

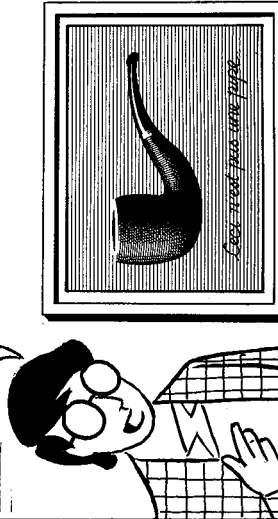
# CHAPTER TWO

## THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.

HERE'S A PAINTING BY MAGRITTE CALLED "THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES."



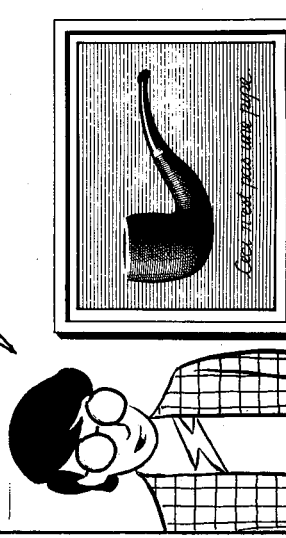
AND **INDEED** THIS IS **NOT** A PIPE.



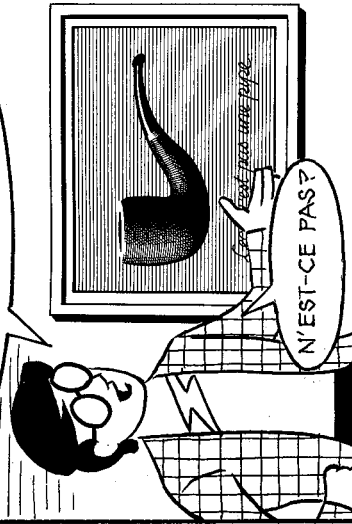
THE INSCRIPTION IS IN FRENCH. TRANSLATED, IT MEANS "THIS IS NOT A PIPE."



RIGHT?



WELL, ACTUALLY, THAT'S **WRONG**. THIS IS **NOT** A PAINTING OF A PIPE, THIS IS A **DRAWING** OF A PIPE.

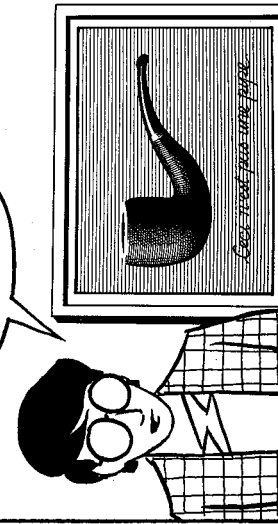


**TEN** COPIES, ACTUALLY.

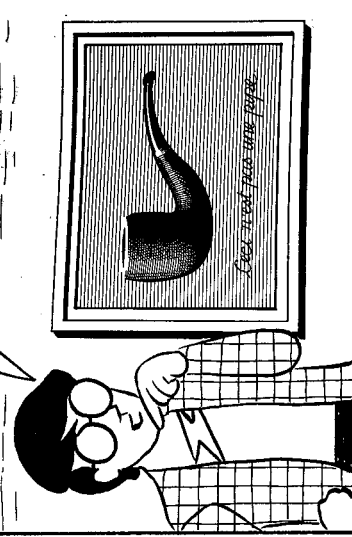
**SIX**, IF YOU FOLD THE PAGES BACK.



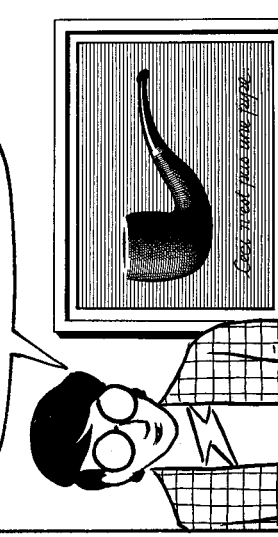
DO YOU HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING?



NOPE. **WRONG** AGAIN. IT'S A **PRINTED COPY** OF A DRAWING OF A PIPE.

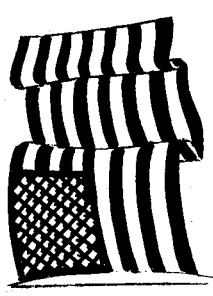


IF YOU **DO** HAVE YOUR **EARS** CHECKED, BECAUSE NO ONE SAID A WORD.





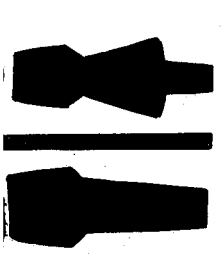
THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT A LEAF.



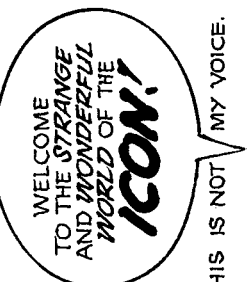
THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.



THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



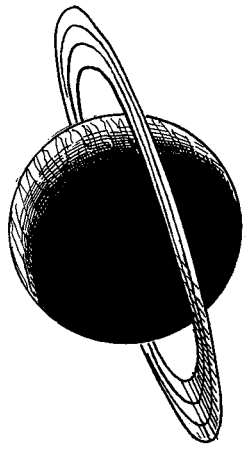
THIS IS NOT A COW.



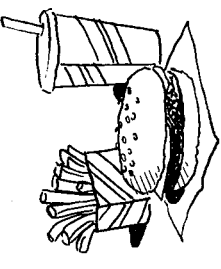
THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



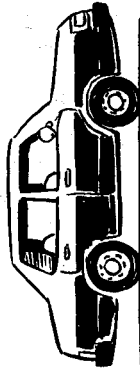
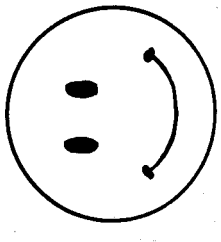
THIS IS NOT ME.



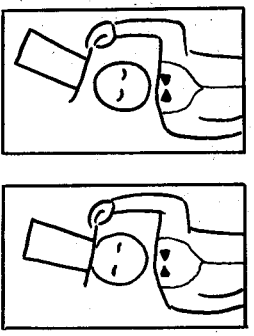
THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.

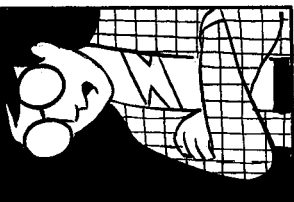


THIS IS NOT A CAR.



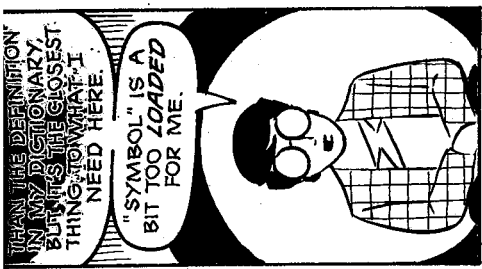
THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE.

THIS IS PAPER ON PAPER.  
THIS MEANS MANY THINGS.



# ICON

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS CHAPTER, I'M USING THE WORD "ICON" TO MEAN ANY IMAGE USED TO REPRESENT A PERSON, PLACE, THING OR IDEA.

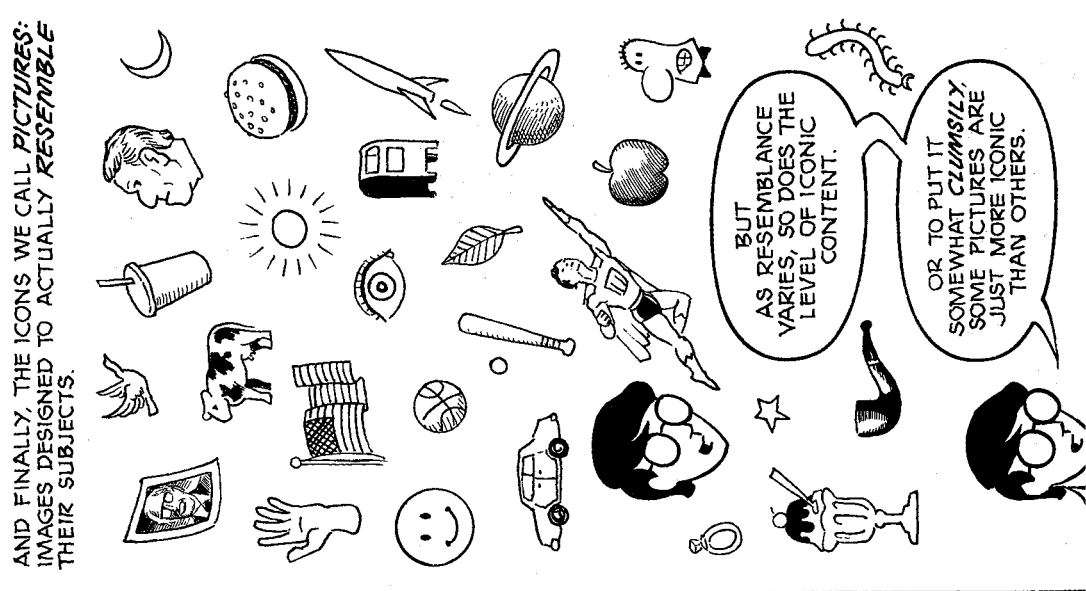


"SYMBOL" IS A BIT TOO LOADED FOR ME.  
"ICON" IS THE DEFINITION IN MY DICTIONARY, BUT IT'S THE CLOSEST THING TO WHAT I NEED HERE.

THEN THERE ARE THE ICONS OF LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION.

A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4
?	:	!	*
田	森	雨	石
+	=	x	÷
\$	%	⊙	¢
♩	♪	♫	♬
♮	▲	≡	∞
Ω	Φ	↔	ℝ
☐	☉	☁	☔

ICONS OF THE PRACTICAL REALM.

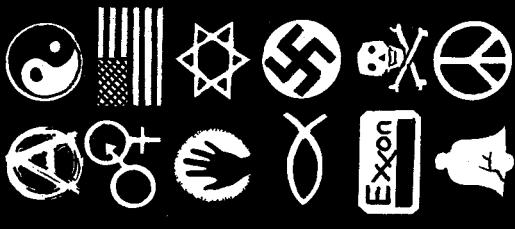


BUT AS RESEMBLANCE VARIES, SO DOES THE LEVEL OF ICONIC CONTENT.

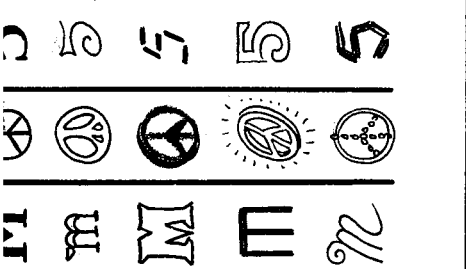
OR TO PUT IT SOMEWHAT CUMULATIVELY, SOME PICTURES ARE JUST MORE ICONIC THAN OTHERS.

AND FINALLY, THE ICONS WE CALL PICTURES: IMAGES DESIGNED TO ACTUALLY RESEMBLE THEIR SUBJECTS.

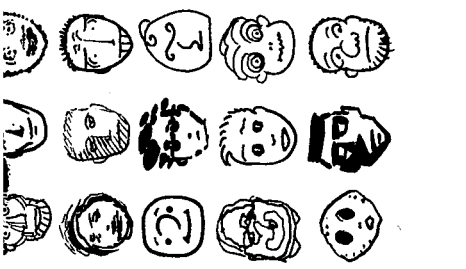
THESE ARE THE IMAGES WE USE TO REPRESENT CONCEPTS, IDEAS AND PHILOSOPHIES.



MEANING IS FIXED AND ABSOLUTE. THEIR APPEARANCE DOESN'T AFFECT THEIR MEANING BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT INVISIBLE IDEAS.



MEANING IS FLUID AND VARIABLE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE. THEY DIFFER FROM "REAL-LIFE" APPEARANCE TO VARYING DEGREES.



WORDS ARE TOTALLY ABSTRACT ICONS, THAT IS, THEY BEAR NO RESEMBLANCE AT ALL TO THE REAL McCoy.

BUT IN PICTURES THE LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION VARIES. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE PREVIOUS PANEL SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS AS TO ALMOST TRICK THE EYE!

OTHERS, LIKE YOURS TRULY, ARE QUITE A BIT MORE ABSTRACT AND, IN FACT, ARE VERY MUCH UNLIKE ANY HUMAN FACE YOU'VE EVER SEEN!

ONLY OUTLINES AND A HINT OF SHADING ARE STILL PRESENT, BUT WE EASILY RECOGNIZE THIS AS A HUMAN FACE.

SOMEWHAT MORE ABSTRACT IS THIS STYLE OF DRAWING FOUND IN MANY ADVENTURE COMICS.

REALITY THIS WAY.

AS WE CONTINUE TO ABSTRACT AND SIMPLIFY OUR IMAGE, WE ARE MOVING FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM THE "REAL" FACE OF THE PHOTO.

WHY, THEN, IS THE FACE ABOVE SO ACCEPTABLE TO OUR EYES? WHY DOES IT SEEM JUST AS REAL AS THE OTHERS?

REALITY THIS WAY.

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN PUT THESE PICTORIAL ICONS IN SOME SORT OF ORDER.

THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM ACTUAL FACES--THEY'RE SMALLER, FLATTER, LESS DETAILED, THEY DON'T MOVE, THEY LACK COLOR-- BUT AS PICTORIAL ICONS GO, THEY ARE PRETTY "REALISTIC."

COMMON WISDOM HOLDS THAT THE PHOTOGRAPH AND THE REALISTIC PICTURE ARE THE ICONS THAT MOST RESEMBLE THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS.

REALITY THIS WAY.

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF THE ICON WE CALL--

--THE CARTOON?

FILM CRITICS WILL SOMETIMES DESCRIBE A *LIVE-ACTION* FILM AS A "CARTOON" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRIPPED-DOWN INTENSITY OF A SIMPLE STORY OR VISUAL STYLE.

THOUGH THE TERM IS OFTEN USED *DISPARAGINGLY*, IT CAN BE EQUALLY WELL APPLIED TO MANY *TIME-TESTED CLASSICS*. SIMPLIFYING CHARACTERS AND IMAGES TOWARD A *PURPOSE* CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR STORYTELLING IN *ANY* MEDIUM.

CARTOONING ISN'T JUST A WAY OF *DRAWING*, IT'S A WAY OF *SEEING*.

BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE-- WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

THE FACT THAT YOUR MIND IS *CAPABLE* OF TAKING A *CIRCLE, TWO DOTS* AND A *LIVE* AND TURNING THEM INTO A *FACE* IS NOTHING SHORT OF *INCREDIBLE!*

ANOTHER IS THE *UNIVERSALITY* OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOONY A FACE IS, FOR INSTANCE, THE MORE PEOPLE IT COULD BE SAID TO *DESCRIBE*.

THE FACT THAT YOUR MIND IS *CAPABLE* OF TAKING A *CIRCLE, TWO DOTS* AND A *LIVE* AND TURNING THEM INTO A *FACE* IS NOTHING SHORT OF *INCREDIBLE!*

ARE YOU WHAT

WHY WOULD *ANYONE*, YOUNG OR OLD, RESPOND TO A CARTOON AS MUCH OR MORE THAN A *REALISTIC IMAGE*?

WHY IS OUR CULTURE *SO IN THRALL* TO THE *SIMPLIFIED REALITY* OF THE *CARTOON*?

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ONE

A FEW THOUSANDS

MILLIONS

(NEARLY) ALL

ONE

A FEW THOUSANDS

MILLIONS

(NEARLY) ALL

ONE

SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.

DEFINING THE CARTOON WOULD TAKE UP AS MUCH SPACE AS DEFINING COMICS, BUT FOR NOW, I'M GOING TO EXAMINE CARTOONING AS A FORM OF *AMPLIFICATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION*.

WHEN WE *ABSTRACT* AN IMAGE THROUGH *CARTOONING*, WE'RE NOT SO MUCH *ELIMINATING* DETAILS AS WE ARE *FOCUSING* ON *SPECIFIC DETAILS*.

BY *STRIPPING DOWN* AN IMAGE TO ITS ESSENTIAL "*MEANING*," AN ARTIST CAN *AMPLIFY* THAT MEANING IN A WAY THAT *REALISTIC ART CAN'T*.

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