



Comic, city, action

A few obvious points to begin with: A) the culture of comics is essentially urban. B) Comics and cinema are two specific cultural contributions to the imaginary of the modern citizen. C) Imagining the future and evoking the past are the impulses which artistic creation is woven on. D) Comics speak volumes about the way the city of the past and the city of the future have been seen at every moment and, coming full circle, they have made a powerful contribution to our vision of them.

It is not surprising that we find in comics visions of cities which are familiar to us. Some of these cities are familiar because we have learned to imagine them as a result of comics; others are familiar because they have come to bear a strong resemblance to what comics had predicted.

The exhibition about cities and comics is the result of these obvious points. It is an exhibition which does not seek to reveal anything, but to show instead what may already be embedded in our mental universe. An exhibition which makes an inventory of all those exercises of imagination—both conventional and not so conventional—which have been performed from the city and which have made up its imaginary.

If, in accordance with the Faustian principle, we accept that modernity is action, then the city of the comic is a city completely reliant on action and performance. In short, with the comic, it is not so much that the city precedes the argument, but rather invents or looks for cities to fit the character and their action. The comic therefore subjects the city—the imaginary city of the modern citizen—to a dynamic of permanent change. It does not have the referential continuity of architecture (which draws attention to itself more through its presence rather than change) or the cinema's sense of a dynamic, yet closed work. The city of the comic is not a backdrop or a landscape, but the place which the action demands. And it is the capacity of action to demand—to transform—which explains why comics have, on occasions, premonitory virtualities.

The comic revives the invisible cities which inhabit its characters: it makes them emerge as the only possible space for the action of each individual. Their city, therefore, always reminds us of, or resembles, dreamt or lived cities, but it never does so in a manifest and specific way. There is always a distance between experience and the representation and the illusion.

This exhibition proposes a journey through the urban virtuality of the comic, created before virtuality formed part of our everyday vocabulary.