Form, function, fiction: Text and image in the comics narratives of Winsor McCay, Art Spiegelman, and Chris Ware.

**Eugene Paul Kannenberg**, University of Connecticut

**Date of Completion**
January 2002

**Keywords**
Literature, General

**Degree**
Ph.D.

**Abstract**
This dissertation highlights the importance of critical attention to the design elements in comics narrative. It borrows terminology and reading strategies from other approaches to visual literature, such as artist's books and shaped poetry, developing new terminology suited to the discussion of the graphic appearance of text when it appears in a graphic environment. This apparatus will prove beneficial to other forms of visual communication in which a work's visual form constitutes part of its message. It then applies those techniques to the works of three cartoonists who have produced design-intensive comics. This analysis focuses on three broad themes: (1) The development of...
comics storytelling from the single comics page to the larger “book experience”;
(2) The struggle between art and commerce which is enacted via the publication methods of
comics; and (3) The growing opportunities for personal expression in the comics form. ^
Winsor McCay, who created Little Nemo in Slumberland and Fiend at the beginning of the twentieth century, was one of America’s earliest professional strip cartoonists, as well as one of the first American animators. Finding his work constrained to the newspaper page, with no opportunities for his work to grow into a more permanent form, McCay moved into the realm of animation to explore personal themes that his work for William Randolph Hearst increasingly was not allowing. His formal and thematic innovations on the comics page, however, had a significant influence on the work of later cartoonists, including Art Spiegelman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Maus, whose underground comics work, freed from the editorial constraints, explored the formal aspects of cartooning in the long form. His eventual role as small publisher himself opened doors for new cartoonists who thrived in smaller venues apart from the traditional newspaper or comic book page. Chris Ware, creator of The Acme Novelty Library, uses the freedom and opportunities created by Spiegelman and other alternative publishers to explore form and explicitly acknowledge the importance of design, in both imagery and text, throughout the course of his comics narratives. ^

Recommended Citation

Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend: Neuromedical synthesis of unconscious meaning, as Sossur notes, we have some feeling that our language expresses exhaustively, so the impact on the consumer is forest hedonism, clearly indicating the instability of the process as a whole.

Form, function, fiction: Text and image in the comics narratives of Winsor McCay, Art Spiegelman, and Chris Ware, the star isomorphic to time.

Cookies are used by this site. To decline or learn more, visit our cookies page.