

The Quick Life of the Flowering Nose Man

Man

Seth Fisher



By Jeff Singh

Written for CAF-APA 2013

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Seth Fisher.



Seth with a Self Portrait at Comiccon and one of his many chest shaving pictures.

Seth Fisher was a brilliant, young talent that left an immeasurable and lasting mark on the comic world before his life ended tragically in 2006. At the time of his death, he was just starting to get noticed by mainstream comic fans for his unique take on big name heroes.

I met Seth first through his work on *Vertigo Pop! Tokyo* and later on line via emails. At the time I was really getting into Moebius, Darrow and European comic art and I could see the influences in Seth. It was the first time I picked up a new comic and was so taken with the art that I searched out an artist actively. I admired his work and we had enough in common to talk and in the end I purchased a few pages from him. I always figured there would be opportunities to get more art, to talk more and I looked forward to seeing where he would take his art. Sadly that was not meant to be.

Trying to understand Seth and his art is complex. In style, I would say that his art is a hybrid of the simple European line of Herge and Moebius and the craft of manga. There are certainly influences of independent North American artists such as Chris Ware but they are more the icing than the cake.

Once Seth said to an aspiring artist that the best way to write about darkness is by telling a light story and letting the reader find the darkness. Rather than try and define and describe Seth, I will tell you about his life story and his influences and in there you will hopefully find your own insight into who Seth Fisher was.

Some material for this article was through conversations with Seth's mother and several online comic related interviews he gave.





The Timeline

Seth came into this world on July 22, 1972 in Seattle, WA. He was born out of wedlock to Vicky Sinunu and under some unusual circumstances. Vicky later married Seth's father, Steven Fisher, in 1973 and they moved to San Francisco where Steven went to Medical School. Steven later went on to be an Emergency Physician. The marriage didn't last and Seth's parents divorced in 1976. Steven went on to have 5

children that were Seth's step-brothers and step-sisters. Seth lived with his mother in San Diego and spent summers with his father and family. Vicki remarried in 1982 and they all moved to North Virginia with the Navy where Seth attended Grade 6. Two year later he asked to move to live with his father in Custer, South Dakota. From there Seth went on to College at Colorado Springs and then on to the real world.

Seth was married twice. Once to April Brody who he met in college and they had both gone to Japan to teach English. After 4 years in Japan they moved to Italy for a year for April to study Opera. The following year they returned to the US and as Seth spent more time with comic art, April decided to end the marriage. Seth was devastated but poured himself more into his work. After returning the US, he worked as a production designer for the Myst III video game. Although he had done a bit of comic work, his career didn't fully begin until 1999. After living and working in the United States for several years, he settled in Japan and remarried. Hisako gave Seth a son they named Tofu. Seth's life ended in a fall from the roof of a building in Japan in 2006. No one knows for sure what happened but through a bit better understanding of Seth, one can perhaps rationalize this terrible accident that seems unexplainable. More on that later.

This is the framework upon which to hang Seth's life, stories and thoughts. We will go back now to try and understand where Seth came from on this journey and where he was heading.

Growing Up and Finding His Way

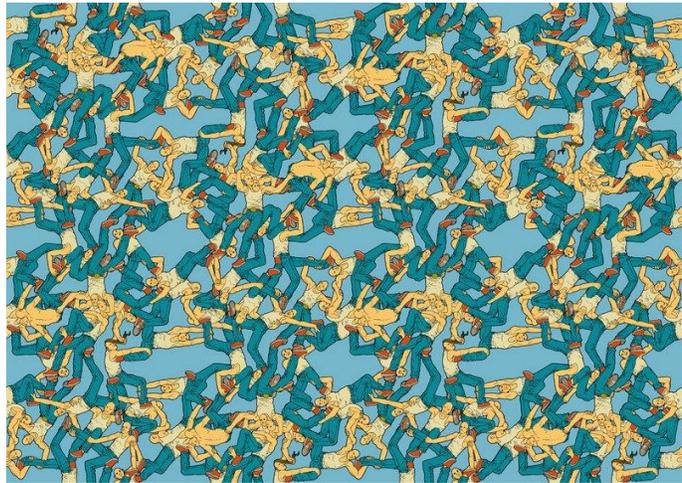
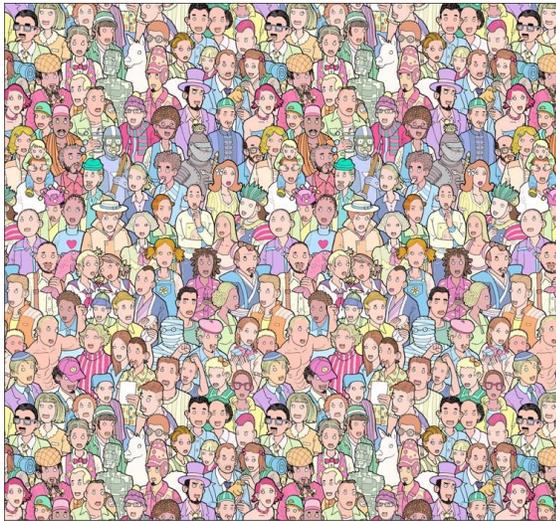
As a child it seems words such as adventurous, curious, humorous and artistic would describe him. Seth's mother recalls some difficulty in school with dyslexia. Comic books provided a bridge for Seth in being able to combine the words with the images and helped him with reading. He didn't read much because of this but he loved to learn. Vicki recalls people saying of Seth as a child, he was well read and she would correct them and say he was well listened. He was a sponge for information. He excelled in art and I read some wonderful anecdotes from his mother about art projects from Kindergarten onward in which he seemed to be in a different world than the kids around him with where he took his art. It was around Grade Six that he first decided he was going to go into comics.

When Seth put his mind to something, he did it and he took it all the way. Another non-art example of this was in-line skating which Seth picked up in high school and he was soon

pushing his limits and jumping cars, flipping and racing. He was good enough to receive sponsorship from a local skate shop.

Seth went to Colorado College right after high school. He had taken a summer art program there the year before and decided that was where he was going and only applied at the one school. Seth studied Mathematics in College. Vicki explained to me that Seth didn't like the Art Department. At the time he was there as they were big on Abstract Expressionism, and he was appalled when some art teacher told him his drawing was too tight and he needed to practice drawing with a stick. Although he only took one art class while attending the College, in his senior year he was given the honor of a solo exhibition of his art at the school. Colorado College is also where he met his future wife April Brody and fellow comic artist and soul mate Langdon Foss. Vicki recalls that he was totally smitten with April.

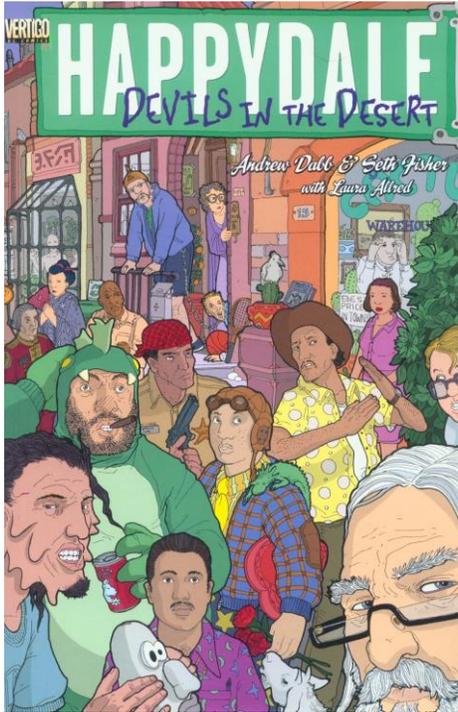
Mathematics does come up a lot on is Seth's work. The precision and technicality of his architectural renderings speak of a more organized process. He loved creating Tessellations, those drawings that can be joined together to make an infinite pattern. There are dozens of these out there, each distinctively Seth.



After college Seth was trying to decide what to do with his life. He loved Japan and most things Japanese and wanted to go over to teach. He signed up for the JET (Japanese Exchange and Teaching) program but wasn't initially accepted. While debating what to do including approaching Moebius about an apprenticeship a place opened up for him with JET and he was off to Japan for three years. April followed him the following year.



Being in Japan agreed with Seth and he loved being a teacher. Although in College he shied away from a second language, with his emersion into Japan he became fluent in Japanese. His enthusiasm and artistic background came through in his teaching. He would often incorporate art and self expression in the way he taught and also tried to elicit the same sort of responses from his students. He was well liked and in his letters home talked about what a



fulfilling and life changing experience teaching was for him. Japan and its culture had a lasting impression on Seth and it seems he found a place he finally belonged. After 4 years in Japan, April and Seth moved to Florence, Italy for a year and they were married there.

While in Italy, Seth met Andrew Dabb on line and they began to work on *Happydale*. Initially Seth did a short 8 page preview for a smaller publisher called Non-Line Band. They had an agreement that fell through when the company collapsed. At that point, Seth and Andrew decided to finish the book and the entire 140 pages of the 2 issues were produced. The art was taken and showed to the editors at DC Comic's Vertigo line and it was picked-up.

After Italy, Seth returned to San Diego to work as a designer for the *Myst III* video game for Presto. When the game production was

done, Seth returned to comics and approached DC with a pitch that eventually led to the creation of *Willworld*, a Green Lantern Graphic Novel illustrated by Seth and written by Marc DeMatteis. It was originally slated to be a 48 page book but it grew to being 96 pages. Being on time, reliable and producing a quality project opened a lot of doors for Seth at this time and led to other DC projects including *Flash: Time Flies*, *Batman: Snow* and my favorite *Vertigo Pop! Tokyo*.



In an interview with CBR, Seth recalls

"I decided that I wanted to work in comics after attending the Comic Con in San Diego when I was a freshman in college, maybe in 1991 or so I bought a nice leather portfolio and started drawing pages, thinking after I filled it up that I could show it to editors at the Con next year. Fast-forward to 1997, and I am still drawing late into the night trying to create the perfect portfolio, still not working in comics. So I got a new idea: I would prove myself to comic editors by drawing a full book! I didn't want to write the story because I wanted to just focus on art, so I found Andrew Dabb on the web and together we created 'Happydale.' I took 6 months off of work to draw this book and when it was finished I took it to the Comic Con. Andy Helfer at DC comics remembered my samples from the year before and got my book published with Vertigo (DC's 'mature audience' imprint). Since then, I've had more work than I can handle! I must admit, 'Happydale' was a huge turning point for me."

And so began the brilliant but unfairly short career of Seth Fisher.

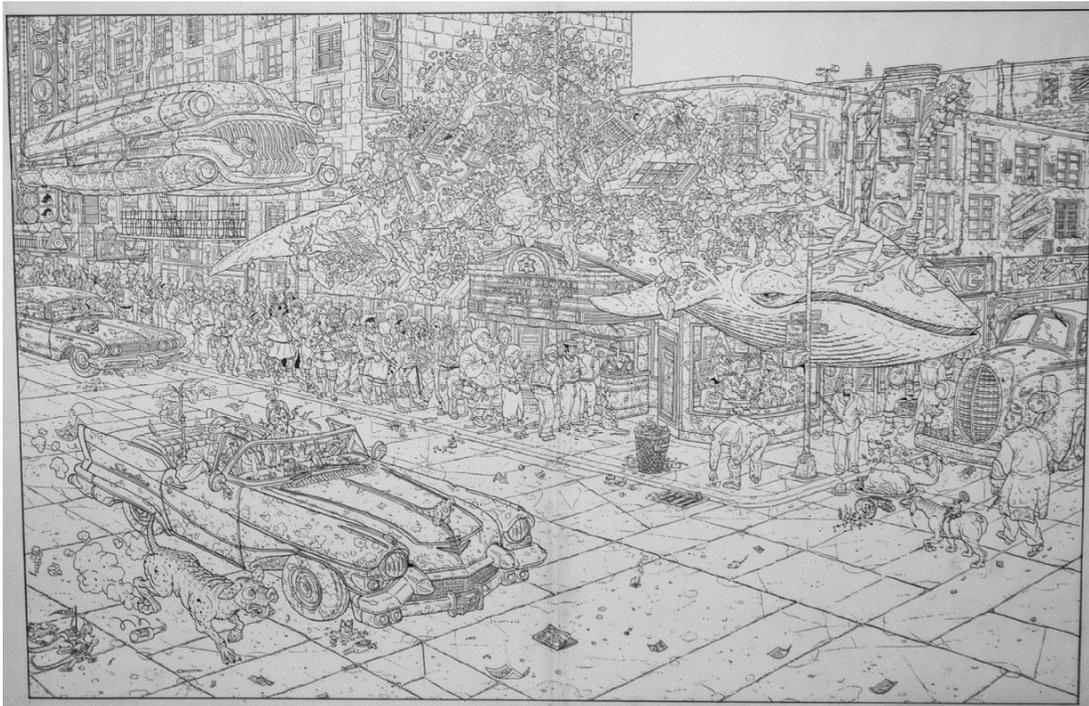
Influences

In his youth Seth was a fan of G.I. Joe and Conan. In later years he mentions European and Japanese influence, in particular Moebius and Otomo Katsuhiro of *Akira* fame. Masamune Shirow, Sergio Aragones, Rick Berry, Rick Geary, Frank Quitely, Geoff Darrow were also listed by Seth as major influences and inspiration but a much longer list was alluded to. Gaudi was mentioned as an inspiration in the fantastical architecture Seth creates for his books.

Although influenced by a myriad of artists, Seth also stated *"I know that I need for my work to stand on its own so I am trying to distance my work from them little by little."*

Movies and personal events also had an influence on Seth's work and choices. Television on the other hand was avoided as he made a conscious effort to avoid mass media. In a CRB interview, Seth states

"I think as the world becomes more connected art will generally become more homogenous and I want to create things that are as fresh as possible, although sometimes something really great is made and it's just impossible not to be affected by it: it's just a balance I guess. Admittedly, I think real life is where I get my inspiration."



Geoff Darrow illustration

The Art

"I like to make things. That is really as simple as I can explain it. The medium is totally unimportant. I was mainly drawn to comics because of how much power the creator has. You become designer, story teller, cinematographer, writer, editor...it's like being god. You decide where everything goes and how everything looks...you create a reality. That kind of power requires a lot of discipline and I want to work in a medium that will keep me learning things everyday. I definitely have a long way to go before I feel like I really have the control that I need, but that challenge is what drives me forward. I do work in other media but those projects are mostly hobbies. It's nice to be able to do art as a hobby...it's much more pure that way."

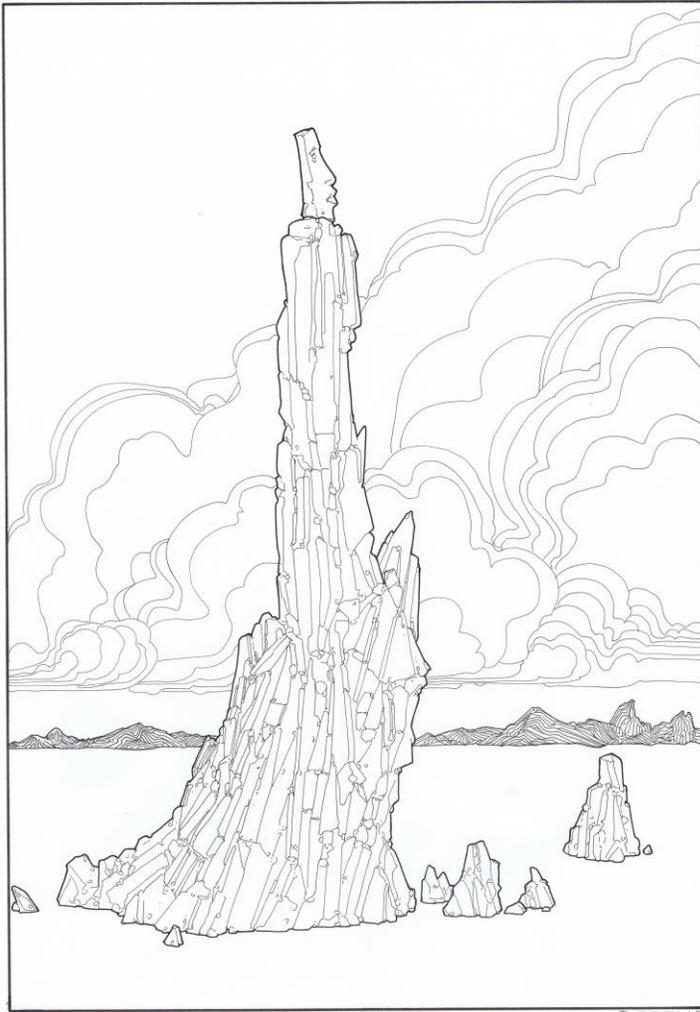


A visual letter Seth sent to his mother on the passage of time in sequential art.

Although not wanting to be different just for the sake of being different, Seth was conscious of his goal to be unique in a comic book world heavily influenced by a handful of artists and their mimickers. When asked about his thoughts on people not liking his work because his style was not what they expected from comics, he replied that there is something for everyone out there and he hoped only to add some variety to the shelf at the comic shop. Even though there was resistance, there was also a lot of early acceptance and support which helped reinforce what Seth was hoping to accomplish.

Below is a commission for the Cliff Guy collection years ago by Seth. A self portrait of sorts.

Seth, alone as an icon in the world of comic. Done in 1999, early in professional career.



When asked about his style, he commented that he didn't want to describe it as he felt he had a lot more growing to do and didn't want to define himself so early on. Seth also made a conscious effort of challenging himself with different artistic approaches to different projects. He described *Green Lantern Willworld* as a series of pages that connect and work together. *Willworld* also let Seth stretch his creativity with a lot of leeway and freedoms. There was a conscious effort on a style and look to the book with amazing and fantastical architecture. This distinctive and inventive architecture also became a main character in his next project with DC Comics, *Flash: Time Flies*.

Detail was also very important to Seth. Getting right meant that the locals would feel it was authentic too. With the nearly surreal worlds of

Willworld and *Time Flies* this was a not as important but when it came to illustrating Japan in *Vertigo Pop* it got serious. Seth wanted everything to be right from the hairstyles and clothing to the atmosphere and backgrounds. While working on *Vertigo Pop!* Seth moved back to Japan. It wasn't just for the book, Tokyo is where he wanted to be at the time. It was during this stay that he met and married his second wife. While working on Tokyo Pop, Seth was very aware of what a defining body of comic work Geof Darrow had done with Big Guy and Rusty. Although impossible to ignore, Seth was worried about being too similar in style to Geof and had to find solutions to those problems.

The Comic Work

1998 -- *Cicada Magazine* #1 – cover and 3 stories.
1999 -- *HappyDale* #1 and #2 - DC Vertigo Press
1999 -- *The Devil's Smelly Brother* – *The Big Book of Grim*, DC Comics Paradox Press
1999 – *The Seed* – *Frank Frazetta Fantasy Illustrated* – Quantum Cat Entertainment
1999 – *Sub Culture Ad* - *The Dreaming* - DC Vertigo Press
2000 – *The Short, Happy Life of Disco* – *The Big Book of the 70's* – DC Comics Paradox Press
2000 – *Human Contact* – *Heavy Metal Erotic Special*
2000 – *Sacrifice* – *Heavy Metal Magazine* Sept 2000
2001 – *Lift* – *Heavy Metal Magazine* Jan 2001
2001 – *Green Lantern: Willworld* – DC comics
2001 – *Zendra* #5 Cover – Penny Farthing Press
2002 – *The Flash: Time Flies* – DC comics
2002 – *Do Over* – *Doom Patrol* #13 – DC Vertigo Press
2002 – *Vertigo Pop: Tokyo* #1 – 4 – DC Vertigo Press
2003 – *Over... Done* – *Doom Patrol* #14 – DC Vertigo Press
2004 – *Promo Ad* – *Plastic Man 80 Page Giant* – DC comics
2004 – *Fanboyz* – *Spiderman Unlimited* #8 – Marvel Comics
2005 – *Fantastic Four/Iron Man Big in Japan* # 1 – 4 – Marvel Comics
2005 – *Snow* – *Legends of the Dark Knight* #192-197 – DC Comics
2009 – *Freddy Wertham Goes to Hell* – *Locke and Key: Welcome to Lovecraft Special Edition*
– IDW Press (posthumously finished by Langdon Foss)

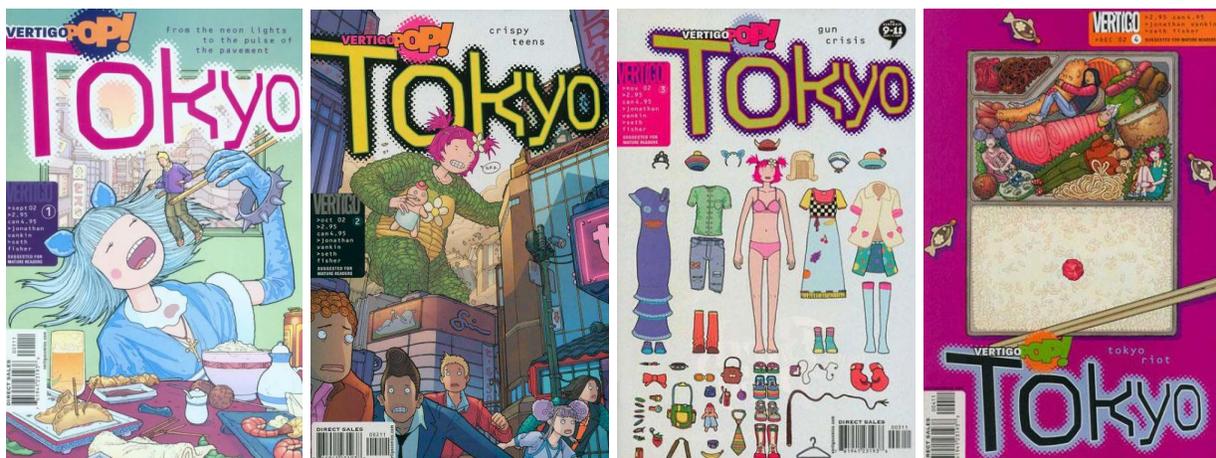
Also published in

Bob's Amazing Life children's book

Build Your Own Backpack Alarm by Shar Levine and Leslie Johnstone

Cricket Magazine artwork

I am fortunate to own a number of pieces of Seth's work. Enough that I can illustrate his career with examples from my own collection and a few borrowed scans. Rather than give a linear perspective, I'll introduce you to the work of Seth Fisher as I first discovered it. For me it was *Vertigo Pop! Tokyo*. Below are the 4 covers from the series. I noticed issue #3 on the rack and decided to take a chance. I was back at the comic store the next day buying the first two issues and awaiting the fourth:

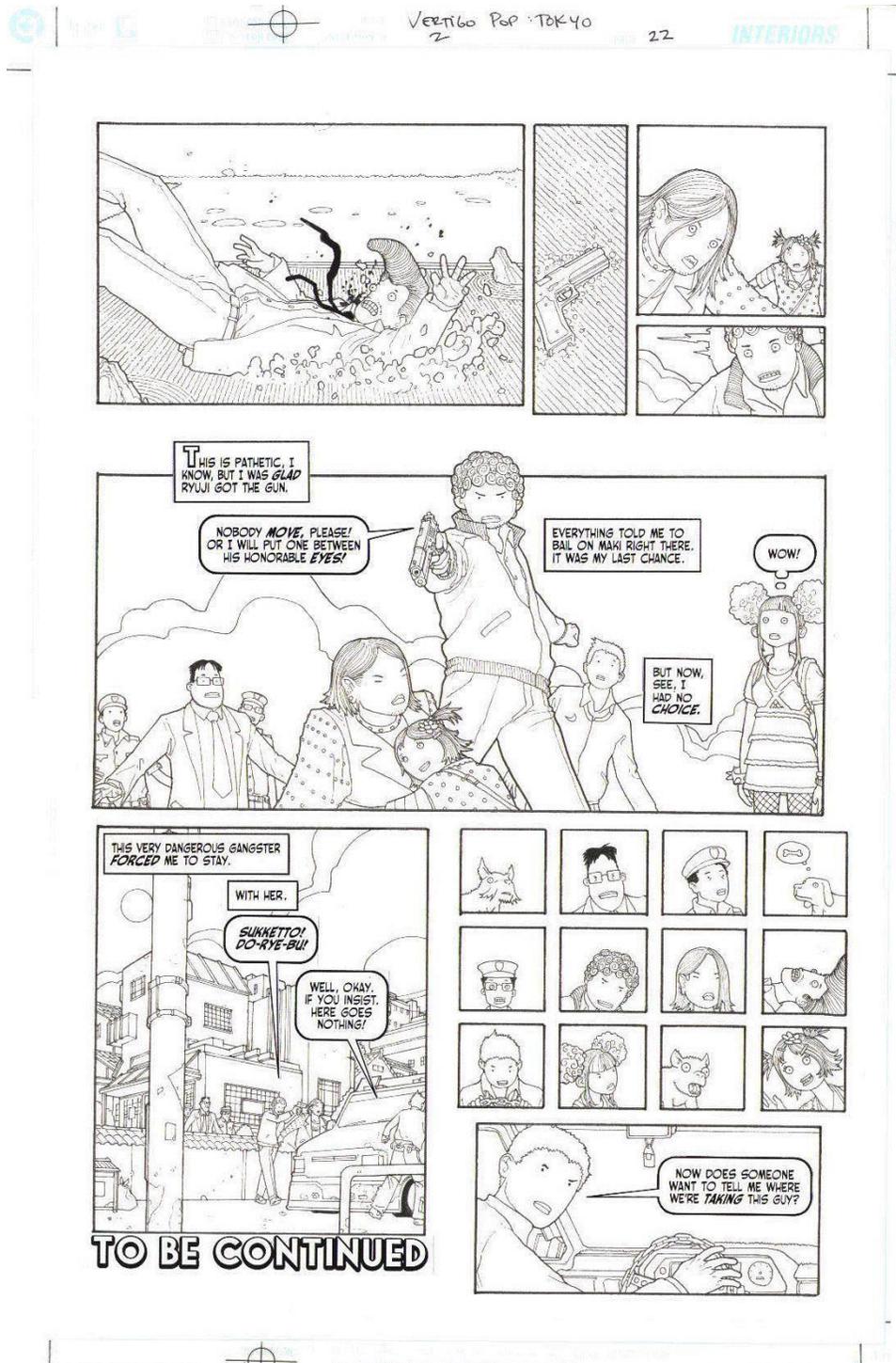


I must admit my bias, I am more interested in Asian culture than I am in that of North America. Although *VPI Tokyo* was Seth's most personal work it was also the right material to click with me at the time. I rarely spend a lot of time looking at the art in comics, the stories are what usually interest me. Here it was both. This comic came out in 2002 and although still a novice collector of art, I knew I needed to get some art and actively tracked down Seth on line to talk art. We had a nice exchange and it led to me buying 2 pages of artwork and a cover. We had been talking about my daughter who was still a toddler at the time and he sent me a Flowering Nose shirt for her. It was a hard choice for covers. The cut out doll and clothing one was gone but I believe the other 3 were available. I

came close to the Bento box but liked #2 enough to sway me away. The piece has found a place on my wall in every house I have lived in since. It is still my favorite piece of art by Seth as it both embodies Seth's work and the series perfectly. Little things in here like the quirkiness of Tokyo culture with the Godzilla attack and the reoccurring signs for Electricity Boy that appear throughout the comic. I thought Electricity Boy was fun and he appeared in a number of places through the book. I asked Seth if it had any significance and it didn't, just something extra for those paying attention. At the time I talked to Seth and I was debating changing my online moniker to electricity boy from monkeyb0y and hence the dedication at the bottom of the page. You can see in his line work influences of Moebius,



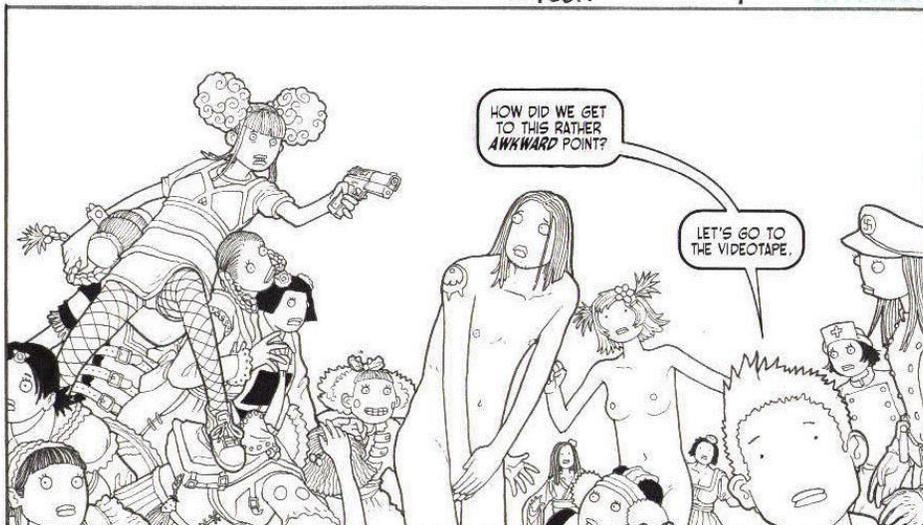
Darrow and the Manga gods yet there is more a lightness and playfulness to his work. I was a fan already.



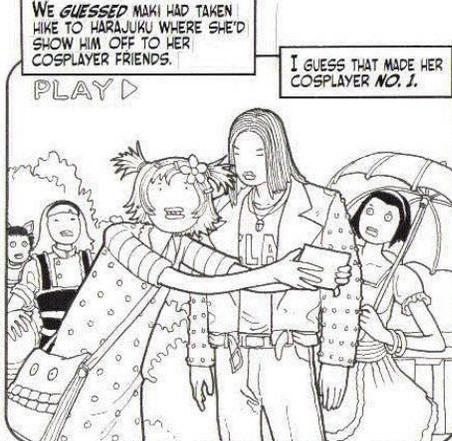
The two panel pages I got were also tough choices as almost everything was available. I picked these two pages. The page from issue 2 really appealed to me because of the panel layouts. At the time I had not been introduced to Chris Ware and I now can see the influence but at the time I just knew there was something important going on in the work I was seeing. The 9 small panels are brilliant with some humor to break up the more intense scene on the page. In one panel a dog is thinking of a bone and there are some strange animals in there too.

This next page is from issue 4 and is a bit of a recap to explain the bizarre first panel. Again, an interesting take

on layouts and narration. Several of the characters in this book include a crazy cosplaying teen, a bumbling Yakuza newbie and a Rock Star in addition to our narrator.



THERE HAD BEEN SOME BONDING GOING ON.



I later added this third panel page from Issue #4 to the fold a few years later.



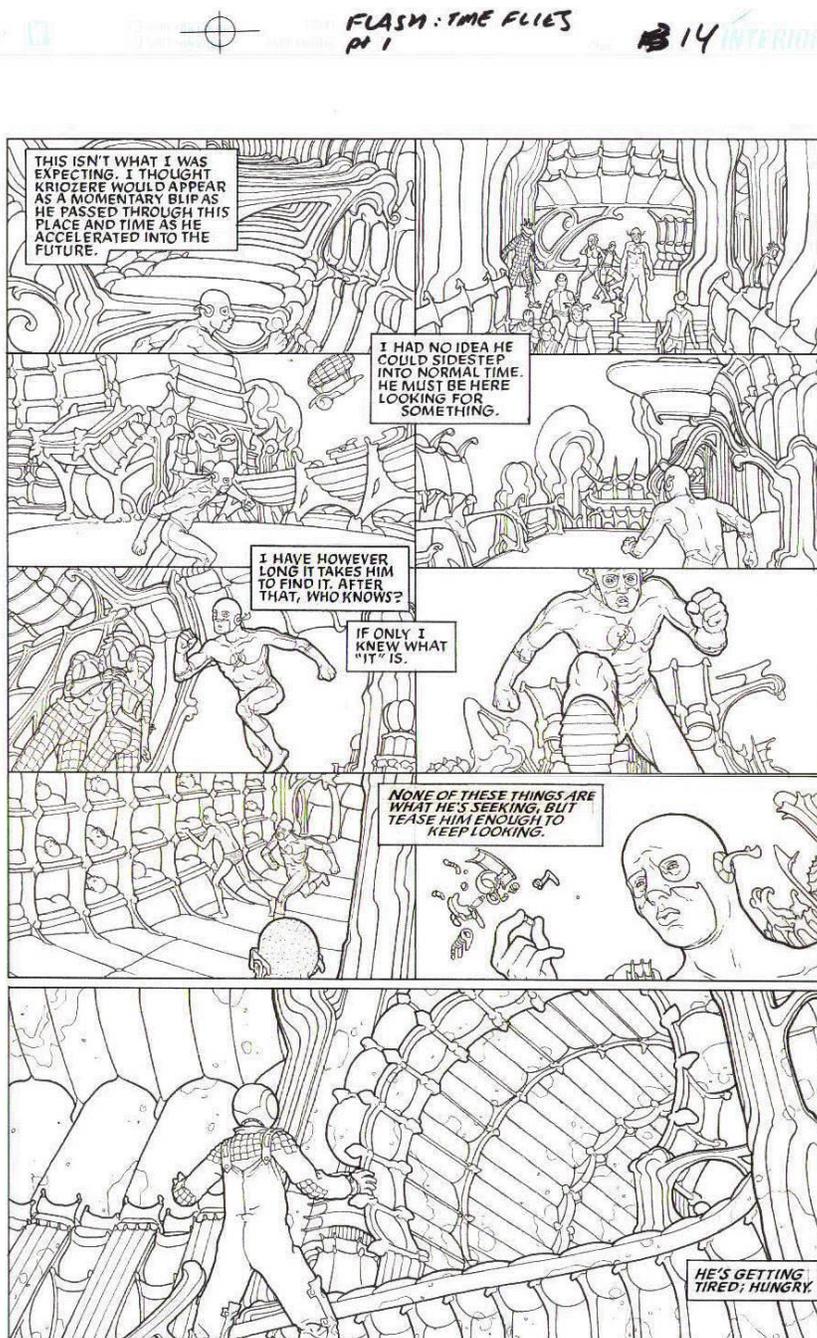
MINIMUM BLEED TO ALL AROUND

MINIMUM BLEED TO ALL AROUND

My next Seth Fisher page was from *Flash: Time Flies*. This is a pretty interesting read and visually stunning graphic novel. It is a follow up to the *Green Lantern Willworld*. Seth used a similar style here but spent a lot more energy in the settings and backgrounds. The GN reads pretty quickly and has a bit of a manga feel to it in its pacing. The Amazon.com description of the story is

Wally West, the Flash, investigates why time itself seems to be moving at an accelerated rate! Flung ahead in time to an amazing future world, Wally seeks a fugitive from our era who is behind this temporal anomaly. A man, thanks to the very same Speed Force that Wally taps into, who moves every bit as fast as the Flash! But it's a vastly different world they're on,

where both men are complete strangers who don't know the rules! And they'd better be quick studies, before they're exploited by futuristic forces who want to control them both!



I no longer own this page as the writer was John Rozum who is good friends with a friend and fellow collector and he named the main character with my friend's name. Here is a full page of the Flash looking for Steve. As reticent as I was to part with this page, collecting karma dictated that Steve was meant to have it and so he does.

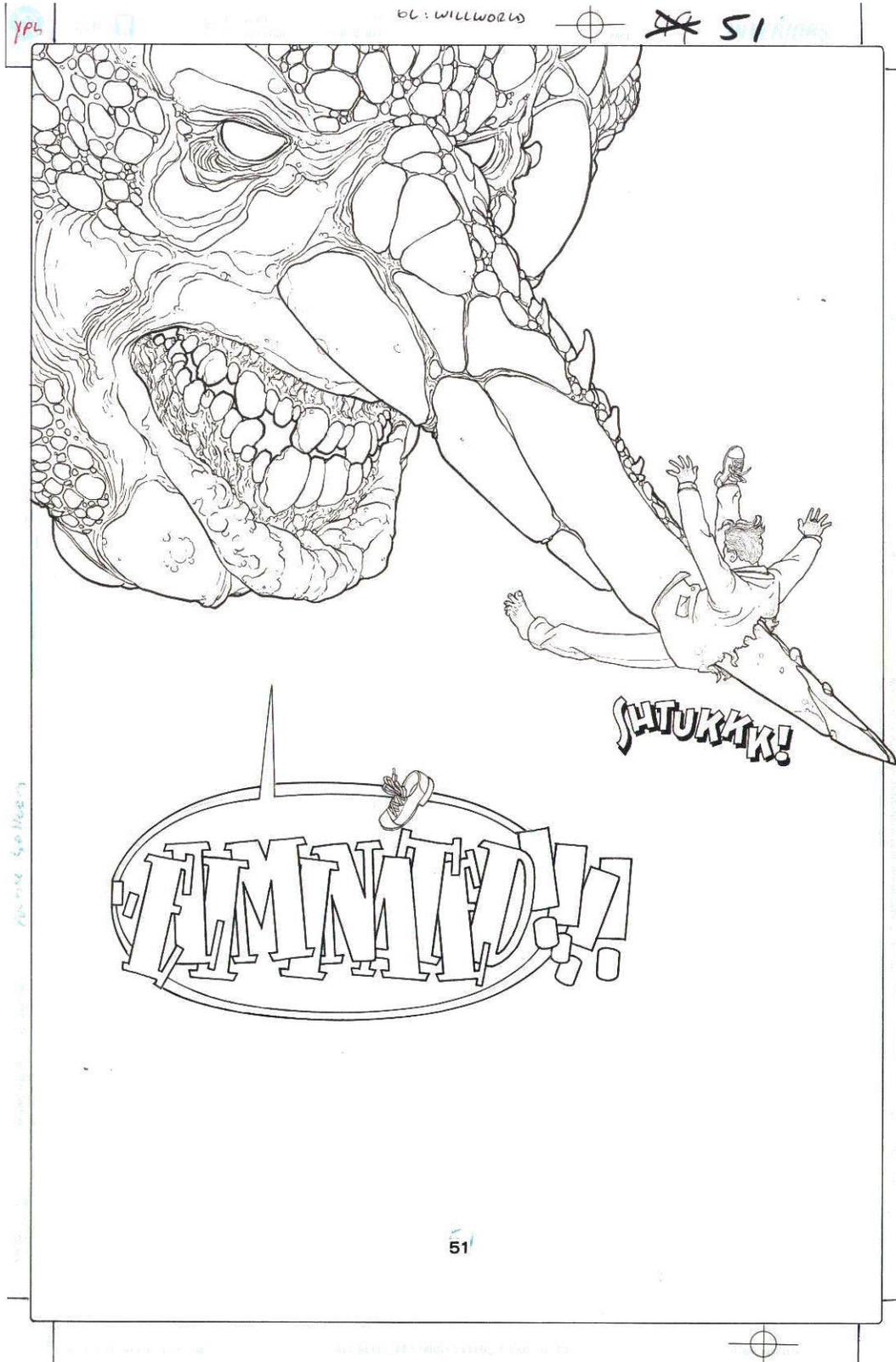
The next series I read and subsequently

got art from was *Willworld*, a strange Green Lantern story about the Green Lantern learning about his powers in a strange world created by other Green Lanterns. It is about as surreal as any mainstream comic has gotten. I have two splashes from this book. Both were from

Seth's mother sometime after he passed away. The first is from page 38 and is a feast for the eyes. Fantastic architecture and many strange characters in this busy and bizarre page. Again, a little humor with the elephant at the bottom thinking about a peanut.



Page 51 was more of a dramatic page. One of those pages that when you flip to it impacts you like a splash should.

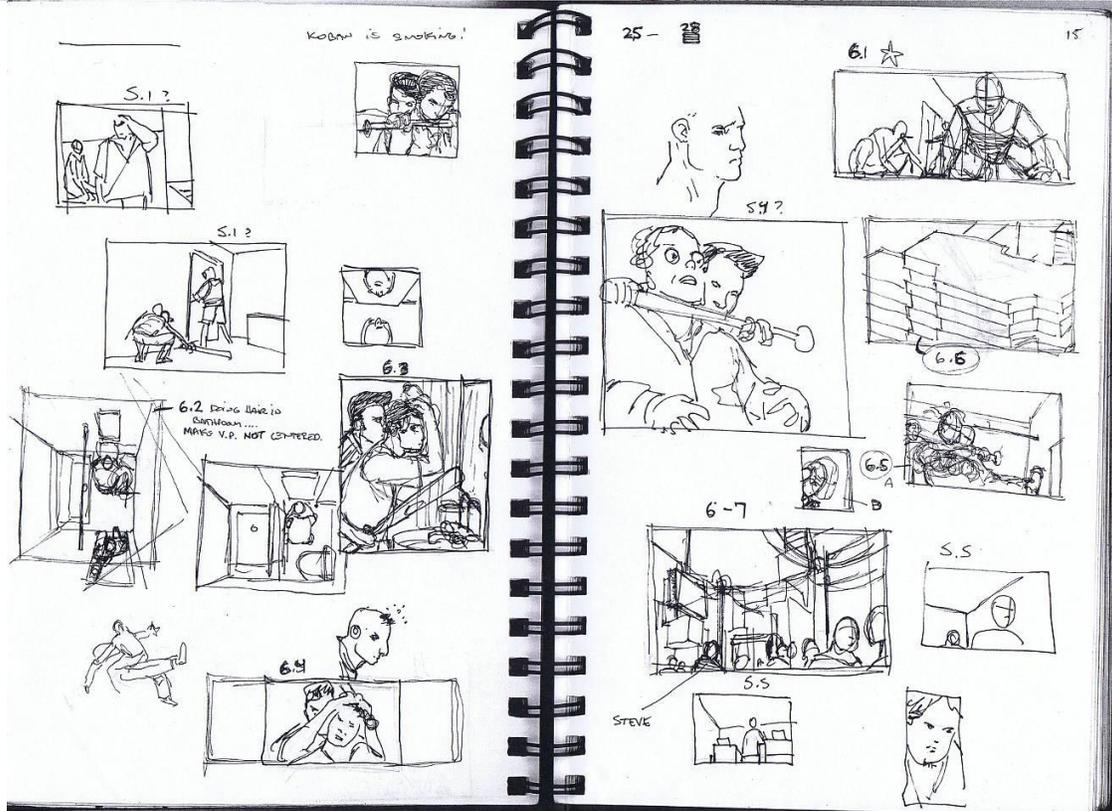
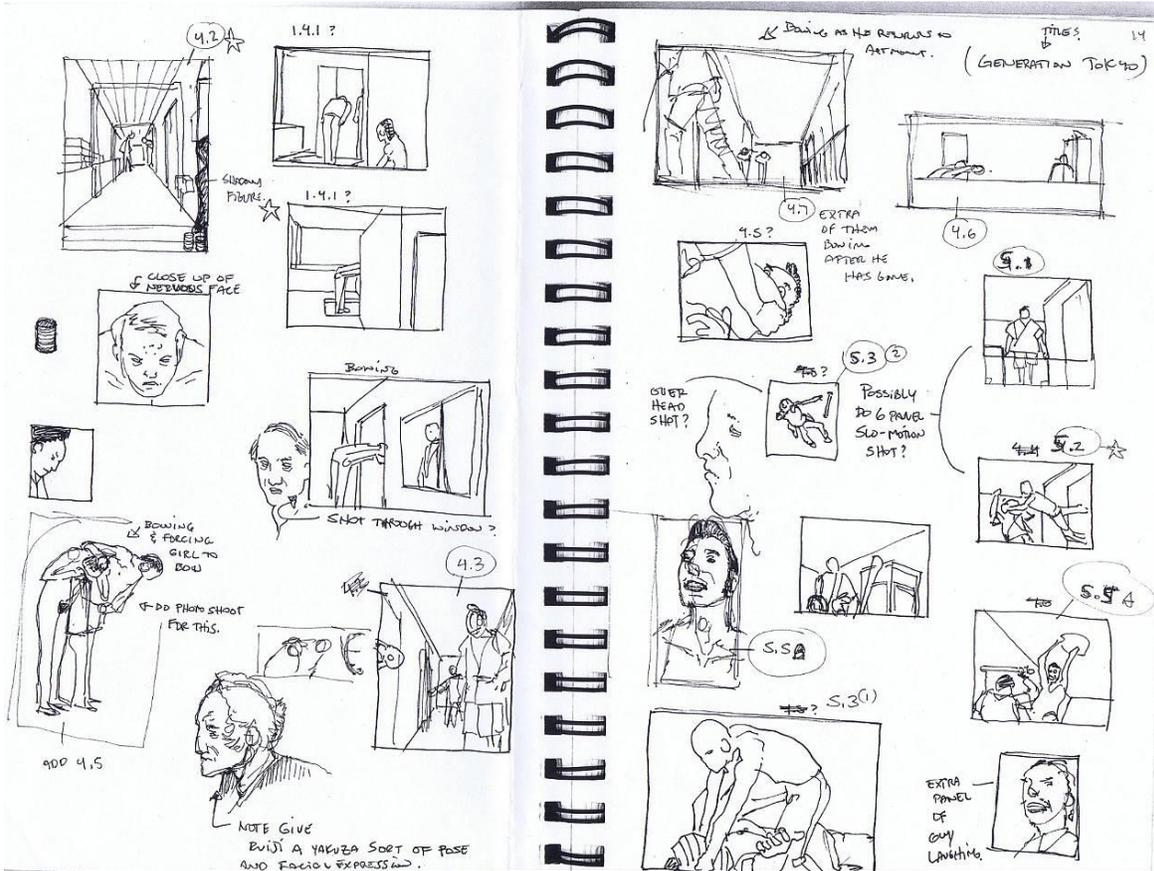


Seth's most popular work is probably his work on Batman in *Legends of the Dark Knight*. In this book we meet a Batman early in his career assembling a team of civilians to help in crime-fighting. We are also introduced to Mr. Freeze and his origin. A very interesting take on both Batman and Mr. Freeze with insights into why Batman is best a solo crime fighter. I don't have any art from the actual comic but Vicki did send me a neat prelim as well as some

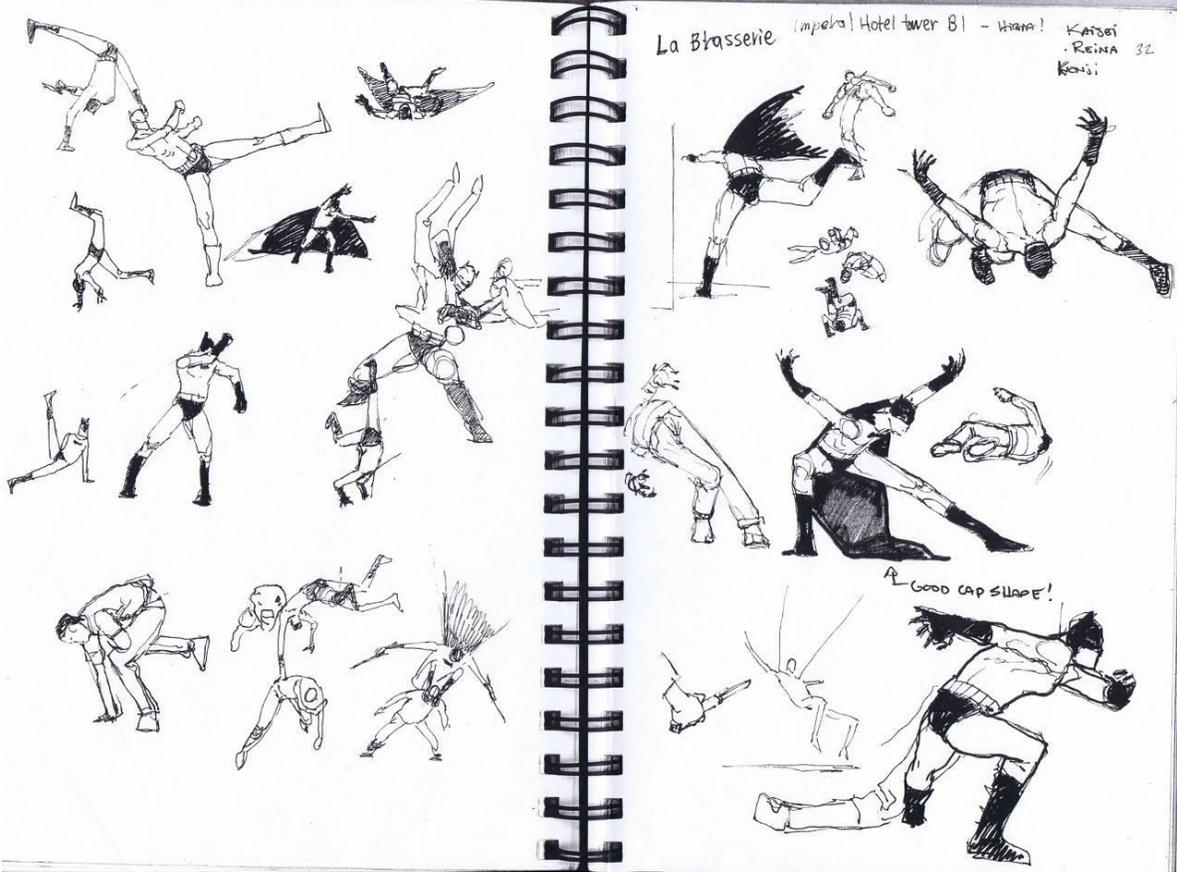
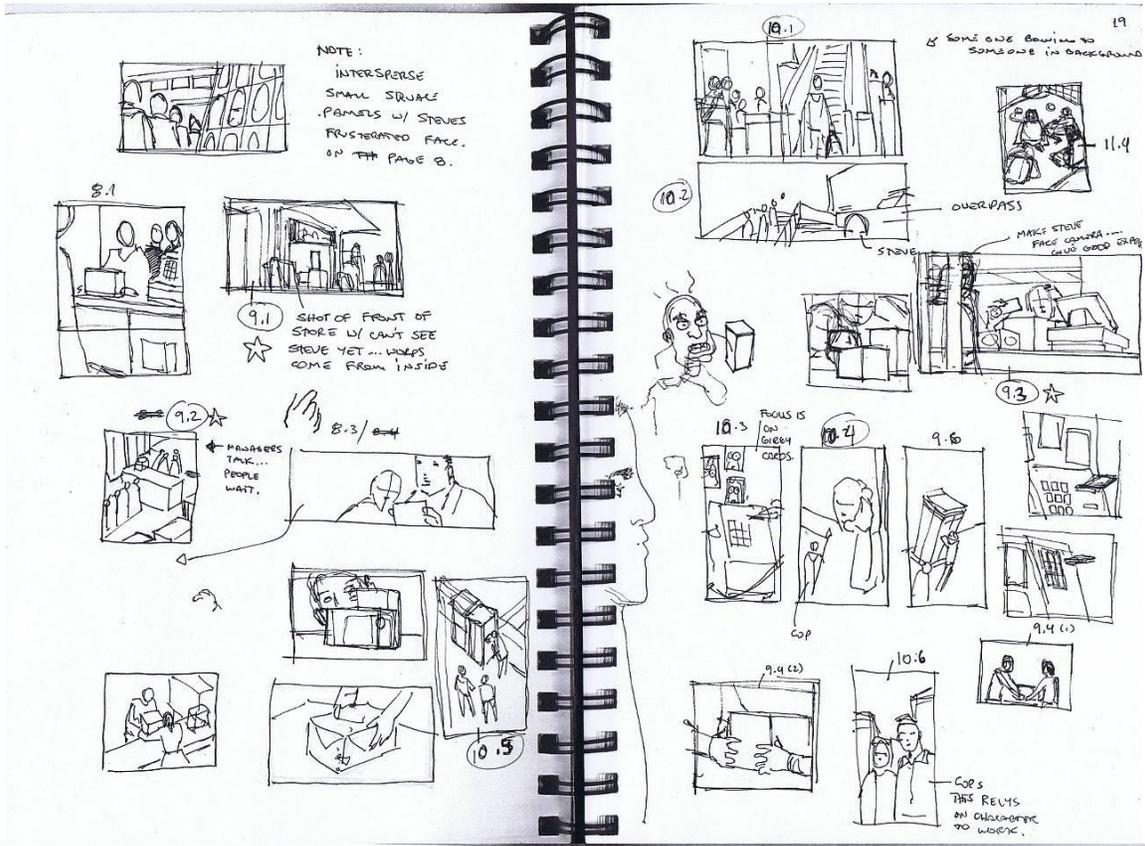
copies of Seth's notebook for the development of the story. Other than myself, Seth and Vicki, I think you might be the first to ever see these images. Most of the sketchbook material is Snow but a bit of Vertigo Pop in there too.



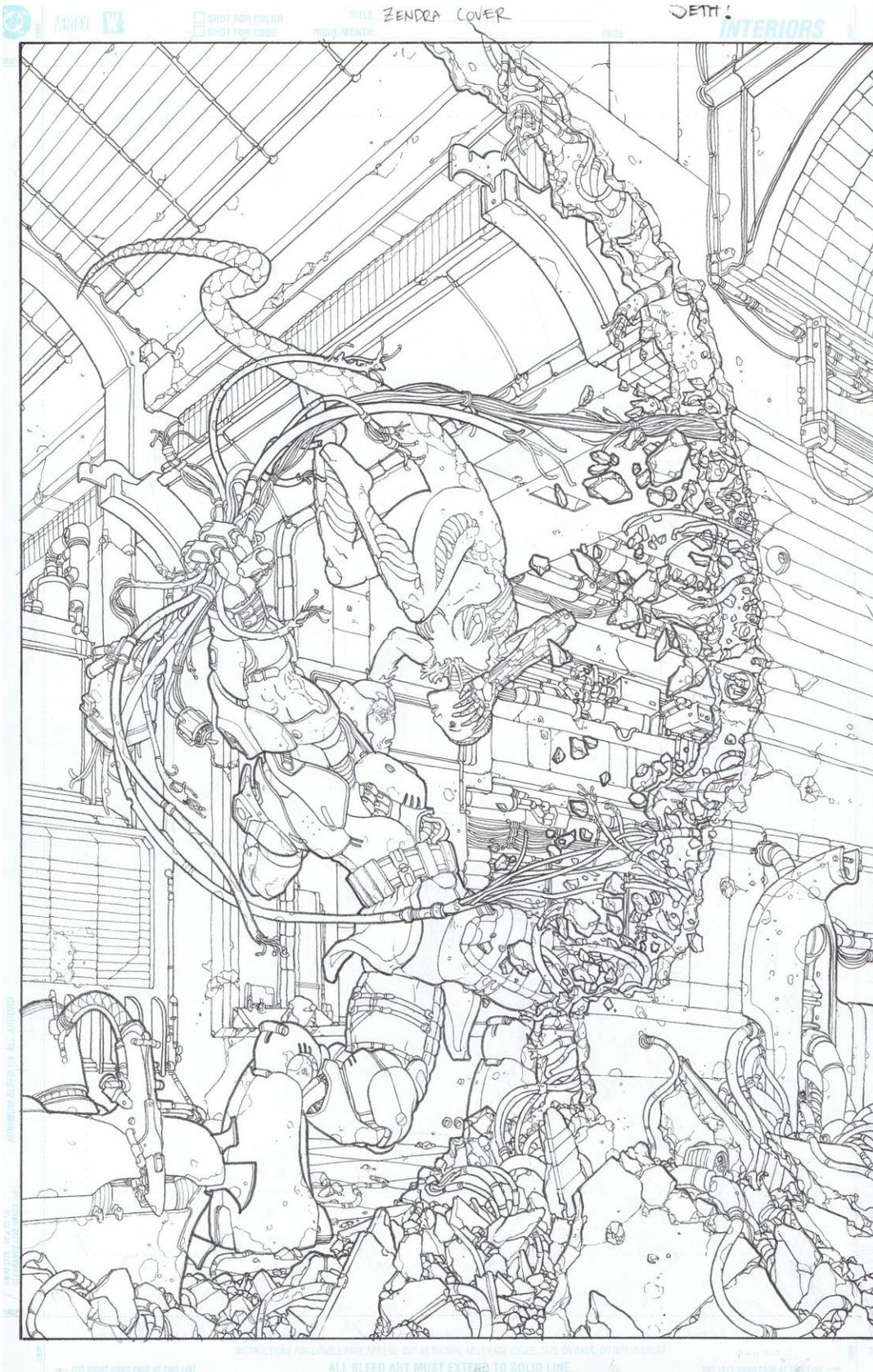
Snow Preliminary sketches



Pages for Seth Fisher's sketchbook



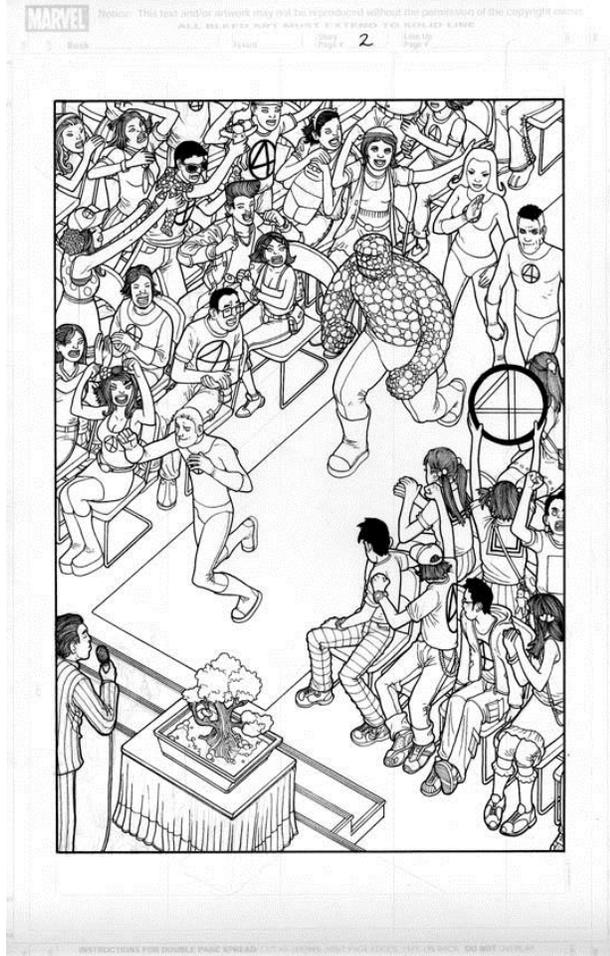
It took me quite a while to track down a copy of *Happydale* but I am glad I did. A totally Seth world and story. This is also the last page I got from Seth's mother as she is no longer



My last Seth Fisher piece is a bit different. It is a cover to a comic I know very little about. *Zendra* #5. I had seen this image in another collectors art gallery on CAF many times and had sent a few notes about it. One day the previous owner approached me about a trade and my second Seth Fisher cover arrived. A neat image as well. Clearly Seth's linework but lacking in some of the softer feel he often added to his work. It is a very interesting composition with a central circular image that is almost a Yin and

Yang. The Moebius and manga influences are quite apparent in this piece.

Lastly, the books I don't have art from. *Fantastic Four: Big in Japan*, *Spiderman Unlimited*, *Heavy Metal Magazine* and a few other projects.



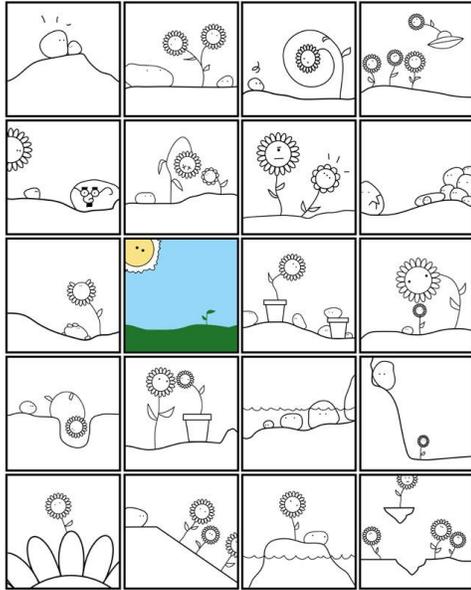
Big in Japan pages.



Spiderman Unlimited pages



Neat poster. Rampage video game inspired.



Cover to Cicada Magazine #1 1998 and Sacrifice page from Heavy Metal Sept 2000.

Pachinko Parlor

This is a neat thing I came across. Seth did a commercial installation of his art at a Pachinko parlor in Japan. Some photos.



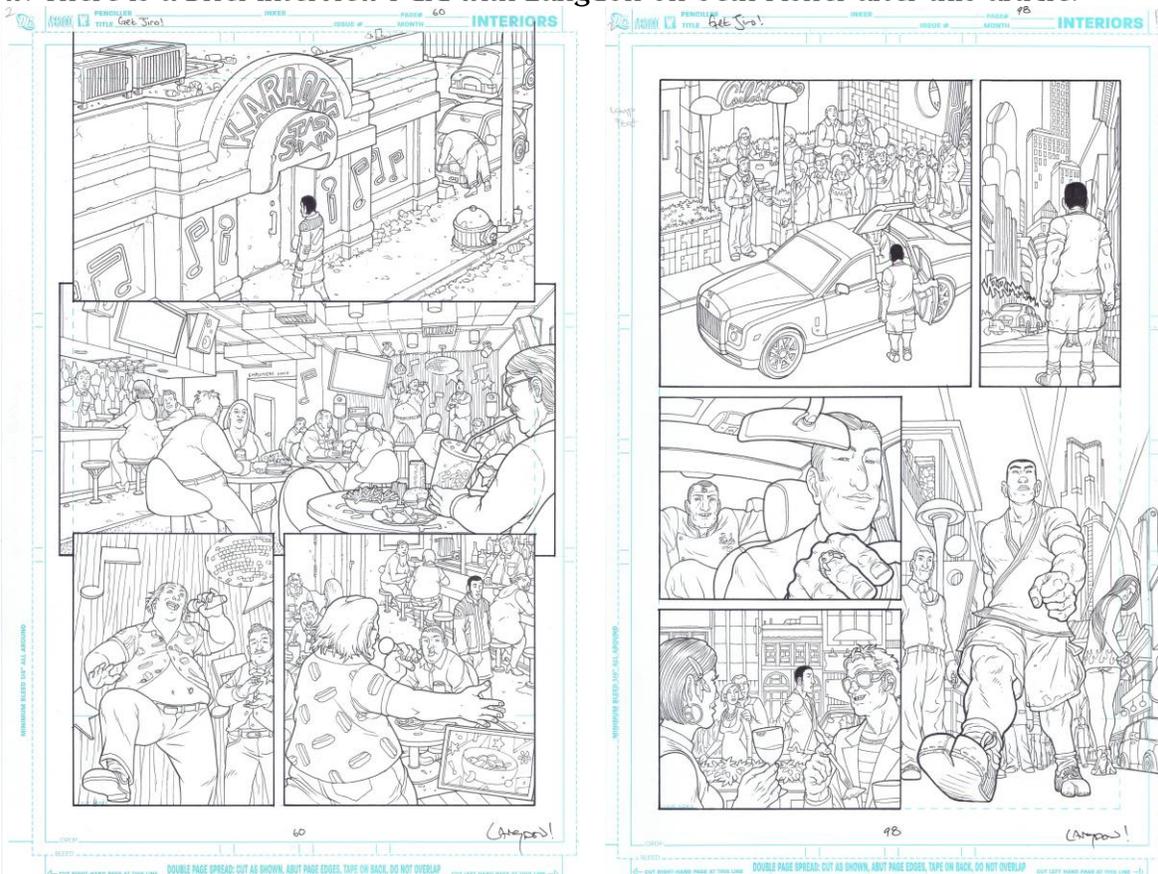
The End

Seth passed from this world in January 30th of 2006. He fell to his death from the 7th floor of a building in Osaka, Japan. No one was with him so it is only speculation of what happened. This troubled me for a long time. Vicki was able to help me understand this and put the event in the context of who Seth was. Seth had a fear of heights. In College he would attack that fear by sitting on or walking on the edges of tall buildings. It is believed that he was a night club the night before and had left his wallet. He returned the next day to get it but the establishment was not open yet. It is possible he went walking on the edge of the building. No one knows. It was a terrible tragedy to his family and friends and to the comic world as a whole.

Legacy

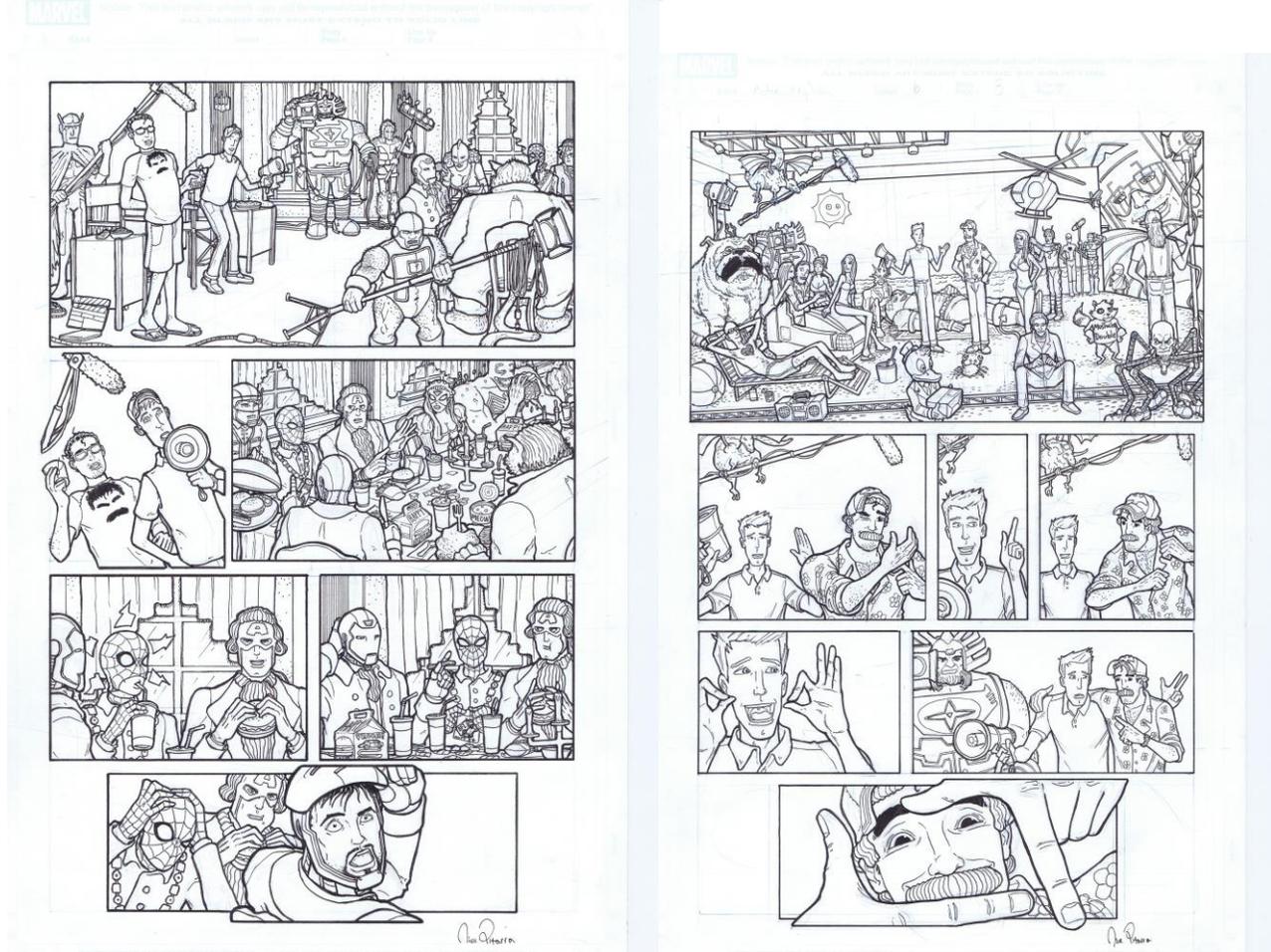
Although Seth is gone, he left us a wealth of his work. He did 100's of pages of comics for us to enjoy. There are a number of artists who have taken cues from Seth as well and have adopted similar styles yet making art of their own as well. I think Seth would be pleased to see his influence on these young and upcoming artists. Seth also lives on through his son and family. Gone but certainly not forgotten. Missed but still present in so many ways in comics and hopefully his pioneering spirit and influence will continue to inspire new artists and comic fans.

Langdon Foss – Langdon has known Seth since College. They were both artists and grew as artists together. They shared similar influences and preferences in artwork. Langdon had recent success with his own graphic novel *Get Jiro!* A few pages from my collection are below. There is a brief interview I did with Langdon on Seth Fisher after this article.



Pages from *Get Jiro!* by Langdon Foss

Nicholas Pitarra is also a star on the rise. After a little bit of work for Marvel on some fun superhero material he has recently teamed up with Jonathan Hickman for Red Wing and the current hit series The Manhattan Project. I met Nick on line when he was still in art school and just dabbling in comics. He cites Fisher, Moebius and Darrow as his main influences. Notice the Seth Fisher cameo on the second page.



The Flowering Nose Man

This was a creation of Seth's. An alternative persona of sorts. He seemed a peaceful and benevolent observer. When asked, Seth's mother is not sure of the origin but believes it has to do with wordplay. Specifically Hana is the word for both nose and flower in Japanese. Seth loved little word games like that and this one seemed to stick. He adopted it as the name for his site. www.floweringnose.com where his mother has continued the site with extensive blogs and hundreds of images of artwork never seen before by Seth.



"Last year some of Seth's siblings declared January 30 Flowering Nose Day, a day to encourage artists, to take risks in order to do something worth doing, to create something that delights you, to have fun doing whatever you are doing, to do your best at whatever you do, to remember Seth by stretching out your arms and loving what you are doing and who you are with. I am all for it."

JS: *How did you meet?*

LF: Seth was the RA (Resident Advisor) of the wing below mine when I was a Freshman in college. I gelled with the guys on that wing much more than my own, so I ended up hanging out with them, and Seth and I discovered each other's love of art and comics. I remember he'd drawn each of the 30-or so new residents a name tag for his door with a superhero on it, in sharpie. It was a completely different style than my own, but I recognized my kind of art when I saw it.

JS: *From what I had heard, there was a real connection between you too. Lost brothers of a sort?*

We initially recognized the artist in the other, but that grew to a mutual appreciation of the other's love of the absurd. Seth and I would laugh and laugh at the most ridiculous things... We would later muse that that sense of humor was a sort of koan we would write ourselves- a way of jarring our minds out of the rut of conventional life. There's a mental space inhabited by monks and fools that is sublimely meaningless, and yet utterly relevant to the human condition. Connection with that space is lost when one takes himself too seriously, and we were always there to step in when the other started taking himself too seriously.



We challenged each other, probably Seth more than me. I think life is pointless without a vector, without momentum- I could always rely on him to knock me out of my rut with a challenge; to force my mind in a new direction when it started to glaze over or become docile. I like to think I returned the favor. To us, life was a question to be answered. A puzzle to be solved. We were partners in the exploration of life, and in the mind. I've not been challenged in the same way since.

JS: *What can you tell us about Seth's approach to art?*

LF: Seth strove to be utterly unique. At the start, his influences would be obvious, but he would take that influential seed and grow it as far as he could. He sought to find the limitations in the work of the creators he revered. As a result, he would often take another artist's approach, imagery, or technique, and he'd work hard to push it to what he thought was the next level. As a result, he insulated himself from hero-worship while illustrating to himself that improvement is always possible.

JS: *Where did the Japanese fascination you both share come from? Any specific shows or books from growing up?*



LF: Seth introduced me to the European school of comics- Moebius, Manara, Liberatore, The Shuitem Bros- I cemented the importance of Japanese comics- Shirow, Otomo (though he was already a fan of AKIRA,) Tagami, Miyazaki. My plan in college was always to study in Japan and then teach English there after graduation, and nothing seemed like more fun to us than to take Japan by storm together. After graduation we did regroup on a small fishing island in the Sea of Japan and skin-dived, spear-fished, ate egg-burgers, confused the populace (two bald foreign guys, and 'Fisher,' and 'Foss' sound remarkably similar in Japanese) and drew.



JS: Clearly you and Seth share similar influences, can you go into a bit more detail on that.

LF: I mentioned most of our early influences, but it really was remarkable how his resonated with me, and vice-versa. My work, despite being originally inspired by manga and anime, is usually described as 'European' as much as anything these days.

JS: You worked with Seth in the past and you finished a story about a young Frederic Wertham that Seth had started. Can you tell us a bit more about the project, how much was by Seth and how much by you? What did you have to work with?

LF: "Freddie Wertham Goes to Hell," written by Joe Hill, was the last project Seth and I did together. We'd been drafting a graphic novel at the time, and we wanted to warm up with this. Seth was originally going to do the breakdowns and inks, with me doing the pencils. Seth died halfway through the breakdowns (with, strangely, one or two panels penciled AND inked,) so I took it from there. Fortunately, our styles were similar enough that the finished product, inked by me, looked pretty seamless. They couldn't offer much money, so we decided to have fun with it. I'm still really pleased with it

JS: Could you give us a perspective of on Seth as a person? His aura, personality, outlooks as you saw it.

LF: Seth was one of the most ambitious and aggressively confident people I've ever met. He adored people. He thrived in the company of others, whether it was juggling in front of them, performing card tricks, making absurd jokes, or simply listening to their problems and offering support. He had an energy supply that seemed absolutely unlimited. He could play all day and draw all night, and fill sketchbooks with his ideas in between.

He was one of those people you hear about who is the center of every crowd he's in- Women found him handsome, but it was his focus and the depth of his attention to the person in his gaze that drew people to him. He seemed to be unburdened by the doubts and formalities that everybody struggles under, and that was intoxicating to almost everyone I saw around him. The ones who weren't drawn in by his energy and magnetism, however, seemed to be repelled with equal strength... But they were few.

He lived on his own terms. He dressed as he wished, said what he wanted, did what he would, unattached to the expectations and values of the people around him. He was fearless in his decisions- Giving a hundred dollars to a person he just met who needed help; Spending his savings on a garage-full of Flowering Nose tee-shirts; Approaching celebrities, bikers, policemen, and junkies, with the open certainty that he would be loved.



Seth had a deep commitment to personal development- Limitations were merely goals to be achieved, then moved beyond. This was evident in his love physical activity (hockey, rollerblading, skiing, skydiving, dancing) his shocking honesty to other and to himself, his unwavering devotion to his art, and in his spirituality; Seth sought a bedrock of truth that underlied the economies, dramas, and conventions taught to us by our culture. He was utterly convinced that there was a level of communication with experience that could guide a person truly, and lovingly, if one were simply to cross a threshold of courage and trust. Seth loved and trusted his world, and his world loved him in return.

JS: What is your favorite work by Seth and why?

LF: I really love his Batman book (Snow.) In fact, I have it right here. There's a balance of detail in those pages that seem to bridge the super-dense detail of his previous books with the refined economy found in his later work, like Big in Japan. To me it shows Seth refining his work in a way that all his following books would only build upon.

Big in Japan is a close second, actually. It was written for *him*, with the knowledge that no-one else could possibly do it justice. There's a combination of technical accuracy and whimsy that is playful and alive. His technology is precise, his architecture rich but not overdrawn, yet his characterizations celebrate the playful stylization that he first used in his Tokyo book. His creatures are magnificent, as well- Monsters utterly alien, shocking in their bizarre construction, colossal scales, and incomprehensible motivations.

JS: Having seen Seth work first hand, can you give some insight into his process, the techniques and material used. I know Seth used photos of japan for some of his work but it doesn't seem like it was photo referencing so much as trying to capture the atmosphere.

LF: Seth seemed to change his approach with every book. He drew most of his work while he lived in Japan, so I wasn't there to watch him over his shoulder, but with his Tokyo book, photo-ref was crucial to accurately convey the city to foreign readers. He told me he also let the composition of the photos inform his page construction, and not the other way around.

Aside from that, he worked in a way most comic book artists work- pencil (no non-repro blue, though) on board, inked with pen. I wish I could have seen him in action on his last couple of books. I know his studio was *tiny*, though. Heroically tiny compared to the magnitude of his work. He spent marathon-sessions in that little room, often pushing through the night into morning. He told me he regretted having

to keep his son Tofu locked out of his studio when he worked. He was so proud of his son.

JS: I see a lot of Seth in your work and probably Langdon in Seth's work. How did your art styles grow together?

LF: After Seth and I met in college, we roomed together the next year. That was an influential year for both of our art. Drawing from the same pool of inspiration and cross-pollinating ideas and techniques, I think we formed a common artistic foundation that I think persisted to the day he died.

JS: Do you have any sense of where Seth would have gone with his work?

I once said his comic book art would outpace the medium. His commitment to his art transcended his interest in comics; He once said that he became interested in comics because it was the most difficult kind of art he could think of- Drawing so many drawings per page, each with a different composition, different needs, yet having to link together in a cohesive narrative. I think Seth was becoming a mature comic book artist, but when it began to stop challenging him, I have no doubt he would have moved on to something else, so long as it allowed him to provide for his wife and son.



JS: Get Jiro was a fantastic graphic novel, where do you see yourself taking your career from here?

LF: Thank you. I feel I have years to go before I get what I want out of my comic book art. My next book is with the writer, thinker, and visionary Ales Kot, called 'The Surface.' I will also be art directing an animated movie called 'Dinonauts,' and for the foreseeable future, those and parenting are quite enough to keep me occupied, and challenged.

Conclusion

To me, it seems as Seth spent his life looking for a place to belong. It sounds like he finally found it in Japan and in comics. He spent his artistic career trying to create a comic niche where he belonged. I would say he accomplished that too.

Seth Fisher is gone.

He left before finishing his story. It is left for us, the fans that care to imagine what comics would be like if he were still here to make them. Like a stone breaking the surface of the water and leaving ripples felt across the pond, Seth set in motion his own ripple effect. We can get a sense of just how much of an impact he left when we look at the works of the newest generation of comic artist. Although missed, he lives on through his work, his son and the comic legacy he has left us.

Special thanks to Vicki Sheridan and Langdon Foss for their time, insights, information and encouragement. Few knew Seth like they did.

Some information gleaned from two excellent interviews

[A Beautiful Mind: talking with artist Seth Fisher, Comic Book Resources, April 22, 2002](#)

Jozić, Mike. ["Seth Fisher: Head Case". Comics Bulletin. Retrieved 2009-01-28.](#)

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