
The Weight of a Line

**ART AND COMICS // YVAN ALAGBÉ,
JESSICA CAMPBELL, AND EDIE FAKE**

By Coco Picard

An age-old mode of artistic research involves bringing a sketchbook to a museum and sketching a painting or drawing in order to understand its operations. Such efforts can yield different insights at different times. The following graphic review follows a similarly intuitive but careful endeavor, looking at three contemporary comic book artists, Yvan Alagbé, Jessica Campbell, and Edie Fake, who also engage the field of contemporary art. Each artist interrogates their own political concerns from sexual politics to gender identity, racial identity, and forgotten histories, using unique mark-making and material strategies that resonate conceptually with the emotive and political landscapes they engage. As a result they capture something of our moment: a deep frustration for society's habits, a frustration that nevertheless unearths new forms of potential. —————

————— In addition to his own accomplishments as a cartoonist, Yvan Alagbé (b. 1971, Paris) spearheads multiple publishing efforts, including a contemporary art review he cofounded, *L'oeil carnivore*, a magazine, *Le Chéval sans tête*, and a comics publishing house, Amok. In 2001, Amok partnered with the publishing group Fréon to establish the Franco-Belgian collaboration Frémok, now a major European graphic novels publisher. Alagbé's graphic novel, *Yellow Negroes and Other Imaginary Creatures* (New York Review of Books, 2018) was recently translated into English. Jessica Campbell (b. 1985, Victoria, Canada) is an artist and humorist based out of Chicago; she is the author of two graphic novels, *XTC69* (Koyama Press, 2018) and *Hot or Not: 20th Century Male Artists* (Koyama Press, 2016), and, working in performance, fiber, painting, and drawing often uses carpet remnants to create stand-alone, figurative artworks. Edie Fake (b. 1980, Chicagoland) is a painter and graphic novelist who envisions and explores the potential of queer spaces—imagined, personal, and historical. He is the author of two books, *Gaylord Phoenix* (2011 winner of the Ignatz Award, Secret Acres), and *Little Stranger* (Secret Acres, 2018). —————

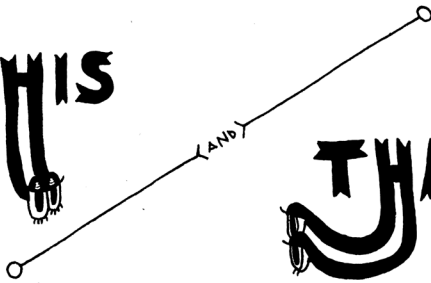
————— Just as typeset critics must internalize and reflect the work of a given artist or author in their writing, this review aims to explore a parallel effort through drawing and handwritten text—creating a graphic reflection of the artists' work. Bear in mind that each drawing of an artwork or comic panel is a failed copy of the original, a copy that has been translated through the hand of the author.

THE WEIGHT OF A LINE

ART **YVAN ALAGBÉ**
and
COMICS **JESSICA CAMPBELL** and
with
EDIE FAKE BY **COCO PICARD**

I AM ALWAYS INTERESTED IN
THE LINE BETWEEN

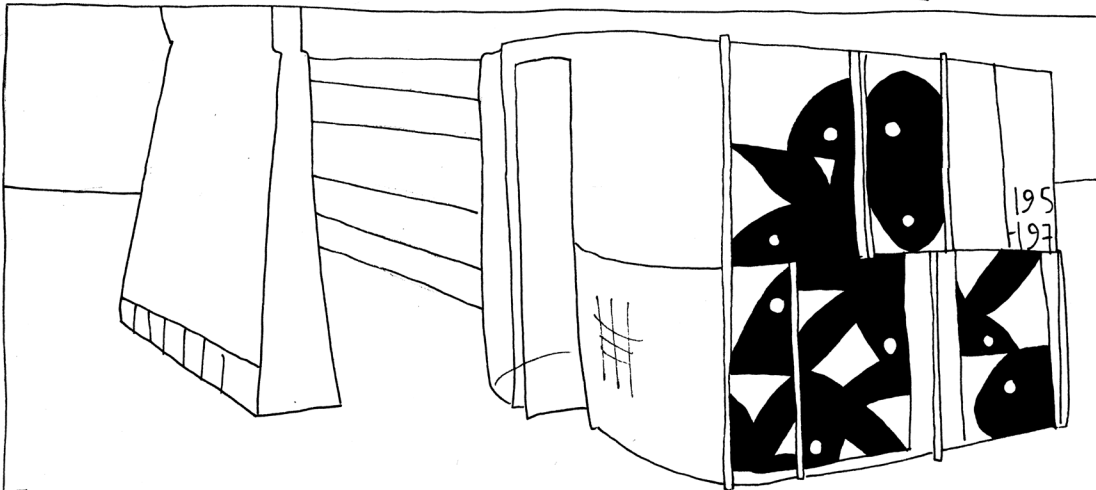
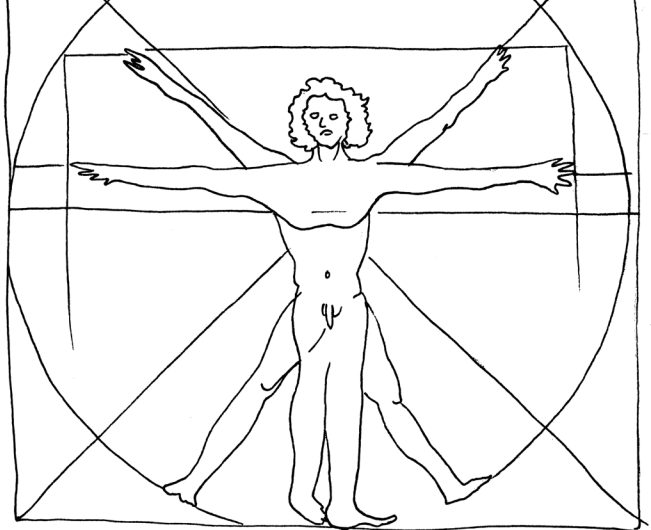
THIS



THAT

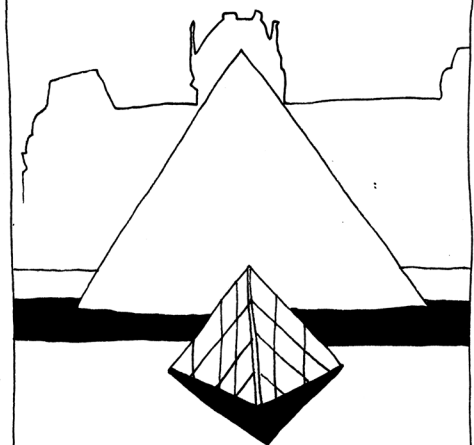
WHAT MIGHT FIRST APPEAR LITERAL OR PRACTICAL WILL, ON
CLOSER INSPECTION, REFLECT A BIAS — a set of terms or
priorities FILTERING DAILY LIFE.

THESE THINGS SHAPE AESTHETIC ASPIRATIONS TOO.



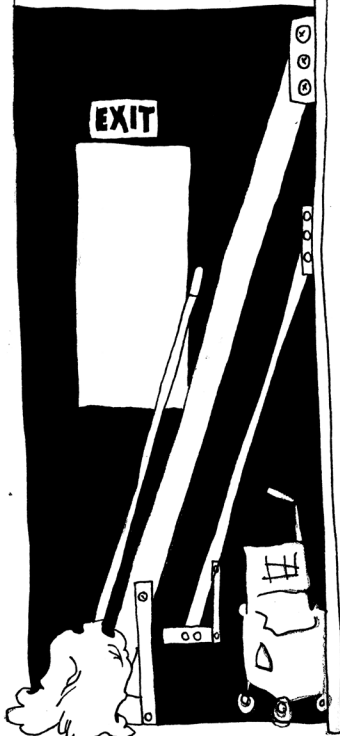
TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE 2016 EXHIBITION, "PLAYBOY
ARCHITECTURE, 1953-1979" — a show THAT PRESENTS
THE MAGAZINE AS A MAJOR PROPONANT FOR MID-
CENTURY ARCHITECTURE.

OR THE WAY MUSEUMS BOAST NATIONAL
STABILITY AS THOUGH IMMUNE TO
TIME, HOUSING OBJECTS THAT NEVER
AGE...

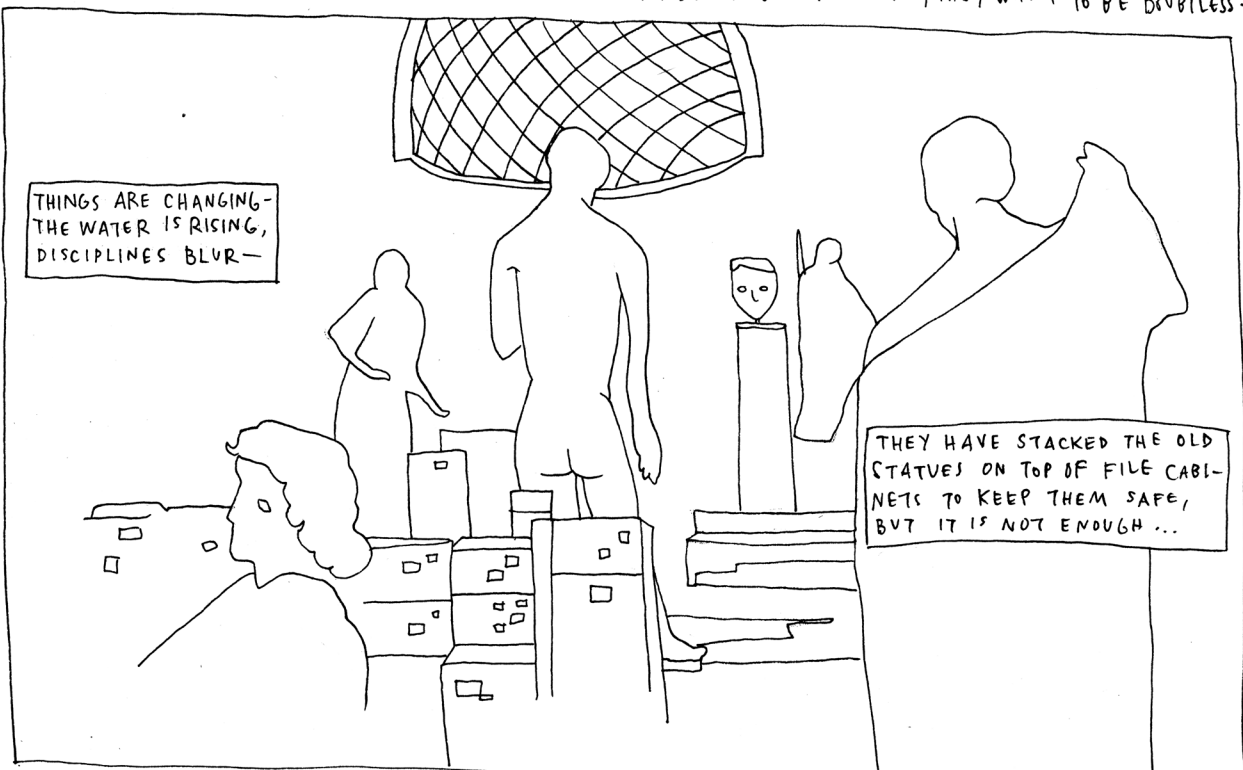


LIKE BORDERS BETWEEN COUNTRIES, THESE PRIORITIES AIM AT IRREFUTABILITY — THEY NEED TO BE CONVINCING, THEY WANT TO BE DOUBTLESS —

meanwhile



THINGS ARE CHANGING —
THE WATER IS RISING —
DISCIPLINES BLUR —



THEY HAVE STACKED THE OLD
STATUES ON TOP OF FILE CABI-
NETS TO KEEP THEM SAFE,
BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH ...

BUT WHAT IF THE REVOLUTION ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CHOOSE TO BE A PART OF? WHAT IF IT JUST HAPPENS - IS HAPPENING - AROUND US ALREADY?



JESSICA CAMPBELL

PLAYS THE BABE GAME WITH ART HISTORY !!

AND NOW!
WITH HER 2016
COMIC - COMPLETE
WITH A COVER
RIFFING ON THE
ETERNALLY STEAMY
"LES DEMOISELLES
D'AVIGNON" COMPLETE
WITH SCRATCH OFF
THINGS - **YOU
CAN TOO!**

CAMPBELL'S WORK VOLLEYS BETWEEN HER POSITION AS AN ARTIST TODAY AND HISTORIC PRECEDENTS. SOMETIMES SHE PRODUCES BLACK + WHITE COMICS. IN OTHER INSTANCES, SHE USES TEXTILES - WEAVING PICTURES OUT OF CARPET.



DRAWING OF JESSICA CAMPBELL'S "CARPET PUKING" 2017.

THESE CARPET WORKS ARE SENSUAL; YOU WANT TO TOUCH THEM BUT CANNOT. THIS RESONATES WITH THE CONTENT ALSO - CAMPBELL REGULARLY HIGHLIGHTS + UNDERMINES LATENT, EVERYDAY MISOGYNY. THE FIGURE/GROUND RELATIONSHIP IS

FURTHER COMPLICATED BY CARPET FIBERS THAT MAKE ANY OUTLINE LITERAL "FUZZY" + SO UNFIXED + UNSTABLE.



IN A RECENT EXHIBIT, CAMPBELL CREATED THE "CARR CHAPEL" JUXTAPOSING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PANELS FROM CAMPBELL'S LIFE ALONGSIDE THOSE INSPIRED BY FELLOW BRITISH COLUMBIAN ARTIST EMILY CARR (1871-1945). ENTERING THIS LOW-LIT ROOM, VIEWERS ARE ASKED TO CONSIDER THE PARALLELS + DIFFERENCES OF GENERATIONAL CONTEXTS.



IN HER GRAPHIC NOVEL, "XTC69", CAMPBELL LOOKS TO A FUTURE IN WHICH SHE IS THE LAST SURVIVOR ON EARTH. SHE IS DISCOVERED SLEEPING IN A COFFIN BY FUTURE FEMMES IN SEARCH OF THEIR OWN SURVIVAL.

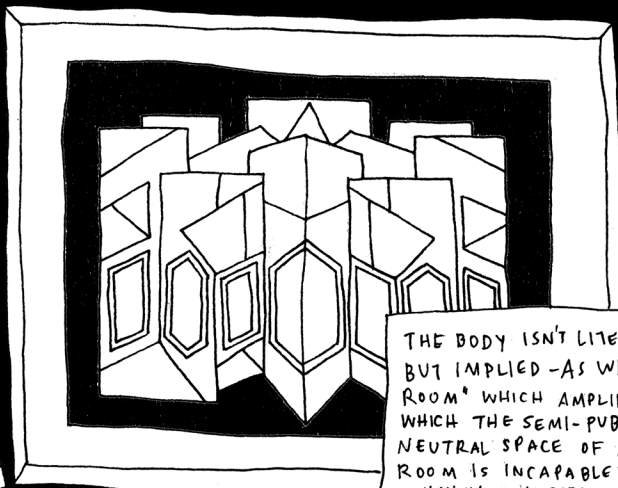
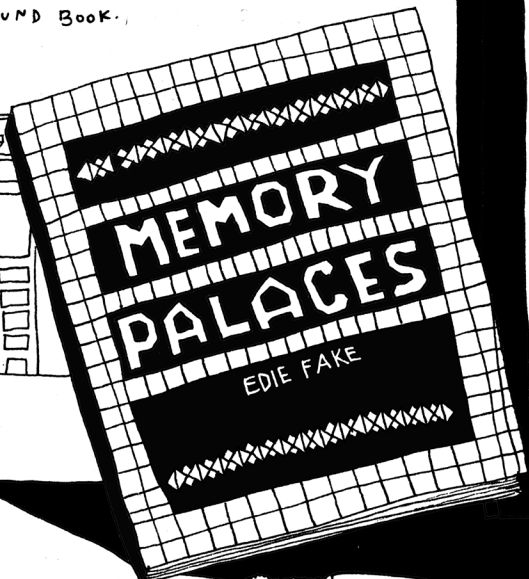


EXCERPT PANEL FROM XTC69

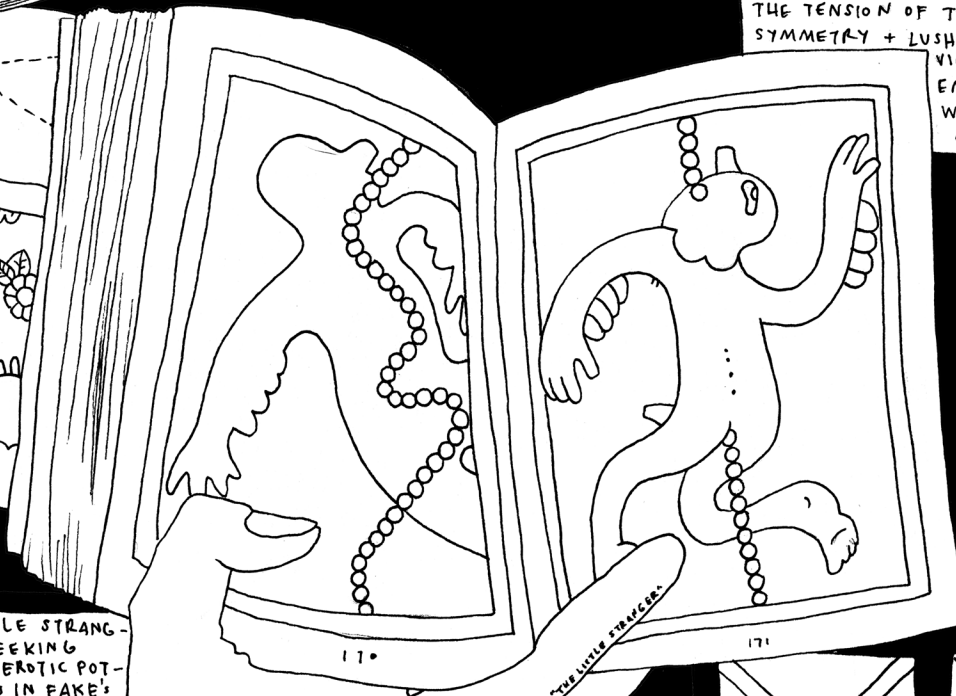
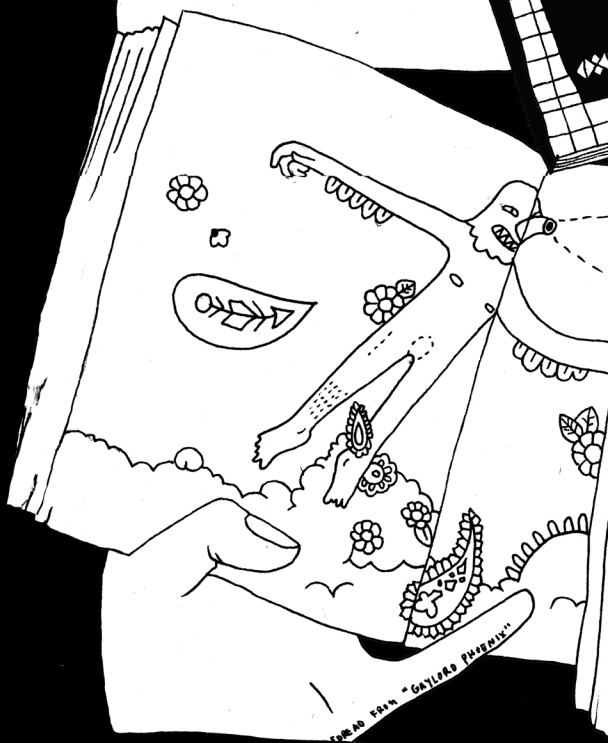
EDIE FAKE

ALSO UNCOVERS HISTORIES—RECOVERING THE FACADES OF LONG LOST FEMINIST + LESBIAN WATERING HOLES IN A SERIES OF DRAWINGS HE LATER COMPILED IN A BOUND BOOK.

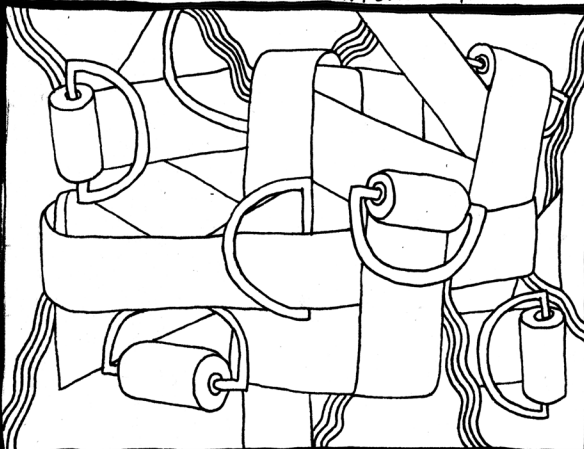
FAKE HAS CONTINUED TO PLAY WITH THE ILLUSION OF SPACE, PUSHING + PULLING AGAINST THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL PICTURE PLANE WITH ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITIONS THAT ALMOST SEEM INHABITABLE.



THE BODY ISN'T LITERALLY PRESENT BUT IMPLIED—AS WITH "THE FITTING ROOM" WHICH AMPLIFIES THE WAYS IN WHICH THE SEMI-PUBLIC + SUPPOSEDLY NEUTRAL SPACE OF A CHANGING ROOM IS INCAPABLE OF REFLECTING ANYTHING COHESIVE. THE MIRRORS OF THE PIECE ARE NON-REFLECTIVE, SMOKY + GRAY, REFUSING THE VIEWER'S POINT OF ENTRY. STILL, THE UNDENIABLE BEAUTY OF THE IMAGE. THE TENSION OF TIGHT, GEOMETRIC SYMMETRY + LUSH COLOR PUTS THE VIEWER AT EASE TOO. EMPOWERING THEM WITHIN THIS HALL OF MIRRORS.



BOOKS LIKE GAYLORD PHOENIX + THE LITTLE STRANGER INCLUDE ANIMATED CHARACTERS SEEKING SEEKING TRANSCENDENCE, SEX, LATENT EROTIC POTENTIAL. UNLIKE HIS ARTWORKS, FIGURES IN FAKE'S BOOKS SEEM UNHAMPERED BY THE PAGE, CAPABLE OF MOVING FREELY. IT'S INTERESTING ALSO TO THINK ABOUT HOW DIFFERENTLY THESE TWO FORMS—FINE ART + COMICS—CIRCULATE DIFFERENTLY.



DRAWING OF EDIE FAKE'S PAINTING "THE BINDERY" (2010, COLORED INK ON PAPER, 18" x 24")

TRADITIONAL ARTWORKS ARE SOMEHOW MORE PUBLIC, OR FORMAL. MAYBE FOR THAT REASON FAKE'S INDIVIDUAL DRAWINGS REFLECT DISCRETE, RIGID STRUCTURES. HIS BOOKS ARE MORE INTIMATE, ENGAGING A ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIP WITH QUESTING PROTAGONISTS THAT MOVE ORGANICALLY THROUGH ALLEGORICAL LANDSCAPES.



PANEL FROM P. 164 OF "THE LITTLE STRANGER"



MAYBE THE DESIRE FAKE CAPTURES—CALL IT HOPE, DETERMINATION, LUST—AN INNER PRESSURE THAT FLOWS AGAINST, AROUND, + THROUGH HARD LINES—MAYBE THIS IS THE THING THAT DRIVES US ALL FROM INSIDE OUT.

YVAN ALACBÉ



Yellow
Negroes
and
Other
Imaginary
Creatures
Jean Lagarde

EACH PANEL IN THE BOOK IS
COMPRISED OF STARK INK DRAWINGS
THAT EMPHASIZE THE CONTRAST OF
POSITIVE + NEGATIVE SPACE

AND ONCE EVERYTHING IS RETURNED
- YES, THAT'S THE POINT
- NOT TO ONLY

ALAGBÉ'S EXPERT DRAFTSMANSHIP MAKES THE READER AS KEEN TO LOCATE THE FIGURE AS THE CHARACTERS ARE TO LOCATE THEMSELVES—LIKE FAKE, THERE IS AN ONGOING SEARCH FOR INTIMACY; LIKE CAMPBELL, AN ENDURING BLUR BETWEEN FIGURE + GROUND. ALAGBÉ'S UNFLINCHING PORTRAYAL SHOWS THE OVERLAP OF COMPLEX LIVES + HISTORIES—EVEN THOSE LEFT OUT OF DICTIONARIES.

PANEL FROM P. 411

... I LOVE YOU

FOUR PANELS FROM P. 57