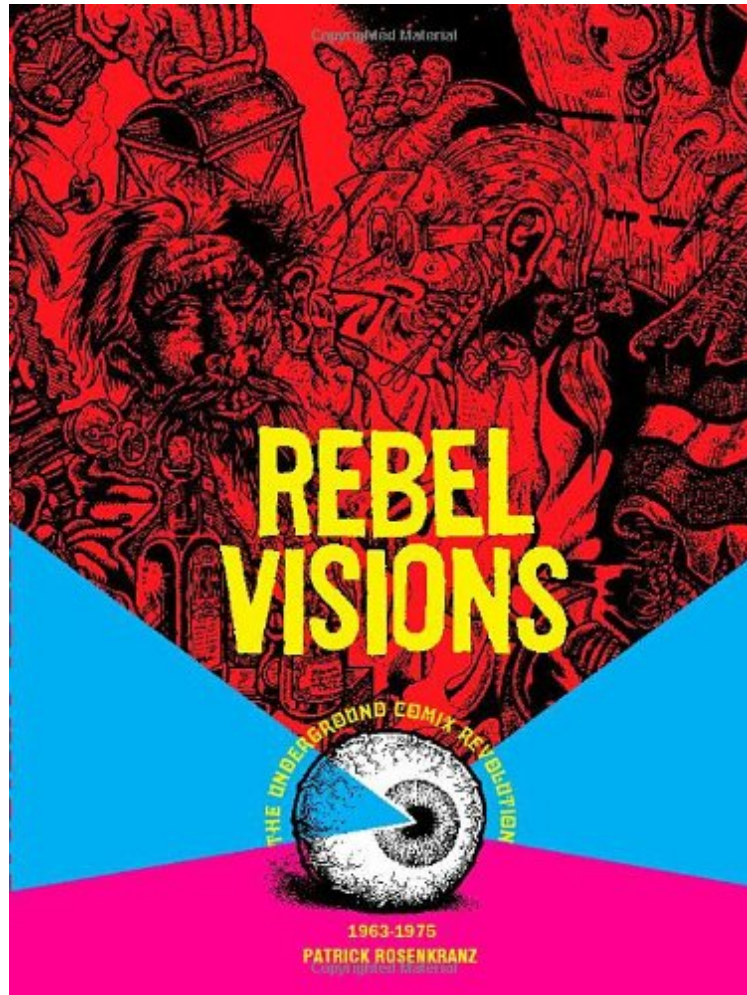


Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution

Patrick Rosenkranz

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Patrick Rosenkranz : Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. When art won't feed our starving eyes, let us eat Crumbs...By meeahAt a time when a museum like the Guggenheim is reduced--as of this writing literally--to emptying the paintings from its walls to make "room" for a new exhibit of essentially next to nothing...a couple lying on the floor simulating a kiss and a few actors hired to ask long-suffering museum "viewers" annoyingly trite questions, such as "what is progress?" one begins to wonder what art historians of the future will think of late 20th century/early 21st century "art." What will become emblematic of our times when our times are long over? What will remain? Will nothing remain? I mean, you have to have something to see, right?"Rebel Visions" makes a strong case without so much as raising the issue that what might very well be considered the most important art of our age was that being

produced in the underground comix movement of the late 60s/early 70s, and which still continues in various incarnations today. As fine art moved from distortion to abstraction to minimalism to conceptualism to what some might argue is little more than flim-flam chicanery cloaked in elitist pseudointellectual gobbledygook, the disdained creators of such work as filled the pages of Zap! and Young Lust and Raw, to mention just a few, might in the meantime actually have been producing the "real" fine art of our time. As the so-called "real" artists turned their back and raised their noses at mere "illustration," as they disdained the world of things in their canvases, and eventually disdained even the canvases themselves, as they "thought" up concepts instead of making images, and as they jockeyed for notoriety and government grants and invitations at all the swell parties, guys like R. Crumb, Robert Williams, S. Clay Wilson, Rick Griffin, and Art Spiegelman were drawing--yes, actually drawing--and the stuff they were drawing directly reflected and directly influenced the culture of late 20th century America. This shouldn't be all that surprising insofar as comic book elements made their way into the paintings of Warhol, Lichtenstein, and a whole bunch of other established fine art types. And before that you've got George Grosz and Max Beckmann. Take a look at their works and tell me you can't see them as akin to comic book panels. While the Julian Schnabels of the world party, the folks in the underground comix movement were actually doing the grunt work, walking the walk, and usually doing it without much appreciation and even less financial reward. Ach! Listen to me blabbering on about art history like EH Gombrich! I know nothing about it--what I know about art history couldn't fill an Idiot's Guide. What I do know is that I like blobs of paint thrown all over canvases as much as anyone; I swoon over string, nails, crushed cigarettes, dirt, poop, yesterday's lunch, and whatever else spray-painted over and glued onto billboards of plywood just as much as any art critic at the New York Times. I'll even nod appreciatively and chuckle knowingly along with the rest of the cognoscenti when some downtown goofball paints a box of toothpicks white, sticks them in his nipples, and photographs them in the pitch-dark with a pinhole camera. In other words, I'm no phillistine! And I like minimalism...I love minimalism...as an anorectic, I am minimalism incarnate! But when it reaches the point when a museum empties itself out and asks people to pay admission to look at its bare walls I start to think I'm being taken for a fool. Listen, when "fine art" gets to the point that you're literally looking at nothing then the eye starts looking for stimulation. A superhero, a talking aardvark, one of those jittery Crumb characters...anything! When it's been so long since we saw anyone actually take a pencil and put marks on a page that resemble something we recognize that we begin to suspect that no one remembers how to do it, when art no longer seems to be making any attempt whatsoever to reflect and comment about our lives and the world we live in, when you need a card full of philosophical rigmarole written by some tenured academic to explain the blank space on the museum wall as a work of art and not, as you originally suspected, the spot left behind when a painting was removed for cleaning- then you begin to think that maybe when the fork in the art road was reached between representation and abstraction, we took the wrong road...or maybe just went too far down the right road. No matter. Just the fact that that the US government tried to shut down the publications featuring these mere schlockmeisters, these adolescent smut peddlers, these underground comic "artists" should tell you something. Aside from all that, "Rebel Visions" is just a lot of fun to read. And it's inspiring too. It makes one envious of the exciting times, the camaraderie, and the commitment to engaged art that these guys had--and that is so lacking in today's art world. It shows you just how much people will do, the lengths they will go to do it, the sacrifices they'll make and for no discernible reward...if they love what they're doing. These guys were, and in many cases, still are, true artists of the first rank. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if in a hundred years from now they will be regarded among the foremost of our time.

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A thing of beauty is a joy forever
By Simon Barrett 'Il Penseroso'
This is an all-new edition, following the 2002 hbk, but Fantagraphics don't flaunt the fact. Why not? The hbk's long sold out and they could sell this all over again to nerds like me. Seriously (OK, I was serious), the hbk's heaven (snap 'em up, fellas, while you can) and this is bliss, apart from the curious (and curiously irritating) typography chosen for the headwords. Trina Robbins went, or was pushed, down the same route when A Century of... morphed into The Great Women Cartoonists - the Women and the Comics original I've not seen - but we're not talking wacky here, fellas, this is serious art! Well, OK, fun art. Thanks a million, Gary (Groth)

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. eye-opening exploration
By Eric Hoffman
From 1963 to 1975, artists published underground comix. These artists gave comics a new cultural legitimacy. Major comics publishers were ignoring pressing social issues of the day. This book is a fascinating and eye-opening exploration of this crucial era in comics history."

The first major historical work about the most influential artistic movement in America since the Beat Generation revolutionized literature. This is a provocative chronicle of the guerilla art movement that changed comics and popular culture forever. This comprehensive book follows the movements of about 50 artists from 1963 to 1975, the heyday of the underground comix movement. Through interviews with the participants and other materials, Rebel Visions is the most intimate look ever at the people and events that forged the phenomenon known as underground comix, from New York to San Francisco, from the corn belt to deep in the heart of Texas, beginning that day in 1968 when R. Crumb debuted Zap #1 from a baby carriage in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. Rosenkranz spent over 30 years researching this book and acquiring the cooperation of every significant underground cartoonist who worked

throughout this period, including Crumb, Gilbert (Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers) Shelton, Bill (Zippy) Griffith, Art (Maus) Spiegelman, Jack Jackson, S. Clay Wilson, Robert Williams, and many more. The book is illustrated with many never-before-seen drawings by all of the underground cartoonists and exclusive photographs. The book is centered in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, where Crumb and the rest of his Zap cronies commingled with the rest of the city's countercultural scene, notably musicians like the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin. The counterculture was omnipresent in San Francisco for those few years, with underground tabloids like Yellow Dog and the San Francisco Oracle steering the zeitgeist out-of-control, along with the music, political, and psychedelic drug scenes, all of which found a group of unlikely revolutionaries who drew cartoons right at the epicenter. This is the definitive book on a memorable and historic era.

A triumph of research and generous observation, definitively documenting a scene of radical invention and subversive intent. - Bookforum
A fascinating and important volume. - Library Journal
A model of comics history and an essential read for anyone looking to truly understand the comics form. - Print
A comprehensive and invaluable history of this groundbreaking period in American comics Rosenkranz has clearly conducted extensive interviews with surviving artists, often allowing them to tell their stories in their own words in his book. - Peter Sanderson, Publishers Weekly
[This] book palpably evoked those moments when change, it seemed, was not only possible, but inevitable - Rick Klaw, Sfsite.com
Copious illustrations of weird sex, bad trips, and savage satire chronicles a critical wing of '60s counterculture. - Spin
Rebel Visions testifies to the wild fertility of the comix imagination. - The Los Angeles Times
Book A year-by-year narrative, using interviews with scores of publishers, editors and leading artists. - The New York Times
Book About the Author Patrick Rosenkranz is widely acknowledged as one of the premiere scholars of the underground comix movement. His books include Rebel Visions (the most widely-heralded history of the era) and The Artist Himself: A Rand Holmes Retrospective. He lives in Portland, OR.