

Centre Pompidou visits

Guided audio tours through the exhibitions and permanent collection.

"Comics, 1964-2024" exhibition

The "Comics, 1964-2024" exhibition brings together, for the first time in France, the three key centres of ninth art expression: European creation, Asian manga and American comics. This podcast gives voice to twelve authors from different generations, who talk about their work and the major themes found along the tour.

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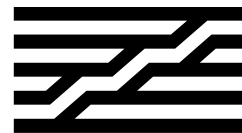
In blue, the narrative voice

In black, the artists' voice

In purple, the podcast's jingle (music)

In red, the transitional sound





Podcast transcription

Reading time: 22 minutes

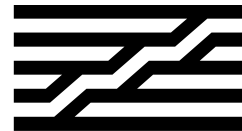
0. Introduction

[jingle of the show] Hello, good evening, welcome. Open wide your eyes and ears. You'll be taken for a visit at the Centre Pompidou. Like a journey through the modern and contemporary history of comics, the exhibition features works by 130 artists from all generations. Enjoy the podcast!

1. Counterculture with Art Spiegelman

Best known for his graphic novel *Maus*, Art Spiegelman is also a leading figure in the American underground comics scene. From his home in New York, he tells us about those early days in the 1960s and explains what the underground contributed to mainstream comics.

What made me dive into underground comics was the call of the wild. It was the moment in history where technology allowed us to have the pill, which made sex much more easy. LSD, which made thinking much more difficult, the technology of printing that now allowed inexpensive mass reproduction, rather than having to have a giant printing press to publish *Le Monde* or something. What attracted me to it most was the possibility of self-expression. The regular comics had become much more stereotyped, rigid. It was a result of comic book censorship in the 50s that made even children's comics burnable. They had comic book burnings, Senate hearings about how dangerous comic books were in America. I went to an art high school that taught comics, and for one assignment I had to make three days of a daily newspaper comic, and a graduate who had become an editor at a syndicate saw them and said: "Oh, I'm going to prepare you to be syndicated in newspapers. This is great. Just do two more weeks". That was a thrill because this was the best paying, most high-profile version of becoming a cartoonist. And I was just 17 years old. So he said: "Just do two weeks and come back in. This is a good strip. Go make ten more examples".

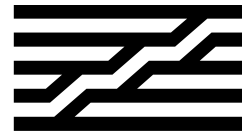


I tried to do that, but after two examples, I realized it's not possible, I don't want to do this for the rest of my life. So I had to discover what kind of comic artist I really wanted to be, and it led me into much stranger territory, just at the moment that underground comics were coming alive to kind of make up for all of the repression of comics that happened from 1952 or 53 till the time I was 17. [transitional sound]

It was like the kiss to Sleeping Beauty, because comics had gone totally to sleep in many ways, after this Comics Code happened. And all of a sudden there was a generation that was around and wanted a place to publish. It wasn't so obviously clear how to break into the big leagues, to the big time, but it was possible to make your own thing. So that meant you had permission not to be able to draw very well, because you could make these in very small numbers if necessary. You had an opportunity to find a new community, and that community is what grew into influencing the generation after. And the main thing that it had was the possibility of new drawing styles and new subject matter. So certainly sex, dope and cheap thrills and radical politics were the basic themes, and self-expression, of course, and soon autobiography. And after that, perhaps the development of the possibility that without compromise, comics could be an art form. Those things all were made very clear by what happened in the 60s.

[transitional sound]

Harvey Kurtzman, an American comic book artist and editor, was like the grandfather of underground comics. Everyone from my generation who became an underground cartoonist had *Mad* instead of a Bible by them. What Kurtzman did was he broke the fourth wall with his humor, talking to the audience rather than just have the characters talking to each other. He made parodies. The first *Mad* comics, when it was a comic book, instead of Superman, they had Superduperman, instead of Mickey Mouse, it was Mickey Rodent, and the drawing was very energetic and compacted tight so that there was a lot going on in the backgrounds, eyeball kicks. He was also not only influential in this new kind of radical parody, in satire, in which he really tried to make it possible to say something that was meaningful. He had an ethical core.



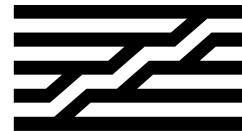
So it wasn't just to make anything crazy that would be surprising, but to really give it a focus. He also had a very strict grammar of how to make a comic book page, and that's what ignited me to really pursue the grammar of comics and what could be made. [transitional sound]

2. Laughter, with Catherine Meurisse

Catherine Meurisse started out at *Charlie Hebdo*, before moving away from press cartoons to publish more personal albums. Here, she presents pages from *Humaine, trop humaine* and *Scènes de la vie hormonale*. She tells us about her vision of humour and the authors who have inspired her.

Humaine, Trop Humaine is a two-part sketch about a German philosopher, taken from a series I did for *Philosophie Magazine* over a six-year period. I had to talk about a philosopher each month, about a celebrity, so to speak, of philosophy, and I took the opportunity to shake up the Pantheon a bit, to shake up these great men, because there are primarily men. Philosophy is mainly written by men. I used this album to change things up a bit and spotlight women. There's often a female character in each of my illustrations who comes along and contradicts a famous philosopher, Nietzsche, Kant, etc. I declare my love for philosophers, great authors, great women writers, while at the same time looking to see what little cracks lie behind the marble statue that can both make you laugh and make you think. I use humour to try to make the whole thing a bit more lively, a bit more accessible.

As for *Scènes de la vie Hormonale*, these were the last drawings I did for *Charlie Hebdo*. After that, I left the newspaper, two years after the attack on *Charlie*, which was an abominable and tragic event and, for me, marked the end of my work as a press cartoonist. In this series, I've started having fun once again. I talk about couples, I talk about desire, about misunderstandings, and I also have fun with psychoanalytical jargon. I had a lot of fun with it. It's an album about libido, in the broadest sense.



It's all about sexuality, love and creation. It's about questioning our bodies, all that friction, all those tangles that get into our heads. It's like another little comic theatre.

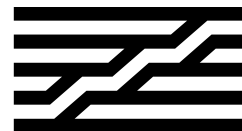
[transitional sound]

How do we live in the world? We need to live with a bit of humour, otherwise we're in serious trouble. Humour is what humans use in order to get by. We do what we can and we're insignificant, we're just passing through, our lives are completely absurd, so we should try to take a step aside to observe the absurdity and laugh about it. It's really a way of remaining dignified in our completely stupid lives. There is also a laugh of resistance. In a way, I grew up at *Charlie Hebdo*. I always heard Cabu say that the press cartoonist's role is to avenge the reader. As far as possible, humour helps us to fight tyranny, hegemony and narrow thinking. It's a way of coping. I see it as a form of elegance. [transitional sound]

Some of the authors shown here have been a great inspiration to me. Claire Bretécher, for example, who I find brilliant and who is brilliant in any case, has influenced many female authors, and has really opened up a path for all of us. She also invented her own language, dialogue and writing style. Her drawing really blends in with her writing.

And Uderzo; I read and reread *Asterix* when I was little. Uderzo and Goscinny were probably the duo who shaped me as a child. There is Schultz, with *Peanuts*, the poetry and the deep, philosophical nature of those strips, it's quite miraculous. *Peanuts* is three or four panels that tell you about the world, the human condition, even offering salvation, redemption through laughter. It presents children with a dog, and both children and adults can see themselves in it. The drawing is simple, uncluttered, it's not much and yet it represents us. That's what makes comics really, really miraculous.

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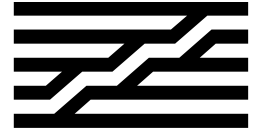
3. Fright with Emil Ferris

Emil Ferris is the author of *My Favorite Thing Is Monsters*, a graphic novel drawn entirely with Bic pens published in 2017, with Volume 2 coming out in May 2024 in the United States. From her home in Chicago, she explains how the horror genre has guided her life and work.

My Favorite Thing is Monsters is a diary written by a young girl who loves monsters and sees her life through the lens of monsters. Her life takes place in Chicago in 1968. There are casts of characters, family members, neighborhood, all of these things are important to her, but she's negotiating fear and challenges in her life, and doing that by creating a diary of all that happens. [transitional sound]

How is my work related to fear in comics? A lot of people tell me that the book is very dark, but I actually made it much less dark than my actual life. By the time I was six years old, I'd seen three dead people, two of whom had committed suicide. The world of Chicago in the 1960s was extremely dark, was very fraught for a child. And I think that what I did was to experience... to externalize fear in horror was a way for me to have victory and understand what the distortion of fear really is in the human mind. That's what I think it is for everyone, actually. But it was especially the case for me. So there were movies that would be played at 10.30 at night called *Creature Features*. And I became very addicted to fear, I guess, to horror, really, and to overcoming fear. And then I began reading the magazines, *EC Comics* and *Mad Magazine* and others, that were essentially about horror, but also were about the human experience and how to negotiate fear and how to overcome it, to be on the victory side of fear, I think. [transitional sound]

When I saw the list of people I'd be showing with, there wasn't one single person whose work I don't absolutely idolize and respect. And to say one name would be unfair, but I can say that even though I'm looking at a list of all-stars, really, I loved Bernie Wrightson because he was my first experience with horror. There were so many things that he did. He was such an excellent penciller.



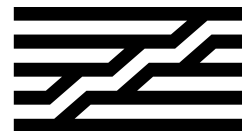
His pencil work, when I finally got to see it, was like the most beautiful skeletal structure, and his work was full of so much emotion. *Swamp Thing* was amazing. It was one of those things that changes your life. You see it, and you're never the same again. Uh, I think it was the case with all of his work. I loved it so much and later learned that many other people whom I also respected, were deeply impacted by his work. I would say Bernie Wrightson, for me, was this revelation about what an artist could do. [transitional sound]

4. Dreams with Blutch

French author Blutch is influenced by painting, cinema, jazz and dance. He tells us about his attraction to the world of dreams, his influences and his comic strip *La volupté*, published in 2006, in which a number of unconnected characters cross paths as a mysterious wild beast roams.

I'm a comic book artist. I write, and I've been published for over 35 years. I've worked in many different media and in many different directions. Perhaps if there's one thing my work has in common, it's that there is no real direction. Instead, over the years, I've tried to change things up frequently so as not to fall into a routine. I've opened a lot of doors, I've explored paradoxical and contradictory paths. [transitional sound]

La Volupté is part of a triptych: *Le Bonheur*, *La Volupté* and *La Beauté*. *La Volupté* is an erratic comic that follows the logic of a dream. Even as a child, reading the Tintin albums, the dream scenes had a big impact on me, and that has continued ever since. My training was marked by surrealism, by the incongruous, and above all by a taste for not knowing what's going to happen. I've always been drawn to stories where I don't know what might happen in the next minute or on the next page. To surprise myself as an author, but also to surprise my readers, even if it means throwing them off balance. Also in this work, in this work on dreams, perhaps, there is a form of humour that I like, that I appreciate, that I would describe as incongruous, a form of nonsense and above all surprise, allowing for surprise. [transitional sound]



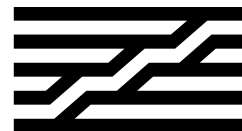
The influence comes above all from the two forebears, Fred, and Forest for my part, who was someone who was very important to me both graphically and narratively. To come back to what I was saying earlier, they represent the incongruous, a form of humour, irreverence, even ferocity, and with Forest, eroticism and sensuality. I am inspired by authors of this calibre. Because my learning didn't stop at one point, it's still ongoing. Although I am an author, in a way, I am also first and foremost a reader, or I was going to say, an observer. I've always been terribly interested in images and I still am today. I still read comics and I learn a lot from them.

[transitional sound]

5. As Days Go By with Camille Jourdy

From her home in Lyon, author Camille Jourdy talks to us about her favourite subjects, her relationship with time and her *Rosalie Blum* trilogy, published in 2016, which tenderly recounts the unexpected meeting of three slightly depressed loners.

My name is Camille Jourdy, and I've been a comic book author and illustrator for around 20 years, since my first book was published, which will be 20 years ago this year. I write for both adults and young people. I would say that the theme that often comes up in my stories is family, family stories, secrets, things left unsaid, difficulties in communicating or, in any case, the way in which people manage or don't manage to communicate. They are often stories about everyday life, with ordinary characters, which means they are anything but ordinary. They are ordinary in the sense that they are not heroes, but anti-heroes. They are not ordinary in the banal sense of the word. I would say they're quite original, they're a little bit mad, like everyone is; a bit off-kilter. It's often these people who affect me the most, people who are having a hard time, those who are struggling with life, those for whom not everything is easy. These are the people I have the most affection for. It's often these characters that I want to write about. [transitional sound]

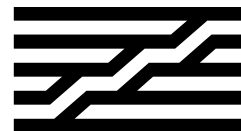


I wrote *Rosalie Blum* when I was a student at the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg, it was my student project. This book is the strange meeting of three loners. There are many questions of solitude in this book. The location, the settings, were inspired by the small town where I grew up. It is set in Dole, in the Jura region of France, and I very often set my stories in this type of location. Generally speaking, they happen in small provincial towns. I have a particular relationship with time in my stories, because when I tell a story, I like to take my time. I like to take time to establish the characters. There is often a kind of melancholy and contemplation.

I can take my time with the drawing. If a character goes for a walk, I like to go along with them. I can draw three pages in which you walk around with the character. I like to slow down the pace at times and then speed it up at other times. For example, sometimes, and I did it in *Rosalie Blum*, but in other comics too, I like to draw a full page. That's when I can have fun with the graphics. It gives me a really atmospheric page in which I can take the time to draw lots of little details. But it also provides a break. It's a real breath of fresh air and it contributes to the atmosphere I want to create in my comics.

[transitional sound]

I know and love the work of most of the authors in this selection. Hergé, of course, I'm not being very original, but Tintin was the first comic book I read, so it really marked my childhood. Then I discovered the work of Lewis Trondheim and many other authors published by L'Association. It's true that I wasn't really attracted to classic Franco-Belgian comics, and all of a sudden, I realized that there were a lot of other things to explore, other ways of telling stories and drawing. I felt much more at home in those kinds of stories. Then I discovered Chris Ware, and his book *Jimmy Corrigan*, which was a real shock for me, his way of telling stories, his drawings. He was definitely one of my strongest influences. [transitional sound]



6. Personal Stories with Étienne Davodeau

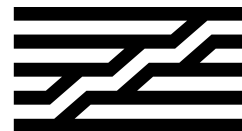
For thirty years, Étienne Davodeau has been alternating between fiction and realist stories in his comic books. He tells us what autobiographical writing brings to his stories and looks back at his book *Le droit du sol*, published in 2021, which is based on his 800km walk from the Pech Merle cave to the disposal site for radioactive waste in Bure.

I've been making comics for about thirty years, and for the last 20 years or so I've been trying to alternate between fiction and non-fiction stories, which have elements of documentary, journalism and autobiography. It's a genre of comics that I really enjoy, and *Le Droit du Sol* falls into the category of non-fiction. So is it journalism, documentary or autobiography? I think it's a bit of all three. That's why I think the term "non-fiction" is an interesting way of defining this kind of book.

What is *Le Droit du Sol*? It represents several of my interests coming together. Comics, of course, but also cave art, as well as more contemporary issues of a political and environmental nature, such as our dependence on nuclear energy, and in particular the question of nuclear waste.

To do this, I decided to walk between two places that I feel are emblematic of these issues. Firstly, the Pech Merle cave in the Lot area, which is a very beautiful underground cave where you can admire drawings that are 25 to 30,000 years old. And at the other end, Bure, in the Meuse area, where there are currently plans to bury nuclear waste from our nuclear power plants. Linking these two points on foot was also a way of practising a discipline that I enjoy, which is long-distance walking. All these elements come together to form a story that is autobiography, journalism and documentary, since there are tons of questions about cave art, nuclear power, our relationship with environmental issues and, of course, comics, since drawing a line with your feet is like drawing on a map, which is itself a form of drawing.

[transitional sound]



One of the aspects of autobiographical writing that interests me a lot, particularly in comics, which is why I do it, is that it allows me to propose a narrative that ignores the question of objectivity, which I think is a question for journalists. As an author of comics, as an artist, I feel that it's more honest to assert and explain my subjectivity. Writing about oneself, writing the "truth", in very big inverted commas, is something that, as far as I'm concerned in my work, involves describing and recounting the events and people I meet and experience. In any case, everything is based on my personal experience. When I said that I walked 800 kilometres, it was a way of making this reality part of my personal practice, and that's what I like about this type of comic.

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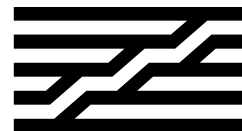
I don't think we fully appreciate the contribution that Edmond Baudoin has made to contemporary comics. Back in the 1980s, when I was a teenager discovering this type of comics, I came across his autobiographical stories. I discovered this very special, very sensitive, very poetic comic strip, which was quite unique in the French publishing landscape at the time. I think that Edmond Baudoin provides a real bridge between two eras, the 80s and the 2000s, and also between two types of comic strip: those published by mainstream publishers and what was to become the independent comic strip. I think that at the crossroads of all this, Edmond Baudoin's work should be highlighted, shown and given to as many people as possible to read.

[transitional sound]

7. Colour / black and white, with Lorenzo Mattotti

When Lorenzo Mattotti published his first albums in the 1970s, printing was still only in black and white. From the 1980s onwards, the advances made in printing techniques enabled him to play with colour and bring comics closer to the fine arts. In this podcast, he tells us about his progression from black and white to colour.

I started out drawing comic strips in the 70s, mainly in black and white. Later, I took on colours. Then my work started to spill over.



After comics, I started doing illustrations, illustrated books, posters, covers; I also paint and I even made an animated film.

I only started working in colour seven or eight years after I began in black and white. With the advent of lasers and the ability to print colours directly, I was able to use very different techniques and I started using coloured pencils. [transitional sound]

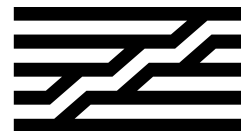
Fuochi was a real turning point in my career. After ten years of comics, I wanted to create a story not only with images and shapes, but also with colours. In *Fuochi*, there is a shift from pencil to oil pastel. The pencil drawings are quite descriptive, but the oil pastel drawings become fully pictorial images. I wanted to give the impression of being completely lost in all these emotions. To do this, I had to draw like a painter.

In fact, I destroyed all the outlines. The emotions are expressed through the marks and strokes. Part of the storytelling is also done with colours. There are passages with very natural colours, representing light, the sun, with green. But little by little, the red starts to take up more space, then it gets darker, bluer. This is an example of how I tried to tell the story through colour too, to convey direct emotions to readers.

Black and white is a big part of my work in comics, because I started with black and white. The way I used it was very much influenced by my masters. Then there was a shift. After colours, I went back to black and white, but I started to use a pen, and place more importance on the pen. The pen can be very light, but also very scrawled, very violent, very wild. [transitional sound]

I was mainly influenced by the great masters like Alberto Breccia, Hugo Pratt and José Muñoz. I met José Muñoz and we almost became friends. He had a huge influence on me throughout the 70s. Then there were other masters, like Moebius, who opened doors, new possibilities to express oneself very freely, with an extraordinary line.

[transitional sound]



8. History and memory, with Emmanuel Guibert

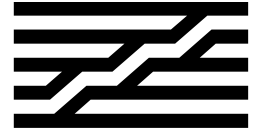
In *Alan's War*, Emmanuel Guibert transcribes the wartime memories of a dear friend into a comic strip. For the Centre Pompidou, he looks back on this series, which is a lifelong project for him.

I met Alan Ingram Cope in 1994, when I was 30. It was on the Île de Ré, where I was visiting for the first time. I was a little lost in the small town of Saint-Martin and I went past a house where a man was sawing wood outside his kitchen door. I asked him for directions and we became best friends for five years. This was Alan, and I recorded his stories extensively. I must have around fifty hours of recorded conversations with him. This is the material I use to write the biographical books I devote to him. Alan was born in 1925 in California, on the outskirts of Los Angeles. He was called up for military service. He arrived on European soil, landing in Le Havre in February 1945, on his 20th birthday. After having been absurdly posted for two months in Picardy because the American army had mislaid their weapons and their vehicles - which is embarrassing for an army on campaign - as soon as they had recovered them, he crossed Europe, at full speed, and was one of the 70 or so soldiers who found themselves furthest east on the morning of the German surrender, on 8 May 1945.

[transitional sound]

Our memory is such that what remains of past events are, most of the time, a few words and a few images. And words and pictures come together to make comics, quite naturally. This is why, when I met Alan, it seemed clear to me that I should try to put down on paper what I was seeing while he was talking.

We had no disagreement on that. On the contrary, it was the vector of even greater precision, of even greater conversation between us. Because obviously, being able to give him back his own memories drawn by someone else – which is quite strange when you think about it – gave rise to all sorts of reactions in him, including memories. These reactions enabled us to enrich his story. Because the simple fact that building it step by step, with him, for as long as he was alive, I had this resource of showing it to



him and therefore of awakening other stories that emerged from reading what I had to offer him. And then, since his death, I've tried to make up for his absence by travelling, investigating and talking to people who knew him.

This work is also a way of staying with someone you appreciated and continuing to hold their hand, so to speak, in life, introducing them to others. And depending on the unique stories of all these people, the countries, the languages in which this story is read, it creates conversations, which are one of the most interesting spin-offs of this work. [transitional sound]

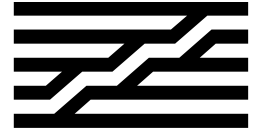
Personally, I can't believe my eyes when I see where I am; being invited to take part in an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, and I'm just as surprised to be surrounded by people who inspire me, some of whom are my role models. Spiegelman and Tardi, for example: their ability to take history in the most personal and visceral way possible; it's not a story seen from a helicopter by commentators, it's a story that is embodied, carnal and that haunts them. You get the sense that their work is really a necessity, something that absolutely must be expressed. If that's what authors are all about, I'm really going to have to roll up my sleeves and give it my best shot, because that's what can be achieved. [transitional sound]

9. Literature, with Posy Simmonds

English author Posy Simmonds has worked as a press cartoonist, children's illustrator and comic strip artist. In several of her graphic novels, she adapts literary masterpieces. This is the case with *Gemma Boverly*.

Gemma Boverly was first published as a series in *The Guardian* newspaper. The story is loosely based on Flaubert's great novel, *Madame Bovary*. I wanted to create a modern Emma, bored and dissatisfied, but independent, well-educated and sexually free. *Gemma Boverly* is a slightly plump, frumpy young English woman.

She is tired of London, and moves to Normandy with her husband Charlie to follow a



dream: a simple, beautiful life in the quiet French countryside. Her neighbour is a baker called Raymond Joubert, and he is the narrator of the story. He falls in love with Gemma because of her similarity to Flaubert's heroine. [transitional sound]

The most important detail is that Gemma Boverly is dead from page one, and the plot follows the circumstances surrounding her death. The idea of basing my story on this great novel came to me on the terrace of a café in Italy. I saw a very beautiful young woman who was very bored, very dissatisfied, full of sighs, full of despair.

I think she was with her boyfriend, whom she treated like a dog. She kept saying "Ricardo, vieni qua!" She would light a cigarette, she was surrounded by Prada shopping bags and had bought some shoes. I said to myself "It's just like *Madame Bovary*" and that gave me the idea. I believe that boredom and dissatisfaction are part of life. [transitional sound]

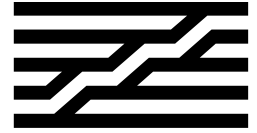
As the novel was to be a series in *The Guardian*, it was the newspaper that imposed the format on me: three columns wide by the length of the page. It was shaped a bit like a giraffe. As I only had 100 episodes to do and the story was long, I had to cram the plot into my pages, which is why I wrote a lot of narration, because narration doesn't take up much space and leaves more room for graphic acrobatics.

[transitional sound]

10. Future Fiction, with Philippe Druillet

Since the publication of his first book, *Le Mystère des abymes*, in 1966, French author Philippe Druillet has revolutionised the way science fiction is approached in comics. He talks to us about his technique, his pictorial influences and the mythical character of Lone Sloane.

Sloane is a rather unsavoury character, but also quite generous. He's a barbarian. He's a very cultured person, in a future we may never know. So, he's about 300 years old, and his life is an absolute battle, a battle against himself. In other words, he's two



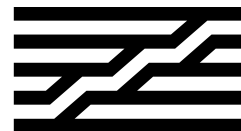
characters, he's himself, and at the same time, there's his older version. Of course, he is on the positive side despite everything, because he can get involved in noble causes. He's a pirate, a privateer, and the other character, his older double, is a dictator, pure evil. [transitional sound]

It's a future world. The fighting is on a planet that is a treasure that nobody realises. It's a world of madness, a world of high-tech delirium, but everything is mixed together: the most primitive barbarity, the most absolute poverty, the greatest wealth, the most immense power. This all forms a whole, on a cosmic level, of happiness, misfortune and everything that exists today, multiplied by 1,000. That's exactly it.

What I wonder, is how it all began. What was the "big bang", what was the starting point? All these characters exist in a world of beauty and light, it's like a painting, it's magic, and they're always attached to things that are futile, basic, sometimes stupid or megalomaniac, or simply criminal. It's as if they weren't aware of the beauty that surrounds them. [transitional sound]

I do everything backwards, because I didn't have any training. I invented my own style, my own work. But above all, cinema is important. To me, it's as important as comics. I would think of album pages as cinema screens. I wanted to make visions, cosmic visions, space visions. So I create things on bits of paper. I come up with an idea and then I work directly on the page like an architect and build it, taking into account the fold, the double page, everything.

I work directly with a large format. In the end, as I've always said, a Druillet page is like cutting into a large six-by-ten metre painting with scissors and having to take a piece. And this carries on everywhere, but unfortunately, we can't make 2.50 metre books, it's a bit tricky. So I have a technique that isn't really a technique, but I go into a trance. It's something I can't control at times. I'm not in control at all and I let myself be guided. I break from the real world – phone calls or whatever – and I enter another world, and that's where it develops.



There was a time, and it still happens to me, when I used to carry around little pieces of card, little sketchbooks, and I'd come up with ideas, even while watching a film. It's not the image, but what it means to me, what I can draw from it and reconstruct. I would make a quick sketch so I wouldn't forget. The rest is a mystery.

[transitional sound]

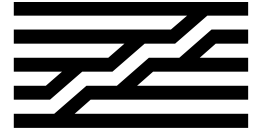
Science fiction is the history of societies, the future of society, and that's where the cartoonist, the painter, the person who does this work must have and has a kind of foresight. I'm not psychic, but my mother was. I feel things that I can't really define. Science fiction allows me to express them because it is the history of civilisations and it continues from the present, from the past, into the future. That's what is so interesting about science fiction, developing human behaviour and the ways in which we create and destroy. [transitional sound]

For me, Gustave Doré is an unrivalled master of painting and drawing. He's extraordinary. To me, he's the greatest cartoonist in the world, there's no question. But drawing is writing. I love Reiser's drawings, for example. They're wonderful. Bretécher, people like that. They are simple things, a form of expression that becomes writing. [transitional sound]

11. Cities with Nicolas de Crécy

Passionate about architecture and mountains, Nicolas de Crécy published *Le Bibendum céleste* in three volumes between 1994 and 2002. In this series, one of his first publications, he develops a very personal universe, in which the imaginary city of New York sur Loire plays a very special role.

I've written around forty books in various forms, including comics, illustrations and novels; lots of different things. What's in the exhibition are things from about thirty years ago. They are from my second comic book, which was called *Le Bibendum Céleste*.



It's a sort of graphic laboratory, like a narrative laboratory. It was at a time when I was discovering and showcasing all the influences I had, in a very pictorial style, in three volumes. It features a town called New-York-sur-Loire. For me, this is an important narrative element. It's almost one of the characters in this series. [transitional sound]

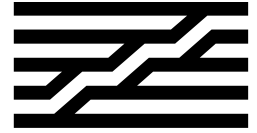
I was very interested in architecture at the time, because I'd come across a book called *Chicago*. I think it was an exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay in 1987. I hadn't seen the exhibition because I wasn't in Paris at the time, but I discovered this book, which fascinated me. In fact, it was about the birth of Chicago, which is to some extent the birth of architecture as we see it in the United States; a mixture of gigantism and baroque. There were neo-gothic influences, all kinds of extraordinary mixes. And in this book, there were lots of graphic elements that I found fascinating and so I put them into my comic as an influence, among other things, because my influences were mainly pictorial, from lots of different sources.

But, on a purely architectural level, it came from this book and photographs by Berenice Abbott, early 20th century photographs of New York. And you can feel that in the drawings, because you recognise the architecture of the early 20th century. It's a pleasure, a bit like a vacation. It's a world that is very personal to me and there's this inspiration in the background, but there's nothing realistic about it.

It's a bit like the pleasure I get from drawing mountains, and that's what interested me about megacities like that, American megacities. I'm fascinated by mountains and I find the same fascination I have for mountains in some of these huge cities.

[transitional sound]

If I go back to that time, to the 90s, my influences were Egon Schiele and David Hockney. David Hockney stayed. He's been a constant. In comics, it was undoubtedly Moebius and authors like Muñoz and Sampayo, who have very radical drawings that are quite extraordinary, quite astonishing. At the moment, I'm looking a lot at what's being done in what we call "contemporary art". For me, the term doesn't mean much, given that comics are part of the contemporary arts, but what we call contemporary art, where there are lots of interesting things. I mean, it's so free, you can find a lot of



things that are quite exciting, but that are quite far from what I do, but that nourish me all the same. My influences do not resemble what I do. I look for things that are far removed from my work. [transitional sound]

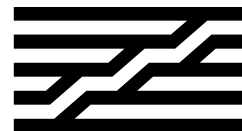
12. Geometry with Jochen Gerner

Artist, illustrator and comic strip author Jochen Gerner has been playing with the codes of language and image since the early 1990s. From his home in Nancy, he explains the formal process he has put in place for his project *RG*, inspired by the Tintin albums.

Broadly speaking, my work focuses on the relationship between texts and images, and on the observation and analysis of printed images of all kinds, whether comics or any other type of image. With the *RG* project, I wanted to analyse and inventory the mentions and use of colour in the series of Tintin albums. For the *Mégacycle* chapter, the aim was to identify each chromatic reference in the textual corpus of these comics, and then to attempt to illustrate each of these references with a drawing of a micro-detail of the original page on which these colour names appeared. It was an unusual exercise in that it involved trying to represent a colour using a simple black line drawing. With the *Ectoplasme* chapter, I chose to highlight an ensemble of recurring thematic forms, specific to each Tintin album. For me, the essential form in *Tintin in the Congo* was liquid, it was fire in *The Crab with the Golden Claws*, and flowers in *The Castafiore Emerald*. Each of these formal categories also seemed to define the main chromatic range used by Hergé to colour his albums.

[transitional sound]

After having discovered, together with the writer Emmanuel Rabu, that each Tintin album was, more or less covertly, governed by precise rules of chromatic and formal recurrence, I decided to highlight the elements by transcribing them in the form of a new comic.



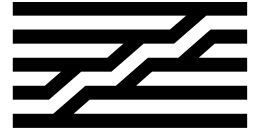
So, for the *Mégacycle* chapter, using a systematic waffle pattern of 12 square panels per page, I built a graphic narrative, a list of colour references developed over 34 boards. Each panel corresponds to a frame of a few millimetres on one of Hergé's pages, systematically captioned at the top with a chromatic term. In this way, the reader sees all of Tintin's adventures unfold without interruption, from the sole thematic point of view of colour, and using a single framing.

For the *Ectoplasme* section, I worked on the idea of graphic patterns and recurring figurative or semi-abstract forms. This makes a total of 22 pages corresponding to the 22 Tintin colour albums. [\[transitional sound\]](#)

I particularly like the work of the artists in the Geometry section of the exhibition. Each has a unique body of work that develops a specific relationship with geometry: Crepax's art of framing, Chris Ware's virtuoso organisation of the graphic principle of the page, Yokoyama's clean, radical drawing, onomatopoeia and graphic motifs, and Martin Panchaud's original synthetic principle of pictograms.

I'm not sure I have a direct link with the formal approach of each of these authors. I wouldn't call them influences, but rather unique journeys, each in their own direction. Our radical graphic choices may well allow us to discover new areas of potentiality that are unique to comics. [\[transitional sound\]](#)

[\[jingle of the show\]](#) It was a Centre Pompidou podcast. You can find all our podcasts on the Centre Pompidou website, its listening platforms and social networks. See you soon with the next podcast!



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Recording: Ivan Gariel and Bastien Pigeon

Editing and mixing: Antoine Dahan

Voice over: Florian Hutter and Claire Olivier

Sound design: Sixième son

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