

PUBLISHERS  
WEEKLY  
PRESENTS



BY SCOTT  
MCCLOUD  
WITH  
BOB LAPPAN  
LETTERING



# COMICS

## and the Visual Revolution

**B**esides being a cheerful reminder of our youth, comics are a serious economic and intellectual force that circulates millions of books and serials each year. So we asked comics artist Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics* (Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), to take a closer look at both the medium and the marketplace and explain it all to us and to do so in the unique visual language of the comics page itself.

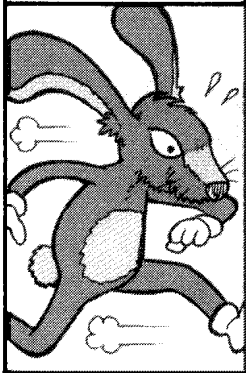
THE WORD  
"COMICS"  
HAS LONG BEEN  
ASSOCIATED WITH  
CHILDREN...



...SUPERHEROES...



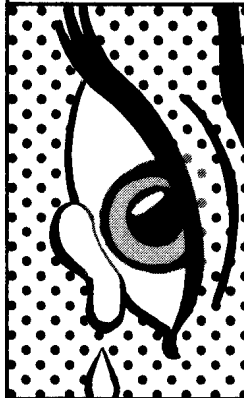
... "FUNNY  
ANIMALS" ...



... ADOLESCENT  
MALE FANTASY ...



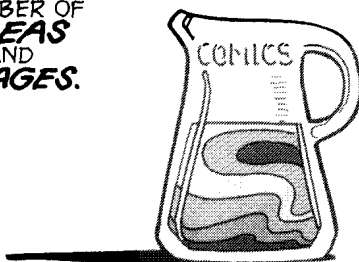
... BIG DOTS ...



... BUT  
THERE'S A  
REVOLUTION  
GOING ON IN  
COMICS.



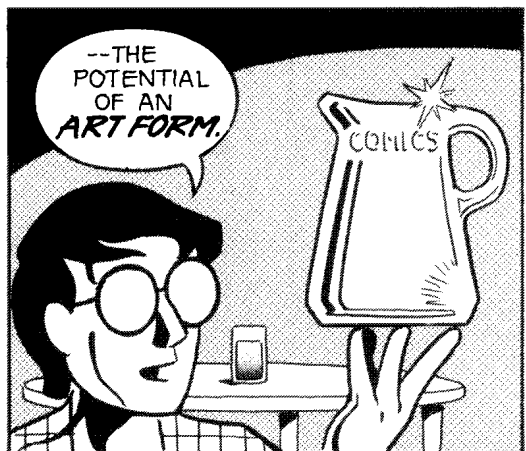
COMICS IS  
A **VESSEL**  
WHICH CAN  
HOLD ANY  
NUMBER OF  
**IDEAS**  
AND  
**IMAGES.**

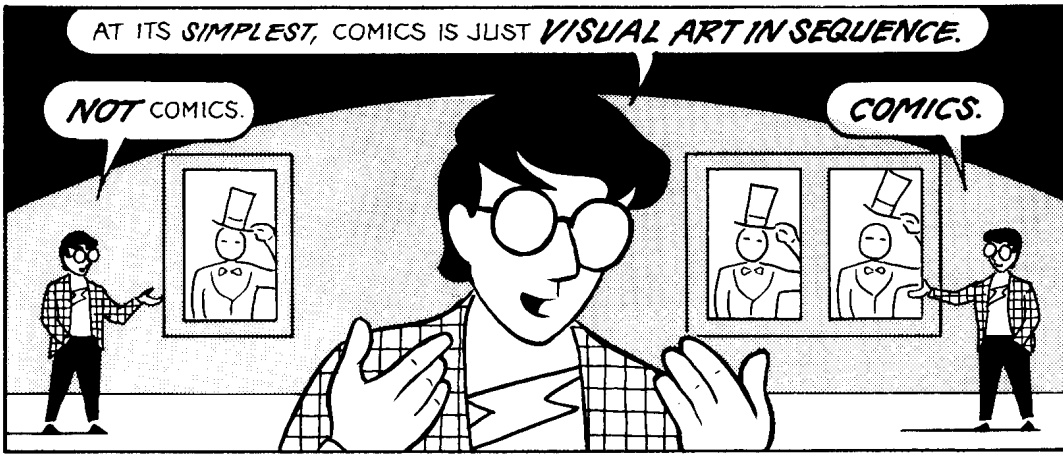


SEPARATE COMICS  
FROM ITS OFTEN  
DISREPUTABLE  
CONTENTS AND  
WE CAN BEGIN  
TO GAUGE --



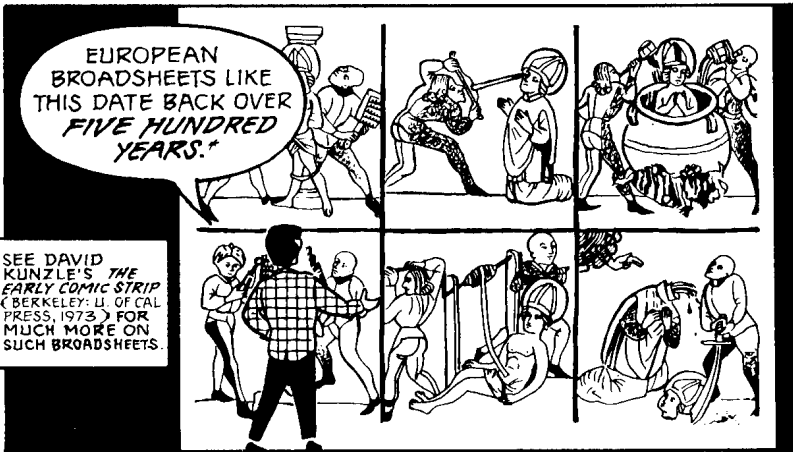
-- THE  
POTENTIAL  
OF AN  
**ART FORM.**



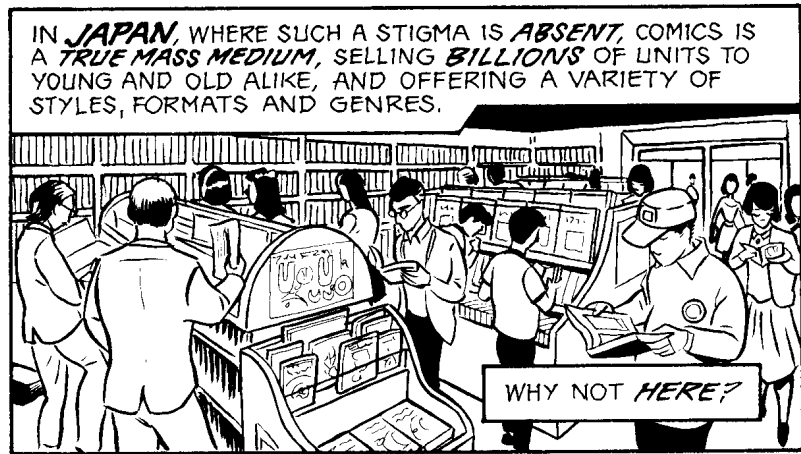
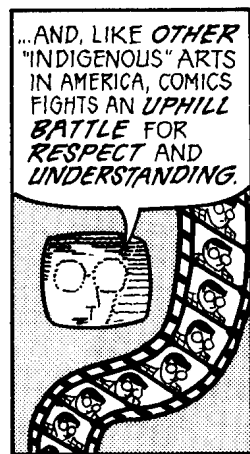
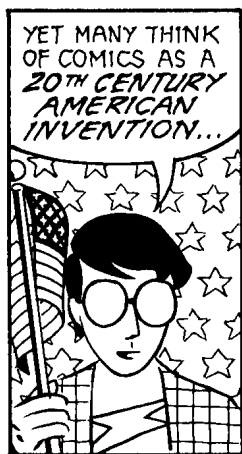
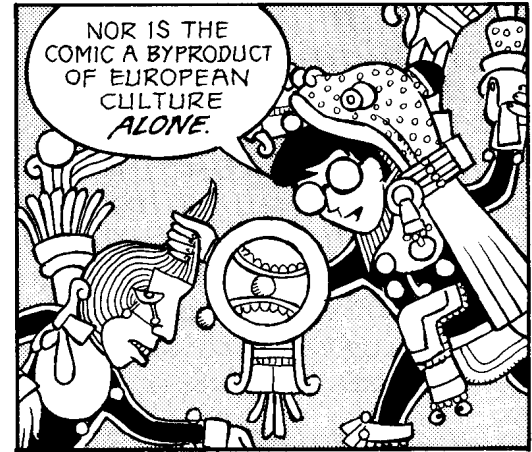


NOT COMICS.

COMICS.



\* SEE DAVID KUNZLE'S *THE EARLY COMIC STRIP* (BERKELEY: U. OF CAL PRESS, 1973.) FOR MUCH MORE ON SUCH BROADSHEETS.



BIOGRAPHY  
ROMANCE  
BLANK VERSE  
EPIC POETRY  
SOCIAL ALLEGORY  
ADAPTATIONS  
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS  
SATIRE

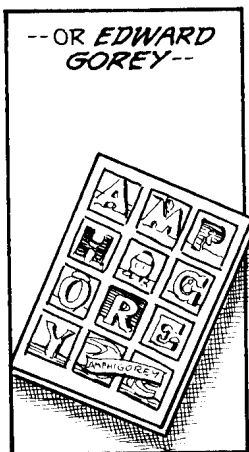
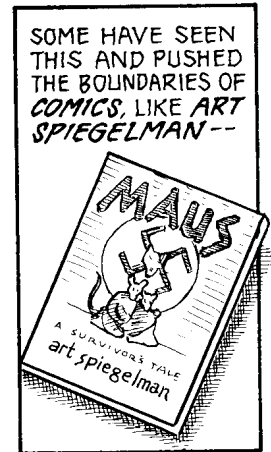
HORROR  
SURREALISM  
HISTORICAL FICTION  
FOLK TALES  
EROTICA  
MYSTERY  
RELIGIOUS TOPICS

SEQUENTIAL ART

...OR ANY SINGLE GENRE...

THE POTENTIAL OF COMICS ISN'T TIED TO ANY KIND OF MATERIALS OR TOOLS...

...OR ANY SCHOOL OR STYLE OF ART.



-- BUT AS LONG AS SUCH WORKS ARE SEGREGATED FROM OTHER COMICS, THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF COMICS MAY NEVER CHANGE.

WHY, THAT'S NOT COMICS, MABEL. THAT THERE'S A "GRAPHIC NOVEL!"

COMICS IS LIKE ANY OTHER MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION--A BYPRODUCT OF OUR INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY FROM MIND TO MIND.

EACH MEDIUM (THE TERM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD MEANING "MIDDLE") SERVES AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN MINDS.

SPOKEN WORD

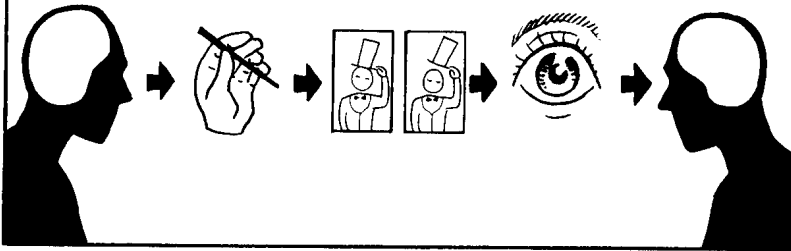
MEDIA CONVERT THOUGHT INTO FORMS THAT CAN TRAVERSE THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND THEN BE RECONVERTED BY ONE OR MORE SENSES BACK INTO THOUGHTS.

WRITTEN WORD

MUSIC

CINEMA

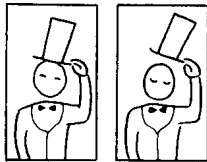
IN COMICS THE CONVERSION USUALLY FOLLOWS A PATH FROM MIND TO HAND TO PAPER TO EYE TO MIND...



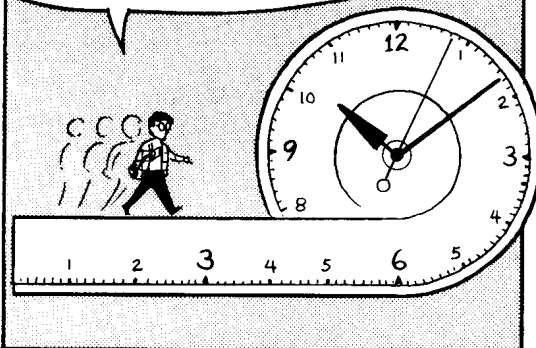
AND AS WITH ANY OTHER FORM, THE QUALITY OF THE IDEAS RECEIVED IS UP TO BOTH CREATOR AND AUDIENCE.



BUT COMICS HAS MANY UNIQUE QUALITIES WELL WORTH UNDERSTANDING--



--SUCH AS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AND SPACE ON THE COMICS PAGE--



--THE EXPRESSIVE POWER OF DIFFERENT LINE-STYLES--

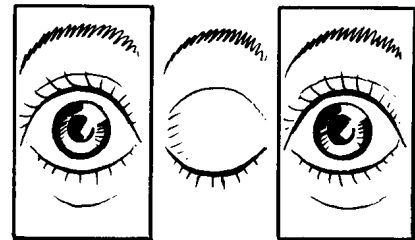


--AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE INTENSE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION OCCURRING BETWEEN PANELS.

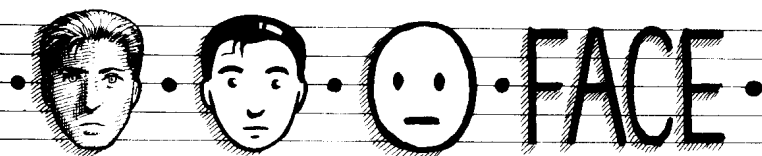


COMICS IS OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS THE JOINING OF TWO ART FORMS: WRITING AND DRAWING.

BUT WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN PANELS ISN'T ABOUT EITHER, IT'S ABOUT THE AUDIENCE'S IMAGINATION.



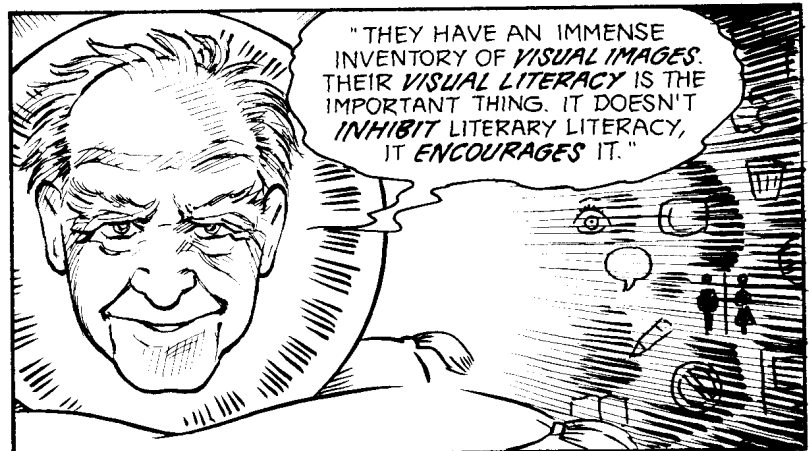
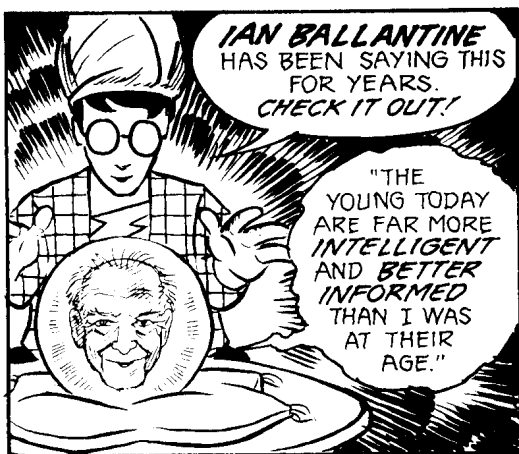
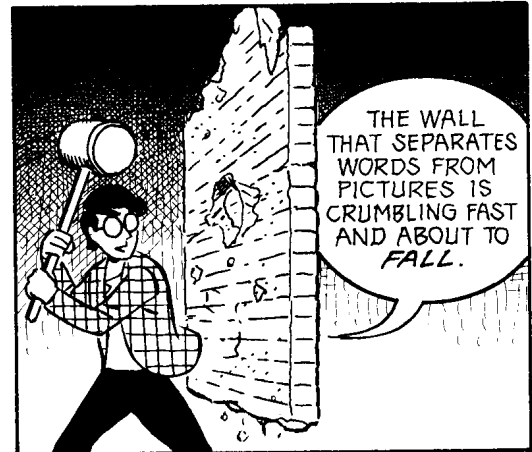
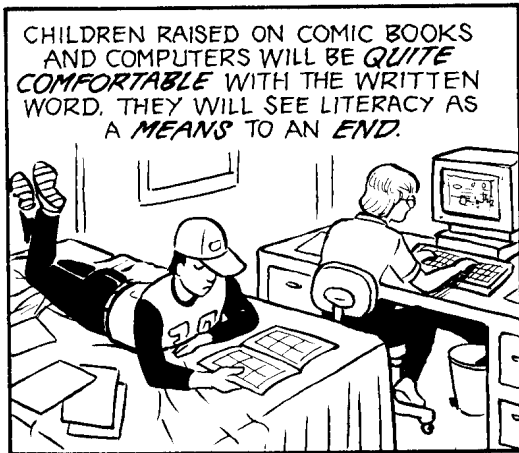
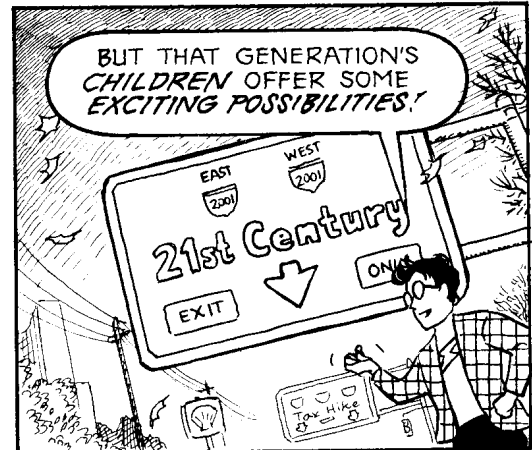
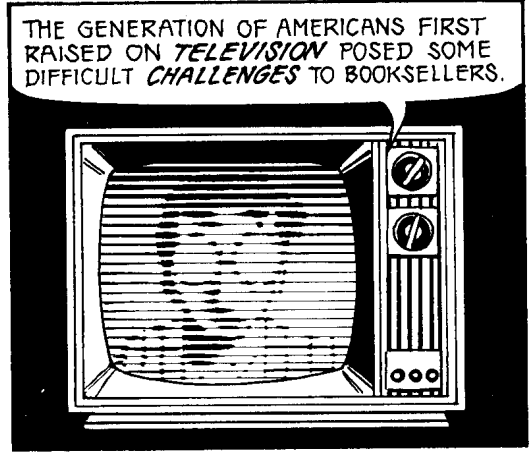
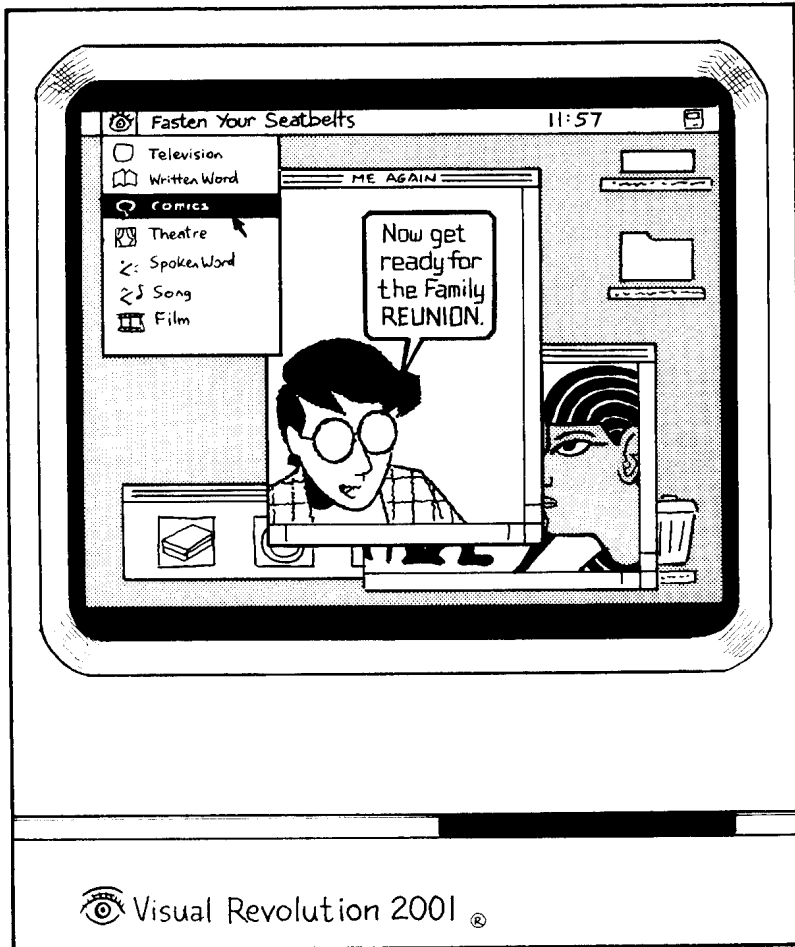
AND WHEN WORDS AND PICTURES DO INTERACT IN COMICS, THERE IS NO WALL OF SEPARATION, BUT RATHER A CONTINUUM FROM RESEMBLANCE TO ABSTRACTION.



COMICS CREATORS UNDERSTAND THAT THE FULL RANGE OF VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY IS AT THEIR FINGERTIPS AND WORDS AND PICTURES ARE JUST TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN.

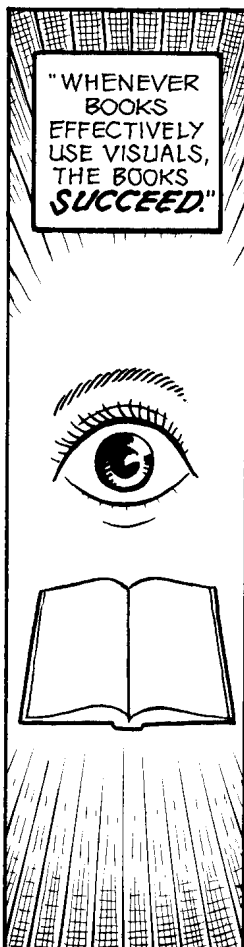
WORDS, AFTER ALL, DID EVOLVE FROM PICTURES. WE'VE ALL NOTICED THE FAMILY RESEMBLANCE.



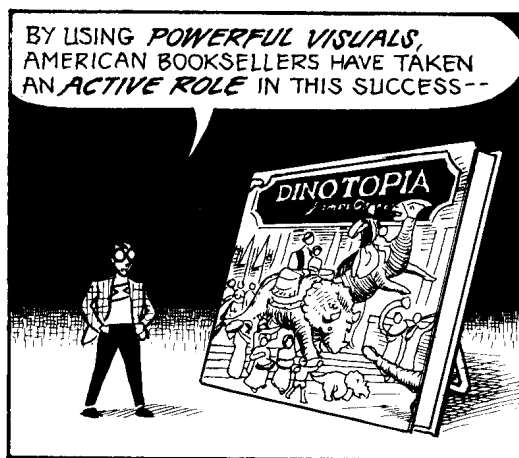




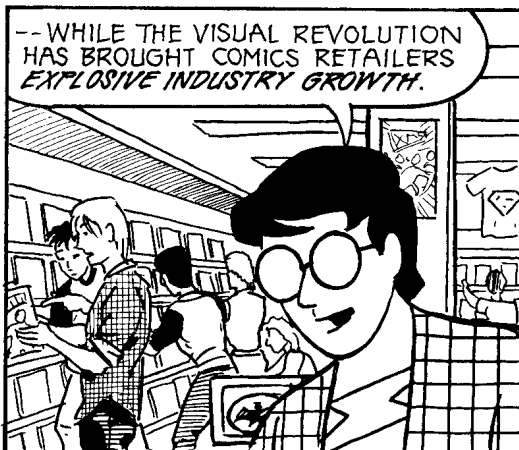
"ESTABLISHED AUTHORITIES HAVE YET TO UNDERSTAND THAT MORE SOULS ENTERING A BOOKSTORE TODAY HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY *COMIC BOOKS* AND *THE TUBE* THAN BY THE *PRINTED PAGE*."



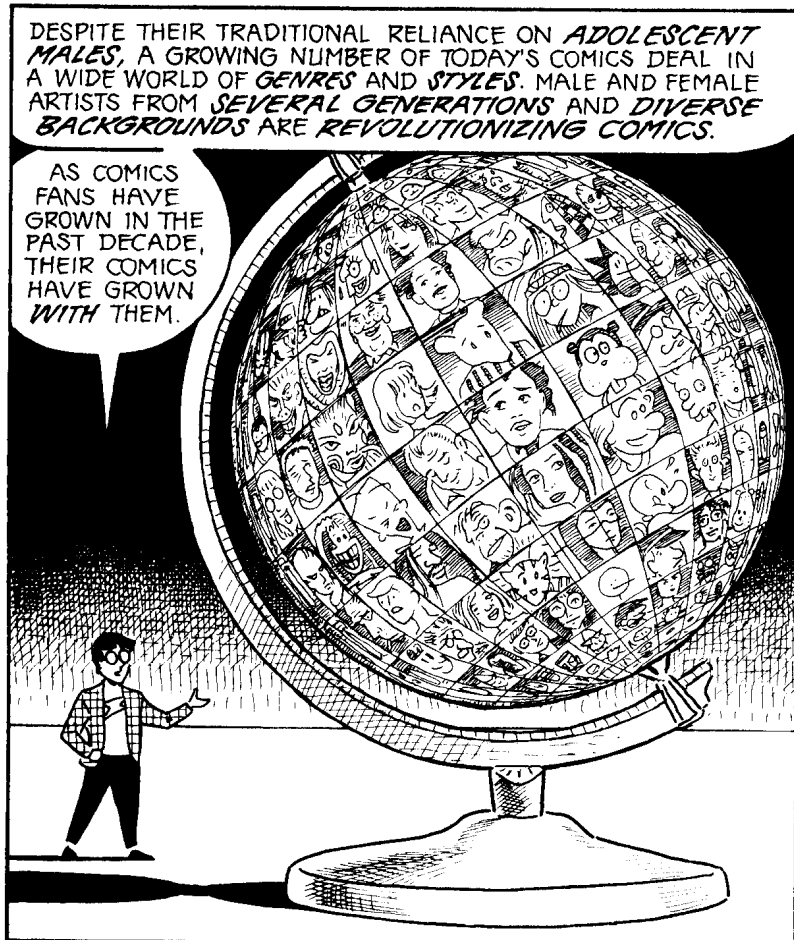
"WHENEVER BOOKS EFFECTIVELY USE VISUALS, THE BOOKS **SUCCEED.**"



BY USING *POWERFUL VISUALS*, AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS HAVE TAKEN AN *ACTIVE ROLE* IN THIS SUCCESS--



-- WHILE THE VISUAL REVOLUTION HAS BROUGHT COMICS RETAILERS *EXPLOSIVE INDUSTRY GROWTH*.



DESPITE THEIR TRADITIONAL RELIANCE ON *ADOLESCENT MALES*, A GROWING NUMBER OF TODAY'S COMICS DEAL IN A WIDE WORLD OF *GENRES* AND *STYLES*. MALE AND FEMALE ARTISTS FROM *SEVERAL GENERATIONS* AND *DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS* ARE *REVOLUTIONIZING COMICS*.

AS COMICS FANS HAVE GROWN IN THE PAST DECADE, THEIR COMICS HAVE GROWN *WITH THEM*.



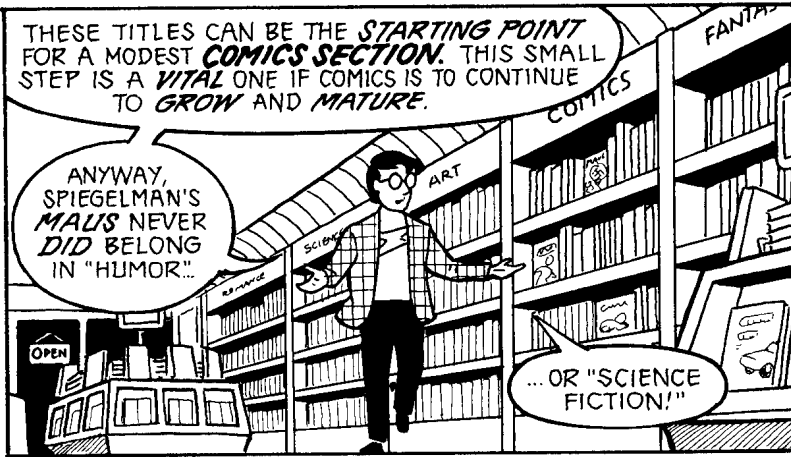
AS THE MODERN COMIC BOOK ENTERS *ADULTHOOD*, IT'S THIS *NEW* BREED OF COMIC THAT CAN SERVE AS A *FOUNDATION* FOR A *VAST* AND *LOYAL* CUSTOMER BASE...



... A BASE NOT DRAWN FROM *FLEETING TRENDS* OR *SHALLOW SPECULATION* BUT FROM THE MOST ENDURING STRENGTH OF THE BOOKSELLER-- *THE JOY OF READING.*



PUBLISHERS WEEKLY HAS PREPARED A LIST OF RECOMMENDED TRADE PAPERBACK COMICS TO ACCOMPANY THIS ARTICLE.



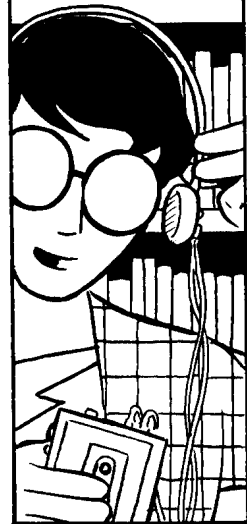
ANYWAY, SPIEGELMAN'S *MALIS* NEVER DID BELONG IN "HUMOR!"

THESE TITLES CAN BE THE **STARTING POINT** FOR A MODEST **COMICS SECTION**. THIS SMALL STEP IS A **VITAL** ONE IF COMICS IS TO CONTINUE TO **GROW** AND **MATURE**.

...OR "SCIENCE FICTION!"

LIKE **AUDIO** BOOKS, COMICS HAVE A STRONG LINK TO **TRADITIONAL** BOOKS, BUT ARE A **DISTINCT** AND **SEPARATE** FORM OF COMMUNICATION, NEEDING **SPECIAL ATTENTION**.

COMICS

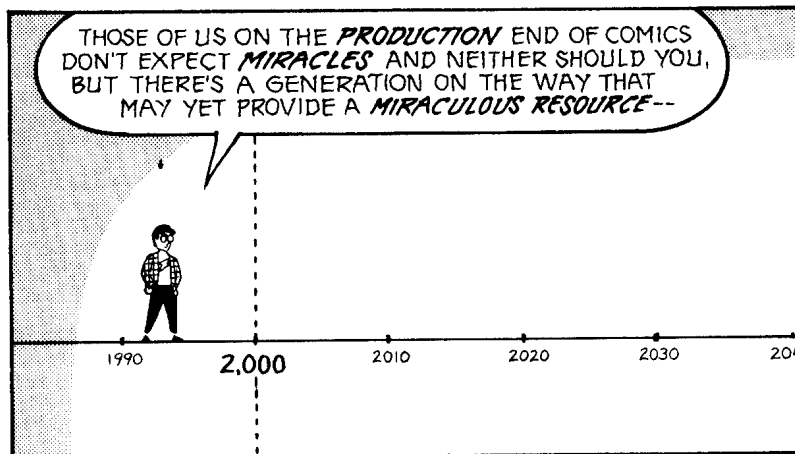


AND MAYBE A LITTLE **PUBLIC EDUCATION** MIGHT BE NECESSARY, BUT ISN'T THAT WHAT RECRUITING CUSTOMERS IS ALL ABOUT?



HMM...

**YOU** MAY WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NEW COMICS, ALSO. THE TITLES PW HAS SELECTED PROVIDE SOME **FASCINATING** READING.

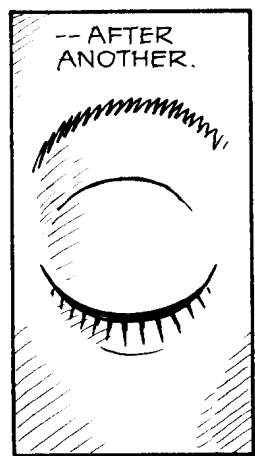


THOSE OF US ON THE **PRODUCTION** END OF COMICS DON'T EXPECT **MIRACLES** AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU, BUT THERE'S A GENERATION ON THE WAY THAT MAY YET PROVIDE A **MIRACULOUS RESOURCE**--

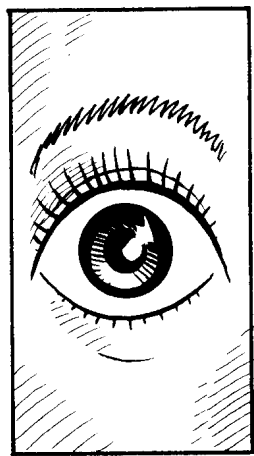
--AND **SOMEONE** IS GOING TO MAKE A **FORTUNE** OUT THERE--



--AS AMERICA WAKES UP TO THE POTENTIAL OF PUTTING ONE PICTURE--



-- AFTER ANOTHER.



SCOTT McCLOUD IS THE AUTHOR/ARTIST OF **UNDERSTANDING COMICS** FROM KITCHEN SINK PRESS (FORMERLY **TUNDRA**) NOW AVAILABLE AT FINER **BOOK** STORES EVERYWHERE.

