

Words and Pictures, Space and Play

Matt Finch for #citylis, 10 April 2015

Let's start with comics.

Wordless comics like this one by Gill Hatcher

<https://twitter.com/gillcomics/status/513461557217742849>

Safekeeping



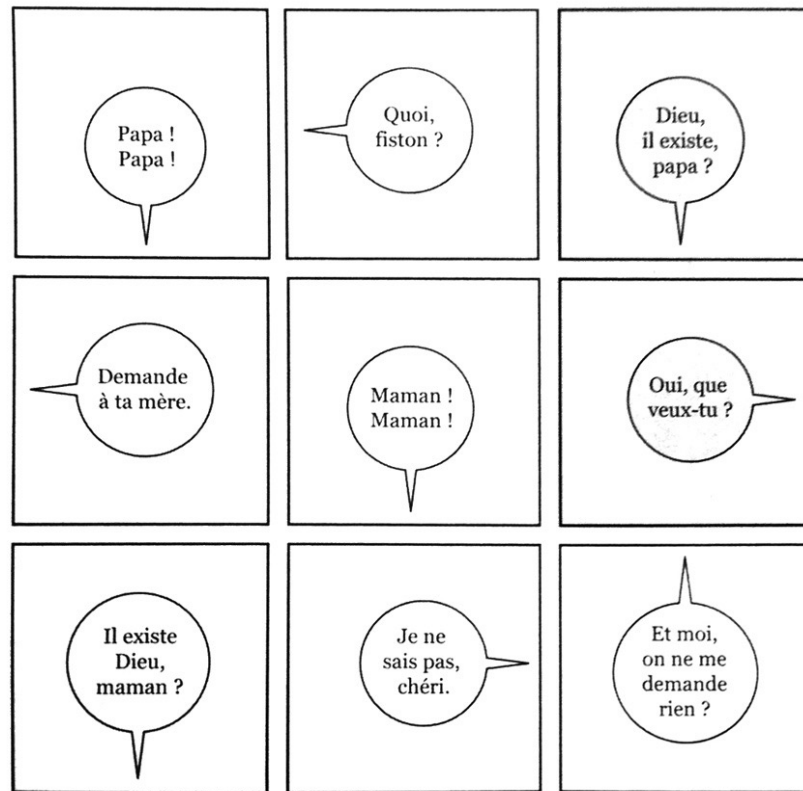
Gill Hatcher 2014

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Pictureless comics like this one by François Ayroles
<http://blog.comicsgrid.com/2012/10/pictureless-comics/>

Feinte Trinité par François Ayroles



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Comics that you can rearrange.

<https://love2read2012.wordpress.com/2012/11/06/comics-exploring-the-future-of-space-word-and-image-2/>



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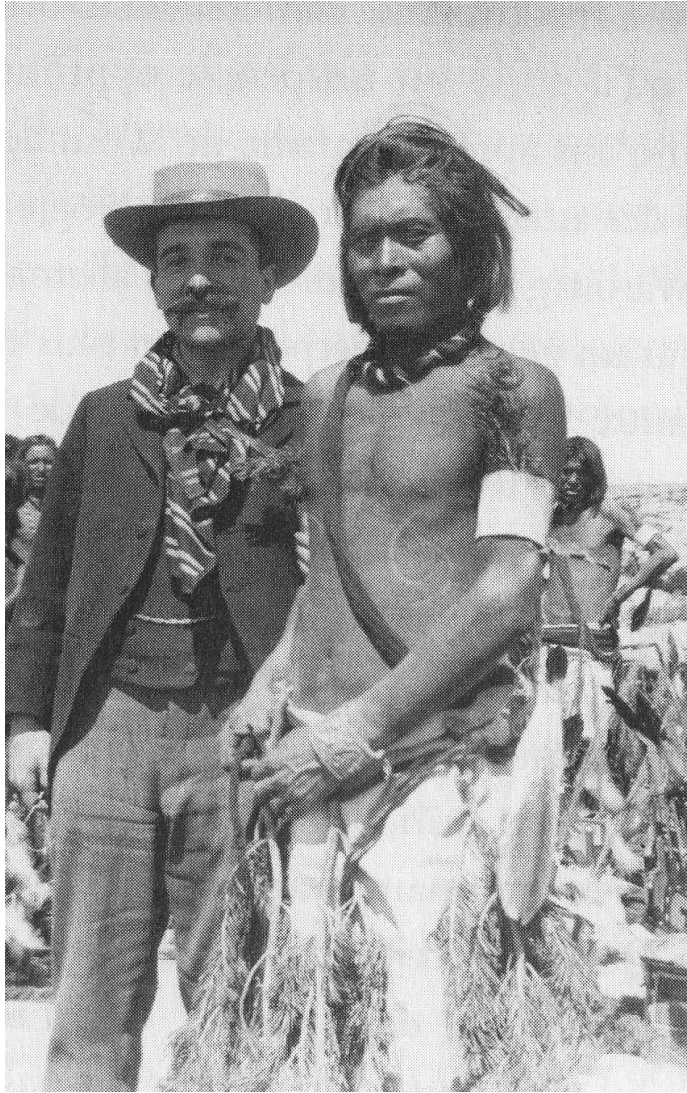
Words and pictures, space and play - that's comics. They can take place on a page, or a screen...or in three dimensions.

<http://matthewfinch.me/2014/10/14/comic-book-dice-a-sequential-storytelling-game/>



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More playing with words and images in space: art historian Aby Warburg arranged his library by the “law of the good neighbour” to encourage serendipitous browsing. He was also interested in juxtaposing images from the Renaissance and antiquity to explore the afterlife of pagan iconography in the present. He’s pictured here on a research trip visiting a Pueblo community in New Mexico.

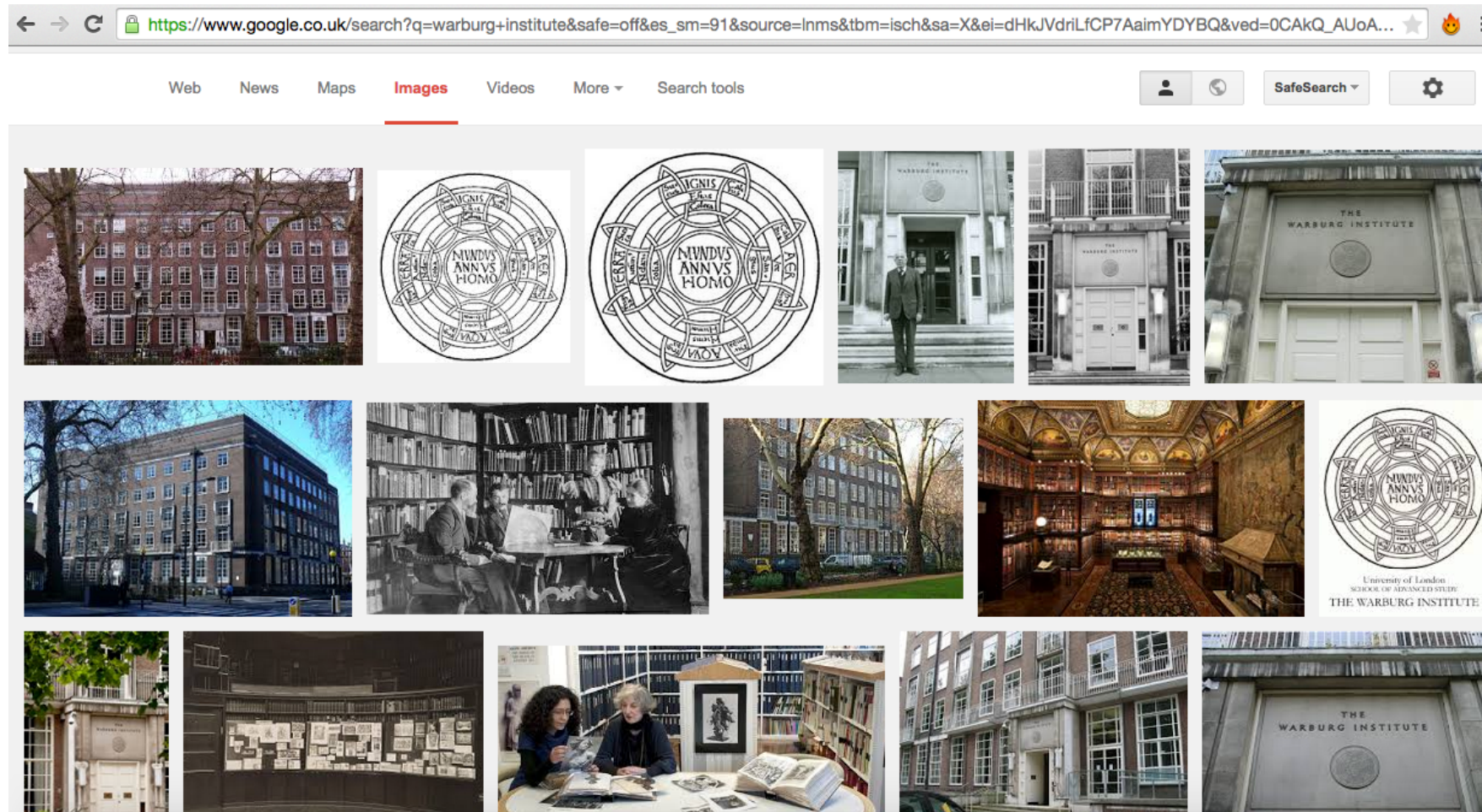
The Warburg Institute, now part of the University of London’s School of Advanced Study, was featured in the *New Yorker* as “the world’s weirdest library” last month.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/03/16/in-the-memory-ward>

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As Adam Gopnik points out in the *New Yorker*, a Google Image search today looks very much like the kind of juxtaposition of images and information that interested Warburg.



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Let's leave academic libraries aside for a moment and think about public librarianship.

When police clashed with the community of Ferguson, Missouri, the library service's sole full-time staffer Scott Bonner kept the building open as a safe space for children to come and receive lessons & childcare. Interviewed by *Publishers Weekly*, he told the magazine that what the world saw in Ferguson was “just libraries being libraries.”

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/65477-ala-midwinter-2015-pw-talks-to-ferguson-library-director-scott-bonner.html>



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Something similar happened in Christchurch, New Zealand, after the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. When a community is in crisis, the value of public libraries reveals itself.

<http://matthewfinch.me/2011/09/12/in-a-way-the-quake-have-pushed-us-to-develop-our-community-role-interview-with-carolyn-robertson-of-christchurch-city-libraries-new-zealand/>



Christchurch City Libraries Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/29328098@N06>

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So what might it mean to work with words and images, space and play, in a public library context?

In Parkes, New South Wales, it meant the school library and public library joining forces with retailers and comics creators to run Australia's first rural comics festival.

<http://au.prime7.yahoo.com/n3/video/-/watch/21544453/comiccon/>



An Initiative of Parkes Shire ...

CENTRAL WEST COMICS FEST

Featuring Pat Grant, Marcelo Baez, & Kings Comics

I'M JUST TRYING TO BREAK THIS.

Friday 14 February - Parkes High School
Talk and workshops for high school students with Australian comics creator Pat Grant, author of *Blue*

Enquiries - Tracy Dawson 6862 1844

Saturday 15 February - Parkes Shire Library - Coventry Room
All day 10.30am - 3.00pm
Buy comics and merchandise from Kings Comics

10.30am - 12.30pm
Workshop for ages 14 - adult. Learn to make your own compelling comics with Pat Grant

12.45pm - 1.45pm
Workshop for ages 8 - 12 - Create comic book characters with Marcelo Baez

2.00pm - 3.00pm
Let's Talk Comics - Pat Grant & Marcelo Baez discuss life and work as graphic novelists, illustrators, and authors
There will be mild adult content as per an M-rated film.

Saturday Sessions are FREE
Bookings essential 6861 2309 or tracie.mauro@parkes.nsw.gov.au
Enquiries welcome

Parkes Shire Council, Parkes Shire Library, Kings Comics

Central West Comics Fest flyer by Pat Grant and Carmen Tom

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Via Kings Comics <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.660919350637538.1073741994.135187129877432&type=1>

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It also made us think about the glamorous world of machine-readable cataloguing.

<http://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd650.html>



Matt Finch

@DrMattFinch

Do any Aussie libraries out there catalogue comics & allow users to search for them by story character? (Eg Captain America in AVENGERS).



Matt Finch

@DrMattFinch

If you do, do you list the character names under the Notes field (500) or the Subject Field (650)?



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It also meant exploring other forms of play, such as a downloadable, CC-licensed all-ages tabletop game based on the work of Cory Doctorow and Louie Stowell.

<http://boingboing.net/2014/11/03/tabletop-superheroes-remixabl.html>



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...and exploring performance and roleplay, as with a series of live-action zombie sieges where participants determined the outcome of a story.

www.abc.net.au/local/videos/2013/10/14/3868601.htm



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Big Box Battle was a similar idea, pitting teen monsters against preteen robots in a knee-high cardboard city.

www.libraryasincubatorproject.org/?p=12899



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We also tried out other kinds of space and play, as when Auckland Libraries took librarians into comic stores for Free Comic Book Day.

https://storify.com/Auckland_Libs/auckland-libraries-goes-mobile-for-star-wars-day-f



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Or when we took our tabletop games to the pub for an over-18s night.

<http://matthewfinch.me/2014/11/27/you-ate-my-battleship-pub-librarianship-and-tabletop-games/>



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Burlesque is a uniquely adult form of play and performance. In Auckland, we wanted libraries to have a voice in the cultural discussion of sex and sexuality. In a time when *Fifty Shades of Grey* sold millions of copies and Dita von Teese was a household name, we created a festival to celebrate and critique sex and sexuality on page, stage, and screen.

<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/07/opinion/backtalk/dark-night-library-burlesque-backtalk/>

Our signature image came from Dylan Horrocks' powerful comic about representation, responsibility, and desire, *The Magic Pen*.

<http://io9.com/saturday-webcomic-a-cartoonist-rediscovers-the-joy-an-470907986>

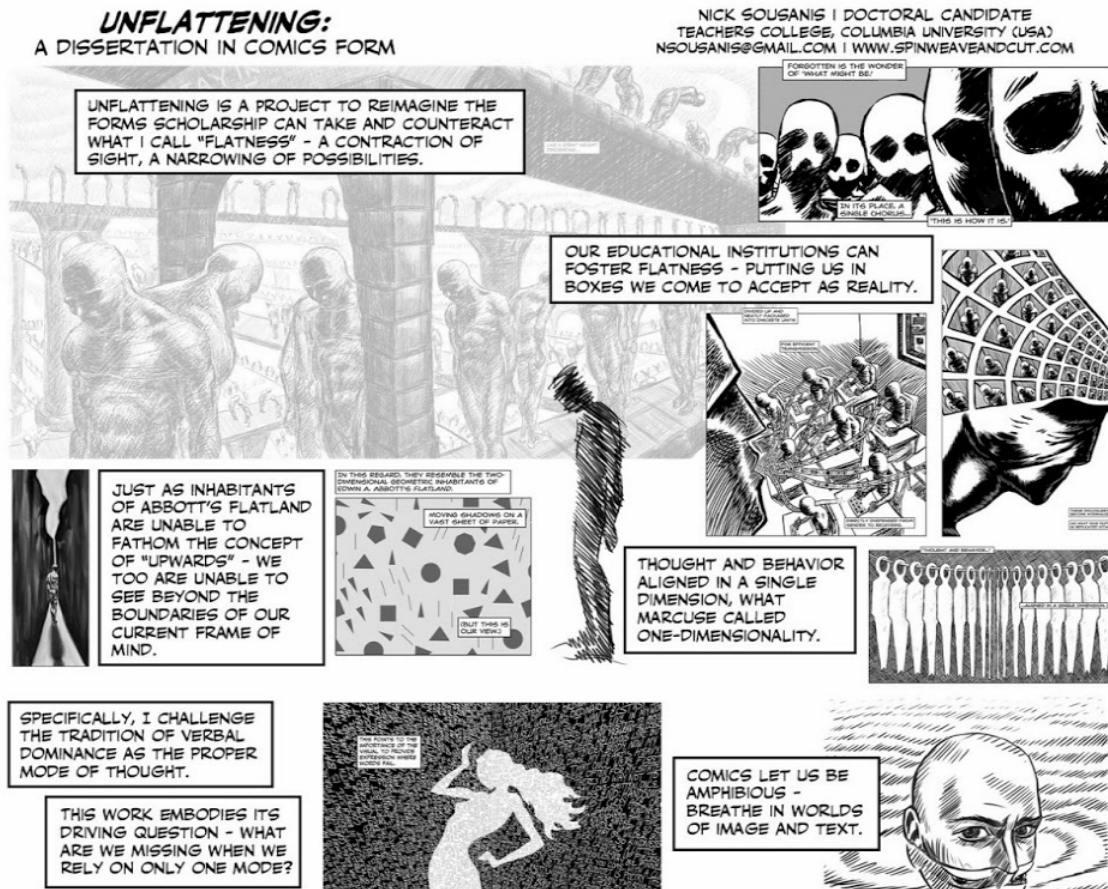


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Dylan Horrocks' thoughtful work leads us back to the medium which started off this presentation: comics, with their endless opportunities for visual and verbal expression.

Nick Sousanis' *Unflattening*, a meditation on perception, learning, and visual language, was a PhD thesis as comic book! It's now available from Harvard University Press. See more at www.spinweaveandcut.com



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But even the simplest comic book image can be deeply resonant, drawing together narrative, visual art, and critical engagement with the world.

It's all words and pictures, space and play.

