

Comics, Anthologies and Zines

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This collection of comics, anthologies and zines was collected in large from two separate comics festivals, the Small Press Expo in Bethesda, Maryland, and the Locust Moon Comics Festival in Philadelphia. These conventions are set up so that creators can sell work, largely self-published or published by small press, and that fans can interact with creators.

Comics as an art form is currently undergoing a large shift. Whereas traditionally comic creators would need to work through an established publisher or syndication agency, now more popular comics are being made through the creators themselves. Many artists also distribute original content for free online. The result is an increased amount of creators and a wider range of content. Now more than ever artists are choosing to use comics as an experimental as well as a story-driven medium.

Some of these authors are not much older than myself, while some are in their 40's or 50's. Some of these creators have been making comics for years and have had full careers, while some are just starting out. For example, the comic *Farmer's Dilemma* was made by Sam Alden, a young cartoonist in his mid-twenties. The graphic novel, *RASL*, alternatively, was created by veteran cartoonist Jeff Smith. This diverse range of age and skill represents the accessibility of the alternative comics world.

As an aspiring cartoonist, I came to these conventions and festivals with the goal of meeting with creators, trading, and buying books. I brought my own comics to sell or trade, but mostly to hand out to creators I admire, in order to network. Some of these books are full graphic novels, while others are anthologies, minicomics, and zines.

Many of these books function as art objects as well as stories. *Sheeeeeeeep!*, by Jen Tong, folds out into a beautiful print rather than a book. Andrea Kalfas' *Warlow's Guide to Wizards Sorcery and Familiars Arcane* includes beautifully printed illustrations in the manner of a field guide. These books blend the line between illustration and comics, and also represent a new wave of book-making arts.

One book, *What It Is* by Lynda Barry, was not purchased at a festival but was bought at Barry's talk at Goucher College. I chose to include it with the others because I was able to meet with Barry when I bought the book, and that personal connection was similar to that of the other books in the collection. Being able to talk to Lynda Barry about comics was one of the highlights of my Goucher career. The book is also a great representation of alternative comics.

Overall, each of these books represents a connection and relationship with the artist. Many of these books were traded for rather than bought. In this sense these books are also like gifts from friends. Having the opportunity to talk to an artist, discuss work, and trade is a great experience. Comics is not historically a career someone pursues for the money. Instead the most important part is making and sharing art with each other. These artists are succeeding in creating a new age for sequential art.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Alden, Sam. *Farmer's Dilemma*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

Farmer's Dilemma is a short story about a young fox, adopted by chickens, coming to terms with his identity as a carnivore and a young adult. The hand-screen-printed cover makes it a beautiful addition to the collection. Alden recently won an Ignatz award for Most Promising Young Talent, and his inking and narrative support this. I was able to speak with the artist and bought this from him at the Small Press Expo.

2. Barnett, Lauren, and Nathan Bulmer, eds. *The Hic and Hoc Illustrated Journal of Humor*. Vol. 1. Montclair: Hic and Hoc Publications, 2013. Print.

This anthology showcases different American cartoonists' works of humor. This collaboration between artists reflects a spirit of cooperation and artist-driven content.

3. Barry, Lynda. *What It Is*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2008. Print.

What It Is is Lynda Barry's masterpiece on writing, art, and the act of creation. Barry's stream of consciousness style of writing and drawing create a dreamlike book intended to explain the elusive nature of inspiration. Barry has been drawing comics for much longer than most of the artists in this collection. One of the main points of her work is that everyone should be able to tap into their creative minds and express themselves. This spirit of inclusion reflects the comics community as a whole.

4. Brosh, Hanni, and Magnolia Porter. *Sugar Crash*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This small book was written by Magnolia Porter and illustrated by Hanni Brosh. It is an extension from Porter's webcomic, *Monster Pulse*. While the comic is small and self-published, it is printed in full color and shows beautiful artwork. The piece shows collaboration between two artists.

5. Chandhok, Lena H. *Pony Tale*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This comic by Lena H. Chandhok tells the story of a girl who is half-centaur, but her peers are unable to identify her as such. According to the artist, it reflects her experiences as a half-Cherokee woman. The autobiographical tradition often occurs in cartoonists' works. In this case the artist has chosen to show a piece of herself through an original story. The comic is printed in black and white, but the bright orange cover stands out.

6. Dahm, Evan, ed. *Hail Stan*. Self-Published, 2013. Print

This zine, with a pure black cover and printed on red paper, showcases many different artists' representations of Satanism in a humorous light. The minicomic includes work from artists KC Green, Maritsa Patrinos, and Kory Bing. The subject matter handled in a humorous manner reflects the jovial side of the comics industry.

7. Davis, Ashley. *Jailbird and the Friend on the Outside*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This comic is free of dialogue. Davis' illustrations are simple, cartoon-like, and very whimsical. Printed in black and white, the story revolves around a recently escaped prisoner.

8. Davis, Eleanor. *31 Drawings That Have Something to Do With Being in Love and Not Being in Love*. Self-Published, 2012. Print.

This small zine contains drawings by illustrator Eleanor Davis. The drawings include men, women, and plant forms, and are abstract representations of love. The book is small (approximately 4.75"x4.5").

While not a comic, this book shows a sequence of drawings that each show different stories and emotions.

9. Dreistadt, Becky, and Gibson, Frank. *Tigerbuttah*. Patty Pan, 2010. Print.

This serves as Dreistadt and Gibson's homage to Little Golden Books. The book follows the story of a young tiger, Tigerbuttah, who imagines adventures around the world. Dreistadt's whimsical gouache illustrations are reminiscent of older books from the mid-20th century.

10. Duncanson, G W. *Tax Day in Never Land*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This surreal comic is printed in full color and contains a stream of consciousness narrative. The book includes cartoon icons melting into one another, talking dogs, strange tales and stories that appear non-sequitur. While comics are often thought of as strictly humorous, many artists decide to use the medium in more of a fine arts context.

11. Flores, Madeleine. *Help Us! Great Warrior*. Vol. 1. Self-Published, 2012-2013. Print.

Help Us Great Warrior is a collection of comics by Madeline Flores, all centering around the same warrior character. Flores' comics are hilarious and beautifully drawn. This book was self-published with content previously published online.

12. Goldstein, Sophie. *Edna II*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This book is a minicomic published by Sophie Goldstein. Printed in black and white, the cover is printed on silver paper. Set in a dystopian future, it tells the story of an old man coping with lost love. Goldstein's work often feels disquieting in a beautiful and emotionally effective way.

13. Green, KC. *Midnite Surprise*. Vol. 2. Benign Kingdom, 2013. Print.

This book contains a collection of illustrations and comics by KC Green. Green has published a number of books after having become successful online. His absurd sense of humor is unique and stands out. Like many other books in this collection, *Midnite Surprise* was self-published and the content is therefore strongly creator-driven and unfiltered.

14. Heumiller, Erik. *The Surprise*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This small book includes an unusual shape for printing. Shaped like a suitcase, it has paper tag on the cover as an added decoration. The minicomic tells a short story about a house sitter who must dispose of a dead dog in a suitcase. The unusual printing sets this comic apart.

15. Johnson, Gretta. *Star Fruit*. Paper Rocket Minicomics, 2013. Print.

Star Fruit tells a dream-like story about a young woman who is whisked away by magical beings with a mystical star fruit. Printed in full color and in large format, this book's illustrations are beautiful and reflect the whimsical narrative.

16. Kalfas, Andrea. *Warlow's Guide to Wizards Sorcery and Familiars Arcane*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This book contains full-color illustrations of magical beings and their familiars, imagined by the artist. Throughout the book Kalfas introduces wizards with all completely unique designs yet united by a similar color scheme. Her drawings pull the book together very nicely and gives it the feel of a field guide.

17. Knetzger, Laura. *Flowering Vine*. Ray Ray, 2013. Print.

This book is cartoonist Laura Knetzger's autobiographical minicomic. In it the artist discusses her fears and thoughts about her future in the comics world. The book is very candidly written and serves as a good example of autobiographical comics. The limited color palette and printing make the book visually beautiful as well.

18. Knetzger, Laura. *Bug Boys*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

Also by Laura Ketzger, this book was a color special from her ongoing series, *Bug Boys*. The story revolves around two beetles and their insect friends. The large format and full-color printing makes this book special.

19. Knisely, Lucy. *Radiator Days*. Self-Published, 2008. Print.

Radiator Days is a collection of comics by cartoonist Lucy Knisley made when she was an undergrad living in Chicago. This was bought directly from Knisley at the Small Press Expo. It functions as a

retrospective of her earlier work, and shows the perspective of a young art student. It shows comics that could be published and sold on their own, like most of the smaller comics in this collection.

20. Lawson, Greer, ed. *Every/Body: An Open Discussion of Gender and Body*. Minneapolis: Self-Published, 2013. Print.

Every/Body is an anthology of works dealing with body image, issues, and gender. Many artists contributed with subjects including gender identity, self-harm, and pressures to dress a certain way. This work was printed through online crowd funding and showcases artists ranging in skill levels.

21. McAndrew, Phil. *Crying in Front of Your Dog and Other Stories*. Saline: McNaughton and Gunn, 2013. Print.

This book was purchased from Phil McAndrew at the Small Press Expo. An unusual shape, the book shows comics and illustrations using ink and watercolor. This book is an unusual square shape and has a beautifully colored cover. McAndrew's pieces border on the line between comics and illustrations, using entire pages as panels and using plenty of space to tell a complete story.

22. Miller, Kayla. *Creep*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This book contains the first chapter of Miller's ongoing series, *Creep*. It is printed in full color. It tells the story of a teenager in Philadelphia who unwillingly becomes a local superhero under the name, "Creep." The comic was published online before being published in print.

23. Mok, Annie. *Stitching Together*. Bare Bones, 2012. Print.

Stitching Together is a collection of comics by Annie Mok about Jim Henson. It contains a comic about Henson's life and career, an autobiographical comic about the artists' relationship to Henson, and several others. The book is Risograph printed in green ink to invoke images of Kermit the frog. Bought directly from the artist at Locust Moon Comics Festival, she signed it with a drawing of the buyer.

24. Odomo, Maré. *Internet Comics*. Sacred Prism, 2013. Print.

Odomo's *Internet Comics* is a collection of autobiographical comics. His work is often dreamlike and here is united through a color scheme of bright blue and pink. The artist focuses on quiet moments and simple every-day objects to tell a story and give the reader a sense of place

25. Patrinos, Maritsa, comp. *My First Time Buying Condoms and Other Embarrassing Stories*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This anthology contains stories by various artists with the theme of embarrassing stories. The editor, Maritsa Patrinos, tells her story about a high school boyfriend. The book is printed in a maroon ink, which goes very nicely with the orange cover. It is printed basic digest size (5.5"x8.5"). The anthology shows a cohesion between many artists.

26. Pietsch, Carey. *The Snapdragon Queen*. Self-Published, 2013. Print.

Pietsch's comic is printed in black and white and the narrative is told in rhyme. The story revolves around a queen in a troubled kingdom and her search for the right flowers to cure her husband's illness.

27. Smith, Jeff. *RASL*. Columbus: Cartoon, 2013. Print.

RASL is the most recent large work by cartoonist Jeff Smith (creator of *Bone*). The story follows a scientist who has discovered how to travel through time. I bought this book from Smith after having met him at the Small Press Expo. As opposed to most of the other books in this collection, *RASL* is professionally printed and is made by an older and more experienced cartoonist.

28. Tong, Jen. *Sheeeeeeeep!* Self-Published, 2013. Print.

This small book folds out into a long screen print. The print depicts a heard of sheep on the Faroe islands. This book was bought by the artist at the Small Press Expo, and is a distinctive part of the collection.

While there is no story and therefore this is not a comic book, it's still a self-published book and shows the artist's ability and dedication.

Wishlist

1. Sunday in the Park with Boys by Jane Mai

This comic is fictional yet uses autobiographical elements. Mai's comics are often sad, quiet, and very nuanced.

2. Very Casual by Michael Deforge

Very Casual is a collection of Deforge's past works including his famous comic, *Spotting Deer*. Deforge's comics are beautifully drawn and written, and often invoke elements of horror.

3. Eat More Bikes by Nathan Bulmer

Eat More Bikes is a humor anthology by Bulmer, who has recently been nominated for an Ignatz award for Promising Young Talent.

4. Cat Rackham Loses It! by Steve Wolfhard

Wolfhard's Cat Rackham comics were released in short stories online for years before being published. In this story Cat Rackham, a silent and nervous cat, gets adopted by an old woman who turns out to be insane.

5. Pompeii by Frank Santoro

Santoro's latest work revolves around a young artist living in Pompeii just before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. I'm drawn to Santoro's minimalist style.

6. Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life by Ulli Lust

Lust's book was recently nominated for an Ignatz award. This book revolves around two young women traveling in Italy.

7. French Milk by Lucy Knisley

Knisley's first book is an autobiographical account of her time spent abroad in France. As a fan of Knisley's work, I would love to read her first published book.

8. Mimi and the Wolves Act I: The Dream by Alabaster

Alabaster's comics are always beautifully drawn and feel dream-like. This book's cover is screen printed, which would be a beautiful addition to the collection.

9. Life Zone by Simon Hanselmann

Hanselmann, an Australian cartoonist, has recently published *Life Zone*, revolving around his characters Megg, Mogg, and Owl. Hanselmann's work, although humorous, centers on characters who deal with depression, drug addiction, and other issues. His comics are always beautifully illustrated with watercolors.

10. Fantasy Basketball by Sam Bosma

This minicomic was released by Bosma for the Small Press Expo. It involves a magical game of basketball. Bosma works as an illustrator and this comic looks visually stunning.