

# Kirby Late-Comer

by Jeff Singh

I like the art of Jack Kirby. I actually like it a lot. As shameful as this is to confess as an aficionado of the sequential arts, this wasn't always so.

I grew up hating Kirby comics. As I dug through cheapie bins at my local comic shop looking for hidden gems, I'd always stop at the Kirby covers and thought Yuck! Why couldn't this guy draw? Why were they letting him do covers? It took many years of studying comic art and Kirby's work to finally get it but when it did click, it was like a lightbulb had gone off and I got it. It took another artist's work to make me understand Kirby.

Given that confession, it goes without saying that I read very little of Kirby's work and knew even less about him. I am pretty sure I am the least knowledgeable collector in this group on Kirby. For me to write anything about the man for this audience would be an insult to the creator we are recognizing and to each of you. So, I will do as I have



done in the past and walk you through how I came to understand Kirby's work, what I see in it and what pieces I currently own.

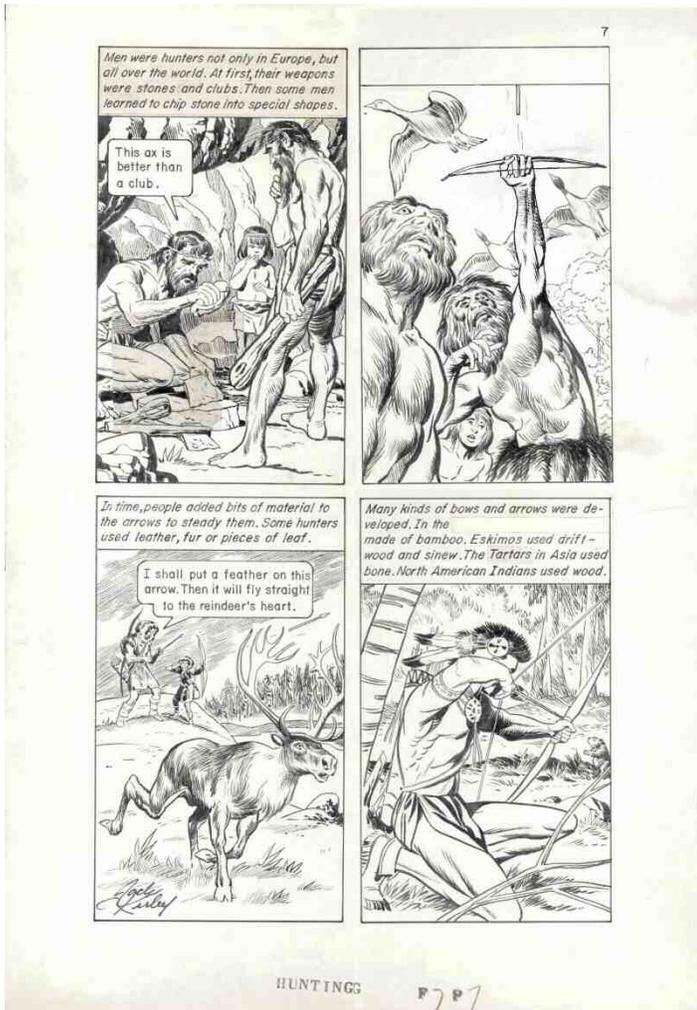
My Kirby journey really started with another artist, someone I also didn't appreciate. Bruce Timm. I grew up equating good art with realism and that probably explains why I didn't like Kirby as a kid. There was something about Bruce's work that I liked. I was an anime fan but not a fan of non-Japanese artists appropriating their style and aesthetics. When I was early in my collecting Bruce Timm was a popular artist to collect and so it only made sense I had a Timm piece. I saw one on eBay from a *World's Greatest Heroes* book he did and for me it looked like Timm art I could understand as it was more classic. It was also fun because it had that giant caption as a tongue in cheek homage to the Marvel silver age. It was a pleasure to own that page which has long since left my collection. It is the page that made me appreciate Bruce Timm. All of a sudden I understood that he was a student of the media and understood other artists and those that went before him. There was genuine respect for comic history and from there I could see how he was taking his style in different directions. More importantly, since Bruce was aping Kirby on these pages, I started to see what others see in Kirby. Looking at the page now, I see it more as a tribute to Kirby and Buscema but regardless, this is the page that started me on my Journey.

Of the Kirby art I currently own, the next piece is my oldest piece and it is from the *World Around Us*. It is also my favorite Kirby piece in my collection as it too helped me understand Kirby. It showed me Kirby could draw more realistic like other artists yet this page also has much of his style present too. I have owned it about 15 years and when I first posted it on CAF, Joe Jusko posted a comment that made me think and still does.

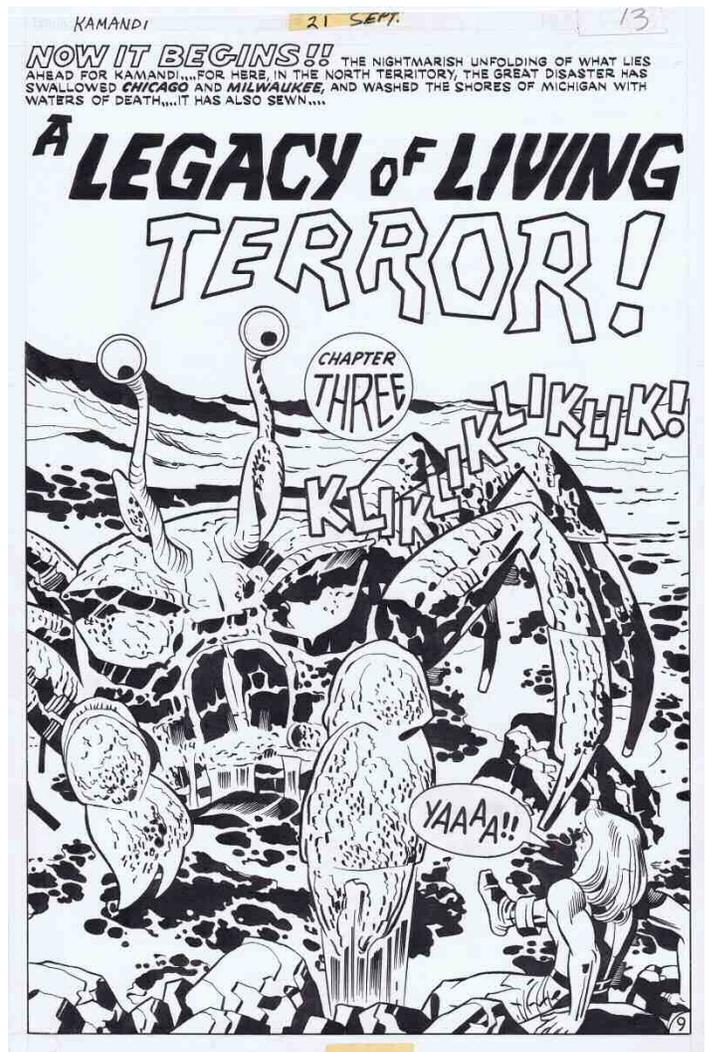
***AWESOME page. Anyone who says Kirby couldn't "draw" should look at this page!***

The page is very nicely inked and I believe Kirby was his own inker on this one. It has well thought out dynamic layouts that make great use of the 4 panel grid format. The anatomy in this one is truly outstanding. My two favorite panels are the two with the bows. I keep coming back to panel two and the position of the archer and how his body lines up straight with the arm and how the chest

anatomy is properly distorted for the position. For me, the highlight is the final panel and archer's perfect stance. The degree of skill that goes into perspective, lining up the bow and the archer's eye on the target showed me just how well Kirby could draw with realism. It is nice that page is also signed.



My next Kirby came in a trade deal. I can't say I was looking for another Kirby at the time but sometimes these things happen for a reason. It is a Kamandi splash page from issue 21 featuring a big Kirby monster. For me, this is full on Kirby at its best. We have a fun design, Kirby crackle and did I mention the Big Friggin' Crab Monster. It does everything a splash page should. It also came with a color guide.



Next I went old school with Simon/Kirby page from *Stuntman* featuring a nice girl circa 1946. Perhaps there is more Simon than Kirby. It is a neat page from the era when Jack first got noticed. The girl images in the final three panels are what sold this page for me. This page fit in my GGA collecting theme and also let me explore the Kirby-verse.

The next page is also an older page from 1954 which fit with the pretty girl theme of collecting. A romance page from *In Love* #3. It is an early page but we can see the Kirby everyone loves coming through. Clear lines, designs and shapes with an eye for storytelling. He might have been working with Joe Simon still on this page. The face designs are unmistakably Jack's. In just a few short years, we will see Kirby reach his maturity as an artist and really start to change comics.

IF SADIE SINGS TWO NOTES... THE HOUSE'LL BE EMPTY BEFORE WE CAN RING THE CURTAIN DOWN!

HERE ARE THE FEELINGS WHOSE TROUBLES APPLE ANNIE DOES NOT HEAR...

WOTTA CRYN'N SHAME! AN ME DYIN' TO TELL YA ABOUT A GREAT LITTLE ACTRESS RIGHT IN YOUR OWN THEATRE... HATCHECK HATTIE!

HATCHECK HATTIE? SHE'S JUST A NICE KID WHO TENDS HATS AND COATS! BROADWAY... IF THEY'D JUST GIVE HER A CHANCE!!

SHE CAME HERE FROM THE STORES WITH STARS IN HER EYES AND HER BEAT WITH ONE POMEY TRYOUT. NOW SHE JUST WATCHES FROM THE CHECK ROOM... BUT SHE KNOWS EVERY ROUTINE IN THE SCRIPT!

LOOK, HATTIE... I CAN'T PROMISE YOU A THING... BUT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR ROUTINE!

I'M SCARED, YOUR HIGNESS!

... AND THEN HER SONG, A SLOW, SUIVING TOUCH... I WOULD LIKE TO LOOK UP THE THOUGHTFULLY AS HE THUMPS THE PIANO...

GOOD GIRL... HATTIE... HOW IS THE VOICE?

SWEET AND LOVELY.

OH? I SUPPOSE SHE AND HER FRIENDS HAD QUITE A LAUGH AT THE RUBE KID SHE 'TOOK IN' UP OVER THE INCIDENT... SHE LOST HER JOB... CAN'T GET ANOTHER ONE...

I SHOULD'NT WONDER! NO RIGHT MIND SO YOU'D BETTER HIRE HER! TELL HER WE HAVE NO OPENINGS, MISS GIBBONS...

WAIT A MINUTE, MR. HILL... DID YOU SAY DONNA IS HERE? NOW? HAVE YOU NO PITY? HOW CAN YOU TURN HER OUT WHEN SHE'S DOWN? HASN'T SHE SUFFERED ENOUGH POOR KID... WHERE IS SHE?

...THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE, DONNA... I'M THROUGH PLAYING THE LONG SHOTS, DARLING... FROM HERE ON IN, DONNA DREAMS IS KEEPING HER FEET ON THE GROUND... I'M PLAYING IT STRAIGHT, INKY... STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER...

DONNA! I'LL BE ALL RIGHT, INKY... ALTHOUGH THERE'S NOT MUCH HOPE FOR ME IN THIS BUSINESS... BUT I GUESS YOU KNOW THAT...

LIKE HOW TO LOVE SOMEBODY, DONNA - WITHOUT SHOWED ME THAT... ANY SELFISH MOTIVE? JUST LOT OF THINGS I NEVER KNEW BEFORE...

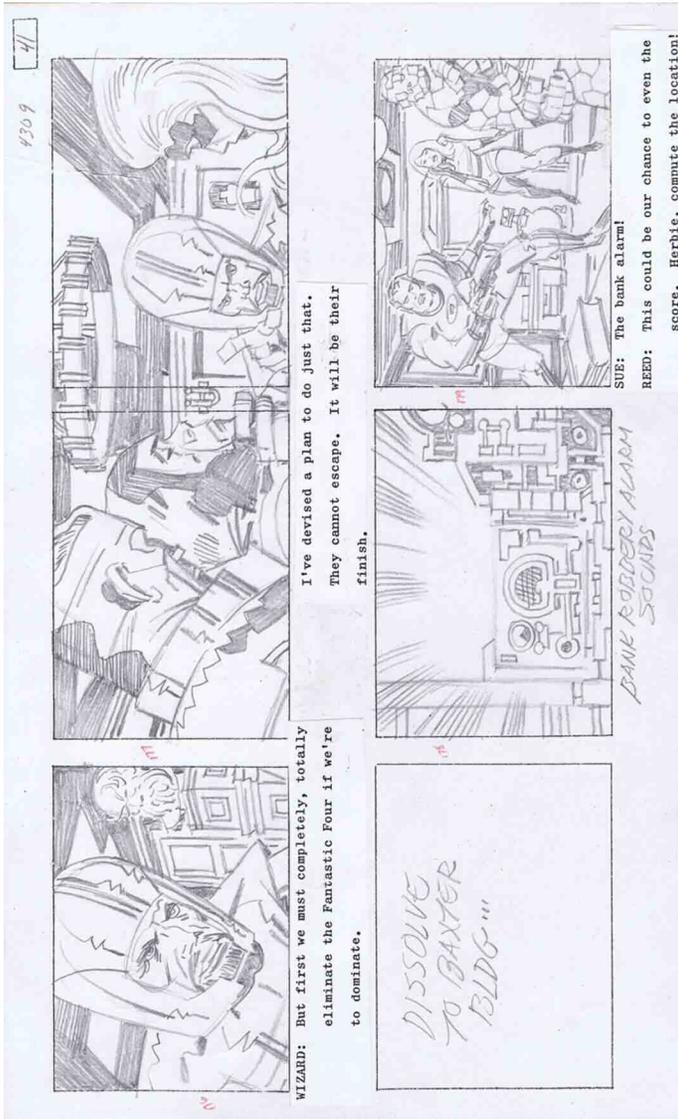
...A LOT OF THINGS, INKY... AND ALL THE TIME, I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST A BIG CITY BUMPKIN! OH, WELL, SO LONG, DAR-LING!

'BYE, DONNA!

INKY WATCHED HER AS SHE TURNED THE CORNER... AND THEN HE STARTED AFTER HER... HE DIDN'T KNOW WHY... DONNA WASN'T MUCH GOOD FOR ANYTHING... SHE WAS EVEN A ROTTEN MODEL... BUT HE NEEDED HER! HE LOVED HER!

In love #3 P21

Next up is a Kirby pencils only piece from a storyboard project he was working on. A number of these went up on Heritage. With so much talk about the injustices done to Kirby's pencils by Vinnie Colletta, I thought a pure pencil piece would be a fitting addition to my collection and a way to study his tight pencils and layouts. It features the Fantastic Four and some of the Inhumans. Of all the characters Kirby draws, I think his take on Medusa is my favorite.



The next 2 pages were much more planned goals. Now that I had a bit of Kirby appreciation and knowledge, I wanted some of his prime super hero work. Anyone that knows me knows I don't like superheroes but when it comes to a Kirby collection you are going to have to get some heroes. It is funny that the reasons I pursued these next 2 pages are almost the opposite reasons I would have

chosen them when I first started collecting. Originally I would have bought them for fan-boy nostalgia. I have gotten away from this in my collecting and I am now approaching these pages from the perspective of Kirby as a pioneer and genius within the field. At the end of the day, they are the same pages I might have picked up at either stage in my collecting.

The first page is a Kirby Cap page. This page is from **Captain America # 198** and has inks by Bruce Berry. I liked it because it features really nice images of Cap, a pretty girl and some classic Kirby backgrounds. The content is a nice peek behind the Captain America curtain at his softer side.



Last but certainly not least, a page from **Thor # 126**. I wanted a good, twice up page. Although I read very little Thor, I always like his imagery and few did him justice in the way Jack did. This page also features a pretty

girl...that is one thing that has not changed in my years of collecting. The border notes are always fun on these twice up pages. Inks graciously applied by the much maligned Colletta.



Now that you have seen the Kirby art I currently own, here is a look back at the Kirby pieces I once owned.

My first Kirby was this page from *Astonishing Tales*. It features Ka-Zar and Zabu, his tiger. I bought this strictly because it fit my Jungle Girl/Hero collecting theme and would be a Kirby example. I still was not a Kirby fan yet and this page did nothing but further my dislike of his art as I thought it looked too unrealistic. Looking back at it now, it is a really nice page and one I would pursue again if the opportunity arose. I sold this page many years ago and only recall owning it because it was Jungle themed.

The next page was a twice up Kirby FF page with very little content and inks by Colletta. It was a fun, goofy page with nice images of Sue in costume and invisible. I don't recall what tempted me to let go of it but obviously it worked.





On the previous page are the last four Kirby pieces I once owned. A Sinnot inked page from the *Silver Surfer* graphic novel, a 2001 cover, a *Journey into Mystery* #110 page with Colletta inks and a *Black Panther* page. Writing this article surprised me as I didn't think I had gone through so many Kirby pages. I don't expect to be letting go of any of my current Kirby pieces as they all fill a niche. I would like to add a few things to my Kirby crypt and these would include a vintage Sinnot inked page, a *Sky Masters* daily, an Everett inked piece and perhaps one day another cover... the kind I would have said Yuck to 30 years ago.

## Heroes Comic Convention Report

June 2017 was my first time attending Heroes Comic Convention in Charlotte, N.C. I had always heard about what a great convention it was in terms of being comic-centric and artist friendly. It certainly lived up to its reputation and it was a great weekend. I went down to Charlotte with no expectations, no pre-set commissions and relatively little cash.



I like to arrive at conventions the day before so I can hang out, see the town a little and be there early on the first day. I did this for Heroes as well although there was no need to be the first in the door unless you were looking for some specific commission lists which I wasn't. After arriving on Thursday, I checked in and decided to walk around the town a bit. I walked about a dozen blocks and had a nice meal at a local bar. I then went over to a nearby hotel to hang out with my buddy Joe Dragunas and his roommate Jeremy Bastian. We hung out for about an hour and I left because I knew Joe had a lot of work to get done despite coming to the convention. I will have a later article in CFA-APA dedicated to Joe and probably Jeremy and David Peterson together. After the visit I went back to the Westin which is the main con hotel and where

many of the after con events take place. I went to the bar and hung out and met a few dealers and collectors.

I did get an early start the next day and since Joe was kind enough to get me an artist alley pass, I got a chance to walk the show before it opened. For those of you that are used to C2E2 and NYCC, it was a refreshing show as it was all vendors and artists. No celebrity guests. No wrestlers. No movie studios. It was just comics, a few non-comic vendors and an artist alley that took up half of the floor space.



My roommate and fellow CAF-APA member Gary Land arrived and we met up and went out for lunch with long time CFA-APA members Benno and Alan Dion.



Benno, Gary, myself and Alan. Below, Wally, myself and Benno.



I also finally met up with Wally Harrington after almost 20 years of knowing him on line. That was one of my bigger goals at this con as Wally was very much an early friend and mentor to me when I first started in this hobby. He shaped what I collect and how I collect in innumerable ways. I understand Dewey Cassell was there on the Friday but I missed him this time around. Former member Russ Garwood was also walking around the show and I had the chance to meet him. As far as non-member meetings, I met up with Felix Lu and sat on an original art panel with him which was a lot of fun. I met up with LOSH Hall of Fame collectors Miki



Russ and Alan

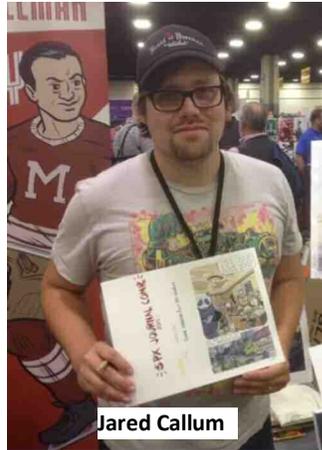
A, Aiden L and David R and we had a nice lunch after the panel. Early on Friday, I met super collector Ben Huang and we became instant friends. We ran into each other and hung out several times during the weekend.



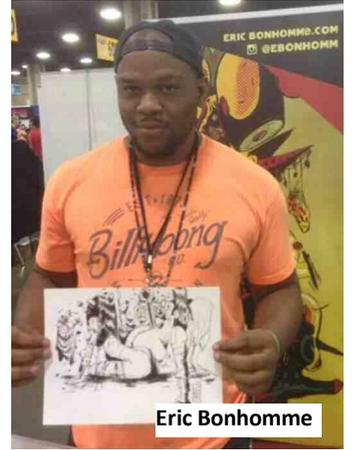
Gregory Miller

Heroes con is about the art and it would be remiss of me not to talk more about that. I spend most of my time at comic conventions combing the ghettos of artist alley looking for new artists to get interested in. Heroes certainly had many new names for me, among them Gregory Miller, Jared Callum and Eric Bonhomme. I ended up with a piece or two from each of them and spent a fair bit of time talking with Gregory and Eric. Eric is very classically trained and was taught by Barron Storey,

George Pratt and other pioneering comic artists. Gregory has a style and aesthetic that is hard to place. A bit of Woodring and a story that reminds me of Evan Dahm's



Jared Callum

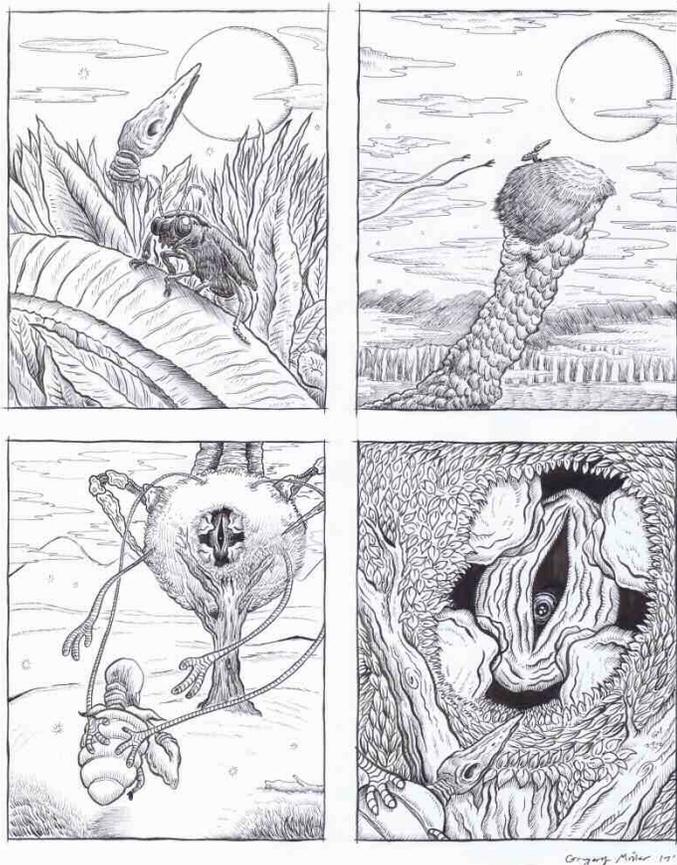
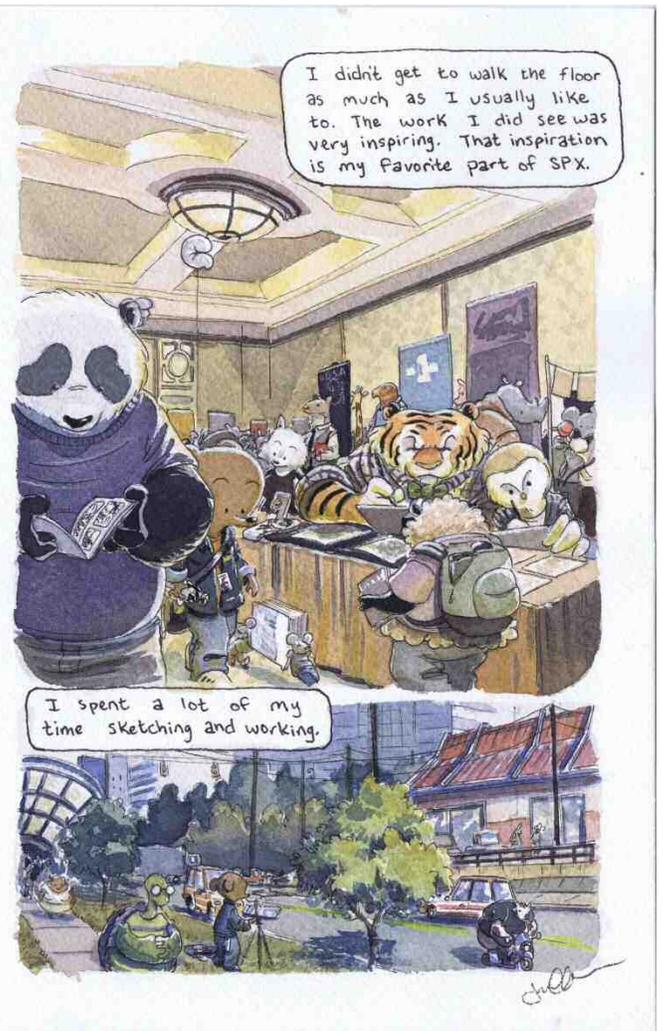
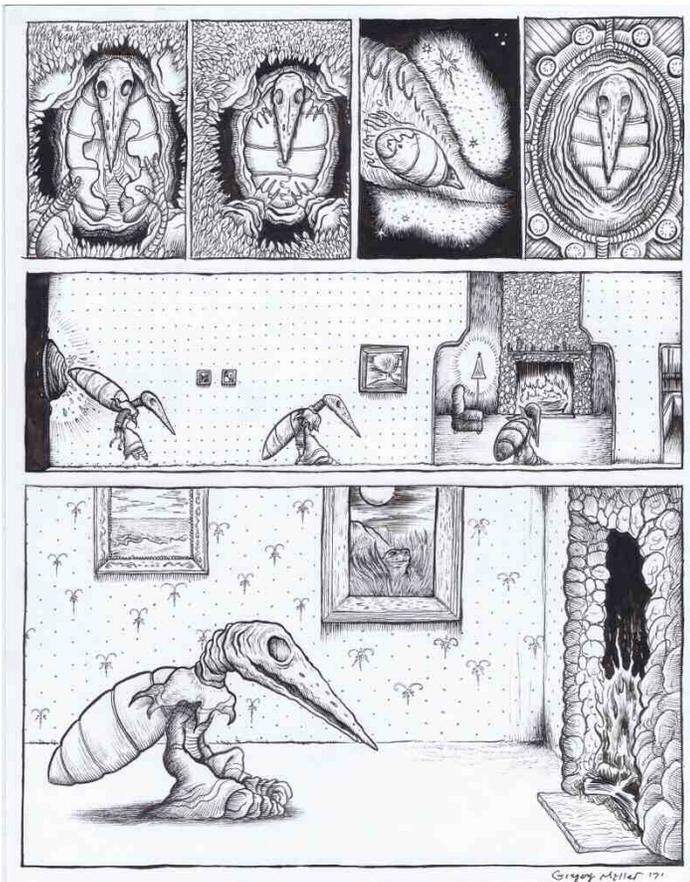


Eric Bonhomme



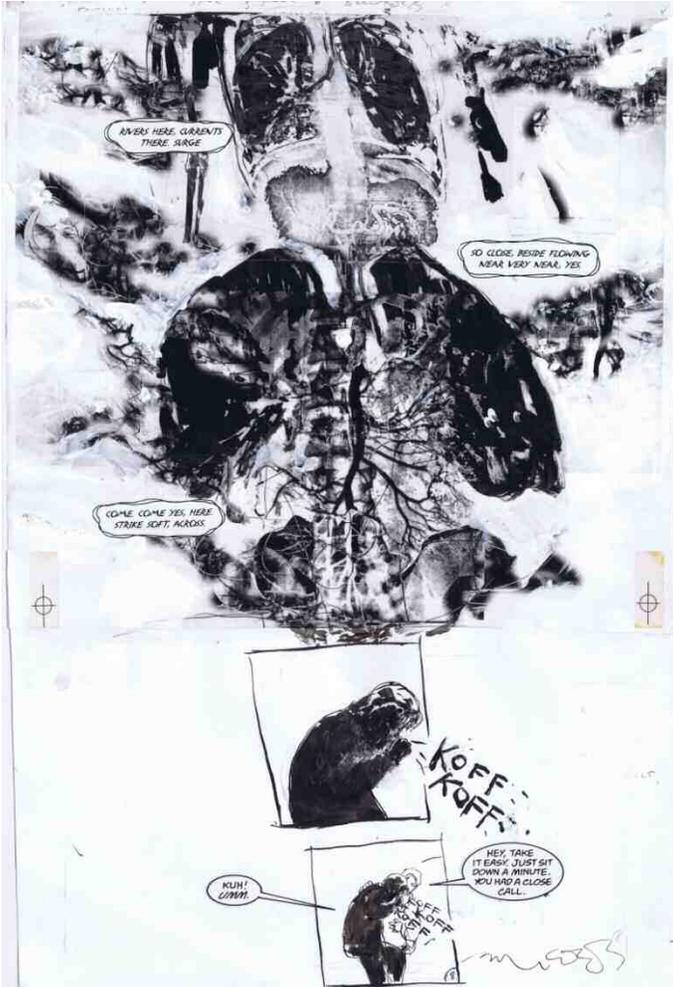
works. I had a Dragon Lady by Caleb King and a Kanaeda and Bike commission by Erik Klaus. Below are page from all of these artists.





The last artist I met was Bill Koeb. I owned a painted page from Bill until just recently so I knew his name. We met casually at the art auction and spoke for about an hour about artists and art. We connected on many levels and had similar views on art. Bill was also trained by Barron Storey and Barron's fingerprints are all over Bill's work. The day after the auction I went to Bill's booth and we talked more and have since picked up on line where we left off. I ended up with a few fine art pieces by Bill in the vein of Roeschenberg and a page from one of his early comics, *Faultlines*.





Heroes is the place to buy art. On the Friday there was a Drink and Draw with artists hanging out and drawing.



*Kirby Late-Comer*

All sales went to benefit the Cul-de-Sac foundation. Chris Ciara and his comic legal initiative helped sponsor the night.

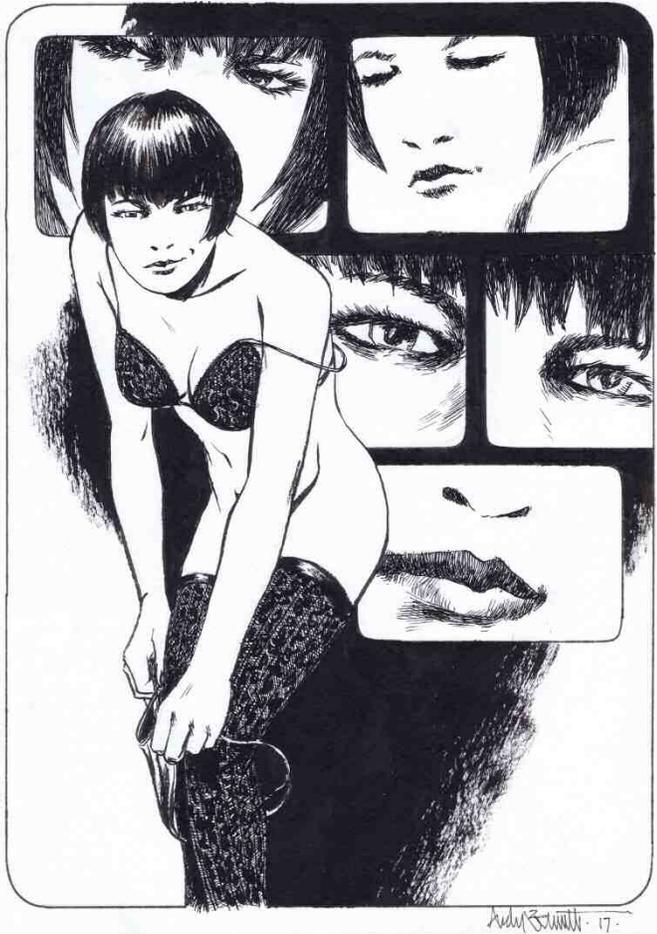


On Saturday was the big art auction with a pop-up RUN DMC mini-concert. It was a lot of fun although I managed to go home empty handed. On the Sunday there were 3 more auctions during the day. I had an unfortunate experience with the auction and left empty handed and upset. I was bidding on the only piece I wanted, a specialty piece by Gregory Miller. No bidding cards, just hands. The opening bid was \$30 and I was prepared to go to \$300. I put up my hand and the auctioneer looked at me and acknowledged the bid. No other bids and when asked for the name of the winner, the lady behind me said Joan just as I was saying my name. He had taken her bid right behind me and not mine. I protested but he said too bad and wouldn't reopen the bidding. The guys next to me all thought I had won. The artist was present and was upset by the whole thing and how low his piece went for. I don't get upset easily but his had me fuming for a good 10 minutes. I later went back to tell the auctioneer what a terrible decision he had made in not reopening it after it was clear that he was the source of the misunderstanding. This was the only sore point for me at the con.



I did see some great art. Wally was kind enough to bring along a portfolio of art that was worthy of a gallery show which included Frazettas, Raymonds and Williamsons. Benno had brought along an amazing portfolio of art to share as well. I did see one of the strangest and most disturbing sketchbook themes ever but this is one to ask me about over a beer rather than to put into print.

Overall, I had a great time and enjoyed the company of other collectors. I found some interesting art and further broadened my horizons. I finally met Wally and met Benno again... both very important people who helped in my evolution as an art collector and also who were my introduction to CFA-APA. Here is one last piece of art that ties Heroes in with the recent direction my collection has been taking...a respectful tribute by Andy Bennett to Crepax and the unforgettable Valentina.



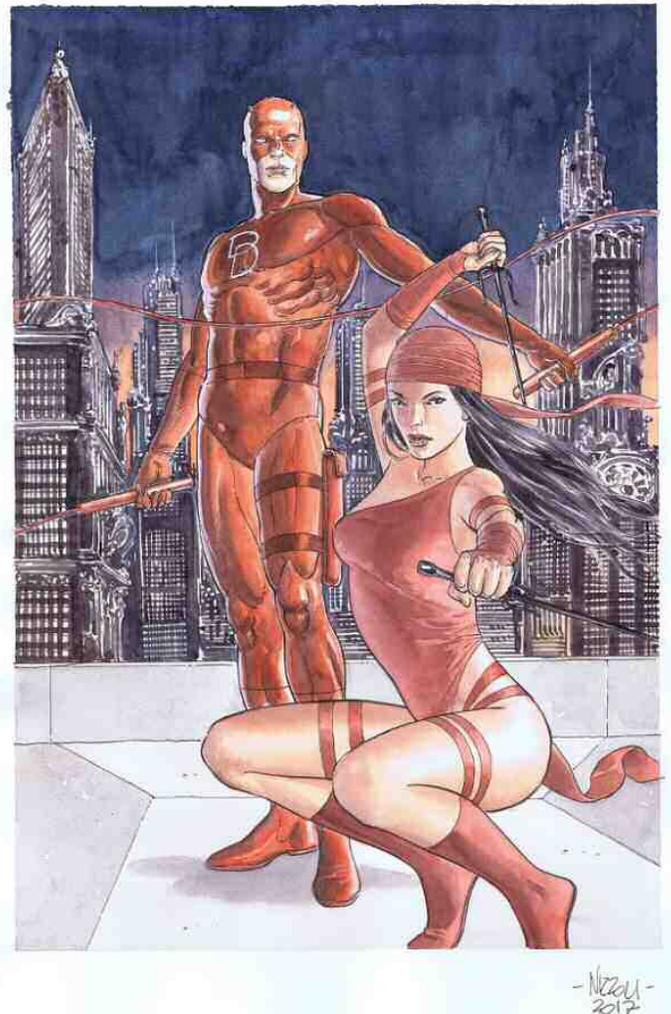
### Mailing Comments CFA-APA #101

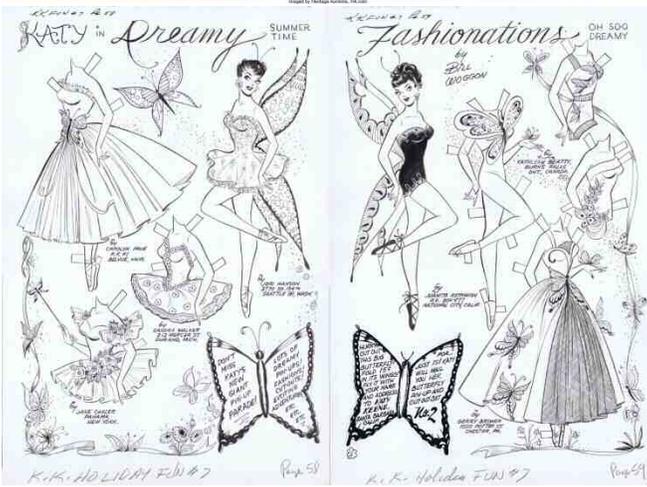
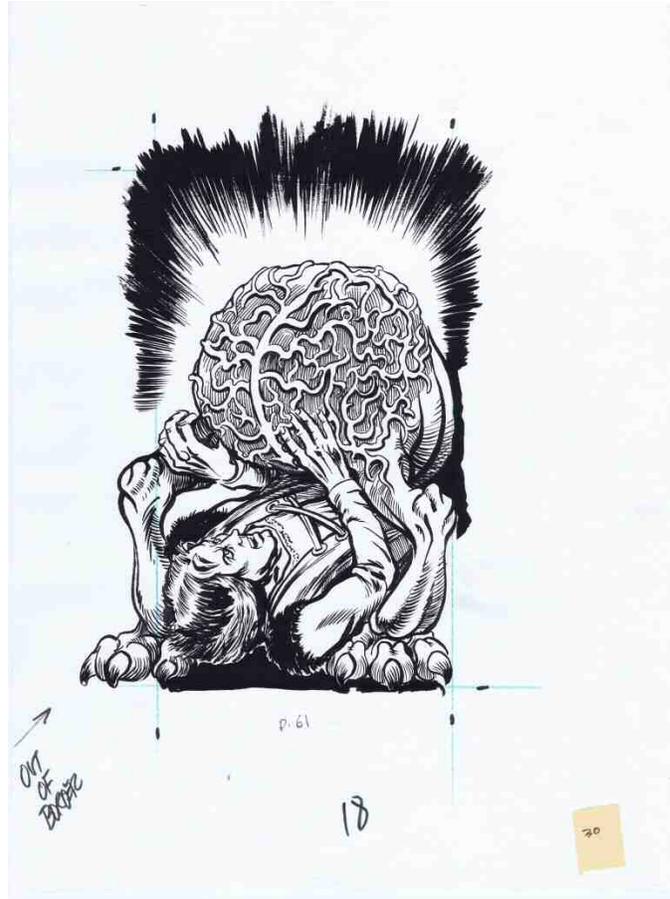
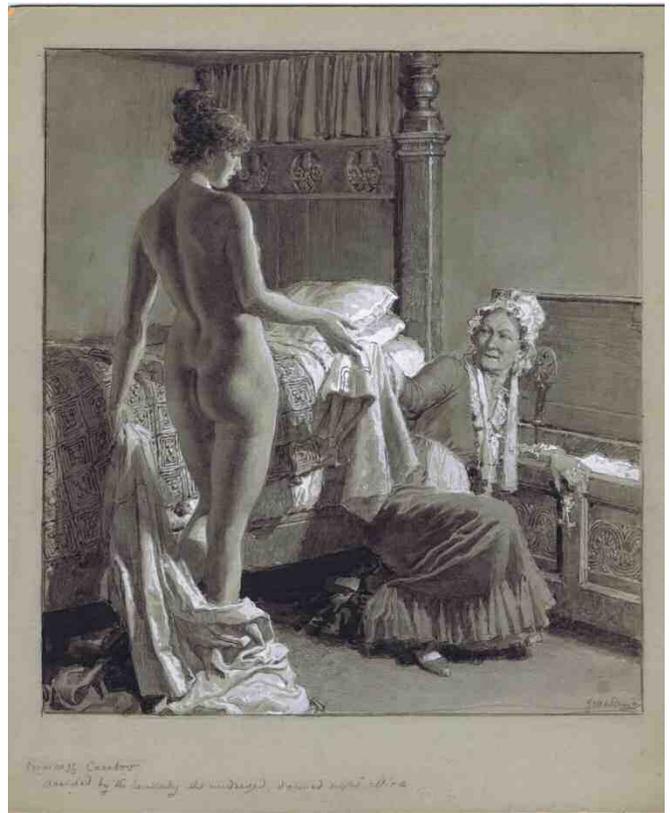
This was a great issue. Thank you to David for your work and to all the contributors for making a landmark issue. I met Bernie Wrightson once and he was already not well at the time but he was friendly and made a point of making eye contact and talking as we connected on some brief discussions on art. It was great to hear all the personal stories of Bernie and the friendships others had. I also enjoyed the art everyone shared, some truly great pieces and the connections to the artist make them that more special. The guest contributors Bill Stout and Steve

*Kirby Late-Comer*

Bissette were a nice surprise and a very welcome addition to this volume. David, as always, your *In Memoriam* section was saddening, well-presented and a very respectful tribute. What you do there is such important work. I had not realized Porges had passed away. I never knew him but knew his art in *MAD Magazine* growing up. Although I own a handful of *MAD Magazine* pieces, I don't actively collect the art but I have such a strong nostalgic soft spot for all things *MAD*. I am starting to think I should do something about it. A warm welcome to the new members

In the interest of no blank pages, here are a few other pieces I have recently added to my collection. First up, a commission by Marco Nizzoli of Daredevil and Elektra as well as a Corto Maltese piece he did for fun. The Corto piece he drew and then water colored as a night scene and a day scene. Both are presented. I own the night scene and later bought the day scene for a John Biernat who I talked about in my CAF-APA # 100 article. Followed by *Detroit City Comics* page by Robert Crumb, Katy Keen 2 page spread by Bill Woggon, Princess Caribou by Matania and a Dungeons & Dragons illustration by Jim Roslof.





This is truly a potpourri of totally unrelated pieces that only make sense together in one place, my collection.