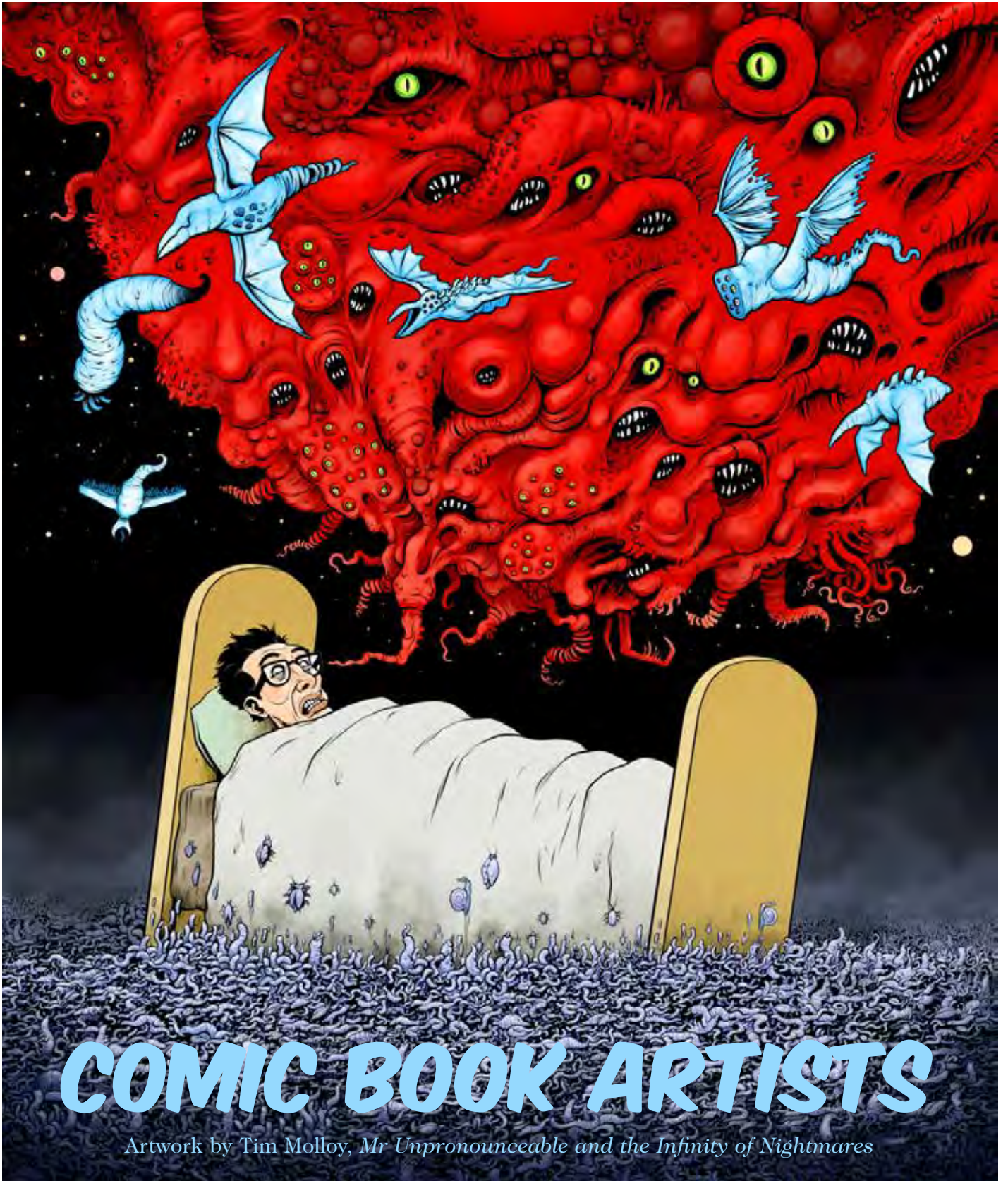


# OUTLINE

THE OFFICIAL ILLUSTRATORS AUSTRALIA NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2, 2015



ILLUSTRATORS AUSTRALIA: ABBOTSFORD CONVENT CONVENT BUILDING, C1.22 1 HELIERS ST, ABBOTSFORD VIC 3067 T 1300 720 181



## COMIC BOOK ARTISTS

Artwork by Tim Molloy, *Mr Unpronounceable* and *the Infinity of Nightmares*

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY TIM MOLLOY  
FEATURE COVER BY DEAN RANKINE  
(PAGE 7)

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## From the editor

Edition two this year is a big one... jam-packed with the amazing work of talented comic book artists.

I admit, comic books were an area of illustration I knew nothing about. I tentatively began researching, and soon found the artists and publishers I spoke to working in this area were welcoming, enthusiastic and rather clever. In my early emails with Bruce Mutard as I tried to define what makes a comic book artist (apart from just the ability to draw work in panels!) vs a regular illustrator I loved his explanation... *"The difference is that a comics illustrator has to tell a story over many juxtaposed panels, whereas an illustrator has to capture his brief in one image, or perhaps a few accompanying an article or in a book. The point is that it illustrates the text, whereas in comics, a lot of storytelling should be left to the image, or as the rule goes: 'show don't tell' (a rule used in cinema). It's not often adhered to. Most of the people... are also known to do illustration and design work, so you'll discover a lot of cross-fertilisation between what illustrators do and comics artists."*



All the profiled artists in this edition clearly know how to embrace that rule. The incredible work and publishing prowess from our contributors - The Sticky Institute, Ben Hutchings/Squishface Studios, Bruce Mutard, Comics with Friends and Strangers, Nicki Greenberg, Alisha Jade, Matt Emery/Pikitia Press, Miranda Burton, James Andre/Milk Shadow Books, Tim Molloy, Dean Rankine and Twelve Panels Press will leave you inspired, perhaps to try a new form of illustration you might not have considered before. So, go forth IA community, and enjoy this edition - hopefully you'll end up knowing a lot more about an area of the industry that you may have been as clueless about as me, but are inspired to research further just like I am.

On a personal front, we are not far off our second baby and will be battering down the hatches for a few months. I will be back later in the year with another jam-packed edition - please feel free to send any articles, areas of interest, or queries to me via the email below. It will be a welcome distraction from nappies and sleepless nights I am sure!

Jess Racklyeft, Editor, Outline magazine

## Welcome to all our new members!

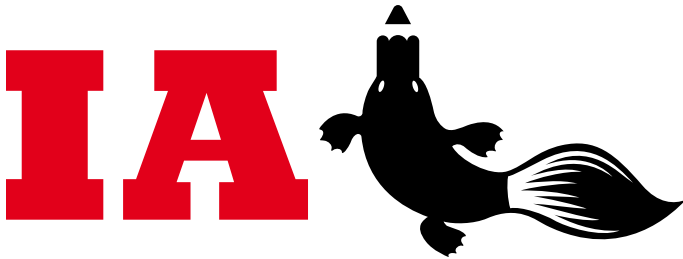
**March:** Cecilia Timm, Lynn Stanton, Sharon O'Connor

**April:** Zanin Lawrence-Politis, Jane Stadermann, Brooke Bobridge, Jim Henry, Marta Tesoro, Bruce Mutard, Sarah Gleeson

**May:** Mike Angliss

**Welcome back:** Ali J

## Prez sez



Firstly a HUGE thanks to our Editor Jessica Racklyeft who does an amazing job of interviewing and putting our *Outline Magazine* together every quarter. Jessica will be taking time off to have her 2nd baby and we wish her all the best over the coming months. We will be seeing Jessica again later in the year for the next edition of *Outline* in 2015.

Big thanks to Vincenzo Pignatelli for speaking at our 'Business of Illustration' talk in May and Billy Blue College of Design for the use of their venue.

It was a full house, a mixture of IA members, non members and students. It was a fantastic insight into honing skills, managing time, self promoting and negotiation. Plans are currently underway to have Vincenzo talk in Brisbane sometime soon.

As you know plans are also underway for our IA book to come out early 2016, this will include the fabulous IA Awards (website currently under construction) and it will of course include our members advertisements, we are updating our mailing list as we speak.

If we could ask all members, if you know of any art directors, agencies, studios, publishers that you think should be receiving our book please let us know (their info is never given to any third parties). We also email them first to ask if they would like to be on our mailing list.

We also ask all members to keep promoting IA where ever possible, this gives us optimum coverage in turn helping all of you. If you have any 'testimonials' you would like to share for our website, please email us.

All 9X5 wood will be mailed in the next few weeks (includes all details/call for entry).

We hope you enjoy our special Comics edition of *Outline* and we'll see you all again later in 2015.

Jody Pratt (President)

{▶▶CLICK!}

**Illustrators Australia**

**IA Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/IAaustralia>

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imagescience.com.au

IA members get 10% off  
printing and scanning from  
our friends at Image Science

When ordering online, just put in the IA discount code.  
Available from the Member-only Resources  
section of the IA website (just log in!)



# Review: Owing It

Last year *Outline* was honoured to have Sharon Givoni contribute articles to several editions - as an intellectual property lawyer, she shared with us a deeper look into issues applicable to illustrators such as copyright. Sharon has now released a (very large!) book called *Owning It: A Creative's Guide to Copyright, Contracts and the Law*.

I was very excited to read this book as the first of its kind for our industry, refining what can be an endless and confusing array of laws and assumptions into a very readable and applicable book for our work.

The book covers such topics for creatives as “the protection of their designs, trade marks, copyright, reputation, confidential information and other intellectual property (IP); how to reduce the risk of inadvertently infringing someone else’s rights; contract basics; licensing; how the law applies online and to certain aspects of social media; how to better achieve positive legal outcomes and much more.”

Illustrators may be particularly interested in the chapter dedicated to illustrators and letterers, which covers relevant information such as trademarking your business name or own name, your moral rights, using cultural icons in your work, resale royalty rights and much more. There is also an overview of contracts and the relationship with an illustration agent.

560 pages of legal issue insight may sound a rather overwhelming read, but I found *Owning It* completely engaging with user-friendly flowcharts and tables, example images and stories, and real-life examples. By communicating what could potentially be a dry topic with colour and stories, the book brings to life the relevancy these sort of issues have for all of our work. After reading the book I feel better equipped to deal with contracts and copyright issues, something that I’ve pushed to the side for far too long!



**{CLICK!}**  
**Owning It**

Published by: <http://www.creativemindshq.com>  
 or available at many local independent bookstore

# The Gallery Perspective

Last edition we focused on fine art, and interviewed several IA members on their experience putting together an exhibition. We are very grateful to Chronicle Books and Lisa Congdon for their generous approval for us to share an interview from the gallery owner's perspective. Below you'll find Lisa's interview with Jessica Silverman, gallery owner of Jessica Silverman Gallery based in San Francisco, California. If you'd like to learn more make sure you read the full book *Art Inc* - it is a very comprehensive read on the practical business side of business, art and illustration.

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*Jessica Silverman began her career by studying studio art as an undergraduate at Otis College of Art and Design, but quickly realized that her interests lay more in organizing and connecting the work of other artists than in making her own work. After college, she enrolled in the curatorial practice program at California College of the Arts (CCA) and converted her studio into an exhibition space called Studio 228. In 2006, during her final year as a student in CCA, she opened the Jessica Silverman Gallery. In 2013, Jessica moved to a new, larger location in San Francisco. In her role as gallery owner, Jessica has become not only an art dealer, but also curator, writer, world traveler and "mom" to her roster of artists. Jessica seeks artists who have a strong combination of passion, talent, and drive. And her eye for emerging talent has been outstanding: works by gallery artists have been acquired by the Tate museums, Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Hammer Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the British Art Council.*

**Lisa:** What type of work do you show?

**Jessica:** We show a lot of abstraction and hyperrealism. I have a few artists who still do figuration and landscape. Increasingly, I'm interested in artists and their relationship with the overconsumption of images. Because of technology, access to imagery is changing the way artists make work. We show video, sculpture, photography, painting—all media.

**Lisa:** How do you go about finding new artists?

**Jessica:** We are a staff of three, and so there is a limit to the number of artists I can represent. We don't have a submission process at the moment because we don't have the capacity to store submission materials or review all of them. We participate in art fairs, and that is a great way to find new talent. I also go to art school open studios. Much of how I find artists is by word of mouth; people who I trust call me and say "You have to see this artist's work."

**Lisa:** What questions do you ask yourself when you are considering a new artist?

**Jessica:** I am looking for art that I think will sell to collectors. I am also looking for a practice. When I walk into an artist's studio, I ask myself: Do I see new materials? Do I see the artist pushing her practice and work in new and different directions? Are things moving? I look at work over a period of a year before I officially represent someone. I like to include the artist in a group show or two to see how it is to work with him first. Typically I only show full-time artists because it means they have a level of seriousness about their practice. And if they have a job, I prefer that their job is in teaching art or in the art world.

**Lisa:** What do you expect from artists once they join your roster?

**Jessica:** Showing in a gallery is serious business. To stay on the roster, my artists have to step up to the plate in a big way and show a commitment to growing their work. I need to be able to walk into their studios and see a full body of work and simply help edit it, as opposed to helping them develop it from scratch. We need to be able to have a conversation about their work that involves criticism and dialogue. I am looking for a confidence and conviction about their work.

**Lisa:** What do you take into consideration when pricing the work of your artists?

**Jessica:** I'm slow and deliberate. If artists have sold paintings out of their studio for \$2000, then we start with that price and go from there. Pricing is tough, even for more expensive work. For example, let's say there are twenty people bidding on a piece at an auction, but the last ten bids are only between two people and thousands of dollars separate those two people from the rest of the bidders. Does that mean the piece really has the higher value when only two people were ready to pay that much? These are things to watch out for. Keeping work at a reasonable price is important, because if you raise the

## {ARTICLE}

price too quickly, you run the risk of overpricing and not selling. Once you go up, you can't go down. There are markers for raising prices, like a big show at another gallery, a museum show, or acquisition by a museum would be a good time.

**Lisa:** How do you see your role with the artists you represent?

**Jessica:** We make sure our artists are feeling good and taking care of themselves because if they are not, they will not have a thriving studio practice. I feel like their promoter.

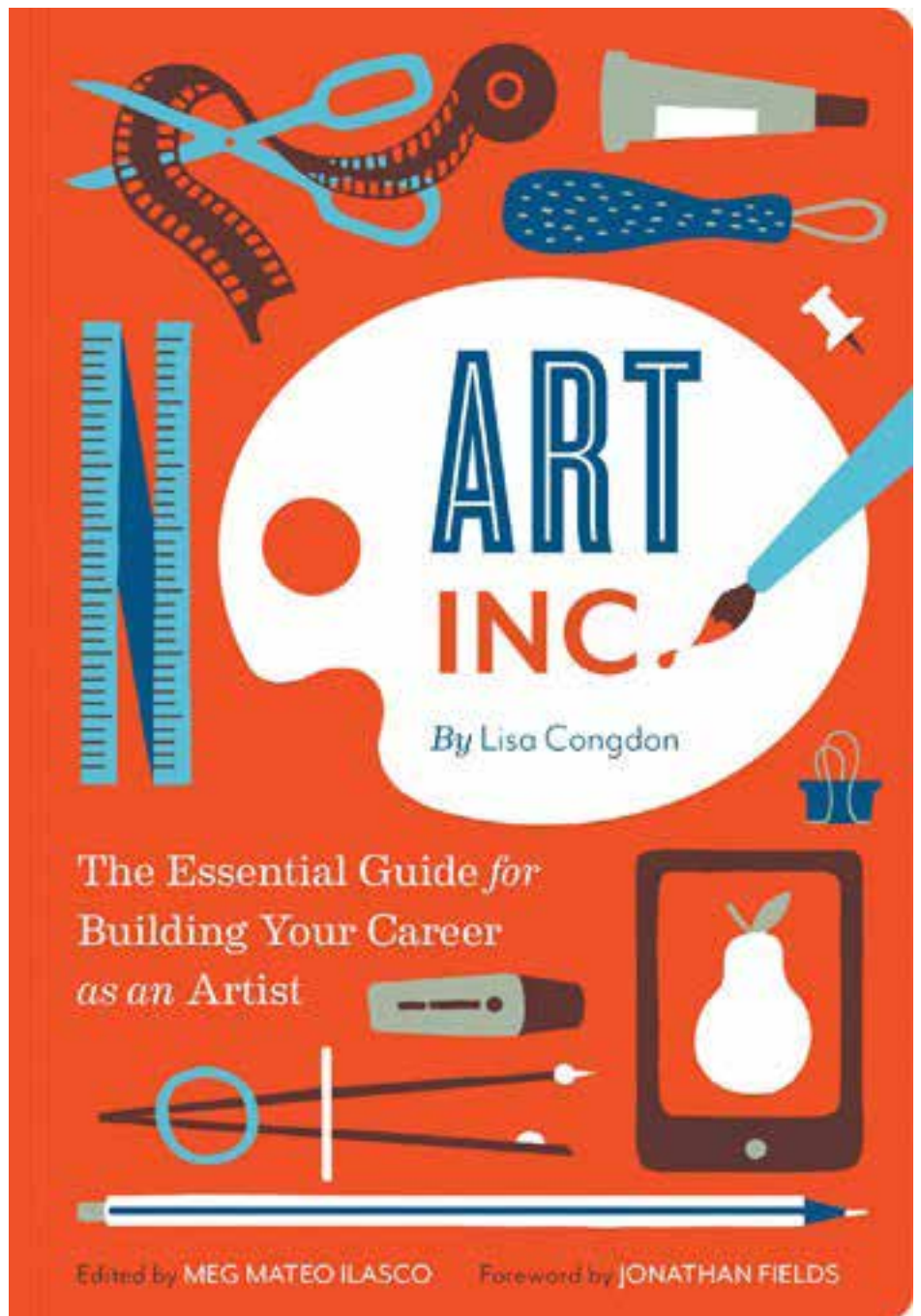
I do their public relations. I write their press releases. I speak on their behalf. I try to communicate about their work the same way they would and that requires that I get to know them, their motivations, their inspirations, and materials as well as they do. Gallery owners are maternal figures, colleagues, friends, and therapists. We are also the bank!

**Lisa:** What advice do you offer to artists who want to break into galleries?

**Jessica:** Use your relationships. If you are in school, one teacher can make one phone call and that can make all the difference. There is a generosity among the right people in the art world. And that's really helpful because the art world can feel very insular.

It's also a good idea to have a strong web presence and to really edit your work to its very best. If you can't edit your work, you aren't ready for a gallery. Keep your artist statement brief and to the point.

Go to gallery shows. When you are there, introduce yourself to the gallery owner and let them know that you like what they do. Ask the gallery owner for a studio visit. Come to an opening. Be part of the community. Go to lectures and talks. Curate your own shows. Find the space or an artist-run gallery and organize a show. Invite people to come; invite gallery owners to come. ●



{▶▶CLICK!} **Art Inc**

**Lisa Congdon** <http://lisacongdon.com>

**Art Inc** Available at all good bookshops in Australia

**Chronicle Books** <http://www.chroniclebooks.com>

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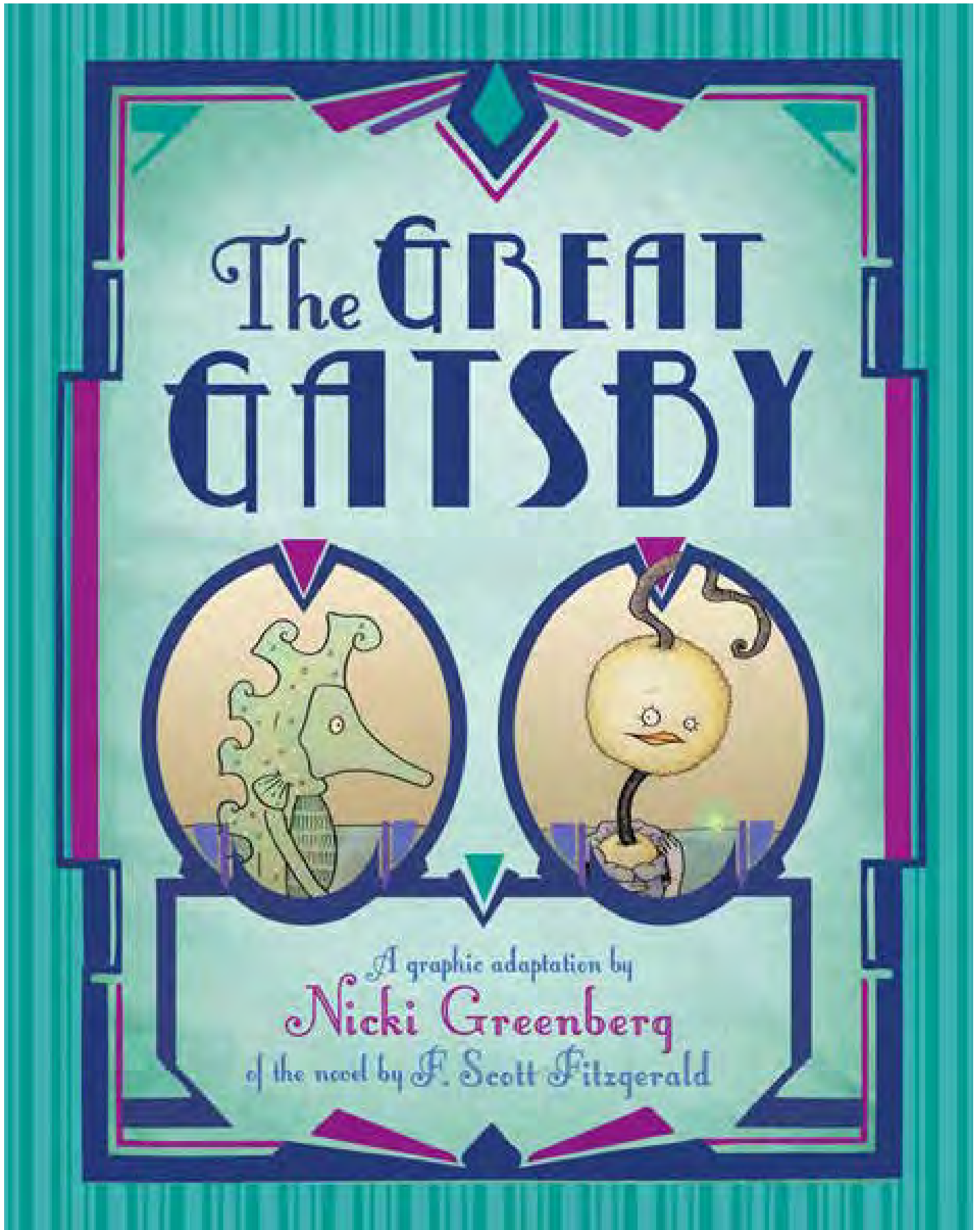
# COMIC BOOKS

Below artwork by Dean Rankine, *Itty Bitty Bunnies in Rainbow  
Pixie Candy Land, Tales from the Crib.*

**PROFILES: NICKI GREENBERG, THE  
STICKY INSTITUTE, BRUCE MUTARD,  
COMICS WITH FRIENDS AND  
STRANGERS, MIRRANDA BURTON,  
JAMES ANDRE/MILK SHADOW  
BOOKS, TIM MOLLOY, DEAN RANKINE,  
TWELVE PANELS PRESS, ALISHA  
JADE, BEN HUTCHINGS/SQUISHFACE,  
MATT EMERY/PIKITIA PRESS.**



# Nicki Greenberg



# Nicki Greenberg

This talented creator began her illustrating career at 14, and has since published a range of work from graphic novels, comics, and currently picture books. We delve into her work and history, along with images from her stunning books.

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**Outline:** Not many people can say they were published at 15, or that they had sold over 380 000 copies of a book they created at that age! Could you tell us about this impressive start to your career?

**Nicki:** When I was 14 I wanted to design greeting cards. I had put together a very sweet (and pretty daggy!) little folio, and my Mum called the greeting card company, Valentine Sands, to ask if they'd have a look. They indulged us and let us come in for an interview. At the very back of the folio were a few cards with characters based on my fingerprint, and to my amazement and delight, Valentine Sands said they'd like to do a range of fingerprint people cards. We called them *The Digits*. Valentine Sands had connections with a publisher, Budget Books, and they liked the characters too, so they asked me if I'd be interested in writing and illustrating a series of Digits children's books. I leaped into the job - it was really a fantastic experience.

**Outline:** You went on to study law - which I can imagine was a difficult choice after having so much success so young with your art. Did you find it difficult to make this choice - and do you still work as a lawyer, alongside your illustration work? What appeals to you about both industries?

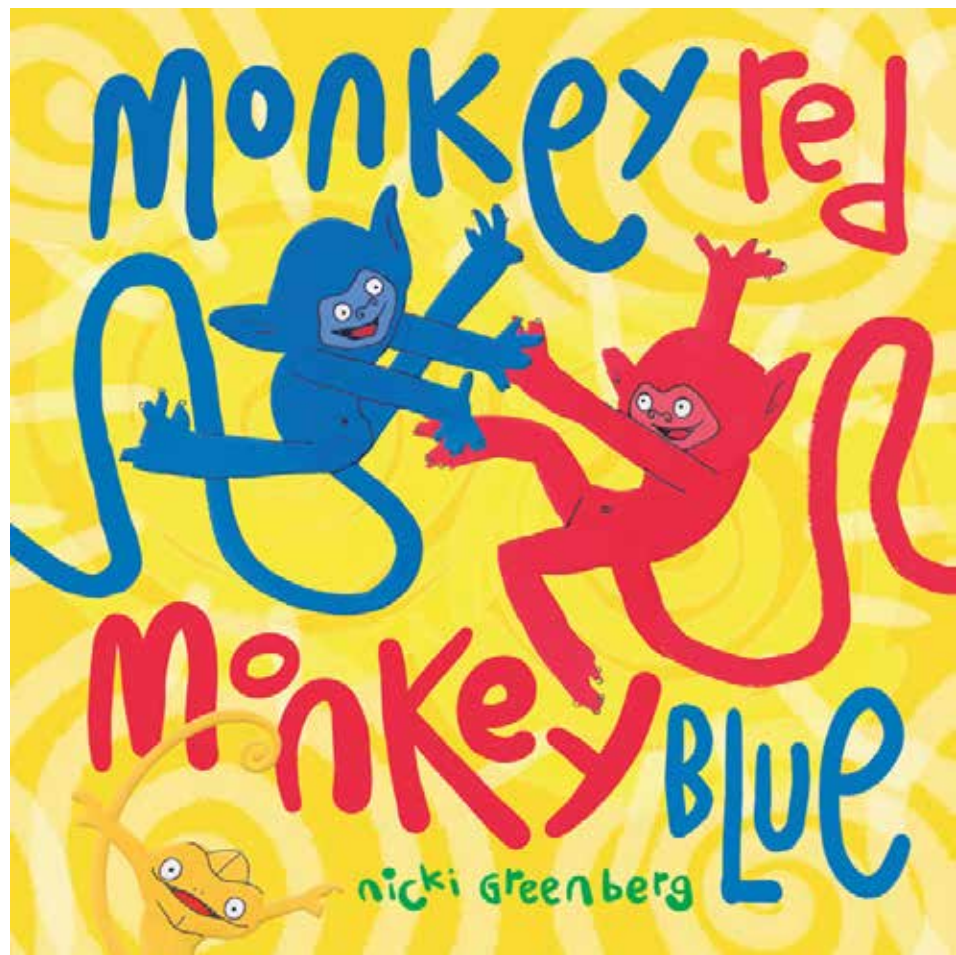
**Nicki:** Studying law was something I chose because it interested me, and because I thought it would be a good career. I didn't expect to make a living as a writer and illustrator, but saw it as a personal passion which I wanted to be at liberty to pursue as I liked rather than being dependent on it to earn a living. As it turned out, I enjoyed a good balance between working as a lawyer and working on my books. Both *Gatsby* and *Hamlet* were huge projects that took many years, and in the case of *Gatsby*, I had no idea whether a publisher would ever take in on. It would certainly not have been possible to support myself while doing these books unless I also had a steady job. I worked in law for ten years - five years full time, and five years increasingly part-time, so that I could spend more time on my books. Since my kids were born I've divided my time between parenting and writing and illustrating picture books. I now see it as a career as well as a passion.

**Outline:** *The Great Gatsby* struck a chord with you, also at a young age. Can you tell us about your fascination for this great book, and the influences it has had on your illustration career?

**Nicki:** I first read *The Great Gatsby* for my Year 12 Literature class, and fell in love with it. I've since read it many times, and find something new to wonder at in every reading. I also see the story, and the characters, a little differently each time - the book resonates in a different way at different stages of a person's life, I think. It is an enigmatic beast, and very difficult to pin down, which is part of what makes it such an enduringly fascinating book.

**Outline:** It would be great to have an overview of your illustration work in general and your current projects/plans.

**Nicki:** For the past five years I have worked almost entirely on writing and illustrating picture books for younger children. I love the picture book form - the constraint of 32 pages is actually a great spur to inventiveness and creativity. I've been developing a range of styles and learning a lot! There are two more picture books



{PROFILE}

# Comic Fatigue

BY NICK GREENBERG



DOCTOR, I THINK I MAY HAVE A CASE OF...



YESS... YOU DO LOOK VERY PALE...

PLEASE - LIE DOWN HERE AND OPEN YOUR WALLET.



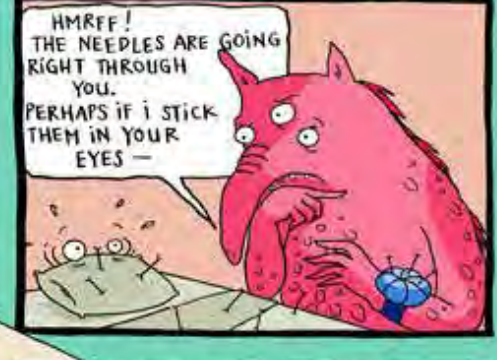
IT STARTED AFTER I FINISHED HAMLET: 427 PAGES OF OBSSIVE ILLUSTRATION JAMMED INTO THREE YEARS.

I GUESS IT'S REASONABLE TO TAKE A LITTLE BREAK AFTER ALL THAT -



BUT IT'S BEEN ALMOST TWO YEARS NOW -

OH, WHAT A ROGUE AND PEASANT SLAVE AM I...



HMREF! THE NEEDLES ARE GOING RIGHT THROUGH YOU. PERHAPS IF I STICK THEM IN YOUR EYES -



THE IDEAS ARE THERE - DON'T GET ME WRONG. IT'S THE EXECUTION.

EVEN THINKING ABOUT PANEL LAYOUTS, COMPOSITION... IT JUST MAKES ME FADE.



THIS IS AN OBVIOUS CASE OF INK ALLERGY. NOW, YOU NEED TO TAKE THESE HOMEOPATHIC TONICS.

WE DILUTE THE INK TO MAKE IT STRONGER. GO FIGURE.



AND YOU MUST ABSOLUTELY CUT OUT ALL DAIRY, SUGAR, WHEAT, MEAT, TOMATOES, MUSHROOMS, EGGS, SEAFOOD, FISH WITH CLOVEN HOOVES, RED FRUITS, EGGPLANT, ALCOHOL, CAFFEINE, STARCH, ARTIFICIAL COLOURS, PRESERVATIVES, GRAPES, BANANAS, SPICY FOODS, COCONUT, YEAST, GLUTEN, HONEY, FRIED FOODS, PEANUTS, CINNAMON, MARGARINE, PESTICIDES OF ANY KIND, GARLIC, TROPICAL FRUIT, SWEET POTATOS, ORANGES, HOT DRINKS, SINGER, THE GAA, 107, LUDWIG 014, WYFANGLON, LUMBER, AFRICA, HOT, 48300.

... AND A SIDE ORDER OF QUINTESSENCE OF DUST, THANKS.



IT WASN'T LIKE THIS AFTER GATSBY. WHEN I FINISHED THAT ONE, I WAS ALL CHARGED UP TO TACKLE SOMETHING EVEN BIGGER.

BUT THAT WAS BEFORE POPPY WAS BORN. I GUESS THIS MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH HOW A BABY TAKES OVER YOUR LIFE, YOUR TIME AND YOUR HEART -



BABY SCHMAYBE! THIS IS CLEARLY ALL ABOUT YOUR FATHER. IT'S HAMLET, FOR FREUD'S SAKE!



NOW, CLOSE YOUR EYES AND IMAGINE YOU ARE IN A NEW YORKER CARTOON...



I DON'T KNOW... THE THOUGHT OF PUTTING IN ALL THE TIME, THE LABORIOUS DETAIL... IT SORT OF REPELS ME -



GLIBBETY GARGLE ARGLY HURGH...

- WHICH IS CRAZY, SINCE I USED TO JUST REVEL IN THAT STUFF. I MEAN, I COULD DRAW FOR TWELVE HOURS STRAIGHT -



MMM-HMMM... I FEEL THAT YOUR AURA NEEDS EXTENSIVE RECALIBRATION...



SPLODGE!

GAH! NOT THE OLD CLASSIC!

SIGH... I GUESS THERE IS NO CURE.

OH!

Andrei 2015

coming out this year and three next year.

**Outline:** What appeals to you about the comic book format?

**Nicki:** Since I was about 17, comics felt like a natural storytelling medium for me. I loved writing prose, but the graphic narrative form has such great possibilities for comic timing, pacing of storytelling, the subtleties of expression and atmosphere. There is also something very personal and immediate about the form - the quirks of your hand and body are translated onto the page. There is a great deal of subtle expression that comes through in the way the lines are laid down. A grounding in comics has been very helpful for working in picture books, especially for things like pacing, transitions and expression.

**Outline:** Can you provide any advice to illustrators looking to develop their work in this format?

**Nicki:** As with any form - read a lot, practise a lot. Also, play to your own strengths in the kind of work you like to do. A graphic novel is usually a massive labour of love, so if

you are going to sustain years of work on one, it should be a project that you feel both passionate about and able to follow through.

**Outline:** Last year we profiled Allen and Unwin publisher Erica Wagner who has provided strong support for the graphic novel format. Is this a rarity for publishing houses and their customers, or do you think graphic novels are becoming more accepted by book audiences (adults and children)?

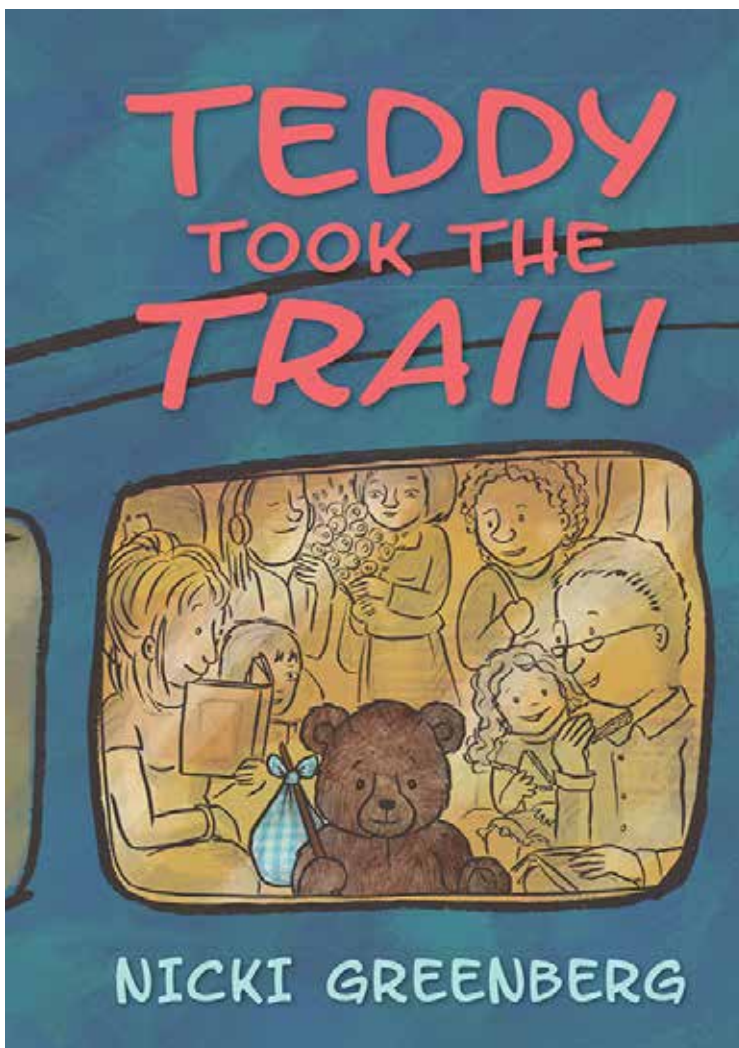
**Nicki:** Erica's bold and innovative and passionate work in this area is so amazing, and has opened lots of eyes to the graphic narrative form. Allen & Unwin have recently done a couple of beautiful comics for younger readers: Trace Balla's *Rivertime* and Gregory Mackay's *Anders and the Comet*. I think this is very exciting, because both books are sophisticated, beautifully written, thoughtful and moving, and they really respect the intelligence of their audiences. They are also satisfying reads for adults, which I think is a hallmark of great kids' literature. Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* seemed to really kick off literary graphic novels for kids in Australia (although of course this was not only for kids!), and I think these new books continue the blossoming of home grown literary comics for young readers.

**Outline:** As an experienced speaker at many festivals, it would be great if you could provide any advice to illustrators looking to do the same.

**Nicki:** I think that being genuinely enthusiastic and excited about your subject matter is important. Also, as with any public speaking, consider your audience and think about what would interest them. It's great to be able to show plenty of Powerpoint slides of your artwork, including preparatory drawings or sketch-book work as well as finished pictures. The back-story of the book's development is usually very interesting.

**Outline:** We'd love to know more about your inspirations and favourite comic/graphic novel artists.

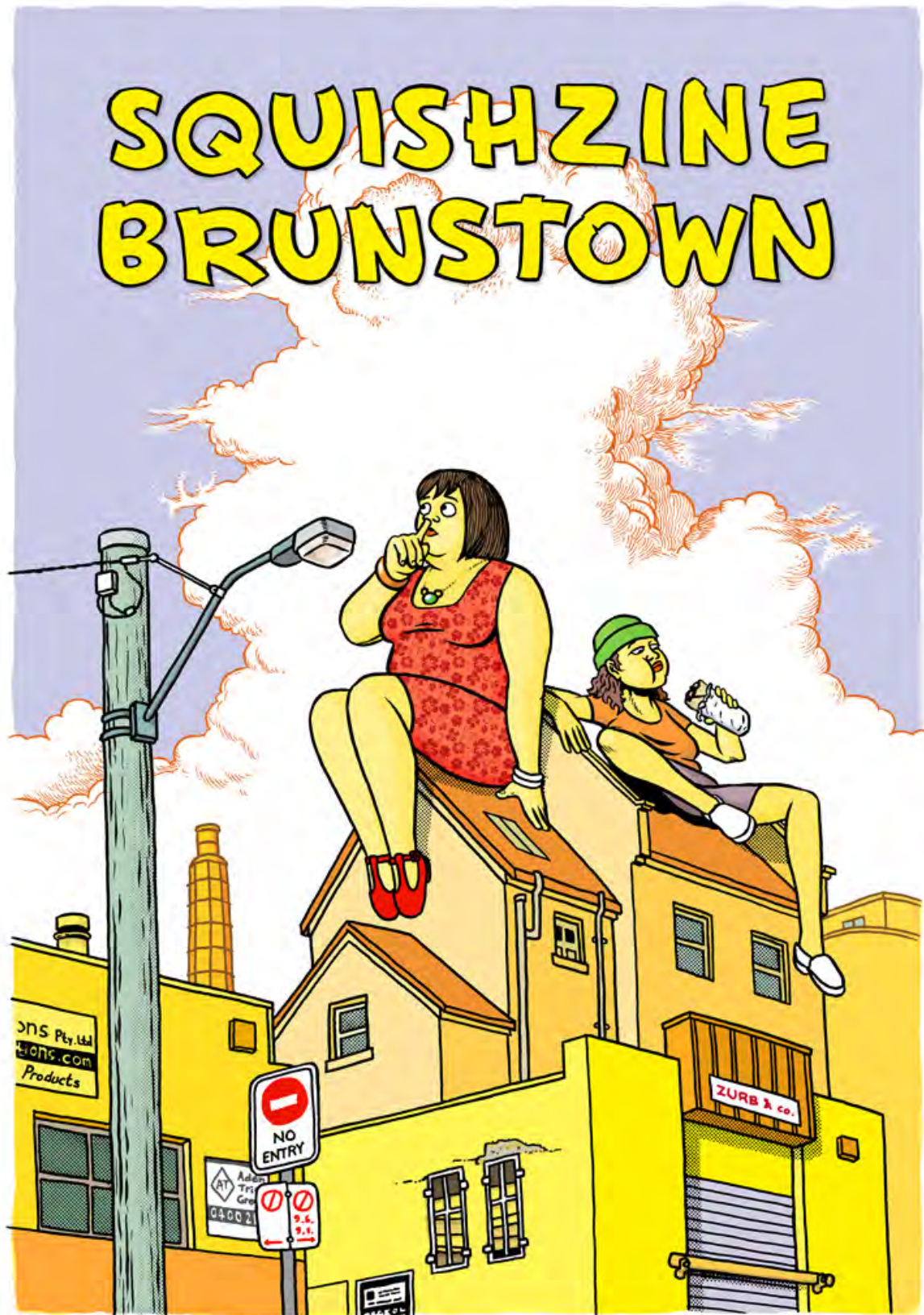
**Nicki:** Some of my biggest inspirations are The Muppet Show and Matt Groening's *Life in Hell* cartoons. There are loads of graphic novels that I love. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is probably the pinnacle. I recently read two fabulous ones: *Bottomless Bellybutton* by Dash Shaw, and *The Making Of* by Brecht Evens. Two hugely powerful comics, which I would definitely urge everyone to read, are non-fiction works by local authors: Miranda Burton's *Hidden* and Josh Santospirito's *The Long Weekend in Alice Springs*. ●



**{CLICK!} Nicki Greenberg**

Website <http://www.nickigreenberg.com>

# Ben Hutchings/Squishface



Comics about Brunswick, Australia.

Free.



{PROFILE}

## Ben Hutchings - Squishface Studio

You may have notice a recurring reference to the mighty Squishface Studio in this magazine, again and again! We speak to the co-founder and comic book star in his own right, Ben Hutchings.

**Outline:** It would be great if you could introduce yourself to the IA community and tell us a bit about your background and what drew you to comics.

**Ben:** My background is self published underground comics, which I have been doing for over 20 years. The past 8 or so years I have been working professionally creating a nauseatingly gross weekly strip for Picture called *Tales from the Pub*, and my personal works are published by Milk Shadow Books. I must have published close to 40 comic books I reckon.

I am lucky to be one of the few Aussies making a living exclusively drawing comics. I don't earn a living from my personal works, but I do get a lot of work drawing comics for other people's published projects.

I now run Squishface Comic Studio in Brunswick which I wish I could say is Australia's ONLY or FIRST cartoonists studio (some caricaturist in Victoria beat us to that apparently!)

**Outline:** When creating comics, either written by you or

others, can you tell us a bit about your process - both for the concepts for the illustrations and the technical drawing process?

**Ben:** I work with pens on paper, so I will firstly thumb out a whole bunch of pages really small, just to show the basic page layout. The thumbnailed panels and words spread out all over the page. When I run out of space I'll usually end up stapling together more pages until I have a weird, disjointed booklet of thumbs and alternate dialogue and lines and jokes, making sure the plot will progress well. I won't thumb the whole comic, just a bunch of pages at a time.

Next up I'll pencil in the final frames quite big, getting a lot of detail in there so I can ink it completely accurately. Then at last, inks which are the funniest bit, I use heaps of crosshatching and screen tones and about 5 kinds of pens. Then I scan the frames and compile the pages in photoshop! If I do colour I'll usually do it digitally.

**Outline:** You've worked with Milk Shadow books, also





Process images from Iron Bard Ballisto

profiled in this edition. Could you tell us about your projects with them and your experiences being published?

**Ben:** Milk Shadow has printed nearly all of my works from 2009 onwards, as well as a 2 Volume set of my underground comic “*You Stink & I Don’t*” which contains 5 issues in each and spans 20 years! I met James through *Tales from the Pub* - he used to submit stories for me to draw. Later on he got into publishing comics and offered to print any stuff I had out, or was gonna bring out. I think the first one he did was *Handball Heaven* which is this rad silent comic about these two freaky, twisty dudes having a really odd, physics-defying game of handball.

James is really easy to work with coz his taste in comics parallels mine - we just like interesting stuff that is drawn well, and is a bit different. We both get excited about the other artists’ projects he’s got going, too. I think my favourite part is getting to attend conventions without forking out for a table, and hanging out with the other MSB artists. So many cartoonists loathe those conventions but I’ve always loved them.

**Outline:** What are your biggest, proudest, comic book projects to date?

**Ben:** The 480 or so *Tales* episodes are a proud achievement, although the scripts aren’t mine. The art is very meticulous and I somehow managed to turn quite repetitive true drinking anecdotes into funny adventures. *Walking to Japan* is still my best project - it was a big comic I blasted out in 2011, newspaper format, wordless, and giant artwork. Also a nice concept - a man walking across the ocean towards Japan while growing bigger and bigger. I’m embarrassed I haven’t topped that comic yet. I probably work too slow. My next two projects will top it for sure, so stay tuned for the answer two questions down.

**Outline:** Throughout this edition, comic book artists have referred to the magical sounding “Squishface Studios”. Who were the founders, how did it kick off, and what are the aims of the group today?

**Ben:** I had the idea after me and some comic friends, including Pat Grant and Simon Hanselman and others did this comics residency at NGV called *Inherent Vice*. We moved our desks into this giant, open studio with big glass walls, and covered it in our art and worked there for 4 weeks, and the public swarmed through, watching us work. I loved it so much I decided to find a shopfront that I could rent out with other cartoonists and have an open-to-the-public cartoonists studio! I had lots of savings and I thought I could risk this thing and it would be great, even if I wasn’t sure what purpose it would serve. The public sure seemed excited about *Inherent Vice*, so I knew it would be a positive, cool thing, and I’d love it. Thank god my buds David Blumenstein and Sarah Howell (who was also in *Inherent Vice*), were actually behind my stupid idea, and we got hold of a few others and made it happen!

So after 3 years (?) we work here all the time, and our lineup always changes, and we run classes and drawing nights and workshops and because we are a comic studio with a weird name everyone thinks of us whenever there is anything comic related in the whole city. That was a nice side-effect of the studio. Suddenly nearly every inch of our lives are filled with comics, which could be worse hey.

**Outline:** How the Illustrators Australia community can be involved in Squishface Studio and the events you run?

**Ben:** To keep alive we always need members, even part time ones, so if you are a cartoonist and interested in trying out our workspace please do! We run a monthly open drawing night too, which is the first Wednesday of



every month where friends and strangers drift in and sit down and chat and draw and it's just heaps of fun and good to get to know other people. You should follow us on facebook so you know about the things we're planning.

**Outline:** We'd love to hear about any future projects you'd like to share with us.

**Ben:** My next Milk Shadow book release - *Iron Bard Ballisto* - (note from the editor: this is also featured on the cover page for James Andrew/Milk Shadow Books). It's a funny adventure about a music loving warrior, with musical scores weaved throughout the artwork! This is an epic that took me forever to complete (my first drawings for it were 2006 I think!) and will be a broadsheet or newspaper size.

I have a couple of other cool comic projects coming up, but the best one will be another personal project which also has been floating around forever. I'm finally going to ink it this year. It is a graphic novel called *Mini Mel and Timid Tom* and I can't wait. It's about cats and their secret world in suburbia. I hope that one will be my masterwork, and then I can die or take up painting. I have even asked a friend to ink it for me in case I die before then. I can't stop thinking about dying when I'm close to a project coming out.

**Outline:** Apart from your Squishface Studio colleagues, where do you find comic book inspiration in Melbourne and beyond?

**Ben:** I can't even tell you, I get ideas every single day and they unfurl in my head over years and years, many at a time regardless of where I am. But being around my colleagues, as well as the thousands of weirdos in Melbourne doing everything from dioramas in fishbowls to lightshows on giant buildings to ugly head sculptures on lampposts, makes me more excited than ever to get these ideas made, and to do them well. ●

{▶CLICK!} Ben Hutchings/  
Squishface

Website <http://squishfacestudio.com>

Ben's Website <https://hutcho.wordpress.com>

{PROFILE}



**THE SILENCE**  
BRUCE MUTARD

**Bruce Mutard**

# Bruce Mutard

Dear reader, every now and then we have a profiled artist who really digs deep into their years of industry experience and shares their knowledge so generously that we get very lucky. Bruce has provided a wealth of information for anyone interested in comic books. Settle back with a cup of tea and read on!

**Outline:** Self-described as being married to comics for over 25 years, we'd love to know how this love affair first began, and more about the comic book children you've produced over this long period.

**Bruce:** Well, without giving my age away, it didn't start before I was ten. I certainly read comics as a kid: *Tin Tin*, *Asterix*, *MAD*, the Duck tales by Carl Barks and Mickey Mouse stories by Floyd Gottfredson (only just starting to be recognised as the true great he was). I did not like superhero comics of the time as I thought the art ugly (that view still isn't far off, but for different reasons). But never did I possess any desire to make comics back then, nor imagine it would become my life's work. I drew a lot of cartoony narrative pictures that resembled those of Richard Scarry, Guillermo Mordillo, or a French artist by the name of Coup, who did these all over set-piece works that have a gazillion funny things going on; a bit like *Where's Wally*, which came along later. I used to call my analogues, the 'fat'n'chubby blokes'. Usually they involved a lot of fighting and funny war stuff, which being a boy, I thought was very cool. How different do I feel about war these days to the point my magnum opus (see below) is a very detailed examination of the morality and implications of war.

Comics fell away throughout my high school years, as I ended up studying the maths-science stream. I didn't start looking at comics again until I was about 20-21, when I was studying graphic design but had every intention of being an illustrator like my then heroes, Marshall Arisman, Brad Holland. For some reason I really liked illustrators who were more painterly, even though I was hopeless with wet media myself (and still am). Around then, I discovered *Heavy Metal Illustrated*, which at that time, showcased the comics work of people like Richard Corben, Enki Bilal, Guido Crepax, Hugo Pratt, Serpieri, Prado and Hermann - all European comics legends. What attracted me at that point, was their illustration skills, not storytelling. All of them were painterly illustrators, and sure enough, many of them did pretty sexy stuff catering to the male gaze, which appealed to this nerd. At that point, I was studying engineering and realised the folly of my career choice, and thought that I am an artist first and foremost. Of course, the folly of *that* choice was far worse in pecuniary terms than had I stuck with mining engineering! However, the muses, attractive as they are, sang their song and one day, a particularly unattractive muse called Robert Crumb sang to me in *Hup #1*, and suddenly I realised that here was a

medium I could express myself with. I could write and draw, so surely, it would be easy to put the two together and say all the things I want to say (nothing intellectual at that point). Had I been forewarned how long and hard a road it was to be to master the skills, I... probably would have still done it. It's very hard for me to shift from the idea of doing anything NOT comics, but I do illustrations for books, posters, prints and Cds. It should be a given that most 'artists' in comics, are also more than capable illustrators, although there are significant qualitative differences between a comics panel and an illustration.

Of the five 'children' I've sired (not counting the considerably larger number of short stories and \*aborted\* projects, and others still gestating), the first was my self-published series, *Street Smell*, published between 1994 and 1998 (of which, more below). Next was *The Bunker*, published by Image Comics (yes, *that* Image comics) in 2003, my first purpose created, self-contained graphic novel. It was about a childhood friendship between a boy and a girl that gets complicated and eventually broken by hormones and other dark stuff. Next I produced *The Silence*, which was published by Allen & Unwin in 2009, after they published the next work, *The Sacrifice* in 2008. They bought both books at the same time, but for marketing reasons, felt *The Sacrifice* the easier sell, which panned out. Then came *A Mind of Love*, which collected the serial *Love To Know You*, my first graphic novel, published by the now defunct Black House Comics in 2010. Last book was *Strip Show*, published by Milkshadow Books in 2011, which was a collection of bits'n'bobs dating as far back as my first year making comics. It was meant to be a counterpart to a proposed three volume collection of short stories called *Sex, Politics and Religion: Stories To Break Up Families By*, to be published by Black House Comics. That never happened, although I might still do it but don't ask when. I think some of my more impressive work is in short comics form, and most of the stories have been published in a myriad of places: *Overland*, *Meanjin*, *Tango*, *Australian Book Review*, *Cordite*, *OiOiOi*, various short lived magazines and anthologies. It would be nice to bring them all under the one cover (or three). Then there's the unpublished *Alice In Nomansland*, which will surely shock those only used to seeing my so-called 'serious' work. I will probably publish this one myself in the next year or two via my imprint, Fabilaux.

**Outline:** How did you build a profile in the industry? How have you made a career of it?



Internal from *The Sacrifice*

**Bruce:** When I started making comics, I was also doing a lot of single panel political and gag cartoons, illustrations and writing stories. I was young and dumb enough to believe I could make a career out of it if I worked hard, pumped out good work, kept hitting magazine editors with cold submissions and hawking folios around until I started getting some work and building up from there. There were no courses specialising in illustration in Australia in those days, nor any place where you could learn to draw representationally. There were certainly no courses in making comics; not even a workshop. One could do a bit of illustration in graphic design, but the emphasis there was more on communication design, typography, packaging and advertising. My school - Swinburne - only took delivery of its first Macintosh in my second year there, to give you some idea. The concept of the internet, web design, multimedia design were all in the future.

So, it wasn't long before comics took over my life, becoming my medium of choice (or did it choose me...), and there was no way to learn other than by doing. So I read comics and cranked them out, making all the mistakes one usually makes when starting: poor panel to panel transitions, fudging the left to right reading order, unintentional narrative ellipses (I could claim they are Godardian 'jump-cuts' but I will not sully the master's name) let alone crap drawing and inconsequential stories. For the first year or so, almost all my stories were short—1-8 pages long—with a couple of unsuccessful forays

to 15 or 16. My goal was to get a regular title like my then comics heroes like Dad Clowes (*Eightball*), Chester Brown (*Yummy Fur*), Seth (*Palookaville*), Peter Bagge (*Hate*), Crumb (*Hup*, *Self-Loathing*), Los Bros Hernandez (*Love & Rockets*), Roberta Gregory (*Bitchy Bitch*) and other so called 'alternative' or 'indie' comics. I wanted to count among them with my own regular issued comic 3-4 times a year, and within its covers, put out... me to the world. This was in the days before the graphic novel and trade collections became dominant as they are now. Briefly I did gain a publishing contract very early on with Rip Off Press (a veteran of the underground comics era still clinging to life on reprints of Glibert Shelton's *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*). My title was to be called *Street Smell*. Publication depended on gaining enough pre-orders through the American comics direct-market distribution system to cover the print bill, which alas, it failed to do. So, up that dream in a puff of smoke.

At that time, there was a strong (vaguely moralistic) push to self-publishing led by it's chief shill, Dave Sim (who was perhaps half way through his 300th issue of *Cerebus* at that point). The advocacy of self-publishing was to own your created properties, in contrast to the work-for-hire environment where the big superhero companies owned all your work, and paid peanuts despite not having monkeys work for them. But that's not much different from doing illustration work for hire, and I don't consider it a problem so long as you \*ahem\* get well paid.

So I ventured into self-publishing *Street Smell*, blindly, without a clue or a CAAD program, assembling my books by old fashioned paste-ups and bromides to make the plates off. These were B&W comics with three colour covers done on an offset press, meaning print runs of at least 500 to 1000 copies to get a reasonable unit price; there were no digital presses in those days. Mini-comics makers and zinesters resorted to photocopiers, which were hardly the slick machines they have now. For distribution, I put the comics on consignment in Melbourne comics shops and indie record stores that sold zines. The rest was done via the zine trading network, which in those pre-internet days, was done by snail mail and consolidated in *Factsheet Five*, an American zine review magazine that was like a hub for all the worlds zinesters and self-published mags, comics and what not. Each issue had thousands! That culture still exists of course, but much of the trade and connections are made online and via social media. It was nice to have a PO Box in those days and be constantly excited by the prospect of so many hand-written letters, zines, and comics that came in. Nowadays, there's nothing but bills and my online orders.

Anyway, the sales were as good as can be expected with that sort of distribution model, eventually selling most of the books over the course of time, with issue 1 selling more than #2, which sold more than #3. I gave up when it was clear that it was never going to lead anywhere, and that it only made sense in the USA. I did put #0 and a pack of #1,2 & 3 through that US direct market distro system, copping the heinous shipping fees eating up all my margin in the hope someone of interest might pick one up and offer me a publishing deal... hahaha (whatta sap). But by that point in time, I had assiduously kept working on my skills base, trying to improve my drawing and storytelling skills to match those artists whom I admired. In short, I started out wanting to draw like Crumb and Serpieri with their luscious cross-hatching, but grew to prefer the clean lines of Jaime Hernandez and Andre Juillard, of which I think I am close to now. Most observers see my work as fitting firmly within the Franco-belgian *ligne-clerc* (clear line) style of illustration: perhaps best typified by Herge.

There was no question in my mind that I would only garner interest from publishers if my work was as good as or better than the best out there. When I say that, I don't mean I want to be *the* best (a subjective qualia anyhow), but to always do the best I can do. If one looks at my graphic novel *A Mind Of Love*, one will discover that it collects the ongoing story *Love To Know You* that ran in issues 1-3 of *Street Smell*. Chapter one was drawn in 1994, chapter two in 1996, chapter three in 1998, chapter four in 2001, chapter 5 in 2009-2010. Therefore it charts the evolution in my art style over pretty much the length of my career. Less so the quality of the writing, which is best determined through the novels and short stories. At the start, I was mostly doing humour, much of it sex and toilet based, but over time, gradually wanting to tell human

dramas, or as I now describe it, telling stories about people moved and shaken by history and it's movers and shakers. I don't write about heroes in the conventional sense, but about living the quotidian life, of emotions, of people who are mostly good people, who occasionally do dumb things, make mistakes and stuff up. My characters are gregarious, extroverted, introverted, stitched up, wanting something they don't have, or be anywhere except where they are. In short, their lives are similar to that most of us know and can relate to.

It wasn't until my novel *The Sacrifice* was released that I began to gain any sort of wider recognition and a sense that I may have a career at comics on a full-time basis. It wasn't so much gaining the imprimatur of an Australia Council grant and a mainstream book publishing contract that aided this, but that my work actually impacted on readers. Since this time, I've had a lot of people come to me at comic conventions and book fairs expressing how much they loved that book, so that validates my efforts more than anything else. The worst thing in the world is to spend years on your work only for no one to notice or care. I had my fair share of that prior to this book, but now I have all the motive I need to keep making new work, as people want it. If I had a dollar for every time someone asked me when the follow up to *The Sacrifice* is coming out...

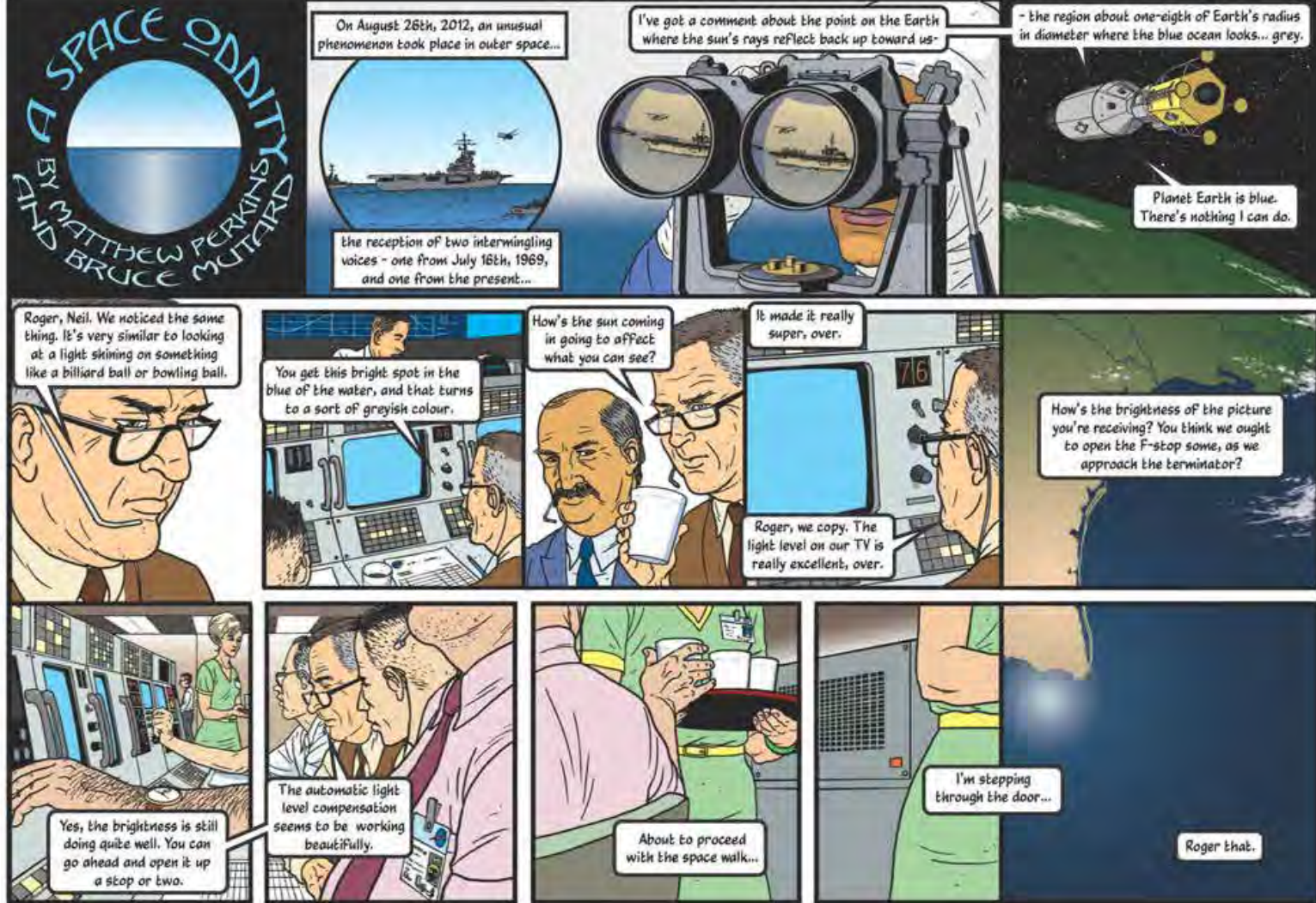
**Outline:** Could you tell us a bit about your experiences both teaching and studying? What courses are available for illustrators wanting to study comic books/graphic novels specifically?

**Bruce:** As mentioned above, when I started out, there were no courses in comic-making here and there still aren't. At present, there are the odd single subjects in comics-making scattered sporadically around some higher educational institutions (visual communication, literary studies, creative writing courses), and ad hoc workshops put on by writers centres, the ASA, by some illustration and design schools where a lecturer who has their own serious interest in comics brings the medium into the classroom in lieu of an official subject for credit.

There are full time diploma courses overseas, such as the Centre for Cartoon Studies in VT, USA, which offers one and two year diplomas and a two year Masters of Fine Arts degrees in comics. I think there are others at the University of Florida, Toronto and there are a couple in France. These teach the skills to make comics, which is quite different to Comics Studies, which attend to the content of comics, or sometimes try to come to grips with how comics work as a form from an academic viewpoint (and I haven't read any that's been successful at it).

What we are seeing a bit more of in Australia is the acceptance of post-graduate research with theses done in the form of comics. I completed mine last year at Monash University within the faculty of Art, Design and





all such political talk is), they published it as I presented it. I would like to think it's because my writing process was pretty intensive, and that I edited it hard myself, which I can assure you I am (see below).

They have also been very generous in giving me space to create the follow up books that have run a very long way past their contracted deadlines. I do keep Erica up to date with my progress, and I can finally say that after years of interruptions, health issues, family issues and doing the above-mentioned Masters, that I am working on the final art to my new book and that it will come out... when it comes out. I don't know if I would have been given such leeway at another book publisher.

One of the major bonuses of being with a major publisher is that they have the resources and connections to get your books into public and school libraries, where my books have a pretty good penetration — far more than the two books that were published by local comics publishers. The buying systems and suppliers to libraries seem to be apart from those supplying bookstores. I'm sure it is not a state secret who these suppliers are, but the small press comics publishers are generally run by individuals who've taken it upon themselves to publish graphic novels and comics and try to sell enough via comics shops, conventions and stalls to recover costs, sustained on the support of their principal's day job. They don't have any knowledge into the various book distribution systems in place. They often start with a flurry of releases, then this slows down rapidly as

the money does not come back in, and that their lives usually get complicated by getting married, buying houses, having children; priorities get shuffled. Most of the sales of my non-A&U titles have been by myself at comic conventions, pop-culture expos like Supanova, small comics festivals, zine fairs and the like. The books are all available online at Amazon, Book depository and the like, but the fact remains its book trade, libraries, mainstream media coverage and overseas rights sales that help a title earn out its advance, recover costs and enable publishers to keep in business. Mainstream book publishers also have publicity departments and sales reps who hawk the books into all of the above outlets, but the small press publishers do not.

But for comics, it's certainly come a long, long way from the days of *Street Smell*. There are far more comics festivals and places to sell, far more readers and makers than I've ever known in my long association with comics. Comics actually garner respect as a medium now, whereas when I started, the pejorative connotations of them being juvenile, sub-literate, disposable toilet paper, was still the popular conception. It's a great time to be making comics so long as you keep your day job.

**Outline:** Have you had any success with government grants to support your projects?

**Bruce:** Yes. I've picked up a developing writers grant and established authors grant from the Australia Council of Arts; two new work grants from Arts Vic; two travel grants

## {PROFILE}

to attend comics festivals overseas on behalf of groups of comics creators here. The Australia Council developing writers grant was what enabled me to take the time to research, write and draw the manuscript submission of *The Sacrifice*. Grants buy an artist the *time* to create, which is in essence, their purpose. We all know that making art takes a lot of time, and if you're working full-time in some non-creative job to pay your way, the creative work is shoved down the list of priorities. When I applied for that grant, there was no mention of graphic novels or comics anywhere in the Literature Board guidelines, so I had to ring and ask if it was permissible to apply. They seemed a bit perplexed, but also gave assent. So I wrote my application and I'll be bugged if I didn't get it - first time. I look back and think how naïve I was with that book, but so glad I was, for if I hadn't been, I would've talked myself out making those applications and submissions. Moral: being stubborn and dumb \*can\* pay off. Once you get one grant and books out there, it is easier to get more, so long as the project warrants it. Best advice I can give to those who want to give the grants a burl, is to read the guidelines very carefully and follow them to the letter. Harder still is to read those guidelines and distill just exactly what it is they are looking for in a submission. For the Australia Council it used to be more about the writers development at that point in their career (and by corollary, Australian writing in general) more than the content of the project itself.

**Outline:** When you are provided with an author's text, could you talk us through the process of interpreting their words to a comic book/visual format? How do you tell the story through the image when the words are supplied first? Do you collaborate throughout the process?

**Bruce:** I could write a book on this and one day I will. Ninety plus percent of the time I adapt my own writing to images. So I almost always write my stories first, knowing I am going to adapt it to pictures and often leave a lot unwritten in the safe knowledge that I'll remember what I really want, but also because I know that the process of adapting my script to images will rewrite my script quite substantially—in effect, a new draft. Telling a story with pictures is quite different to telling it with words only, probably calling on different regions of the brain to do so. In short, telling stories visually means building a space and time with lines, washes, chiaroscuro, colour and so on within the panel borders (however they take form), which utilises the way humans visually interpret the world to immerse them in a story-world. Pictures really do say a lot more than words alone, and can also be perceived as a whole, almost instantly, with the extremely fast concatenations of our fovea all over the image. Words on the other hand, require time to concentrate on a few letters and words one after the other to understand what is being communicated. So comics engages a two speed visual interpretation process: fast images and slow text, meaning the eye is hovering about the image co-present with the text far more than it might otherwise have done. In short, it

behooves the writer to always have the motto, 'Show, don't tell' in mind when writing for comics.

So, back to your question. If I'm adapting someone else's script or writing for comics, the first thing to be cognisant of is the format and presentation of the work: portrait, landscape, print, online, B&W, colour, page count. These do shape the meta-panel, or page in which panels will be organised, and how dense the panel grid will be. The content determines the panel layout: something action based works best with an open layout with just a few panels per page, whereas something dialogue based might be best served with a grid of panels. Something for kids would be more likely to feature action, but also art that is more 'cartoony', whereas a gritty crime drama might be better in black and white. But the author and/or publisher will have their own needs the illustrator has to work with. If the publisher is from the educational sector, they are often far stricter with their requirements and formats, so you have to work with what you're given. The tricky part is whether the writers and commissioning editors know how comics tell stories. I worked on a series for Macmillan Education where it was plain the writer had no idea, so while she had done her research well and written proficient scripts, she did not understand that in most cases, panels can only contain one occurrence (meaning action and dialogue exchange). I basically tossed out her layouts and reorganised the panels into occurrences, which resulted in very cramped layouts at times, but there was no wriggle room in the script - the editing and approvals process for educational books is very rigorous. But I wasn't about to make a bad comic out of it. I've seen such bad comics and can understand why they weren't a hit with the kids; they were difficult to follow.

Then there is something different like the all-comics issue of *Cordite*, where artists were asked to adapt contemporary poems into comics. For me, the challenge was to take words that are usually so visually evocative and allusive, into something actually visible, but without simply illustrating them. I adapted A Frances Johnson's poem, *Microaviary* (about drone warfare of all things) because when I read it, all these images by association flooded into my consciousness from my unconscious, and it was immediately apparent to me that I should simply put those images down. To that end, about half the actual words disappeared into the images, and where they remained, the images added new contexts and layers, so that in a sense, it was a new work. I would love to do more such 'collaborations' and there is talk of such.

It is always best to have a writer/artist team as collaborators. I have had writers come to me asking where they might find artists to illustrate their graphic novel - so they are wanting 100 - 150 pages of art. If the writer is able to pay a few hundred dollars per page, there is a fair chance of finding someone who will commit. But since most writers won't be able to shell out 40 grand on the art (and big publishers certainly won't either, let alone pay anything,



it'll be very hard to find illustrators who'll commit to a work that might take two or three years of part time work. The only way any illustrator will commit is if they collaborate from the beginning of the work, so that they participate in its creation and vision, in a sense taking ownership of it such that they are motivated to see it come to light. A graphic novel that will still take years to come to fruition will still be a test for both of them, and there are no end of difficulties that could render the working relationship fraught. In the US mainstream comics publishing, Franco-Belgian commercial comics scene and manga, most creative talents are getting paid to work, so it's a job. Most projects in Australia are done on spec, with only the hope of getting a publisher interested, or having to go the self-publishing route, which can lead to the problems of distribution and selling outlined above. So, the difficulties of collaboration here are manifest. It is perhaps why most graphic novels here are done by writer-artists.

**Outline:** We'd love to know more about your art making process. Do you work primarily digitally? What programs and processes do you use?

**Bruce:** After spending a lot of time researching and writing my scripts, I adapt it into images via layouts: usually 8-9 thumbnail pages per A4 sheet. This just allows me to think about the way the story reads as a page and within the panels. Changes of scene for instance are always best at the turn of a page, so I might add or subtract a

panel or two to make it fit; new scenes and ideas come in, some are dropped. Words are often dropped when I realise the image says it all. I usually only do layouts once for most scripts, but sometimes twice. For some short stories, I might actually work the story out visually first, simply thumb-nailing panels and allowing images to go where they may, adding the dialogue later.

My methodology has changed over the years. Once the layout adaptation is complete, I might do some character designs, though I don't do much of this. I am not creating any iconic characters such as those inhabited by spec fiction. Since quite a lot of my stories are historical fictions, or set overseas, I do a lot of visual research with Google Image. I start my finished art sketching the panels and contents with a blue non-repro 1.0mm lead in a clutch pencil on a nice bristol cartridge by Schoellehammer, which I think they no longer make. I go over this with a 0.5mm 2B propeller pencil to firm the lines I want. At this point I'll go one of two ways: ink using a nib - usually a Hunt 101 with India ink (FW used to be the best, but that's long gone. Pebeo do a nice, black, most non-fading ink) and then black fills with a brush. Then I use white out (usually gouache) to fix things up before scanning. Or, I now often scan the pencils in and 'ink' using my Wacom Intuous in Photoshop. This means one can correct the erroneous lines as one makes them, so there is no white-out stage. I am not a clean inker with the nib, so I make a lot of mistakes and result in a messy looking page.



Once I started using the computer to assist my art, I found myself constantly having to keep polishing the work in Photoshop, so in some sense, I cut out a step by inking on the machine. It's no faster, and might even be a bit slower since the surface of a Wacom can be a bit slippery. I've not really tried the Cintiq yet, but where I have, I did find the distance between the pen tip and the line (which for some reason lagged) to be distracting. It's probably just a matter of getting used to it. I may yet go down that path.

I do all my half tones and colouring within Photoshop, using layers and transparencies. I like 'flat' colouring that is popular within the *lign-clerc* tradition. I do use gradations and some effects, but keep them to a minimum. I don't 'paint' to reproduce painterly effects, though of late, I'm experimenting with a looser, rougher toning style that doesn't use paint bucket. I am not very good with customising brushes and maximising the possibilities of programs, partly because I have so much to do, I work out what I

need to do to get the result I want and sit within that comfort zone. Since I am starting the final art on my new book, I can afford to play around a bit and work out how I want this book to look. Given its length, it'll have to be B&W to be financially viable, but I'm going to try colour to see what it looks like.

**Outline:** What is Supanova?

**Bruce:** Supanova is a pop-culture expo that comes to each mainland state capital once a year (plus Gold Coast) for a 2-3 days. It showcases all aspects of popular culture, but usually those with a spec-fiction angle: sci-fi, fantasy, horror, thrillers, steampunk, gothic, fairytales, whatever the human imagination has come up with. So, we're talking movies, TV shows, comics, manga, anime, animation, games, video games, toys, collectibles, wrestling. They bring out a slew of celebrities from spec fiction shows past and present for signings and photos. There is a big

exhibitors hall where commercial enterprises showcase and sell their wares, and an big artists alley where makers of comics, illustrators, artists, toy-makers, jewelry makers, make-up, costumiers, fashion labels and so on all offer their wares to the public. Attendances can vary between 15,000 for Adelaide to over 50,000 for Sydney. One of the biggest features of the shows is Cosplay, where attendees dress up as their favourite character or pretty much whatever they want to be. There are competitions for best costume, which leads to a national competition and international ones. There are people who are professional cosplayers, who have huge online followings and can be invited as guests in their own right. It's a phenomenon that started in Japan and has grown to be probably the major feature of these shows. I love looking at it, and some go to amazing lengths with their costumes. I haven't cosplayed yet (yes, it is a verb now), but I'll do so one day, but only as something really odd and possibly my own creation (some people do their own thing). Cosplay has its own industry of suppliers selling ready to wear costumes, hats, weaponry, accessories, make-up, contact lenses, you name it. If you haven't been, all I can say is as I do to others who've not been: I guarantee you'll see things you've never seen before; some of it will blow your mind, some you might want to unsee.

**Outline:** We'd love to know a few of the comic artists that inspire your own practice. Are there any upcoming titles or projects you can share with us?

**Bruce:** I mentioned some of my earliest inspirations above: Robert Crumb, Eleuteiri Serpieri, Jaime Hernandez, Andre Juillard, Herge for the art. Alan Moore, some Neil Gaiman, Chester Brown for writing. But really, the biggest influence on my work is actually cinema, particularly that of Antonioni, Bergman, Godard, Tarkovsky, Resnais, Bresson, Herzog, Ozu and so many of the greats in the golden age of 'auteurs' during the 1950's to 1970's. This pertains both to the stories I tell and the *mise en panel* that I use: humanist stories and figures in landscape, of which Antonioni was the undoubted master. I have no compunction in admitting that my stories are really films, but I put them on paper and not on screen. When younger, I really wanted to make films, but I didn't have the extroverted personality to work with people to create a vision. I could probably do it now, but I think the only way I would be working for screen is if someone approached me to adapt one of my works for screen (open to offers). Now that my Masters project is finished, I am certainly eager to explore comics for space much more, and aim to do a PhD that will achieve this. A doctorate will give me an entree into teaching at a tertiary level too.

The main project I am working on is what most of my readers would love to see: the follow up to *The Sacrifice*. This began as a single volume work following Robert Wells, a young man in early WW2 Melbourne sacrificing his pacifist values in order to enlist - something nearly everyone had to do in the social environment of a total war

economy of the time. The second volume was to be called *The Fight*, and follow Robert through his active service. The third volume, *The Return* would follow his return to civilian life, trying to be 'normal' again after having seen and done things that no person should ever have to do or see. I spent three years researching and writing *The Fight*, even to the point where I completed thumbnail layouts of the entire novel. But... I paled at the thought of doing the finished art, which I knew would take at least 2-3 years to complete. There was nothing wrong with the book: it was dense and layered in the way *The Sacrifice* was, carrying on from Volume one and leading to volume three, but... I sensed no challenge in it. It would be meeting all expectations, whereas (damn my eyes), I want to exceed expectations. In short, I was more interested in Roberts post-war life and through the development of that (as one needs to do in a trilogy), I am now completing a graphic novel following Robert's daughter, Andrea, as an army nurse in Vietnam circa 1970-75. So, followed another three years of research, writing and layouts. It's a walloping great big thing, and will probably take me up to 5-6 years to complete the art alone, since I'm one given to stupid amounts of background detail and creating immersive 'spaces' in my comics. It may well come out in several volumes, but I don't know.

Aside from that, I still do short commissions if they offer challenges. I've ventured into publishing (Fabilaux) with the first book, *Art Is A Lie*, by Carol Wood and Susan Butcher being the first one off the press. In short, it's a collection of 1-3 page comics strips mostly first printed in a US art magazine, *Artillery*, over the past 9 years under the title, *Dead or Alive*. Essentially they are spoof biographies of famous artists, done in myriad of styles, so no two stories look the same. Imagine Picasso as done by EC Segar (*Popeye*), Duchamp as a *Dick Tracy* story, Hieronymous Bosch as done by Don Martin (MAD), or the 5000 Fakes of *Dr. Suess*. Imagine Frida Kahlo as a *Betty Boop* cartoon, or if you can, Tom of Finland as done by George Herriman. You probably can't, but they do exist in this book.

I'm also trying to set up the *Australian Comics Journal* to become the voice, hub and record of Australian comics (there is no one stop, go-to hub at present), helping with organising events, exhibitions and festivals that will promote comics as a medium — and not just Australian comics and in Australia. I do workshops, public speaking and write about comics in public and academic spaces. For that reason I am happy to come on board at Illustrators Australia and help create a comics component here, since it is plainly obvious that those who do art for comics are all illustrators, and many actually do illustration and cartooning work. Here's to spreading our collective joy. ●

**{CLICK!} Bruce Mutard**

Website <http://www.brucemutard.com.au>

{PROFILE}



# Comics with Friends and Strangers

*Images from April event*

## Comics with Friends and Strangers

Based in Adelaide, this group of “like-minded folk who enjoy drawing comics” meet monthly. We discuss the aims of Comics with Friends and Strangers with two of the founders, Gina Chadderton and Owen Heitmann, as well as their own practice.

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**Outline:** Owen and Gina, it would be great to give us some background on your own art making and what has inspired your interest in comic books.

**Owen:** I trace my interest in comics back to Maurice Sendak’s children’s picture book *In The Night Kitchen* (which is, in part, an homage to Winsor McCay’s comic strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, although I didn’t know that at the time!). As a slightly older child, I loved *Tintin* and *Asterix*, as well as newspaper comic strips such as *Peanuts* and *Calvin and Hobbes*. But I was a voracious reader of novels and non-fiction as well. It wasn’t until just before I started high school that I really latched onto comic books in earnest. Every aspect of the medium interests me: I’m endlessly fascinated by the choices different creators make in terms of page layout, panel composition, lettering styles, inking techniques and everything else that goes into a comic. A lot of people equate comics with superheroes, which have never interested me at all. Comics can tell any type of story that you can think of.

My art-making evolved roughly in pace with what I was reading: beginning with jokes told in cartoons and comic strips and progressing to telling stories in comic book form. I published my first major work (a 48-page zombie comedy-adventure) in 2003 with the aid of a grant from the South Australian Youth Arts Board. Since then I’ve done a few webcomic series (at [www.24houreynic.com](http://www.24houreynic.com)) and self-published several minicomics, but in recent years I’ve focussed on doing short standalone pieces for comic anthologies in Australia, Canada and the US. These range from slice-of-life dramas to kid-oriented comedy. I like experimenting with different art styles to suit the mood of each story.

I don’t consider myself a natural artist at all, and every drawing takes a lot of effort, but I persevere because I really enjoy it – and seeing a finished page where there was once only blank white space is very satisfying!

**Gina:** I’ve always drawn. And for some reason I’ve always just been drawn to comics and cartoons. The first comic I really remember being inspired by was *Tintin* (not that I ever really tried to draw like Herge, but I really wanted to do what he was doing: telling stories with pictures). My

mum teaches craft and is one of those people who can just fix any crafty/arty problem, so I had a lot of feedback about my art I was producing. I always sort of saw it as art more than storytelling until I realised that I only really ever drew if I had words attached to the picture. It wasn’t until I was in year 8 or 9 that I really got into reading comics (which was actually thanks to my drum teacher; he lent me a whole heap of his comics and I was hooked). Ever since then I’ve been on a mission to read everything I can and immerse myself in as many different comics genres as I can. There are so many different ways to tell a story in comics – it’s always a challenge to decide which way you want to tell the story. But quite frankly, I don’t think I’d like it as much if it wasn’t. Each comic I do is better than the last in some small way and that is really satisfying.

I started really drawing full comic stories when I was 13 – I





Above: WIP by David Follett, the group in action  
 Previous page: Madeleine Karutz

did about 40 stories about my music teachers and they were terrible! But fortunately the teachers humoured me (and my folks used this as an opportunity to improve my spelling). At 16 I made my first publicly released zine (heavily influenced by Jhonen Vasquez) that I got up the courage to distribute at the comic book stores in Adelaide for the bargain price of free, and after that you couldn't stop me – I was producing zines all over the place.

Most things inspire me to make comics. I love stories – true, fiction, love, crime, scary, funny, mundane; I love them all and I just want to tell them. I do mostly autobio comics but I love sci-fi and slightly magical stories and really like it when true stories weave elements of magic into the plots. I think the comics medium lends itself to be able to do this well. I listen to a lot of podcasts and watch heaps of TV and movies. I try to get a mix of these two mediums into my comics (the aural and the visual). My goal in life is to create a comic that feels like a Wes Anderson movie.

**Outline:** What kicked off the Comics with Friends and Strangers concept? How long has the group been meeting for, and what are the aims of the meetings?

**Owen:** It was all Gina's idea!

**Gina:** Well, a couple of years ago Owen and I went on a trip to Melbourne and visited Squishface Studio ([squishfacestudio.com](http://squishfacestudio.com), also interviewed in this edition! - Ed). I was instantly jealous of the fact that they had 4–5 comic artists all sharing the same studio space, and having these great opportunities to collaborate and share ideas and talents. I also noticed that they ran an all-ladies comics drawing night and was so jealous that we didn't have something like that in Adelaide. So I mentioned to Owen that we should start our own sketch group (but for both genders) when we got home and then we kinda just did. We've been meeting every month since June 2013.

Luckily Owen is good at getting stuff done, because I'm really just an ideas lady.

The aims of the meeting are fairly loose. We provide an optional activity every week that people who come along

can partake in but they are also welcome to just come along and do their own thing and work on their own project too.

I really just wanted to meet up with other comics artists (because we are typically a secluded bunch and often prefer to be stuck in our rooms or studios by ourselves) and draw with other people around. Because although it may not be your best work, the activities each week are there to challenge you to do something outside of your comfort zone – which I try to make myself do, but don't always succeed at unless there is someone else trying it out with me!

OH YEAH. And snacks. Snacks are important.

**Outline:** Is the comic book scene large in Adelaide? Are there similar groups meeting in other cities in Australia that you can recommend?

**Owen:** I could be biased, but my impression is that the comic book scene in Adelaide has a proportionally larger pool of talent (compared to our population) than other Australian cities. In support of this belief, in 2009 I edited and published *Fist Full Of Comics* volume two ([ffoc.24houreynic.com](http://ffoc.24houreynic.com)), a six-issue series that aimed primarily to provide an outlet for South Australian creators (although it also published work from interstate and international contributors). Adelaide is home to several other self-publishers and many hobbyists, not to mention professional creators like Greg Holfeld (*Captain Congo* artist), Dan McGuinness (*Pilot & Huxley*), David Follett (*Uncle Silas*), Michal Dutkiewicz and more.

As far as similar groups, there are plenty just in Adelaide! In addition to Comics with Friends and Strangers (which focuses on drawing comics), there is Panels and Gutters at the Grace Emily Hotel on the first Saturday of every month (for comic creators to meet and chat), a monthly meeting in the Adelaide Hills (for working cartoonists), and the monthly Adelaide Ladies Comic Club (a book club for women to read and discuss comics).

**Gina:** As mentioned above, Squishface Studio is a hub of activity in Melbourne town. I've also heard of a separate



by Gina Chadderton

Melbourne Comics Creators meet, the ACT Comics Meet, the Sydney Comics Guild, the Sydney Comics Creators Monthly Meeting, Perth Comickers... and I imagine that there are similar meetings in most capital cities and probably a few smaller towns too! Squishface is the only one of these that we have firsthand experience with, but we always recommend meeting up with other local creators, as comics can often be a very solitary experience otherwise.

**Outline:** Are there any projects or collaborations that have resulted from the Comics with Friends and Strangers meet ups?

**Gina:** Owen and I had the pleasure to represent Comics with Friends and Strangers over in Newcastle at the National Young Writers' Festival last year, which was great fun.

**Owen:** Another project that resulted from the meet-ups was that Gina and I and a handful of the regulars were invited to exhibit our comic work last year at Light Square Gallery as part of *Lowered Brows*, an exhibition curated by Josh Searson.

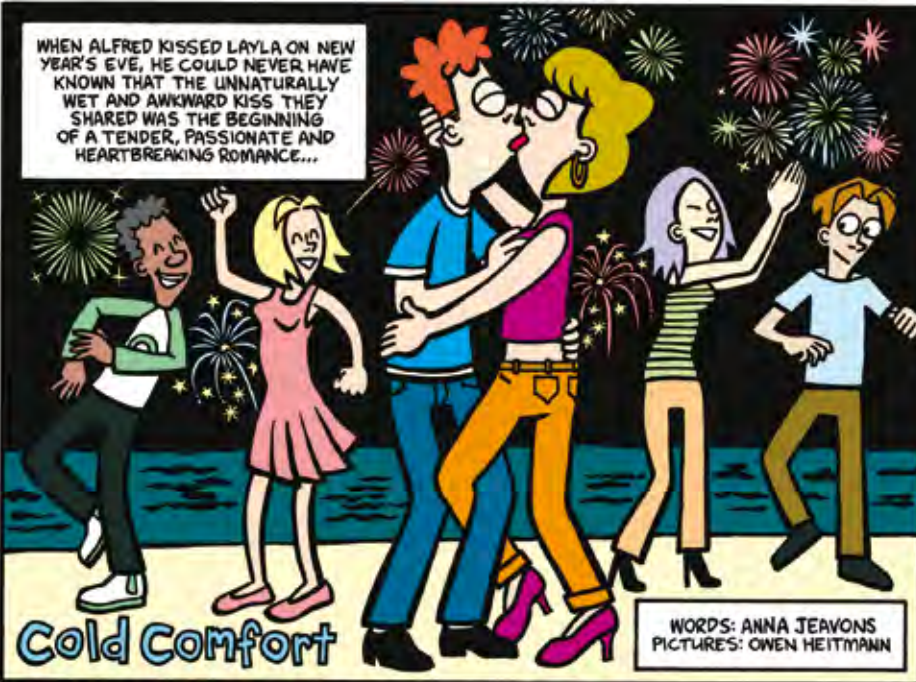
I don't know that we can trace any new collaboration solely to the meet-ups, but we do enjoy offering another opportunity for like-minded creators to meet, and we've been tossing around the idea of inviting attendees to contribute to an anthology zine at some point in the future.

**Outline:** Could you talk to us a bit about zines in Australia, and other ways comic artists may find their audience?

**Gina:** Well, the zines are great. I'm a big fan. I recently went to the Festival of the Photocopier zine fair (February this year, 2015) in Melbourne and it was huge and busy and wonderful. What I really liked seeing was how many comics artists were using this medium to produce their comics. In a digital age, having a self-produced physical copy in your hands is such a good feeling.

Saying that, one of the best ways for comics artists to find their audience these days is of course the internet and social media, which I definitely take advantage of. Facebook is the most successful for me in terms of getting across to an audience; however, I much prefer using Instagram. The visual element of storytelling is very

WHEN ALFRED KISSED LAYLA ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, HE COULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN THAT THE UNNATURALLY WET AND AWKWARD KISS THEY SHARED WAS THE BEGINNING OF A TENDER, PASSIONATE AND HEARTBREAKING ROMANCE...



By Owen Heitmann.

important and I think the way Instagram is set up really is super. A lot of artists use Tumblr (as do I) and find that they get a great following from that. I'm yet to crack the Tumblr code but I'm getting there.

TWITTER IS AWFUL, don't use it. And of course there are webcomics! Sometime people use Tumblr for those and it suits the comics well. But mostly each comic has a dedicated website to make reading it easier for the audience.

However, while artists may have big followings online, I still think that discovering someone in a shop or at a market can be more powerful and you will remember the artist more. All my favourite artists are ones that I bought from at stores/markets and had a conversation with the seller. They stick in your mind and worm their way into your brain. There is just something magical about physical copy.

**Owen:** When I find my own audience, I'll let you know!

**Outline:** We'd love to hear any plans for your own work, and Comics with Friends and Strangers, coming up in 2015.

**Owen:** I have a couple of stories in the pipeline for various comics anthologies, but most importantly I'm in the planning stages of my first major graphic novel. It's a screwball romantic comedy set in high school, and it will be at least three times longer than my previous longest narrative. I'm hoping to workshop the script with other creators later this year, so I won't get to the fun part of actually illustrating it for ages! Once it's finished, I'd love to have it picked up by a book publisher, but I do comics first and foremost for myself, so the most important thing to me is creating fulfilling work – although reaching readers is always nice!

As for Comics with Friends and Strangers, Gina and I will be running a related workshop in May 2015 at *Inkers and Thinkers*, an interdisciplinary comics symposium at the University of Adelaide. We're also hoping to attract some guest speakers at our regular meetings, and possibly source some grant funding, but our focus is on just keeping it a fun experience and welcoming new faces.

**Gina:** SO MANY PLANS!

Personally, I'm working on three main stories. One is fictional and is about Australian teens solving crime. I'm hoping it will be a regular webcomic soon. The other two are autobio stories: one about growing up with a brother with severe autism and another about being diagnosed with jaw cancer when I was 16 and the aftermath of the surgery.

I'll also be keeping up with my pure illustration work for exhibitions. I am hoping to curate an exhibition early next year called "Wish You Were Here" that will showcase female Adelaide artists (born or based), each creating a set of three postcards of real or imaginary places. I'm pretty excited to see what all these talented ladies come up with!

**{CLICK!} Comics with Friends and Strangers**

**Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/ComicsWithFriendsAndStrangers>

**Owen** <http://outtamyhead.24hourcynic.com>

**Gina** <https://www.facebook.com/georgerexcomics>

# The Sticky Institute



## {PROFILE}

# The Sticky Institute

“A zine (/ zi n/ ZEEN; an abbreviation of fanzine, or magazine) is most commonly a small circulation self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images usually reproduced via photocopier.” (Wikipedia definition). We wanted to include some information on zines in this edition for illustrators looking to experiment with new formats and structures (such as comics!). When hoping to know more about zines, the first recommendation from the community was to contact The Sticky Institute. This store is well-known as the go-to place for zine culture in Melbourne. Outline is thankful to coordinator Luke Sinclair for his insights into this important artist run space.

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**Outline:** The Sticky Institute has definitely become an institution, and is well known by many as the go-to place for zines. Could you tell us about the early beginnings of the business - whether you knew if a zine store could be successful - and your operations today?

**Luke/Sticky:** Sticky Institute has operated out of Shop 10 Campbell Arcade Melbourne since April 1st 2001 (underneath Flinders Street Station). We are an Artist Run Spaces that is dedicated solely to zines. Sticky started off life as a project within the office space of Platform Artists

Group who used to coordinate Public Art exhibitions in old advertising cabinets under Flinders Street Station and Spencer Street Station (they have recently been evicted from their Flinders Street Campbell Arcade space which was Melbourne's oldest and longest running Artist Run Space having run for over 20 years). We separated from Platform in 2007 and became a stand-alone arts organisation. We never knew how successful the project would be when we started out in 2001. Sticky has supported over 12,000 individual zine titles from all around the world since we opened in 2001.





**Outline:** Who volunteers at your store? How do they affect the direction of the shop?

**Luke/Sticky:** Sticky has changed its structure many times over the years in order to survive. The current structure is that there are three coordinators who report back to a Management Committee of seven. There are usually a further ten volunteers working at the store at any given time. More than a hundred people have worked at the shop since we opened. Volunteers run the shop, pay the zinemakers who have sold work through us, coordinate zine stalls at zine fairs, events and gigs and organise our zine festival which is held every February - The Festival of the Photocopier. Everyone who currently works at Sticky is a volunteer. We managed to secure funding from City of Melbourne, Arts Victoria and the Australia Council for the Arts between 2007 and 2011 so coordinators were paid between those years. In 2012 we re-structured and went back to an all-volunteer structure after unsuccessfully applying for funding from all three funding bodies.

Volunteers directly affect the kind of zines we stock as they tend to search out the kind of work that they are most interested in. My personal interest is in per-zines so if I have got time to search out some new zines for the shop it will be per-zines I am looking for. Volunteers who have a passion for autobiographical comics from Latvia will search out those titles.

**Outline:** What about your own background - how did you first become interested in zine culture? Do you create your own now?

**Luke/Sticky:** I began making zines in 1994 when I was 18 years old. I am turning 39 this year and making more

zines than ever. All my zines are anonymous and I distribute in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and the UK as well as through Sticky Institute, Take Care Zine Distro, Auntie Mabel's Zine Distro, Co-West Co-Working Zine Shop, Breakdown Press and Pioneers Press. I really love zines. I came to zines through going to all ages shows in the early 90's, making my first collaborative efforts with friends before making my own solo zines.

**Outline:** Can you tell us a bit of an overview about the zine culture in Australia and abroad?

**Luke/Sticky:** We just keep on getting given more and more zine titles at Sticky. My work in zines does not involve computers and I totally bought the argument that the internet would kill zines by the year 2000 and the whole world be shopping, eating and having sex exclusively on-line by 2001. This simply did not happen and now we see zinemakers connecting and sharing zine info on-line which has allowed zines a whole other life. There are a whole series of zine fairs that happen around Australia each year which are extremely well attended. Sticky organises The Festival of the Photocopier in Melbourne. We organised Tonerpalooza with the State Library of Victoria in the middle of the year last year but that is not happening in 2015 as the State Library decided not to fund it this year. In Sydney there are two big zine fairs that happen on the same weekend - the Museum of Contemporary Art Zine fair and another fair - Other World which has sprung up in protest to the Museum of Contemporary Art's connections to Transfield who support the MCA and coordinate Australia's concentration camps for asylum seekers. In Queensland there is the Zine and Indie Comic Symposium which happens over a weekend at the end of August. There is also the This Is Not Art zine



fair which happens at the National Young Writers festival in Newcastle NSW every October. Over recent years Sticky has coordinated stalls in Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth, Sydney, Brisbane.

**Outline:** Do you travel to any international zine events?

**Luke/Sticky:** I went to the Auckland Zine fest in 2014 where I gave a talk about Sticky and coordinated a Sticky stall at the zine fair. I've also given talks and run workshops in Canada and the USA.

**Outline:** For illustrators hoping to create their first zine, can you provide any advice - we'd love to hear more about the set up for creating zines in store.

**Luke/Sticky:** Sticky has some facilities that anyone can use in store. The main thing we offer is the photocopier. Copying cost 6 cents a side but if you are a member of Sticky Institute the price comes down to 3 cents a side. We also offer a range of badge making equipment in store that costs 50 cents a badge.

**Outline:** What festivals and events does the Sticky Institute get involved with?

**Luke/Sticky:** Sticky ran a zine stall in Sydney last weekend at the "Second Circulation" zine exhibition at Verge Gallery. We are running a zine stall at the Newstead Short Story Tattoo in central Victoria in late April. We will have a stall at the Other Worlds Zine fair in Sydney in May,

a stall at the Zine and Indie Comic Symposium in Brisbane in late August as well as putting up stalls at gigs and exhibition openings and the like around Melbourne throughout the year. Tonerpalooza will not be happening in 2015 as the State Library of Victoria has been cutting back on their events and decided not to fund the zine festival in 2015. The Festival of the Photocopier will be happening again in February 2016. There are always zine events and zine launches happening in store at Sticky which you can find about through the Sticky website, Sticky Facebook page or by dropping by the shop.

**Outline:** We'd love to hear about any other upcoming plans and events for the Sticky Institute.

**Luke/Sticky:** The main plan is simple. Be open Wednesday to Friday 12 noon to 6pm and 12 noon to 5pm on Saturdays into the future. This allows people to have access to the zines we stock and coordinating volunteers every week of the year is a pretty massive undertaking for a completely volunteer run project. I guess the main goal is to continue getting the zines to the kids, Sticky Institute 2001 to 2015. ●

**{CLICK!} The Sticky Institute**

**Website** <http://www.stickyinstitute.com>

**Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/stickytheinstitute>

## {ARTICLE}

Breaking news for illustrators of graphic novels and comics - we are grateful to the powerhouse team of Elizabeth MacFarlane, Bernard Caleo and Erica Wagner for sharing the exciting beginnings of their new publishing house.

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## Twelve Panels Press

A new Australian publishing house for long-form comics, by Elizabeth MacFarlane

The inking for Twelve Panels Press began four years ago in an East Brunswick coffee shop. Bernard Caleo and I had already been scheming for a year over the successful implementation of the University of Melbourne creative writing subject 'Graphic Narratives'. Now we were discussing the next step in comics domination.

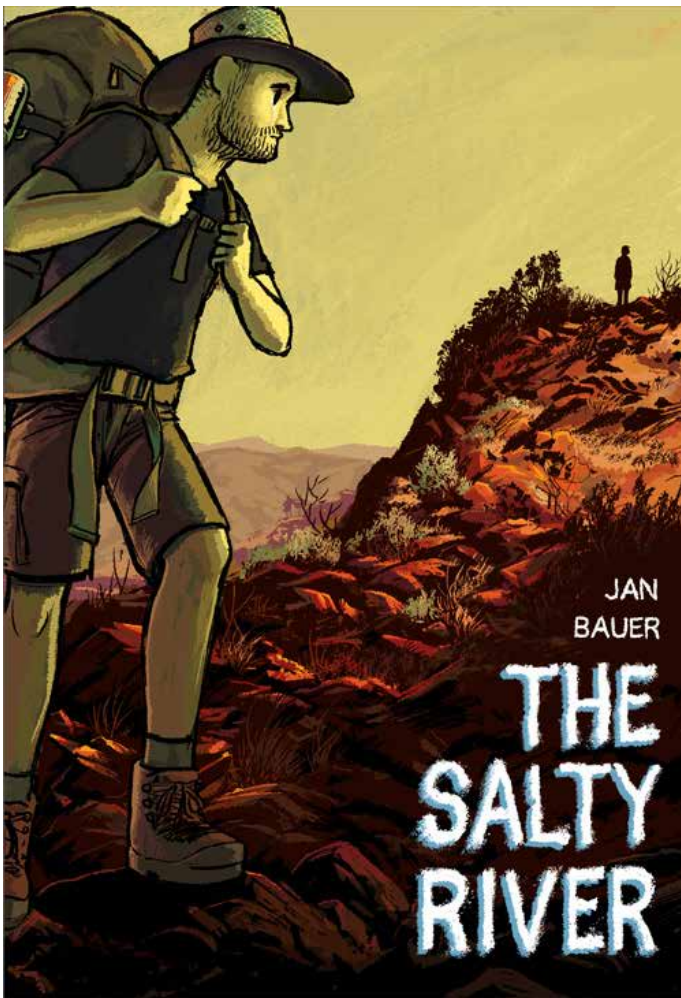
At the end of four coffees and two biscuits, we had a name and the beginnings of a logo. But, as we both acknowledged, also no time and no money. Over the next few years, Bernard made a movie and I made a baby. Twelve Panels Press lingered tantalizingly in the background – something we would eventually get to, when the next project was over, and the next, and the next...

It was clear to us that Australia needed a boutique publisher of 'literary' comics – long-form graphic novels with narrative depth, beautiful art, and attention to production values. Books that could be found not just in specialty comic book shops and pop culture convention stalls, but could also sit comfortably on the shelves of Readings Bookstore, Kinokuniya, literary festival events, and your local School and public library. When Bernard came back from travelling around Europe promoting his (and director Daniel Hayward's) feature documentary *Graphic Novels! Melbourne!* we added books-in-translation to our publishing possibilities.

Erica Wagner joined the conversations around the middle of 2014 and brought with her over 25 years of publishing experience, including pioneering the Allen & Unwin graphic novels publishing program which has included such titles as Nicki Greenberg's adaptations of *The Great Gatsby* and *Hamlet*, Bruce Mutard's *The Sacrifice*, and Mandy Ord's *Sensitive Creatures*. Erica and Bernard had also been talking for years, discussing possibilities and angles and mad schemes. It was time for the three of us to start drinking coffee and plotting together.

On my office wall I have a little sketch of Bernard that I drew while he gave a talk to my Graphic Narratives students. The quote in his speech bubble: "The currency of comics is obsession and unreasonable love." For all three of us, the medium of comics is a passion. It is a storytelling form we believe in so strongly that most of our various projects involving comics have been labours born of love and returning nothing but love. We want Twelve Panels to be not just a press, but a presence: a way of fostering and enriching the reading community's understanding of and engagement with this beautiful medium. We would like each of our books and their authors to spark the seeds of discussion: in book clubs, school and university classrooms, bookshops, public forums. Each of us has a unique channel by which we approach the form of comics – as artist, academic, publisher – and we want to use and share this dynamic with as broad a readership as possible.

At the beginning of 2015, things began to happen remarkably quickly for Twelve Panels Press – so quickly that we found ourselves in April with the contract and distribution rights for our first book, *Der salzige Fluss (The Salty River)* by Jan Bauer. Bauer, a Hamburg author, animator and teacher, will be a guest at the Melbourne Writers Festival in August, and a number of other festival events



nationally. Twelve Panels Press will be proudly promoting the English translation of his beautiful debut graphic novel.

*The Salty River* follows its author-protagonist Jan Bauer who is reeling from a difficult break-up and a sad loss in his native Germany. Bauer sets off for the Australian desert in search of himself. His 450-kilometre journey takes him into the scorching hot centre of Australia. There he meets a fellow wanderer, the young French woman, Morgane. The two grow closer as step by step they traverse the tough and beautiful Larapinta trail's dry and salty riverbeds. The story is a tender and unexpected love story set in a spectacular environment, a story of learning the importance of keeping an open heart. Throughout the book the reader is treated to Bauer's stunning full-page drawings of the landscapes of Australia's centre.

Translating Bauer's book is at the time of this article still in process. Our wonderful translator, Judith Pattinson, has previously translated the award-winning German novel *Erebus* by Ursula Poznanski. She studied European languages in Australia and on the shores of Lake Constance in Germany and has worked as a translator, production editor, web designer and bookseller. The unique challenge

of translating a German graphic novel whose two main characters are speaking English as their second language has been a stimulating process for both Judith and the three of us as we edit the manuscript. Judith wrote to us recently: "It's just such a cool project to be involved in that I still can't believe my luck!" We agree sincerely.

As a small publisher starting out and coming to grips with the market, Twelve Panels Press will keep things modest going forward. We are in discussions with a number of other potential authors, both local and international. At the start of all our meetings, Erica reminds herself (and us) to "try to stay calm". Not an easy task when we are seeing the beginnings of a 5-year dream approach reality. **1**

*Dr Elizabeth MacFarlane is a writer and lecturer in creative writing at the University of Melbourne. In 2011 she designed the subject Graphic Narratives, the first tertiary subject in Australia devoted to the comics medium. Elizabeth also co-directs the Comic Art Workshop, an annual residency for emerging comics artists, and is currently researching Graphic Medicine – the relationship between comics, illness narratives, and medical schools.*

**{CLICK!} More Information**

Learn more about the work of the members of  
Twelve Panels Press:

**Bernard Caleo** <http://www.cardigancomics.com>

**Elizabeth MacFarlane** [www.elizabethmacfarlane.com.au](http://www.elizabethmacfarlane.com.au)  
[www.comicartworkshop.com.au](http://www.comicartworkshop.com.au). Look for the "Graphic Narratives at Melbourne Uni" page on Facebook.

**Erica Wagner** <http://www.ericawagner.com.au> - also please see edition 1, 2014 for a full profile on Erica's work.



{PROFILE}



*seeds of svalbard*

Alisha Jade

## Alisa Jade

Comic book creator, keeper of the “Australian Women in Comics” list, industry spokesperson, self-publisher, traveller and all round creative talent, we take a look into the work of “unstoppable force” Alisha Jade.

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**Outline:** We'd love to hear a bit about your background and your current work as an illustrator.

**Alisha:** My background is a little eclectic - I've a Bachelors in Literary Theory and Writing but work as a kind of Project Manager for a large company, so while I've come from origins of very literary fare I might as well have a Bachelors in Kicking Butt and Taking Names, since that's most of what I do! My work in comics has become quite similar, in that I'm not only interested in publishing my own work and driving myself to new challenges and working with others, but also in raising the profile of women in comics, specifically locally, and the awareness of comics in general to the wider public. Much of my time now feels spent in the administrative side rather than

artistic, but I'm sure I'll find a balance soon.

**Outline:** You recently travelled interstate and overseas - we'd love to know some of the events and inspiration you found along the way.

**Alisha:** I travel interstate probably more often than is good for my budget, but my recent trip to Japan was something I've been wanting to do since the last short trip I spent there. We were there for an entire month, and it was fascinating to observe not only the incredible differences in our surface cultures and ideas, but also in the way we approach comics and art and censorship. I visited Comiket, which is one of the largest, our equivalent would be zine fairs probably, in the world. Production types ranged from





the photocopied and stapled to the glossy, professionally printed, and an impressive amount of it was heavily romance based or straight out pornographic. It really interests me, coming from a culture that accepts the objectification in the everyday for women but rejects depictions of female pleasure, to see rows upon rows of creators offering comics largely by women, for women, with a strong emphasis on relationships that definitely weren't platonic! While it would take more study than I think anyone could devote and make comics at the same time to consider if Japan's approach to sexuality as public thoroughfare is 'healthier' than our shame culture, it's absolutely amazing to muse upon and get a very different perspective.

**Outline:** Congratulations on your award of a Platinum Ledger! Can you tell us about the Ledgers and your award - what it represents, and other awards presented?

**Alisha:** Thank you! The Ledgers are an award program that was recently rejuvenated and represents something I think is really important in the local comics community - celebration. Being such an insular group of people, we really don't celebrate enough, and the Ledgers are an opportunity to highlight excellent current works alongside significant contributions to the wider community. The Ledger I received was of the latter, a Ledger recognising work that I've done in the comics community both with the Women in Comics List to promote local lady creators, Minicomicon, an event I ran in Brisbane this year, along

with what I figure is general Awesomeness. I think in the speech someone called me an 'unstoppable force'. I rather like that!

**Outline:** What is your typical process to create your comic book work?

**Alisha:** My typical process varies with the different books and stories I make, and I try to constantly refine and alter my process to become more effective. In basics though, I'll generally think of a concept (often rather quickly, ideas really aren't difficult, the work is in execution) and jot down a rough script. From this I'll create thumbnails, then upsize these digitally to create pencils. I ink these using a lightbox and if there's colour, I'll add this generally traditionally with copic markers. All these steps vary though, sometimes I'll skip thumbnails, other times I'll do digital colour. I've even just finished putting together a comic where I didn't even DRAW it, a collaboration! That one's very new to me but it's turning out quite fun!

**Outline:** I've noticed quite a few comic book artists manage their own "mini print presses" (or self-publish in other words) - can you tell us a bit more about the process of setting up your own business publishing your comic work?

**Alisha:** Most local creators, even if they're not publishing under an 'imprint' will be self publishing in exactly the same way as anyone with an official business name. They



just may not know it. Depending on what they want to focus on is how their imprint will be set up. I want mine to grow and envelop more than just my solo work, and as such I've created systems that support that, where as many are primarily interested in getting their own work out there at a minimal loss. I mentioned before that I spend a lot of time now on admin duties, which is something most self-publishing artists do not want to burden themselves with. And for certain types of self-publishing, that's fine!

**Outline:** Comic books are traditionally seen as an area dominated by male artists (and perhaps "masculine themes"). Why is this the case? Do you believe this is changing?

**Alisha:** Comics have indeed traditionally been seen as a 'masculine' field, but as with almost any other occupation or passion, women have always been there. I'm noticing more and more that, it really doesn't matter in numbers terms what percentage are termed 'men' or 'women' (or non-binary) to perception, but how visible the creators are. That's why I try to make sure I can be public at events like conventions, or online, women have long been a group in comics that have not been heard, and there is no reason with the tools we have today that we need to accept that any longer. The advent of the internet and accessible platforms and social media was the end of a truly 'male

dominated' field. It took a long time for me to realise that being ignored by many creators is not the same as not being allowed into the club - what it means is that the way is open for us to take our right to be here and forge new paths and audiences for our work. It almost helps that much of the audience was as neglected as the creators in some ways. At events almost all my readership comes from women... the audience is coming out from the shadows as we are stepping out with them.

**Outline:** You manage the list of "Australian Women in Comics" which is fantastically long! Can you tell us a bit more about your inspiration for this page?

**Alisha:** I have to admit, the original spark that created the idea of The List for me was a completely random happenstance, in that a presentation was given to a group of people that included a comment along the lines of '*women in comics: ???*'. I saw it online, and it was the straw that broke my reserve, and while for those first few days especially I was pretty mad, I've come to look back at it with amusement (and even told the creator recently) and even gratitude. The List quickly exploded into something I hadn't expected, a listing of over 120 women and a complete inspiration. I'm hoping to be able to turn the list into a real database on its' own site at some stage, when time permits. It's growing all the time!



**Outline:** We'd love an overview of some of the leading female comic book artists in Australia and abroad that we can research further.

**Alisha:** There are a lot of creators locally I'm inspired by, and what's interesting is that there is some incredible work coming from people who have never really done comics before, but are giving it a solid go! Creators I'm watching for work by include Sam Calcraft, Lex Sugden, Frank Candiloro, Caitlin Major, Mel Stringer, Chris Gooch, Ele Jenkins, Katie Parrish, and Lee Lai for a few, but to be honest I'm hoping to pick up work by at least three quarters of the people on the Women in Comics list at some point!

**Outline:** Finally, if you have any plans for the rest of 2015 you can share with the IA community, we'd love to hear

them!

**Alisha:** I have many plans, what remains to be seen is my ability to reach them! I'm about to launch the first collaboration I've ever done, with Caitlin Major, called Seeds of Svalbard, and I could not be more excited! It's really gorgeous and Caitlin's designs are perfect. I'm also working on a bunch of new comics, sticking my nose into a possible new event and considering an anthology! But it's still really early in the year, so everything might have changed come October! ●

{▶CLICK!} Alisha Jade

Website <http://www.ohmycomics.com>

# Milk Shadow Books

Below artwork by Ben Hutchings, Iron Bard Ballisto. Ben is also profiled in this edition.



# James Andre/Milk Shadow Books

Creator of publishing label Milk Shadow Books, James' great deal of experience across comic books and publishing is shared with *Outline*, along with work of some of the amazing talent he represents.

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**Outline:** When I began researching this edition, I had several recommendations to contact Milk Shadow Books. Could you tell us about your own background, and the background of your publishing house? What do you think has built your reputation in the industry?

**James:** Bordering on obsession, I've always loved books and comics. This changed in my teens when I started getting more into film, but in my twenties I came back to comics. The medium allows both huge and personal visions to be generated with little money. They're something intimate that can be created by one, or a few people, and then presented directly to the reader.

When I moved to Melbourne several years ago I spent my

days working in low paid menial jobs to support myself. At night I would write scripts, prose and poetry in the cramped bedrooms of wherever I lived at the time. Milk Shadow Books was a publishing label that I created for the first novella, *'The Infernal Sugar Dive'* that I wrote and illustrated myself. I thought it would look more professional having a label on it. I've since used the MSB name on everything that we've published.

I didn't know many people when I moved to Melbourne but there was a monthly comic meet at a local pub. Liking both comics and beer, I went along each month. Somebody once called it a support group for nerds, which it probably is, but many of my friends to this day were met in that group. Eventually as I published more work, I started

Left: Ben Constantine, "Squirt Stone - The Collected Plump Oyster Vol 1", right: Bobby N. "No Map But, Not Lost"





Left: Scarlette Baccini "Zombolette", right: Jase Harper "Awkwood"

publishing work from people whose work I admired. We've recently won some Ledger and Aurealis Awards, so that's also helped us get more professional recognition. I just try and help artists get their work into print.

**Outline:** To get more into the nuts and bolts, it would be great to get more of an overview about the structure of your business and as well as the independent and small presses you work with.

**James:** Our business is very small. We have four production staff, myself included, who work on a contract basis when things need to be done. This includes proofreading, design, and anything else that needs doing. My wife Matilde is also incredibly supportive, and luckily has a good eye for design and business too. I still work a day job. This job and returns from past books help to produce new publications. We currently publish two to four projects a year. We just try and release titles once they're ready, and not rushed. The quality of the work and its presentation is vital to us so it needs to be right. We then launch the book once it's printed.

**Outline:** I know Madman as a film distributor, but saw that they distribute your books. Could you tell us how this arrangement works, and where interested illustrators could track down some of your great titles?

**James:** Yes, Madman Entertainment are our official Australian and New Zealand retail distributor. So they stock the shops and conventions, while we sell the books ourselves through our website ([www.milkshadowbooks.com](http://www.milkshadowbooks.com)), at some smaller fairs and to some select shops. Overseas folks can track them down on Amazon, The Book Depository etc. Stockists in Australia and New Zealand can order direct from Madman or can contact me for more details.

Madman have been great. They're strong supporters of Australian content, bizarre animation and general weird cinema. As a long time fan of their catalogue, I feel incredibly lucky to be part of what they do.

**Outline:** When new comic book illustrators contact you with their portfolios/book concepts, what makes a stand out artist? What sort of artists/writers do you work with?

**James:** Imagination is the key factor. A unique art style helps. Having something to say along with a strong style is important too. I'm a fan of surreal black comedy, so most of our work has an undertone of that. Material that will appeal to a diverse audience is good. Stories that haven't been told in a certain way previously. Anybody that said that everything has been done before probably wouldn't last long with us.

We generally print graphic novels and trade paperbacks in B/W. At this stage we're officially closed for submissions, but anyone looking to submit work could probably shoot me an email at [james.andre@milkshadowbooks.com](mailto:james.andre@milkshadowbooks.com) for a look.

**Outline:** You've written some of your own comic books/zines. As the author, could you tell us about the working relationship with an artist - I can imagine it could possibly be quite a collaborative process?

**James:** It's enjoyable. An artist will rarely envision something perfectly as you imagined it. But that's often for the best. If you're working with like-minded artists then they will bring their own life experience, style, and media tastes to the project, then things should build to be better than you had initially hoped for. I'm not a great artist but I know a few. It's an honour to see your creations taken seriously. Especially to then have them put their time into them to give them life.

I'm currently working on my first full-length graphic novel, *The Sceptics* with Jase Harper on art. Jase brings many years of professional animation experience to the project. This is extremely helpful in simplifying scenes to their core actions, and making the flow of the art accessible. I wrote the story with Jase's art style in mind, so that really pushed me to put in visual elements that I thought Jase would excel at.

**Outline:** Could you tell us a bit more about the general comic book scene in Australia and New Zealand? Which of our comic artists are well known internationally?

**James:** The Australian scene has picked up over the past few years. It's always been slightly fragmented, with small pockets of art-house comics, genre-orientated people, and mainstreamers. Recently each of those fragments have developed into something larger, and sometimes mixed with each other.

We work with some people who have a large online following such as Tim Molloy and Ben Constantine, but also some well known locals such as Jase Harper, Ben Hutchings, Scarlette Baccini, Bobby.N and Dillon Naylor. Ben and Jase are also part of the Squishface Studio, Australia's first comics gallery and studio. (*Also interviewed in this edition - Ed*).

Some of the other artists who are becoming more known overseas are people like Pat Grant, Mel Stringer, Simon Hanselmann, Campbell Whyte, Doug Holgate, Dean Rankine... There's lots of talented Australians producing work that's unrestricted by distance or physical printing due to the freedom of the internet.

**Outline:** Possibly a quite silly question, but what defines a zine vs a comic?

**James:** A comic is generally a monthly floppy style comic art/story magazine. Whereas a zine is usually a small A5 sized (but it could be any size really) printed, photocopied and stapled (maga)zine that could have stories, articles, rants, photos, drawings etc.

You've then got graphic novels (or original graphic novels/ OGNs as they're sometimes called) which has one long form comic story that is published in a book format, while trade paperbacks are when a series of monthly comic floppies are published together in a book. Confusing, but I think that's about right.

**Outline:** We'd love to know upcoming books/zines/comics we should look out for.

**James:** In a couple of months we'll be publishing a follow-up to our first newspaper comic. This is by Ben 'Hutecho' Hutchings again. His last one, *Walking to Japan*, was a silent reflective yet bright piece about literally walking across the sea to Japan. But his next newspaper is the opposite. *Iron Bard Ballisto* is a black comedy about a viking musician warrior who takes on a building full of assassins. It sounds silly, and is even sillier when you read it. But it's also a masterpiece. Ben has taken two years to pencil, ink and create all of the textures by hand. It'll be something special.

We'll have a third volume of *Mr Unpronounceable* from Tim Molloy later in the year. That's looking like a regular event. I think of it as an evil Tintin meets H.P. Lovecraft series of books, but that's probably incorrect. Tim is on another level when it comes to comics.

We have some horror noir in the form of *Gone Fishin'*. That'll be the latest book in the *Dicks* series by Tom Bonin. That's basically a stylish, almost European looking, series about Tom (Waits) and Bill (Burroughs) fighting monsters and supernatural forces.

Finally as mentioned above, I've almost finished the first draft of my new graphic novel, *The Sceptics*. Feeling very happy that Jase Harper's doing the hard work of drawing the thing. It's a horror black comedy featuring death metal, dinosaurs, science and religious cults. It should be fun and possibly offensive.

There's more on the go, but that's top secret comics stuff for now. ●

**{CLICK!} Milk Shadow Books**

Website <http://www.milkshadowbooks.com>

{PROFILE}



# Mirranda Burton



## Mirranda Burton

Talented printmaker and graphic story teller, Mirranda shares a look into her education, work, art making, and path to publication.

**Outline:** We'd love to hear an overview of your career and travels, and the big influences for your art making.

**Mirranda:** I graduated from the North Adelaide School of Art in South Australia in 1995, after which I spent three years travelling and working overseas. Returning to Melbourne I picked up my artistic journey again, furthering my interest in art, design, and animation by completing a

degree in Multimedia Design at Swinburne University. From there I headed to Sydney and worked in the animation industry for two and a half years where I was able to refine a wide range of skills. When professional opportunities began to shrink considerably, I returned to Melbourne to freelance as an artist, cartoonist, designer, and animator.

The influences on my work have been diverse, from the



**Mirranda:** I have been printing my linocuts at the Baldessin Press in St Andrews in the last year, after they restored their beautiful 1857 Albion Press. I have only taught one weekend workshop in relief printing there, but no doubt more will be scheduled in the future.



**Outline:** I'd love to know more about the step-by-step process of creating silk cut linoleum prints in particular (the prints shared on your blog are amazing!)

**Mirranda:** Creating my linocuts always begins with drawing. It takes weeks for me to resolve a design, but eventually I transfer (in reverse) with carbon paper the image on to lino. I then carve out the negative space, or everything that I want to be white or the colour of the paper on which it is to be printed. Then I roll ink on the lino block, and print it by means of an etching or Albion press.

cinematic worlds of Akira Kurosawa, Charlie Chaplin, Aardman Animation to vintage textiles and German expressionist printmaking.

**Outline:** You've a great deal of experience in animation, and worked for Disney in Australia. Do you find many similarities between comic books and animation? What do you find are the most rewarding and challenging aspects of each medium?

**Mirranda:** Animation is a medium that exercises considerably more control in the way it is viewed than comics, dictating the amount of time sequences are experienced and giving more distinct voices and personalities to characters. I've always felt I have more room to move in a comic due to the physical gaps between panels and a psychological space in which the characters and environments can expand in my imagination. Both media come with equal challenges and rewards. Animation is naturally painstakingly slow, often producing only 1-3 seconds of raw footage after a long day of work. However the joy of seeing inanimate materials come to life on screen is always magical, and you feel like Dr Frankenstein after creating a new breathing life form. The all consuming nature of animation makes me appreciate the relative immediacy of making comics with so few resources, where I am left with the simple challenges of effective story-telling and drawing.

**Outline:** It was great to hear of your work at the Baldessin Press (this print studio was mentioned in the last edition). Could you give us an insight into your printmaking experience and the classes you run there?

**Outline:** Do you exhibit your work?

**Mirranda:** I exhibit my work currently in galleries and in the Nillumbik Artists Open Studios program.

**Outline:** Could you explain to us the differences between a graphic novel and a comic book?

**Mirranda:** A comic book is generally a shorter story form, where as a graphic novel indicates a longer work and a considerably more in-depth story.





**Outline:** Congratulations on your awards for your graphic novel *Hidden*. Could you tell us a bit more about this project? What inspired this work, and what process did you follow to create it? Was it difficult to get it published?

**Miranda:** *Hidden* is a graphic novel consisting of four short stories inspired by my work running an art program for adults with intellectual disabilities. I chose the cartooning medium for its simplicity and accessibility, which I felt helped humanise complex and confronting characters. The book was published almost accidentally, when I was living next door to Black Pepper Publishing. I was planning to self-publish, and so asked for advice in regards to printing technicalities. It was a surprise when they asked to see a sample of my book and then made an offer to publish the work.

**Outline:** We'd love to hear of your upcoming projects/exhibitions and/or classes.

**Miranda:** At the moment I'm working on another graphic story book called 'The wombat that wouldn't do combat.' It's based on true events that took place during the Vietnam war years in Melbourne when a wombat was registered for military service as a form of protest against conscription. The story explores the series of trip wires

that were set off in military bureaucracy when the wombat instinctively went underground just before he was called up to serve in Vietnam.

**Outline:** For IA members who want to research other comic book/graphic artists in Australia, are there any colleagues/studios or other resources/people you can recommend?

**Miranda:** Comic book artists largely work very independently and are often self-taught. However Squishface Studio in Brunswick is a collective of cartoonists, regularly holding small events, talks and gatherings, providing an excellent starting point for finding out more. Minotaur Books in Melbourne also have a dedicated space for Australian comic book creators, offering a cross section of work from locals. Another launching pad is the annual Ledger Awards, announcing their pick of the best in Australian comics, often bringing to the fore relatively unknown talented authors and artists. ●

**{CLICK!} Miranda Burton**

Website <http://www.pawpedaller.com/nav.html>

{PROFILE}

# Tim Molloy



# Tim Molloy

Confession: before I put this edition together, I really didn't know where to start. When researching, several people recommended I got in touch with Tim. You'll understand why after reading this interview with *Outline*, and I'm so grateful I have been introduced to his incredible work.

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**Outline:** We'd love to hear about your career path, education, and early inspiration for the comic book world.

**Tim:** When people ask me when I started drawing, I often tell them "as soon as I had a crayon in my hand as a toddler." And it's true, I just never stopped. I was making my own comics (inspired by the usual stuff: *Tin Tin*, *Asterix*, kids cartoons and superhero comics) by the age of ten.

After going to my first comic convention in Auckland at the age of 14 or 15 I started to think about DIY self-publishing. I was amazed that there were people in Auckland doing just that.

By this point I was also into *2000AD*, *Milk And Cheese*, and *Lobo*. I was all about the anti-hero.

The idea of self-publishing my own work was somehow both transgressive, and non-confrontational at the same time.

Perfect for an awkward adolescent with grandiose dreams of world domination.

Later, I remember seeing a comic by a guy called James James on the shelf at the comic store and thinking, "I could do this too." I saw a commonality in humor and aesthetic, he seemed to be about my age. We became good friends, partners in crime and sometimes collaborators.

By the end of High School I was publishing my own little free A4 pamphlet called '*Poot*'.

This was followed up by '*Ninja Sheep*'. Once I was out of school I quickly got a spot doing a weekly page for the Auckland University magazine *Craccum*. They started off being pretty gag orientated and infantile, but pretty soon I found new inspiration in psychedelia and surrealism. At this time I was studying Animation, which I did for four years. All the while I was honing my skills and living the crummy life of a student/artist/musician in Auckland. I worked as





an animator in kids TV for a year or so, but decided that my soul probably couldn't take the crushing life of a studio monkey for too much longer.

Eventually, I moved over here and haven't looked back. I was picked up by Jacky Winter Illustration Agency and a while later approached by Milk Shadow Books who have now published three of my books.

**Outline:** What are you currently working on?

**Tim:** I am working on my third *Mr Unpronounceable* book at the moment. It is going to be called 'Mr Unpronounceable And The Infinity Of Nightmares' and will follow our (anti) hero as he journeys to the Great Library on the dark side of the Moon. As usual he is on a misguided quest for esoteric knowledge that will end horribly for all involved. There will be Mandrills. (Note from Ed - see our amazing cover image!).

**Outline:** Was your move from New Zealand to Melbourne based on work opportunities? What is the comic book scene in NZ like?

**Tim:** Basically, yes. I think the long term plan was to go further afield but I've become happily stuck here, as many people do. It is a great city, with a vibrant art and music scene and I've done a lot of fulfilling illustration work here. The money is just way better in Australia, too. My first job as a dish-pig was earning me significantly more than what I was getting as an animator in Auckland.

The comic scene was, and remains strong in New Zealand. However, it's a bit of a fishbowl in the creative arts back there and I'm the kind of person that would rather be a small fish in a big pond. (Not that I achieved 'big fish' status back there by any means.) In any case, you are forced to grow more that way I think, and there are more nooks and crannies to explore.

**Outline:** This is a fantastic paragraph from your website and gives us a bit of an insight into your work,

*'My work is an ever expanding and interconnected web of dreamlike and nightmarish storylines soaked heavily*

*in delusion, confusion and a general sense of unease. I draw heavily on surrealist techniques, symbolist ideas, synchronicity and dreams to construct my stories. Recurring themes include (but are not exclusive to) death, rebirth, the nature and expansion of consciousness, self-destruction and discovery... There is a kind of pre-apocalyptic tension throughout, balanced (I hope) with a sense of humor that stops it all from getting too serious...'*

Can you share with us a bit more of an insight into the role of the comic book narrative in balancing your work through humour? Have these recurring themes always been part of your art making?

**Tim:** For the longest time they have yes. I have always been on a kind of 'spiritual journey.'

I instigated my own baptism and entry into Catholicism at the age of ten, and then left the church by 14... I had deep problems with the theology. I've dabbled in many 'belief systems' since then, and studied as much armchair esotericism as I could without actually joining a cult. I got deeply involved in the toxic stew of conspiracy theory... all the way down multiple rabbit holes and back, fortunately. I've always been interested in the Occult and continue to lead a vivid and weird dream-life.

At this point in time however, my reality tunnel is extremely skeptical, atheistic and materialistic. In fact, I've found myself recently falling into the philosophies of Nihilism and Anti-Natalism. These are so bleak. True Detective and Thomas Ligotti inspired Cosmic pointlessness. Thankfully, it's too late for me to take this on board in its fullness. I've had a child of my own now, so I'll just have to press on with a cheery smile!

ALL of this serves the art though. I've come to see my work as really an exploration of exploration.

And increasingly, a weird satire of this 'quest for truth' trope.

I've always had a pretty black sense of humor, which I inherit from both my parents' families, and this has served me well over the years. If you don't laugh, you have to cry.



**Outline:** Congratulations on your Aurealis Awards win! Could you tell us about these awards, and the work that was recognised at them?

**Tim:** Thank you! The Aurealis awards are Australia's premier Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy awards for writing. The Graphic Novel category is relatively new and I actually hold the record for being nominated - three times! The third time was the charm and I won the award for *'Mr Unpronounceable and The Sect Of The Bleeding Eye.'*

This book was the follow up to *'Mr Unpronounceable Adventures'* and tells the story of Mr U's conflict with a heretical sect of cultists whose very existence threatens reality itself. It's a surreal adventure that ticks all three genre boxes.

**Outline:** Do you exhibit your traditional artwork, and do you have any upcoming shows you can share with us?

**Tim:** Yes! I've had a number of pretty successful solo shows at the exhibition space above The Old Bar in Fitzroy, but might give the traditional work a rest for a while in favor of the comics stuff! That's said, I do feel the calling of inky fingers and watercolors, so who knows?

**Outline:** You appear to have great skill working digitally

as well as through older school techniques such as painting and sculpture! Do you have preferences working in certain mediums, and could you give us a bit of an overview about your art making process?

**Tim:** I tend to skip around and work on various things at once. At times, I've had several digital comics, watercolors, acrylics and sculptures all on the go at one time. These days, I'm seeing the value in not spreading myself too thin. I have a child now and it helps to be able to seize every moment that I can, and not get too stuck in the studio. I have a portable drawing tablet, so I'm doing most of my work on that these days. Digital is great for speed too, both in completing projects and also in making progress in your practice generally. One of the things that gives me the most satisfaction is seeing myself 'leveling up.' I hate stagnating.

**Outline:** We'd love to hear more about some of the projects you are most proud of to date.

**Tim:** My last book *'Mr Unpronounceable And The Sect Of The Bleeding Eye'* is my proudest achievement to date. It is the longest story I've ever told and sums up a lot of the themes I've been wrestling with over the years. As far as illustration work goes, I recently produced the cover for The Peep Tempels *'Tales.'* It is an awesome album and I am

{PROFILE}

# TINARIWEN

SUNDAY 24TH AUGUST



really proud to be in my own way, involved. This really represented this idea of 'leveling up' to me.

I've had a couple of pieces up on a couple of billboards at different times. There is something about having your work visible from a passing car on the motorway that is pretty exciting for a comics person. Our drawings are usually trapped between neglected pages!

**Outline:** Who are your art/comic book heroes?

**Tim:** Too many to list all of them, but off the top of my head as far as comics go ... Moebius, Jim Woodring, Junji Ito, Charles Burns, Robert Crumb... Ben Stenbeck. Ben is a friend of mine from back in NZ who has achieved his dream, EXACTLY, to work with Mike Mignola and draw Hellboy comics. Big time!

I've recently discovered this amazing Italian artist called Laura Zuchetti. AMAZING! She has illustrated a Graphic Novel called *Swords Of Glass*, and I cannot wait to get my hands on it.

As far as 'fine' art goes: Escher, Helnwein, Dali, Lily Mae Martin (a friend who does the most incredible detailed drawings from life. She is insane with her detail) I'm very drawn to the Lowbrow artists, the Visionaries, the Surrealists, and the Symbolists.

I have always been an avid reader of prose too and love Stephen King, Clive Barker, HP Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Philip K Dick. Recently, Thomas Ligotti. Anything weird, sinister, mind-melting and horrific.

I guess the same goes when it comes to film. David Cronenberg, David Lynch, Dario Argento, John Carpenter, George Romero, and Alejandro Jodorowsky... Holy Mountain is my all time favourite film.

I bet I've neglected to mention about a million people. I like to think I wear my influences on my sleeve though.

**Outline:** For illustrators hoping to learn more about comic books, we'd love to hear your recommendations on stores/artists/events we can get involved in.

**Tim:** All Star Comics is THE place in Melbourne. They are the opposite of the 'comic book store guy' cliché. They won the Eisner Award for best retail store last year. Squishface studios in Melbourne are a great open studio who run constant fun events. One of which is the Home Cooked Comics Festival. We just had that and it was great. Silent Army are a wonderful collective here in Melbourne. More of a punk, street gang vibe. But nice. Milk Shadow Books are the beautiful people who publish me and are very approachable. ●

{CLICK!} Tim Molloy

Website <http://www.timmolloy.com>

# Dean Rankine



MATT  
GROENING

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## {PROFILE}

# Dean Rankine

This clever comic book creator (and rather self-deprecating one at that!) has obviously been recognised through by the industry, being a guest at Supanova, creating work for the Simpson's/Futurama and creating a comic book series whose title alone deserves attention!

**Outline:** We'd love to have an overview of your career, and how you have built a career in comic books. Did you start at an early age? Was it a tough industry to break into?

**Dean:** I've drawn for as long as I can remember. I was particularly influenced by watching too many cartoons as a kid. And comics seemed to be a natural progression. I did an Art & Design course at TAFE '89-'90 and I've been freelancing with on and off success ever since. I have to confess I've always had a part-time 'day job' to help make ends meet. If I was solely relying on my freelance work to pay the bills I would've starved to death somewhere in the middle of '93. But my first freelance work was doing spot illustrations for the school magazines that used to be put out by the Education Department; *Pursuit*, *Comet*, *Challenge*, *Explore*. I've drawn comics for *K-Zone*, *Mania*, *KidZone*, *Australian MAD Magazine* and *The Dandy* and

*The Beano* from UK publisher DC Thomson. As well as book illustrations for Pearson Australia, Acorn Press, Scholastic and Penguin Books. And comics for Bongo, who produce *The Simpsons* and *Futurama Comics*. Comics are notoriously difficult to break into. Living in Australia probably doesn't really help matters. And the thing with comics is it's not just the breaking in part. It's also the maintaining steady work that can be problematic.

**Outline:** How was your recent experience being a guest at Supanova?

**Dean:** SUPANOVA was an absolute BLAST! Drawing at Pop Culture conventions is such a different experience than my usual day-to-day. I'm normally at home by myself staring at a sheet of paper or computer screen and going slowly insane from my lack of contact with other human beings (I swear my cat has started to talk back to me). But at a con I'm drawing people like they're a Simpsons character or drawing their heads in jars a la *Futurama*, so it's constant with people. I'll often have a bit of a crowd watching me draw. So, in some ways, it almost feels like performance art. People get a real kick out of seeing something appear on a blank page.

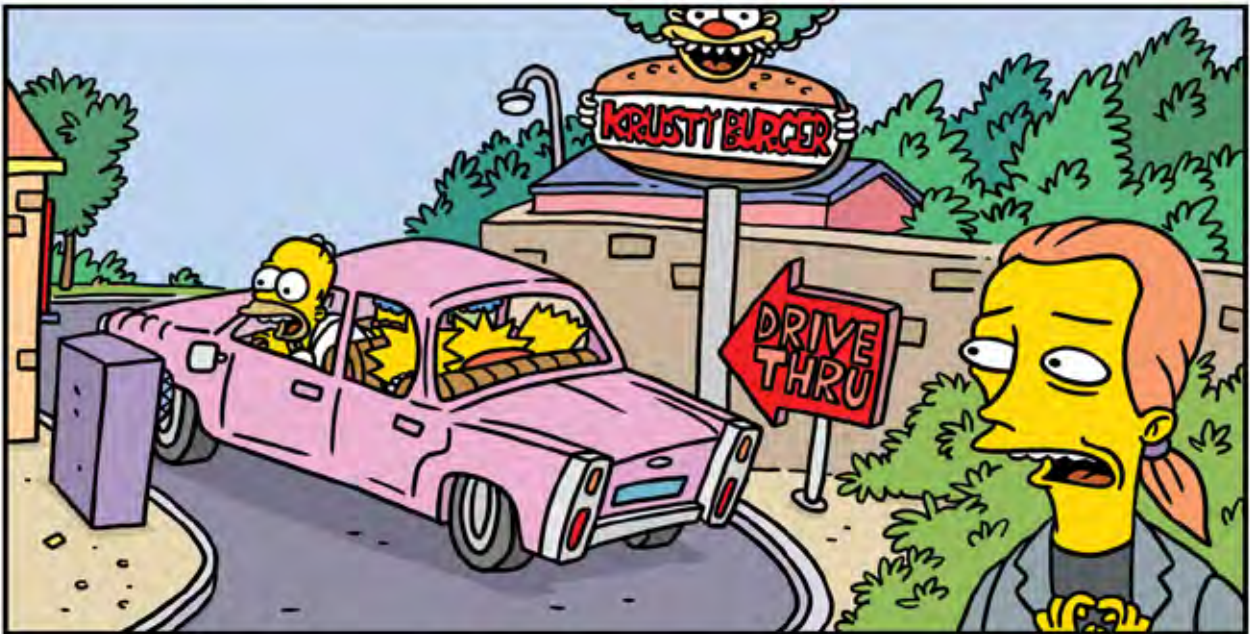
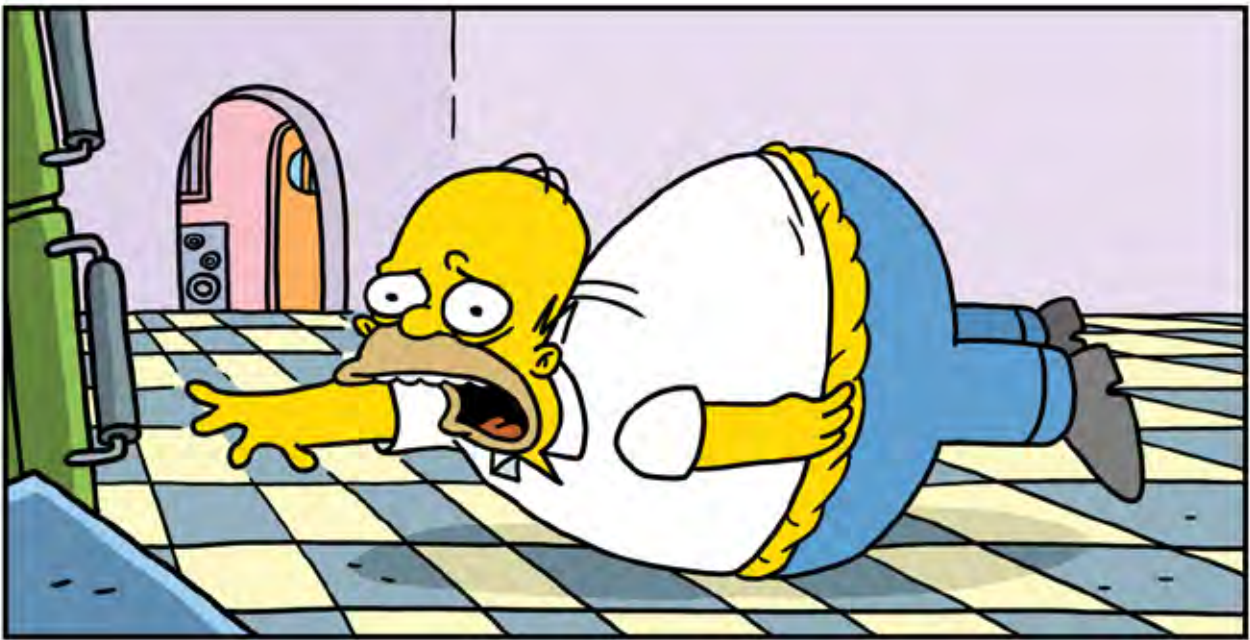
**Outline:** We'd love to hear about the fantastically named "Itty Bitty Bunnies in Rainbow Pixie Candy Land" series. How does this fit in your community work?

**Dean:** So 'Itty Bitty Bunnies in Rainbow Pixie Candy Land' is about two naked, drug-using bunny rabbits that inhabit a magical, fantasy world. It's for grown-ups! It's kind of messed-up. On a deeper level it's a social commentary about the Western world. It's all shiny on the outside with this dark, exploitative creamy centre. But generally it's just an excuse for me to draw cute little bunnies doing horrible, horrible things!

So, I've been a Community Worker for about 20 years. A lot of that time has been working with Injecting Drug Users. The Bunnies don't really 'fit' with that directly. It's not like my 'day job' inspired it or anything. But what I will say is, if you spend anytime with Emergency Workers, Nurses or Community Workers you'll soon discover we've developed a pretty dark (and often twisted) sense of humour. And I think that comes out in the Bunnies.

**Outline:** Congratulations on your Ledger award. Can you tell us about these awards and yours specifically?





MATT  
GROENING

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laughing at my response because honestly I can't draw cars to save myself. But that's the theory anyway!

**Outline:** Of course we can't finish up without hearing a bit about your experience creating comics for *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*. Can you tell us how you got such a high profile gig and the experience working with an international team? Do you write and illustrate for them?

**Dean:** Yep. I write and draw for them. I was doing some comics for those kids magazines that you buy in the supermarket. But the work kind of dried up. So, I wandered down to my local Coles to see what magazines were floating around and I picked up a copy of *The Simpsons*. I flicked through it and it all looked pretty good. But I came across this one page and I thought, 'Ya know, that's not so great. I could just about do that'. Some people are inspired by great art but I was inspired by average art because it gave me the sense that this was actually achievable. So I started submitting work. And by maybe the third story I sent in, they started using my stuff. I don't know why. Because, looking back, it was pretty horrible. But they must have seen something in what I was doing because they've been using my work ever since. It's been going on for a number of years now. And they've just been great to work for. But, interestingly, I've never spoken to anyone in the flesh. All my contact has been over email. Which, I have to say, I don't mind. I can get kind of nervous around people so it's kind of perfect.

**Outline:** Who are your comic book art heroes and why?

**Dean:** If I ever met Sergio Aragonés in person I think I'd completely lose it! He's the artist best known for those little cartoons in the borders of MAD Magazine. He's just so clever (and QUICK) and I admire his longevity in the industry. I think Matt Groening is amazing. Alex Toth is a GOD! Same with Jack Kirby. I always adored Savage Steve Holland's animation in movies like *'Better Off Dead'* and *'One Crazy Summer'*. And I think John K who created *Ren & Stimpy* is a genius.

**Outline:** We'd love to hear of your plans for the rest of the year.

**Dean:** I've done 6 cons already this year and I've got a stack more. So that'll keep me busy. Comics wise I'm in the middle of issue #5 of *Itty Bitty Bunnies* and I've got one more to do before they're put together in a trade paperback. I'll do some more work for *Simpsons* hopefully. I'll submit some work to some other publishers which will hopefully get some traction. I've got bits and pieces of freelance illustration stuff. And I've written a script for a post-apocalyptic mutant love story which I wouldn't mind making a start on. So, yeah, the rest of the year's looking good. ●

**Dean:** Thanks! I was trying to play it super cool on the awards night. But when they called out my name I was as giddy as a school girl! I wasn't cool! I wasn't cool! The Ledger Awards recognise 'excellence in Australian Comics'. And I received a silver for *Itty Bitty Bunnies*. So, from now on, I'm totally going to write 'Award-winning Comic Writer and Artist' on all my bio's.

**Outline:** What is your process for creating your illustrations - does it change according to the job/series?

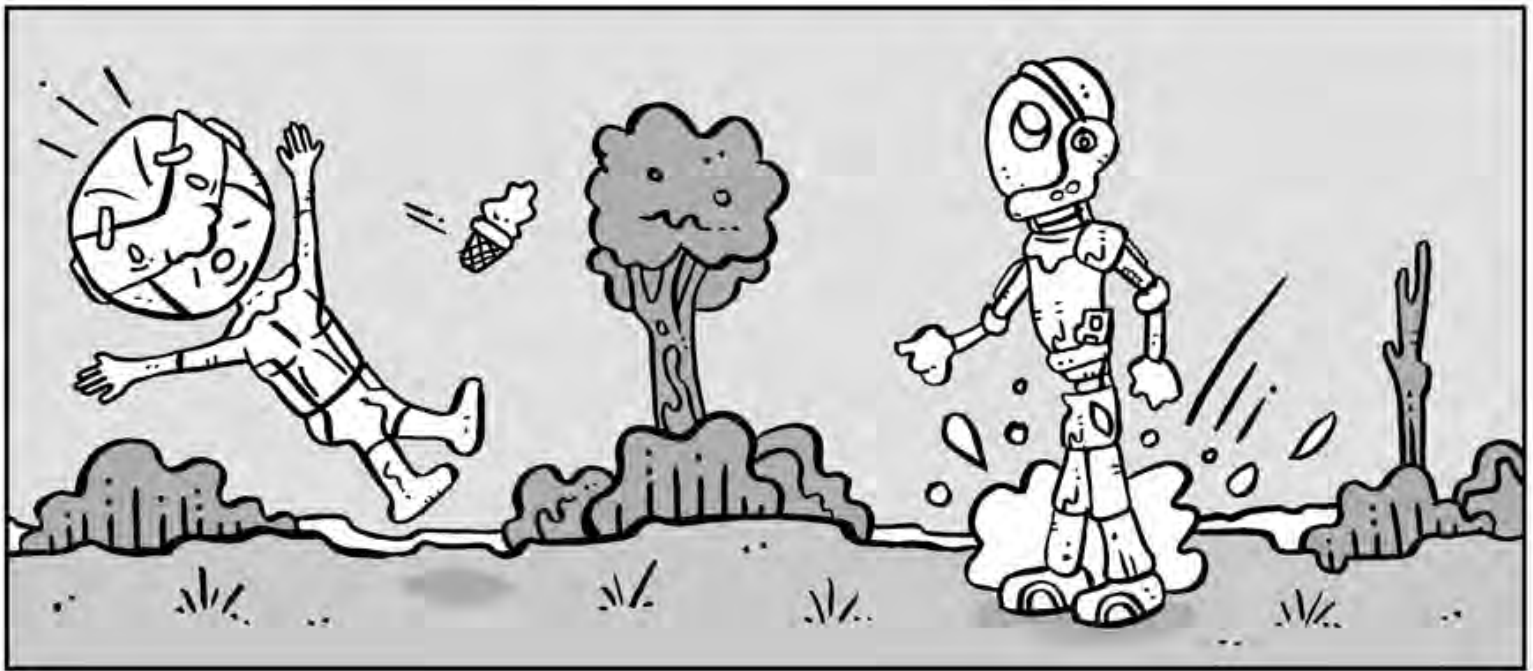
**Dean:** Working on something like the *Simpsons*, I stress a lot more. I'm drawing in someone else's style (or at least trying to) and I'm conscious it's a real privilege to be working on it, so I desperately want to do a good job. So, generally, the pencilling stage normally takes a bit longer. As for how I work, I just pencil onto photocopier paper, scan it into the computer move it around the page to where I want it to go, then 'ink' and colour digitally in photoshop. I've never particularly enjoyed inking so when I got a wacom tablet a couple of years ago it changed my life.

**Outline:** What makes a good comic book artist/illustrator in your opinion? What discipline is involved?

**Dean:** Storytelling is the number one skill. Comics aren't just pretty pictures. You have to be able to lead the reader's eye through a sequence clearly and in an engaging way. Clarity is really important. A dog is supposed to be quickly recognizable as a dog. A car should look like a car. I'm

**{CLICK!} Dean Rankine**

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Matt Emery/Pikitia Press

## {PROFILE}

# Matt Emery/ Pikitia Press

We have featured a few passionate publishing/press businesses in this edition. We finish off this edition of *Outline* by speaking to Matt, who explains the set-up and operations of his own business as well as his personal comic book work.

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**Outline:** Could you give our readers an overview to your own background, and the beginnings of your “micro-publishing” house Pikitia Press?

**Matt:** As a publisher I’m still finding my feet really. Pikitia Press was started as a blog to share historical Australian and New Zealand comics research and also writing about contemporary work. I named it ‘Press’ with the intention of moving incorporating a micro-publishing facet at some stage. That was initiated after about a year of blogging with the publication of Peter Foster and James Kemsley Snr’s first volume of *Ballantyne* newspaper strips in colour.

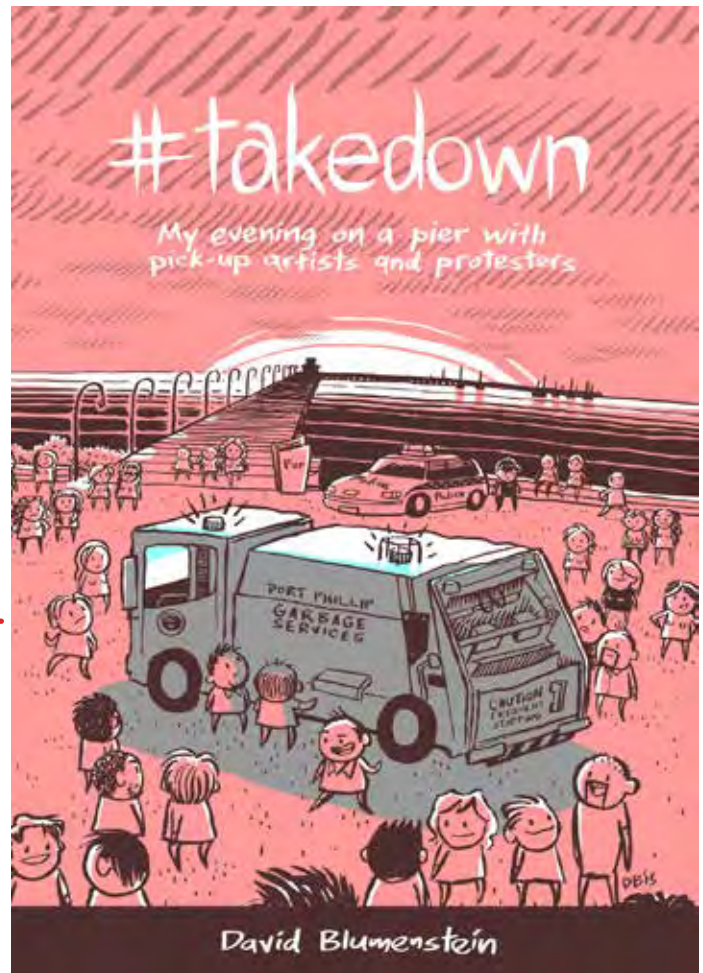
It’s only, now four years later, that I’m getting a proper business infrastructure in place. I entered publishing with the knowledge that there is a very small audience for the sort of work I am interested in publishing but believe through the Internet we’re slowly finding that audience and with a bit of hard work we could get micro-publishing to a point of sustainability. A couple trips to US conventions have been very insightful for making contacts and networking for distribution and publicity.

Regarding myself, I’ve loved comics since I was a young lad and my parents foisted various things in my hands. I’ve practised many art forms over my lifetime but comics have been the constant and around 2008 not long after moving from New Zealand to Australia I decided to start taking it a lot more seriously.

**Outline:** What are the aims of Pikitia Press, and what made you decide to create the business?

**Matt:** I wanted to help some friends get their work out to a wider audience. Also wanted find an outlet through publishing for some of the historical research I’m doing on comics and cartooning. Still working on that part. The challenge having a go at making a sustainable business has also been a motivator.

**Outline:** Are the small publishers in the comic book industry in Australia quite competitive or supportive? What



retailers do you work with, or is your market mainly online?

**Matt:** It’s more of scene here than an industry, most comic artists and even publishers in Australia have day jobs. Some small publishers are very supportive of each but there is also a gulf between some of us because of an utter lack of commonality between what we publish. From what I’ve seen in international scenes this is very common throughout the world.

Online and specialty retailers are the particular market we are pursuing. I have little interest in franchise book stores or mass market book retailing. For the types of comics we publish there is very little interest in these markets and the economics are hard to make work. Sadly they are also rapidly being usurped by online markets. Observing this I’m trying to find a market that will still exist in five years time.

**Outline:** Who are some of the artists you work with? Can you tell us about some of their projects?

**Matt:** David Blumenstein has just had his book *#takedown: My evening on a pier with pick-up artists and protesters* come out (image above). I’ve known David for over a decade and it’s nice to work with him on something which I’d consider the best thing he’s done to date. James Davidson, a New Zealand cartoonist, is also making some of best all ages comics in Australasia with his *Moa* series (cover image next page). Sarah Laing when she is not busy writing novels, working for larger publishers, or co-editing

# MOA



{PROFILE}

brilliant anthologies has made some beautiful auto-bio comics in her *Let Me Be Frank* Series for Pikitia Press (cover image above, right). Sarah's stories are often small personal works which are among my favourite types of comics. In case any of the other artists read this, you are all great! I hope to expand to publishing more artists this year via some anthologies, as always the difficult part is making the economics work.

**Outline:** On your blog you have "happy birthday" posts to many comic artists - a great way for me to learn a little more about some current and historical comic book artists. Could you share with our readers your personal top 5 of comic book artists - from today or the past? What makes their work stand out for you?

**Matt:** I could make a 900 page book about why I like these artists and many more, but in brief a selection from all over the world,

1. Steve Ditko - His tenacity and steadfast adherence to his beliefs and aesthetic. Still making and self-publishing comics in his late eighties! There may never be another cartoonist as iconic and also unknown as Ditko. The last publicly known photograph of him is from the 1960's!
2. Gilbert Hernandez - A workhorse of a cartoonist, about

35 years into his career and now making some of his finest work. I admire his dedication to making comics that he wants to make, regardless of how confronting or unfashionable they may be, not to say some of his work couldn't and shouldn't be embraced by a wider audience.

3. Noel Cook - New Zealand cartoonist who in the 1920's made some of the first Science Fiction comics anywhere in the world. Cook worked in New Zealand, Australia, England and America. He was adept at many styles of art and I'm still discovering the large body of work he created in comics and as a commercial artist

4. Indira Neville - I've known of Indira for a while but have only really engaged with her work recently. Indira makes humorous comics with bite, she is also one of my favourite people to talk with and listen to about comics.

5. Moira Bertram - relatively unknown now but one of the most dynamic comic artists of Australia's golden age of comics. Romance, War, Action, Science Fiction she could do it all brilliantly. Deserves to be recognised internationally for what she accomplished largely in collaboration with her sister Kathleen in what was a predominantly male industry at the time. From sifting through Government records I've also found Moira was one of Australia's first cartoonists to self-publish her work and to recognise the

