

Art Spiegelman

né en 1948, à Stockholm (Suède)

Galerie Martel presents a preparatory drawing by Art Spiegelman for *Lead Pipe Sunday*, a lithograph conceived as a critical homage to the history of comics.

Constructed like a genuine comic page, the image diverts the world of Dick Tracy, an emblematic figure of the American comic strip, in order to propose a version that is both ironic and reflective. The detective discovers a crime scene that turns out to be a mise en abyme of the medium itself, populated with references and figures drawn from the history of comics.

Through this gesture of parody, Spiegelman does not merely cite a style: he dismantles it. By replaying the graphic and narrative codes of the classic strip, he brings popular culture and art history, humour and critique, memory and détournement into tension. This drawing reveals, with great precision, the construction of the image in Spiegelman's work, and the way in which he inhabits inherited forms in order to displace them more effectively.



Art Spiegelman, *Lead Pipe Sunday, Dead Dick*, lithographie, 42 x 57 cm
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BIOGRAPHIE

With his masterpiece *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (published in the USA from 1980 to 1991), crowned with the Pulitzer Prize in 1992, Art Spiegelman changed the way the ninth art was perceived.

In his now historic account of the Holocaust, the artist, born in 1948, transposes the story of his father, a survivor of Auschwitz, into a world in which Jews, represented as mice, try to survive against the Nazis, aided by collaborating Poles—represented respectively as cats and pigs.

In a single major work, the American proved that comics are not a genre intended solely to entertain young readers. For the artist, comics are a medium of endless possibilities, allowing stylistic daring both in substance and in form.

In a lecture entitled *What the %@&! Happened to Comics?*, Spiegelman retraces the history of comics and sabotages its stereotypes. In our “post-literate” societies where images abound, he explains that “comics are a reflection of the very way our brain works. Thoughts do not appear to us as holograms but as images that burst like little speech bubbles, not as long paragraphs.”

Spiegelman studied comics at university and began his career as a cartoonist at the age of 16 while continuing his studies in art and philosophy at Harper College. From the 1960s onward, he became an active member of underground comics culture. Creative consultant for Topps Bubble Gum Co. from 1965 to 1987, Art Spiegelman created *Wacky Packages* and *Les Crados*, while also teaching the history and aesthetics of comics at the School of Visual Arts in New York from 1979 to 1986. In 2007, he led a comics seminar at Columbia University.

In 1980, Art Spiegelman and his wife, Françoise Mouly, founded *RAW*, an independent comics magazine that became iconic and in which the first pages of *Maus* were published. Together, they published *Little Lit* and *Big Fat Little Lit*, a series of comics anthologies for young readers published by HarperCollins. Toon Books, a children's publishing house, would also result from their collaboration.

With *Breakdowns*, published in 1978, Art Spiegelman offered us a personal and aesthetic self-analysis of comics, one that the publication of *Be a Nose*, bringing together work from three research and sketch notebooks, invites us to pursue. Art Spiegelman worked regularly for the international press, and more particularly for *The New Yorker* as a cartoonist and writer from 1993 to 2003. The artist also illustrated *The Wild Party*, a forgotten 1928 classic written by Joseph Moncure March.

In 2004, he published *À l'ombre des tours mortes*, an atypical work gathering together all of his contributions to major newspapers and magazines on the aftermath of 9/11. The book, published in the USA by Pantheon, was an international success and appeared on *The New York Times Book Review* list of the 100 must-read books of the year.

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In 2005, as part of the exhibition devoted to the fifteen masters of twentieth-century comics at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, an entire retrospective section was devoted to Art Spiegelman's work. That same year, the artist appeared among the 100 most important personalities in the famous Time Magazine list. In 2007, Spiegelman was made Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters in France, and appeared in an episode of *The Simpsons* in 2008.

In 2011, the artist received the Grand Prix of the Angoulême International Comics Festival, which led to a major retrospective exhibition that was also presented at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Crowned with immense success, the exhibition travelled to the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Jewish Museum in New York, before stopping in Toronto at the Art Gallery of Ontario. *CO-MIX: A Retrospective of Comics, Graphics, and Scraps* was published to accompany the exhibition.

In 2009, *Maus* entered the selection of reference works for all students by the Young Adult Library Association. Two years later, with the publication of *MetaMaus*, Art Spiegelman returned to the genesis of his masterpiece, adding unpublished documents and personal interviews. The book received the National Jewish Book Award. In 2020, the New York Public Library included *Maus* in its list of the 125 books that have marked the past 125 years.

Spiegelman continues to explore the formal possibilities of comics with *Wordless!*, a multimedia performance project presented at the Sydney Opera House in 2013 and then at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014. In 2015, his collaboration with the celebrated French artist J.R. gave rise to the book *The Ghosts of Ellis Island*. Passionate about the work of Si Lewen, Spiegelman edited *Si Lewen The Parade: L'odyssée d'un artiste*, which he wrote and designed. In 2021, the artist illustrated *Street Cop* by Robert Coover for a limited edition published by Isolarii.

In 2015, Art Spiegelman was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 2018 he was awarded the Edward MacDowell Medal, a first for a comics artist.

From 29 May to 4 November 2024, several of his works were shown at the Centre Pompidou in Paris as part of the major exhibition *La BD à tous les étages*.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- 2025 — *Never Again! And again...And again*, avec Joe Sacco
- 2012 — *MetaMaus, un nouveau regard sur Maus*, Flammarion
- 2009 — *Be a nose!*, Casterman
- 2008 — *La Nuit d'enfer de Joseph Monsure March*, Flammarion
- 2008 — *Breakdowns*, Recueil de bandes dessinées des années 1970-1980, Casterman
- 2005 — "Les multiples moi de Selby Sheldrake", dans *Drôles d'histoires pour drôles d'enfants*, Little Lit, Seuil
- 2004 — *A l'ombre des tours mortes*, Casterman
- 2002 — "Prince Coq, une parabole hassidique", dans *Conte de fées, contes défaits*, Little Lit, Seuil
- 1996 — *Maus*, édition intégrale, Flammarion
- 1991 — "Et c'est là que mes ennuis ont commencé", *Maus*, Tome 2, Flammarion
- 1986 — "Mon père saigne l'histoire", *Maus*, Tome 1, Flammarion

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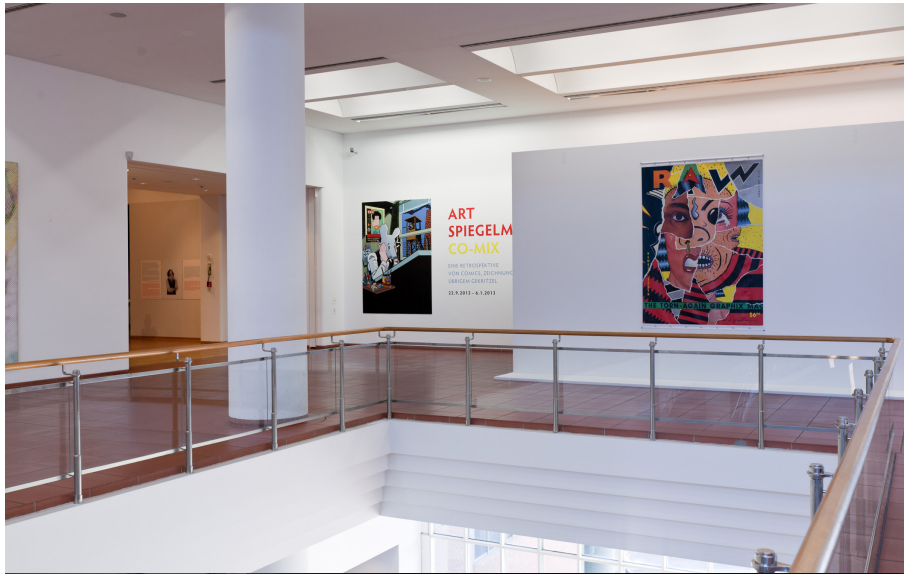
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2015 —Art Spiegelman, le musée privé, Musée de la BD d'Angoulême

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2015 —Art Spiegelman, le musée privé, BPI centre Pompidou de Paris