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In Love With Art: Franoise Mouly's Adventures In Comics With Art Spiegelman (Exploded Views)



Synopsis

"Jeet Heer more thoroughly and widely understands comics history and the perplexing binomial life of the cartoonist better than anyone who's not one. As well-versed in literature as he is in comics, he always gets at the peculiar, poetical texture of his subject not only by what he writes, but how he writes it—clearly, mellifluously, and beautifully. Our humble discipline is singularly lucky to have him telling its story."—Chris Ware

In a partnership spanning four decades, Françoise Mouly and Art Spiegelman have become the pre-eminent power couple of cutting-edge graphic art. Their landmark magazine *Raw*, which first published artists such as Ben Katchor, Chris Ware, and Charles Burns, brought an avant-garde sensibility to comics and, along with Spiegelman's legendary graphic novel *Maus*, completely revolutionized the form. As art editor of the *New Yorker* since 1993, Mouly has remade the face of that venerable magazine with covers that capture the political and social upheavals of the last two decades, such as the black-on-black cover after 9/11 and the infamous Barack Obama fist-bump cartoon. Based on exclusive interviews with Mouly, Spiegelman, and a pantheon of comics artists—including Dan Clowes, Barry Blitt, Anita Kunz, and Adrian Tomine—*In Love with Art* is both an intimate portrait of Mouly and a rare, behind-the-scenes look at some of today's most iconic images. Through the prism of an uncommonly successful relationship, the book tells the story of one of the most remarkable artistic transformations of our time. Jeet Heer's writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Slate*, *Boston Globe*, the *American Prospect*, and the *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

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Customer Reviews

Art and Francoise were just like the artists of the "Belle Epoch." They lived in a run down neighborhood, subsisted on odd jobs, and their apartment was a studio, factory, gallery, and performance space all rolled into one. Rather than deal with the printers, they bought their own mini-press and printed their magazine on their own. This may not seem like much to you, but these were the days before the cheap xerox machine, Quark Xpress, or InDesign (does anybody even use Quark anymore?) Those of you that read MAUS are probably familiar with Art Spiegelman's life, but Francoise Mouly's life is equally interesting. Her father was a rich doctor, a Legion D'Honor medal winning plastic surgeon, whose life was ruined because he had lots of daughters and no sons. Francoise ruined his life again by choosing architecture over medicine, then she quit school to travel, moved to the USA, and there you go. All along she preferred to work with her hands (a skill badly-needed in 1970's Soho) and became the neighborhood handyman. I think this book is a statement on what it takes to be a start-up. This was an era when people did their own repairs, never threw anything away, reused equipment and furniture, didn't use credit cards; in short, it was "austere" (Occupy Movement take note!) and you had to take care of yourself. The Success of Mouly and Spiegelman's RAW magazine was as much to do with their own hard work as was the content. There was no shortage of underground comix artist-Crumb, Burns, Griffin, Moscoso, Pekar-but you needed business sense to make a magazine for them. These people weren't hobbyists or profit-seekers; they were artists who worked hard. Today's startups in Brooklyn, they're always surprised at how much work they have to do and how little money they make. In the 1970's, the new magazines, stores, and restaurants were not a place to make mountains of money, and the people that started those businesses knew it and accepted it. A more apt title would be "They Had to Live For Their Art." The book is short and not well promoted, which is a shame. It has all the things that make New York's history interesting; artist communities, Soho lofts, weird publications, do-it-yourself startups. Like most famous New Yorkers (uh-oh, get ready for a repeat of every other New York book I ever reviewed) they were from outside the city; Paris, France, and Rego Park, Queens. Some more photos from the era would've been welcome, along with artwork from RAW magazine. I would also have like to learn a little more about Spiegelman's early career, and maybe have some photos of their old neighborhoods in Paris and Queens. But I'll forgive any shortfall in this book. After all, it's a low-budget book from a small press, and those of us who love zines and small presses appreciate the roughness, don't we?

The name Art Spiegelman is known throughout the world for his revolutionary work, *Maus*, and his editorial work on *RAW*, which first helped introduce the work to Chris Ware, Charles Burns, and others. But...Art didn't work alone. His partner in these adventures for over forty years has been his wife, Francoise Mouly, who has her own artistic talents. She has been the art editor of the *New Yorker* since 1993, including the famous black on black cover after 9/11, and was a driving force behind *RAW*. In this book Jeet Heer, introduces the world to Mouly, through exclusive interviews with Mouly, Spiegelman, Dan Clowes, Adrian Tomine, and more. This book provides a behind-the-scenes look at the successful relationship between Mouly and Spiegelman, as they transform the world around them. Heer does an excellent job of telling their story and capturing their personality. This is a great book, and an easy read that covers a lot of ground between Mouly and Spiegelman. I highly recommend this book for all fans of graphic novels, comics, and art in general. I give this book 4 out of 5 stars. ARC provided by NetGalley

Jeet Heer's biography of the Paris-born New Yorker Francoise Mouly is breezy, yet quite insightful. Heer argues that Mouly, like other woman in the underground/art comics scene, deserve more credit for their contributions to the field. While her husband Art Spiegelman was putting ink on individual sheets of paper, Francoise Mouly dragged an old Multilith printing press into their Soho loft to put ink on hundreds, thousands of sheets of printed matter. In the 1980's Mouly and Spiegelman were co-founders of *RAW*, the magazine, and *RAW* press, which published great graphic art by Sue Coe, Gary Panter, and Jerry Moriarty, among others. Today Francoise Mouly is art editor of *The New Yorker* and the publisher of Toon Books. Heer's book's is not a big coffee table book, but clearly a labor of love. It is handsomely printed and illustrated with selections from a wide variety of Mouly's projects, past and present.

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