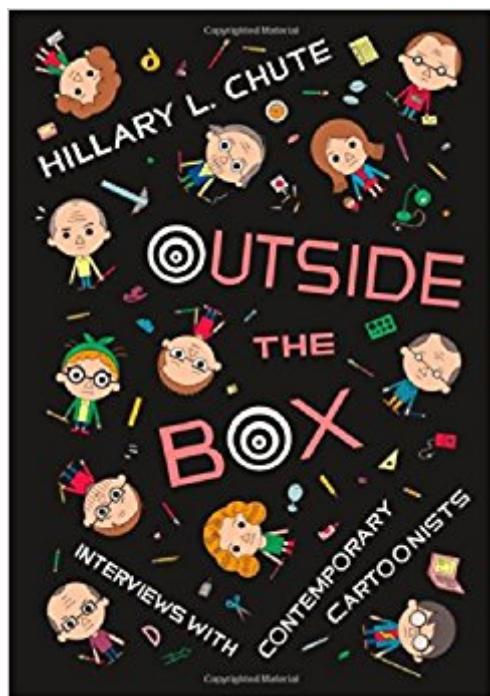


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# Outside The Box: Interviews With Contemporary Cartoonists



## Synopsis

We are living in a golden age of cartoon art. Never before has graphic storytelling been so prominent or garnered such respect: critics and readers alike agree that contemporary cartoonists are creating some of the most innovative and exciting work in all the arts. For nearly a decade Hillary L. Chute has been sitting down for extensive interviews with the leading figures in comics, and with *Outside the Box* she offers fans a chance to share her ringside seat. Chute's in-depth discussions with twelve of the most prominent and accomplished artists and writers in comics today reveal a creative community that is richly interconnected yet fiercely independent, its members sharing many interests and approaches while working with wildly different styles and themes. Chute's subjects run the gamut of contemporary comics practice, from underground pioneers like Art Spiegelman and Lynda Barry, to the analytic work of Scott McCloud, the journalism of Joe Sacco, and the extended narratives of Alison Bechdel, Charles Burns, and more. They reflect on their experience and innovations, the influence of peers and mentors, the reception of their art and the growth of critical attention, and the crucial place of print amid the encroachment of the digital age. Beautifully illustrated in full-color, and featuring three never-before-published interviews—including the first published conversation between Art Spiegelman and Chris Ware—*Outside the Box* will be a landmark volume, a close-up account of the rise of graphic storytelling and a testament to its vibrant creativity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There comes a point when the best underground art leaves the back corners of head shops to move to art galleries and highbrow magazines, and nowhere is that more true than in the history of "art comics." Chute, a professor of English at the University of Chicago, outlines this history by sharing interviews with a dozen groundbreaking contemporary cartoonists, including Daniel Clowes, Alison Bechdel, Françoise Mouly, and Joe Sacco, as well as a transcript of the first public conversation between Art Spiegelman and Chris Ware. Chute wisely lets each artist take the lead as they reflect on their influences, their process, the industry, storytelling, and the value of comics and their place in the American art and literary scenes, accompanied, of course, by reproductions of the artists' work. It's a fascinating glimpse into a medium swiftly gaining recognition since the publication of Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus* in 1986 and its shift from handmade comics printed in copy shops to *New Yorker* covers and museum exhibitions. --Sarah Hunter

"This is a book of great interviews with great cartoonists. The interviews are great because Hillary Chute is great. She knows how cartooning works and she intimately knows the work of the artists she's interviewing. The interviews are smart, insightful, and very readable. This isn't dry stuff nor is it fluffy. It's the real stuff. Anyone interested in the minds of today's cartooning masters will want to read it." (Seth, author of *Palookaville*) "Chute wisely lets each artist take the lead. . . . It's a fascinating glimpse into a medium swiftly gaining recognition." (Booklist) "A handy guide to the creators behind the graphic novel revolution." (Publishers Weekly) "How refreshing it is to listen to these cartoonists talk about a branch of the culture here in America that isn't plagued by feelings of decay, repetition, malaise, or despair. . . . These interviews are as good a reminder as any that, at least for the world of alternative comics, the blood is flowing and the people believe." (Slant) "It is a valuable record of some of the industry's greatest talents contemplating their work, their influences, and comics culture at large. . . . No one is better poised for such a project than Chute." (Cleaver) "This collection of interviews is remarkable, not least of all because so many of the contributors have been interviewed extensively. Yet, all of these are fresh and insightful examinations of some of the most diverse creators in comics." (New City) "Full of fascinating, weighty insights into the artistic and working concerns of some excellent cartoonists." (Times Literary Supplement)

A great book for any one who loves the medium and its possibilities. A wide vista of the current players, that manages to keep the narrative personal, relatable and interesting.

I got this book from the public library and liked it so much I bought a copy for my son as a surprise gift. We both enjoy the interviews with all the usual suspects - the author has collaborated with some of the cartoonists, and those who she didn't know seemed very comfortable discussing their work with her. Jump to the last double interview with Ware and Spiegelman - a real treat. Loved all the representation of women in comics, too. As the interviews progress, you will want to look up the works they are talking about to get the full picture. This is definitely a great book for those who want to know about the creators of comics, the recent history of comics in the US, and generally about the multiple ways people approach making comics - styles vary significantly. Each interview is an easy and entertaining read.

More journalism than scholarship\*, these interviews were garnered over ten years. Aside from the last two (which gain the third star) Chute's ingratiating, over-eager presence tends to dominate. If you just want to hear cartoonists speak, given that there's overlap (Clowes, Gloeckner, Kominsky-Crumb, Ware) I'd recommend Andrea Juno's Dangerous Drawings instead: Ted Rall's 3-volume Attitude is better yet. (Rall is one of Juno's chosen cohort.) Juno comes over as cool, intelligent, rounded, above all respectful, Chute as a breathless tyro journalist with a dusting of academe. Only with Adrian Tomine does she relax, talk as equals, flirtatiously almost, while the Spiegelman/Ware combo works just fine, Chute way down in the mix. And yes, the Mouly section is charming and informative both, though more about the life than the art. 3.5\* The scholarly exception Alison 'haptic' (p156) Bechdel. Enough already! Give comics back to the artists

The Francoise Mouly chapter made me buy three copies, one to keep, two to share.

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