

# NOISE

ENGLISH TRANSLATION







a strangely dreamlike visual poetry, the lettering mutates to ambiguous text formations. A subtle subversion of the "law and order"-mannerisms of the original, from the perspective of an emerging "counterculture". But at the same time a tribute to something Jess loved as a child. Until 1959 seven "Cases" were created. [8]

Chester Gould (US, 1900–1985)

Born in Oklahoma, he moved to Chicago at the beginning of the 1920s and worked there as draftsman and illustrator for various clients.

Gangsters controlled Chicago and police was weak. This made Gould and every other law-abiding citizen angry, and in this frame of mind he created Tracy, a detective who would take action.

In the first story the father of Tracy's fiancée was shot to death, and Tracy joined the police forces for revenge. At that time in Chicago "Dick" was a slang expression for "detective". [9]

Gould had his big breakthrough with "Dick Tracy" in 1931.



Jess vs. Gould

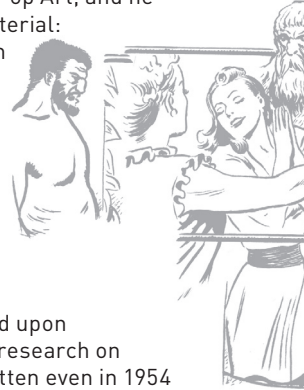
On the occasion of the intended publication of a contribution in an anthology in 1960, Jess sent his "Tricky Cad" to Chester Gould. Gould was furious and threatened legal action. Jess had collided with Gould's thinking trained by license and merchandising contracts. [10] Is that why "Case VII" remained the last "Tricky Cad"?

## PAGES 14–17

In spring 2006 – I was for the first time at Aleksandar Zograf's [11] "GRRR! Comic Festival" in Pancevo [12], an industrial town 20km northeast of Belgrade – I had the "Whinemeal" material with me, created a few weeks before. Muhamed Kafedzic, a young Bosnian artist, recognized "Tricky Cad". He had just finished his diploma thesis on comics and Pop Art, and he suggested further material: Schwitters, Fahlström

...

Schwitters: an old acquaintance from another context – it quite figures that he had glued the "first comic collage".



I had already stumbled upon Fahlström during my research on Jess – that he had written even in 1954 an essay on comics for an American art magazine. [13] But I hadn't been able to find this essay. Also Muhamed knew nothing about it.

Back in Graz I saw in the catalog of a then running exhibition [14] the reproduction of a collage by

Öyvind Fahlström (SWE, 1928–1976).

It was written therein: "In 'Dr. Livingstone, I Presume' (1959) the comics material is cut into pieces to such an extent that only a kind of sound remains ... This sound he (Fahlström) uses to compose a landscape, an abstractly detailed carpet full of micro-events." [15] In the year before I had tried to ink scribbles and doodles, spontaneous gestural material, to transfer them to a comic surface. I was interested in the tension between the "something" and the representational concrete impression due to the execution. In "Dr. Livingstone" there was something of this indefiniteness between abstract and concrete. In the summer 2006 I transferred excerpts of "Livingstone", diverse zooms, to the

intricate surface. (pp. 12-17) The differing montage methods of "Whinemeal" and "Livingstone" somehow presented the poles of strategies in dealing with concrete material: On the one hand the new combination of mainly intact elements in the frame of their original form, anagrammatic shifts in the same "world", on the same "level". On the other hand the fragmentation of the elements, the splitting up in tiniest image pieces that are then synthesized into new material. "Whinemeal" and "Livingstone" became the condensation cores, around which slowly an increasingly denser net of references accumulated ... associations, thoughts, experiences of my own ... layer by layer.

Then the machine hall was dropped in favour of the animals looking at us out of the forest.



### PAGE 23

Michael Jordan <sup>[16]</sup>

### PAGE 35

Sound of the surface, I rather liked that. Sound as analogy to the flow, the style of the drawings ...

Seen from a musical viewpoint, also "remix" was something self-evident. Or "interpretation": to translate what one likes into one's own sound ... and the methods of montage of "Whinemeal" and "Livingstone" corresponded in essential also to the means of my own music: cut, montage, speed, running direction, superimposition ... and Tonto itself began in 1994 as a musical platform. <sup>[17]</sup>

Sound of the surface ... what is the surface? "[...] that the viewer always attempts to "read" a collection of images and make sense of them, and does this in terms of a common socialized visual language [...]." <sup>[18]</sup>  
: The surface is the venue of the interaction of elements, the plane of reactions.

I remembered drawings from nearly 20 years ago, motifs for flyers and tape covers for Fleischpost, the band where I was the drummer then. <sup>[19]</sup>



### PAGES 22-23

The "chopping" in the wood and the "humming" in the machine hall:

The first image stands for the arranging specific sound events, the other for the synthetic generation of sounds.

Onomatopoeics are not necessary, the sounds are implicit.

That's how it was planned.

"Double Spiral" (p.2)  
 "Spiral Field" (p. 48)  
 "Aufpassen, Jeff!" ("Watch out, Jeff!"),  
 " Ja, Grosser Meister" ("Yes, Great Master")  
 and "Genossen" ("Comrades"), (pp. 50-51).

These already were transmissions and combinations of material of different origins ... and later these became also the cover motifs of the first three Tonto comics.

Kurt Schwitters  
 (GER, 1887–1948)

After having arrived as a refugee in London in 1941, the Dadaist Schwitters also used material for his late collages that had come to England with the US Army. "For Käte", 1947, was supposed to be shown as part of a series in a New Yorker gallery, but then Schwitters died, and the exhibition was cancelled.

When it was rediscovered in the early 1960s and retrospectively exhibited, "For Käte" was recognized as one of the pioneering works of Pop Art – as one of the first works of the "Fine Arts" that used material from comics.



About 60 years later similar sources and composition in Zograf's <sup>[11]</sup> collage. However, the image of the woman in the center has changed.



## PAGE 48

After Reijo Kärkkäinen <sup>[20]</sup>

Then it's about similarities of songs and narratives – something I first noticed in 2003 when I saw Marko Turunen's <sup>[21]</sup> story (pp. 53–58) in "Stripburger" <sup>[22]</sup>. I realized that such short narratives somehow could function like songs. Atmosphere and form define the ending, it must not always have a "punch line". The strongly homogenizing effect of the form – like a pot with disparate elements thrown in, being cooked to sometimes mysterious concoctions ...

Igor Hofbauer's <sup>[23]</sup> "Band You Never Heard, Never Saw" (pp. 64–71) aims from a somewhat other direction

and via a close band the way led to "Zippy" by Bill Griffith <sup>[24]</sup>.

"Expressionism" from 1982 (pp. 78–81) is the cover of the LP of the same name by "The Striggles" <sup>[25]</sup> from 2008.

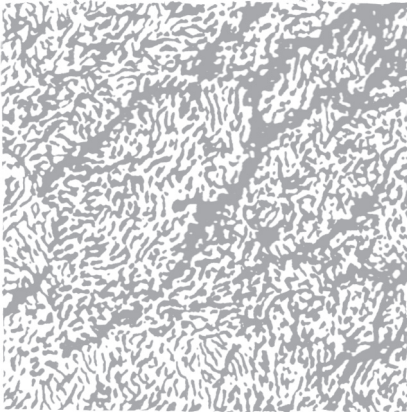
"Iggy Pop in Serbia" (pp. 62–68), or, to be more accurate: Iggy Pop in Pancevo, by Vladimir Nedeljkovic <sup>[26]</sup>, a musician and artist. Incidentally, he had also designed a cover for "The Striggles".

Vladimir's disturbing story here in a cover version, very near to the original.

## PAGE 49

"Mystery Music" (pp. 26–27) by Nicolas Mahler <sup>[27]</sup> is, to me, one of the most disgusting stories. Nicolas says: "It's about excretion and reception of music."

"Imaginary Media" (pp. 52, 61) by Aleksandar Zograf <sup>[11]</sup>:  
And if I remember right, also Kai Pfeiffer <sup>[28]</sup> told about his drawings – that I first saw in his publication "Land" – something about an event where the images were projected ... and a guitar also played a roll? ...  
"Realm" (pp. 28–31): "The drawings shown here belong to the series "Realm": a realm of pure Indian ink – molecular drawings. They are not depictions, the drawings show nothing but themselves, a world built of ink particles – almost completely flat."  
Kai's remark here stems more from the terminology of "concrete painting" ... but for me the ink molecules remain a hole in the landscape.



In 2004, in "Land", Kai said: "How many pixel per inch is your mind's resolution?"

### Subtle Borders

Parallel to "Whinemeal" I had in one go "translated" a lot of different material, transposed to a formal level in order to induce an reaction of the elements ...

Religious paintings from around 1500, Japanese woodcuts from the 19th century, collages of my own from the 20th century (they later formed the cover of TC #12: Nordpol) – and motifs by Henry Darger, a legendary outsider artist (USA, 1892–1972)

"That's goes too far, you can't do that!" For Michael Jordan a borderline was crossed with Darger – the subtle border between "transponing/transferring" and "tracing".



Strange, that he didn't see "Smellphone" <sup>[29]</sup> in this light as it was exactly the same when I was inking his drawings.

## PAGE 50

In spring 2010 David Schilter of "Kuš!" <sup>[30]</sup> invited us to make a contribution to the theme of "sound": "(...) What's special about it is that we invite only people who are musicians themselves (...)"

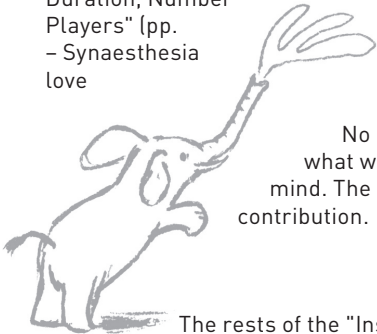
My answer to David: "That fits in just fine. I have been preparing for some time a Tonto edition: "Noise". The material is quite heterogeneous. It has accumulated at my place in the last years. Somehow it belongs together, there are several threads leading through ... a little while ago I tried to explain to Nicolas Mahler what this book is about. (Since "Invisible Dummy" <sup>[31]</sup> he makes fun of my concept ruins ...) And what I told him then I will try to transcribe into a comic for you: quotes and remixes from the existing material plus additions ... my own and from others ..."

The plan was to make a story for "Kuš!" on the material that later should also serve as editorial for the Tonto book.

The origins of the genesis of this theme go back several years. What's it about? Which threads go through the material? Looking for the motifs and thoughts, lost traces, all kinds of things come to light. The collection of material (copies from the "Universe" archives) goes back to the 1980s ...

I wanted to make use of the long train journey from Graz to Luzern – to the Fumetto Festival, where we met David – to distil out of the ca. 50 notes of the collection of material the editorial for "Noise". But this attempt branched off to a collage, a very personal story on panic – tinnitus – irritation: "Inside Noise" (pp. 72-77)

"Inside Noise" was published in July 2010 in Kuš! #7, as well as Edda's "Shifting Sound. Score for Any Instrumentation, Duration, Number of Players" (pp. 30-34) – Synaesthesia love



No idea, what was in her mind. The red is my contribution.

The rests of the "Inside Noise" material went on to Dice <sup>[32]</sup> and to Igor Hofbauer <sup>[23]</sup>: "A parcel with scraps is on its way to you. I have collected them for you in the last months."

Having received it Dice wrote: "Seems to become a kind of signal chain." This



sounded quite good. He wrote: "Seems to become something like a flow chart, signal-to-noise."

"How to Build a Noise Generator from Scrap" (pp. 18-21) – here in a remix by Edda and me.



## PAGE 51

### Speaking of holes

In a book on artist groups in Spain of the 1930s devoted to Surrealism I noticed something. For every group a series of works was depicted. At least one of all these works was a painting "Amorphous Form with Hole".

It seems this had then already become a central theme of the Surrealist iconography.

Each of the holes had an "edge" indicating a shell. Did this originate from ceramics?





I myself had used in a series of drawings holes like that and also amorphous forms. And "Genossen" ("Comrades") from 1993 (p. 51) quite hits the situation of the Surrealist International that conferred in the 1930s on a political engagement. "Everything Fits Exactly" (p. 35)

Some years before "Genossen" it was still obvious that it was about bullet holes in the piano (p. 60) – it's not clear however if the shots happened in or out of the musical context.

Also in Marko Turunen's <sup>[21]</sup> "Alien" there is such a hole.

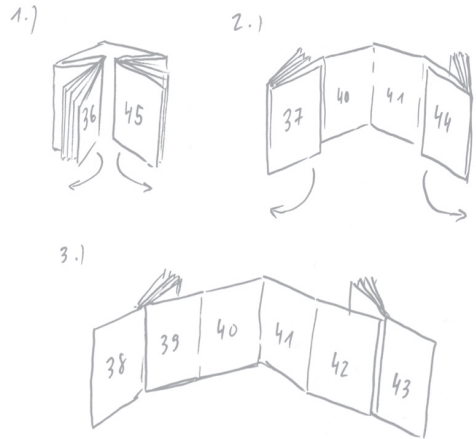
## PAGE 52

"Skree – Skriiikk" (pp. 36, 45-47) by Igor Hofbauer <sup>[23]</sup> : "Sorry that I didn't contact you earlier but (...) my spine strike me with



full force, so I'm laying on the floor for two weeks...but on the floor I started drawing... so I did sketches for NOISE (...)"

Behind Igor's "The Pleasure Was All Mine" is Pakito Bolino's <sup>[33]</sup> "Distortion" (pp.37-44)



He is "a copy machine with distortion", "using the figurative imagery of worst comix", so Pakito about himself, when we were in summer 2008 in Marseille and produced together with him "The White Land" (TC #10) <sup>[34]</sup> The material for the montage of "Distortion" I found in Pakito's "Une putain de lettre d'amour" from 1992.

Pakito's answer on our inquiry in this regard:

"Hello Tonto no scan of this too old do what you want with this thank and see you next time!!! pakit"

Almost 20 years later Simon Häussle <sup>[35]</sup> provided the red voice in Pakito's concert. He took up "Distortion" and commented it with a delicate drawing that actually executed every distortion and every copy dirt with the brush.

## PAGE 59

### New Perspectives

"Inside Noise", depicting the own condition during the first Jess reception, again was a fresh view on the material.

It's possible that I interpreted Jess then, when I discovered him, his background, in the focus of my own mood – the overstuffed house, the collection of the collage material, the scrap archives, his main work that he spent 30 years on and that remained nevertheless incomplete ... [36]

The sequence with the water forcing its way into the house and the flooded cellar had something of a death in the family, as if someone close had died.



Two years before my preoccupation started, Jess had died, the originals of his "Tricky Cad" now crumble in the archives etc. – If you are looking for it everywhere death is flashing out.

### Into the small

"However, this image is much more convincing as a reproduction than in the original: very small, delicate and pale,

with a gauzelike paper partly blurring the comic picture it has not much to do with the enormous, not manipulated paintings by the Pop artists." Lucy R. Lippard wrote that in 1966 on Schwitter's "For Käte", 10,5 x 13 cm [37]

In her opinion, the large-formatted transformations to painting were something "not manipulated", pure ... in contrast ... hmm ...

## PAGES 60–61

### Anagram

Question: "'Low Density', the lettering. Self-made or font? Can this be understood as an anagram,

Handwritten text "LOW DENSITY" where the letters are stylized and intertwined, suggesting an anagram.

and thus as a hidden layer of meaning of 'WALT DISNEY'? Was this your intention?" [32]

Dice: "Yes, self-made. Quasi an anagram – but actually I trigger here the same mechanism as with the images. They, too, are to be understood quasi anagrammatically, saying also 'Donald' because of their flow – although there is only a ghosting of 'Donald' left. Therefore most of the people see 'Walt Disney', although something quite different is written!"

MEANWHILE – WHINEMEAL; DICK TRACY – TRICKY CAD; WALT DISNEY – LOW DENSITY; EDDA – DEAD [38]

See signature on p. 34

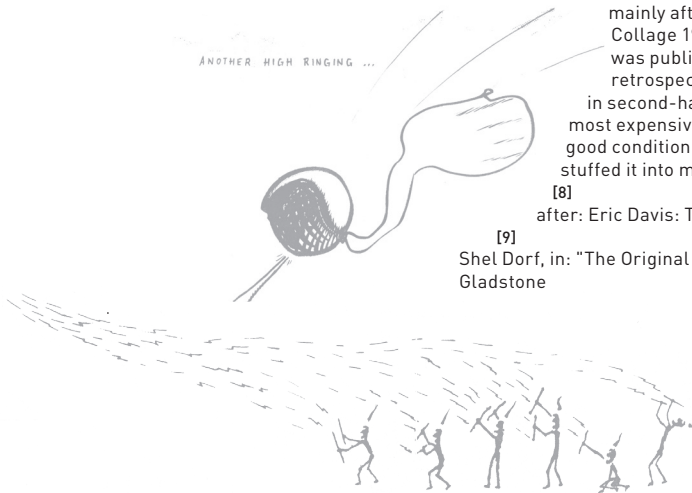
My own transformations were kind of back-transformations into the "small". But I didn't know then that my motifs were small themselves because they worked with the

comic material in original size. "Case VII" measures 48,3 x 17,8 cm. "Dr. Livingstone" measures only ca. 100 x 100 cm, in spite of the almost monumental density of the motif carpet. "Comic material in original size" means here the size of reproduction, the printing size. The original drawings were, at least then, much larger.

Eventually I realized that Norbert Gmeindl's <sup>[39]</sup> drawings actually were huge – they were only drawn in a minute way. When asked he said he made his drawings as if they were already printed ... The printed book is the perspective.

Norbert's "Totem Signal Chain" (p. 11) is a collage of motifs from a story of "Mandrake the Magician". Developed by Lee Falk in 1934, Mandrake's adventures are based on his unusual capability of express hypnosis. "The magician performs a gesture with his hands, then the guns of the gangsters bend. But not really, they just think they do." Thus Norbert's account.

Originally, the "Totems" were a poster for a concert of "8 oder 9". <sup>[40]</sup>



"8 oder 9" curse the technician

*"8 oder 9" verfluchen den Techniker*

## PAGES 78–80

### APPENDIX

[1]

La Monte Young, Composition 1961 No. 4: Draw a straight line and follow it

This is a drawing after George Maciunas' graphical interpretation from 1964. I saw it back in the 80s and somehow it stayed on my mind ... the head has been drawn by Edda ...

[2]

Edda Strobl [AUT, \*1962]

Founded in 2001 the comic branch of the Tonto collective that was then mainly a music label.

[3]

Helmut Kaplan [AUT, \*1967]

[4]

Tilman Osterwold: Pop Art, 1989, Taschen

[5]

after: David D'Arcy: From the Garbage Can to the Gallery. Modern Painters, Nov. 2005,

[6]

Max Ernst: Une semaine de bonté, 1934.

In the almost 200 plates of his collage novel Max Ernst used the illustrative image fund of the 19th century: wood engravings, industrially produced in large workshops in order to quench the growing thirst for images ... much by Gustave Doré, but also material from catalogues for medical devices and furniture, illustrations from magazines and detective novels. Today also Max Ernst's material relicts, the cut up books, are presented in museums ...

[7]

mainly after: Jess: A Grand Collage 1951–1993. The book

was published on occasion of his retrospective in 1993. I found one

in second-hand in the USA, one of my most expensive books. It was in a rather good condition before the postman stuffed it into my mail box ...

[8]

after: Eric Davis: The Alchemy of Trash

[9]

Shel Dorf, in: "The Original Dick Tracy", no. 1, 1980, Gladstone

[10]  
after: Jack Foley: Six Passages from a Notebook  
plus a Poem

[11]  
Aleksandar Zograf (SRB, \*1963)  
Many years ago Aleksandar led a workshop in a  
Grazer art society and Edda participated – a contact  
that proved to be very important for the development  
of Tonto comics.

For several years Aleksandar had organized the  
"GRRR! Comic Festival" in Pancevo, a very intimate  
but intense meeting between international and local  
scene ...

[12]  
Pancevo is a industrial city, 20 km north-east of  
Belgrade, that was bombed for 78 days during the

NATO intervention against Serbia in 1999.

[13]  
Öyvind Fahlström wrote in 1954 the essay "The  
Comics as an Art". Even in the 1950s this essay  
addressed aspects of the possibilities of this  
medium that were only many years later more widely  
discussed. After having searched in vain for a long  
time, Michael Jordan was able to get for me a copy of  
this remarkable article ...

[14]  
Claus Mewes (ed.): Art and Politics: Erro, Fahlström,  
Köpcke, Lebel. Katalog 2003, Ausstellungen  
2003–2006

[15]  
Roberto Ohrt: "Alle Grenzen werden fallen.  
Deserteure aus dem Theater des Kalten Krieges", in:  
Art and Politics, p. 98

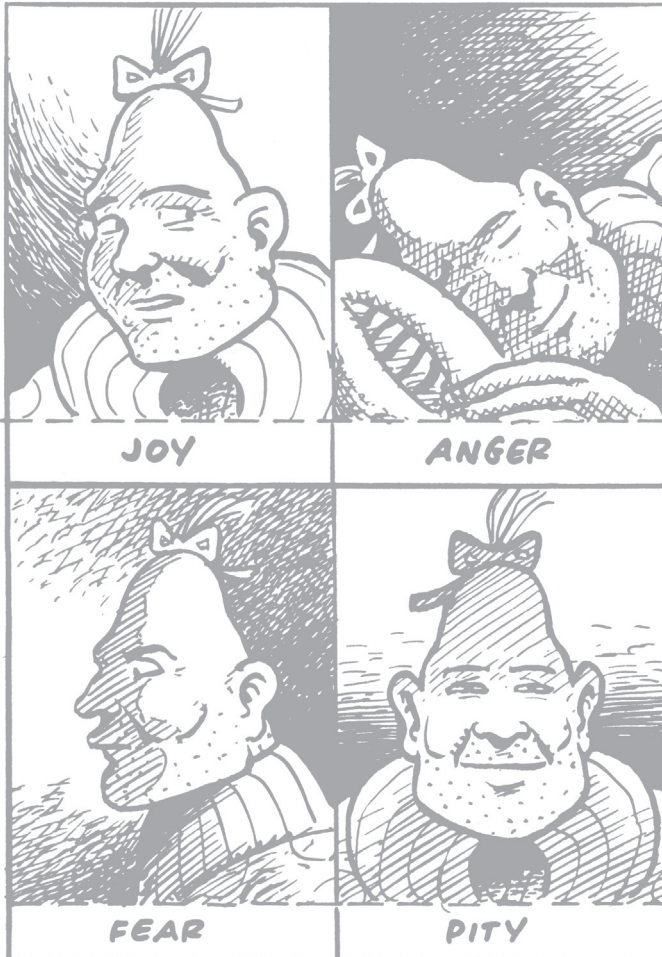
[16]  
Michael Jordan (GER, \*1972)  
Co-operation since 2003,  
meanwhile Tonto co-activist

[17]  
Tonto started in 1994 with  
audio tapes, since 1999 there  
was the Tonto CDR series  
with 30 editions and concerts  
... interface of different  
approaches ... my own CDs  
in this series: "Wave Mash  
Targets" (1999, tonto #1) and  
"Whistle on Carpet" (2003,  
tonto #17)

[18]  
Mike Kelley: Myth Science,  
1995

[19]  
Fleischpost was an  
instrumental trio existing  
from 1989 until 1994. Pölzl  
(git), Klöckl (bas), Kaplan  
(dr). "Reas" by Andi Klöckl  
(aka Reas) was published as  
tonto #11 in the CD series.

[20]  
Reijo Kärkkäinen (FIN,  
\*1964), an artist embedded  
in the Finnish comic scene  
around "Kuti" and Tommi  
Musturi, was one of the  
participants at the exhibition  
"Glömp X" in Graz. The motif  
on p. 84 is part of a drawing  
that had wandered into our  
archives. When he left he  
gave each of us a drawing;  
mine became the starting  
point of "New", a story that  
was published in the Finnish  
"Kuti" in 2010 ...



Reijo has made a.o. several books with Pakito Bolino's [33] "Le Dernier Cri".

[21]

Marko Turunen (FIN, \*1973)

In "Basis", published on occasion of the 20 years anniversary of "Strappazin" in 2004, a coloured version of "Alien" was printed ...

We wanted his b/w version. Marko said he could not find the b/w originals, he hadn't thought that anybody would ever ask for them as now there existed the colour version ...

[22]

Stripburger

Since ca. 20 years international working anthology with headquarters in Ljubljana.

[23]

Igor Hofbauer (CRO, \*1974)

aka Hof, known especially for his concert posters for the Club Mocvara in Zagreb, himself a drummer, had only started with comics with his collection "Prison Stories". One of those stories was published in TC #11: "The Invisible Dummy". The vignettes on pp. 78 and 81 were also done by him.

[24]

Bill Griffith (USA, \*1944)

Robert Lepenik of the "Striggles" arranged our contact to Bill Griffith. It's a special honour. Since the early youth his stories have accompanied us ...

... when Zippy plays with Ken and Barbie who are not able to find their car on the parking space of the shopping center because they are on drugs ... and at the end the hair-do of Ken is the wrong way round ...

[25]

The Striggles

I thought I was done with Rock music until I saw "The Striggles" ...

[26]

Vladimir Nedeljkovic (SRB, \*1964)  
I met Vladimir at the "GRRR! Comic Festival" in Pancevo. Rock'n Roll ("Rokenrol") musician, a.o. Zontag, concert manager, e.g. the Balkan tour of the "Striggles", for whom he also designed a cover. Author of a book on the history of "Rokenrol" in Pancevo. Another big theme for Vladimir is Nicola Tesla. Lives in Novi Sad.

He was already represented with another disturbing story in TC #9.

[27]

Nicolas Mahler (AUT, \*1969)

Depicted here: Two pages from "Mystery Music".

The complete collection was published in 2006 at "L'Association". Mahler is perhaps the most famous Austrian comic artist at present ... Also trips to other artistic fields: sculpture, installation or film ("Mystery Music" exists also as a film)

Last publication: the Thomas Bernhard adaptation "Alte Meister". Co-activist of: Kabinett - Passage für Comic und Artverwandtes at the Museumsquartier in Vienna.

[28]

Kai Pfeiffer (GER, \*1975)

lives in Berlin. See <http://electrocomics.de>

[29]

"Smellphone" was the first story by Michael Jordan that I inked,





"Le Dernier Cri" is the interface of many threads, for example here was published in 2010 "Johnny 23" by Charles Burns, his own remix of "X'ED OUT".

[34]

"The White Land", 2008, published as TC #10. A silk screen print in a small edition, a co-operation of Le Dernier Cri and Tonto.

[35]

Simon Häussle (AUT, \*1980)

... since TC #12 as a co-activist with Tonto

[36]

The information stems mainly from (8) Eric Davis: The Alchemy of Trash. The impression then was certainly supplemented by diverse splinters of information of the first Jess researches.

[37]

Lucy R. Lippard: Pop Art. 1966, p. 10.

[38]

Edda Dead Strobl, 2143 Dead Strobl. The 2143 key functions in both directions. That was years ago a present by me ... >> 34 (signature)

[39]

Norbert Gmeindl (AUT, \*1954)

The first package of drawings by Norbert I received at the beginnings of the 1990s. Since the beginnings of the 21st century every one or two years he sends a new parcel. For nearly all the TCs we have drawn from that. The "Totems" were part of the first material, and Edda used them several times, e.g. for "Bands in the Box" a concert series when Tonto was still mainly occupied with music ...

[40]

8 oder 9

... is a musical conglomerate that's active since the 1980s. Many of the texts and compositions are by Norbert Gmeindl who also performs them. For "8 oder 9" he created a special comic series. The curse on the sound technician is from no. 2, October 19, 1983.

published a.o. in TC #9 and on electrocomics.de.  
There is also a colour version by Edda.

[30]

KUŠ!

International anthology, based in Riga, Latvia  
... Mainly conducted by David Schilter, a Swiss socialized into the comic world by the "Fumetto" festival in Lucerne.

www.komicss.lv

[31]

"The Invisible Dummy" was published in summer 2008 as TC #11. A partly prophetic work. We foresaw the collapse of the market in autumn as well as the accidental death of a nationalistic regional politician ...

[32]

Diceindustries (GER, \*1970)

I met them in Lucerne when I had my "Low Density" signed and made them draw a goofy for me.  
Since "Invisible Dummy" regularly with Tonto ...

"Low Density" was published in 2005 as

"Qwert" #10.

[33]

Pakito Bolino (FRA, \*1966)

Pakito's graphic-screen-print-animation-noise-empire in Marseille



