Will Eisner Giclée Art Exhibition

Denis Kitchen Art Agency and Will Eisner Studios

Cover artwork for Will Eisner's *A Contract with God*, Pen and Ink with watercolor on board, 1985
This exhibition of giclées is from scanned or photographed original art by Will Eisner. The Giclées are very high-resolution fine art digital prints. They are listed below with leading print identification numbers in original publication date sequence from 1936 to 2017. Multi-page stories and sequences from the same story or graphic novel are listed together (e.g. 09 to 15) and should be requested and exhibited as a set. They are available framed or in fine art sleeves. Each individual giclée or sequence of giclées has a small exhibition label. The page number at the end of many of the giclée descriptions (e.g. pg 28) refers to the page numbers in the 2017 original art Exhibition Catalogue, Will Eisner: The Centennial Celebration, 1917-2017. There were two Will Eisner original art exhibitions in 2017 – one that started at the New York Society of Illustrators, New York City and one that started at the Angouleme International Cartoon Museum, Angouleme, France. Also available are large informational panels on gatorboard. All the listed giclées, or a portion, are available for exhibition. Email info@willeisner.com for more information.

The giclées have been on exhibit at:
The Lakes International Comic Art Festival, Kendal, Scotland
The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska
The Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri
Harper College, Palatine, Illinois
WILL EISNER (1917–2005) The lasting legacy that Will Eisner has in sequential art cannot be overstated. Known as the “Champion of the Graphic Novel,” Eisner entered the field as a teenager in the 1930s when the comic book industry in the United States was in its infancy. As an early comic book packager for publishers, he created such characters as Sheena, Queen of the Jungle; Blackhawk; Uncle Sam; and Dollman. His innovative storytelling, dynamic layouts, and the artwork in his newspaper insert series, The Spirit (1940–1952), has inspired generations of cartoonists. An astute businessman, the 23-year-old creator of The Spirit negotiated the ownership of his own intellectual property, during an era in which creator equity was virtually unheard of.

As a draftee and then Warrant Officer during World War II, Will Eisner developed and refined the use of comics for instructional and educational purposes. The comics format proved to be an excellent approach to teaching GIs about the proper maintenance of their equipment and, in the process, saved many lives. The result of his wartime work led to Eisner’s PS*Magazine, which is still being published by the US Army today. After The Spirit’s newspaper run ended in 1952, Eisner focused on the use of the format as a teaching tool by creating comics for the government and private industry. But inspired, in part, by the underground commix movement of the early 1970’s, he returned to comics and created A Contract with God, the first modern graphic novel in 1978. At a time when most of his contemporaries were retiring, Eisner went on to create more than 20 additional graphic novels and numerous short graphic stories. He also found time to teach cartooning at the New York School of Visual Arts. He incorporated his curriculum into an acclaimed trilogy of analytical and instructional textbooks. Among the honors bestowed upon Will Eisner are the National Cartoonist Society’s Reuben Award, the Milton Caniff Lifetime Achievement Award, the Yellow Kid Award, The Society of Illustrators’ Hall of Fame, and multiple Harvey and Eisner Awards, the latter of which are named in his honor and presented annually at San Diego Comic-Con.

86 Framed Giclées (20"x 26")

01. Espionage: Starring Black Ace
Published March 1940 (drawn in 1939)
*Smash Comics* #8, page 3
This pre-Spirit page features the bird's eye views and ominous shadows that would soon be among Will Eisner's visual trademarks in "The Spirit" (pg 28).

02. Espionage: Starring Black Ace
Published January 1940 (drawn in 1939)
*Smash Comics* #6, page 4
Eisner's distinctive brushwork is apparent in this comic book page drawn a year before his syndicated newspaper breakout with "The Spirit" (pg 29).

03. The Spirit: "The Prom"
December 1, 1940
Page 1 of seven-page story
The Spirit is poised to spank his girlfriend Ellen Dolan. A rare surviving original page from the first year of the weekly adventure strip (pg 31).
04. *The Spirit*: "The Haunted House"
December 8, 1940
Page one of a seven-page story
The Spirit himself was often not a major character in the stories bearing his name. And in this early splash page he is not even prominent in the splash page. Will Eisner instead creates a spooky sense of foreboding in the mind of the reader. And as he did with most opening pages, the logo is incorporated into the image itself.

05. *The Spirit*: “Ellen Dolan Detective Agency"
April 21, 1941
Page 6 from a 7-page story
In this page Will Eisner demonstrates how time can be slowed down in a comic strip: It takes four dramatically timed panels for the flicked cigarette to land (pg 33).

06. *Care for Your Sidearms*
Circa 1942-45
U.S. Army poster
Drafted as a private during World War II, Will Eisner worked at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and the Pentagon creating safety and educational posters and literature.

07. Untitled poster
Circa 1942-45
U.S. Army poster
During his second world war service, Will Eisner was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer and often employed humor, and the recurring Private Joe Dope character, to communicate important safety points.

08. *The Spirit*: "Il Duce's Locket"
May 25, 1947
Page 1 of seven-page story
The alluring *femme fatale* P'Gell was both a dangerous antagonist and a recurrent love interest for The Spirit.

09 to 15. *The Spirit*: “Li’l Adam”
July 20, 1947
Complete 7-page story
Eisner parodied Al Capp's popular "Li'l Abner" comic strip in this episode of "The Spirit" as well as Harold Gray's "Little Orphan Annie" and Chester Gould's "Dick Tracy" (pg 45-51).

August 3, 1947
Page 1 of seven-page story
P'Gell was such a long-running nemesis to The Spirit that even her non-criminal niece Saree (on the couch) became a cast member (pg 43).

September 5, 1948
Page 1 from a 7-page story
In Will Eisner's personal favorite Spirit story, a man who is determined to show the world he can fly demonstrates it with tragic consequences (pg 55).
November 30, 1947
Page 6 from a 7-page story
In this excerpt from a prison escape story, Eisner caricatures himself as crime lord Slippery Eall (far right in third panel). Two assistants are also part of the in-joke (pg 52).

19 to 25. *The Spirit*: "Quirte"
November 21, 1948
Full seven-page story
In this innovative story, the reader gets inside the head of Quirte and sees events sometimes unfold through the villain's own eyes (pg 57-63).

April 3, 1949
Splash page
The heroic opening page of this story, reproduced from the original art, shows where Will Eisner made corrections with whiteout. In the published version only the black lines would be visible.

27. *The Spirit*: "Jewel of Gizeh"
March 5, 1950
Page one of a seven-page story
This dramatic *film noir* image displays Will Eisner's mastery of brush and ink, and ranks as one of the most popular splash pages in the long run of "The Spirit."

28 to 34. *The Spirit*: "The Island"
March 26, 1950
Full seven-page story
An action-packed South Seas adventure takes The Spirit out of his usual Central City (New York City) locale (pg 69-75).

35. *The Spirit*: "Feiffer Kills Eisner"
December 31, 1950
Page two of a seven-page story
Jules Feiffer began his distinguished career as an assistant to Will Eisner in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. In this unusual and playful New Year’s Eve story Feiffer has just murdered Eisner and is taking over "The Spirit" strip himself.

January 1966
Page 1 of five-page story
After a fourteen-year hiatus, “The Spirit” made a one-shot reappearance in the *New York Herald Tribune* magazine to spoof John Lindsay’s campaign for Mayor of New York City (pg 81).

37 to 38. *The Spirit*: "The Soaring Sixties"
1972
Two-page story in *The Someday Funnies* (2011)
Eisner's prescient take on computer crime, written and drawn in 1972, went unpublished for nearly forty years (pg 86-87).
39 to 44. *A Small Business*
1977
Three-page story originally appearing in *The Spirit Magazine* #18
This short story, shown both in the initial blue and black pencil stage, allows viewers to see the "before and after" alongside Eisner's finished inked pages (pg104-109).

45. *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*
1978
First edition cover art
This monotone "wash" drawing of Frimme Hersh ascending a staircase was done for the first edition (Baronet Books). Later editions featured a similar composition, but in full color (pg 111).

46 to 49. *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*
1978
Four-page excerpt from “The Super” chapter
The gruff building superintendent at 55 Dropsie Avenue unwittingly becomes a victim of his own lust and an unlikely con artist (pg 112-115).

1979
The Spirit Magazine #20 cover
In this dramatic wraparound watercolor cover painting, The Spirit eludes a nemesis, Silk Satin and her henchmen (pg 116-117).

51 to 54. *Life on Another Planet* (a.k.a *Signal From Space*)
1983
Four-page excerpt from the full graphic novel.
In Eisner's only full-length science fiction work, he darkly speculates what would happen if Earth received a signal from intelligence outside our universe (pg 124-127).

55. *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*
1985 edition, cover painting
Frimme Hersh ascends the steps to his Dropsie Avenue tenement after burying his daughter, a semi-autobiographical element from Will Eisner's most celebrated graphic novel.

56. *New York: The Big City*
1986
From the "Walls" chapter
This page, from a collection of Will Eisner's big city vignettes, reveals the big city perils of investing "big money" in an apartment with a "perfect view."

57. *New York: The Big City*
1986
From "The Block" chapter
Will Eisner's summary of a loud, bustling, political, and congested New York tenement in a single brilliant illustration.
58 to 62. *A Life Force*  
1988  
Five-page excerpt from the full graphic novel.  
As the lead character Jacob Shtarkah suffers a heart attack in an alley, he observes a cockroach also struggling to live (pg 129-133).

63 to 68. *To the Heart of the Storm*  
1991  
Six-page excerpt from the full graphic novel.  
This sequence from Eisner's most overtly autobiographical work recalls how his father diffused a potentially violent encounter by "using his head" (pg 136-141).

69. *To the Heart of the Storm*  
1991  
Four-page excerpt in pencil stage  
These pencil roughs can be compared to the finished counterparts in this exhibit. The differences between initial concept and final inks can range from subtle to significant (pg 135).

70 to 73. *Last Day in Vietnam*  
2000  
Four-page excerpt from the full graphic novel.  
Excerpt from first-person stories Will Eisner learned while traveling overseas, in this case Vietnam, while doing research for the *PS: The Preventive Maintenance Monthly* magazines he created for the U.S. Army (pg 150-153).

74 to 75. *Fagin the Jew*  
2003  
Two-page excerpt from the full-length graphic novel.  
In these key scenes, the character Fagin from *Oliver Twist* confronts his creator, Charles Dickens, about the negative portrayal of Jews in his books (pg 156-157).

76 to 81. *The Escapist*  
2004  
*Michael Chabon Presents: The Amazing Adventures of the Escapist*, no. 6  
Will Eisner's very last work featured this six-page cross-over between "The Spirit" and "The Escapist." It was done as a favor to author Michael Chabon, who based Joe Kavalier, a character from his novel, "Kavalier and Clay," in part, on Will Eisner.

82. *The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*  
2004  
Page 15 from the complete book (version without words)  
In 1878 French police remove the body of writer Maurice Joly, who wrote a book based on Machiavelli to attack Emperor Napoleon III. In 1894 conspirators associated with the Russian secret police adapted Joly's suppressed text to fabricate a conspiracy by Jews in order to influence Czar Nicholas II. The top of the page is a flashback to when Joly was still alive.
83. *The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*
2004
Page 15 from the complete book (version with words)
Will Eisner created his word balloons on separate overlays that laid on top of the original art. “The Plot” has been published in many languages, and this technique allows international publishers to have greater flexibility for translations.

84. *The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*
2004
Page 24 from the complete book (version without words)
Pyotr Rachkovsky and Ivan Gorymikine, members of Czar Nicholas II’s inner circle, hatched the plot to create “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” Word balloons were removed from this version to show how Will Eisner composed his page before dialog was added.

85. *The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*
2004
Page 24 from the complete book (version with words)
Will Eisner created his word balloons on separate overlays that laid on top of the original art. “The Plot” has been published in many languages, and this technique allowed international publishers to have greater flexibility for translations.

86. *Standing Nude*
First published February 2017 (painted in 1936)
This pre-Spirit oil painting was painted after Will Eisner attended DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, NY and while he was studying at the Art Students League of New York (pg 25).

6 Informational Panels (19”x25”)

P1. Will Eisner Short Biography

P2. Quote from an interview with Will Eisner, 1941

P3. Quotes about Will Eisner

P4. Photograph of Will Eisner at his drawing board

P5. Photograph of Will Eisner

P6. Photograph of Will Eisner standing in front of a painting he painted while studying at the Art Students League of New York in 1936 (see giclée # 86).