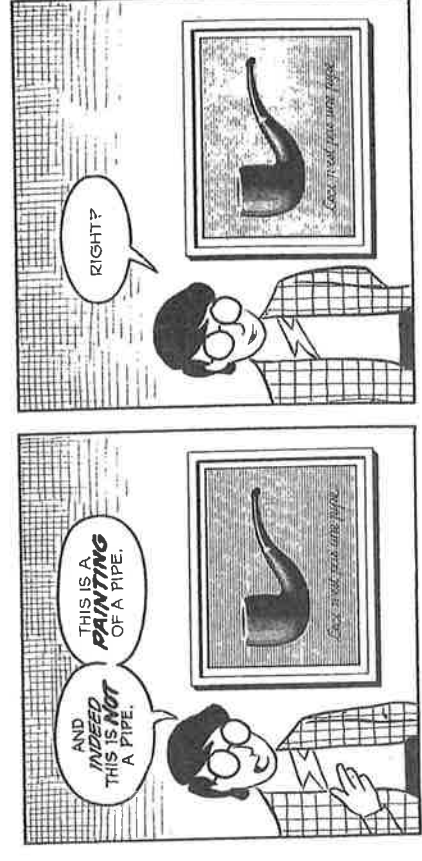
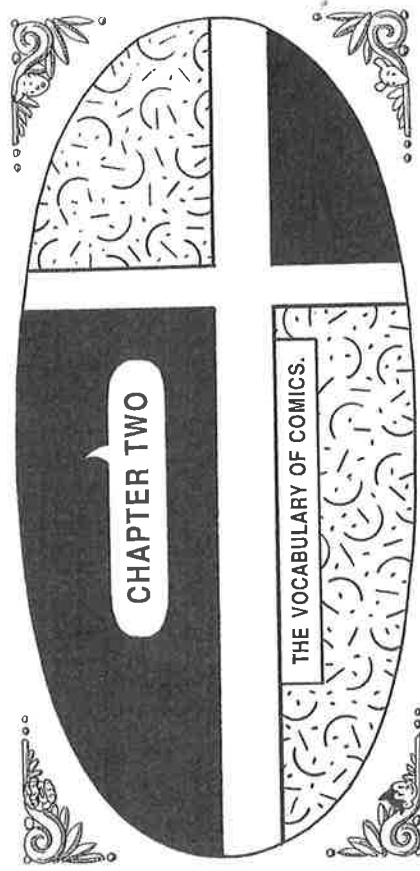


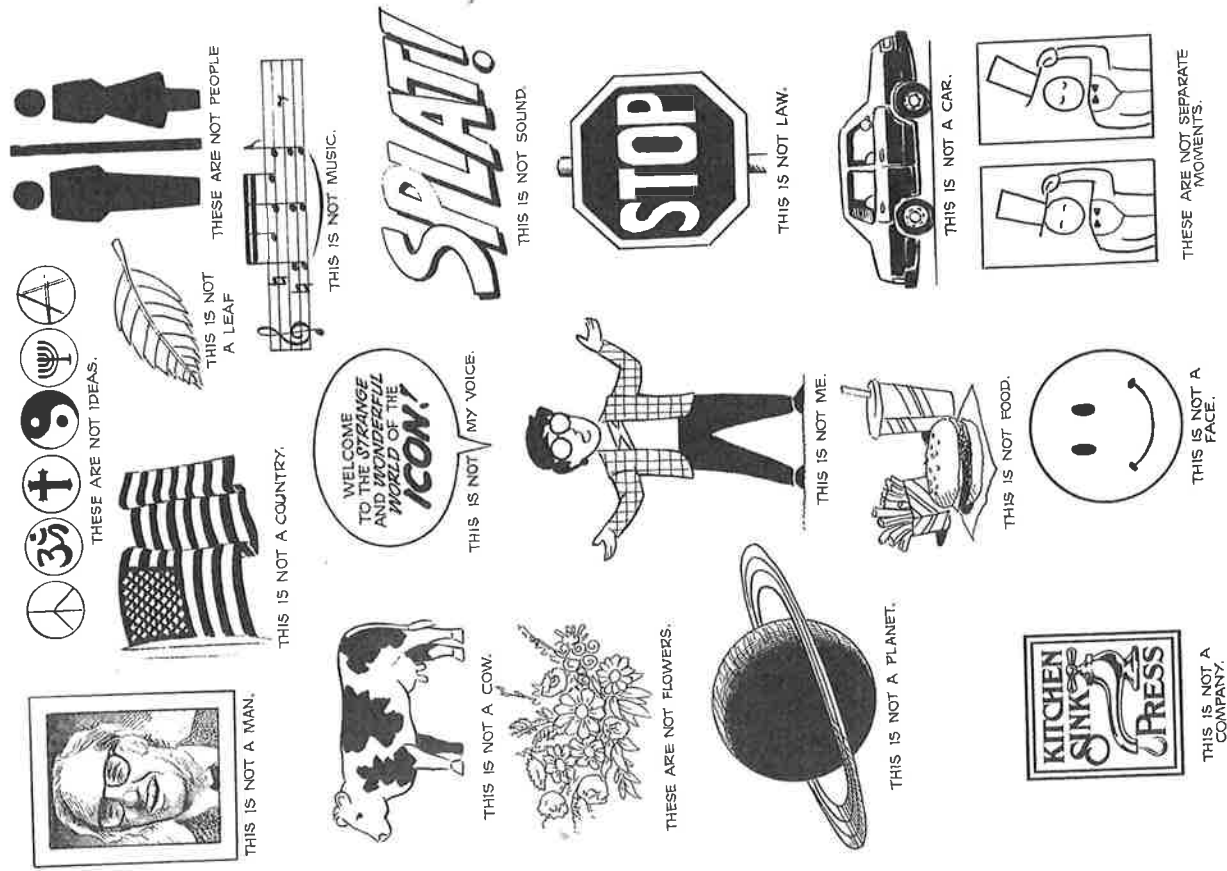
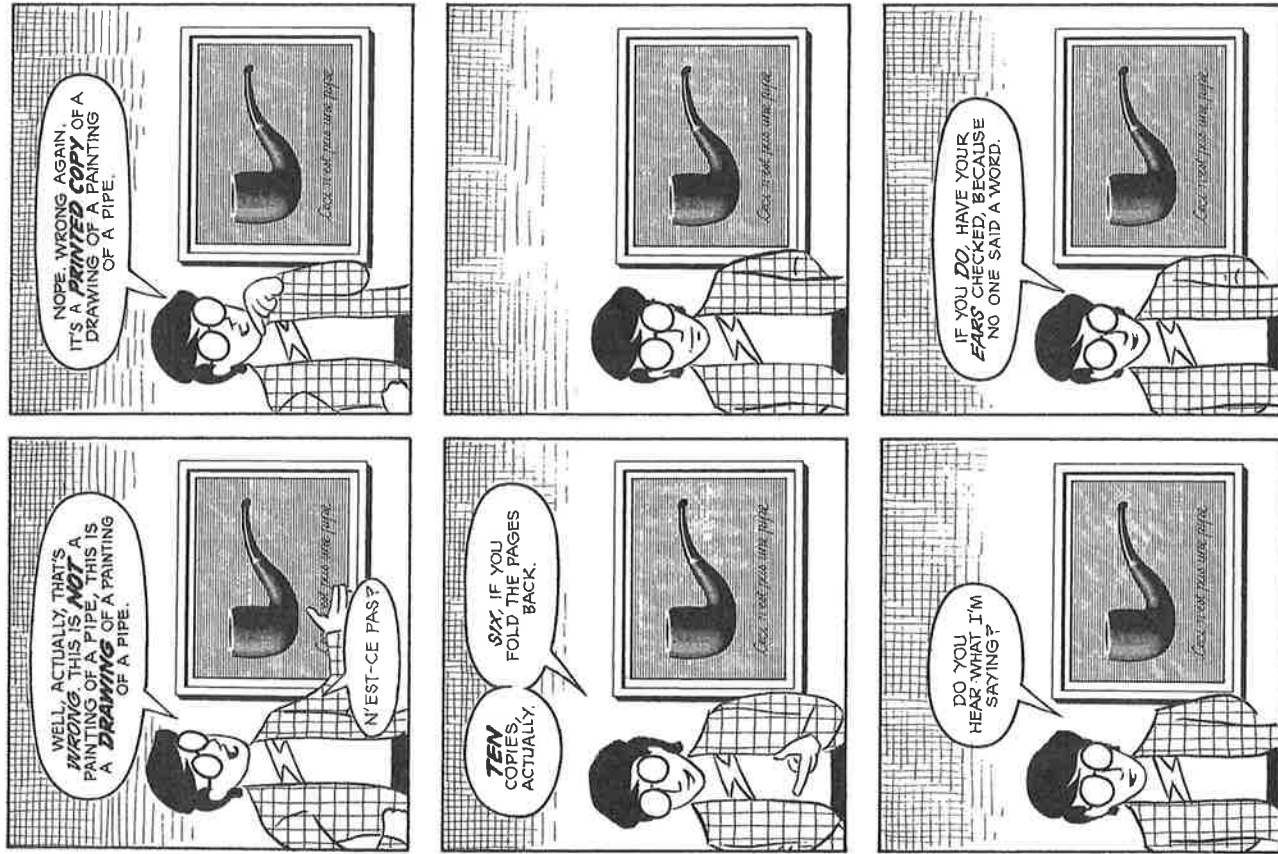
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11

From *The Vocabulary of Comics*

SCOTT MCCLLOUD

From *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. 24-37.



ONLY OUTLINES AND A HINT OF SHADING ARE STILL PRESENT, BUT WE EASILY RECOGNIZE THIS AS A HUMAN FACE.

SOMEWHAT MORE ABSTRACT IS THIS STYLE OF DRAWING FOUND IN MANY ADVENTURE COMICS.

REAL. UNWY.

AS WE CONTINUE TO ABSTRACT AND SIMPLIFY OUR IMAGE, WE ARE MOVING FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM THE "REAL" FACE OF THE PHOTO.

WHY THEN, IS THE FACE ABOVE SO ACCEPTABLE TO OUR EYES? WHY DOES IT SEEM JUST AS REAL AS THE OTHERS?

REAL. UNWY.

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF THE ICON WE CALL--

--THE CARTOON?

REAL. UNWY.

WHY--

--ARE--

--WE--

--SO--

--INVOLVED?

WHY WOULD ANYONE, TO A YOUNG OR OLD, RESPOND TO A CARTOON AS MUCH OR MORE THAN A REALISTIC IMAGE?

WHY IS OUR CULTURE SO IN THRALL TO THE SIMPLIFIED REALITY OF THE CARTOON?

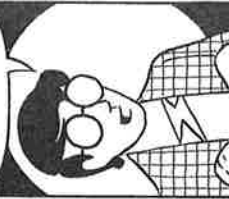
SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.

DEFINING THE CARTOON WOULD TAKE ON A MUCH MORE COMPLEX SPACE AS DEFINING COMICS, BUT FOR NOW, IN GOING TO EXAMINE CARTOONING AS A FORM OF AMPLIFICATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION.

WHEN WE ABSTRACT AN IMAGE THROUGH CARTOONING, THERE ARE SO MUCH ELIMINATING DETAILS AS WE ARE FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC DETAILS.

BY STRIPPING DOWN AN IMAGE TO ITS ESSENTIAL MEANING, AN ARTIST CAN AMPLIFY THAT MEANING IN A WAY THAT REALISTIC ART CAN'T.

FILM CRITICS WILL SOMETIMES DESCRIBE A *LIVE-ACTION* FILM AS A "CARTOON" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRIPPED-DOWN *INTENSITY* OF A SIMPLE STORY OR VISUAL STYLE.

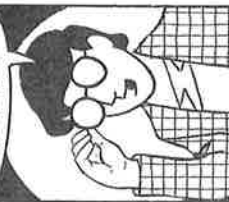


THOUGH THE TERM IS OFTEN USED *DISPARAGINGLY*, IT CAN BE EQUALLY WELL APPLIED TO MANY *TIME-TESTED CLASSICS*. SIMPLIFYING CHARACTERS AND IMAGES TOWARD A *PURPOSE* CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR STORYTELLING IN *ANY* MEDIUM.

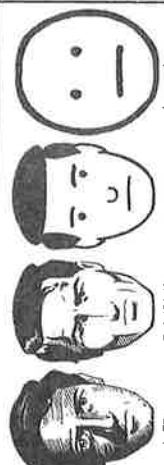
CARTOONING ISN'T JUST A WAY OF *DRAWING*. IT'S A WAY OF *SEEING*.



THE ABILITY OF CARTOONS TO *FOCUS* OUR ATTENTION ON AN IDEA IS, I THINK, AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR SPECIAL POWER, BOTH IN COMICS AND IN DRAWING GENERALLY.




ONE



A FEW THOUSANDS MILLIONS (NEARLY) ALL

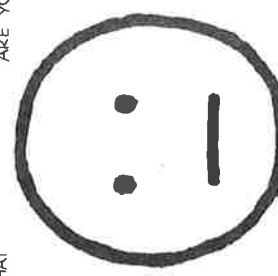
ANOTHER IS THE *UNIVERSALITY* OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOONY A FACE IS, FOR INSTANCE, THE MORE PEOPLE IT COULD BE SAID TO *DESCRIBE*.



BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON—ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE—WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.



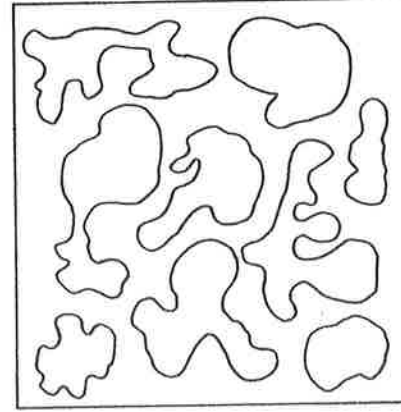
WHAT ARE YOU REALLY SEEING?



THE FACT THAT YOUR MIND IS *CAPABLE* OF TAKING A *CIRCLE*, *TWO DOTS* AND *A LINE* AND TURNING THEM INTO A *FACE* IS NOTHING SHORT OF *INCREDIBLE!*



BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!

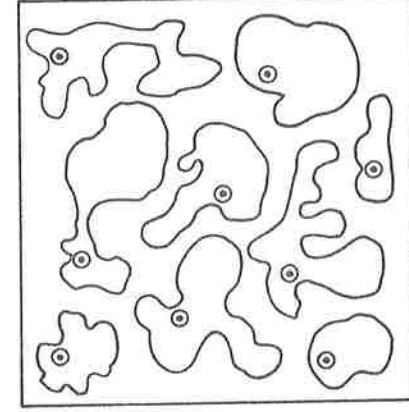



ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE *CLOSED* CURVES BUT *OTHERWISE* CAN BE AS *WEIRD* AND *IRREGULAR* AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE *THIS*.



NOW—YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY *LOOK* LIKE, EVERY SINGLE *ONE* OF THOSE SHAPES CAN BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.

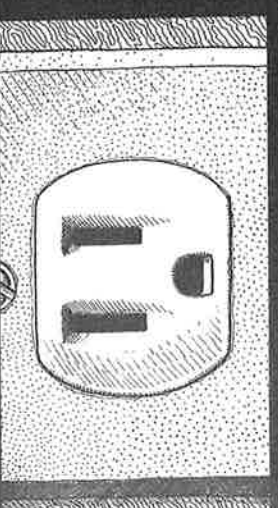
YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE *THIS*—

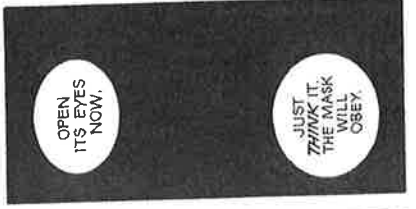
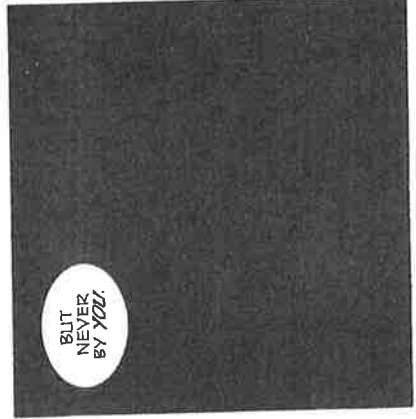
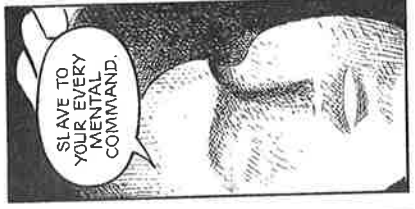
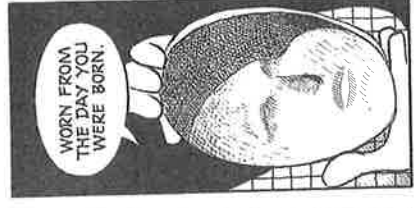
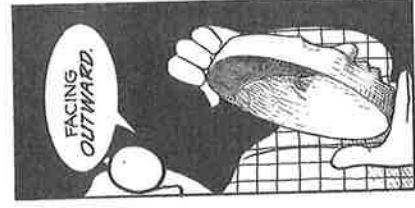
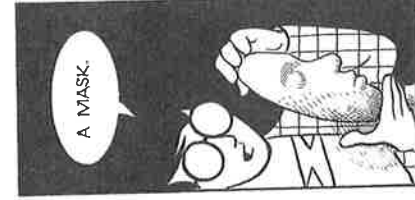
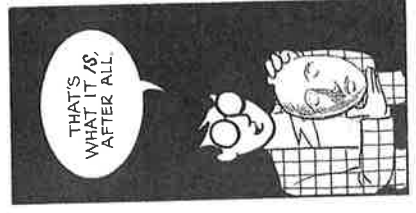
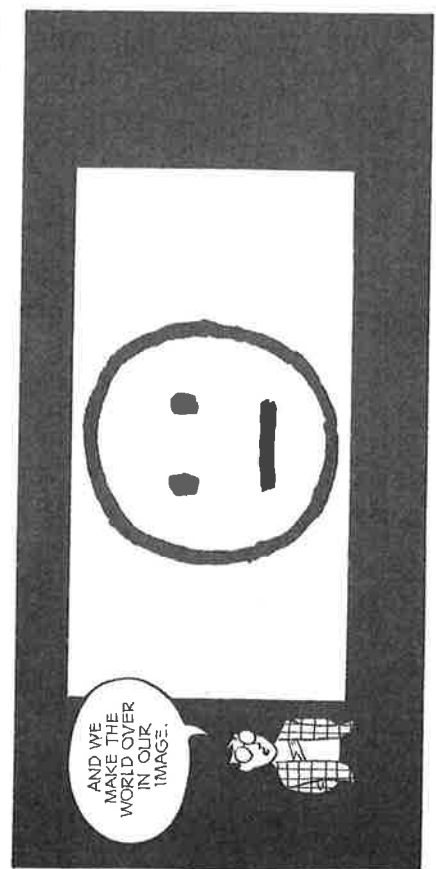
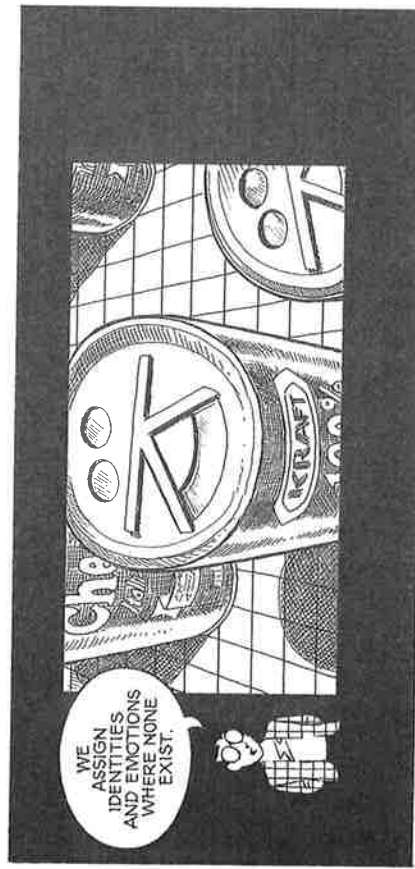
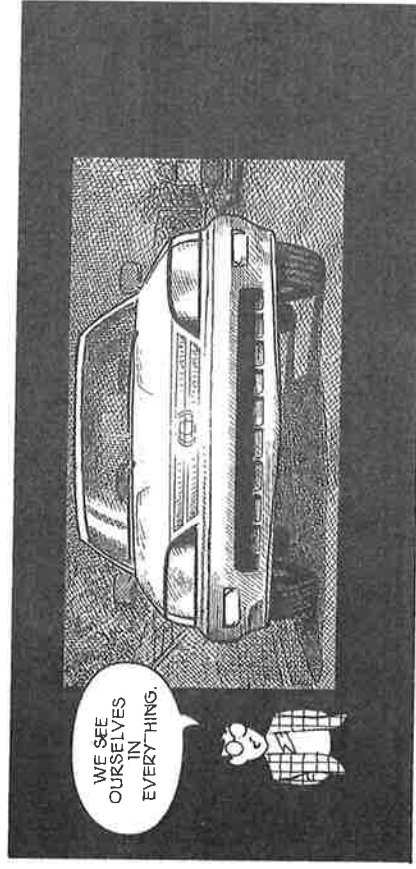


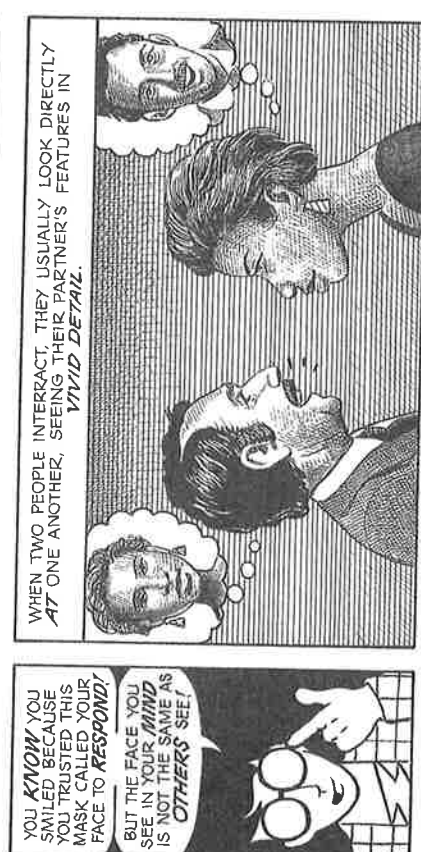
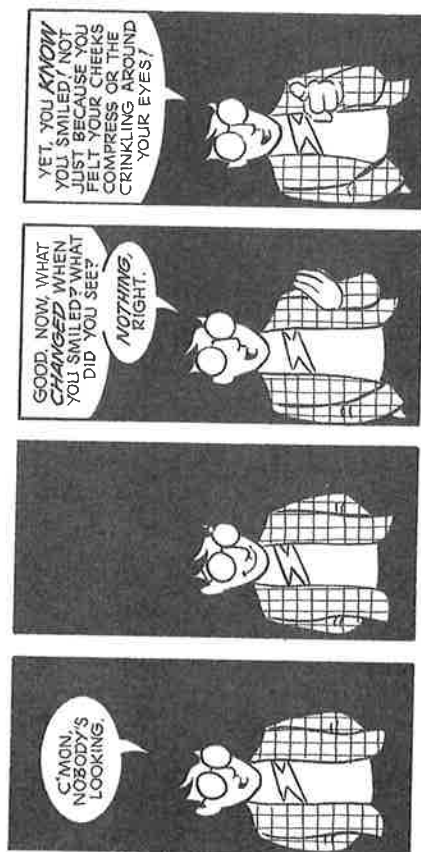
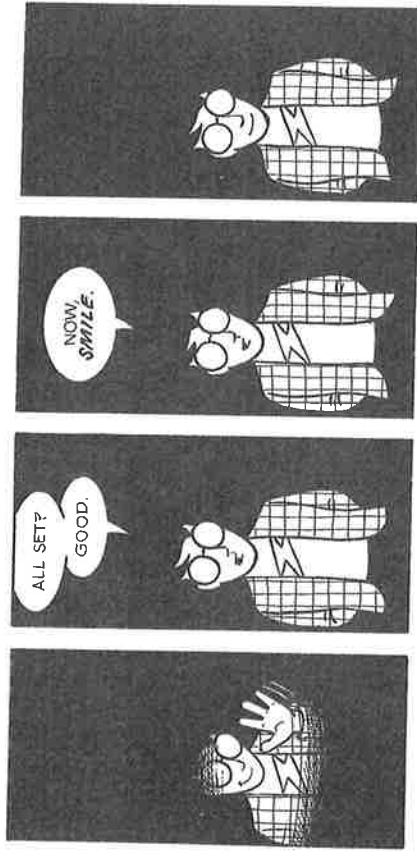
—FOR *THIS*?



WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.







12

Visual Pragmatism for a Virtual World

BARBARA STAFFORD

A CONSTRUCTIVIST MANIFESTO

Recent academic rhetoric is saturated with terms of rejection, revision, revolution; but manifestos, even of renunciation, remain in short supply. Writing about what is wrong in old optical formats and new imaging technologies is relatively easy. Harder is proposing mind-opening analogies between historical displays of visual intelligence and computer-age information viewed through the eyes. Being digital requires designing a post-Gutenbergian *constructive* model of education through vision. But I am not convinced, with Nicholas Negroponte, that a hypermedia future entails obliterating the past.¹ The crux of the matter, I think, seems more Darwinian than cataclysmic. Today's instructional landscape must inevitably evolve or die, like biological species, since its environment is being radically altered by volatile visualization technologies. This ongoing displacement of fixed, monochromatic type by interactive, multidimensional graphics is a tumultuous process. In the realm of the artificial, as in nature, extinction occurs when there is no accommodation. Imaginative adaptation to the information superhighway, even the survival of reflective communication, means casting off vestigial biases automatically coupling printed words to introspective depth and pictures to dumbing down.²

The bound book has led a charmed existence since typesetting was invented in mid-fifteenth-century Mainz. This longevity, no doubt partially owing to a Darwinian flexibility, makes me optimistic about its mutated persistence. Become more virtual informational space than stable artifact, the traditional volume can find another life as an interconnective environment. Lines of copy interface with users very differently when presented in hybrid Web pages, and acquire unsettling mobility when reformatted, amended, and emended electronically. The digital imaging revolution is crucially

From *Good Looking: Essays on the Virtues of Images*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. 3-15.

