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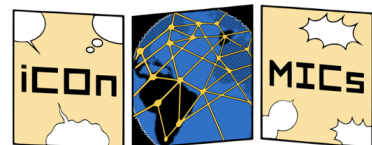
Comics strike back: digital comics, digital audiences, digital practices

Universiteit Gent, 12-14 July 2022

In collaboration with:



**NARrating
the MESH**



European Digital Comics



cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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Day 1. Digital forms: aesthetics and archaeology

Timetable

9:30-9:45	Welcome (Prof. Maaheen Ahmed)
9:45-10:00	Presentation of the conference (Giorgio Busi Rizzi, Lorenzo Di Paola, Nicoletta Mandolini)
10.00-11:00	Keynote 1: Lukas R.A. Wilde
11.00-11.30	Longer coffee break
11:30-13:00	Panel 1
13:00-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:30	Panel 2
15:30-16:00	Longer coffee break
16:00-17:00	Keynote 2: Lorenzo Ghetti+Carlo Trimarchi
17:00-17:30	Longer coffee break
17:30-19:00	Panel 3
19:00	Small reception

Keynotes

- Lukas R.A. Wilde (Universität Tübingen): Digital Comics and Media Aesthetics: From Transmedia Forms to Hypermedia and Intermedia - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Lorenzo Ghetti (comics author): TO BE continued and the choices behind making a webcomic - [ONLINE](#)
- Carlo Trimarchi (webmaster): Building Webcomics: A Developer's Perspective - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panels

Panel 1. Archaeology of digital comics

- Giorgio Busi Rizzi (Universiteit Gent) - Di Paola, L. (Università di Messina): New forms and reading protocols: for a genealogy of digital comics - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Mario Tirino (Università di Salerno) – Lorenzo Di Paola (Università di Messina): At the origins of digital comics: imaginaries and media history of the first intersections between comics and digital media - [HYBRID](#)
- Simona Castellano (Università di Salerno): Digital comics and social media: comics created for Instagram, between affordances, communities and new ways to engage consumers - [ONLINE](#)

Panel 2. Comics!: from digital to print

- Daniel Goodbrey (University of Hertfordshire): From Digital Display to Printed Page: An Exploration of the Use of Digital Comic Adaptations and Hybridisations in Print Comic formats - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Josh Rose (Dallas College, Texas): Backwards Compatibility: Formal Regression When Comics Shift from Digital Conception to Print - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Marco D'Alessandro (Independent Scholar): Continuity: behind the screen and inside the frame - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panel 3. The aesthetics of digital comics

- Misha Grifka (Ohio State University): Digital Time, Space, and Comics - [ONLINE](#)
- Ivan Pintor Iranzo (Pompeu Fabra University): From the window to the map in e-comics: psychogeography of immersion - [ONLINE](#)
- Gaëlle Kovaliv (Université de Lausanne): Internet, le paradis perdu des bandes dessinées? - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Day 2. Digital practices and activism

Timetable

10.00-10:30	Presentation: EUDICOM – European Digital Comics project
10.30-11:30	Keynote 1: Grace Gipson
11.30-12.00	Longer coffee break
12:00-13:00	Panel 1
13:00-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:00	Panel 2
15:00-15:15	Shorter coffee break
15:15-16:15	Keynote 2: Lucia Tralli
16:15-16:45	Longer coffee break
16:45-17:45	Panel 3
17:45-18.00	Shorter coffee break
18.00-19.00	Panel 4

EUDICOM – European Digital Comics project

- Enrico Turrin (Federation of European Publishers)

Keynotes

- Lucia Tralli (AUR - The American University of Rome): Radical Inclusivity and the Queer Affective Labor of Oh Joy Sex Toy, Erika Moen's "Queer, Pervy and Weirdo" Sex-Education Webcomics - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Grace Gipson (Virginia Commonwealth University): Re-writing the Comic Script into the Digital: Creating "New Normals," "New Frontiers," and "New Modes of Engagement" - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panels

Panel 1. Gender, feminisms and digital comics

- Nicoletta Mandolini (Universidade do Minho): A Feminist Smash! Instagram Comics against Gender Violence in Latin America and Italy - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Virginie Giuliana (Université Clermont Auvergne): De l'image au message : la bande dessinée numérique par Precariada - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panel 2. Reality and the digital: graphic journalism and documentary comics

- Dario Boemia (IULM): Graphic journalism and digital comics. A preliminary survey - [ONLINE](#)
- Brittany Tullis (St. Ambrose University): From Print to Webpage – The Evolution of Documentary Comics in Present-day Peru - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panel 3. Unconventional practices in underground digital comics

- Carlotta Vacchelli (Biblioteca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute, Rome): Digital Comics and the Italian Underground. Čapek Magazine and Love-Bot - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Benoît Crucifix (Universiteit Gent): Poorly Drawn: Graphic Incompetence as Aesthetic Virtue in Digital Comics - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panel 4. Digital comics creators and activism

- Alice Parrinello (University of Oxford): Digital Comics and Queer Activism - [ONLINE](#)
- Alessia Mangiavillano (Coventry University): COme Vlte Distanti: An Italian collective experience of comics activism on social media in the time of COVID-19 - [ONLINE](#)

Day 3. Digital audiences, reception, and participation

Timetable

9.30-10:30	Keynote 1: Ilan Manouach
10.30-11.00	Longer coffee break
11:00-12:00	Panel 1
12:00-12:15	Shorter coffee break
12.15-13.15	Panel 2
13:15-14:15	Lunch break
14:15-15:15	Keynote 2: Margarita Molina Fernandez
15:15-15.30	Shorter coffee break
15:30-17:00	Panel 3
17:00-17:15	Shorter coffee break
17:15-18:15	Panel 4
18.15-19.00	Presentation: iCon-MICS
19:00- 19:15	Conclusive remarks
20:00	Conference dinner

Keynotes

- Ilan Manouach (Aalto University, comics author): Comics as a computational object - ON CAMPUS
- Margarita Molina Fernandez (Université du Québec à Montréal, comics author): Understanding Digital Comics for Creation: from Conception to Reception - ON CAMPUS

Panels

Panel 1. Digital comics from creation to publication I

- Charlotte J. Fabricius (Syddansk Universitet): The Comicity of Instagram Cartooning - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Matteo Gaspari (Independent Scholar): Feltrinelli Comics, a case study to explore the impact of digital comics on the Italian comics' landscape and publishing industry - [ON CAMPUS](#)

Panel 2. Digital comics and their readers

- Cigdem Erdal (Harran University): Time-Killers or Life-Changers? Webtoon Reading Experiences from Turkey - [ON CAMPUS](#)
- Wagner Dornelles (Universidade Federal Fluminense): From ink to binary codes: colors, authorship, media and digital technologies - [ONLINE](#)

Panel 3. Participatory practices and social media

- Alessio Aletta (University of Toronto): "24 Ore Comics" (2016-2020). Patterns, Features, Interactions in a Social Media Comic-Making Event - [ONLINE](#)
- Kin Wai Chu (KU Leuven): The collaborative production of digital cartoons on the social media - [ONLINE](#)
- Chunwei Liu (University of Glasgow): Cosplaying through voice: self-identification and gender-crossing in fan-dubbed animated comics - [ONLINE](#)

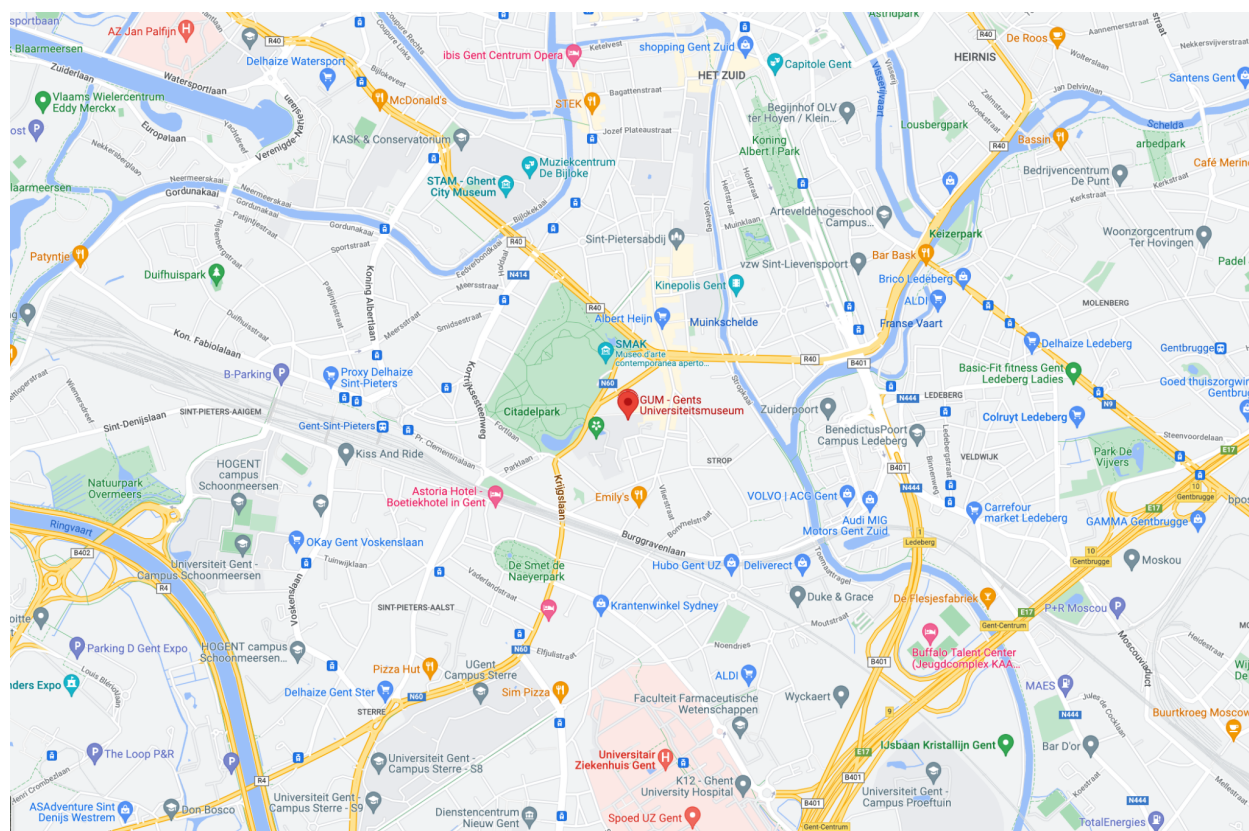
Panel 4. Digital comics from creation to publication II

- Linda Berube (City, University of London, British Library): Producing Comics, Creating Culture: UK digital comics from creation to consumption - [ONLINE](#)
- Maya Quaianni – Simone Marchisano (WOW – Spazio fumetto, Milan): Promoting digital comics - [ONLINE](#)

Practical information

Venue

The conference is taking place at the GUM - Gents Universiteitsmuseum, rooms 0.1 and 0.2. The museum is located in the center of Ghent, within walking distance from both most accommodations and the train station.




Catering

The lunch and coffee breaks and the small reception on the first days of the conference are paid for by the organization. The conference dinner on the last day will be free for the keynote speakers; participants can join by paying their share. The location of the dinner is still TBC.

Online participation

The conference takes place in the Bruxelles timezone, Central European Summer Time, UTC/GMT+2. Online participants will be provided with a Zoom link to the



conference. As the whole event is going to be streamed on Zoom, interested spectators will be able to watch the conference for free by sending an email with their name and affiliation to digitalcomics@ugent.be.

EUDICOM

Enrico Turrin (Federation of European Publishers): *Strengthening the Distribution of European Digital Comics*

The Eudicom project was designed to support publishers of comics in Europe in getting ready for distributing digital comics. The consortium partners, led by IZNEO, the leading European digital comics platform, researched and exchanged their experience to offer an efficient capacity building programme primarily to publishers in Poland, Spain and Italy and promote the benefits to the other EU countries via the Federation of European Publishers.

The project supported comics publishers of European countries in regard to technology formats, distribution models and marketing opportunities, in order for them to reach new audiences and make the most of revenues on the growing digital platforms in Europe and worldwide.

It mapped the status of the comics market in Europe and particularly regarding digital comics and digital comics distribution. It provided a capacity building programme for comics publishers interested in digital comics and is currently running a series of distribution tests with the project's coordinator IZNEO. The presentation will focus on Eudicom research and findings on the status of digital comics in Europe.

Eudicom is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

Abstracts

Aletta, A. (University of Toronto): *"24 Ore Comics" (2016-2020). Patterns, Features, Interactions in a Social Media Comic-Making Event*

The "24-hour comics" is a challenge in which comics artists attempt to create, writing and drawing from scratch, a finished 24-page story in 24 hours. The concept was ideated by Scott McCloud in 1990 and formalized in the first "24 Hour Comics day" in 2004; in subsequent years, the same format has been adopted by countless independent initiatives around the world. This paper focuses on the case study of the Italian spin-off "24 Ore Comics", organized around two times a year by prominent comic artists Sio, Bigio and Dado since 2016. This event is held entirely remotely through a dedicated Facebook page which still hosts all entries submitted until 2020 (after which the organizers switched platform and altered the format), for a total of more than 300 comics (many of which, however, left incomplete). With relative ease, this corpus is adapted in a database suitable for all kinds of research questions. For instance, it can give a measure of the influence manga-derived style has had on young aspiring comic artists (who are the core participants in the

challenge). More interestingly, however, it also presents unique features: namely, it shows how seasoned authors and absolute beginners confronted the double problem of creating a digital comic (on a platform not optimized for this purpose) and overcoming the appalling time constraints, and how these limitations reflect on the comics themselves. Furthermore, since on several occasions a selection of the entries (especially the organizers') has been printed in book form, there is also the issue of re-mediating such peculiar works into a more traditional – and marketable – form. Finally, the analysis of the comments left on the platform can help us retrace the interactions among creators and with their readers, allowing us to reconstruct the social dimension of the events.

Berube, L. (City, University of London, British Library): *Producing Comics, Creating Culture: UK digital comics from creation to consumption*

The digital technology that has 'disrupted' creation, production, and consumption workflows as well as business and communication models in publishing has had no less of an impact on the comics industry. It has not only changed print book and comics publishing but has also threatened to supplant those publications with electronic or digital works (Coover, 1992; McCloud, 2000). "Digital" and "comics" were supposed to be an irresistible, unstoppable even, combination: taking "about 3 minutes" for print comic strips to transfer to digital and become webcomics. Longer form comics, or graphic novels, have not been so easily translatable to the digital environment (McCloud, 2009). Some scholars suggest that the more 'uniquely digital' the comic is, for example presenting readers with a "disrupted view", the more they will be driven back to traditional layouts and print facsimiles (Hou et al., 2016; Benatti 2019), maybe even right back to print comics. Creators shape ideas into comics to attract readers, not drive them away. It may be that a preference for print comics among readers, indeed creators and publishers, influences how digital comics are received. UK digital comics have their own communities and cultures around making, producing, and reading. What is the nature of these cultures and communities? Has digital indeed ushered in disruption, revolution even? My presentation will offer initial findings from my ongoing PhD research into creation to consumption patterns in UK digital comics. My doctoral research begins with an exploration practice (or process) as a unit of observation and analysis (DeCarlo, 2018), while analyzing the communication that creates these digital cultures. Widening the critical lens to include the broader cultural, economic, and social contexts reveals different levels of communication: around the creative endeavour as well as the production and consumption of these cultural objects (Peterson and Anand, 2004; Brienza, 2010; Brunel, 2012). It may be that there is not a print comics culture and a digital comics culture, but more a hybrid print-digital culture that is at once fluid and traditional in its creation and production processes and communication models. My presentation will explore this possibility.

Boemia, D. (IULM): *Graphic journalism and digital comics. A preliminary survey*

In Europe journalistic genres – book review, reportage, interview and others - were born and developed in parallel with the birth and spread of periodicals, from the 17th century onwards. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, they encountered the language of comics, which modified their structure and broadened their possibilities. At the end of the 20th century, they also encountered a new medium, i.e., the digital, and a new environment, i.e., the web, which have profoundly changed the traditional genres of journalism both textually and pragmatically. Little or nothing has been studied about this encounter and it is unclear what adjustments journalistic genres have undergone to adapt to the new medium, support and environment. This contribution aims to give a first overview of the digital evolution of comics journalism, paying particular attention to forms, places of distribution and modes of reception.

Busi Rizzi, G. (Universiteit Gent) - Di Paola, L. (Università di Salerno, Università di Messina): *New forms and reading protocols: for a genealogy of digital comics*

This paper attempts to unpack the complexity of digital comics by quickly reconstructing their salient evolutionary lines, contextualizing them within the broader media landscape, and then discussing the directions they are prominently developing.

It begins by tracing the many remediations that have marked the history of comics, in particular on some constant tensions underlying the comic-form: the implications of seriality; the dialectic between popular form and artwork; and the influence of orality, most evident in their early days and again, many years later, after the digital turn. In particular, we will highlight the close relationship between cinema and comics, and, after the advent of digital, between the latter and video games.

In underlining affinities and divergences between different media forms, the paper focuses on three particularly significant examples: Chris Ware's *Building Stories*, a comic book of resistance to digital and yet, in many ways, the closest thing to a digital comic without being one; Lorenzo Ghetti and Carlo Trimarchi's *To Be Continued*, a webcomic capable of experimenting with and enlivening many of the possibilities of digital comics; and Andrew Hussie's *Homestuck*, probably the most successful compromise between plot complexity, storyworld breadth, and formal features on the one hand, and expansive transmediality and participatory networks on the other.


In doing so, this paper aims to achieve an effective overview of digital comics from the perspective of media archaeology, situating them both diachronically over the course of their history, and synchronically, in relation to the other media that feed them and are in turn fed by them, cyclically, across media boundaries.

Castellano, S. (Università di Salerno): *Digital comics and social media: comics created for Instagram, between affordances, communities and new ways to engage consumers*

Comics is a medium that has preserved over the centuries an inextricable relationship with other media, from press to cinema (Frezza 2017; Frezza 2018). The encounter with the digital is not excluded from this discourse: in fact, the digital led the medium to face changes that affected some production, distribution and consumption processes (Di Paola 2019). The advent of social media is part of this reasoning and, by redefining multiple socio-cultural processes (Boyd 2011; Boccia Artieri 2012; Vittadini 2018), it has partly changed the mediascape, thus having a general impact on the world of comics. The dialogue between social and comics, among the various social network sites (SNS), includes Instagram. It is in fact a social network built around a visual language and a visual grammar (Manovich 2017) and therefore oriented towards the production of (especially) images and videos. For this reason, it lends itself well to the creation of comics: by entering the mechanisms of visibility (boyd 2014) and spreadability (Jenkins, Ford, Green 2013) of social media and inserting themselves into the grassroots (Jenkins, Ford, Green 2013) and participatory (Jenkins, Ito and boyd 2016) logic of digital cultures, comics adapt to the affordances (boyd 2011) of Instagram, bringing out some peculiarities but also critical issues. Following the evolution line of comics and using many national and international case studies, this contribution wants to reflect on the arrival of comics on a visual social network such as Instagram, analysing not the simple adaptation of some comics for the social network in question, but analysing comics created specifically on and for this platform. The paper will proceed with a “mapping” of comics on Instagram, focusing on several issues: a) socio-cultural and media processes; b) graphic and formal characteristics of comics on Instagram, which follow the affordances of the social network; c) types of publics and evolution of the concept of community; d) new ways to engage the reader-user-consumer. A reflection of this kind opens a more general problematisation of the comics social media relationship, which will be considered in this paper, highlighting positive and critical aspects of the phenomenon.

Chu, K.W. (KU Leuven): *The collaborative production of digital cartoons on the social media*

This presentation aims at exploring how the social media shape the spontaneous and collaborative approaches in digital comic production. To do this, I will conduct a case study of a digital cartoon phenomenon, known as “The Chaos of the Yellow Gloves.” It involves about 100 Hong Kong cartoonists who spontaneously produced digital cartoons and short comic strips in dialogue with one another on Facebook. The yellow gloves are narratively depicted as a magical object which made the wearer do zany actions. The participating cartoonists created digital cartoons using their own autofictional alter-ego and posted their works on their own Facebook page, but their works are linked with the other cartoons of the same theme through various harsh tags and tags. As a result, these digital comic works,




loosely connected by disjointed tales of intersecting characters, can be read individually, intertextuality and collectively. Each cartoon contains a structurally standalone gag, while some cartoons feature a crosscutting comic dialogue with a loosely connected theme. I propose these cartoon characters transnarratively oscillate between their fictional story world and reality based on the fact that the cartoon characters, as the avatars of the cartoonists, are also featured in the social-commentary cartoons and autobiographical cartoons on the cartoonists' Facebook pages. This discursive practice of spontaneous and collaborative digital cartoon production has developed into a form of digital advertising strategy and changed the dynamics of the cartoonist community in Hong Kong.

Crucifix, B. (Universiteit Gent): *Poorly Drawn: Graphic Incompetence as Aesthetic Virtue in Digital Comics*

Webcomics have tended to generate online controversies around the qualities of drawing and craftsmanship, as online comics are sometimes judged by importing professional virtues from the print publishing world. By contrast with the editorial guidance and quality standards of comics publishers, webcomics have thrived because of the relative blurring of professional and amateur productions: this has gone hand in hand with a requalification of drawing styles and esthetic criteria that remains understudied in comics studies. Yet, digital comics regularly frame and thematize this understanding of their own drawings as unprofessional, maladroit or 'poorly drawn' (see the title of the webcomic "Poorly Drawn Lines"). Against this broad theoretical framework, I will propose to turn to the digital comics produced by Antoine Marchalot as a way to think through some of these issues. Following Livio Belloï and Fabrice Leroy's study of Pierre La Police's comics, I will argue that Marchalot's online work relies on a purposeful degree of graphic incompetence to undermine the very framework in which he publishes, such as Le Monde and Professeur Cyclope. Working for professional online venues, he relies on esthetic virtues of amateurism for satiric means. In the process, Marchalot fundamentally interrogates what was considered as innovative in digital comics of the time, proposing an off-beaten path to digital comics experimentalism.

D'Alessandro, M. (Independent Scholar): *Continuity: Behind The Screen And Inside The Frame*

Since their appearance, digital comics have posed many challenges to the world of comic studies. Are they really comics? Should we talk about them as videogames? Interactive experiences? The questions are many, and they usually stumble on the – apparently – most important question: how can we define a comic? Scholars have multiplied paths and definitions, features and prototypes, most of which really unnecessary. Some of them though are extremely insightful, and offer a proper angle from which analyse digital comics. This contribution will hence focus on the two aspects I believe are the most



relevant. Firstly, the reader's agency, their control over the pace of narration. Secondly, the structural relation between a simultaneity and continuity, between global and local embedded in comics language. If, as Fresnault-Deruelle put it, "discontinuity is the basis of comics universe", there will be necessarily some sort of continuum on which this discontinuity can emerge. Normally, this continuum is the white page itself, but with digital comics things get more complicated: the space of the screen is limited (especially with phones), missing the material affordances to show a broader picture. How can digital comics offer a space to be inhabited, filled with time and space? To look for a possible answer, this contribution will look at two excellent examples of digital comics, able to blend and adapt the language of comics to new mediascapes: Phallaina and Media Entity. With the first one, we will see how another sensory sphere, absent in traditional comics, can be entrusted with carrying the elements of continuity: sound and music. With the second, we will observe how a limited frame can turn into the open field for an ever-changing patchwork of panels.

Dornelles, W. (Universidade Federal Fluminense): *From ink to binary codes: colors, authorship, media and digital technologies*

Comic books have been adapted to different types of support since the beginning of the XX century. This transmedia movement (Jenkins, 2009), in most cases, represented not only a break of platform logic but the changing of the language itself, based on audiovisual possibilities. However, in the XXI century, the development of different types of high-definition screens in PCs, notebooks, tablets, and cellphones allowed the consumption of comics similar to their original forms, but with a shift in the media: papers and ink gradually lost space to screens. These changes represented new possibilities and issues for those who worked with art forms. Screens have the possibility of modifying the presentation of comics and pieces of art, due to significant color changes that to some extent can emulate the reproducibility criticized in Walter Benjamin's (2006) work. This work proposes a brief investigation about the impact of the aesthetic-narrative experience in comics and uses as corpus Frank Miller's *Batman: Year One Comics*. The story was originally released by DC Comics in 1987, between 404 and 407 editions of the *Batman* series, and had other releases as a Graphic Novel in later years. David Mazzucchelli was responsible for the illustration, Richmond Lewis for the colors, and Todd Klein on lettering. In the drawings, one can observe the use of high contrast between black and white, but in parallel the abundant use of vibrant colors. The definition and the quality of images separate digital readers such as Kindle (Amazon) from sophisticated tablets, such as iPad (Apple) and Galaxy Tab (Samsung). Beyond the idea of aura presented by Benjamin (2006), this text intends a brief investigation around the aesthetic experience based on the support. To guide this discussion, we will use authors such as Edmond Couchot (2003), Nara Cristina Santos (2004), and Christiane Paul (2008) and the debates around digital art forms.

Erdal, C. (Harran University): *Time-Killers or Life-Changers? Webtoon Reading Experiences from Turkey*

Digital comics, or webtoons as their well-known name among manga readers, are on the rise in today's digital entertainment industry. With their dynamic technological innovations such as episodes containing music, webtoons continue to grow into a more promising field both for creators and readers. Numbers prove this point too; with annual webtoon productions going up from 163 to 1817 between the years 2010 and 2016. After its domestic growth, the webtoon industry of Korea has spreaded overseas in 2013 (Jeong, 2020, p.72). This paper focuses on Turkish readers and their webtoon reading experiences, as to understand

- Why do Turkish readers choose webtoons? Is there any transculturality, or is the reason for reading webtoons might be explained through "digitalization" spice sprinkled on traditional manga or other comic forms?
- What genre do they prefer and what do these genres could tell us about changing reading experiences?
- Considering their transmedial aspect, what do readers think about their favorite webtoons getting adapted to screen or cinema?

Japanese and Korean influences on Turkish culture is not something new, due to these countries' history, however, webtoon or manga reading is quite niche, compared to Japanese anime and Korean K-pop music consumption. Therefore this paper is expected to reveal significant points through this niche community, in order to understand the culture industry climate in Turkey, where digitalization grows with a breath taking speed. With the aim of answering the above-mentioned questions, a sample group has been selected from webtoon readers and online interviews have been conducted. This paper will try to make sense of those results, and expand the research with fresh point of views.

Fabricsius, C., J. (Syddansk Universitet): *The Comicity of Instagram Cartooning*

Instagram, a social media platform initially designed for sharing mobile photography, is increasingly populated by cartoonists and comics artists. As Instagram users have found ways to monetize their profiles and the platform has become a hub for influencer culture, more comics creators use Instagram not just to promote print work but as a primary publication platform. Many of these creators are women sharing their experiences of life, motherhood, and creative work in diary comic form. These women's work brings together various traditions of comics and cartooning, including graphic memoir, women's autobio comics, comics strips, and newspaper cartoons. As drawing their lives becomes paid work, whether through direct patronage models or derived print publications, the practices and

themes of work-life become entangled in the Instagram posts and surrounding communities. This work, I will argue, is fundamentally shaped by gender, race, and class. In this presentation, I offer this formation of Instagram comics as a pertinent area of study in the realm of digital comics. Although creators occasionally post sequential comics by utilising the option of including multiple images in one post, single-panel cartoons are the most common type of post. I will argue, however, drawing on Colin Beineke's notion of comicity, that sequences emerge in the time and space of the timelines and grids of Instagram, making them readable as comics. The presentation will outline trends of form, materiality, and content, focusing in particular on how print adaptations make clear the formal innovations of the Instagram comic. As a case study, I will discuss work by celebrated US cartoonist Lucy Knisley. Comparing Knisley's graphic memoir *Kid Gloves* (2019), her collection of cartoons titled *Go To Sleep/I Miss You* (2020), and her Instagram profile (@lucyknisley), I will discuss the uses of the comics form, the diary comics genre, and affective communication as Knisley transposes her work across different material contexts.

Gaspari, M. (Independent Scholar): Feltrinelli Comics, a case study to explore the impact of digital comics on the Italian comics' landscape and publishing industry

Despite being historically quite marginal in the Italian comic book industry, digital comics have undergone a series of structural and linguistic changes over the past few years. The most significant being – in a similar manner as the one pointed out by Julien Baudry for the French market – a shift from an innovative approach to the language such as the one of TO BE continued by Lorenzo Ghetti to a more classical, social network based product aimed at self-promotion. The success of platforms like Instagram widened both the pool of authors that publish online and their potential readership, creating an editorial framework that deeply impacted the self-publishing tradition and the publishers' activities themselves. While traditional self-publishing still exists, the most notable case being Mammaiuto with its hybrid digital/physical nature – as explained Lisa Maya Quaianni Manuzzato – most of the scouting by Italian publishers is focused on the analysis of their success on Instagram. An important case study in this sense is Feltrinelli Comics. Feltrinelli is one of the leader publishers in the Italian narrative market, and recently launched its comic book imprint. Most of its catalogue is composed by Instagram-famous authors – such as Sio (502k followers), Fumettibrutti (167 k followers), Quasirosso (107 k followers) and RichardHTT (205 k followers) – that almost never wrote and self-published comics before and therefore often show a lack of understanding of the editorial and publishing processes and a precarious ability to shift from the typical online strip format to the long-form graphic novel format. Despite this, Feltrinelli Comics publications are usually quite successful, with sell rates higher than the average graphic novel, suggesting that this shift from self-publishing to online self-promotion does not affect negatively impact the market. I wish to briefly examine these shortcomings and their effect on the Italian comic book market through the critical reading of the paradigmatic graphic novels *Seitu* by Quasirosso and *Uno* by David

Marchetti: both show criticalities due the lack of the authors' experience in long-form writing and self-publishing.

Ghetti, L. (comics author): *TO BE continued and the choices behind making a webcomic*

There are many different ways to start a webcomic because there are many different reasons for doing one. Posting on social networks or personal sites, choosing a strip format or a serial are important decisions that must be affected by the objective that we want to achieve.

When we started TO BE Continued we took some of these decisions, some because we wanted to, some because we had to. Some changed, some remained; some were good choices, others not.

Reflecting on why and how we did TOBECO is a good way for us to understand how a digital comic can work, be useful and, we hope, fun.

Gipson, G. (Virginia Commonwealth University): *Re-writing the Comic Script into the Digital: Creating "New Normals," "New Frontiers," and "New Modes of Engagement"*

What does it mean to tell a good story? How are these stories told? Interestingly, the comic book has increasingly become a popular medium for telling all kinds of visual narratives. As noted by illustrator and science journalist Roxanne Palmer, comics are "great for condensing and coloring stories." As a creative tool they have a universal appeal, which allows for audiences and creators to transform ideas and the ability to escape and imagine. Moreover, as comics continues to expand as a multi-faceted medium, while gaining new readership and audiences, we also have to consider the role the digital plays in creating "new normals", "new frontiers" (academically and socially), and "new modes of engagement." Channeling in on the conference theme: "Comic Strike Back: Digital Comics, Digital Audiences, Digital Practices" this presentation will explore the ways in which the digital has, globally, become a unique binder for present and future dialogues and ventures in the comic book landscape.

Giuliana, V. (Université Clermont Auvergne): *De l'image au message : la bande dessinée numérique par Precariada*

Depuis son lancement en 2010, Instagram s'est imposé comme étant le principal réseau social de diffusion d'images, le visuel primant sur le texte qui les accompagne. Cet environnement a été propice à l'émergence de nouvelles pratiques artistiques, notamment dans la communauté d'illustrateurs de bande dessinée. Si des artistes se sont installés

dans le panorama bédéistique digital à travers les blogs, Twitter ou la diffusion dans la presse électronique – tel a été le cas de Raquel Córcoles et son indétrônable « Moderna de Pueblo » (CORTÉS NAVARRO, 2016) –, la révolution digitale à travers Instagram a vu émerger d'autres dessinateurs qui ont perçu le potentiel de ce nouvel outil qui, en outre, a rebattu les cartes de la production, de la distribution et de la réception des œuvres de bande dessinée. En 2019, le compte Instagram Precariada, qui compte aujourd'hui plus de 111 000 abonnés, voyait le jour. Diana Montero, illustratrice madrilène, définit elle-même ses illustrations comme des « armes de destruction massive » (<https://www.precariada.com>), voyant, de la sorte, la « bande dessinée comme une machine de communication » (MATLY, 2015) visant à faire la lumière sur des faits d'actualités ou des réflexions personnelles, liés à la société espagnole actuelle dans laquelle elle évolue. Sous la forme de cases uniques et autoconclusives, dans le sillage d'autres illustratrices comme Flavita Banana, ses « vignettes narratives » (DEL RÍO CASTAÑEDA, BENITO TEMPRANO, 2018) aux traits fins et incisifs se focalisent sur des thèmes variés, tels que le féminisme, l'amour, les faits divers ou encore la santé mentale, que l'illustratrice aborde à travers le prisme de l'humour, dans un but d'identification collective. L'objectif de ce travail est d'explorer la voie créative de la bande dessinée digitale à travers l'exemple de Precariada et son impact social dans l'aire hispanique, depuis une perspective culturelle, esthétique et intermédiaire, contribuant ainsi à éclairer sa production socialement engagée.

Goodbrey, D. (University of Hertfordshire): *From Digital Display to Printed Page: An Exploration of the Use of Digital Comic Adaptations and Hybridisations in Print Comic formats*

This paper identifies a range of adaptations and hybridisations that have come about as a result of the digital mediation of the form of comics. It then makes use of a practice-based approach to examine how these digital adaptations and hybridisations could potentially be integrated into existing print comic formats. Digital display has become a popular mode of consumption for the form of comics. Although originally developed within the bounds of printed media, today comics are commonly read on the screens of smartphones, tablets and personal computers. In adapting to the inherent qualities of these digital display devices, a range of new comic formats have emerged. This digital mediation of the form has resulted in comics sharing common platforms of consumption with other visual, interactive and narrative forms. This in turn has led to instances of hybridisation between these forms, resulting in digital comics that incorporate elements of animation, sound, gameplay and multicursal narrative. Although driven by digital mediation, these adaptations and hybridisations of the form of comics have the potential to also be applied within print comic formats. This paper presents a practice based exploration of this potential through the creation of a series of prototype print comic narratives. These prototypes include print-based approaches to the 'infinite canvas' (McCloud 2000, 222), 'panel delivery' (Goodbrey 2017, 67) and hypercomic formats, alongside experiments in the

expression of time-based elements such as animation and sound. As a whole the inquiry aims to contrast different approaches to spatiality and the 'design unit' (Hatfield 2009, 139) of the page in digital and print comic formats. In doing so it provides an examination of the creative tensions that exist between the fixed, physical configurations of print and the more 'plastic' and mutable nature of digital media (Murray 1997, 154).

Grifka, M. (Ohio State University): *Digital Time, Space, and Comics*

At their most simple, digital comics may be simply photographic duplicates of their paper versions—a scan of an analogue work. Critics have claimed that this is all digital comics are. Of course, this is easily disproven with reference to the vast number of digital comics that incorporate unique innovations to the comics page, its publication format, and audience engagement. In this paper, I will discuss the unique attributes that digital comics possess, through analysis of two comics: *Hero* by Hwei Lim, and *Buying Time* by Casey J. Both comics complicate the combination of panels, words, and pictures: *Hero*'s dialogue and captions are presented as hover-over text rather than incorporated in the panel image, and in *Buying Time* panels are triggered by the reader and layer on top of one another, interrupting the gestalt image. Through these comics, I will explore the potential that digital comics hold for altering and elaborating on the comics form. Additionally, I intend to speak to how technical and production differences for digital comics widen the playing field for alternative stories and themes. For instance, *Buying Time* is about a world which charges its inhabitants money for social and leisure time, fracturing people's relationships to their own time. It uses the digital format of the comic to incorporate both animation, which has a strict relationship to time, and layered panels, which disrupt the reader's normal ability to gauge pacing and time from the relative size and placement of the panels in a page. Lastly, I hope to touch on the technological challenges of digital comics accessibility and longevity. Both *Hero* and *Buying Time* depend on internet browsers that make their particular innovations legible. In fact, *Buying Time* relies on Flash and is not viewable to current-gen browsers like Chrome. Digital comics require active preservation, and are part of the technological history of the internet, which becomes rapidly obscured as the next new technology is adopted.

Kovaliv, G. (Université de Lausanne): *Internet, le paradis perdu des bandes dessinées ?*

À la suite des travaux de Scott McCloud, la bande dessinée numérique en ligne (blogs, réseaux sociaux...) est souvent associée à des notions telles que la liberté ou les possibilités sans limites d'une toile elle-même infinie. Cette idée est partagée largement et il est par exemple fréquent de rencontrer des titres tels que "Instagram, le paradis de la BD ? Sur le réseau social, nombreux sont les auteurs et dessinateurs de bande dessinée à laisser libre cours à leur imagination...", *Beaux-Arts Magazine* ; "La BD a trouvé en Instagram un nouvel eldorado", *CNews* ; "Et si Instagram était le réseau le plus propice à la bande dessinée ?"

Nouvel Obs. Cette communication, notamment basée sur plus de trente entretiens interrogera cet idéal de liberté, en explorant les représentations et les positionnements théoriques des auteurs-trices.

Nous commencerons par illustrer et comprendre cette vision des bandes dessinées en ligne, surtout dans l'opposition avec les œuvres imprimées. Nous explorerons en particulier les paramètres liés à l'absence de filtre éditorial au sein des productions numériques, ou du moins de toute entité perçue comme telle. La partie principale de cette présentation montera ensuite qu'en réalité de nombreuses contraintes continuent de s'appliquer aux présentations, ce qui modalise l'apparente libération du médium numérique. Ces contraintes prennent des formes variées et concernent des enjeux très différents. Mentionnons ainsi la difficile rémunération lors d'une diffusion complètement dématérialisée, qui mène souvent à une autocensure, dans l'espoir de signer un contrat postérieur avec une maison d'édition, ou la nécessité de conclure des partenariats avec des institutions, leur octroyant ainsi un droit de regard sur les productions. Citons encore les conditions d'utilisation des plateformes et sites internet, qui limitent la liberté d'expression ou simplement le manque de temps lié à l'absence de structures économiques viables. Nous terminerons en nous concentrant sur les limites spécifiques inhérentes aux réseaux sociaux, puisque de nombreuses bandes dessinées numériques contemporaines sont diffusées par le biais d'Instagram. Nous verrons que l'interface, les conditions d'utilisation et l'algorithme ont des effets déterminants sur le contenu, le style, les dessins et la construction narrative des bandes dessinées.

Liu, C. (University of Glasgow): *Cosplaying through voice: self-identification and gender-crossing in fan-dubbed animated comics*


Animated comics, a newly raising type of digital comics, blur the boundary between comics and animations by animating static comics. Unlike traditional animations, animated comics are usually developed from existing comics by adding simple action effects such as flying-in or vanishing texts, and it is a common practice to fan-dub such adaptations. Interestingly, in fan animated comics, the voice-over actor's voice quality is not always in line with the character's identity in terms of age, gender and other characteristics. By examining the voice over in the fan animated comics of the Batman series and its franchises posted on Youtube, this essay argues that fan-dubbing realises and strengthens fans' self-identification with characters, weakening potential obstacles such as the dissimilarities between characters' and fans' appearance, ethnics, age or gender. Especially, the gender identities of characters can be presented by the interaction between two modes: visual as the comic images, and audio as the actors' intonation and acting, embodying the potential of gender-crossing and weakening gender binary chauvinism. According to Valéry's "three-body problem" theory (1990), a person's identity consists of three layers: self-perception, identity presentation, and physical conditions. In dubbed animated comics, a character's identity is both visible, readable and audible, while the

voice-over actor's identity is only audible with the verbal texts. Due to the integrity of the original comic, the character's identity presentation is coherent even without voices, while the text cannot stand alone as a consistent narration. Moreover, in the adaptation, the motioned texts and the mostly static visuals remind the audience that, unlike the movable characters in traditional animations, the voice is part of the texts instead of the characters. Thus, the acting experience hides and replaces the actor's identity presentation with the characters', resulting in a voice "cosplay" that achieves self-identification with fictional characters.

Mandolini, N. (Universidade do Minho): *A Feminist Smash! Instagram Comics against Gender Violence in Latin America and Italy*

Comics entertain a fruitful and long-lasting relationship with activism, an area of political intervention that they have vastly served in light of their adaptability and communicative potentials. Comics activism and activism comics - which is to say the practice of creating comics to support specific activist goals/campaigns and the act of expressing through comics the authorial political views on a topic (Lund 42, 2018) - have touched upon different areas of social activism (environmental issues, veganism, gender issues, class discrimination etc.) and have now fully crossed the line that separates the physical realm from the virtual (Yalcinkaya 2014; Jeffries 2020; Nagtegaal 2020; Streeton 2021). Symbolic Interventions linked to the world of comics ranging from the production of graphic novels/comics to the establishment of collaborations with major comics publishing houses have already become widespread in the sphere of feminist activism and in that of activism against patriarchal violence in particular (Chattopadhyay 2019; Mandolini 2020; Pande and Nadkarni 2016; Fedtke 2019; Lodhia 2021). This paper aims at deepening scholarly understanding of feminist comics-related activism by studying its uses in the sphere of social media, with a particular focus on Instagram. It will consist in the analysis of Instagram pages of Latin American and Italian feminist collectives active in the field of gender violence prevention such as @CrucesxRosas, @Heroinasxabortolegal, @Lasrevueltas, @Niunamenos, @LuchaySiesta, @NonUnaDiMeno. By means of a medium-specific and mediologic analysis of the aforementioned social media pages, the contribution has the objective to identify the peculiarities of feminist comics activism produced through Instagram and reflects on how the digital space of activist participation to the symbolic struggle against gender violence fosters a fruitful blend between comics and other media and/or creative practices (illustration, internet memes, street art/graffiti).


Mangiavillano, A. (Coventry University): *Come Vite Distanti: An Italian collective experience of comics activism on social media in the time of COVID-19*



COme Vite Distanti (Like Distant Lives) is an Italian comic published at the pace of one panel per day on social media over two months during the first lockdown period (March-May 2020). A book pre-order campaign was run along with the online publication, with the purpose to fundraise for the Lazzaro Spallanzani National Institute for Infectious Diseases during the COVID-19 emergency. This paper explores the potential of comics for social activism by considering (i) the imaginaries that the narrative offers; (ii) the role of social media in circulating the story and engaging with the audience; (iii) the key role of ARFI Comic Book Festival in devising and coordinating the project. The analysis is further informed by two interviews with key actors involved in the project. The first section provides an overview of the narrative: A young man wearing a face mask sneaks into other people's houses and observes the lockdown from their perspectives, whilst remaining invisible and not perceivable to the most. This section also illustrates how the story was put together by more than sixty comic artists and discusses its overall cohesion despite the multiple visual and narrative styles involved. Moving on, the paper investigates the social media engagement and role of the readership by focusing on one particular page of the comic. The readership was invited to produce a page to celebrate Italy's Liberation Day from the Nazi occupation, recurring on 25th April, and post it on social media. The winning entry is dedicated to those who lost their life in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean and reach Europe. Thus, the comic invites to reflect on vulnerable categories, made even more vulnerable by the circumstances of the pandemic. Analysis also draws attention to the importance of social media as a digital tool for activism, the strengths and the weaknesses of digital and analogue formats, and further contributes to expand our understanding of how comics as an art form – on both digital and print supports – can sustain medical research in a creative, concrete, and collaborative way.

Manouach, I. (Aalto University): *Comics as a computational object*

Speculations about the growing role of automation in artistic production have been a consistent trope in modern and contemporary art debates throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first. But in general, the comics industry, since its early beginnings, has expanded symbiotically alongside the development of printing, distribution, and communication technologies. In the twenty-first century, comics artefacts are increasingly embedded in information-intensive contexts and the digital transformation of the comics industry has had a profound impact on the ways in which information is aggregated, stored and retrieved. The cumulative effects of these technologies have resulted in the expansion of the scope of knowledge, and continues to unsettle professional capacities and traditional models of production in the industry. This disruption is felt as an institutional challenge for academia and comics research (the need for a constructive approach versus operations of marginal displacements in the existing canons) but also for artists where the shift involves a necessary radical rethinking of rooted traditions of craftsmanship in comics communities that might be insufficient in responding



to the intensities of a media-saturated information economy. The industry's technological affordances accelerated by the democratization of artificial intelligence and the rise of synthetic media and generative algorithms, thrusts the comics medium into largely unknown territories. The abundance of digitised media content available through third-party groups of comics fans, the increasing convenience of programming language frameworks and machine learning libraries, the secularisation of knowledge through e-learning and plummeting prices in specialised hardware is reaching a critical/inflection point where artificial intelligence will profoundly shape the ways we produce, consume, archive and distribute comics artefacts.

Molina Fernandez, M. (Université du Québec à Montréal): *Understanding Digital Comics for Creation: from Conception to Reception*

Digital comics are a 'bastard' medium, a hybrid of comics, animated film and video game, which is not subject to a fixed form or format. Authors "invent their own writing, exploring the narrative and aesthetic possibilities of a digital universe with variable geometry and in constant technical evolution" (Boudissa, 2016, p. 93). However, tackling this task without having ever worked with sound, movement or interactivity is arduous. When I first started creating digital comics, I was able to get an idea of how I could integrate movement and sound, as I had been trained in audio-visual and animation during my Fine Arts studies. But I didn't know where to start with the interactivity. I had an idea of "what" could be done and what I wanted to do, but I didn't know "how" to do it. Not necessarily in a technical aspect, but in a compositional aspect.

I therefore undertook research coupled with the development of an artistic project with the aim of understanding the dynamics concerted between textual elements belonging to classic comics – such as text and images –, additional textual elements available in the digital environment – such as movement and sound – and interactivity to tell a story.

This lecture will present my research findings, which I believe may be of interest to researchers and artists. I'll offer a global portrait of digital comics by approaching the phenomenon from three perspectives: a media approach, which focus on the materiality of the media; a textual approach, which analyzes the relationship between the media device and the representation; and an experiential approach, which aims to clarify the ways of conveying an experience, the characteristics of interactivity and the characteristics of the reception experience of digital comics.

The conception of a digital comic project can be undertaken from any of these perspectives, but it must take all three into account. In fact, the enhancement of a multimodal and interactive narrative is achieved by what I refer to as a strong narrative-representation-interaction interdependence. Furthermore, due to its materiality and emotional value, the affection that the reader experiences in front of a digital comic narrative focuses on the reading experience. Therefore, the author should not lose

perspective on the experience of reception all through the creative process, in order to convey an engaging, fulfilling, and meaningful experience.

Parrinello, A. (University of Oxford): *Digital Comics and Queer Activism*

In the summer of 2021, I conducted a series of interviews with different Italian graphic novelists, who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The interviews were recorded for a podcast I produced called Queer Graphics, which is forthcoming and was funded by the AHRC and the University of Oxford. The aim of the project was to present an overview of the artists' works and to engage with their own queer positionality. The artists that were interviewed are Nicoz Balboa, Frad, Giulio Macaione, and Flavia Biondi.

The paper I will present is partly based on the interviews with a selection of the authors (in this case, Nicoz Balboa, Frad, and Giopota), as their practice is characterised by an oscillation between collaborating with the publishing industry and independent digital comics. Indeed, the three artists have all published their works with Italian publishing companies (Coconino Press, Oblomov Edizioni, Renbooks, Asterisco Edizioni, and Bao Publishing among others), but are currently showcasing their work online on different platforms - Patreon, Instagram, and Tapas, respectively. Thus, the paper will further explore their relationship with digital comics, in particular in connection with LGBTQ+ activism. The paper will argue that the practice enacted by Nicoz Balboa, Frad, and Giopota is a form of digital queer activism, which contrast Italian homonormative tendencies, a phenomenon related to a process of normalization of the LGBTQIA+ community. By engaging with political themes, by placing front and centre characters that are far from the white, cisgender, gay man (stereo)type, and by providing their work online and for free, they enact a form of online activism. The theoretical backbone is provided by Lisa Duggan's definition of homonormativity (2003), a local analysis of the phenomenon (Ferrante 2019), and by the more general graphic novels theory (Tosti 2016; Barbieri 2017).

Pintor, I. (Pompeu Fabra University): *From the window to the map in e-comics: psychogeography of immersion*

Comics are part of the sequential visual narrative and other forms of expression such as medieval narrative painting, Mesoamerican codex, hieroglyphs, or the languages of preliterate peoples. From prehistoric cave paintings to the printed comic that became a mass medium in the 20th century, the encounter between numerous images showed that the image was never born one and emancipated, but multiple, linked or juxtaposed, in processes of clash signifier or temporary mimesis. In the same way, digital video embodied an aesthetic change for cinema, based on the substitution of a technology grounded on the optical for another whose origin was sound, the massive use of connected smartphones and tablets has induced significant changes in the comic.

The immersive condition of the comic album, the double-page panoptic, has given birth, in e-comics, not only to the invocation of the infinite canvas that many comic authors, such as Hergé, Fred or Luc, and François Schuiten, had already intuited but also to other possibilities, which hybridize elements of paper comics with contemporary devices. In the face of e-comics such as Dash Shaw's *BodyWorld* (2007-2009), Chris Ware's *Touch Sensitive* (2011), Marietta Ren's *Phallaina* (2016), *The Eyes* (2019), by Javi de Castro, *To Be Continued* (2014-), by Lorenzo Ghetti, or *Joselito* (2018-2021), by Marta Altieri, there is a paradigm shift that enhances both media, the one that uses the paper support and the one that uses the touch screen.

The infinite scroll, preferably vertical, conceived by the engineer Aza Raskin, the possibility of using videos, music, and effects that unfold the visual canvas in all directions shows that the centrality of the succession or panoptic of 'windows' in printed comics is replaced, in e-comics, by immersive modes that activate a completely different cognitive map regarding the creation of habitable space, the notion of off-screen and the autonomy of the narrated world. These modifications invite us to make a double approach to these examples from investigations rehearsed in digital cinema by Steven Shaviro, Lev Manovich, Adrian Martin, or Sergi Sánchez and from imagination studies and hermeneutics.

Quaianni, M. - Marchisano, S. (WOW – Spazio fumetto, Milan): *Promoting digital comics*

The study of digital comics often focuses on their innovations in language and aesthetic. In addition to digital comics' intrinsic characteristics, it is equally important to understand how these productions are published and promoted on the two channels used by digital graphic narratives: personal websites, and social media platforms. In the current age of online presence, more and more cartoonists must reinvent themselves as social media managers, publishing posts, following Facebook algorithm updates, and searching for new Google Analytics plugins. Many of them have decided to publish their production almost entirely online, for free, before or after a printed version of their works. How do they build their audience? How do they act to improve engagement? How do they earn from their online comics? In our presentation, we will focus on some Italian authors of digital comics, that are using websites and social media platforms to promote themselves. Among them, we find active collectives between self-publishing and digital comics, such as Associazione Culturale Mammaiuto, and prominent cartoonist and comic artist Mario Natangelo, with a huge following distributed between his personal pages and "Il Fatto Quotidiano" pages, the Italian newspaper where he works. The research will be conducted through the analysis of the main online promotional tools such as websites, blogs, and social media accounts. To understand the cartoonists' Digital Marketing strategies, we will use tools provided by the platforms (analytics, Insights, others) and interviews with the authors.

Rose, J.R. (Dallas College, Texas): *Backwards Compatibility: Formal Regression When Comics Shift from Digital Conception to Print*

In his important recent study *Between Pen and Pixel*, Aaron Kashtan examines the intersection of print and digital comics through the idea of materiality. Although Kashtan considers the specific situation of digital comics later converted to print comics by focusing in part on Comixology's "guided view" technology, he does not explore what happens when online comics designed first for a digital materiality are subsequently "downgraded" into a traditional print codex format. This paper will examine the latter condition through two comic artists' work—Sydney Padua and Dash Shaw—through an art historical approach to materiality, specifically the concept of formalism. Popularized within modern art by the Twentieth Century art critic Clement Greenberg, formalism proposes that art should conform visually and conceptually to the intrinsic material nature of its own medium. Through this lens, I will analyze Shaw's *Bodyworld*, originally published serially on his website and later in book form, and Padua's *2D Goggles*, originally published as a webcomic on her blog and later collected into the print graphic novel *The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage*. Padua and Shaw's comics feature interesting formalist exploration of the potential of digital comics that become starkly reductive when transferred to a traditional print form. Through an examination of these works, I propose a conception of digital comics' materiality and potential must be broadened beyond the constraints of traditional publishing, market demands, and one rooted in textuality.

Tirino, M.-Di Paola, L. (University of Salerno): *At the origins of digital comics: imaginaries and media history of the first intersections between comics and digital media*

With this paper, we aim to analyse the mediological and sociological conditions that marked the first impact between comics and digital technologies. The history of digital comics started during the 1980s, crossing important media practices and breakthroughs that had a strong influence on the comics industry. Through the analysis of Michael Saenz's *Shutter* (1985) and *Crash* (1988) and Pepe Moreno's *Batman-Digital Justice* (1990), we will try to reconstruct the influences and the mediological systems at the basis of these comics. These works paved the way for technical and expressive modalities capable of kickstarting the digital comics revolution.

The emerging logics linked to digital, however, have not only influenced the practices of production and consumption of comics, but have also had an important impact on their imagery and aesthetics of reference, which are increasingly linked to the world of information technology and the cyberpunk-inspired imaginary of what the virtual is.

Our investigation will try to hold together these different levels so to reconstruct the ecosystem in which the future of digital comics was born.

Tralli, L. (AUR - The American University of Rome): *Radical Inclusivity and the Queer Affective Labor of Oh Joy Sex Toy, Erika Moen's "Queer, Pervy and Weirdo" Sex-Education Webcomics*

Cartoonist Erika Moen's contribution to the tradition of feminist and queer-oriented sex-education comics (Faris, 2019) started in April 2013, when she began her journey with Oh Joy Sex Toy (OJST). OJST is a weekly sex-education webcomic - published at www.ohjoysextoy.com - that Moen has ideated together with her husband, Matthew Nolan, who is currently Creative Director and Editor of the project. The candid, joyous, informational, and liberatingly inclusive tone of OJST, divided between a sex toy review column and a sex education series, has rapidly gained attention and a small but dedicated community of readers. In 2014 Moen joined the crowdfunding platform Patreon to support her work on the webcomic, where about 1.500 people are helping finance her work. In recent times, Moen has taken a step back from the creative side of OJST to focus on other projects stemming from the strips (notably, the publication of a series of volumes dedicated to sex-education topics for young adults and teenagers and an autobiographical graphic novel about her mental health issues), leaving space for a long series of guest artists that are featured on the project.

This paper will have a double focus. Firstly, I will discuss Moen's work as a queer practice dedicated to re-shape public understanding of sexuality and sexual practices through her radical inclusivity of all subjects that are usually under- or misrepresented in this kind of work, still dominated by cis, white, conforming and heterosexual narratives. Moen's comics, on the contrary, include a wide variety of bodies, gender identities, sexualities, and sexual practices, shown in a vulnerable and empowering way. Secondly, building on recent feminist scholarship on affective practices online (Kanai 2019), we will focus on Moen's work as a form of queer and feminist affective labor, analyzing not only the webcomics (especially the strips that are more autobiographical) but also her social media accounts and the Patreon posts where she shares tidbits of her personal life that are inextricably connected to her work.

Trimarchi, C. (webmaster): *Building Webcomics: A Developer's Perspective*

Creating and publishing a digital comic presents several technical challenges and issues that can affect the work of both comic authors and developers. Many of these challenges are the same as standard web development, but are further complicated by the often unique structure and requirements of a webcomic; others are entirely new, requiring in many cases somewhat unconventional practices.

Based on my experience, I will list and analyze the most common pitfalls that might arise when working on a webcomic: understanding them is of fundamental importance for a


better collaboration between authors and developers, which I believe is a key factor to creating more innovative comics.

Tullis, B. (St. Ambrose University): *From Print to Webpage. The Evolution of Documentary Comics in Present-day Peru*

In the aftermath of the internal armed conflict in Peru, which lasted from 1980-2000, the documentary comic began to take root and flourish in the Peruvian comics scene, fostered by a group of local cartoonists seeking to preserve and protect historical memory surrounding this period, as well as to aid in the process of national healing following this deeply painful period. Though stemming from a tradition of socially engaged comics production that can be traced back to decades before the start of this conflict, the documentary comics that came after it began to take a decidedly realist approach to engaging with the societal ills of their time, rather than cloaking their commentary in allegory and funny animals. In another notable departure, this body of work also began to incorporate significant amounts of “official” / published material in the form of news articles, photographs, and even the report that came out of the commissioned Truth and Reconciliation Report of 2003. Supported by the Peruvian Ministry of Justice and various national and international foundations, this work quickly established Peruvian comics as a key space for interrogating complex concerns at the personal, local, and even national level. After giving a brief general overview of this trajectory, this presentation will focus on a recent evolution of the Peruvian documentary comics as manifested in *La guerra por el agua* (The War for Water), created by Jesús Cossio, Nelly Luna Amancio, and Jason Martinez. One of the most compelling aspects of this comic is its materiality, which is what this presentation will center. Bringing its readers directly into the conflict via interactive progression, audio, and animation, the virtual space of the comic also creates links to investigative reporting and other coverage of the local (and largely indigenous) battle for access to water in the face of multinational corporate interests. Published in both English and Spanish, this text effectively pushes the boundaries of traditional conceptions of local organizing, presenting a compelling example of the role that webcomics can play in expanding community organization efforts around the world.

Vacchelli, C. (Biblioteca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute, Rome): *Digital Comics and the Italian Underground. Čapek Magazine and Love-Bot*

My presentation focuses on the project Čapek Magazine, an online portal of Italian comics whose aesthetics, inspired by the masters of American Comix and Italian underground (from Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton to Professor Bad Trip), is hybridized with digital production and circulation practices. This magazine brings together multiple generations of authors, employing first-generation Italian underground personalities, such as Marcello



Baraghini, editor of *Stampa Alternativa*, and Vincenzo Sparagna, editor of *Frigidaire*, as well as emerging illustrators and artists, such as Venancio de Venanzi, Roberta Scomparsa, and Marie-Cécile. Beyond relying on both digital and printed venue to circulate, the magazine employs Artificial Intelligence to create original comics. This is the case of *Love-Bot*, an unsettling erotic/porn graphic short story produced through an AI by the founder of Čapek, Ivan Hurricane, making the case of the first Italian comic book created through an AI. Considering Čapek as a case of hybridity between underground aesthetics (style, contents, target readership, authors) and digital forms, I aim at demonstrating how the employment of digital techniques, such as AI, and the circulation through digital venues, facilitates the innovation of the underground modes, introducing new elements, as well as discussing and corroborating the Italian underground tradition.

Wilde, L. R.A. (Universität Tübingen): *Digital Comics and Media Aesthetics: From Transmedia Forms to Hypermedia and Intermedia*

While the digitalization of comics may still be in its infancy, it is now well over 20 years that Scott McCloud has published his manifesto “Reinventing Comics” (2000). Within these two decades, digital comics have been many things for practitioners and scholars alike, at the same time one of the most neglected and yet most popular and productive areas of comics’ evolution. Considering that most aspects of cultural production, circulation, and reception are to some degree digital nowadays, digitalization is increasingly considered more of an event than a process, allowing us to take a look back at the question “What has the digitalization of comics been?” Comics can certainly be identified by their integrated “base media,” writing and images. These semiotic structures will always be integrated into some sort of “carrier media” as material support, such as newspapers, booklets, or digital reading technologies. Third and finally, one can speak of comics itself as a “medium conventionally perceived as distinct.” Here, we focus on comics as an artistic genre, communicative form, or cultural technique that can be imitated or “quoted” in other medial contexts through intermedial references. Arguing from such a multidimensional conceptualizations of media and mediality, digital comics have, once again, been many things at the same time, and often interchangeably: A transmedia form that can traverse material and digital boundaries, hypermedia that integrate various other media forms such as animated sequences, sounds, or interactive games, and intermedia that challenge or simply abandon established media borders far beyond earlier minimal definitions like “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence.” Can a theory of mediation shed some new light on comics’ (digital) aesthetics?