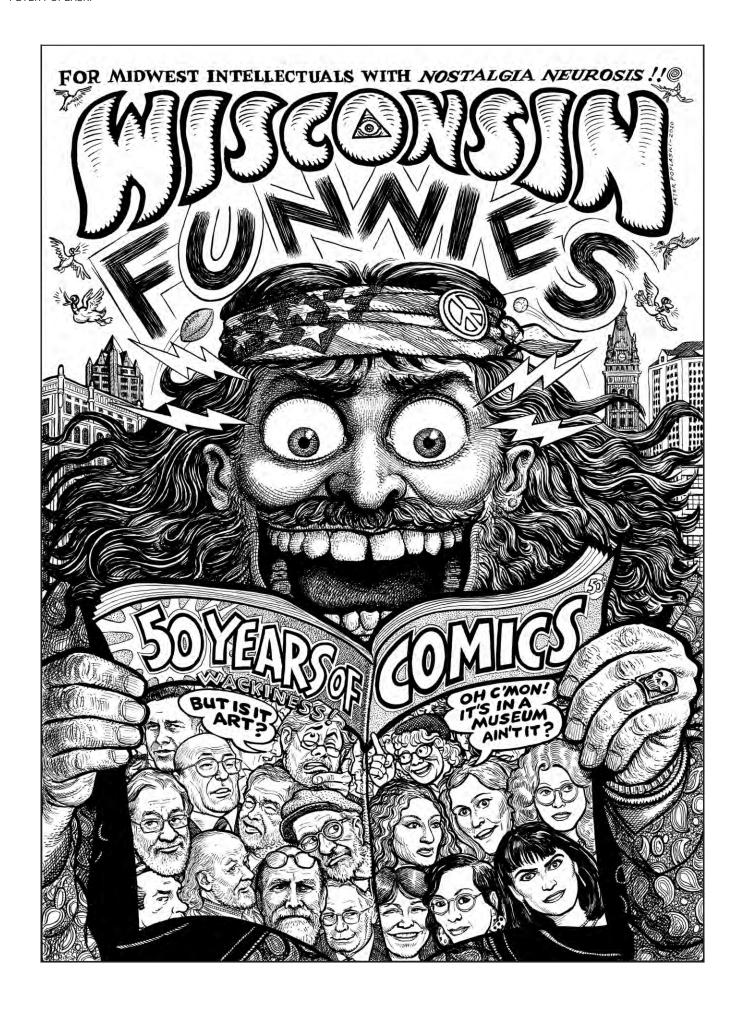






157 *Corporate Crime Comics* #2, 1978. Cover. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board. 19 x 15 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen. *Corporate Crime Comics* subverted the traditional presentation of comic book antagonists. Instead of featuring supervillains, the publication's two issues adapted true stories of white-collar crime. Peter Poplaski drew the cover of issue #2—as well as "The ITT Scandal" in issue #1—in Chester Gould's famous *Dick Tracy* style, employing its grotesque effects to express the ugliness of power and corruption.



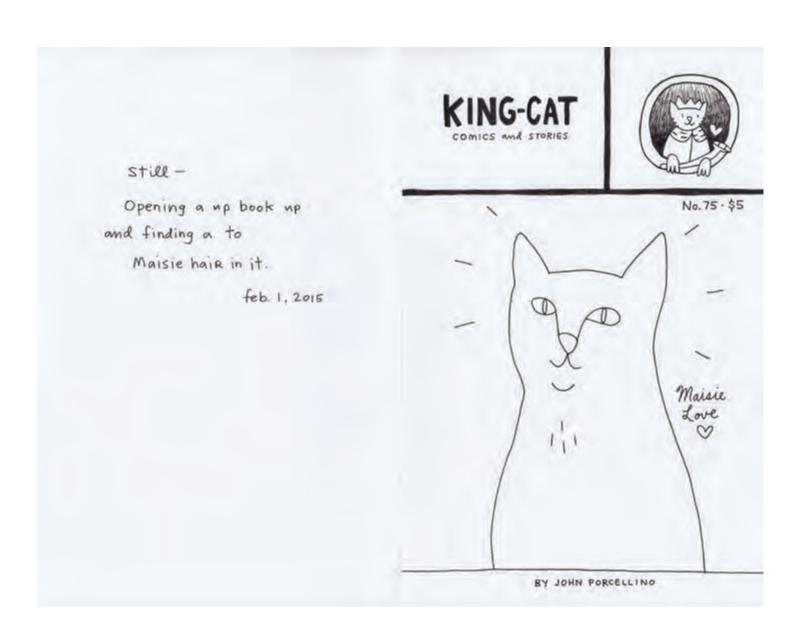


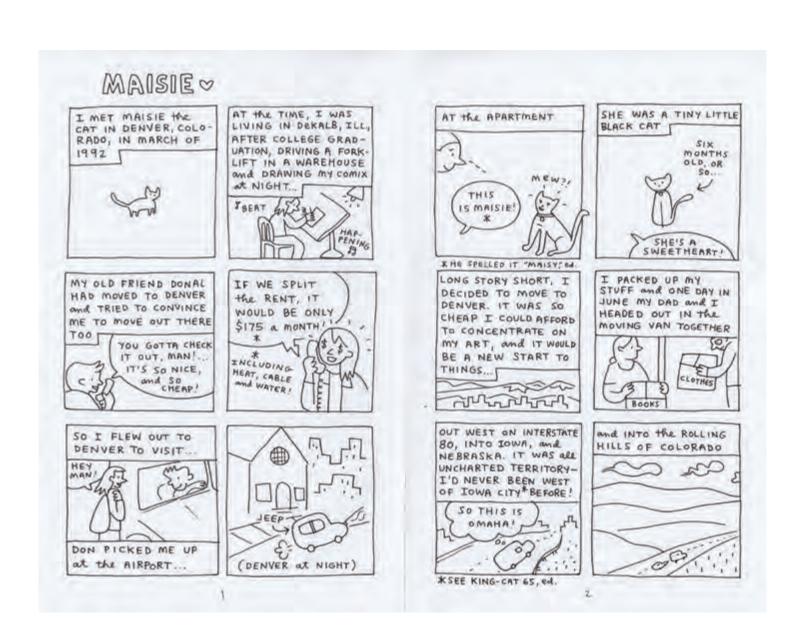
Wisconsin Funnies: Fifty Years of Comics, 2020. Cover. Ink on Bristol board. 23 x 15 ½ in. Museum of Wisconsin Art.

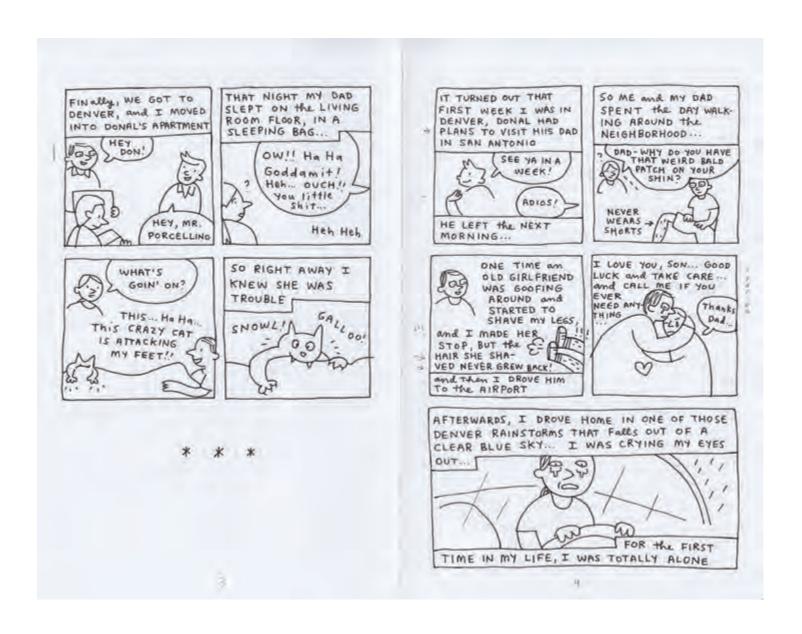


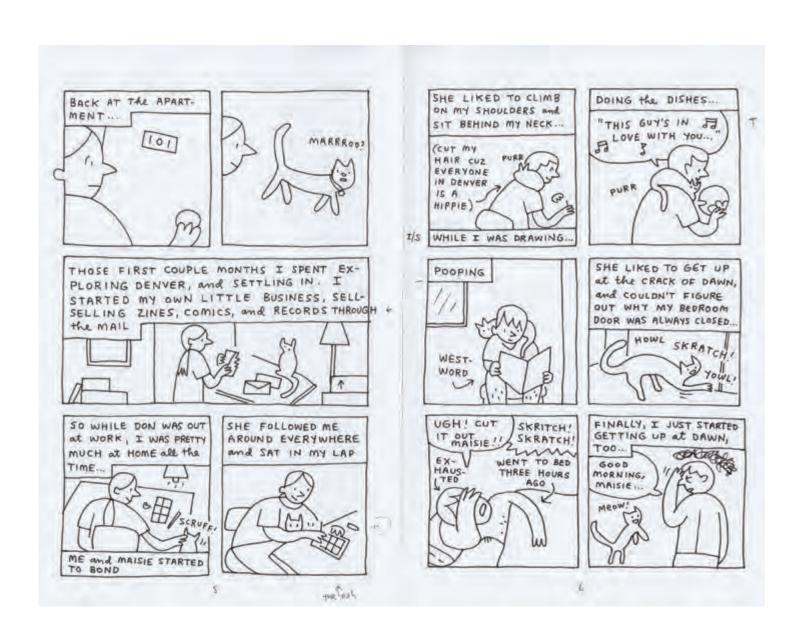
Wisconsin Funnies: Fifty Years of Comics, 2020. Cover. Ink on Bristol board with digital color by Maria Hoey. 23 x 15 ½ in. Museum of Wisconsin Art.

JOHN PORCELLINO



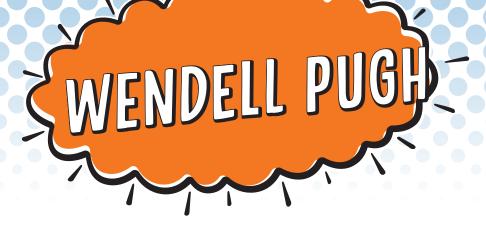










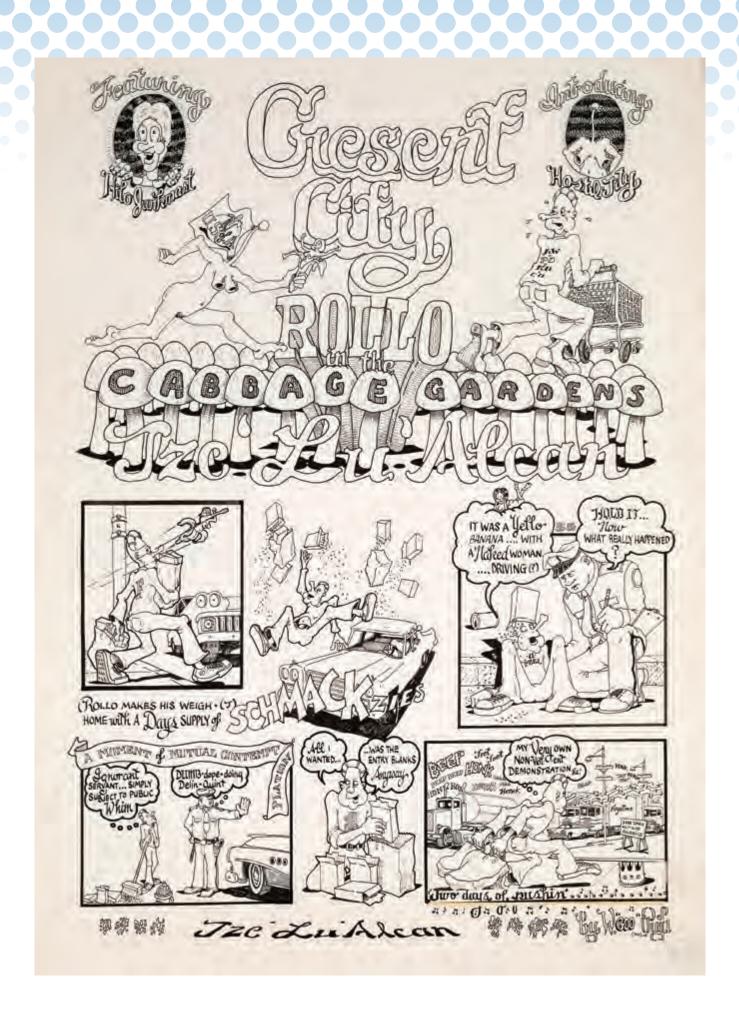






166 Fenster Sitzen, 1971. Weekly strip. Ink on illustration board. 5 ½ x 5 ½ in. Published in the Bugle. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

167 Fenster Sitzen, 1971. Weekly strip. Ink on illustration board. 5 ½ x 5 ½ in. Published in the Bugle. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



Crescent City Rollo, 1972. 2 pp. Ink on Bristol board. 19 x 14 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



169 Crescent City Rollo, 1972. 2 pp.

TRINA BBINS



170 One Flower Child's Search for Love, 1972. 5 pp. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on Bristol board. 17 x 12 in. Published in *Teen-Age Horizons of Shangrila*. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.







173 One Flower Child's Search for Love, 1972. 5 pp.



STEVE RUDE



175 Nexus #3, 2014. 4 pp. Ink and graphite on Bristol board. 22 x 15 in. Courtesy of the artist.





Nexus #3, 2014. 4 pp.





179 Nexus: Into the Past and Other Stories, 2015. Cover. Opaque watercolor, Cel-Vinyl, and colored pencil on illustration board. 30 x 20 in. Courtesy of the artist.

BILL SANDERS



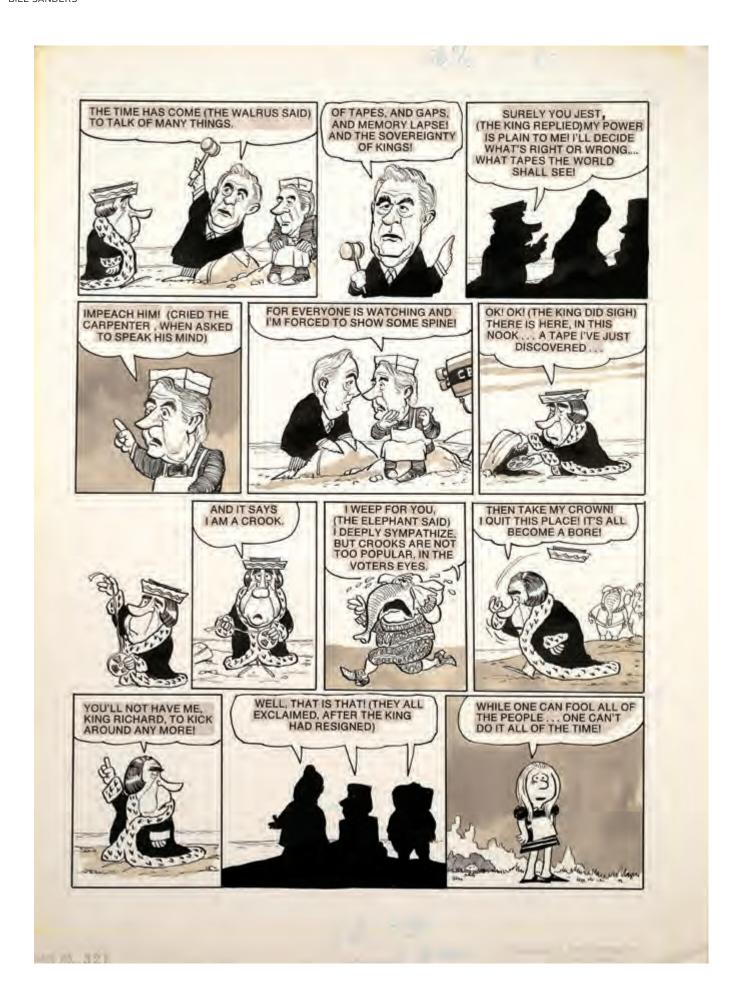
180 Alice in Watergateland, 1974. 4 pp. Ink and wash on Bristol board. 21 x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Published in Comix Book #1. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

Editorial cartoonist Bill Sanders worked at the *Milwaukee Journal* from 1967 until his retirement in 1991, stirring up many controversies over the years with his unflinching and often acerbic positions on politics and politicians. His only foray into the world of comic books came with his contributions to two issues of *Comix Book: Alice in Watergateland* and *Foggy Bottom*.



Alice in Watergateland, 1974. 4 pp.





Alice in Watergateland, 1974. 4 pp.



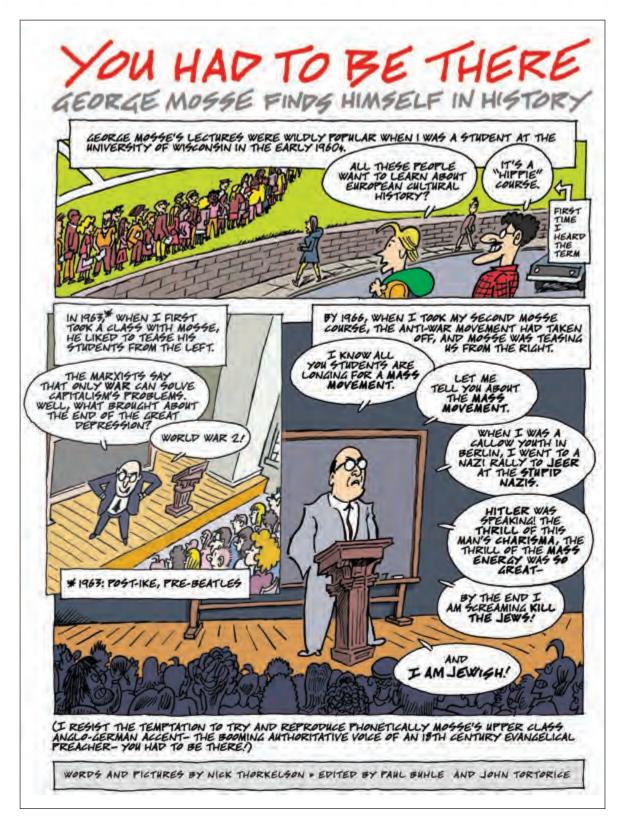
184 Foggy Bottom, 1974. 3 pp. Ink and wash on Bristol board. 20 x 15 in. Published in Comix Book #2. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

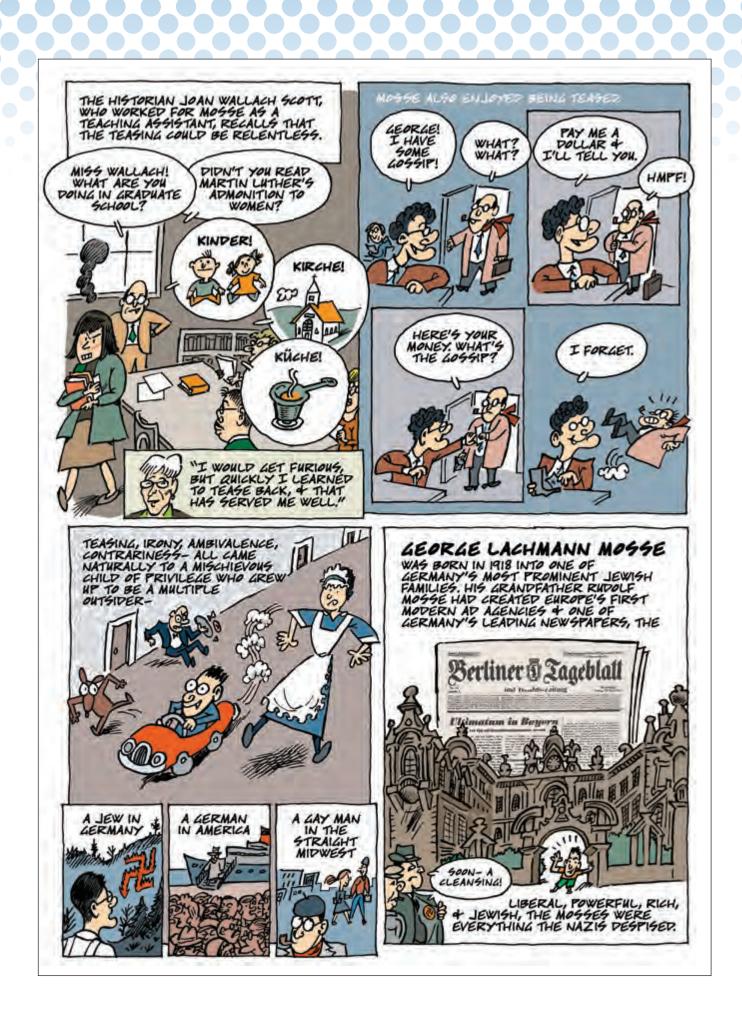


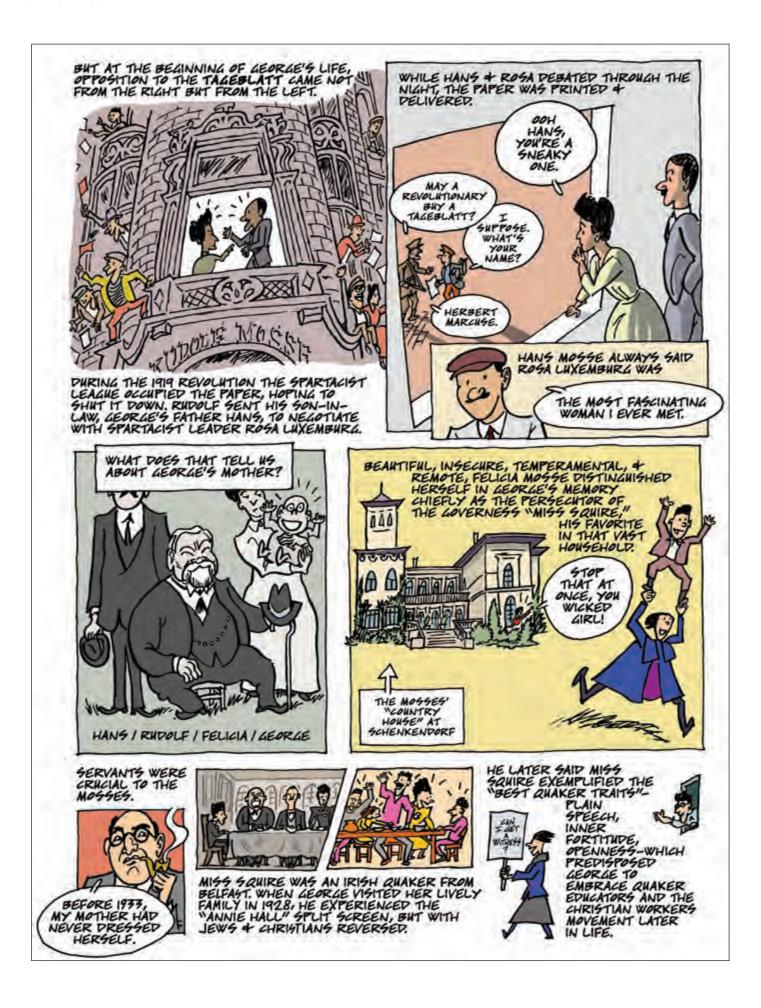
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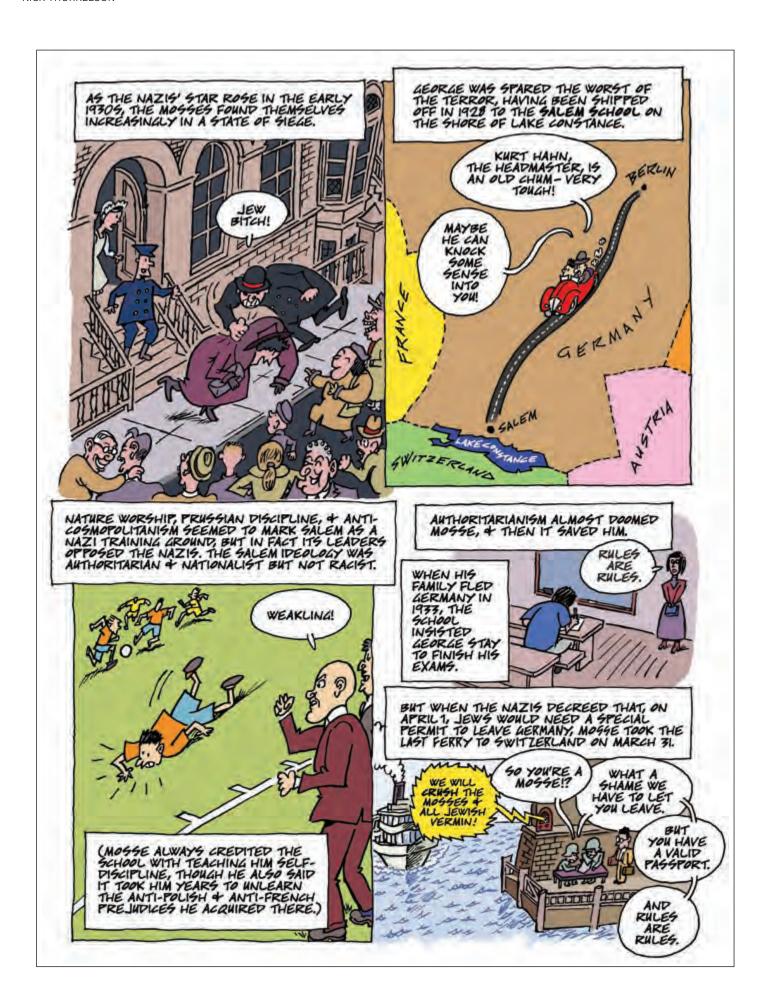
THORKELSON -

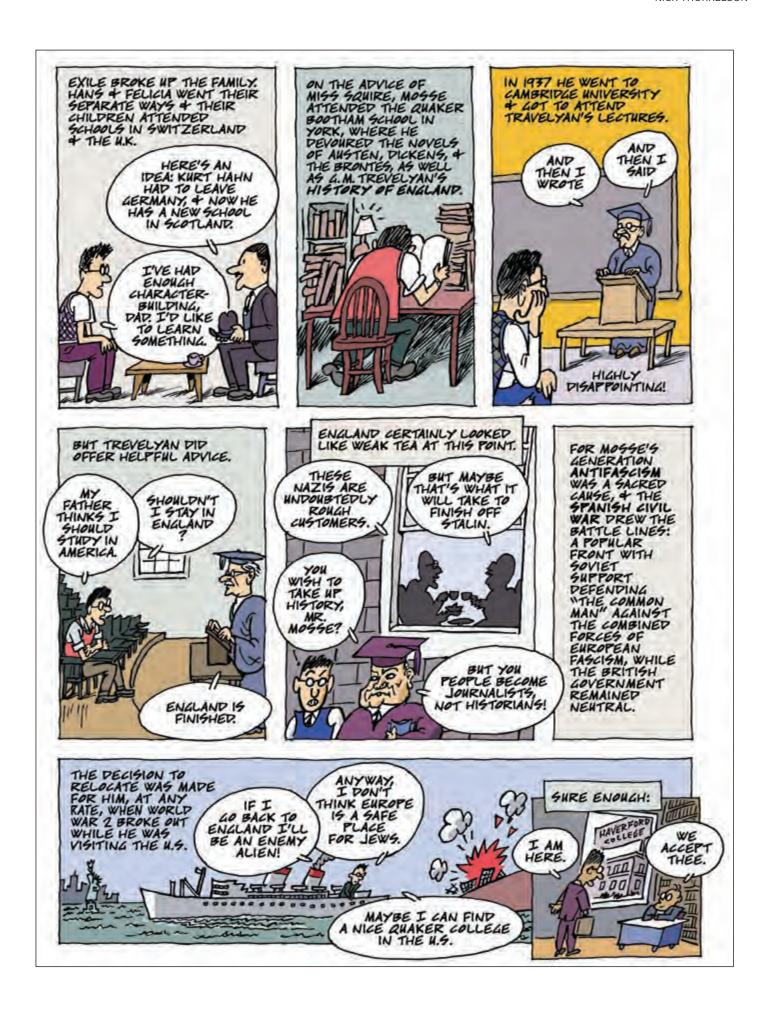


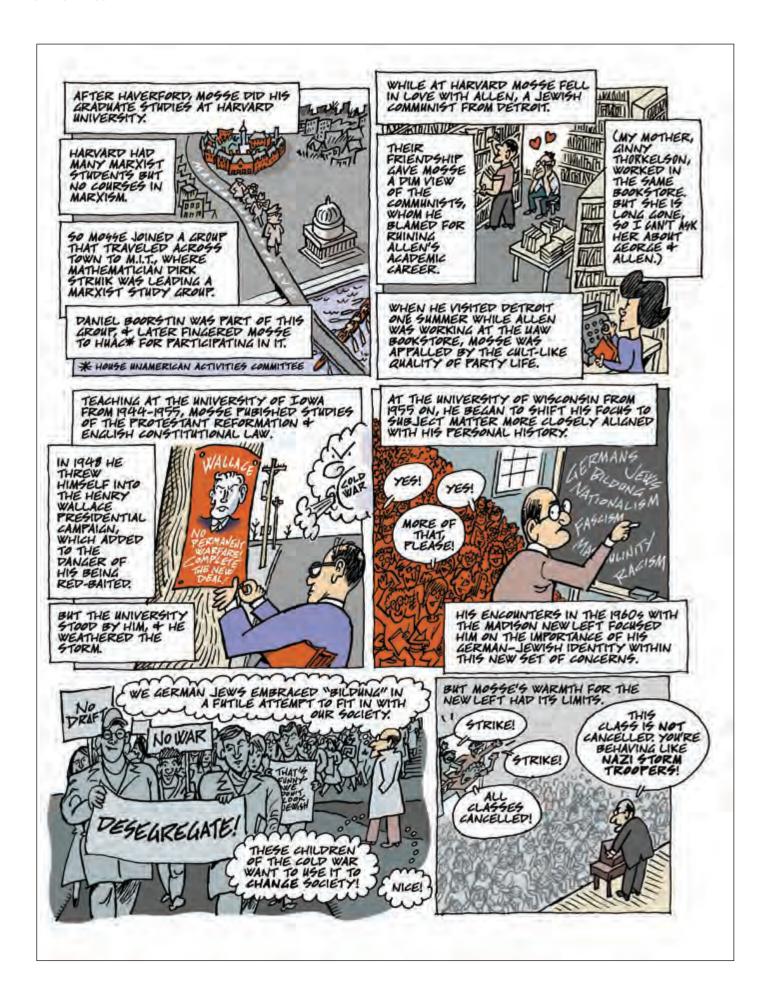


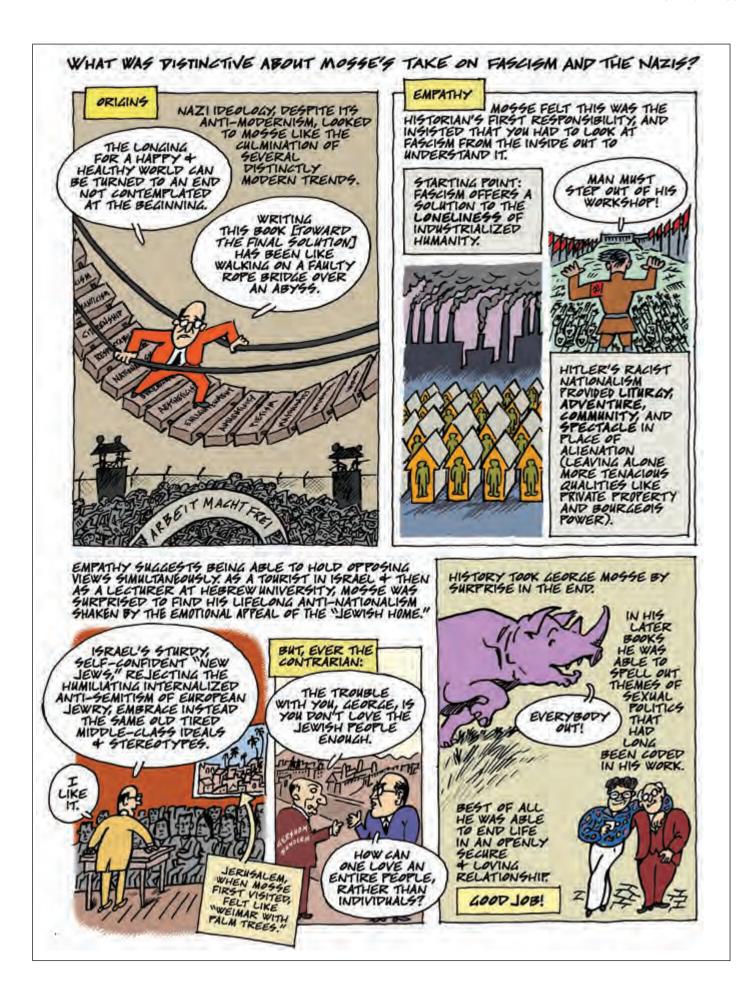












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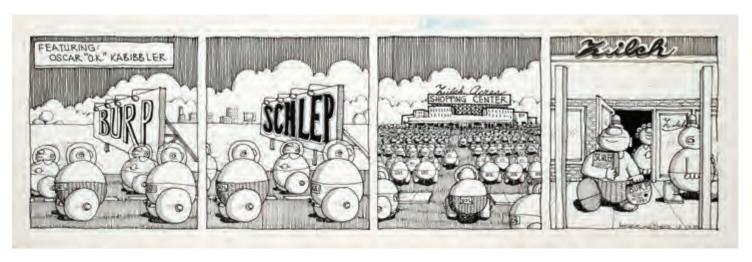
195 Wildcat Bill From Grizzle Hill, 2013. 2 pp. Digital file. Published in Graphic Classics Volume 24: Native American Classics. Courtesy of Tom Pomplun and the artist.

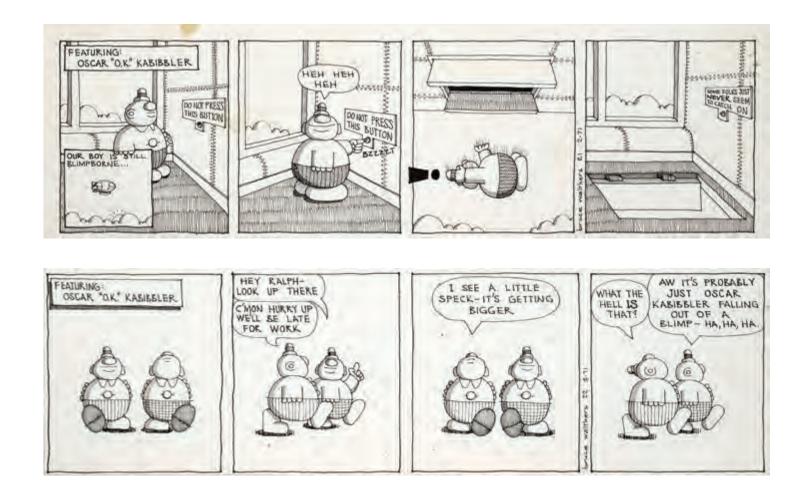


Wildcat Bill From Grizzle Hill, 2013. 2 pp.









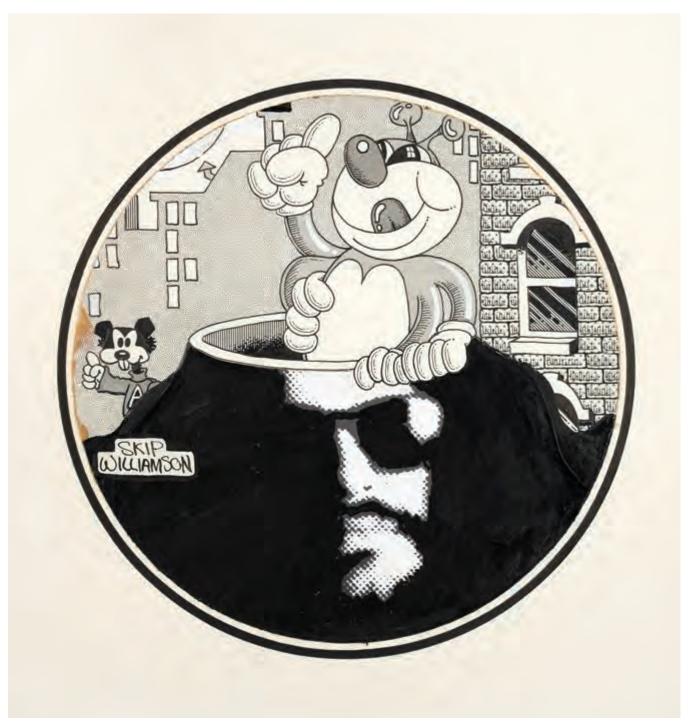


201 Oscar Kabibbler, 1972. Ink on Bristol board. 18 x 13 ½ in. Published in O.K. Comics #1. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



202 Oscar Kabibbler, 1972. Ink on Bristol board. 18 x 13 ½ in. Published in O.K. Comics #1. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

SKIPWSON



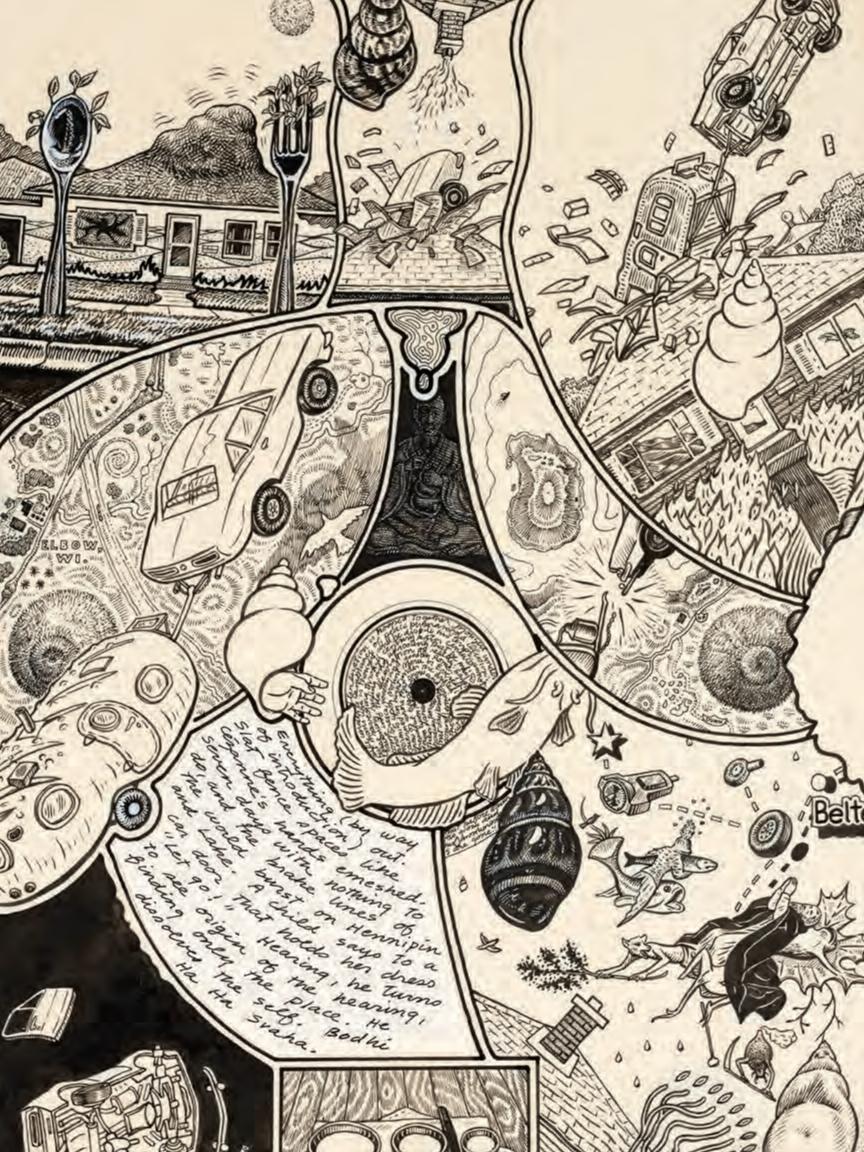
203 *Self-Portrait for Famous Cartoonist Button Set*, 1975. Ink and Zip-A-Tone on illustration board. 14 ½ x 11 in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen. In 1975, Kitchen Sink Press issued the Famous Cartoonist Button Series consisting of fifty-four self-portraits printed on pinback buttons. The set featured contributions from underground artists, such as Chicago-based Skip Williamson, alongside old pros from earlier generations.





Gag Cartoon—Biker and Gentleman, 1976. Ink on Bristol board. 11 x 8 ¾ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.

205 Gag Cartoon—Dog and Hydrant, 1979. Ink on paper. 13 x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Courtesy of Denis Kitchen.



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Lynda Barry (b. 1956) is a cartoonist, author, and teacher. She was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, and grew up in Seattle. During her student days at Evergreen State College in Washington, her work, primarily Ernie Pook's Comeek, appeared in alternative newsweeklies such as the Chicago Reader, thanks to her good friend Matt Groening, later of The Simpsons. In 1988, she published her illustrated novel The Good Times Are Killing Me, which was later adapted to the Broadway stage. In recent years, Barry has focused her energies on the creative processes of writing and drawing, reflected in Making Comics, What It Is, Picture This, and Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor. Among her many awards are the Wisconsin Visual Arts Lifetime Achievement Award, the Eisner Hall of Fame, and a MacArthur Fellowship. Barry is an associate professor of Interdisciplinary Creativity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and lives in rural Rock County.

Susan Simensky Bietila (b. 1947) is a Milwaukee-based artist whose protest art includes work she did for underground newspapers (including *Rat*) and daily newspapers such as the *Guardian*. Bietila became a student-activist in the 1960s when she joined with members of the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (W.I.T.C.H.) to protest a bridal fashion show in New York. This experience showed her the political power of art—a force she chronicled in a comic in the portfolio *This is an Emergency!*. Bietila is involved with the political comics anthology *WW3 Illustrated* as an illustrator and designer.

Dan Burr (b. 1951) is a comic book artist best known for his collaborations with writer James Vance on *Kings in Disguise* and *On the Ropes*. Burr's career began with Kitchen Sink Press as well as Eclipse Comics and Dark Horse Comics, but it is the six-issue limited series *Kings in Disguise* (set in the Depression) that earned his Eisner and Harvey awards. His collaboration with writer Michael Goodwin on *Economix: How Our Economy Works (and Doesn't Work) in Words and Pictures* was a *New York Times* bestseller. Burr lives in Milwaukee.

Ernie Bushmiller (1905–1982) is most famous as the longtime artist/writer of the syndicated strips *Fritzi Ritz* and *Nancy*. Early in his career, Bushmiller also wrote gags for Mack Sennett silent films. Five volumes of his topical *Nancy* strips (for example, volume four, *Bums*, *Beatniks & Hippies*), were published by Kitchen Sink Press in 1989–91. Bushmiller was seen as both the ultimate square (he called himself "the Lawrence Welk of cartoonists") and by others as profoundly insightful. A multigenerational secret cult called the Bushmiller Society has developed around this perhaps unlikeliest of comic artists.

Jeff Butler (b. 1958) was born in Madison, Wisconsin, where he continues to reside. From childhood, Butler was drawing everything, including comics. His early efforts came to the attention of comics author Mike Baron (*Badger*) and led to a career in illustration, much of which was the art for games such as *Dungeons & Dragons* for TSR of Lake Geneva. Today his output can be enjoyed in games such as *Soldier of Fortune* and *Star Trek: Elite Force*. Butler teaches cartooning at Madison College.

Milt Caniff (1907–1988) was a giant of comic strip art. His creations *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon* elevated the level of artistry in daily newspapers for half a century. Kitchen Sink Press reprinted many of Caniff's strips, which let a new audience appreciate the work. Caniff was a founder of the National Cartoonists Society and was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1988. His archive at Ohio State University is one of the treasures of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum.

Al Capp (Alfred Caplin) (1909–1979) was by far the most famous cartoonist of his era. His *Li'l Abner* comic strip ran in nearly a thousand newspapers with as many as 90 million daily readers. He was also a TV personality, had his own radio show and newspaper column, ran a merchandising empire, lectured widely at colleges, and was the only other cartoonist besides Walt Disney to have his own theme park. Kitchen Sink

Press published an encyclopedic twenty-seven-volume library of *Li'l Abner* daily strips, along with additional collections of Capp's *Fearless Fosdick*. Capp's other Wisconsin connection was decidedly unsavory: in 1971 he was accused by a University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire coed of indecent exposure and sodomy, which soon led to the collapse of his public appearances and, before long, his career.

Robert Crumb (b. 1943) is the most famous of the "underground comix" artists, best known for creating the long-running title *Zap*, characters like Mr. Natural, Fritz the Cat, Keep-on-Truckin', and countless stories featuring himself in both autobiographical and erotically fantasized situations. Philadelphia-born Crumb has long and deep connections to Wisconsin. Kitchen Sink Press published many of his titles, including *Home Grown Funnies* ("featuring the Snoid from Sheboygan"), *Mr. Natural, XYZ, Art & Beauty, People's*, and the definitive *R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book.* Kitchen Sink also produced Crumb's first vinyl recording and merchandise. Crumb and his wife, cartoonist Aline Kominsky-Crumb, came close to relocating to central Wisconsin in 1990 before settling in France.

Will Eisner (1917–2005) is regarded as the father of the modern graphic novel. *A Contract with God*, published in 1978, decisively altered the way comics are told and packaged. A teenaged Eisner entered the comic book industry at its birth in the mid-1930s, creating characters like Blackhawk, Doll Man, and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. In 1940, he began *The Spirit*, an unprecedented comic book section inserted into as many as 5 million Sunday newspapers, running till 1952. Kitchen Sink Press began in the early 1970s to reprint *The Spirit* stories in nearly 150 comic books and magazines, and published more than a dozen of Eisner's graphic novels, including *A Contract with God*. The industry's most prestigious award, the Eisner, presented every year at the San Diego Comic Con, is named after him.

Will Elder (Wolf William Eisenberg) (1921–2008) spent most of his career collaborating with his high-school classmate and lifelong friend Harvey Kurtzman, beginning with Kurtzman's brainchild *Mad* in 1952. The two also worked many years together on *Playboy's Little Annie Fanny* and earlier satire magazines such as *Humbug, Trump*, and *Help!* Arguably the highlight of *Help!* magazine was the *Goodman Beaver* comics adventures, which often feature the naive title character encountering famous cartoon characters (Superman, Archie and friends), and in so doing, testing the bounds of copyright

infringement. Kitchen Sink Press published a collection of *Goodman Beaver* in 1984.

Don Glassford (1946–2020) had a short but memorable career in comics. He contributed a weekly strip called *Studley* and occasional covers for the *Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American*, and was briefly part of the Krupp Comic Works collective in Milwaukee in 1971–72, where his work was reprinted in Jim Mitchell's *Smile* series. Glassford's best-known work is *Deep 3-D Comix*, the first 3-D underground comic. The centerfold depicts a bird's-eye view of Milwaukee's hip East Side exploding.

Leilani Hickerson (b. 1983) is a freelance illustrator who graduated from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia in 2006. In addition to her contribution to Graphic Classics' *African-American Classics*, her work can be seen in *Black Comix: African American Independent Comics, Art & Culture.* Hickerson is a professor of Fine Arts at Mercer County Community College in New Jersey.

Denis Kitchen (b. 1946) is an underground cartoonist, publisher, author, agent, curator, and founder of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. A native of Racine, Wisconsin, Kitchen graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee with a degree in journalism, hoping to become an editorial cartoonist. Instead, he published *Mom's Homemade Comics*, the first underground comix in Wisconsin, and one of the first anywhere. Subsequently, there emerged the underground newspaper he helped found, the *Madison–Milwaukee Bugle–American*. He created Kitchen Sink Press, the most important alternative publisher Wisconsin has produced. Kitchen eventually relocated from Princeton, Wisconsin, to Massachusetts, where he continues to wear many hats.

Harvey Kurtzman (1924–1993), regarded as one of the most influential figures in comics history, is best known for creating the popular comic book-turned-magazine *Mad*. He first made his mark in the 1940s creating *Hey Look!* filler pages for Stan Lee's Marvel/Timely comics. He left *Mad* after creative differences to start the short-lived *Trump* for Hugh Hefner, followed by *Humbug* and *Help!*—all widely admired publications but commercial failures—before spending a quarter-century doing *Little Annie Fanny*, with Will Elder, for *Playboy*. Kitchen Sink Press published his *Kurtzman Komix*, *Jungle Book*, *Goodman Beaver*, and *Hey Look!* collections, and Kurtzman contributed guest covers for *Bijou Funnies* #8 and *Snarf* #5.

Peter Loft (b. 1952) jumped directly from Shorewood High School in Milwaukee to the Cartoon Factory studio in 1971, joining Peter Poplaski and Denis Kitchen as part of Milwaukee's Krupp/Kitchen Sink complex. Loft contributed a weekly strip, Fox Trot, and periodic covers for the Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American. He also contributed illustrations and covers for the Krupp Mail Order catalogues, and participated in the educational Consumer Comix, done for Wisconsin's Department of Consumer Affairs. He became an animator and currently resides in Belgium.

Jay ("Jayzey") Lynch (1945–2017) first achieved a wide audience in the one-panel gag section of Harvey Kurtzman's *Help!* magazine and in Paul Krassner's *The Realist.* In 1968, with fellow Chicagoan Skip Williamson, he cofounded *Bijou Funnies*, one of the earliest underground comix. Lynch's recurring contribution was *Nard n' Pat.* Lynch and Williamson met and joined Denis Kitchen in Milwaukee, forming with others an underground cartoonist hub second only to San Francisco's in size and output. Lynch achieved additional pop culture acclaim for creating "Bazooka Joe" gum gags as well as "Wacky Packs" and "Garbage Pail Kids" trading cards.

Milo Miller (b. 1974) is an active zinemaker and the cofounder of QZAP, the Queer Zine Archive Project, which was initiated in 2003 to provide activists a way to access queer zines through digitized copies in an online archive. Current focus is on the importance of the narratives that are told through zines in ways and about subjects that are rarely discussed in other forms of queer media. Beginning with their earliest zines in 1992, Miller's own work is a playful lens on queer culture, media, and current events. Serial zines include *Nikita's Boot* (1992–93), *Mutate* (1999–2008), *Gendercide* (2005–11), and *Rumpy Pumpy* (2012–present). Among their stand-alone zines are the cookzine *Bananarchy Now; Us Amazonians*— *A Kirsty MacColl Fanzine*; and *Big Zine, Little Zine*. Miller currently lives in Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood.

Jim Mitchell (b. 1949) is a versatile artist who draws caricatures as easily as serious portraits. Comics were a natural fit. Hooking up with the Krupp collective in Milwaukee in 1970, he produced three issues of *Smile* comics, composed largely of the popular strips he contributed to the *Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American*. Mitchell oversaw the short-lived Krupp Syndicate which sold a package of five weekly *Bugle* strips and his own cover illustrations to about fifty underground and college weeklies. Mitchell left the comics business many years

ago, but remains an active artist, the last of the original comix collective still in Milwaukee. He is currently finishing an autobiography.

Mark Morrison (1944–2000), a cartoonist based in Madison, created a solo underground comic called *Pagfeek Papers* for Kitchen Sink Press in 1973. His quirky drawing style and offbeat brand of humor caught the attention of peers including Art Spiegelman. But *Pagfeek* was not a commercial success. Sporadic short pieces of his appeared in anthologies like *Snarf*, but a discouraged Morrison left the comix scene in the mid-1970s and turned to oil painting and high-end woodworking.

Michael Newhall (b. 1945) has skills that range from painting to carving scrimshaw—punctuated by a brief comics career during the late 1970s. He created an acclaimed story for *Mondo Snarfo* (the hauntingly surreal "Buddha Crackers"), as well as work for *Death Rattle* while a resident in the Kitchen Sink complex in Princeton, Wisconsin. Newhall subsequently became a Buddhist monk. In recent years, he has served as the guiding teacher at the Jikoji Zen Center in Los Gatos, California.

Peter Poplaski (b. 1951), a native of Green Bay, Wisconsin, is an exceptionally versatile artist: a cartoonist, designer, and painter. He has drawn numerous *Batman*, *Superman*, and *Wonder Woman* covers for DC Comics and IDW compilations. A longtime art director for Kitchen Sink Press, he also contributed to numerous undergrounds, including *Corporate Crime*, *Snarf*, and *Death Rattle*. Regarded as the best mimic in the business, Poplaski drew in the *Captain Marvel* style for a *Tom Strong* collaboration with Alan Moore, and has ghosted covers attributed to artists as diverse as Al Capp, Jay Lynch, Bob Kane, and Keiji Nokazawa. He is currently at work on the definitive Zorro book. He is responsible for the poster and book cover art for *Wisconsin Funnies*.

John Porcellino (b. 1968) was born in Chicago and began drawing and self-publishing his autobiographical zine *King-Cat Comics and Stories* in 1989. Since then, eighty issues have been published, and Porcellino's work has been translated into German, French, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Korean, inspiring several generations of cartoonists worldwide. Since 1992, Porcellino has also run the Spit and a Half Comics Distro, an international distribution resource for self-published and small press art and literary comics. He lives in Beloit, Wisconsin, with his wife Stephanie and several animals.

Wendel Pugh (b. 1943) already had a solo underground, Googiewaumer Comics, before meeting fellow Milwaukee cartoonists and contributing to Kitchen Sink titles such as Snarf and Bizarre Sex. Pugh was also part of the weekly Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American comics page. His Fenster Sitzen strip was among those distributed by the Krupp Syndicate. Pugh moved to Colorado in the mid-1970s and dropped out of comics.

Trina Robbins (b. 1938) is a cartoonist and writer whose work has been especially important in opening the world of comics to more women and in reclaiming women cartoonists of the past. Her early work produced *It Ain't Me, Babe* and *Wimmen's Comix*, working with other women cartoonists. In the 1980s, Robbins became the first woman to draw the iconic *Wonder Woman*. Among her many nonfiction works is *A Century of Women Cartoonists* published by Kitchen Sink Press. Robbins lives in San Francisco and remains an active artist and writer.

Steve Rude (b. 1956) is an award-winning (Eisner, Harvey, etc.) comics artist, best known for creating *Nexus* with writer Mike Barron. Rude's work has been published by Dark Horse (*The Moth*), DC Comics (*Tales of the Teen Titans, The Incredible Hulk vs. Superman*), and Marvel Comics (*Fantastic Four, X-Men*). Rude was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and today is living in Arizona.

Bill Sanders (b. 1930) remains an active political cartoonist known for his drawings and commentary on civil liberties and civil rights. His long and controversial tenure at the *Milwaukee Journal* brought both awards and protests, especially from mayors, governors, and police officers. One cartoon published in *Kaleidoscope* depicted a judge in Milwaukee as a pregnant Girl Scout. Sanders's cartoons were widely syndicated in the United States and abroad.

Nick Thorkelson (b. 1944) has done cartoons on local politics for the *Boston Globe* and in support of organizations working for economic justice, peace, and public health. He is the co-author and/or illustrator of *The Earth Belongs to the People, The Underhanded History of the USA, The Legal Rights of Union Stewards, The Comic Strip of Neoliberalism, and <i>Economic Meltdown Funnies*. He has also contributed to a number of nonfiction comics anthologies. He is the writer and artist of *Herbert Marcuse: Philosopher of Utopia* (City Lights), and is working on a graphic biography of William

Morris. Thorkelson moonlights as a musician, animator, graphic designer, and painter. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and some of his earliest cartoons appeared in *Connections*, a Madison underground newspaper. Thorkelson lives in Provincetown. Massachusetts.

Marty Two Bulls Sr. (date unknown) is an Oglala Lakota from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. He has been the editorial cartoonist for *Indian Country Today* since 2001, receiving a number of awards including the Sigma Delta Chi Award from the Society of Professional Journalists. In 2017, he was a finalist for the Herblock Award, which "encourages editorial cartooning as an essential tool for preserving the rights of the American people through freedom of speech and the right of expression." Two Bulls's career includes stints at the *Sioux Falls Argus Herald* and *Rapid City Journal*. His work continues to appear in Native American publications such as *News from Indian Country*, and he was a contributor to Graphic Classics' *Native American Classics*.

Bruce Walthers (Bruce von Alten) (b. 1944) was one of five regular contributors to the *Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American* "Comix Page," which was syndicated to other papers. His droll strip featured suburbanite everyman Oscar "O.K." Kabibbler, who eventually earned two issues of his own—*O.K. Comix*—at Kitchen Sink Press. Walthers later left the world of comics, taking his sense of humor to Montana, where winters are worse than in Wisconsin.

Skip Williamson (1944–2017) was an underground cartoonist and central figure in the underground comix movement. In the 1960s, Williamson moved to Chicago where he met Jay Lynch. He and Lynch produced *Bijou Funnies*, one of the most significant of the underground comix, and the first comic that Denis Kitchen distributed beyond his own work. As an art director and illustrator, Williamson also worked for *Hustler* and *Playboy*, and he designed a number of record album covers.

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