

Press release

The birth of SIGNs has taken place

The first issue of a new scholar journal devoted to the History of Comics is out!

The debut issue of the first international journal devoted to the history of Comics appeared during the Napoli Comicon festival. SIGNs (*Studies in Graphic Narratives*) was born out of a cooperative project including people from Italy, Belgium, Great Britain, United States, Portugal, France, Switzerland and Japan. The journal is grouping together leading experts, and it is supported by universities as well as festivals... and of course, Comicon is among them. The aim of the endeavour is to help revealing a part of the medium's heritage, so far largely forgotten: its History.

The new look of Contemporary Comics surely has two main factors: the success of manga and of Asian pop culture, and the widespread acceptance of graphic novels as cultural artifact. However, another player is Comics' Past. Indeed, the historical dimension of the medium has taken the limelight, as witnessed by the success of reprint series – from *Gasoline Alley* to *Peanuts*, from Töpffer to Jacovitti – and the numerically large and culturally varied attendance at historical exhibitions – from *Masters of American Comics* to *100 ans de Hergé* –. This success is further witnessed by great contemporary authors – from Art Spiegelman to Seth – bound to a journey on the rediscovery of their roots. The historical roots of Comics Culture.

This is the environment from which SIGNs was born: A journal devoted to the History of Comics or, more broadly, of 'Graphic Narratives', ranging from caricature to *picture books*. After decades of scarce investigations, as well as of acceptance of unsubstantiated myths (i.e., the 'origins' myth and the *Yellow Kid*), the aim of SIGNs is therefore twofold: to address a lack of scholarly investigation, and to boost awareness of the field in contemporary comics culture. Thus, SIGNs plans to investigate the path leading to contemporary comics, focussing on a period roughly encompassing its early developments in the 1830s and reaching the dawn of its industrial era (the emergence of it as an industry), between the 1910s and the 1930s.

SIGNs has the ambition of becoming a regular forum for establishing a common historical knowledge on comics. To this end, each issue will contain high-quality reprints of rare material, and, in forthcoming issues, a review section surveying publications of relevance. All articles are written in English, possibly reproducing hard to find texts. It is a biannual magazine with roughly 84 pages. With the support of festival, universities, museums, and with the collaboration of the best experts in the field – from different countries, as well as scholars of different disciplines – SIGNs aims to become the common home for the new look of historical research.

Official Presentation.

The official presentation of the journal took place on April 28 at 17.30. Speakers were Fabio Gadducci (Editor SIGNs; University of Pisa), Matteo Stefanelli (Managing Editor SIGNs; Catholic University of Milan), Enrico Fornaroli (Fine Arts Academy of Bologna), Matt Madden (author).