

**“My constituents can’t read. But damn it, they can see pictures.”**  
-William M. Tweed

## **THE ART OF EDITORIAL CARTOONING**

**Adam Zyglis**  
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Canisius College, Buffalo, NY

**Advisor: Thomas Joyce**  
English Department  
Canisius College, Buffalo, NY

**Second Reader: Mel Shroeder**  
English Department  
Canisius College, Buffalo, NY

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## INTRODUCTION

On July 22nd 1987, Palestinian political cartoonist Naji al-Ali was assassinated several feet from the newspaper office he worked at in London. The thousands of his cartoons that exposed the dirty politics of the Middle East had cost him his life. It is even argued that one of his last cartoons was solely responsible for his death ([www.oneworld.org](http://www.oneworld.org)). Even though the possibility of being assassinated is not a serious concern of cartoonists in the United States, this martyr of patriotic art certainly illuminates the potency of the American editorial cartoon. The source of this power can be in the nature of the art form.

“It is an expression of yourself in every way, your politics, your aesthetics and your personality.” - Clay Bennett (*Christian Science Monitor*) on editorial cartooning

There are few disciplines that encompass as many genres of human activity as does the editorial cartoon. Its unique place in American culture has been relatively difficult to articulate successfully. The editorial cartoon ties together art, journalism, entertainment, politics, and humor. It is generally agreed upon that art and journalism are the two prominent dimensions of its essence. However, throughout history, the art form has been strictly labeled as a form of journalism. For instance, the most prestigious national award for editorial cartoonists is the Pulitzer Prize, which is a journalism award. Typically, historians are the ones who have classified the cartoons in such a way, but, for

various reasons, even some cartoonists themselves consider their work primary journalistic in nature.

This is a huge misconception. *In my thesis, I will argue that editorial cartooning is primarily an art form, and the graphic art and conceptual art within the cartooning process are the dominant dimensions in the discipline. Furthermore, the role and importance of this dimension is overlooked and under appreciated.* Understanding this rich mixture of elements provides a greater insight into the power and success of the editorial cartoon.

To support this argument I have broken my thesis into five major sections. The first section develops a theoretical foundation of art. This broad discussion of art is needed as a context in which to define the editorial cartoon. Once these preliminary distinctions are made, editorial cartoons can be seen as works of art.

A look at the progression of the discipline is the next logical step in understanding its nature. So, the second section is an examination of the past and present of the editorial cartoon. I utilize this perspective in order to identify how the art in the discipline has developed over time.

After the history of editorial cartooning has been analyzed, the next place to look is in the minds of the artists themselves. Section three focuses on this perspective, and challenges the arguments that are provided by the cartoonists.

Then, the roles of art and journalism, which are the two most prominent dimensions, can be thoroughly assessed. I will begin this part with a discussion of elements of a successful editorial cartoon. Then, after exploring the roles of art and

journalism, I will show that conceptual and graphic art is dominant over journalism, making the discipline truly an art form.

Finally, the last section is a reflection on the unique theory of editorial cartooning that is developed through the arguments of this thesis. Here, I will discuss the shortcomings of this theory and highlight areas of future work.

## **PART I – CREATING A CONTEXT: Definitions & Distinctions**

There are many issues involved in the process of analyzing the role of art in editorial cartoons. One must first ask the question ‘what is art?’ before identifying art within a specific discipline. However, this question has been proven to be extremely difficult to answer consistently. The definition of art has changed throughout history, and it seems to become less and less definable as more and more people attempt to articulate it. So it would be both unnecessary and problematic for me to develop my own definition of art.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will simply provide several widely accepted definitions, or theories, of art. Several issues come into play with distinguishing art from non-art. How a work of art looks, what it communicates, and how it makes the viewer feel, are all important in defining art. Finally, a definition of editorial cartooning can be made within this context. From this point, it will be apparent that each widely accepted definition of art applies to a specific element of editorial cartooning.

## What is Art?

Philosophers have debated for hundreds of years on the topic of art. Over the years, one thing that has been agreed upon is the fact that a work of art is a type of artifact. This is the broadest way in which art is distinguished from non-art. An artifact is “anything made or created by a human being” (Fisher, 148). Under this distinction, laws, theories, furniture, paintings, poems and editorial cartoons are all examples of art. Obviously, other human constructs such as laws fit the definition of ‘artifacts’, and most people agree that laws are not artworks. Thus, a more explicit distinction is needed.

There is also one other universal distinction pertaining to art. It is accepted that art consists of both *content* and *form* (Butcher, 10). The form of a work of art is ultimately ‘the way it looks’. The content, in contrast, is ‘what the artwork says’. These two dimensions have been at the heart of traditional debates involving art’s definition. The importance and function of both form and content are usually the determining factors in establishing a definition of art. One of the more historically popular ongoing debates on the definition of art addresses which of these two dimensions of art is most important. The extensive writings and studies on the subject of art have yielded four prominent theories that can be illustrated in specific art movements.

The oldest classification of art is undoubtedly found in the ‘mimetic theory.’ The word mimetic comes from mimesis, which means imitation. This is simply the idea that art is a representation, or imitation, of reality. The theory stems all the way back to the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and it has originally developed from the ancient art of prehistoric cave painting. In visual art, it is the pictorial representation of what an artist

sees. In literary art, it is the imitation of life through characters and stories that the writer observes. Aristotle wrote that imitation is a universal human characteristic, making this definition historically successful (Fisher, 196). Overall, the theory does not emphasize either form or content because both are needed in order to imitate reality.

There are shortcomings to this theory, because most of the art produced today is nonrepresentational. During the Renaissance, the theory was solely applied to the representational art of realism, which is visual art that appears photo-realistic. However, visual realism is an extremely narrow view of art by today's standards because many art movements challenged the theory. Throughout the twentieth century, the Surrealists questioned the very idea of the reality portrayed by Renaissance artists, and they provided a more accurate representation of the subconscious. So now, some consider the mimetic theory to allow for explorations within this 'subconscious reality' (Fisher, 200). Furthermore, the theory has been more recently developed to accept the imitations of emotions and feelings, as long as these expressions represent reality. Thus, a contemporary definition of the theory qualifies an artifact to be a work of art if it accurately represents some dimension of life at the time of the artist (Welish, 50).

The next two traditional theories of art embody the form vs. content debate that was mentioned earlier. One side of the debate is that the content of art is most important. I will refer to this theory as the 'content theory'. Recall that the content is what the artwork says, so this is considered to be more important than how the artwork looks. But that doesn't provide a definition of art.

In the late 19th century, Leo Tolstoy developed many extensive essays exploring the definition of art. He articulated the content theory's distinction between art and non-



art. He said “for art to be art [for the content theory], it is necessary that its content should be of something important, necessary to man, good, moral, and instructive” (Welish, 38). According to this theory, a work of art is a social, moral, or political truth dressed in artistic form. Keep in mind, the form is less important but still necessary. The theory is not illustrated through a particular movement, but it can be seen throughout the history of art. For example, in 1545 during Luther’s revolt against the Catholic Church, he had the artist Lucas Cranach create a series of colored woodcuts on the origin of the Pope. The content of the art was of great moral and political importance of the time (Shikes, xxvi). In general, political corruption has inspired artists to take the role of the social and political critic. Believers in the content theory, often point to such artists as the true artists of the time.

This distinction, like the mimetic theory, has many readily seen problems in the realm of nonrepresentational art. More specifically, the emergence of the modern art movement posed a direct challenge to the content argument. This is the contrasting side of the form vs. content debate, and the third theory of art. It is often labeled as the “art for art’s sake” or “aesthetic” theory, but it is more accurately referred to as the “form theory” (Fisher, 198). Simply put, the way that a work of art looks is more important what the work of art says. The modern art movement attempted to break away from the restrictions of content and imitation. The modern art movement should not be equated with the form theory. Modern art was about more than just beauty in form. Nonetheless, this birth of abstract and nonrepresentational art inspired artists and critics to reassess the definition of art once again. So if something can still be art if it does not accurately

represent reality (mimetic) or have content of great importance (content), then it seems that we are simply back to art as artifacts with form and content.

However, the form theory does distinguish between art and non-art, and it uses the idea of beauty. The notion that beauty is necessary to a work of art did not originate in the form theory, and it has often included the beauty of art's content. But in the form theory, an artifact is considered to be a work of art if its form is beautiful. A major issue arises when this notion of beauty enters the debate. Beauty is subjective; it is in the eye of the beholder, as the phrase goes. So critics of the form theory have insisted that something as subjective as art cannot be defined by something that is just as subjective. This is irrelevant because it is impossible to avoid subjectivity in defining art, as seen in the first two theories.

The form theory is often associated with formalism. Formalism does not provide a theory of art, but it provides a theory of form. It places an importance on composition, which is the organization and visual structuring of a work of art. Also, formalism defines the elements and principals of design, which are used to create a beautiful composition. The ideas of formalism will later be useful in discussing formal art within the editorial cartoon.

The fourth and final prominent definition of art comes from the "expression theory" and, like the mimetic theory, does not emphasize form or content. It contends that for art to be art, it must express an emotion or attitude of the artist. Artwork can also express ideas, arguments, and events. But artifacts that are not artworks can also express such things. So one interpretation of the theory requires that artifact specifically expresses emotions in order to be art (Fisher, 238). Art as expression means that artwork

functions as a vehicle for the artist to communicate emotions to the viewer or the world. An example of art by this definition is the Abstract Expressionism movement in the mid twentieth century. Jackson Pollock was an American abstract expressionist, whose prime was from 1948 to 1952. His art was composed of simple lines, shapes and color splotches. The clustering of the paint drips and the clever use of color invoked striking emotions in the viewers of his art (Butcher, 31).

This theory also has its problems. Not all art expresses emotions. It can be argued that many artworks, such as those defined by the previous three theories, do not purposely express emotions. Likewise, many artworks arguably do not represent reality, have beauty in form, or have importance of content. All four of the theories must certainly have their exceptions.

In an attempt to find that ultimate distinction between art and non-art, the notion of originality has entered the debate. Since the mid nineteenth century, artists and critics have begun to link the concept of novelty with contemporary definitions of art. In his writings on the traditional theories of art, Tolstoy concluded that originality is a previously ignored but necessary condition for art. He wrote, “the production of something *new* is creation - the real artistic activity” (Welish, pg 50). Novelty has been implicitly honored in the art world for centuries. Only original works are worth any money. Even though accurate replicas of famous art can show great skill, they are relatively worthless.

There have been art movements that have emphasized the originality of art, such as the conceptual art movement. Conceptual art is defined as “art in which the idea behind a particular work, and the means of producing it, are more important than the

finished product” (Collins English Dictionary). This became an official art movement in the 1960’s, and it strongly valued originality. The movement became famous for turning everyday common objects and pictures of these objects into art. It was another attempt to redefine art. Instead of emphasizing the form or the content of the work of art, it emphasized the idea or concept, which is a third universal element to any work of art.

An interesting aspect of this type of art is its questioning nature. Not only did conceptual art question conventional definitions of art, but often, it also questioned governmental and societal policies. Conceptual artists tend to express strong social and political criticisms through their work.

Editorial cartoonists also express such messages in their art. In fact, every major distinction of art, as described above, can be applied to the discipline. However, first a definition of the editorial cartoon must be provided.

## **What is the Editorial Cartoon?**

It is interesting to note that the distinction between political cartoons and editorial cartoons is rarely made. These two terms are easily confused and frequently interchanged. However, there are slight differences in the two types of cartoons, and these differences are important since this thesis is about *editorial* cartoons, not *political* cartoons. Both are cartoons with editorial messages that generally appear in the pages of newspapers and magazines. But I feel that the term editorial cartoon is more accurate because it can also include cartoons that are societal and cultural in nature. The discrepancy between the two types of cartoons will become clear as further distinctions

are made. In Part IV, I will explain how some of the best editorial cartoons put a cultural or societal spin on a political message.

When broken down into the two most obvious parts, the editorial cartoon is simply graphic art with commentary. Recall the universal elements of form and content within all art. So within this context of art, the graphic art embodies the form of the cartoon, which is how it looks. The commentary embodies the content of the cartoon, which is what the cartoon says. However, ‘graphic art with commentary’ is a broad definition, and it encompasses many other disciplines beyond the scope of the editorial cartoon. In fact, there are three general types of graphic art with commentary. They are *social cartoons*, *political cartoons* and *comic art*. Author Charles Press adapted these distinctions from cartoonist Alan Dunn, and I will provide my own interpretation of them (Press, 10). After these three are defined, a definition of the editorial cartoon can be provided.

Press distinguished these three categories by their purpose. He said that the comic artist intends to “amuse”, the social cartoonist intends to “make life more bearable” and the political cartoonist attempts to “bring order through governmental action” (Press, 11). However, defining the three types of graphic art by purpose implies that each of these types has only one specific purpose. This is not the case, because each given cartoonist has his or her own unique purpose or intentions. Furthermore, a given artist may even have several different purposes. So it is more logical to define them by subject matter, which is readily apparent.

A categorization of graphic art into the three basic genres is useful, however, only when the three types are defined by their subject matter, or their topic of commentary.

As one would expect, the social cartoon comments on society or culture, the political cartoon comments on government, and comic art comments on the human experience. I distinguish them in this manner because the subject matter of a given cartoon can be easily identified, unlike the intentions of the artist. Also, as with most abstract distinctions, the boundaries defining the three types of graphic art are overlapping. For instance, many cartoons comment on society, government, and human experience.

A distinction of the *editorial cartoon* has not yet been addressed. It is important to remember that it is not necessarily bounded by subject matter. Editorial cartoons are usually political, but they can also comment on society and the human experience. A clear distinction of editorial cartoons can be made, and it is the following: *a work of graphic art with commentary is an editorial cartoon only if its commentary conveys a distinct editorial message portrayed in a clever or witty manner*. Many scholars have mistakenly attempted to define the editorial cartoon by its function, which is highly debated upon, even among cartoonists themselves. This is what Press did with his definition of the political cartoon. He said that political cartoons “bring order through governmental action.” But they can also entertain, amuse and enlighten, so the function or purpose cannot be used to define it.

As mentioned before, the editorial cartoon, like all art forms, has been typically broken into content and form. In the arguments of this thesis, I will occasionally refer to the content (or commentary) as the *journalism dimension*, and the form as the *graphic art dimension*. However, I would argue that this abstraction of editorial cartoons into only two parts is the critical mistake that has been made by many scholars studying the

editorial cartoon. Actually, three prominent dimensions exist within the nature of the cartoon.

Charles Press decomposed the political cartoon into three parts, but not in an artistic context. He called them the three elements of a political cartoon, but his distinctions are inadequate. The first element, he said, is the “picture of reality that artists present to us as the essence of truth” (Press, 62). This element is different from the form, because the form is purely aesthetic. Also, this element is not common to all political cartoons because many cartoons are surreal, and many cartoons lie. The second element he refers to as the “moral message” (Press, 62). This corresponds to the content, although the message of editorial cartoons is not always moral. Lastly, he describes the third element: “through artistic technique and allegorical imagery, the artist creates a mood telling us how we should feel over what is happening” (Press, 62). This mood is a part of editorial cartoons, but in an artist context the form and the content both help to create a mood. He claimed that these elements correspond to “intellect, conscious, and emotion,” which does not accurately describe the editorial cartoon (Press, 62).

So Press, like other scholars, failed to accurately identify the third dimension of the editorial cartoon. This central dimension is the *concept* or *idea* behind the cartoon, which corresponds to what I call the *conceptual art dimension*. This concept is a third universal element in all artworks, and it is an extremely important part of the editorial cartoon. The concept is ‘the way that a work of art says what it says’. Cartoonists themselves identify this element, but as a result the message is usually left out. Rollin Kirby, a well-respected American cartoonist, considers a cartoon to be “75 percent idea

and 25 percent drawing” (Hess, 11). But the artist’s message, or in other words the content, is separate from the form and the concept.

So in actuality, the editorial cartoon is composed of three major parts: the content (what it says), the concept (how it says it) and the form (how it looks). (GIVE EXAMPLE AND WALK THROUGH) In Part IV, I will analyze the importance and the roles of these dimensions.

## **Are Editorial Cartoons Art?**

Now that the editorial cartoon is defined, I will show how it fits into each theory of art. The first definition of art, the mimetic theory, requires art to imitate reality. Editorial cartoons are considered by many to be one of the purest artifacts of popular culture in a democratic country because of the use of widely understandable symbols and images. Rodger E. Fischer, author of *Those Damned Pictures*, said “the context of the effective editorial cartoon, disregarding altogether its ideology or the issue at hand, can tell us much about the popular culture of its day” (Fischer, 122). So images and symbols found in the *form* of the editorial cartoon represent or imitate objects and ideas in reality. For instance, the use of the Statue of Liberty in cartoons represents the ideal values embraced by America (Drawn and Quartered). Furthermore, a given character in a cartoon always represents a person in society, whether it’s a caricature of a specific political figure or a depiction of the general American. Thus editorial cartoons are art by the mimetic theory.



The content theory permits an artifact to be art if its content is ‘important, necessary to man, good, moral, and instructive.’ The editorial cartoon fits very naturally into this theory, because of the fact that it is bound to an editorial message. Scholars believe that good editorial cartoons are required to be of some moral truth. Charles Press, esteemed critic of the editorial cartoon, wrote that “winning cartoons are generally high-minded sermons against sin, with a thick icing of artificial religiosity” (Press, pg 199). Remember that the artist as a social critic usually defines art in this manner, which means that editorial cartoonists fulfill the role of the artist as a sociopolitical critic. So, the editorial cartoon fits into the content theory.

The form theory of art also works well because of the fact that graphic art is the form of the cartoon. Recall that the form theory requires art to be art if its form is beautiful. Graphic art is a type of art defined by its form. It uses lines to create graphical images of beautiful form. However, the forms of certain cartoons appear to be more beautiful than the forms of others. But this simply means that some cartoons hold a higher value of formal art. Michael Ramirez is a cartoonist whose art is of very high formal value. The beautiful form of his cartoons, displayed in the LA Times, has earned him extremely high respect within the industry. Other cartoonists, such as Pulitzer Prize winner Joel Pett who draws for *Lexington Herald-Leader*, hold a lower standard of formal beauty, but their cartoons still are considered to be graphic art. Since it is generally accepted that all editorial cartoons take the form of graphic art, then they all qualify to be art by the form theory.

The fourth theory of art, the expression theory, requires an artifact to express an attitude or emotion of the artist. Again, the editorial cartoon’s opinionated editorial

message allows it to qualify as art within this theory. Since the message is an opinion, it is an expression of the artist's attitudes or emotions.

Finally, there is the more contemporary notion of originality, as was seen in conceptual art. But there is no debate on this issue. Originality is considered to be a vital element of a good editorial cartoon according to the judging rubrics of many prestigious awards. Originality in concept, form and content is important to a good editorial cartoon.

However, some critics expect much more out of an editorial cartoon in order for it to be art. Consider the following passage by Ralph E. Shikes: "At what point does a caricature or satirical political cartoon transcend topical comment and become 'art'? Probably when its draftsmanship is superior and controlled, the composition inherently striking, the impact of the conception immediate, the message of lasting importance" (xxvi, *Indignant Eye*). So he believes that only some editorial cartoons can be considered art when certain criteria of *form*, *content* and *concept* are met. First of all, when he says 'art', he really means *high* art. Many traditional art historians distinguish between high and low art, and they consider *low* art to be non-art. But in the contemporary art world this distinction is outdated and irrelevant. Thus, by modern standards, he is mistaken in his analysis, because he should be referring to 'high and 'low' art, not 'art', and 'non-art'. So considering this distinction, a cartoon that meets these requirements could be elevated to the level of 'high' art.

In general, editorial cartoons fall under the definition of art regardless of which theory is upheld. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is primarily an art form. The additional elements of humor, politics, and especially journalism are also very

important. Editorial cartoons are not always funny or political, but the dimensions of journalism, graphic art and conceptual art are always prevalent.

## **PART II – THE EDITORIAL CARTOON: Past & Present**

A historical examination of the editorial cartoon helps in understanding the progression of the art form and the development of its elements. The historical perspective is by no means comprehensive. I have specifically selected the cartoonists that have changed and defined the nature of the art form over time. For the look at contemporary cartoonists, I have similarly focused on the most influential artists, which are not necessarily the most popular artists. The third section analyzes the progression of the craft, in order to identify trends.

### **A Brief, Highly Subjective History**

In 1754, Benjamin Franklin created a political graphic that printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9<sup>th</sup>. This is the first known American editorial cartoon that was printed (Hess, 24). However, some historians do not acknowledge this fact, for some reason. In fact, the Franklin cartoon was well ahead of its time.

At the time of the cartoon, Franklin represented Pennsylvania in the Albany Congress. The purpose of the cartoon was to persuade Americans to unify the colonies in light of the Indian and French problems. So he drew a serpent divided into eight separate parts, representing each of the eight colonies (refer to Appendix A). The phrase “JOIN,

or DIE” appeared in bold underneath the snake. He chose to use the symbol of a snake because of a popular myth that the parts of a severed snake would come back to life if its parts were put back together before nightfall (Hess, 24).

The cartoon was ahead of its time for many reasons. First of all, the form of the cartoon was extremely graphical, even by today’s standards. This highly contrasted the realistic style of the cartoons of the time. Franklin’s simple, graphic approach yielded a concise and powerful image, with no unnecessary distractions.

The content was very powerful and inspiring to the community of the time. More importantly the message was extremely clear and concise, so today’s average newspaper reader could easily understand the point.

However, the concept of the cartoon was most responsible for its success. Recall that the concept of the cartoon is how the message is said. It can be seen as the snake in the *form* of the artwork. Franklin’s idea, or *concept*, was to represent the colonies as eight parts of a snake. This is a brilliant concept for two reasons. First of all, he was the first to utilize animalism and symbolism in his rendering of the serpent. Both techniques are widely used today. But more importantly, he injected a piece of popular culture into the political message, which is also a common practice of modern cartoonists.

Within a month of it being printed in Pennsylvania it appeared in nearly every newspaper across the continent. It was also reprinted during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 and again in 1774 during the Revolution. It is conceivable that the overwhelming success of the cartoon actually helped to unify the colonies, although it would be impossible to prove.

The next cornerstone of cartooning came in the late 1800's with Thomas Nast's famous series of Boss Tweed cartoons. The story of how cartoonist Thomas Nast took down William Marcy Tweed, the corrupt kingpin of Tammany, is familiar of most American History students.

"Stop those damn pictures," Boss Tweed supposedly told his lieutenants after viewing Nast's cartoon 'Who Stole the People's Money' (Fischer, 2). Tweed later explained, "I don't care so much what the papers say about me. My constituents can't read. But damn it, they can see pictures" (Fischer, 2). Nast's cartoons in 1871, which printed in *Harper's Weekly*, exposed how Tweed and his Democratic cohorts controlled New York City politics and sucked millions of dollars from the taxpayers (Hess, 54). Two years later, the Tweed Ring was removed from power and Boss Tweed himself was arrested and imprisoned. Later he escaped to Spain, but a customs clerk identified him from looking at Nast's cartoon 'Tweedledee and Tildendum'. It is even rumored that when the authorities arrived, he was found to possess copies of Nast's cartoons (Fischer, 2).

But what is most important about Nast's work was its revolutionary effect on the art of editorial cartooning. Rodger A. Fischer, author of *Them Damned Pictures*, argued "his systematic destruction of the Tammany kingpin pioneered many artistic and conceptual conventions used for more than a century by exemplars of ungentlemanly art" (11). Artistically, his brilliant depictions of Boss Tweed and culprits Peter "Brains" Sweeny, Richard "Slippery Dick" Connolly and Mayor A. Oakley Hall helped institute the use of caricature as a powerful tool in the form of the editorial cartoon (refer to Appendix A). Fischer wrote Nast "elevated caricature in American cartooning to a

genuine art form and a deadly political weapon by his metamorphosis of Tweed's hulking but benign, even dignified, visage into the embodiment of unbridled greed and autocratic arrogance waxing fat upon a helpless citizenry" (8). Even by themselves, Nast's caricatures questioned the very character of William Tweed. This technique has been used by cartoonists ever since.

In terms of concept, he helped widely establish the techniques of animalism and symbolism, which were first used in Franklin's cartoon. The Tammany tiger character appeared in many of his cartoons to illustrate the danger of the Tweed ring. He also invented the Republican elephant symbol in his cartoon 'The Third Term Panic' (Hess, 27). As a result of this cartoon, and many others of course, the elephant has officially become the universal symbol of the Republican Party.

Also, Nast's cartoons have greatly influenced how cartoonists deal with political events. Most notably, the story of Tweed's demise dramatically inflated people's perception of the editorial cartoon's power to mythical proportions. But his cartoons also spurred an ongoing debate on the function of editorial cartooning. Fischer believed that he emphasized the importance of a moral message. He wrote that Nast exemplified "the ethical imperative which lifts transitory journalism into transcending art" (3). This emergence of a moral element in his editorial cartoons allowed them to be classified as art by the content theory, and many cartoonists believe this to be the purpose of the craft.

However, others believe the role of cartoonists is to attack those in power, regardless of whether the victim is deserving of the assault or not. This is why Stephen Hess wrote that Nast focused in on Boss Tweed mainly because of his easily caricatured

features (10). Whatever Nast's purpose, it remains clear that his work set a precedent for future generations of cartoonists.

Since WWII, there were three artists who have significantly affected the growth of editorial art. The first artist who helped to define the editorial cartoon during this period is Bill Mauldin. As a sergeant in the army during the second great war, Mauldin drew for *49<sup>th</sup> Division News* and afterward for *Stars and Stripes*. For the first time, America saw the War through the eyes of two ragged soldiers, namely Willy and Joe. Mauldin's famous Willy and Joe cartoons portrayed a war of frustration and emptiness, abandoning the notion that war is a noble enterprise. His cartoons rallied the support of the troops and the resentment of higher military officials (Hess,101).

The form of the Bill Mauldin cartoon was aesthetically pleasing and polished, yet it was typical of cartoons of the time. However, his depictions of Willy and Joe helped hammer his message into the heart of the reader. They were slouched and sullen in posture, with miserably drab expressions (refer to Appendix A). Without even reading what they were saying, one could get the drift of the cartoon. The content reinforced by the images exposed the disheartening everyday realities of the war.

Ironically, one of his artistic weaknesses was responsible for his success. This weakness, which was one of form, forced him to discover a conceptual strength. "Mauldin confessed that in the beginning it was embarrassing having to label well-known politicians because he couldn't draw their faces, so he avoided such caricature when possible," Charles Press reported (313). This avoidance of caricature forced him to frequently depict the 'typical' citizen or soldier, which proved to produce highly successful concepts in his cartoons.

These concepts driving his cartoons were what really made Mauldin stand out. Actually, the feelings and emotions that his cartoons stirred in the viewer were most memorable, but his ideas were responsible for this effectiveness. The idea behind his Willy and Joe cartoons was to use the everyday experiences of the American soldier to express the misery of war. This proved work remarkably. Press wrote that this technique was “murderously effective” (25). It made personal the larger than life notions involved in war. Since Mauldin, cartoonists have frequently utilized the perspective of the typical soldier to communicate more universal messages.

Mauldin’s cartoons continued to pack a strong emotional punch throughout his life. One of the most memorable of them was printed later in his career on November 23<sup>rd</sup> in 1963, when he was drawing for the *Chicago-Sun Times*. The cartoon was drawn in response to John F. Kennedy’s assassination, and it portrayed the Lincoln Memorial figure cowering in sorrow (Hess, 112). It became one of the most famous cartoons in history because of its powerful concept and striking form.

The next great cartoonist of that time was Herbert L. Block, better known as Herblock. He actually was a working cartoonist since 1929, and he won his first Pulitzer Prize in 1942. However, his influence really began to emerge when he began working for the *Washington Post* in 1946.

Herblock’s artistic style became the staple of cartooning at the time. His form symbolized the emergence of a new cartoon. Block had little detail, but plenty of expression in his characters. He also utilized the technique of caricature, much in the spirit of Thomas Nast (Press, 302). This more graphic style, helped to emphasize what was important in each cartoon. The notion of ‘less is more’ began to be applied to



editorial cartoons. Press explained, “every little movement has its meaning, but there is no unnecessary clutter. Every detail is a cue that counts toward its message” (303).

Block’s cartoons helped to set the president that if a given detail is not purposeful, take it out. This caused artists to pay extra attention to the form of the cartoons.

His real fame came out of his creative ideas. He would twist a political event into some ridiculous way producing an extremely hilarious analogy. Although Herblock would attack the toughest issues, he exploited the power of concept and humor, pushing the envelope of the conceptual dimension of the cartoon. For example, the cartoon entitled ‘Fire!’ that appeared in print on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949, played off of the fact that irrationally shouting fire in a crowd produces hysteria and therefore is not rightly protected in the first amendment.

The form of the cartoon portrayed a hysterical man with a large bucket of water climbing up a ladder to put out the statue of liberty’s flame (refer to Appendix A). True to Block’s style, it was composed of strong expressive lines complimented with charcoal shading which provided depth to the work. The crazed man was very expressively drawn and extremely amusing to observe.

The content of the cartoon was that the McCarthy Communism scare was causing a state of hysteria, which was violating the liberty of the people. His idea to correlate the shouting of the word ‘fire’ to that of the word ‘communist’ produced a brilliantly effective and creative concept.

The last of the great historical artists is Pat Oliphant, and he still drawing today. At the age of 31, he moved from Australia and began drawing at the *Denver Post* in

1964. His foreign background may have given him an edge, because his style was very different from what was going on in America.

The beautiful form of his cartoons immediately impacted other cartoonists of the time. He had an incredible talent to produce highly dynamic people and scenes. His art was full of movement. Oliphant accomplished this with a gestured sketch, which is an artistic technique of quick and loose hand sweeps. The finished form of his earlier cartoons looked carefully drawn, however the dynamics of an underlining gesture were still evident in his cartoons.

As the form of his style matured over time, he began to fully exploit the dynamics of his sketch. Today, to the untrained eye, some of his cartoons may appear to not be finished. This is because the figures and objects in his cartoons form from a cloud of quickly drawn thin lines, which is a preliminary artistic technique. Traditionally, after the final lines are carefully drawn in, the loose scribbles that were quickly sketched are erased. However, many artists have found that leaving in these loose lines in the final product create a greater sense of movement and an interesting style. Edward Sorel is most famous for utilizing this technique in his artwork (Sorel). Similarly, Oliphant leaves such loosely drawn lines, especially in areas rich in texture. This characteristic of his form created an interesting and original looking cartoon style. Oliphant's success showed the business that aesthetics are something that should be paid attention to.

Pat Oliphant's appearance on the American editorial cartooning scene also greatly influenced the conceptual trends in the craft. Before he arrived, cartoonists in America heavily relied on over-used-symbols. Oliphant commented,

I'm afraid to say, American cartooning was a laughingstock among other cartoonists in the world. All we ever saw was the Peace Dove with the scroll in

its mouth, Hope coming over the hill, and the Rocky Road to prosperity. There was a stagnation one could see. Here was an audience that was ready for new approaches (Hess, 114).

He brought new ideas and new viewpoints. Oliphant also attacked the most controversial issues head on, unlike most of the cartoonists in America. Most remarkably, he addressed civil rights issues with unforgiving bite (Hess, 114). He was and still is highly respected by his colleagues. Steve Sack of the Star-Tribune recently said, “He revolutionized the way American’s look at cartoons. He’s at the top of the business in every way.” Many others agree, after the seventies the editorial cartoon was a new breed, and Pat Oliphant led the way (Hess, 115).

There are many artists I have not mentioned that have highly influenced the discipline. Jim Borgman and Jeff MacNelly both began to develop in the 1970’s, and they highly influenced the form of the political cartoon. Their styles have become mimicked time and time again. Borgman still draws at the Cincinnati Enquirer. All of the historical cartoonists I mentioned have done their part in advancing the art in editorial cartoons. Franklin and Nast took the first step in developing successful graphic and conceptual techniques. Then Mauldin and Herblock rose to the top of the industry and set the conceptual standard for post WWII cartoonists. Finally, when the advances in the discipline reached a plateau in the 1970’s, Oliphant utilized his foreign perspective to revolutionize the industry once again.

## **A Look Around the Room**

The realm of editorial cartooning today is a much different place than it was in the past. The great artists of the past, who were mentioned in the previous section, had raised

the bar with each innovation in technique. Today, it is much harder to be a cartoonist. The competition is fiercer than it was in the past, and editors are more likely to use syndicated artists (Devericks interview). There are eight major syndicate groups in America, and they are responsible for deciding which cartoonists are printed on a national level. However, papers that only use syndicated cartoons do not provide a cartoon with a local perspective, which is a disservice to the readership.

With that said, the cartoonists I will discuss in this section are all very talented and influential in their own ways. This examination is very brief, and unfortunately there are many talented artists that are not mentioned. Also, Pat Oliphant and Jim Borgman could technically be included in this section, since they are still considered by many to be right at the top of the field.

First of all, Tom Toles, who began drawing at the *Courier Express* in Buffalo in the 1970's, has gained much respect over the years. In 1982, he began drawing for the *Buffalo News*, where he eventually won a Pulitzer in 1990. Sometime after Herblock suddenly died of a heart attack in 1993, Toles was chosen to take his place at the *Washington Post*, arguable the best position for an editorial cartoonist (aaec website).

He was originally an illustrator, until he researched the history of editorial cartooning at the University at Buffalo and developed his own unique style. His cartoons are considered to be minimalist, in terms of form. He uses very few lines to create characters, and breaks things up with the occasional grid-like crosshatching (Hess, 137). When asked how he stumbled onto his unique and abstracted style, Toles claimed that he lacks the ability to draw with the detail and skill of other cartoonists. However, many of his contemporaries like Steve Sack, insist that he is being modest and that his style works perfect for his cartoons (Sack interview). Actually, the *Washington Post's* decision to hire Toles was somewhat controversial in the industry. Artists like David Horsey argue that Toles simply does not draw well enough to hold the highest job in the business

(Horsey interview). This tension addresses the role of the graphic art dimension, which will be assessed in Part IV.

Because of his minimalist style, Toles is often forced to draw in strip format, which really makes Toles a hybrid in terms of format. The editorial strip cartoon is a relatively new phenomenon. This began to become a trend after Gary Trudeau won the first Pulitzer awarded to a strip in 1975 for his cartoon series 'Doonesbury' (Press, 333). Now, many artists make a living drawing editorial comic strips. 'Boondocks', by Aaron McGruder, has begun to pop up in the funny pages of newspapers across America.

Other syndicated strip artists such as Tom Tomorrow and David Reese have taken the route of alternative presses and magazines. These two artists are also part of a postmodern art trend within cartooning. Tom Tomorrow's approach with his strip, 'This Modern World', is to decompose the views of today's society and to present them in a completely rearranged manner. The form of his art resembles the pop art of Andy Warhol, and his characters look like stereotypical 1920's Americans. Tomorrow's characters blindly support the leaders in charge of the country, and always in the face of some injustice. He presents political events of the time in such a black and white world in order to illustrate how absurd things actually are in reality.

Among single panel cartoons, there is a group of artists who have developed highly original drawing styles over the past few decades. The first of the three is Michael Ramirez. When he first emerged in the late eighties and early nineties, his style resembled that of Borgman and MacNelly. However, over the years he has developed a rather unique and beautiful drawing style. Many of his contemporaries, including David Horsey, Eric Devericks, and Clay Bennett, all agree that the form of his work is simply breathtaking (interviews).

Ramirez's drawings are extremely intricate and rich in texture, but they still remain cartoon-like in style. The environments he creates are uniquely dense in detail and realistically rendered. This quality of his cartoons is peculiar, considering the trend

toward a more abstract sketch embodied by Toles's minimalist work. Furthermore, one would think that these backgrounds are so full of objects that they would create clutter and distract from the content and concept of the cartoon. But this is not the case because Ramirez cleverly leaves an uncommonly large buffer of white space between the objects important to the cartoon and the environment. This does a wonderful job of grabbing the viewer's attention and holding it. His cartoons hold the viewer's focus for longer than most cartoons because after understanding the point of the cartoon, the viewer is free to admire the artistry. He also gets away with such rich backgrounds by contrasting them with the exaggerated look of the characters in the cartoons, which also attracts the viewer's attention ([www.cagle.com](http://www.cagle.com)). All of these techniques used by Ramirez illustrate the importance of design and form in the successful cartoon.

Ramirez has certainly been rewarded for these innovations. He now works for the *Los Angeles Times* and has a Pulitzer. Even though the Pulitzer is considered the highest honor a cartoonist can receive, the best in the business aren't always recipients of the prize. For instance, Steve Sack is greatly respected by his peers, but he is yet to be awarded one.

Sack is the next influential artist, and tends to be underrated. He is the artist's artist, meaning that his colleagues tend to respect him more than his readers do. He originally became known in the early eighties for his work on the *Star-Tribune*, in Minneapolis.

At first, like most other cartoonists, his style resembled that of Borgman and MacNelly. So the form of his work wasn't what made him stand out originally. It was his ideas. Sack frequently looked to Hollywood for inspiration, playing off of the latest blockbuster hit. For instance, in 1987 he drew a series of four movie parodies in response to President Reagan's Iran scandal. One of the more memorable was a spoof on the movie *Platoon* entitled 'Buffoon.' The form of the cartoon was modeled after a movie poster, and it featured Reagan in a military outfit shooting himself in the foot. There

were also several little jokes in the script of the cartoon, which added to the pun. Later Sack also drew parodies of movies such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Tales from the Crypt* and *Home Alone II* (Fischer, 129).

Sack's allusions to Hollywood entertainment proved to be extremely effective. Essentially, Sack was exploring the technique of fusing popular culture with a political event. He was by no means the first to do this. Actually, Ben Franklin's famous 'JOIN or DIE' cartoon utilized this technique, but Steve Sack was the one to exploit it. The reasons why this innovation was and is so effective will be addressed in Part IV, in the assessment of the conceptual art dimension.

More recently, Sack became known for his unique drawing style, in addition to his conceptual creativity. Now, through his cartoons, he has beautifully crafted a three-dimensional cartoon universe. In the past Sack stuck to ink, but now he achieves a greater sense of depth in his work because of his transition to charcoal and pencil. It is as if you could reach out and touch the characters in his cartoons ([www.cagle.com](http://www.cagle.com)).

Artists also look to the form of his art for inspiration because of his brilliant blending of caricature and cartoon. One must understand that the art of caricaturing is different from the art of cartooning. Generally, cartoons are more abstracted and simplified than caricatures. It is frequently challenging for artists to incorporate caricature into their cartooning style. Clay Bennett believes that Sack has blended the two as well as anyone in the business could (Bennett interview).

Bennett himself is skilled at this technique, which is one of the reasons why I chose him to be the third highly influential single panel cartoonist. Bennett is probably the most original of the three, in terms of both form and concept. In 1981, his first cartooning job was at the *Saint Petersburg Times* in Florida. At this point, his cartoons were not much different from others in the field. However, there were traces of his current style of form, such as his smoothly drawn people that were rather mild in exaggeration.

The big change came when he got fired after thirteen years because his new editor didn't like his views. He bought a computer to type resumes and he quickly learned Photoshop in his spare time. After getting a job drawing for the *Christian Science Monitor*, he began to do most of his work on the computer. The outlines of the cartoons are hand drawn, but the coloring and detail work is added on the computer.

The result of this technical innovation was a sharp cartooning style resembling still shots from a full feature cartoon movie set in the 1940's. His art has a very soft feel, producing a subtle punch. The rest of his colleagues that stick to black and white images have a more striking form, which works for very striking concepts. But Bennett's style is effective because his concepts are very subtle and uniquely clever. Because he works for the *Christian Science Monitor*, Bennett had to concentrate more on subtle unique concepts, rather than other methods such as shock value, controversy, etc. Part of the reason for Bennett's unique concepts is because of the paper he works for. Mike Ritter, cartoonist for the *Arizona Tribune* and current president of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, argues that one of the major reasons that Bennett is so original is because of the conditions he works in (Appendix B).

The *Christian Science Monitor*, unlike most big publications, restricts the freedom of the editorial cartoonist (this issue of editorial restrictions will be addressed in Part IV). Bennett says that he has almost total freedom, and that is good enough for him. His editor at the Monitor doesn't necessarily care what he says, but his editor does care how he says it. Because it is a Christian publication, he must use tasteful concepts to deliver his message. This is tough because many cartoonists, and I am guilty of this at times, rely on shock value to deliver a strong punch of a message. This is seemingly a limitation for Bennett, but it has actually turned out to nurture his originality.

He often carries out this technique by using common real life analogies, such as building a house or fishing. On the other side of the conceptual coin, Steve Sack almost always bends the rules of reality with his cartoons. For instance, both artists addressed



the bleakness in the job market earlier this year (refer to Appendix A). Sack depicted the job market as a sloth sleeping in a tree and Mr. Bush's tax cuts as the sloth's new running shoes. Sack showed Bush standing on the ground, expecting the shoes to make the sloth run. This is a very surreal scene, but it is a great concept and fits with Sack's style.

Bennett's cartoon depicted the job market as a lonely shriveled hot dog on a big grill, and he showed many people surrounding the grill with empty hot dog buns. This concept was also very good, but it was a real life analogy and typical of Bennett's style.

Sack's surreal approach is effective because it is shocking and unexpected, but Bennett's realistic analogies work because most people can relate to them. In 2002, Bennett's originality finally paid off by winning him a Pulitzer.

The innovations of the artists mentioned above, plus many others, have further advanced the craft of editorial cartooning. Notice that nearly all of the innovations were of the graphic art dimension and the conceptual art dimension. This shows that the art in editorial cartoons is what has been advanced since the days of Thomas Nast. Ultimately, the roles and importance of all three dimensions must be assessed in order to better understand the editorial cartoon. However, before this is done, a look at what the artists themselves think will be insightful in the analysis of the elements of the cartoon.

### **PART III – AN ARTISTS PERSPECTIVE: The Interviews**

One of the major problems with theoretical investigations of art is that there is often a gap between the theory and the actual process of an artist. This is not always true. Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, was an excellent theorist and practitioner of his craft of architecture. But editorial cartoonists are seldom considered to be theorists. Many cartoonists have a wonderful understanding of the discipline, but in my research I have

not come across a theoretical book on editorial cartooning written by a working artist. Furthermore, most theorists of the craft have degrees in history and political science, not art. As a working editorial cartoonist myself, this problem was one of many reasons why I wrote this thesis in the first place.

In this section, I have interviewed some of the foremost cartoonists today, two of them being mentioned in the previous section, and asked them about the issues under discussion here. Their opinions give a vital perspective into the theoretical arguments, making them relevant to the process of cartooning.

## **Eric Devericks**

In 2001, Eric Devericks won the John Locher Memorial Award for his work at Oregon State University. This is most prestigious honor a college cartoonist can receive in North America. The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists currently sponsors the award along with several other groups. Within a year of receiving the honor, Devericks was offered a fulltime position at the Seattle Times, where he currently works.

When I contacted Devericks about the thesis, he responded hastily. “Everyone will disagree with you. It is journalism because the message is more important than the art,” he said. So implicit to his statement was the assumption that the editorial cartoon is broken into two parts, being the form and content. I have shown in the first two parts that this is inadequate, and that concept is needed. Also, it is ironic that he calls cartooning journalism when form and content are distinctions of art.

In defense of his assertion, he explained, “What you are saying is more important than how it looks.” It was clear from this point that he did not consider the concept of the cartoon, which is inherent to the art form. Months earlier I had gotten cartooning tips from him over the phone. Interestingly enough, all of the advice he had given me was meant to improve the form of my cartoons. So with this in mind, I then asked him what the role of art was in cartoons. He referred to the art as the vehicle for the message, and so it must be used to convey the message in the best possible way. In other words, he confessed that the success of the cartoon does depend on how you present your message. Here he implicitly acknowledged the importance of concept.

Next I questioned him about the function of editorial cartooning. He thought that it was to uncover the greater political truths, and that it was serious. Then, he explained that there is a debate among most professionals on the function of cartooning. Devericks said that it could be thought of as a spectrum, with very serious cartoonists on one end, and very gag oriented cartoonists on the other. This variety of functions within the field, as I mentioned in Part I, helps make it an art form. Art does not have a definable function or purpose, and neither does editorial cartooning.

When asked about his favorite cartoonists, he mentioned Steve Sack, Michael Ramirez, Jim Borgman and David Horsey. Devericks said that these were some of his favorites because he liked their drawing style. Also, in response to my last question he told me if he couldn’t be a cartoonist he would be a graphic designer, which is what he went to college for. His responses seemed to be contradictory. If Devericks believes that editorial cartooning is journalism, and the message is most important, one would think that his favorite cartoonists would be the one’s that share similar views and express

similar messages. One would also assume that if Devericks couldn't be a cartoonist, he would be a journalist, not an artist.

## **Clay Bennett**

Devericks was wrong when he said that '*everyone* will disagree with me,' but many of the artists I interviewed did, including Pulitzer Prize winning Clay Bennett from the *Christian Science Monitor*. However, Bennett agreed with me more than Devericks.

At first, Bennett said that the "message is most important." Although, he claimed, the art can be the very important in some cartoons. In the spirit of a good cartoonist, he used an interesting analogy to explain his thoughts: "The editorial cartoon is like a little joke. The setup can be more important than the punch line." I like his analogy, but in the arguments of this thesis, the punch line would correspond to the concept, not the message. Since the concept is how the message is communicated, it delivers the punch.

Bennett wasn't quite sure if it is more a form of art than a form of journalism. He said it is both, but more than anything it is commentary. So this implies that he leans toward the journalism. However, his ideas on the function of editorial cartooning seem to suggest otherwise. Bennett thought, "The function is what you make of it. It is an expression of yourself in every way." This is very similar to the definition of art by the expression theory (refer to bottom of page 10). So Bennett would argue that editorial cartooning qualifies as art in terms of its form and its function, but it has the limitations of journalism.

## David Horsey

Next, I questioned David Horsey, the more famous of the Seattle based cartoonists. Interestingly, his comments were just as problematic. Horsey attended the University of Washington for Graphic Design, but after two years, he changed majors to Communications to be more marketable. Upon graduation, he worked as a local reporter for the Suburban Daily, and occasionally submitted an editorial cartoon. A few years later, a cartoonist position opened up at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and he was hired. He has stayed there ever since, and he has remarkably won two Pulitzers in the past four years.

When asked about the nature of the cartoon, Horsey responded in a similar fashion to Bennett, but with more assurance. He thought that it is commentary, in between art and journalism. “It can become an art if taken to the next level,” he said. But he believed the heart of cartooning to be opinion. Horsey then said he would be a reporter if he weren’t a cartoonist. So according to him, only the best cartoons can be considered art. That is a rather subjective statement, which is similar to what Ralph E. Shikes said about editorial cartoons at the end of Part I. Except Shikes provided criteria of form, concept and content. However, Horsey probably should’ve said cartoons can become *high* art if taken to the next level, considering the modern distinction between high art and low art.

The overall message from Horsey's answers was that editorial cartooning is not quite an art form. However, like the first two artists interviewed, his other responses implied the craft actually is an art.

Pat Oliphant, Jim Borgman and Michael Ramirez were some of Horsey's favorite cartoonists that he mentioned. What he liked about these artists was their appealing styles. I assumed that he was referring to their drawing styles because he added, "I always look at Ramirez's cartoons because even if I don't like the message his drawings are always amazing." So, good art is what attracts him to other cartoonist's work.

Other responses were even more perplexing. Horsey said that you need to be a good artist first, and he thinks Tom Toles is not a very good artist. He even went further in saying that he felt Toles is not a skilled enough artist to have been hired by the *Post*. Horsey explained, "People need to enjoy looking at the art. The better and more diverse you are as an artist, the more success you can have with your cartoons." Here is the problem. He talks of editorial cartooning as if it is an art form, yet he explicitly refers to it as a form of journalism.

## **Mike Ritter**

The last two cartoonists that I interviewed expressed opinions that explicitly supported this thesis. Although at first Mike Ritter seemed to disagree with me, by the end it was clear that he thought of the craft as an art form.

Ritter started drawing cartoons when he attended Arizona State University. As the staff cartoonist at the college's daily paper he won several Gold Circle Awards from Columbia University's Scholastic Press Association, including a first place for editorial

cartooning in 1990. In 1992, he started drawing for *Tribune Newspapers* in Phoenix, Arizona, and has been there ever since. He is now the current President of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists.

Ritter originally told me that art is important, but it is secondary to the idea of a cartoon. It seems that when he said *art*, he was referring to the *form* of a cartoon, because he separately addressed the idea. Also, he added that this all depends on what I actually refer to when I say art. So I explained how the art in a cartoon consists of conceptual and graphic art, and that the cartoon breaks down into form, concept and content. He responded, “I like that breakdown. It is probably the best way you could talk about cartoons. Then in that case, the concept is most important. It is vital.” Ritter thought that the conceptual art dimension is the dominant dimension, which implies he thought cartooning is an art.

In order to get a more explicit response, I asked him if cartooning was art or journalism. He said that cartooning is art and commentary. Then he explained how it is not journalism, “what we do is not journalism. Reporters investigate and present new information to the reader. We don’t do that; we make tons of assumptions.” Also, when asked about the function of editorial cartooning, Ritter differentiated the craft from opinion writers, “[editorial cartooning] is not to persuade anybody. That is the job of the editorial writer. Editorial writers use facts and evidence to prove their points. We just hook people in.” So it was clear at this point in the interview that he thought the craft is an art.

Ritter’s other responses also fell in line with the arguments of this thesis. One of his degrees is in Illustration, so he said that if he couldn’t be an editorial cartoonist he

would be a freelance artist. Also MacNelly, Oliphant and Bennett are some of his favorite artists because of their impressive drawings. He explained, “I’ve always been drawn to colleagues with really good artwork.” The previous cartoonists I interviewed also admired their peers that were skilled draftsmen. I found all of Ritter’s opinions to be very valuable, especially because of his authority as the AAEC President.

## **Steve Sack**

Like Clay Bennett, Steve Sack is considered to be one of the most influential cartoonists today. But despite the fact that he is highly admired by his peers, Sack has yet to receive a Pulitzer Prize. After Sack attended the University of Minnesota, he began to work for the *Star-Tribune*, where he has been ever since.

Unlike the other four cartoonists, Sack came right out and said that editorial cartooning “is art.” He defended his claim by showing that it is not journalism. Sack explained that editorial cartoonists lie, exaggerate and “read minds.” Journalists could not get away with this; they rely on facts.

According to Sack, there are three elements to a good cartoon, and they are all equally important. “There is the visual element, the idea element and the originality,” he declared. The message in the cartoon is slightly overlooked in this statement, because the content has to be intelligent and of importance to the reader, or nobody will be interested in the cartoon. But Sack’s argument stresses the vital importance of art. The “visual element” refers to the graphic art dimension, and the “idea element” equates to the conceptual art dimension. Originality can be relevant to all three dimensions.



Sack provided other responses that remained consistent. His favorite cartoonist was clearly Pat Oliphant. Oliphant's art skills were among the many reasons why Sack admired him. When not cartooning, Sack mentioned that he actually devotes his time to creating other artworks such as paintings and illustrations for personal enjoyment. Of all the cartoonists I talked to, in fact, Sack was the first to admit he is an artist, and the first to defend the editorial cartoon as an art form.

Both Ritter and Sack acknowledged the importance of aesthetics and agreed the craft is an art. But it is very interesting to observe that some of their well-respected colleagues disagreed with them. The contradictory nature of their responses causes me to question their reasoning. When one closely examines the cartoonist's interviews and artworks, it is apparent that the ones with inconsistent views, namely Devericks, Horsey and Bennett, all seem to fulfill a similar function. All three fall on the more serious end of the spectrum. Bennett even said that for him the purpose of editorial cartooning was to "change the world." On the other hand, Mike Ritter and Steve Sack do not think they are changing anybody's mind.

If these three artists are trying to change people's views and uncover greater political truths, then it is logical to assume that they want people to take the messages of their cartoons very seriously. Furthermore, to admit that editorial cartooning is an art form, as opposed to a form of journalism, is to take emphasis away from the content, or the journalism dimension. Thus, I conclude that these three artists are claiming that what they are doing is journalism, so that their readers consider them to credible journalists with valuable and important opinions. They are attempting to overemphasize the message,

which unfortunately causes them to explicitly underestimate how important art is to the craft, yielding their seemingly inconsistent responses.

## **PART IV – THE EDITORIAL CARTOON: Art & Journalism**

The cartoonist's opinions are the final piece to the ground on which the dimensions of graphic art, conceptual art and journalism, can be more fully explored. When we understand the roles of art and journalism this allows us to assess their importance. At the end of this section I will argue that the artistic elements of the editorial cartoon are dominant, justifying the discipline's existence as an art form.

When non-artists like political scientist and historian Charles Press attempt to describe the elements of a cartoon, they ignore or gloss over one of the most vital resources available, the process of cartooning. As a cartoonist myself, I keep this process in mind throughout this section.

Before directly analyzing the individual dimensions, it is wise to consider what has traditionally been found to be important in cartoons. To create a context for this section, I will look at the existing criteria needed for a good editorial cartoon.

### **The Mark of Success**

The terms for considering the worth of a work of art are often difficult to accurately define. However, there are official recognitions of editorial cartoons, as there are in many other fields. What makes a good editorial cartoon? When I say 'good', I

really mean successful, or better yet, effective. So the things that make an effective editorial cartoon are to be considered its most important elements. One way to discover the ingredients of an effective editorial cartoon is to examine the rubrics of the most prestigious awards.

The top award for editorial cartoonists is the Pulitzer Prize, which is like the Oscar for editorial cartooning. The Columbia University School of Journalism organizes the contest. The program began in 1918, but the editorial cartooning category wasn't added until 1922 (Press, 196). Originally the Prize was awarded for the single best cartoon of the year. Fortunately, in 1967 the organizers realized the importance of consistency and changed the award to best cartoon or collection of cartoons. Today, a Pulitzer submission consists of no more than twenty editorial cartoons.

The winner of the Prize emerges from a two-step process of judging. First, a group of four to six professional editorial cartoonists sift through all of the submissions for the year. Their job is to narrow down the entries, and filter out those without a chance of winning. There can be up to one hundred cartoonists that enter, so this is where the bulk of the judging takes place. Then this committee of artists passes on their recommendation to the advisory board, which is made up of fourteen experienced publishers and editors. The recommendation can be the name of one cartoonist, the names of many, or that no award should be given. In fact, since the inception of the program there have been five different years where no award was given for cartooning (Press, 197).

Having professional cartoonists involved in the process is supposed to ensure that the winner is respected by his or her colleagues. But it is ultimately the job of the

advisory board to select a winner, and they do not necessarily have to fall in line with the recommendation. Hence, some past winners have sparked controversy among many artists, and some respected artists have been overlooked for the award.

There are four rubrics used to judge the entries. According to the entry form found on the internet, the award is given “for a distinguished cartoon or portfolio of cartoons published during the year, characterized by originality, editorial effectiveness, quality of drawing and pictorial effect” ([www.pulitzer.org](http://www.pulitzer.org)).

One half of these rubrics specifically refer to the art in cartoons. It should be clear by now that the ‘art in cartoons’ is two dimensional, being both graphic and conceptual in nature. The “quality of drawing” rubric directly correlates to the quality of the cartoon’s form, which is part of the graphic art dimension. The “pictorial effect” refers to both of the graphic art and conceptual art dimensions. The concept used to visually convey the message (conceptual art) and the way in which the concept is drawn (graphic art) are both factors in the “pictorial effect.” This will be more clear when the roles of the dimensions are each fully assessed.

The art in cartoons is also involved in the remaining two rubrics. The “editorial effectiveness” rubric refers to all of the dimensions. The “editorial” part is found in the journalism dimension, which is obvious because the message of an editorial cartoon is always biased by definition. But the “effectiveness” part is found in the art dimensions. How the message is expressed (conceptual art), and how this expression is drawn (graphic art) both dictate how effective the message will be. Finally, the remaining rubric of “originality” also involves all three dimensions. A good cartoon must have a unique drawing style, idea and message.

So, art is found in more than half of the criteria needed to win a Pulitzer. Thus, simply by examining the rubrics of the Prize, one can infer that art is most important in a successful cartoon. However, it would be a mistake to assume that these rubrics accurately and fully describe the substance of a good editorial cartoon. There are other existing standards for a good cartoon.

Rubrics of other contests, such as the Editorial Cartoon Award for the Associate Collegiate Press (ACP), place slightly more emphasis on journalism than the Pulitzer does. Two of the four rubrics for the ACP Award deal with journalism in the cartoons. One is “clarity of message.” This requires that the editorial message of the cartoon is simple and concise, because complicated messages get confusing in cartoons. However, this rubric also deals with the art dimensions of the cartoon, because how the message is expressed dictates how clear it is. This rubric is similar to the “editorial effectiveness” rubric for the Pulitzer. Now the other journalism rubric for the ACP Award is purely journalistic. It is “relevance to community,” and it is needed in a successful cartoon. This specifically refers to the topic and message of the cartoon, which is found within the journalism dimension.

The theoretical writings on editorial cartoons, such as the work of Charles Press, also attempt to identify the successful cartoon. Press actually indirectly describes the successful cartoon by describing what it is not. He explains that it is impossible to fully describe it, because people’s “tastes and experience differ” (Press, 17). It is characteristic of any art form to be subjective in nature. This is precisely true with editorial cartoons, making it impossible to establish a universally objective judging scheme. However,

there does exist a rough consensus of what makes a good cartoon, and it is embodied in the rubrics of the top awards.

## **The Journalism Dimension**

The parts of journalism that do not apply to the editorial cartoon were illustrated in the section on the artist's perspective. Sack and Ritter explained that editorial cartooning is very different from reporting and editorial writing. Reporters present new information to the reader, where editorial cartoonists assume the reader already knows enough about the topic of the cartoon to immediately understand it. The editorial writer proves points with facts and evidence, where cartoonists tend to express their opinions with exaggerations. The biggest difference between cartooning and journalism is found in the process of each discipline. Journalists have to do some sort of investigating, whether it's to present the findings or to use the findings to prove an opinion.

There exists, however, a very small minority of professional cartoonists who investigate and present potentially new information to the reader. Ted Rall, a syndicated weekly cartoonist, is able to do this because drawing one cartoon a week gives him the time to investigate (Appendix B). Also, he draws in strip format, which allows him to present more information than his single panel colleagues can. This means that some cartoonists are more journalistic in nature than others. But the vast majority of professionals are single panel artists who react to headlines instead of creating them. And I would suggest that they operate under two deadlines, one, the deadline to present a certain number of cartoons each week, and two a more subtle deadline, to draw cartoons

about issues that have the public's attention. Furthermore, this variance in function, which has been mentioned several times before, is a characteristic of the discipline's artistic nature. Being an art form, editorial cartooning can fulfill various functions and purposes. The forms of journalism have very specific functions that define them.

Where journalism and cartooning overlap is in the realm of commentary. Essentially commentary is opinion. According to the New Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, commentary is "anything serving to illustrate a point, prompt a realization, or exemplify." The message of the cartoon is usually some form of commentary. But the message can venture beyond the bounds of commentary's definition. Sometimes the message of a cartoon, expresses an emotion of the cartoonist. This often happens when well-respected people pass away. For instance, many different cartoons simply drew a sincere portrait or caricature of Bob Hope in response to his death. It is clear from this example that editorial cartoons are not necessarily confined to the role of commentary.

The message of the cartoon does not need to comment on a specific event. Many cartoonists comment on contemporary life in general. A work of journalism does have an event that is associated with it. Charles Press explains, "a political cartoon need not be wholly journalism. It need not have a specific historical event tied to its tail like a tin can." The cartoon by Mike Ritter on the media's war coverage illustrates this point. He depicts a middle-aged father watching TV on the couch with a large bowl of popcorn. The father is calling to his family, 'Hurry up everybody, the war is started' ([www.cagle.com](http://www.cagle.com)). This is a comment on American's reaction to media war coverage in general, not on a specific event.

The notion of morality in the intentions of a cartoon has been briefly addressed in previous sections. Thomas Nast's Boss Tweed cartoons introduced the power of the moral imperative. Some cartoonists today, especially those of serious tone, would agree that morality is needed in good cartoons. Allen Nevins and Frank Weitenkampf, coauthors of A Century of Political Cartoons, also believe that an ethical purpose is important. They argue, "without moral earnestness no cartoonist is likely to give his work a quality of universality or permanency" (Nevins, 10). This may be true, but for the purpose of this thesis I am interested in what makes a cartoon effective, not permanent. Also, different people have different sets of moral beliefs, because some moral issues are really subjective. That is why in describing an effective cartoon I stop at opinion. Mike Ritter said,

Our ideas on an issue come from our backgrounds. I think the most important thing for an artist to do is develop a core of beliefs. You need a core of beliefs because if you don't have them then you're a late night cartoonist, and you won't last long (Appendix B).

True opinions come from one's core of beliefs. So if a cartoonist draws on a topic that he or she does not have a strong opinion on, it will most likely show through as a weak cartoon. Furthermore, cartoonists with a core of beliefs are usually opinionated about a lot of things, and this helps to inspire ideas consistently.

Editorial cartoon critics often think that for a cartoon to be successful, the topic of the message must be of lasting importance, meaning that the topic correlates to a historically significant event (Press, 23). I disagree, because those who hold this view are confusing the notion of *successful*, with *memorable* or *historical*. Historically memorable events certainly do not happen every day, but the best cartoonists are expected to draw good cartoons every day. If it were true that successful cartoons are



drawn on topics of lasting importance, then cartoonists that work during times of great turmoil and injustice have an unfair advantage, and this is not the case. Actually, cartoons that are remembered because of their historical topics are not always the most successful cartoons, even though they may be among the more memorable of them.

The success of a cartoon is not contingent upon the historic importance of the topic, as long as the topic is relevant to the reader. However, it is contingent to how the cartoonist cleverly expresses his or her views, which is found in the art dimensions. It is often true that times of great historical importance inspire some of the best cartoons. This is simply because good ideas usually come out of topics that invoke strong personal opinions of the artist, which is common during upsetting times (Press, 24).

To be effective, there are two criteria of content for a cartoon, which were seen earlier in the rubrics of the top awards. They are that the message is (1) clear and (2) relevant to the readership. An opinionated message is part of the definition of the editorial cartoon, so it is assumed and not included in the criteria. The basic role of journalism in cartoons can be extracted from these criteria. This role is to provide a clear and relevant opinion of the cartoonist to the reader. The bulk of the criteria for an effective cartoon are found in the art dimensions.

## **The Art Dimensions**

Through the previous sections, the art of the cartoon has been divided into the graphic art dimension and the conceptual art dimension. I have grouped them together

here in order to illustrate the overall role and importance of art. However, each of the two dimensions has its specific function and significance.

The graphic art dimension is the most obvious art dimension since it can be seen as the form of the cartoon. Even though it is important, I am arguing that form is secondary to the conceptual art dimension.

The role of the graphic art dimension is found in the formal theory of art. From this theory, a set of generally accepted techniques and principles has been developed and utilized in the art world. These artistic tools, so to speak, are fairly agreed upon and taught in art schools across the country, but there are some discrepancies. I am referring to the Elements and Principles of Design specifically used in creating two-dimensional art. There are usually seven elements and seven principles. A complete discussion of design theory is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will simply highlight the most important formal concepts used in creating a successful editorial cartoon.

The elements of design are considered to be the basic building blocks of art. They are line, shape, value, color, form, texture and space. The composition of a work of art is the arrangement of all of the identifiable elements in the form. All of these elements can be found in the form of editorial cartoons, including color. Even though color may be the least important element to editorial cartoons, most strip artists tend to use color on a regular basis. Also, color is usually found in the internet versions of many single panel cartoons, including the works of Clay Bennett and Ann Telnaes. Line is the most fundamental of the elements, because all cartoons begin with line. Cartoonists use lines to create the shapes, values, forms, and textures that compose their works.

The two most commonly used lines in cartoons are hatched and crosshatched lines. Hatched lines are thin lines drawn close together and parallel to each other. Crosshatched lines are hatched lines that crisscross. Hatched and crosshatched lines create texture and the appearance of form and space. Space is the illusion of a three-dimensional volume created on a two-dimensional surface, and form is a three-dimensional shape in this space. Many cartoonists create a sense of form and space, and they do this in two different ways. Applying a type of hatching (regular or crossed) to a shape is the most common way it is accomplished. Other cartoonists create form and space by employing value, another element of design. For most artists, this is the use of a gray marker or a computer program to shade the objects in the composition. There are even some artists that use both value and hatching together.

The principles of design are produced in a work of art by manipulating the elements of design. They are rhythm, balance, emphasis, contrast, movement, pattern and unity. Balance, emphasis and unity are the most important principles utilized in editorial cartoons. Balance and unity produce an aesthetically pleasing composition, while emphasis focuses the viewer's attention on the most important parts of the cartoon. This is vital, because an effective cartoon must grab the viewer's attention and communicate the message in a matter of seconds. The principles of design make this possible.

The placement of objects in a composition produces balance or imbalance. The objects in a balanced work of art effectively fill the composition without crowding it. If a composition is balanced, it can either be symmetrical or asymmetrical. To identify the balance of a work of art, one must imagine folding the work in half along a vertical axis.

If the objects on each half roughly match in position and size, then the balance is symmetrical. If not, it is asymmetrical. Some of the more interesting compositions are asymmetrical balanced, because a sense of movement is created in such a composition. This movement guides the viewer's eye. So cartoonists often use asymmetrical balance to guide the viewer's attention to the punch line of the composition.

Asymmetrical balance can often create emphasis, which is the second major principle of design found in cartoons. When manipulated appropriately, the elements of a composition can produce a dominant focal point. This is the function of emphasis. As I mentioned in the artist's perspective, Michael Ramirez does this extremely well by leaving large buffers of white space around the important objects in his cartoons. This technique successfully creates emphasis because the white buffer next to the important objects produces the largest area of value contrast. Emphasis can also be used to grab the reader's attention.

The third principle of design found in cartooning is unity. This principle is achieved in a work of art when all of the elements in the composition work together. Being unified means that each part of the artwork fits in with the rest of the piece. A cartoonist can unify his or her work by using a specific artistic technique throughout the composition. One common unifier is hatching. For instance, Tom Toles consistently infuses grid-like crosshatchings to the elements of his cartoons. Not only does this provide a sense of continuity, it is an identifying feature of his unique style.

Formal style, in general, is very important to a successful cartoonist. Style incorporates all three dimensions of the editorial cartoon, but formal style is different from conceptual and journalistic style. A cartoonist's formal style refers to the common

graphical characteristics of his or her artwork. Its purpose is to unify a body of work, but more importantly it is to distinguish one artist's work from another.

This is where the notion of originality finally comes into play. The originality of a cartoonist's style largely dictates the effectiveness of that style. Just look at the work of every professional editorial cartoonist out there. Each artist has a unique feel to the form, content and concept of his or her cartoons. The significance of originality is illustrated in awards rubrics such as the Pulitzer Prize. Also recall that Steve Sack said originality is one of three equally important elements in a good cartoon.

In terms of formal style, originality is important but not vital. Most accomplished cartoonists have unique form, however many cartoonists start out by mimicking the styles of others. There are two main reasons why original form help make a cartoon more effective. The first reason is that original graphic art catches the viewer's attention. This obviously contributes to the effectiveness of a cartoon, because a cartoon that people do not notice is going to fail. The second reason original form works is because the form of a cartoon is the vehicle for the concept and the message. This means that the style of the form has an affect on the tone of the cartoon's message. Thus an original form helps create a unique voice for a cartoonist.

In order to have a successful style, one must utilize the elements and principles of design. So it is now clear that general formal design plays a powerful role in the success of an editorial cartoon. I learned first hand just how formal techniques could improve the quality of my own cartoons.

In April of 2003, I informally contacted Eric Devericks of the *Seattle Times*, to talk about cartooning and to get some pointers. This was well before I interviewed him

for this thesis. In retrospect, I find it interesting that just about everything we talked about would fall under the graphic art or the conceptual art dimensions. Mainly, he gave me tips on the form of my cartoons, most likely because he must have known that an artist can teach a fellow artist to have better technique. The other elements, originality and good conceptual design, are not something that can be taught.

Devericks, who has an art degree in Graphic Design, gave me a formal design critique of my cartoons. This helped me immensely. His first observation was that when he looked at my cartoons, his eyes would dart all over the place. He informed me that this is because I do not successfully create points of emphasis. My cartoons were very flat and washed out looking, composed of lines with similar thickness and with no black space. He said that high contrast is attractive, so I should use much more ink. Also, by putting black space in the cartoon, a better sense of visual form and space will be created.

Composition, which is the way the form of the cartoon is laid out, is very important to pay attention to in a good editorial cartoon. Devericks told me “everything in the composition of a cartoon must have a purpose.” The great cartoonists of the past knew this, especially Herblock. Anything that is put into a cartoon for no reason must be removed in order to keep the message concise.

He also told me to always choose the best visual perspective for the cartoon. My cartoon entitled ‘Christmas Wants’ did not have the best possible perspective. It depicted a scene at a checkout line, where a ‘typical’ American was buying tons of materialistic gifts. The checkout lady was asking ‘did you find everything you **need**?’ as a middle-eastern lady in rags was waiting behind the American with a small bag of fruit. However, the gifts were slightly blocked by the people in the composition because the visual

perspective was a profile of the checkout lane. If I had illustrated the scene from above the gifts, I could have emphasized just how unnecessarily large the stack of gifts were. It is important to note, that what Devericks taught me was not a formula for a successful cartoon. Rather, he was able to show me where my cartoon had not taken full advantage of my own conceptual frame.

This experience with Devericks highly influenced my formal style. After conferring with him I took all of his advice, and now my cartoons demand to be examined (refer to Appendix A). My experience and study have convinced me that the importance of graphic art in editorial cartooning needs to be understood. Overall, the form of a successful cartoon must have three things. It must be attractive, purposeful and original. Attractive cartoons are pleasing to observe and are not ignored by viewers. Purposeful form effectively communicates the message of the cartoon, and reinforces the role of originality and graphic design.

The conceptual art dimension is the heart of an editorial cartoon. Without a good idea a cartoon flops. Rollin Kirby, a well-known cartoonist, he knew the importance of the concept early in the cartoon's history. In 1918 he said, "A good idea has carried many an indifferent drawing to glory, but never has a good drawing rescued a bad idea from oblivion" (Hess, 11). The concept is the way in which the message is expressed, and it is the most creative dimension in the cartooning process.

The first step in the cartooning process is journalism. As I said before, most cartoonists read what is out there and then react. Some may investigate. Either way, this part of the process is research oriented. Once the cartoonist finds a topic he or she wishes to express an opinion about, the message is established. The graphic art process of

rendering the final work is more creative but is also very tedious and mundane. This is especially true of established artists that have very consistent formal styles. The real creative challenge is involved in the middle step, which is the conceptual art dimension.

I have argued that some dimensions of cartooning cannot be taught or formalized. This makes creativity one of the most difficult dimensions to discuss theoretically. This dimension works on the theoretical level largely in the way we are taught to be creative early in life; cartoonists, like school children in art class, ‘brainstorm’ to get ideas, concepts and expressions. It is an accepted fact that an editorial cartoonist must be clever or witty. An editorial cartoonist tries to capture a clear way to express the message by coming up with as many ideas and drawings as possible, and choosing the best ones.

The idea must also be appropriate, meaning that it must maintain the integrity of the message. In other words, an appropriate concept expresses the intended message without distorting it. Also, cartoonists try to avoid ideas that are open to interpretation. Such vague ideas are also inappropriate, since the purpose of the concept is to express the message.

Of course, style and originality apply to the conceptual art dimension. Conceptual style is the tendency of an artist to use certain types of ideas. For example, Clay Bennett’s style is to use real life concepts to convey his messages. This is different from Steve Sack’s conceptual style, which is to use surreal metaphors to communicate his messages.

Originality is a huge part of the conceptual art dimension. It is absolutely vital for the concept of an effective cartoon to be original. This is implicit to this dimension because conceptual art itself is defined by originality. If a cartoon has a recycled



concept, there at least needs to be a new twist or the cartoon packs no punch. An original concept is a novel interpretation of an event or opinion, making it intellectually interesting for the viewer. This is what people want to get out of editorial cartoons when they look at them. If a cartoon presents something in a completely recycled manner, then the form is really the only valuable dimension. Thus, a cartoon without an original idea provides no new intellectual value and is ineffective.

So there are three conceptual elements in the successful cartoon. The concept must be witty, appropriate, and original. This dimension is central to the successful editorial cartoon, and originality can be used to show this. The message of a cartoon does not have to be unique to be successful. In fact, some issues have only two sides that can be upheld by a cartoon. Also, The look of a cartoon does not need to be original in an effective cartoon. As long as the form is attractive and purposeful, it can resemble the styles of other cartoonists. However, the idea used to express the message has to be a novel interpretation in order for the cartoon to be of high quality. The domineering power of the conceptual art dimension is the primary force behind an editorial cartoon's effectiveness.

## **PART V – Final Thoughts**

There are many elements of the editorial cartoon that were not fully assessed in the arguments of this thesis. Humor is one of the more influential substances in the craft, but its role was not evaluated. Developing a complete breakdown of the nature of the editorial cartoon would be a colossal task that is beyond the purposes of this thesis.

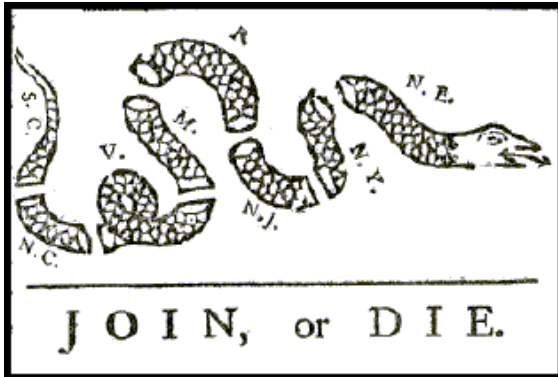
However, the roles and significance of the three largest dimensions of the craft were thoroughly assessed. Thus, the question of whether editorial cartooning is a form of art or journalism is resolved. It is clearly an art.

First, I provided five widely accepted definitions of art, and explained how the editorial cartoon can fit into all of them. From here, I examined the progression of the craft, and showed that its growth over the years was in the dimensions of art. Then the artist's perspective provided a necessary connection between the practice and the theory of cartooning. Finally, the roles of the three dimensions were fully explored, uncovering the authority of the conceptual art dimension. Thus, both art dimensions together clearly dominate over the journalism dimension.

Abstracting an art form such as this into three distinct parts fails to fully depict how all of the ingredients intermix with each other. The three dimensions that I addressed all depend on each other in different ways. The form expresses the message, but it needs the concept in order to do so. The message cannot be communicated without the other two, and by itself the concept is purposeless. The interrelationships of these and other elements of the editorial cartoon are currently uncharted territories. Future work is quite necessary if this rich art form is to be fully understood.

## APPENDIX A – Cartoon Galleries

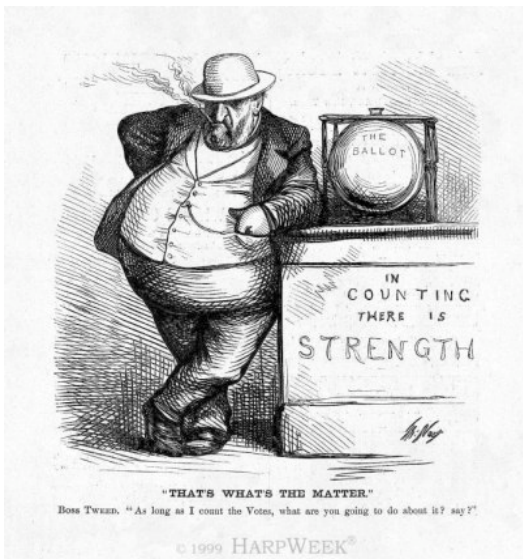
### A Highly Subjective Historical Gallery



Ben Franklin



Thomas Nast



Thomas Nast – Boss Tweed



Bill Mauldin – Willy and Joe



Bill Mauldin



A stunning blend of word and picture for a metaphor of threatened freedom

Herblock



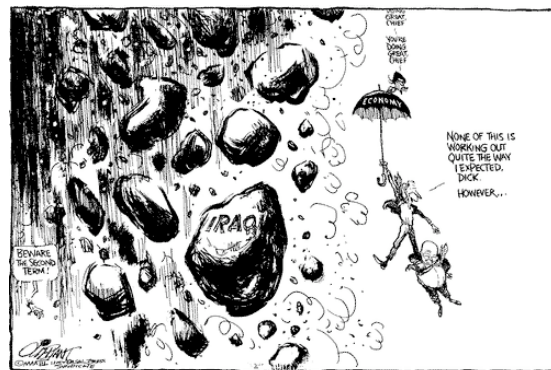
Herblock



Pat Oliphant



Pat Oliphant



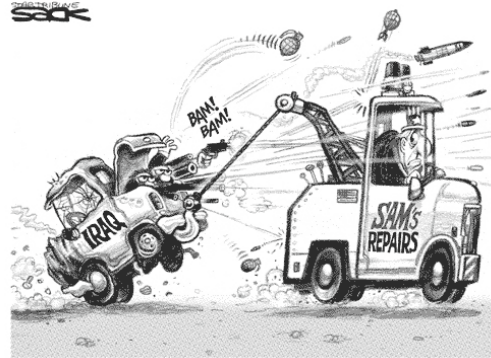
Pat Oliphant



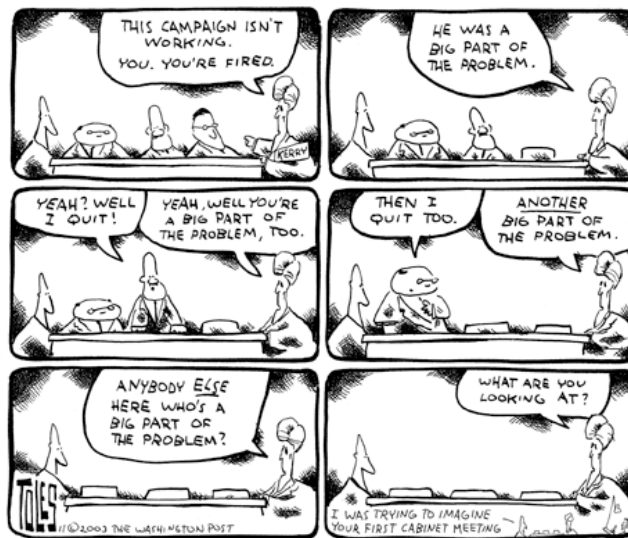
## A Highly Subjective Contemporary Gallery



Steve Sack



Steve Sack



Tom Toles



Michael Ramirez



Michael Ramirez



Steve Sack



Clay Bennett



Tom Tomorrow



Clay Bennett

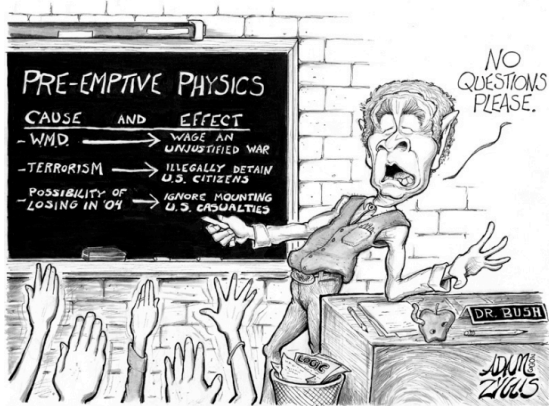


Clay Bennett



## A Personal Gallery







## **APPENDIX B – Full length Interviews**

### **Eric Devericks – Interviewed September 18<sup>th</sup> 2003**

*When did you know when you wanted to be an editorial cartoonist?*

Well, I went to Oregon State for Graphic Design, and I was always into drawing and politics since I was young. I actually changed my major over to Graphic Design after the first year. But anyway, when I was a senior I won the John Locher Award, which eventually led to me getting hired at the (Seattle) Times. And here I am.

*How has your work changed over time?*

Yeah, I don't know if you have seen my website, but I have some really old cartoons still posted there, God I have to remember to take them off. I was really sort of blind to my problems. Um, the biggest problem I recall that I had was in my text. I never really took the time to write out my text properly, and actually most younger artists don't spend enough time on text. Anyways, my writing was kind of sloppy, and the text bubbles around the words were far too close to the words themselves. After this was pointed out to me, I measured out my text lines with a ruler, and I developed a font that was natural to me. But, in developing your own text style, make sure that the hand written font you create adheres to your artistic style. I also made sure to let the text breath. Leaving a large margin of white space around your text is a good thing.

*Is editorial cartooning art or journalism?*

If you are arguing that it is mainly art, everyone will disagree with you. It is journalism because the message is more important than the art. In the cartoon, what you are saying is more important than how it looks.

*What is the role of art in your cartoons?*

Art functions as the vehicle. The message is carried and delivered by the art, so you must use the art effectively. Being good at drawing is a given. You have to be good to make it these days.

*What is the function of editorial cartooning?*

I draw cartoons to uncover political truths, and present them. Actually, there is a rift in the cartoonists in the field. On the one end, you have serious artists, who are very into saying what needs to be said. These artists can be funny, but only if you like making fun of people. I tend to fall more on this end. Then on the other end, there are gag artists like Mike Luchovich, who kind of make a joke of what we're doing. A lot of people despise Luchovich.

*Which cartoonists do you admire most and why?*

God, there really are so many artists I like. Let me see... you have Steve Sack, David Horsey, Michael Ramirez's work is amazing, and of course there is the great Jim Borgman. I guess I like these guys because they have really appealing drawing styles.

*Which cartoonists do you admire most and why?*

If I couldn't be a cartoonist I would be a graphic designer probably, because that's what I went to school for.

## **Clay Bennett – Interviewed September 19<sup>th</sup> 2003**

*When did you know when you wanted to be an editorial cartoonist?*

When I was about five years old I knew that I wanted to be a cartoonist. Political cartoons? I probably knew when I was around fourteen years old. My Dad was a lifer in the army. He was real analytical. Now he is a retired Democrat.

*How has your work changed over time?*

Well I utilize the computer nowadays. My first cartooning job was at the Saint Petersburg Times in Florida. It was a real liberal newspaper. Everything was hand drawn at this point. I wasn't required to conform to the editorial page, but even so there was no real discrepancy in our views. Each paper has its own policy. Some cartoonists are given complete freedom, and others are treated more like editorial writers. So anyway, a new editor took over after thirteen years of drawing at the paper, and so there was a change in direction. He was real conservative, and I wasn't. He didn't like my ideas, and I was fired from the Times in 1994. After that I sort of sheepishly got on computers. I originally bought a computer after I was fired for resumes and things like that. About mid 1995, I acquired Photoshop, and I taught myself how to use the program. So I have used Photoshop to create my cartoons since I have worked here at the

(Christian Science) Monitor. Now the Monitor gives me freedom, but not one hundred percent. They take issues on a day-to-day basis; sometimes they don't like the tone. But at this point I don't keep anybody in mind but myself when I draw. It is very rare when they don't run a cartoon.

So this is when my cartoons changed. I first pencil the sketch on tracing paper. Then I ink it. I break up the composition into layers. I draw and scan in each layer separately, from the background to the foreground. This is how I achieve a sense of perspective or atmosphere.

*Do you venture into other art forms?*

Not recently, I was a commercial art and history major in college, so I have done some commercial art. Cartoons just naturally took over.

*What is the role of art in editorial cartoons?*

The message is most important, but art is certainly important. The editorial cartoon is like a little joke. The setup can be more important than the punch line. So sometimes the art can be more important. Step one is art. Once all of the elements are in line, a more successful cartoon can emerge. Now sometimes a cartoon is more successful with no words.

But art can be a crutch, or what you depend on when you don't have a good idea. In this case the angle, for instance, can be very important. One cartoon I drew was of a guy running after his car. The idea wasn't that great, but I portrayed him running after his car through the side mirror.

*Is editorial cartooning art or journalism?*

It is both art and journalism. It is really a form of commentary. I mean it depends on your definition of art. If you consider writing to be art, than it is really no different than editorial writing.

*What is the function of editorial cartooning?*

It's to change the world. I really take it seriously. It is my ongoing treatise about what's wrong with the society we live in. Now Mike Luckovich... some people say he is missing the point. But he is doing just what he should be doing. The function is what you make of it. It is an expression of yourself in every way, your politics, your aesthetics and your personality. Mike is meatier than what people think. There is an underlying substance. Originally I was more of a gag style cartoonist. Then I got more serious, now I have found myself somewhere in the middle. It's all about self-explorations.

*Which cartoonists do you admire most and why?*

Jeff McNally was a huge influence. I would hang up his work. I really admire it. Steve Sack is one of my favorites today. He has very original cartoons. He is very good at successfully incorporating caricature into his style. His concepts are always uniquely clever and usually pretty bizarre. Mike Ritter is also very good, and he's a great guy to talk to.

## **David Horsey – Interviewed September 20<sup>th</sup> 2003**

*When did you know when you wanted to be an editorial cartoonist?*

Early on I had an interest in politics. I worked on my high school newspaper, as a writer. I believe I drew some cartoons at that point. I ended up going to the University of Washington for Graphic Design. A few years in I changed my major to Communications. After school I started out as a reporter for the Suburban Daily, and I drew cartoons on the side. Then a few years went by, and a cartoonist position opened up at the P.I. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer).

*Which cartoonists do you admire most and why?*

I admire Pat Oliphant, Jim Borgman, Michael Ramirez, among others. I like them because they have really good styles. I always look at Ramirez's cartoons because even if I don't like the message his drawings are always amazing.

*How important is art in your cartoons?*

Well, you need to be a good artist first, to be a cartoonist. (When asked about Tom Toles) Toles is a good guy with good witty ideas, but his drawings aren't good. I guess he is a minimalist, and his consistency works for him. He is essentially a writer, and he is very dependant on good ideas. But I don't think his art is fun to look at, and I don't think newspaper readers think his art is good. People need to enjoy looking at the art. The better and more diverse you are as an artist, the more success you can have with your cartoons.

*Is editorial cartooning art or journalism?*

It is commentary. It is in between journalism and art. Opinion is at the heart of cartooning. It can become an art form if taken to the next level. But I am more of a journalist. I would be a reporter if I weren't a cartoonist.

*What is the function of editorial cartooning?*

It is to buy a new car. No, really... it's to stir up debate. (Editorial) Cartooning is engaging in the ongoing debate of politics. It is ultimately my personal expression of the world. Here I am given almost one hundred percent freedom. The best papers recognize that cartoonists should be given freedom. I fall on the serious end of the spectrum. Sometimes I wish I could be funnier. (Mike) Luckovich is on the other end, but he gets a bad rap. He takes it pretty serious. I think that he always has some underlying substance. Now Rogers in Pittsburgh is a real joker. He is just trying to make a joke of politics. But my idea of the function of cartooning is different from other people's ideas.

## **Mike Ritter – Interviewed November 19<sup>th</sup> 2003**

*When did you know when you wanted to be an editorial cartoonist?*

I always drew a lot when I was a kid, and my parents were very political. I think that is a big part of why cartooning was so attractive to me. And, again, I love to draw. Actually,

I love to be finished with a drawing. I drew cartoons in college, and then I started at the *Tribune* after college.

*Which cartoonists do you admire most and why?*

I've always been drawn to colleagues with really good artwork. But that is just because I love the art side of things. MacNelly is one of my all time favorites. I love Oliphant also. Clay Bennett is just brilliantly original. His art and his ideas are both original, and I think a big part of it is the situation he's in at the *Monitor*. His cartoons remind me of old movies that couldn't come right out and say things. They had to be real subtle when they alluded to sex and stuff. That's what Bennett's cartoons are like.

*What would you be if you couldn't be a cartoonist?*

I majored in History and Illustration in college, so cartooning is perfect for me. But I don't think I would be anything if I wasn't a cartoonist. I don't know... I would be a... street person, or something. I suppose if I got fired tomorrow I would do illustrations to pay the bills.

*How important is art in your cartoons?*

Art is important, but it is not most important. Your ideas are most important. It depends on what you mean by art. (I explain to him how I compose the editorial cartoon from three parts: form, concept and content) I like that breakdown. It is probably the best way you could talk about cartoons. Then in that case, the concept is most important. It is vital.



*Is editorial cartooning art or journalism?*

(Editorial) cartoons are art and commentary. Now journalism... you know, what is journalism? What we do is not journalism. Reporters investigate and present new information to the reader. We don't do that; we make tons of assumptions. Now Ted Rall is one of the exceptions, but most cartoonists don't have the time for that. He is weekly, and he has a strip so he can do that. It is commentary though. Our ideas on an issue come from our backgrounds. I think the most important thing for an artist to do is develop a core of beliefs. You need a core of beliefs because if you don't have them then you're a late night cartoonist, and you won't last long. (Asked about Mike Luchovich and Rob Rodgers) Those guys get a real bad rap. I really like their cartoons. They are funny, but they have beliefs.

*What is the function of editorial cartooning?*

First, I'll tell you what the function is not. It is not to persuade anybody. That is the job of the editorial writer. Editorial writers use facts and evidence to prove their points. We just hook people in. We get people involved and get them engaged. If people see a cartoon and they like it, they hang it on their office door, or their cubical. If not, they call in and complain. So we have to be able to defend our views in this case. They are black and white on gray issues, literally and figuratively. So people have to agree or disagree. They have got to be expressions of the artist. Cartoons crystallize and encapsulate ideas in an extreme form.

## **Steve Sack – Interviewed November 12<sup>th</sup> 2003**

*When did you know when you wanted to be an editorial cartoonist?*

As a boy, I remember that I always enjoyed looking at them. But it wasn't until college that I learned I could actually draw them for a living. I went to University of Minnesota, and I did part time illustrations for the daily. At one point I had to fill in for the cartoonist, and I never really stopped since.

*How has your work changed over time?*

I started out looking like MacNelly. Of course most people mimic other artists to begin with. I change styles often, and I think that's healthy. Now I use many different techniques. Sometimes I use pencil, sometimes charcoal, and even black colored pencil.

*Do you venture into other art forms?*

I occasionally paint for personal enjoyment. But that's it. I do some kid's stuff for the holidays, and maybe a freelance illustration here and there.

*Which cartoonists do you admire most and why?*

Pat Oliphant, by far, is the giant in the business. I remember admiring his art at a very young age, without even understanding he cartoons. He revolutionized the way American's look at cartoons. He's at the top of the business in every way.

*How important is art in your cartoons?*

There are three elements to an editorial cartoon, and they are all equally important. There is the visual element, the idea element and the originality. The art has got to be effective, you are only working with a little box.

*Is editorial cartooning art or journalism?*

It is art. Personally, I am an artist. Journalism is fact, and evidence. We read minds. We lie. All art is a lie. And in lying, or exaggerating, we find the greater truths. Furthermore, we react; we don't present new facts.

*What is the function of editorial cartooning?*

Everybody has their own personality. You must approach it in a real personal way. Some people tend to be more whimsical in reacting, while others tend to be more heavy. Getting involved in such a debate of which is better is pointless. It is what ever you want it to be.

*What would you be if you couldn't be a cartoonist?*

I always tell my wife I would be a wanderer. In college, I originally majored in self-selection, but when I transferred, U of Minnesota didn't have the major. So I kind of wandered around then too.

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