

CHAPTER FOUR

TIME FRAMES.

SO! LET'S SEE: EACH PANEL OF A COMIC SHOWS A SINGLE MOMENT IN TIME.



AND BETWEEN THOSE FROZEN MOMENTS-- BETWEEN THE PANELS-- OUR MINDS FILL IN THE INTERVENING MOMENTS, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF TIME AND MOTION.



LIKE A LINE DRAWN BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

RIGHT?



CLK



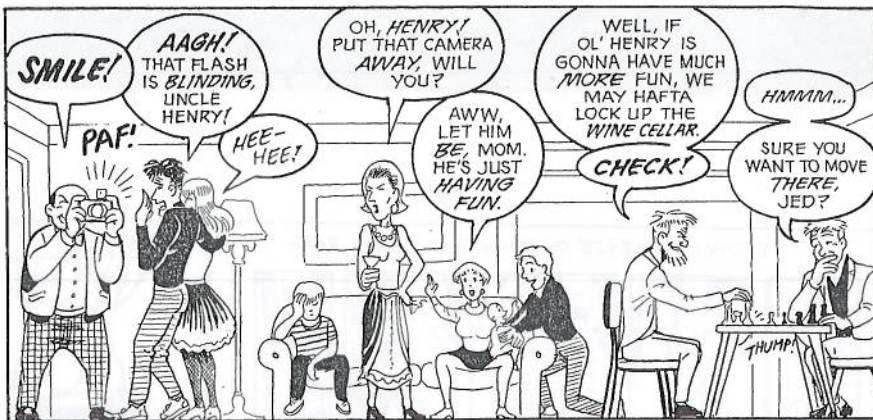
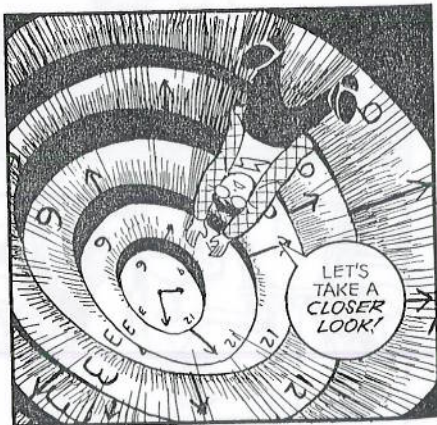
NAAH! OF COURSE NOT!



TIME IN COMICS IS INFINITELY WEIRDER THAN THAT!



LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!



SINGLE MOMENT? HARDLY!



EVEN THE BRIEF SOUND OF A FLASH-BULB HAS A CERTAIN DURATION. SHORT TO BE SURE, BUT NOT INSTANTANEOUS!

PAF!



FAR SLOWER IS THE DURATION OF THE AVERAGE WORD. UNCLE HENRY ALONE BURNS UP A GOOD SECOND IN THIS PANEL, ESPECIALLY SINCE "SMILE!" UNDOUBTEDLY PRECEDED THE FLASH.

SMILE!

PAF!



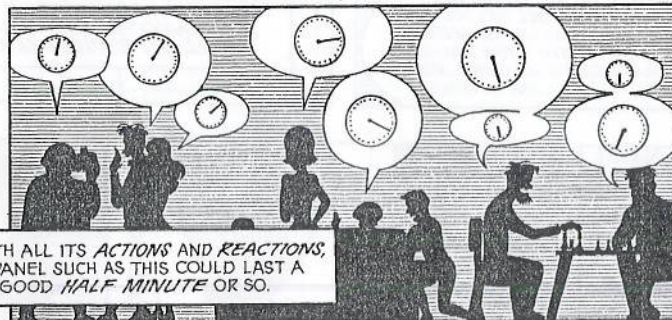
LIKewise, THE NEXT BALLOONS COULD HAVE ONLY FOLLOWED THE BURST OF THE FLASHBULB, THUS ADDING STILL MORE TIME.

AAGH! THAT FLASH IS BLINDING, UNCLE HENRY!

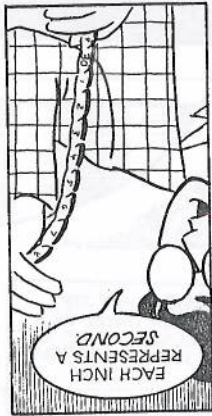
HEE-HEE!



JUST AS PICTURES AND THE INTERVALS BETWEEN THEM CREATE THE ILLUSION OF TIME THROUGH CLOSURE, WORDS INTRODUCE TIME BY REPRESENTING THAT WHICH CAN ONLY EXIST IN TIME--SOUND.



WITH ALL ITS ACTIONS AND REACTIONS, A PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD LAST A GOOD HALF MINUTE OR SO.



EACH INCH REPRESENTS A SECOND



SUCH A ROPE MIGHT BE SAID TO WIND SOME-THING LIKE THIS PANEL.

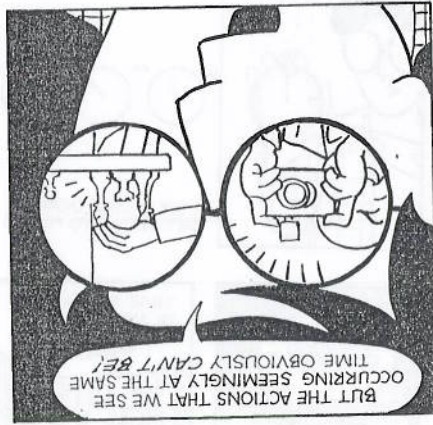
SIMPLIFIED OF COURSE, SINCE EACH BALLOON HAS ITS OWN TWISTS AND TURNS



AND SINCE EACH FACE AND FIGURE IS DRAWN TO MATCH HIS/HER OWN WORDS--



ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT IT: LET'S THINK OF TIME AS A ROPE



BUT THE ACTIONS THAT WE SEE OCCURRING SEEMINGLY AT THE SAME TIME OBVIOUSLY CAN'T BE!



BUT HOW COULD THIS BE ANYTHING BUT A SINGLE INSTANT IN TIME. CONTINUOUS IMAGE AS A SINGLE INSTANT IN TIME. AND BY REPRESENTATIONAL ART TO SEE ANY SINGLE OUR EYES HAVE BEEN WELL-TRAINED BY THE PHOTOGRAPH

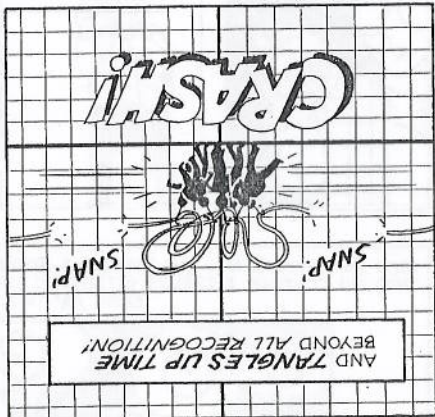


EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL "READ" THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT TIME SLOT.



ONE PANEL, OPERATING AS SEVERAL PANELS.

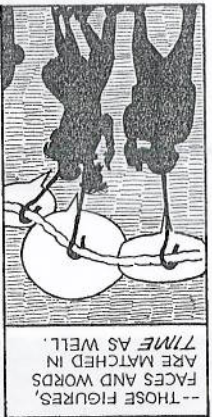
IN SOME RESPECTS THIS PANEL BY ITSELF ACTUALLY FITS OUR DEFINITION OF COMICS! ALL IT NEEDS IS A FEW GUTTERS THROWN IN TO CLARIFY THE SEQUENCE.



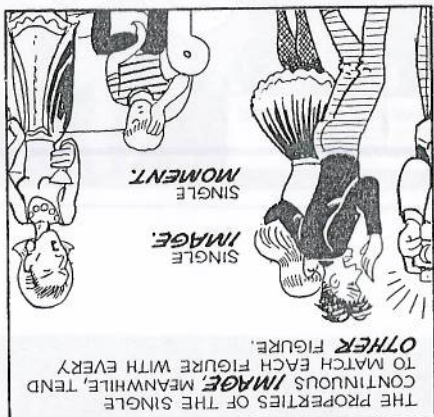
AND TANGLES UP TIME BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!



PERHAPS WE'VE BEEN TOO CONDITIONED BY PHOTOGRAPHY TO PERCEIVE SINGLE IMAGES AS SINGLE MOMENTS. AFTER ALL, IT DOES TAKE AN EYE TIME TO MOVE ACROSS SCENES IN REAL LIFE!



--THOSE FIGURES, FACES AND WORDS ARE MATCHED IN TIME AS WELL.



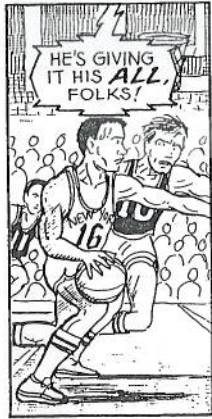
THE PROPERTIES OF THE SINGLE CONTINUOUS IMAGE MEANWHILE, TEND TO MATCH EACH FIGURE WITH EVERY OTHER FIGURE.



PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING LEFT TO RIGHT, THIS PUTS ALL THE IMAGES ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



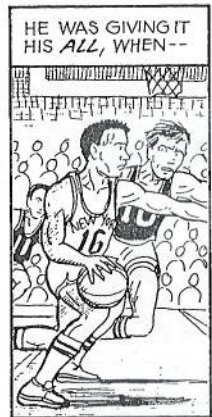
NOT ALL PANELS ARE LIKE THAT, OF COURSE.
A SILENT PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD INDEED BE SAID TO DEPICT A SINGLE MOMENT.



IF SOUND IS INTRODUCED, THIS CEASES TO BE TRUE--



-- BUT, IN AN OTHERWISE SILENT CAPTIONED PANEL, THE SINGLE MOMENT CAN ACTUALLY BE HELD.



THESE VARIOUS SHAPES WE CALL PANELS HOLD IN THEIR BORDERS ALL OF THE ICONS THAT ADD UP TO THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



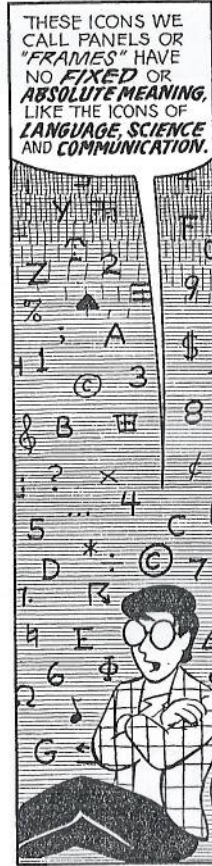
ALL EXCEPT ONE.



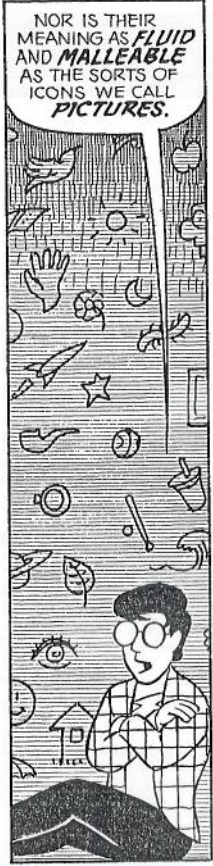
FOR JUST AS THE BODY'S LARGEST ORGAN -- OUR SKIN -- IS SELDOM THOUGHT OF AS AN ORGAN --



-- SO TOO IS THE PANEL ITSELF OVERLOOKED AS COMICS' MOST IMPORTANT ICON!



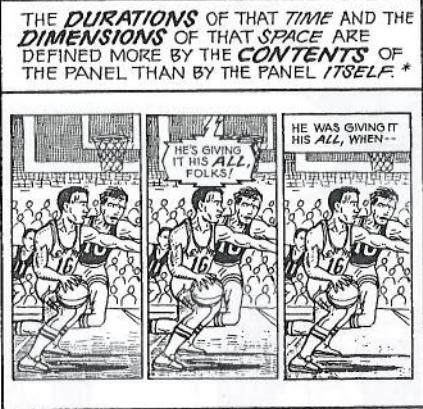
THESE ICONS WE CALL PANELS OR "FRAMES" HAVE NO FIXED OR ABSOLUTE MEANING, LIKE THE ICONS OF LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION.



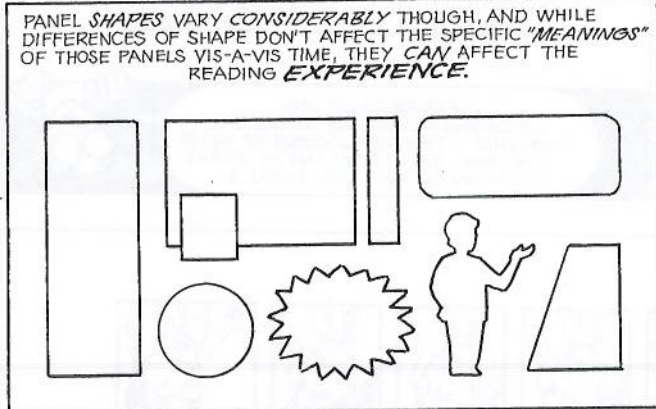
NOR IS THEIR MEANING AS FLUID AND MALLEABLE AS THE SORTS OF ICONS WE CALL PICTURES.



THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF GENERAL INDICATOR THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



THE DURATIONS OF THAT TIME AND THE DIMENSIONS OF THAT SPACE ARE DEFINED MORE BY THE CONTENTS OF THE PANEL THAN BY THE PANEL ITSELF.*



PANEL SHAPES VARY CONSIDERABLY THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "MEANINGS" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY CAN AFFECT THE READING EXPERIENCE.

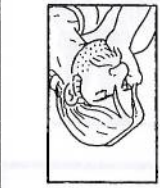


WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AS DEPICTED IN COMICS AND TIME AS PERCEIVED BY THE READER.

*EISNER, DISCUSSES THIS UNDER THE HEADING "FRAMING TIME" IN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART.



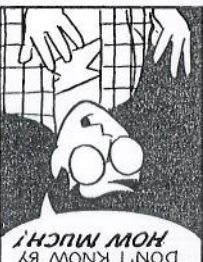
IN MOST CASES, IT'S NOT HARD TO MAKE AN EDUCATED GUESS AS TO THE DURATION OF A GIVEN SEQUENCE, SO LONG AS THE ELEMENTS OF THAT SEQUENCE ARE FAMILIAR TO US.



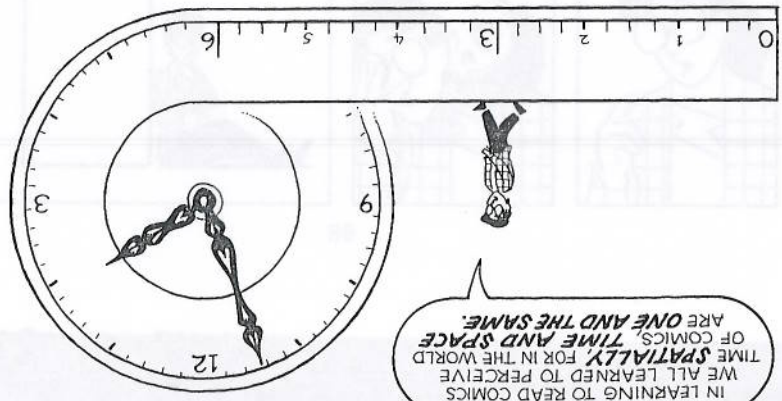
FROM A LIFETIME OF CONVERSATIONS, WE CAN BE SURE THAT A "PAUSE" PANEL LIKE THIS LASTS FOR NO MORE THAN SEVERAL SECONDS.



THE FEW CENTIMETERS WHICH TRANSPORT US FROM SECOND TO SECOND IN ONE SEQUENCE COULD TAKE US A HUNDRED MILLION YEARS IN ANOTHER.



SO, AS READERS, WE'RE LEFT WITH ONLY A VAGUE SENSE THAT AS OUR EYES ARE MOVING THROUGH SPACE, THEY'RE ALSO MOVING THROUGH TIME-- WE JUST DON'T KNOW BY HOW MUCH!



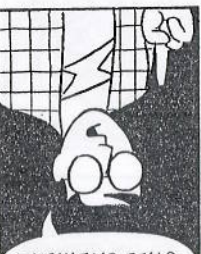
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE TIME SPATIALLY, FOR IN THE WORLD OF COMICS, TIME AND SPACE ARE ONE AND THE SAME.



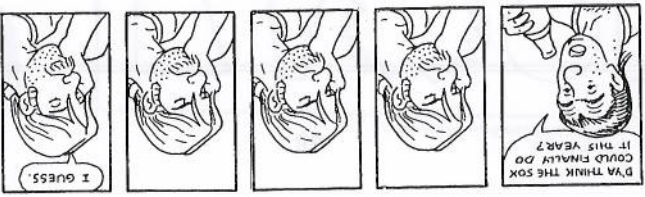
AS UNLIKELY AS IT SOUNDS, THE PANEL SHAPE CAN ACTUALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR PERCEPTION OF TIME, EVEN THOUGH THIS LONG PANEL HAS THE SAME BASIC "MEANING" AS ITS SHORTER VERSIONS, STILL IT HAS THE FEELING OF GREATER LENGTH!



IS THERE ANY WAY TO MAKE A SINGLE SILENT PANEL LIKE THIS ONE SEEM LONGER? HOW ABOUT WIDENING THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS? ANY DIFFERENCE?



WE'VE SEEN HOW TIME CAN BE CONTROLLED THROUGH THE CONTENT OF PANELS, THE NUMBER OF PANELS AND CLOSURE BETWEEN PANELS, BUT THERE'S STILL ONE MORE.



BUT IF THE CREATOR OF THIS SCENE WANTED TO LENGTHEN THAT PAUSE, HOW COULD HE OR SHE DO SO? ONE OBVIOUS SOLUTION WOULD BE TO ADD MORE PANELS, BUT IS THAT THE ONLY WAY?



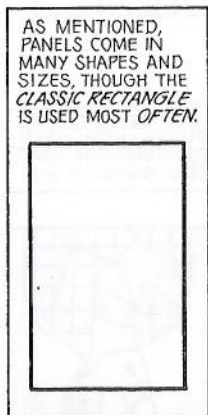


EVER NOTICED HOW THE WORDS "SHORT" OR "LONG" CAN REFER EITHER TO THE FIRST DIMENSION OR TO THE FOURTH?

IN A MEDIUM WHERE TIME AND SPACE MERGE SO COMPLETELY, THE DISTINCTION OFTEN VANISHES!



THE PANEL BORDER IS OUR GUIDE THROUGH TIME AND SPACE, BUT IT WILL ONLY GUIDE US SO FAR.



AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE CLASSIC RECTANGLE IS USED MOST OFTEN.



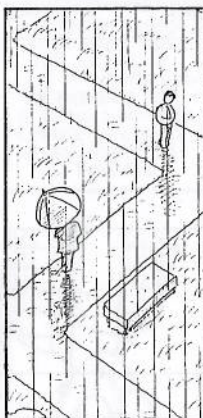
MOST OF US ARE SO USED TO THE STANDARD RECTANGULAR FORMAT THAT A "BORDERLESS" PANEL SUCH AS THIS CAN TAKE ON A TIMELESS QUALITY.

HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?!

I GUESS.



WHEN THE CONTENT OF A SILENT PANEL OFFERS NO CLUES AS TO ITS DURATION, IT CAN ALSO PRODUCE A SENSE OF TIMELESSNESS.



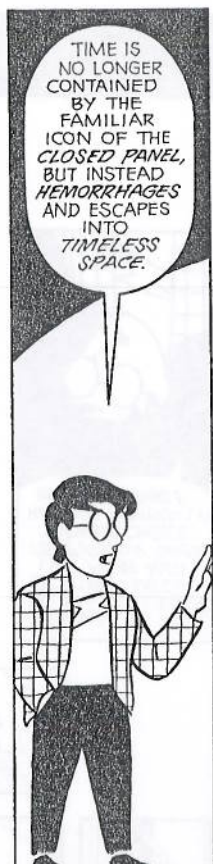
BECAUSE OF ITS UNRESOLVED NATURE, SUCH A PANEL MAY LINGER IN THE READER'S MIND.



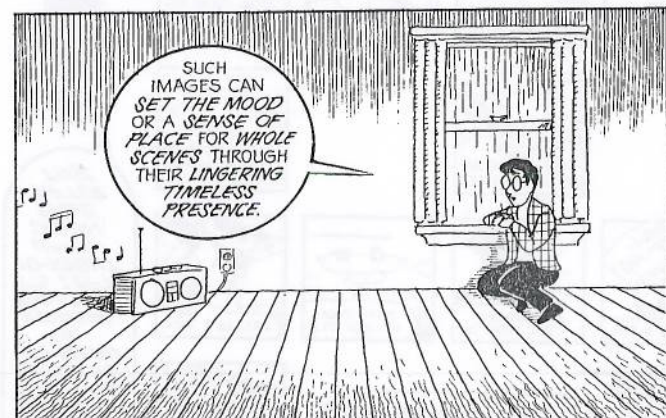
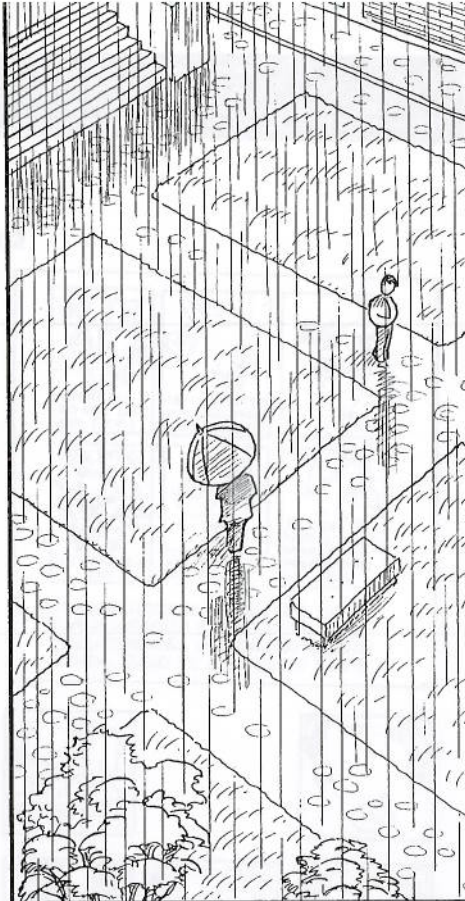
AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH FOLLOW IT.



WHEN "BLEEDS" ARE USED -- I.E., WHEN A PANEL RUNS OFF THE EDGE OF THE PAGE -- THIS EFFECT IS COMPOUNDED.



TIME IS NO LONGER CONTAINED BY THE FAMILIAR ICON OF THE CLOSED PANEL, BUT INSTEAD HEMORRHAGES AND ESCAPES INTO TIMELESS SPACE.



SUCH IMAGES CAN SET THE MOOD OR A SENSE OF PLACE FOR WHOLE SCENES THROUGH THEIR LINGERING TIMELESS PRESENCE.



ONCE AGAIN, THIS IS A TECHNIQUE USED MOST OFTEN IN JAPAN AND ONLY RECENTLY ADOPTED HERE IN THE WEST.

LIKE A **STORM FRONT**, THE EYE MOVES OVER THE COMIC PAGE, PUSHING THE WARM, HIGH-PRESSURE **FUTURE** AHEAD OF IT, LEAVING THE COOL, LOW-PRESSURE **PAST** IN ITS WAKE.

WHEREVER THE EYE HITS **LAND**, WE EXPECT IT TO BEGIN **MOVING FORWARD**.

BUT **EYES**, LIKE **STORMS**, CAN **CHANGE DIRECTION!**

LIKEWISE, ALL **PANELS STILL TO COME--THIS NEXT--FUTURE**.

BUT **UNLIKE OTHER MEDIA**, IN **COMICS**, THE **PAST IS MORE THAN JUST MEMORIES** FOR THE **AUDIENCE** AND THE **FUTURE IS MORE THAN JUST POSSIBILITIES!**

BOTH PAST AND FUTURE ARE REAL AND VISIBLE AND ALL AROUND US!

WHEREVER YOUR **EYES ARE FOCUSED, THAT'S NOW**, BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOUR EYES TAKE IN THE **SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE OF PAST AND FUTURE!**

IN **COMICS**, **AS IN FILM, TELEVISION AND 'REAL LIFE'**, IT IS ALWAYS **NOW**.

THIS PANEL AND ALONE REPRESENTS THE PRESENT.

ANY PANEL BEFORE THIS-- THAT LAST ONE, FOR INSTANCE-- REPRESENTS THE PAST.

SELDOM WE DO CHANGE DIRECTION, EXCEPT TO **RE-READ OR REVIEW** IT'S **LEFT-TO-RIGHT, UP-TO-DOWN, PAGE AFTER PAGE**.

THIS MAY, IN PART, BE THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER MEDIA LIKE **FILM** AND **TELEVISION** WHERE **VIEWER CHOICE HAS NOT GENERALLY BEEN FEASIBLE**.

THE **INCREDIBLE** THE **MONTH...** **BROKE AGAIN!** THE **END OF BORKOW SOME MONEY FROM HIS OWN FUTURE!** **MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE GUY ANDER!** **GO OUT TO DINNER!** **EAT!**

CONDITIONED AS WE ARE TO READ **LEFT-TO-RIGHT AND UP-TO-DOWN**, A MISCHIEVOUS CARTOONIST CAN PLAY ANY NUMBER OF **TRICKS** ON US.

THE **END OF BORKOW SOME MONEY FROM HIS OWN FUTURE!**

THE **INCREDIBLE** THE **MONTH...** **BROKE AGAIN!**

THE **END OF BORKOW SOME MONEY FROM HIS OWN FUTURE!**

THE **INCREDIBLE** THE **MONTH...** **BROKE AGAIN!**

OH MY GOD! I'M **IN THE WRONG IN THE HOUSE!**

WHAT ARE YOU **DOING HERE?**

GOSH, I JUST **WANTED TO RENT ANOTHER VIDEO.**

DO YOU HAVE **CARNIVAL OF SOULS?**

JUST KIDDING. **WHAT CAN I GET FOR YOU?**

OH, HI. **MR. GORDON! CARL?**

NO.

ONE BEER WON'T **HURT!**

GLUG!

CRASH!

RIP CARL. **END**

THE IDEA THAT THE **READER MIGHT CHOOSE A DIRECTION IS STILL CONSIDERED EXOTIC.**

HMM... I BETTER **NOT** **GO HOME NOW.**

HI, MOM. I'M **HOME!**

IT'S A **NOTE!**

BORNEO?! BORNEO!

I **SORRY**, ALL **WANT OUR VIDEOS TO RENT ARE IN A VIDEO BORNEO.**

HMM... I **JUST DRIVE AROUND A WHILE**

HMM... A **FORK TO THE RIGHT IS THE VIDEO STORE.**

NAH! I'LL **TALK TO YOU LATER.**

OH, HI. **MR. GORDON! CARL?**

NO.

GLUG!

CRASH!

RIP CARL. **END**

COMICS READER'S GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF COMICS

COMICS READERS ARE ALSO CONDITIONED BY OTHER MEDIA AND THE "REAL TIME" OF EVERYDAY LIFE TO EXPECT A VERY LINEAR PROGRESSION. JUST A STRAIGHT LINE FROM POINT A TO POINT B. BUT IS THAT NECESSARY?

FOR NOW, THESE QUESTIONS ARE THE TERRITORY OF GAMES AND STRANGE LITTLE EXPERIMENTS.

BUT VIEWER PARTICIPATION IS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AN ENORMOUS ISSUE IN OTHER MEDIA.

HOW COMICS ADDRESSES THIS ISSUE--OR FAILS TO--COULD PLAY A CRUCIAL PART IN DEFINING THE ROLE OF COMICS IN THE NEW CENTURY.

TIME WILL TELL.

AS MENTIONED EARLIER, TIME AND SPACE IN THE WORLD OF COMICS ARE CLOSELY LINKED.

AS A RESULT, SO TOO ARE THE ISSUES OF TIME AND MOTION.

AS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER THREE, MOTION IN COMICS IS PRODUCED BETWEEN PANELS BY THE MENTAL PROCESS CALLED CLOSURE--

--USUALLY BY TRANSITION TYPES ONE TWO...BUT LET'S NOT GET INTO THAT AGAIN!

DESPITE COMICS' THREE THOUSAND YEAR HISTORY, IT WASN'T UNTIL TOPFFER'S MID-1800'S DOODLINGS THAT SPECIFIC MOTIONS WERE PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-FAMILIAR PANEL-TO-PANEL FORM.

HOW, IN BRIGHT AND WITTY SOCIETY, ONE SHOULD BE SEATED IN ORDER TO TALK THEATRICALLY, CARICATURED, AND THE LATEST NOU-SENSE IN GENERAL.

HOW, IF A SUPERIOR MAKES A TREE, ONE JUMPS UP WITH A ROAR OF LAUGHTER.

WITHIN A FEW YEARS, HOWEVER, MOTION WAS A HOT TOPIC INDEED!

THE FUTURISTS IN ITALY AND MARCEL DUCHAMP IN FRANCE BEGAN THE SYSTEMATIC DECOMPOSITION OF MOVING IMAGES IN A STATIC MEDIUM.

AS THE MOVING PICTURE BEGAN ITS SPECTACULAR RISE, A FEW OF THE MORE RADICAL PAINTERS OF THE DAY EXPLORED THE IDEA THAT MOTION COULD BE DEPICTED BY A SINGLE IMAGE ON CANVAS.

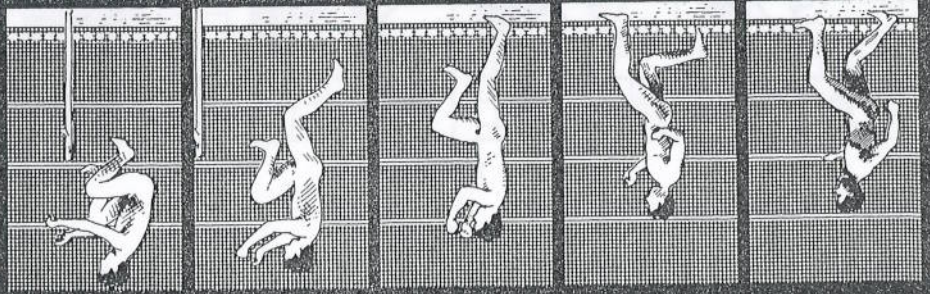
IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!

EVENTUALLY THOMAS EDISON FILED THE FIRST PATENT ON A PROCESS USING STRIPS OF CLEAR PLASTIC PHOTOS AND FILM WAS OFF AND RUNNING!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE THEY ARE BUT MAKE TOYS NEXT WILL SHOW YOU! HA! CHILD'S PLAY! BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER! MY STROBOSCOPE IS SUPERIOR IN EVERY WAY TO THE OBSOLETE ZOETROPE!

FRAUDS ALL! MY ZOOPRAXINOSCOPE WILL--!

IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO CAPTURE MOTION THROUGH SCIENCE!



DUCHAMP SOON MOVED ON, THE FUTURISTS DISBANDED AND FINE ARTISTS GENERALLY LOST INTEREST IN THIS OTHER TYPE OF "MOVING PICTURE."

BUT THROUGHOUT THIS SAME PERIOD ANOTHER MEDIUM, LESS CONSPICUOUSLY HAD BEEN INVESTIGATING THIS SAME AREA.

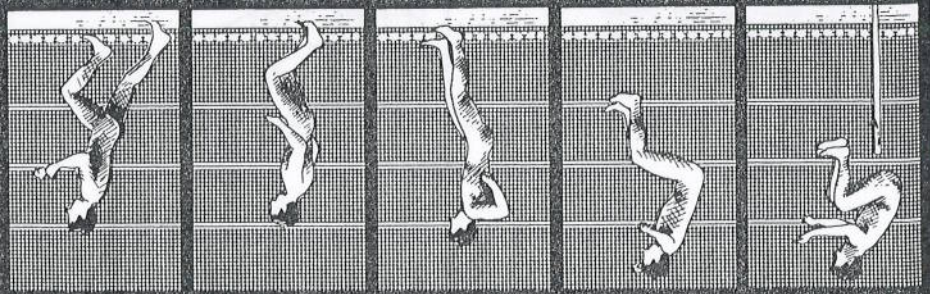
I'M SURE YOU CAN ALL GUESS WHICH MEDIUM I MEAN!

IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A WORLD--

--FILLED WITH MOTION--

--THEN BE PREPARED TO PAINT MOTION!

DUCHAMP, MORE CONCERNED WITH THE IDEA OF MOTION THAN THE SENSATION WOULD EVENTUALLY REDUCE SUCH CONCEPTS AS MOTION TO A SINGLE LINE.



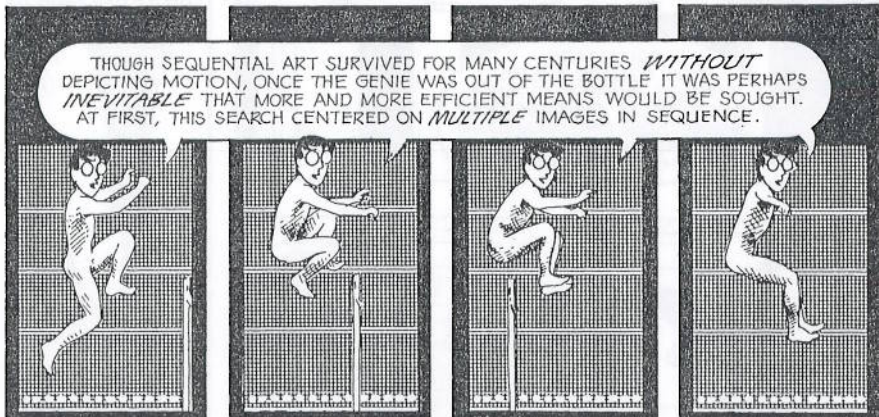
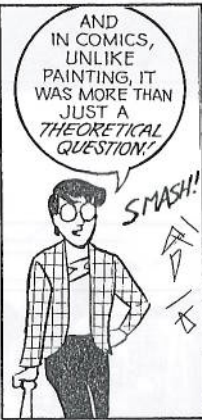
COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EDWARD MUYBRIDGE



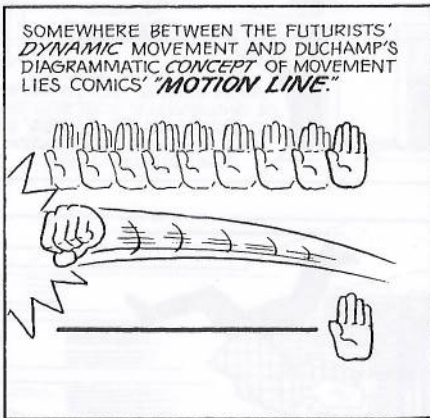
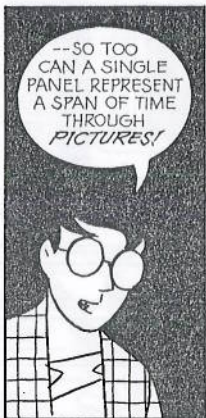
FROM ITS *EARLIEST DAYS*, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A *STATIC MEDIUM*.



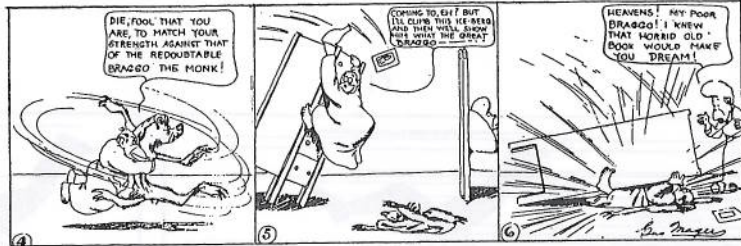
HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?



THOUGH SEQUENTIAL ART SURVIVED FOR MANY CENTURIES *WITHOUT* DEPICTING MOTION, ONCE THE GENIE WAS OUT OF THE BOTTLE IT WAS PERHAPS *INEVITABLE* THAT MORE AND MORE EFFICIENT MEANS WOULD BE SOUGHT. AT FIRST, THIS SEARCH CENTERED ON *MULTIPLE* IMAGES IN SEQUENCE.



IN THE BEGINNING, MOTION LINES--OR "*ZIP-RIBBONS*" AS SOME CALL THEM--WERE *WILD, MESSY*, ALMOST *DESPERATE* ATTEMPTS TO REPRESENT THE PATHS OF *MOVING OBJECTS* THROUGH *SPACE*.



"POPEYE" AND "BRAGGO THE MONK" © KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.

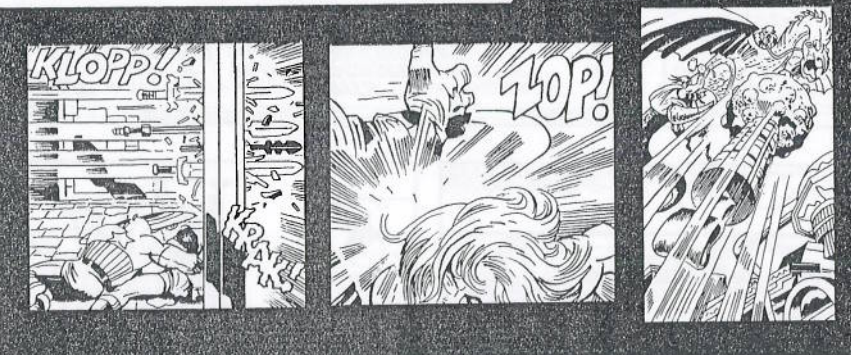
OVER THE YEARS, THESE LINES BECAME MORE *REFINED* AND *STYLIZED*, EVEN *DIAGRAMMATIC*.



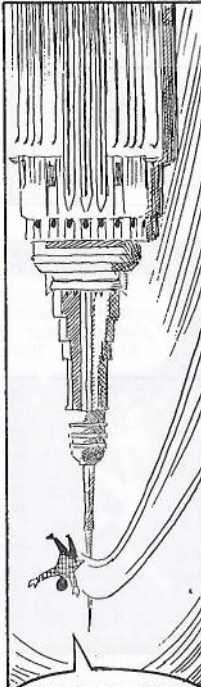
EVENTUALLY, IN THE HANDS OF *HEROIC FANTASY* ARTISTS LIKE *BILL EVERETT* AND *JACK KIRBY*--



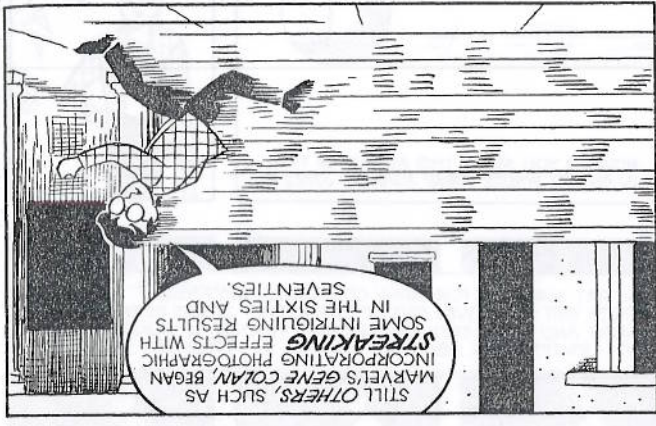
--THOSE SAME LINES BECAME *SO* *STYLIZED* AS TO ALMOST HAVE A *LIFE* AND *PHYSICAL PRESENCE* *ALL THEIR OWN!*



ART (CENTER AND ABOVE RIGHT) © D.C. COMICS. (LEFT AND RIGHT) © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP INC.



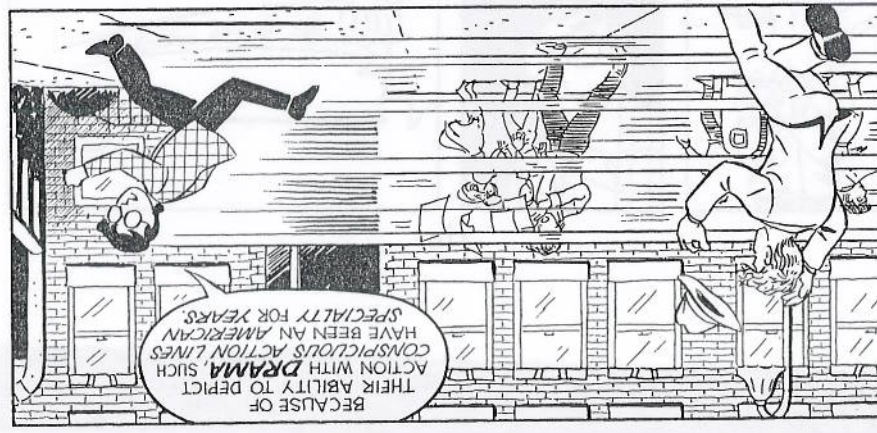
IN THIS APPROACH, BOTH THE MOVING OBJECT AND THE BACKGROUNDS ARE DRAWN IN A CLEAR, ARTICULATED STYLE, AND THE PATH OF MOTION IS IMPOSED OVER THE SCENE.



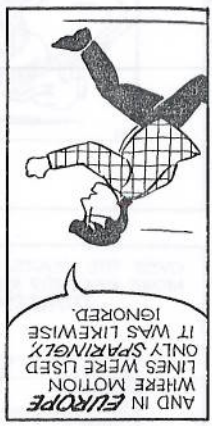
STILL OTHERS, SUCH AS MARVEL'S GENE COLAN, BEGAN INCORPORATING PHOTOGRAPHIC STREAKING EFFECTS WITH SOME INTERESTING RESULTS IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES.



OTHER ARTISTS TRIED ADDITIONAL EFFECTS SUCH AS MULTIPLE IMAGES OF THE SUBJECT, ATTEMPTING TO INVOLVE THE READER MORE DEEPLY IN THE ACTION.



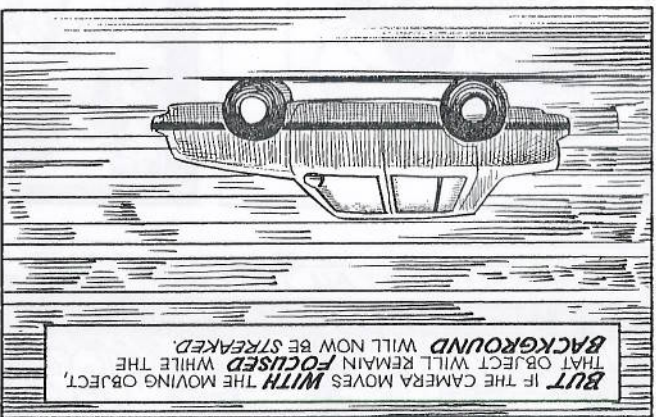
BECAUSE OF THEIR ABILITY TO DEPICT ACTION WITH DRAMA, SUCH SPECIALTY FOR YEARS HAVE BEEN AN AMERICAN



AND IN EUROPE IT WAS LIKEWISE IGNORED.



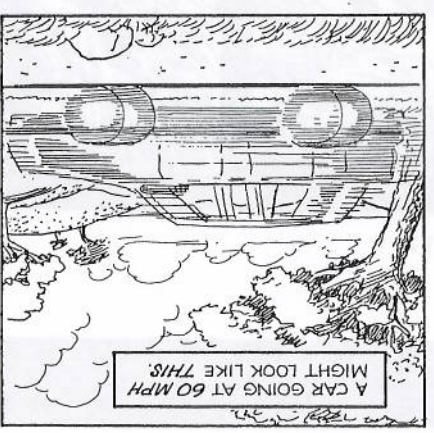
BUT IN JAPAN, ONCE AGAIN, A VERY DIFFERENT COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED THIS VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF MOTION AS THEIR OWN!



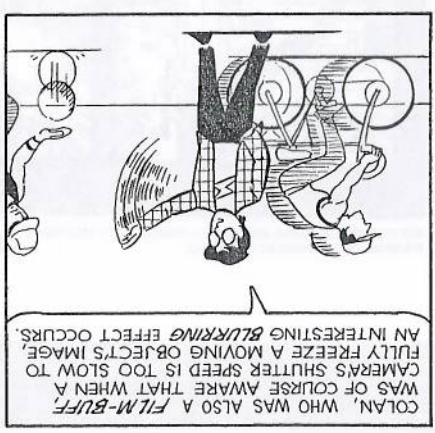
BUT IF THE CAMERA MOVES WITH THE MOVING OBJECT, THAT OBJECT WILL REMAIN FOCUSED WHILE THE BACKGROUND WILL NOW BE STREAKED.



AMERICAN COMICS ARTISTS TOOK LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THIS KIND OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TRICKERY.



A CAR GOING AT 60 MPH MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS.

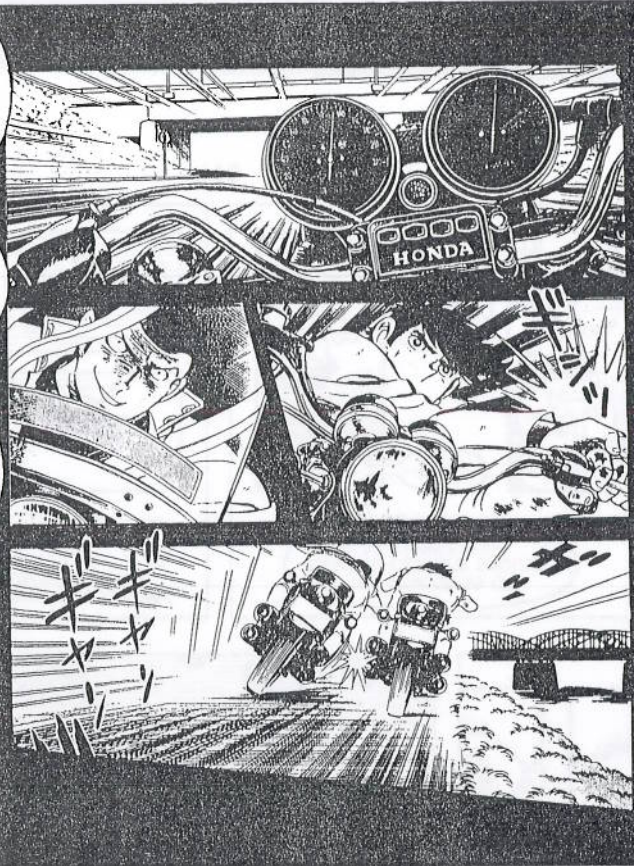


COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A FILM-BUFF, WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE, AN INTERESTING BLURRING EFFECT OCCURS.

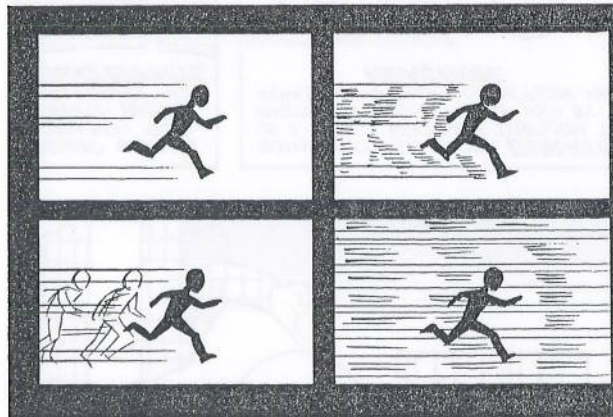
"SUBJECTIVE MOTION," AS I CALL IT, OPERATES ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IF OBSERVING A MOVING OBJECT CAN BE INVOLVING, BEING THAT OBJECT SHOULD BE MORE SO.

JAPANESE ARTISTS, STARTING IN THE LATE 60'S, BEGAN PUTTING THEIR READERS "IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT" WITH PANELS LIKE THESE.

AND STARTING IN THE MID-EIGHTIES, A FEW AMERICAN ARTISTS BEGAN TO ADOPT THE EFFECT IN THEIR OWN WORK, UNTIL BY THE EARLY NINETIES IT HAS BECOME FAIRLY COMMON.



©石井いさみ?



ARE THESE THE ONLY WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A SINGLE PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.

IN A MEDIUM WHERE TIME AND SPACE MERGE--

--THE STORYTELLER HAS SOME UNUSUAL TOOLS AT HIS/HER DISPOSAL--

--SUCH AS THE POLYPTYCH, WHERE A MOVING FIGURE OR FIGURES--

--IS IMPOSED OVER A CONTINUOUS BACKGROUND.

IN COMICS, COMPOSITION FOLLOWS A VERY DIFFERENT SET OF RULES THAN IN MOST GRAPHIC ARTS.

BY INTRODUCING TIME INTO THE EQUATION, COMICS ARTISTS ARE ARRANGING THE PAGE IN WAYS NOT ALWAYS CONDUCTIVE TO TRADITIONAL PICTURE-MAKING.

HERE, THE COMPOSITION OF THE PICTURE IS JOINED BY THE COMPOSITION OF CHANGE, THE COMPOSITION OF DRAMA--

--AND THE COMPOSITION OF MEMORY.

IF THE COMPOSITION OF A SINGLE PANEL IS TRULY "PERFECT," DOESN'T THAT IMPLY THAT IT CAN--OR EVEN SHOULD--STAND ALONE?

THE NATURAL WORLD CREATES GREAT BEAUTY EVERY DAY, YET THE ONLY RULES OF COMPOSITION IT FOLLOWS ARE THOSE OF FUNCTION AND CHANCE.

COMICS, AT ITS BEST, SHOULD DO NO LESS.

