

Graphic Content

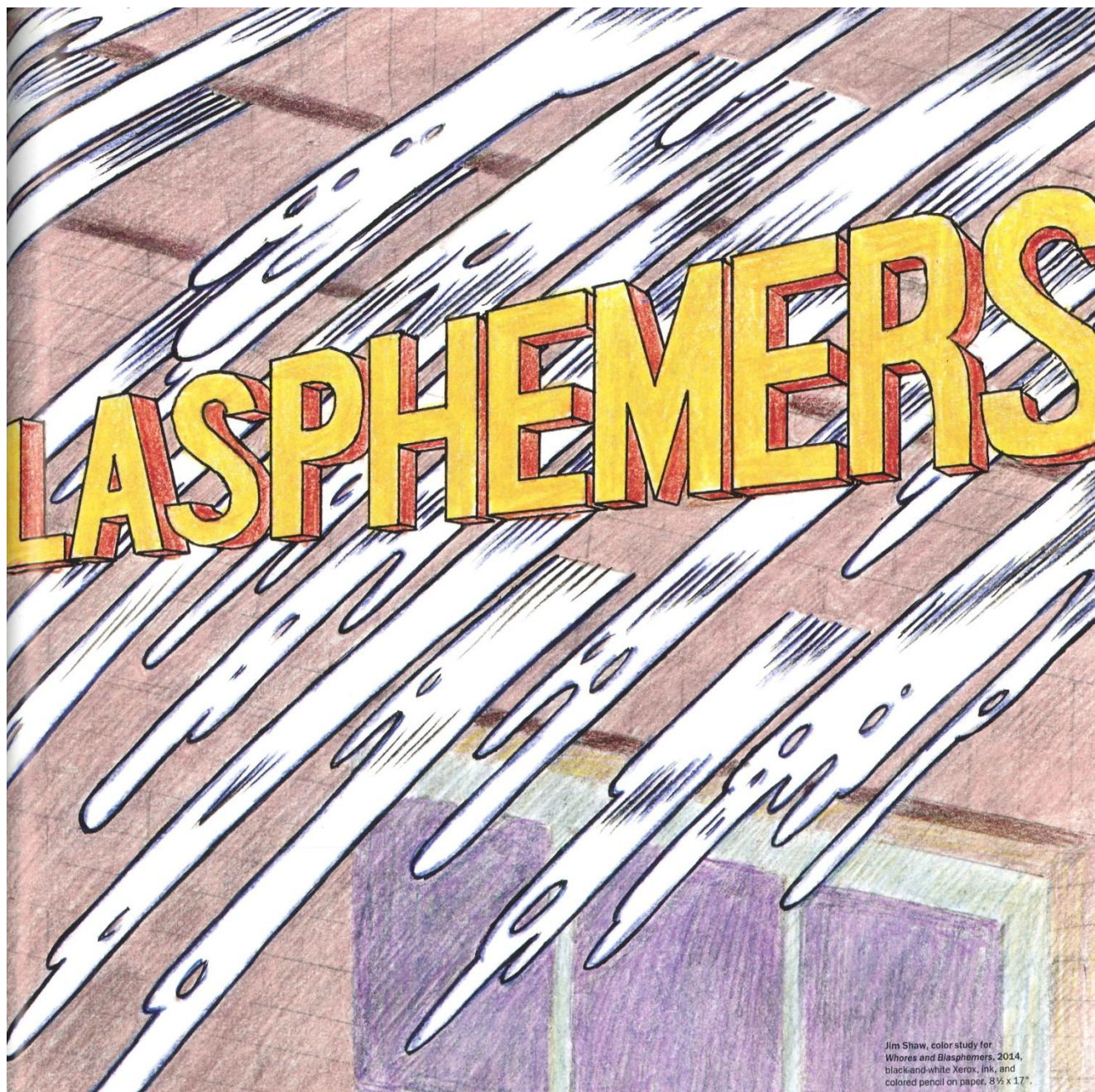
ART AND ANIMATION

AT LEAST SINCE Lichtenstein appropriated a comic-strip Benday dot, Duchamp riffed on *Mutt and Jeff*, or Eisenstein admired a Mickey Mouse cel, art has had a love affair with animation, comics, and cartoons—and its ardor, eagerly reciprocated, has given rise to a tense historical interplay between high and low, synthetic and real, margin and center. Perhaps this mutual fascination stems from the fact that animation is about things coming to life—but an artificial life, an alien fantasy. Words and pictures and objects gain an agency that is fundamentally other. Animation is the realm of alterity, of sedition, of seriality, pulp and science fiction, true crime, simulation.

Artforum invited fifteen contributors to survey this teeming landscape, whose scope embraces everything from CG rendering to Sunday funnies to gaming networks. Curator FABRICE STROUN and critic STEPHEN BURT delve into the history of comics and the graphic novel and their fraught relation to contemporary art and

literature; artist CORY ARCANGEL reveals the moment when Pop went digital, unearthing a trove of 1980s computer graphics created by Andy Warhol; cartoonist ART SPIEGELMAN curates a multifarious array of comics from the Bronze Age to 1986; artist LELE SAVERI gathers a compendium of zines in all their xeroxed transgression; and JIM SHAW, JULIEN CECCALDI, JORDAN WOLFSON, DOUGLAS WOLK, HILLARY CHUTE, KERRY JAMES MARSHALL, IDA APPLEBROOG, NICK ZEDD, ED HALTER, and IAN CHENG look at specific practices, whether their own or others', within and between the genres of drawing, film, video, writing, coding, and animation. If these domains have always provided a special place to speculate about the limits of experience—to explore identity, lifestyle, and "appearances," as cover artist Ceccaldi puts it—the following pages aim to take us further beyond life as we know it.

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Jim Shaw, color study for:
Whores and Blasphemers, 2014,
black-and-white Xerox, ink, and
colored pencil on paper, 8½ x 17".

JIM SHAW

IN ART SCHOOL, we are handed a sort of "carney" attitude toward the world—us against the rubes. We're told that, in our exalted place as outsider observers, we have a unique take on reality that those caught up in its daily routines can't see. But every time I try to comment on the world using some "new" aesthetic arena, like hairdos, clothes, film, etc., I find there's someone in that domain who has already done more interesting things with it than I could ever come up with. Every time I work in the realm of comics, for instance, I discover a whole raft of artists who have done it better—and for miserable pay, with no respect outside the field. Ramona Fradon, Bill Everett, Dick Sprang, Wayne Boring, and Bob Powell are some of the geniuses who have recently come to my

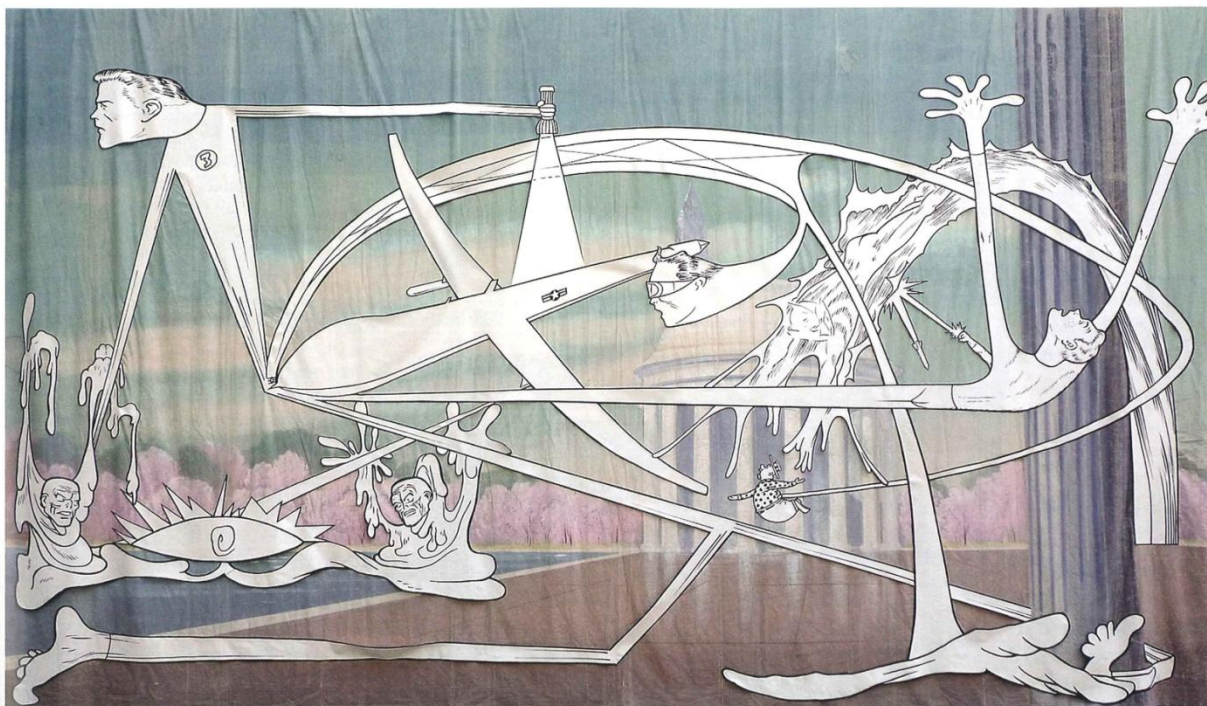
attention as I attempt to use and understand all the conventions and nuances of graphic, inked marks and sequential storytelling. They are additions to the pantheon of great comic artists who, month after month, managed to dredge up whole worlds out of their heads and onto the page, under endless deadlines and the rather dumb stories* their editors forced on them.

The color study for *Whores and Blasphemers*, 2014 (see page 294), with a text quoting the annoying child evangelist Duffey Strode, contains a lot of splash elements that ape the style of Sprang, who drew Batman and Superman in the *World's Finest Comics* (1955–63) in what was a particularly old, cartoony, 1940s pop manner unusual for the silver-age, early-'60s, more "polished," corporate DC. In the *Jefferson Memorial* mural, 2013, there are four artists' characters referred to, all of whom had the "power" to stretch, or even disincorporate:

Jack Cole's Plastic Man was the original; Jack Kirby's Mr. Fantastic was a nonhumorous version that ushered in the iconic Marvel '60s heroes; Elastic Lad was one of many inexplicable variations that Superman's pal, Jimmy Olsen (drawn by many artists) transformed into, in one of the weirdest stretches of corporate surrealism in history (all in the pursuit of selling comics to nine-year-old boys); and, finally, Fradon's genius creation Metamorpho, who spills onto the side like an AbEx splatter. All of them quadfurcate from a single figure in an attempt to deflect the deadly attack of a US drone, in the umpteenth reference to Picasso's *Guernica*. Much of my recent work also relates to nineteenth-century political cartoons, and I figure that the drones and their equivalence to Nazi aerial bombardment are a fit subject for dark political humor in the present decline. □

JIM SHAW IS AN ARTIST BASED IN LOS ANGELES.

*Sometimes the genre conventions of the stories give a surreal or nightmarish charm as well, and the effect of the repetition allowed these artists to hone their skills.



Jim Shaw, *The Jefferson Memorial*, 2013, acrylic on muslin, 12 x 22".