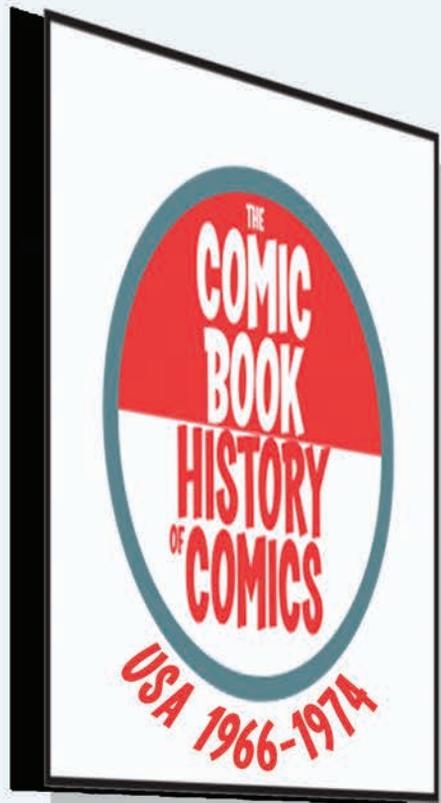
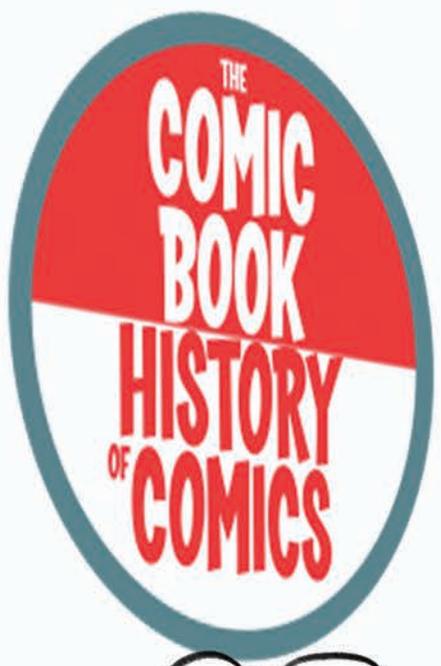
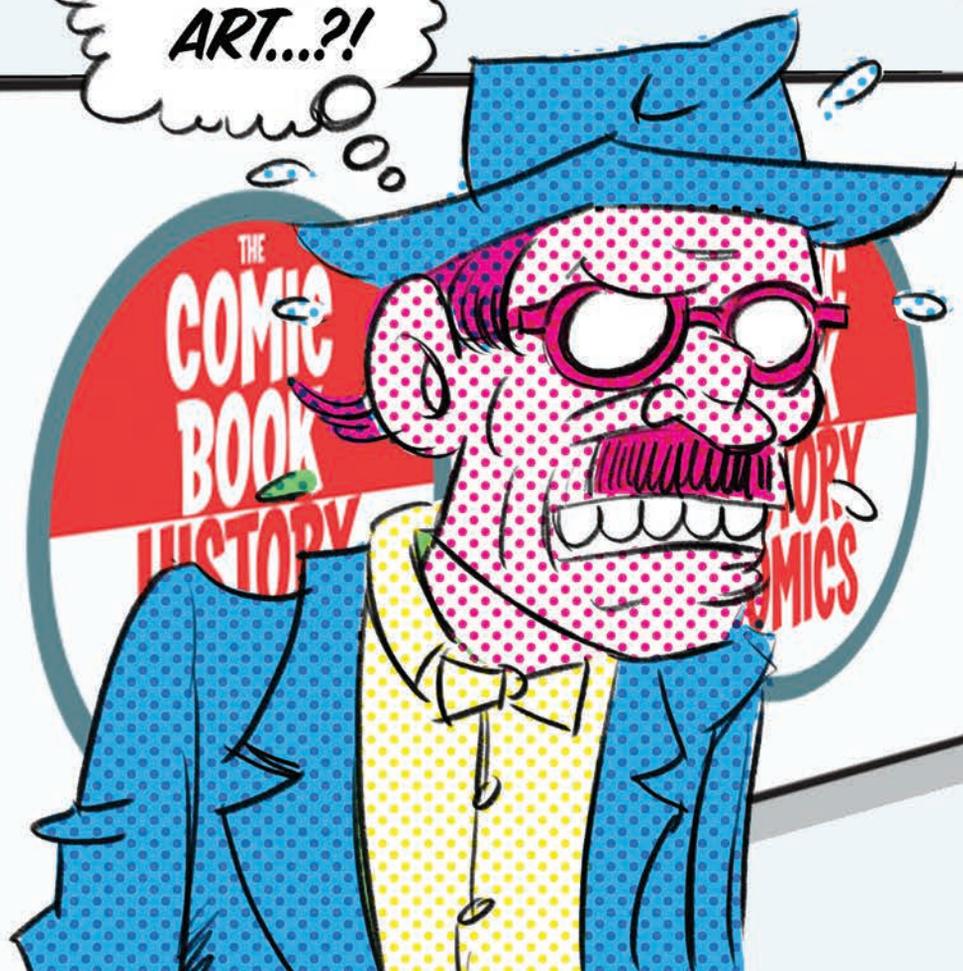


VAN LENTE
DUNLAVEY
GUZOWSKI



*BUT...
IS IT
ART...?!*





written by
Fred Van Lente

art by
Ryan Dunlavey

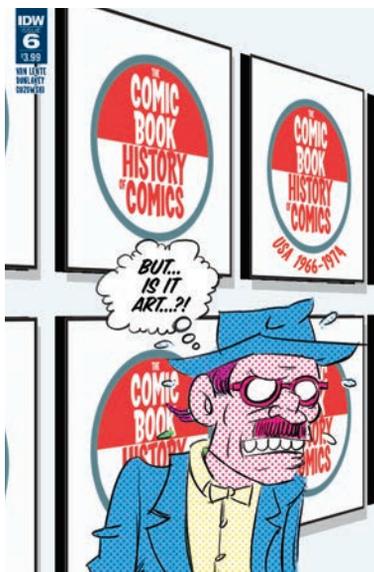
colors by
Adam Guzowski

letters by
Fred Van Lente

edits by
Tom Waltz

production design by
Neil Uyetake

publisher
Ted Adams



REGULAR COVER
art by Ryan Dunlavey



SUBSCRIPTION COVER
art by Ryan Dunlavey

For international rights, contact licensing@idwpublishing.com

IDW[®]
www.IDWPUBLISHING.com

Ted Adams, CEO & Publisher • Greg Goldstein, President & COO • Robbie Robbins, EVP/Sr. Graphic Artist • Chris Ryall, Chief Creative Officer • David Hedgecock, Editor-in-Chief • Laurie Windrow, Senior Vice President of Sales & Marketing • Matthew Ruzicka, CPA, Chief Financial Officer • Lorelei Bunjes, VP of Digital Services • Jerry Bennington, VP of New Product Development

Facebook: facebook.com/idwpublishing • Twitter: [@idwpublishing](https://twitter.com/idwpublishing) • YouTube: youtube.com/idwpublishing
Tumblr: tumblr.idwpublishing.com • Instagram: instagram.com/idwpublishing



THE COMIC BOOK HISTORY OF COMICS #6. APRIL 2017. © 2017 FRED VAN LENTE & RYAN DUNLAVEY. All Rights Reserved. © 2017 Idea and Design Works, LLC. All Rights Reserved. IDW Publishing, a division of Idea and Design Works, LLC. Editorial offices: 2765 Truxtun Road, San Diego, CA 92106. The IDW logo is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Idea and Design Works, LLC. Printed in Korea.
IDW Publishing does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories, or artwork.

POP

IN THE 1940s, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY ART PROFESSOR HOYT L. SHERMAN USED A UNIQUE METHOD TO DEVELOP HIS STUDENTS' POWERS OF PERCEPTION.

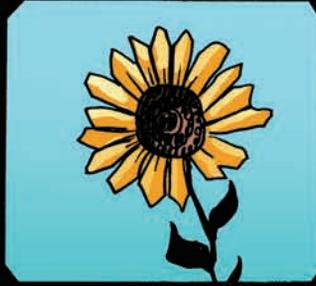
HE WOULD FLASH AN IMAGE BRIEFLY ONTO A SCREEN IN A DARKENED CLASSROOM.



THE STUDENT WOULD THEN HAVE TO DRAW THE IMAGE COMPLETELY FROM MEMORY. IN THE "FLASH ROOM," SHERMAN ARGUED...

...THE ARTIST COULD DEVELOP HIS POWERS OF OBSERVATION AS A PURELY MECHANICAL FUNCTION OF OPTICS, DEVOID OF THE IMPOSITION OF MEANING.

ONE OF HIS STUDENTS EXPLAINED, "YOU'D GET A VERY STRONG AFTERIMAGE, A TOTAL IMPRESSION, AND THEN YOU'D DRAW IT IN THE DARK--"



"THE POINT BEING THAT YOU'D HAVE TO SENSE WHERE THE PARTS WERE IN RELATION TO THE WHOLE."

"IT WAS A MIXTURE OF SCIENCE AND AESTHETICS, AND IT BECAME THE CENTER OF WHAT I WAS INTERESTED IN.

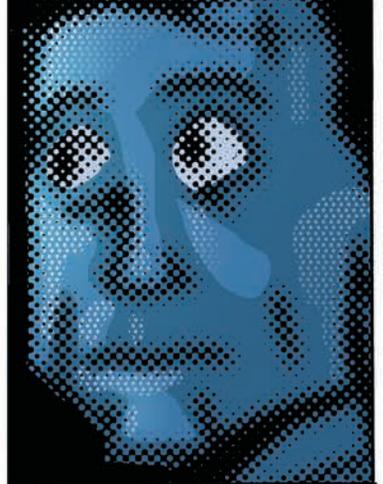
"I'D ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MARK THAT WAS ART AND ONE THAT WASN'T."



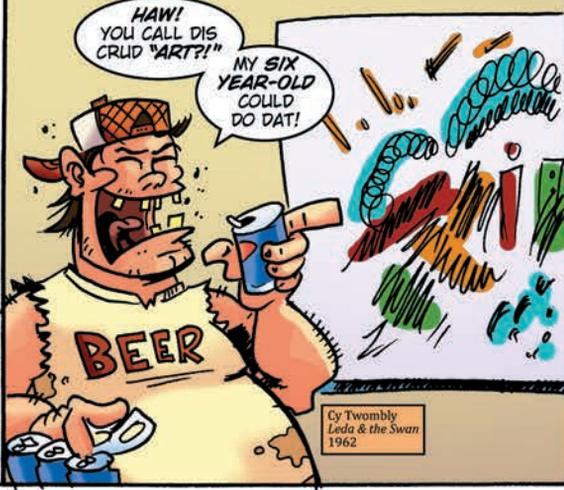
"SHERMAN WAS HARD TO UNDERSTAND, BUT HE TAUGHT THAT THE KEY TO EVERYTHING LAY IN WHAT HE CALLED PERCEPTUAL UNITY."



THAT STUDENT'S NAME WAS ROY LICHTENSTEIN.

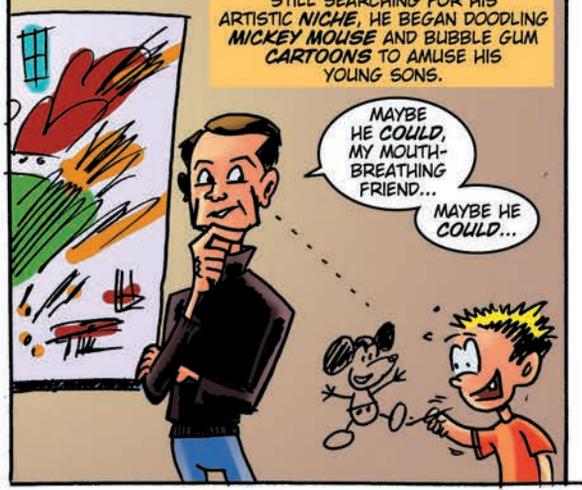


AFTER COLLEGE, LICHTENSTEIN TAUGHT AROUND THE COUNTRY AND BECAME A MINOR **ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST**, IN THE STYLE THAT DOMINATED POSTWAR AMERICAN PAINTING.



Cy Twombly
Leda & the Swan
1962

IN 1960, LICHTENSTEIN ACCEPTED A PROFESSORSHIP AT **RUTGERS** IN NEW JERSEY.



STILL SEARCHING FOR HIS ARTISTIC NICHE, HE BEGAN DOODLING **MICKEY MOUSE** AND **BUBBLE GUM CARTOONS** TO AMUSE HIS YOUNG SONS.

COLLEAGUES ENCOURAGED HIM TO CONCENTRATE ON HIS **COMIC STRIP DRAWINGS**.

"I THINK I STARTED OUT MORE AS AN **OBSERVER** THAN AS A PAINTER," HE SAYS, "BUT, WHEN I DID ONE, ABOUT HALFWAY THROUGH THE PAINTING I GOT INTERESTED IN IT AS A PAINTING."



HE BRANCHED OUT FROM STRIPS AND COMMERCIAL ART TO LOOK THROUGH **COMIC BOOKS**--MOSTLY WAR AND ROMANCE TITLES--FOR INSPIRATION.

HE FOUND INDIVIDUAL PANELS FROM COMICS ROMANCE ARTISTS **RUSS HEATH** AND **MIKE SEKOWSKY** AND WAR PENCILLER **IRV NOVICK** WERE AMONG HIS FAVORITES...



...WHICH HE WOULD THEN PROJECT ONTO THE WALL AND **TRACE**, IN THE PROCESS PURPOSEFULLY **SIMPLIFYING** THE DRAWING, BREAKING IT DOWN TO ITS **ESSENCE**, TRYING TO REMOVE THE ORIGINAL ARTIST'S **STYLE AND PERSONALITY**...



...INSISTING THAT SUCH AN "**AFTERIMAGE**" WAS AN **IMPROVEMENT** UPON THE ORIGINAL AND A WHOLLY **UNIQUE** PIECE OF ART.

LICHTENSTEIN BROUGHT HIS "COMIC STRIP PAINTINGS" TO LEGENDARY NEW YORK DEALER LEO CASTELLI, OF WHOM WILLEM DE KOONING ONCE SAID COULD SELL ANYTHING AS ART, EVEN BEER CANS.



CASTELLI IMMEDIATELY SAW THE COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL OF THIS NEW DIRECTION.

IN A BIZARRE COINCIDENCE, JUST A FEW WEEKS LATER, A RELATIVELY UNKNOWN DESIGNER NAMED ANDY WARHOL TURNED UP ON CASTELLI'S DOORSTEP, TRYING TO PUSH HIS OWN COMICS-INSPIRED PAINTINGS.



CLEARLY SOMETHING WAS IN THE AIR -- A ZEITGEIST OF LATE 50s/EARLY 60s CULTURE THAT HERALDED THE BIRTH OF "POP" ART. THE TERM, DEPENDING ON WHO YOU ASK, CAME FROM THE WORD "POPULAR"...

...OR THE TOOTSIE POP HELD BY THE BODYBUILDER IN THIS, WHAT IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE THE FIRST TRUE WORK OF POP ART, BRITISH ARTIST RICHARD HAMILTON'S 1966 COLLAGE "JUST WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES TODAY'S HOMES SO DIFFERENT, SO APPEALING?"



(NOTE JACK KIRBY'S COVER TO YOUNG ROMANCE #26 ON THE WALL.)

HEY, LOOK! I COPIED A WHOLE BUNCH OF OTHER GUYS' STUFF!

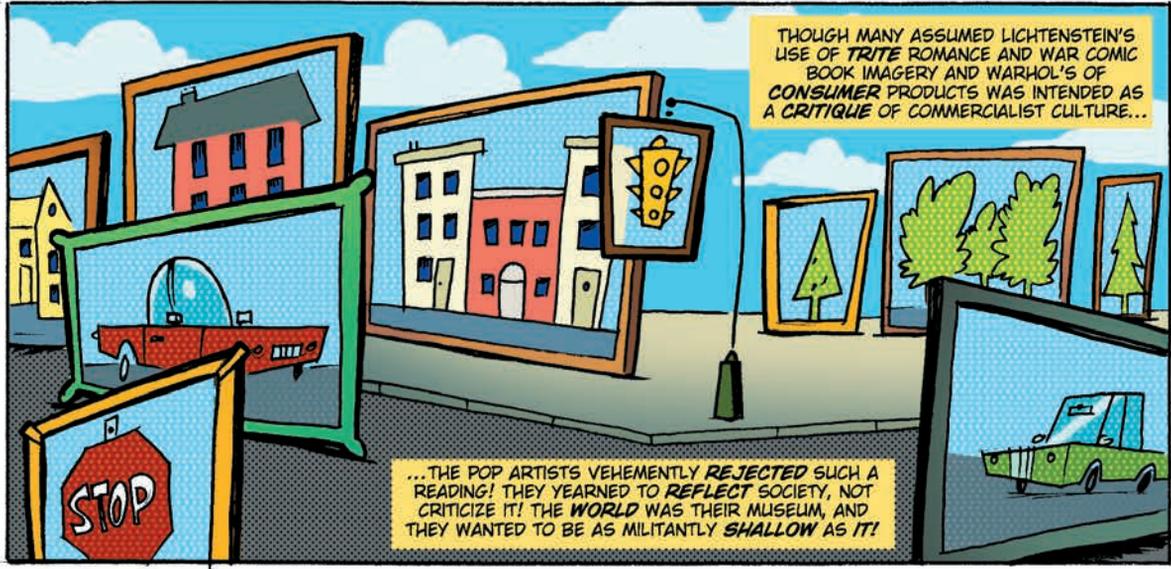
I'M A GEN-YOO-WHINE POP ARTIST! ->HYUK!<-

AFTER SEEING LICHTENSTEIN'S WORK, WARHOL ABANDONED HIS COMIC STRIP PAINTINGS. HE ENVIED ROY'S PAINTED-ON (THROUGH A WIRE SCREEN) "BENDAY" DOTS.

WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT?

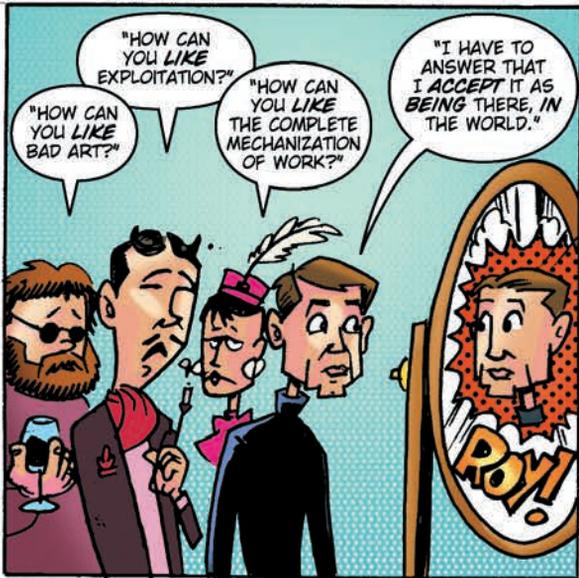
NINETEENTH CENTURY ARTIST BENJAMIN DAY INVENTED THE DOTS UPON THE ADVENT OF "PROCESS" ENGRAVING TO CREATE GRADATIONS IN PRINTED ARTWORK.

BUT LICHTENSTEIN TURNED BACK THE CLOCK ON PRINTING HISTORY, USING PRIMARY COLORS AND SIMPLISTIC STYLES IN HIS BENDAY DOTS TO EMPHASIZE FLATNESS, BANALITY AND A LACK OF INDIVIDUALISM, JUST AS WARHOL'S FUTURE SILKSCREENS AND SCULPTURES UNDERSCORED THE BANALITY OF HIS SUBJECT MATTER -- ANTI-GLAMORIZING THE EVERYDAYNESS OF OBJECTS LIKE BRILLO PADS.



THOUGH MANY ASSUMED LICHTENSTEIN'S USE OF TRITE ROMANCE AND WAR COMIC BOOK IMAGERY AND WARHOL'S OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS WAS INTENDED AS A CRITIQUE OF COMMERCIALIST CULTURE...

... THE POP ARTISTS VEHEMENTLY REJECTED SUCH A READING! THEY YEARNED TO REFLECT SOCIETY, NOT CRITICIZE IT! THE WORLD WAS THEIR MUSEUM, AND THEY WANTED TO BE AS MILITANTLY SHALLOW AS IT!



"HOW CAN YOU LIKE BAD ART?"

"HOW CAN YOU LIKE EXPLOITATION?"

"HOW CAN YOU LIKE THE COMPLETE MECHANIZATION OF WORK?"

"I HAVE TO ANSWER THAT I ACCEPT IT AS BEING THERE, IN THE WORLD."



BUT THE MASS CULTURE POP ART TRIED TO EMULATE BECAME, AS THE MOVEMENT REACHED THE HEIGHT OF ITS INFLUENCE IN THE MID-60s, MORE AND MORE LIKE POP...

...*"EMPHASIZING STYLE" TO "SLIGHT CONTENT,"*
IN THE WORDS OF SUSAN SONTAG'S 1964 ESSAY
"NOTES ON CAMP"...

...MIRRORING THE
HIPSTER'S IRONIC
CONSUMPTION OF "SQUARE"
CULTURE IN ORDER TO
MOCK IT...



HA, HA!
IT'S JUST
SO STUPID!

...SUCH AS HUGH
HEFNER'S FAMOUS
SCREENINGS OF CHEESY
OLD MOVIE SERIALS LIKE
BATMAN & ROBIN (1949) IN
THE *PLAYBOY MANSION*.

CREATED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SUPERMAN FAD (1939) BY WRITER *BILL FINGER*
AND ARTIST *BOB KANE*, BATMAN IS ARGUABLY NOT A "SUPER" HERO AT ALL...

...BUT RATHER THE MOST SUCCESSFUL *PULP AVENGER* IN
THE *SCARLET PIMPERNEL-ZORRO-SHADOW* MODE, WITH NO
SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES, JUST A *SPOOKY OUTFIT*,
ATHLETICISM AND *RICH TWIT* ALTER-EGO.



BY THE 1950s, UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
SF-HAPPY EDITOR *JACK SCHIFF*, BATS
STRAYED FAR FROM HIS URBAN ROOTS,
ROUTINELY BATTLING DINOSAURS
AND FLYING SAUCERS.



SALES DROPPED THROUGHOUT THE DECADE AS
THE DARK KNIGHT INCREASINGLY BECAME A *CAMP*
PARODY OF HIMSELF...

...AN IMPRESSION NOT HELPED
BY WERTHAM'S ASSERTION, IN
SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT,
THAT BATMAN AND HIS SIDEKICK
ROBIN EMBODIED "A WISH DREAM
OF TWO *HOMOSEXUALS*
LIVING TOGETHER."

