

Adventures in Comic Art January 2019



I just got back from the most amazing comic art trip I have ever taken and I thought I'd use that as a topic to write on for CFA-APA. The trip involved 4 cities in France and 2 in Italy in an 8 day whirlwind that left me art drunk and with empty pockets but also with memories and stories that I will always cherish.



This was a last minute trip that all came together because I was able to align a few stars. I had just been to my first Angouleme Comic Festival in 2018 and had planned on coming back a few times in the coming years but not this quickly. The Corben exhibition would have been great to see but then add to that a Manara and an 80th Anniversary of Batman exhibition in addition to another dozen or so exhibitions I was itching to go but wouldn't have gone for this alone. Then a friend mentioned an Alberto Breccia exhibitor in Toulouse that was on for a few weeks but was ending the weekend before Angouleme. Breccia is one of my favorite artists and his art is very difficult to find and so a chance to bathe in originals by Breccia was quite a strong factor in getting me to come back to France at the end of January. If I had come for these two things I'd have been left with three days to do other things and I wanted to make it comic art related and so I decided if I could tie one more amazing thing in between these two events, I would go and that amazing thing happened. More on that later. The plan had come together and now it was time to book tickets. First I booked the Angouleme Convention tickets, then the plane tickets, then the inter Europe flight tickets and trains. Next was finding a place to sleep at Angouleme and then finally a hotel for my last night in Paris. All the while I was conspiring with friends to

make each stop memorable and to have friends there to have fun with.

The day I left, I met up with a friend and fellow art collector here in Toronto for lunch and to look at talk art. I was giddy about the trip but also a little nervous as I usually am before such a complex trip as I worry something will go wrong and throw the whole thing off. After we had lunch, he dropped me off at the airport with my one suitcase. In it was a large, strong art tube that I brought specifically to carry art in to and from Europe. I got on an evening plane to Toulouse, France via a short stop in Frankfurt. As an aside, when I travel through Europe I always try to make my connections either through Brussels for the chocolates or Frankfurt for the wieners and beer at the airport. I had a few hours to kill in Germany and so I had a great sausage and beer while watching a Bayern Munich football/soccer game on TV. The flight to Europe was technically an overnight flight and I managed to get some sleep. From Frankfurt I caught a connector to Toulouse where I arrived just after noon and took the tram and metro into the city to meet up with Giovanni and Massimo, my two Italian buddies that came out to meet me and to



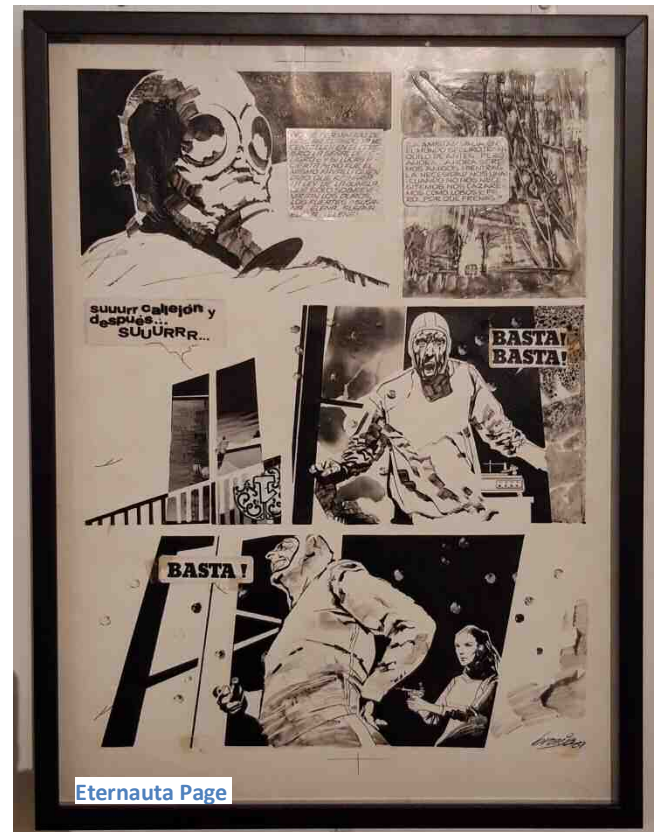
Max and I Outside Library, Toulouse



hang out for the weekend in Toulouse and to enjoy the Breccia exhibition. We dropped off my bags at the Airbnb flat we were renting and proceeded to the large library where the Breccia exhibition was being held. I had feared that because it was in a library, it might not be a great or large exhibition but I was very happy at the quality of the exhibition and the material they had managed to acquire to show.



The exhibition was in the basement of the library in large gallery space near the comics and children's section. It was well lit, airy and open. In addition to



Eternauta Page



Perramus Page

the artwork which was all nicely framed, there were many large images and wall murals to decorate the space. Several large showcases displayed vintage copies of rare first printings from Argentina of various books. The exhibition was a nice overview of the career of Alberto Breccia but seemed to focus on his best work which includes all of his works with Hector Germaine Osterheld as a writer and then his later experimental works. Please see my article on Breccia a few issues ago in CFA-APA to get the full overview of his career. There were pages from all of his most important works including *El Eternauta*, *Mort Cinder*, *Fables*, *Dracula*, *Perramus* and many others. For me, the most impressive pieces were the *Perramus* and *Eternauta* pages. The exhibition had many contributors but among them was the family/estate of Breccia and so some truly rare examples were on display for the first time. There has been controversy in the recent years about the possibility that the Breccia art in the hands of collectors is stolen and so many are hesitant to show their work. Several big collections in Italy were seized but it is my understanding that these have all since been returned and the concerns about theft and art seizure are dissipating. Of course, these concerns means that no one has seen Breccia art in public in years and a show like this without the family loaning art would not have been possible previously. It was a truly rare and remarkable show that we were

fortunate enough to stumble upon and worked out with all our plans.

After the exhibition, we walked around Toulouse and enjoyed the beautiful city but we were also there during the weekend of terrible unrest and Yellow Vest protests. We saw over 50 police vehicles at different times including water cannons. The police



were out in full force and in full riot gear. Many of the banks and other businesses that represent the establishment were vandalized with smashed windows, smashed and spray painted ATM's, many bus shelters were shattered and the main government building was vandalized with signs, spray paint and banners. The smell of tear gas was in the air. Although we never actually saw the protest, the aftermath and response was apparent and we did see the police dragging several people under arrest down the streets to jail. It was an interesting time to be in France. This was on the Saturday which is the big day for protest by the Yellow Vest movement and the timing of the protests are usually mid-afternoon to early evening as it was this time. The riots didn't affect our enjoyment of the beautiful city and the weather was quite nice.



After a nice dinner in small restaurant, we went back to the flat and talked for some time before heading to bed. The next day we got up and headed off to one of the main museums

in Toulouse to absorb some fine art and had a great time before heading back to the flat and then to the airport for a flight to Milan. It so happened we were all on the same and only flight to Milan that day via Easy Jet. Although I paid a bit more because I booked from overseas, the prices for flights can be incredibly low in Europe and my friends only paid 35 euros for return tickets from Milan to Toulouse and back again. In Milan, we said good bye to Massimo as he took a



bus back to his home in Torino and I headed back with Giovanni to his place in the old city. I was to be his guest.

I met Giovanni for the first time at Lucca 3 years ago. We had been to several mutual dinners and he



approached me to talk about Frank King art and we were instant friends. Since then we have talked on line a few times and when he wrote a book about Frank King, he included a chapter dedicated to my collection of Gasoline Alley dailies as he thought it was a perfect collection covering King's repertoire as an artist. I was certainly flattered. Giovanni is a very humble collector in that he has an incredible collection but speaks very modestly about it. The Krazy Kat Sundays and multiple McCay pieces he slowly showed me over the 3 day visit were incredible in addition to the hundreds of other pieces. I also learned about a few new artists who I

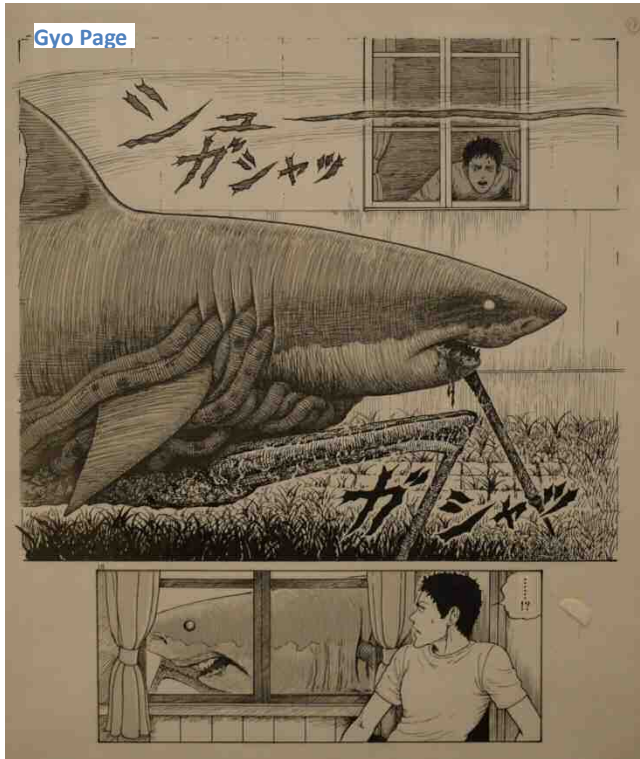


didn't know previously. One of my goals on this trip was to better appreciate Magnus as an artist. I know the Italians love his work but it seems to be something not as cultivated outside of Italy. Thanks to some teaching and help with an overview of his career, I am starting to come around on Magnus.

The first day in Milan involved a bit of sightseeing with Martina, Giovanni's wife. The initial plan was the first day I'd go to Verona for the meeting I will tell you about in a moment and the second day would be spent in Milan with Giovanni and he arranged time off from his busy work schedule. That all changed a few days prior and the two days had to be flipped.



Gio couldn't get the day off so Martina, who I also met at Lucca, took me around a bit and we went to a comic shop and a few of the sites of Milan. We later



Gyo Page

met up with Giovanni after work and went to the Milan Comic Museum which happened to be closed on Monday. Thankfully I know important people...Gio was able to get the museum opened for a private tour and they had a Junji Ito exhibition going on that was a carryover from Lucca 2018. Ito was the main reason I'd have wanted to go to Lucca this year but I'd already booked my Tokyo trip and so that was out. It was a fantastic exhibition with many great pages that would otherwise be impossible to see anywhere else since the artist holds all his art and does not have any other venue to display it. Of all the exhibitions I saw on this trip, this might be my favorite. If you don't know Ito's work, it is some of the creepiest and most nauseating horror produced in Japan. Not terribly scary but just strange and upsetting in a good way. The museum is only for showing art and not a sales gallery and remarkably is run without government support or funds. The outside of the museum is covered in stylized pictures of many famous comic characters including Calvin and Hobbes, Tintin, Asterix, Mafilda, Lucky Luke, Batman, Spirou and many other classics. It has a nice books store and two stories of display space plus a library that allows one to read comics all day long. The upper floor special exhibitions often have a small admission fee but the main floor where the Ito exhibition was is free to all to visit. It is remarkable

that places like this exist and something I'd love to see happen here in North America more often.



Enrico, myself and Giovanni

After the museum we drove to visit Enrico Salvini in his flat where he was preparing a dinner of us. Enrico is likely known to most of you as the kilt wearing Italian who ran the website RedSector Art and represented many artists over the years but most notably Eduardo Risso and Giorgio Comolo. Enrico is also a trained chef in addition to an original art collector and we were treated to a night of good food and art. Flipping through Enrico's art and looking at the pieces he chose to frame made for a quite a night. Afterwards, we said goodnight and headed back for more art sharing at Gio's.

The next morning I set out for Venona with another Italian friend who I also met for the first time at Lucca. Michele and I became fast friends and have a friendship that feels like we have known each other for decades when in reality it has only been a little over 2 years. He has helped me with many art deals and was my introduction to *El Eternauta* and Albert Breccia. Although he tried to join us in Toulouse for the exhibition, he was unable to swing it but we met up for our quest that day. First, a bit of a preface to this adventure that might put it in context. I have always enjoyed meeting creators I admire and with only a rare exception, those interactions have been wonderful and have led to a greater understanding and appreciation of the artist's work. I was too young to meet Kirby, Pratt, Breccia, Caniff but I was fortunate to meet Will Eisner, Joe Kubert, Iano Asano, Naoki Urasawa, Bill Sienkiewicz, Frank Miller, Jordi Bernet and others over the years. I have always regretted not meeting Moebius as he was still alive during the time I appreciated his work. When I think

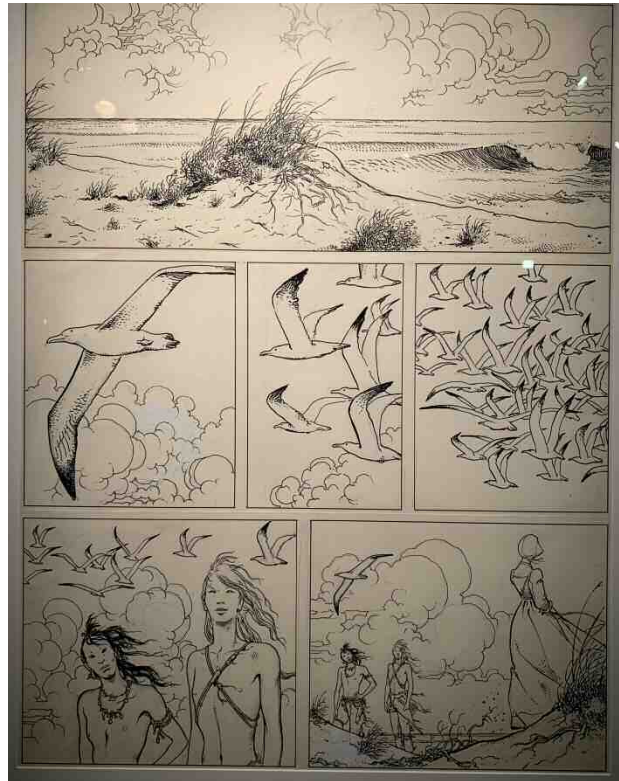
of other creators I'd love to meet who are still with us, there was only one at the top of the list and that was Milo Manara. Through Michele I was able to



arrange a visit with Manara at his studio in Verona where we went out for lunch with him and his wife and I got some art signed and a small dedication.

I had been trying to set this meeting up for some time and when the trip was coming together, I thought if I was in Europe already, perhaps things would work out and they did. So, Michele and I went to Verona and had lunch with Manara. Although he only speaks Italian and French, we were able to get by with a bit of French and with Michele translating. I asked him a few questions about his past and thought I'd share his responses. I knew he came from a background in art and architecture and started comics after his studies. I asked him about the comics he read as a child and what were his favorites. He told us that his mother was a school teacher and forbade

comics thinking it would make him unintellectual. He said he never looked at comics until he started to draw them in his 20's. I later followed up that question with what his mother thought of his success as a comic artist and he laughed saying the erotic nature of his artwork didn't help the issue. I asked him how much he communicated with other artists in Italy like Guido Crepax, Hugo Pratt and others during the 80's and 90's. Like many artists, Manara felt they worked in isolation but were friendly and would

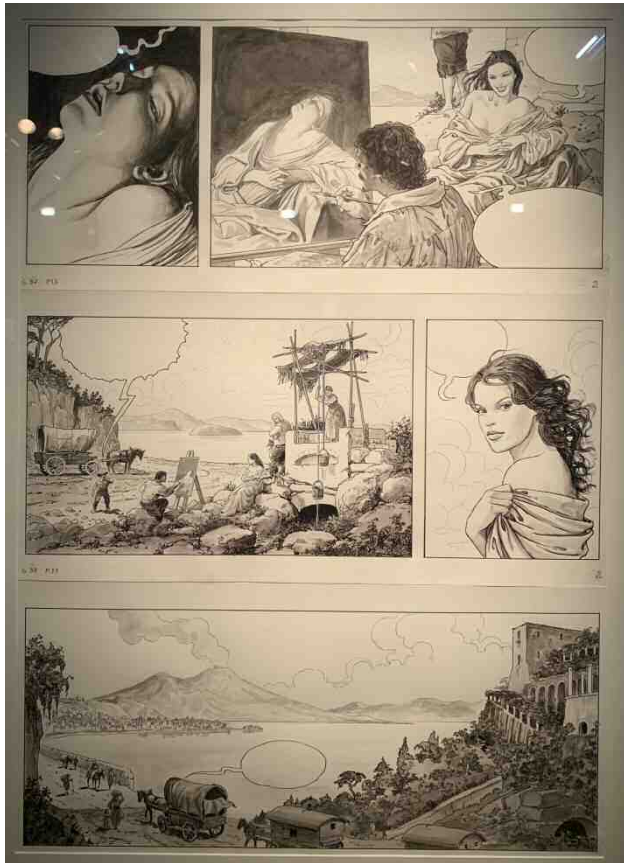


usually only meet at conventions but would have little contact outside of that world. The exception was with Hugo Pratt who was a good friend and they collaborated on several projects. At one party years ago, Pratt had told Manara and the others around him that he wanted Milo to take over Corto Maltese one day. Milo joked that there were a number of witnesses to this statement and it was never spoken of again. The last time they met when Pratt was already quite ill, the topic of Corto never came up and it was left as unfinished business. After Pratt passed away, the



family asked Manara to continue the series but he declined feeling that it was not something he had Hugo's blessing to do and so he wouldn't do it. This all came up as I asked Manara what he thought of the new Corto Maltese being published and he was not a fan of the new run. Milo also told us a story about how he had an exhibition in Milan and he had been given notice that Guido Crepax would be attending. They had never met before and when Crepax was there, they stepped aside to talk and Manara told

him what a fan he was of his work. Crepax has been under the impression that Manara didn't like his work because of some comments a journalist had made to him and Milo confirmed this was not the case and stated that he had the utmost respect for him. This made Crepax cry as he had thought that Manara didn't think he was a good artist. This was also



towards the end of Crepax's life and I don't believe they met again. We talked a bit about Caniff as well and Manara knew Caniff's work well having a full set of Terry reprints in his studio and he had been given an original Terry daily by Hugo Pratt years ago which he still had. Manara does not collect other artists work and I was surprised to find very few originals up on his studio walls. Most were by him but only perhaps a dozen pieces. There was a large abstract painting on his wall from 1964 that he had done early in his art career. I had asked him what work he was most proud of and he said it was a difficult question to answer. His most successful story was Click! and he takes pride in that but if the studio was on fire he would grab the art from Indian Summer and the first Giuseppe Bergman story to take with him. I took some nice pictures of our time with Manara and his studio and at lunch but unfortunately those were lost in a file transfer error from my phone. C'est la vie.

We did also get some site seeing in Verona which is a beautiful town. After our meeting, Michele and I had to literally run to catch the train back to Milan. We had dinner with Giovanni and his family and I left early the next morning to the airport.



I flew to Bordeaux in France via Brussels. The stop-over was long enough to get a meal and to load up on chocolate to bring home. On landing in Bordeaux, I was met by Jean-Paul Gabilliet who many of you may know through his art collecting. We have been friends for years on line and we had met the year before in person in Angouleme. Since I was to be in his home city, we arranged for him to pick me up and I got a tour of his comic art collection which is extensive and diverse. He has some of my favorite pieces in all of ComicArtFans.com and to see them in person was great. We had a nice visit and then he dropped me off at the train station and I headed into Angouleme.

Once in Angouleme, I met up with Bhanu who was my host from AirBNB. I booked last minute so the room I stayed in last year was gone and I had limited choices and wanted to be as near the center of town as I could. The place I stayed was across the street from the train station which was an incredibly convenient location and was only a 5 minute walk to the festival. The flat was student level housing over a Kabab shop and I was essentially couch surfing for the weekend but it was cheap, fun and easy. Bhanu was a PhD student in electrical engineering and a



good host which made for a very pleasant stay. I got in in the evening before the convention so I walked the city a little before and had a nice meal in town before heading to bed early. The next morning I got up and headed off to the festival. As I reported in a previous CFA-APA on Angouleme, there are over a dozen exhibitions to see, dealer tents, publisher tents with huge artist dedication areas, Manga town, the comic art museum and then so many small, off festival venues doing comic art related things. The main downtown shopping mall hosted about a dozen places with artists doing dedications and the main book store had a dedicated area to this with about a

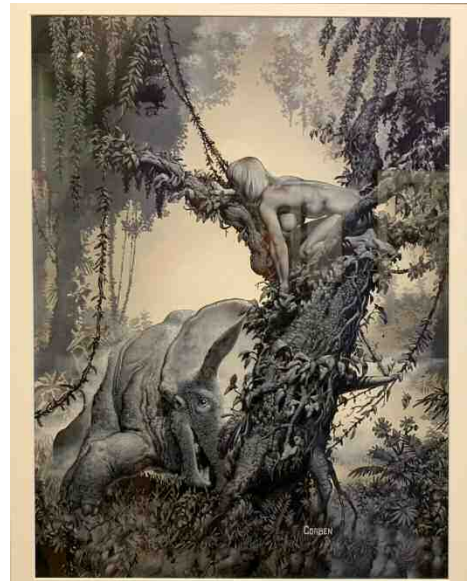


dozen artists doing dedications there too. I had missed this part of the show the first time around. In addition to seeing every exhibition, I did manage to get two dedications this year. The first was from Tony Sandoval whose work I have long appreciated and was hoping to find some original from and something I am still working on. The second was from an artist named Viannello who is doing Corto Maltese books which look like a lot of fun. I also got to spend some time talking to a few creators including Benoit Peters who was sitting alone at a booth in the International Comics Pavilion.

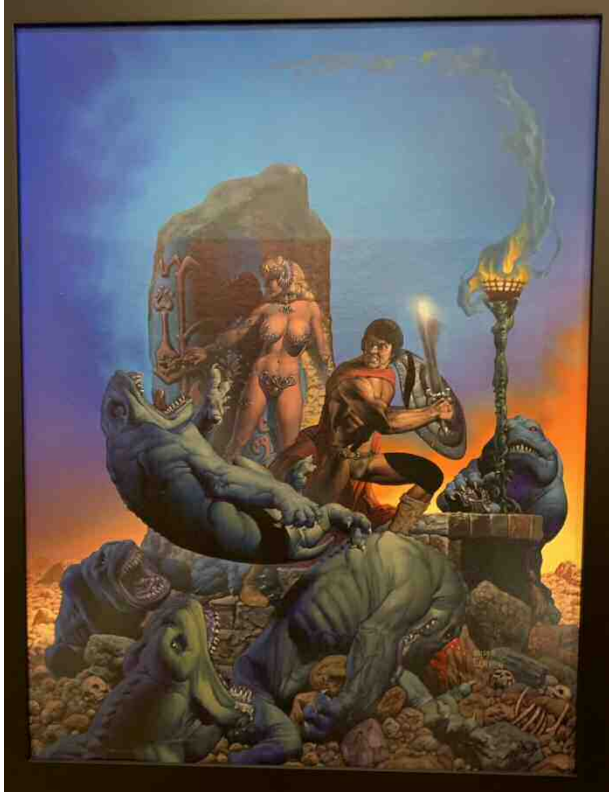


In my mind he is a superstar and so I was glad to have about 20 minutes to chat with him about his work writing for Schuiten and about his recent book on Chris Ware. Of the exhibitions, my favorite was the Manara but closely followed by a truly exhaustive and overwhelming Corben show and then the Masamoto exhibition. There was a truly fantastic Batman exhibition set up with props like crime alley, Wayne Manor, the Bat Cave, Arkham Asylum with individual cells for each of the villains and so much great

Batman art. I met up with a group of Parisian art collectors I know for drinks and dinner one night and that was a lot of fun too. Arnaud was my main



contact and we had met in Paris a few years before when I bought a Bilal from him and spent an evening



at his flat looking at his art collection. That night was profoundly influential on me as he introduced me to Ledroit, Tardi and Ricci all of whom I now own pieces from. I spent time talking to art dealers Marc Mokken, Francesco Bazzana and Albert Moy in the dealer tent and saw some cool art for sale (the only art for sale so far on this trip). I won't go into length about the rest of the festival as I have covered that in the previous article on Angouleme but suffice to say it was a busy weekend of art, friends, food and wine.



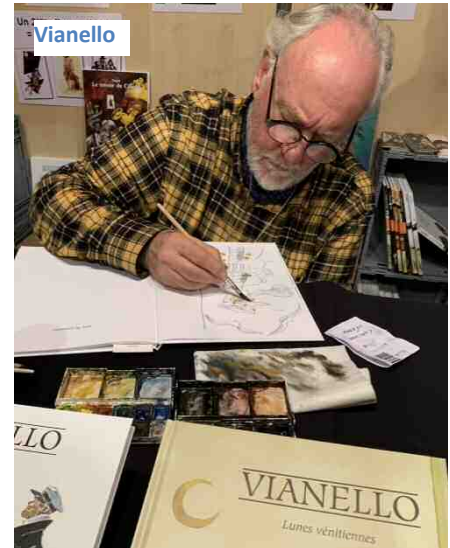
I left the Saturday morning on the first train to Paris. I try and avoid the busy con days so I was glad to get out. I was a little worried being in Paris on a Saturday as that is the day of the Yellow Vest protests



but I never saw or heard of anything the entire time I was there. The only difference is on one of the

subway trips, two stations were bypassed because of their activity.

Arriving early, I had time to get from Montparnasse to my hotel in Montmartre to drop off my suitcase before heading back just in time for the 10:30 opening of Daniel Maghen's Art gallery. I spent



about an hour there and left with an interesting piece by an artist I don't know from a book I have never heard of. *Nuit Blanche* by Olivier Neuray. I liked the



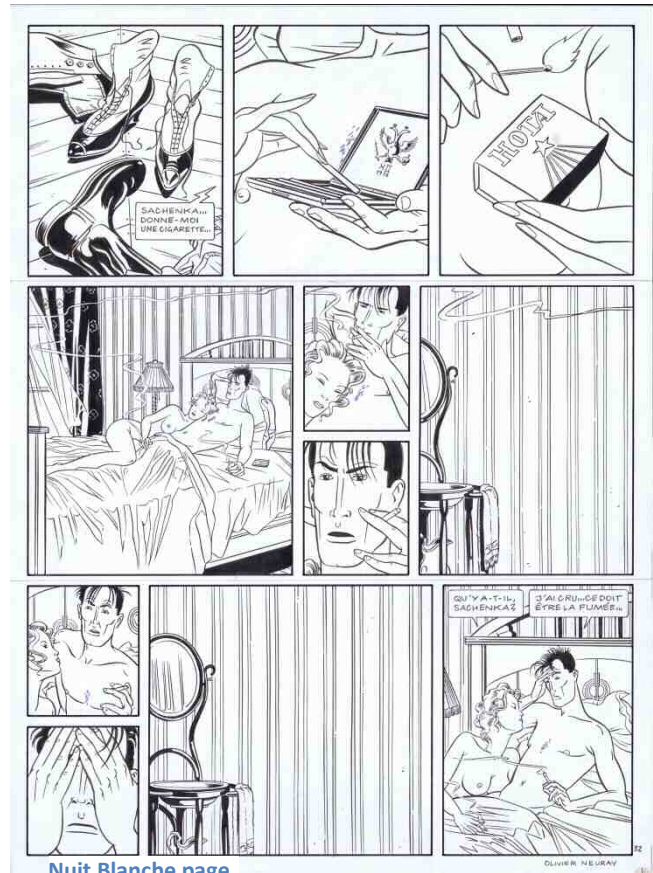
page because of the layouts and panel designs both on the page and the actual content of the panels. I thought the use of shape and form were interesting and I liked how the wall paper added context to the page. It was quite inexpensive and thought it would be a nice piece to bring home to tie in with the trip. From there I headed to Huberty-Breyne gallery which



Eric and I, Paris

is 3 minutes away and met up with Eric, a fellow art collector who came in from Northern France to hang out with me for the day. At H-B we had a great interaction with the galleriest and we saw a lot of hidden art from the files. I had been looking for art by Edmund Baudoin for some time and thought I'd ask if they knew of any for sale and they pulled out a stack of about 50 pages. I found one to bring home with me and again very affordably priced. He is an artist I hope to learn more about but I am quite familiar with his art style having long admired it in other collector's galleries. From there we headed up to Montmartre and had lunch before visiting Bernarde Mahe's Gallery 9'eme and the wonderful Sorel illustration exhibition they had going on. We followed that up with a visit to the spaces that Barbier-Mathion gallery occupies and enjoyed the Ledroit exhibition. From there we went on to visit Fred, a friend who I met last year who has an apartment full of EC, Burns and other great artwork. After a few hours there it was time to head back to the hotel and get ready for a morning flight home the next day. I spent the night climbing up to *Sacré-Cœur* to overlook Paris at night which is the reason I choose to stay in this area when visiting.

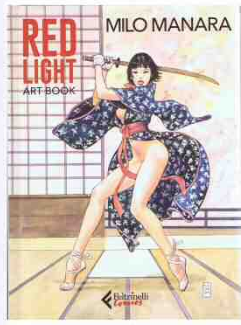
I have had a few of these art trips in recent years but this was probably my favorite. It was full of great art exhibitions of artists who I really wanted to see art from, full of friends and memories. The main driving force for the trip was the chance to meet Manara but the time spent with friends was certainly the highlight. I am hoping to do a few more of these kinds of trips in coming years although I can't imagine topping this one, but certainly something I am willing to strive for.



Nuit Blanche page



Edmund Baudoin page



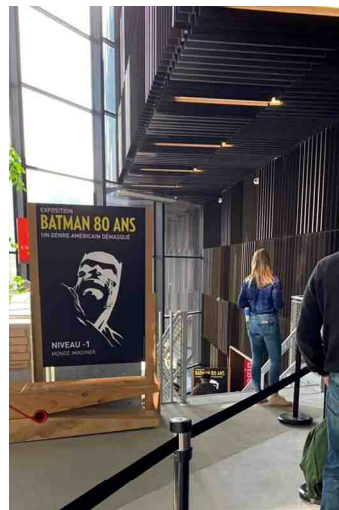
Feltmelli Comics



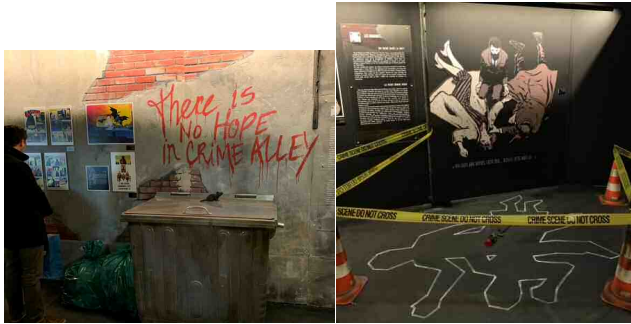
Per Jeff! Milo Manara



Batman Exhibition Pictures



The Batman 80th Anniversary Exhibition was one of the highlights of Angouleme. It was a very elaborate display that had different themes and areas with both iconic images and original art throughout the exhibition. It was held on the lower floor of the main library and was an event where they limited the number of people in at any time to prevent it being too busy or



crowded. This meant a bit of a que but on the day I went and at the time it was less than 5 minutes.

Upon entering, you enter the dark world of Gotham city and Crime alley. The classic image from Batman Year 1 was recreated with the chalk outlines of bodies and Mazzucchelli's defining image on the wall. It was a dark space with graffiti on the wall, a dumpster and the appearance of a back alley. From there you entered Wayne Manor and a bat crashing through a window over a desk done in 3-D.

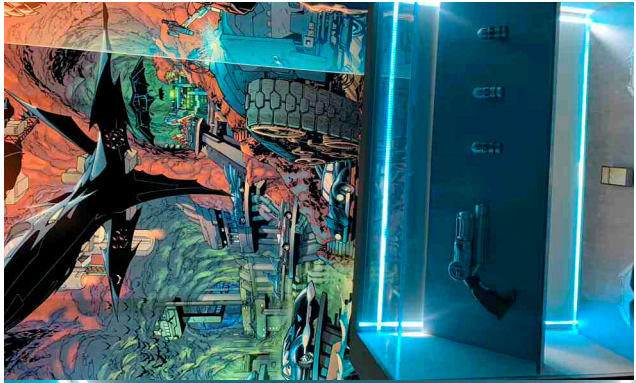


From the stately looking room we enter the Batcave with a central control area and various weapons and



suits around. The lighting in each area was quite different and helped to enhance the experience with each facet of Batman's world.





Leaving the Batcave you walk down a long corridor with art to an art Deco style Elevator that transitions

you to a modern aged Gotham with Bruce Timm imagery and a Gotham Police department setting with the Batlight.





The next area was my favorite and from the amount of attention and pictures people were taking, I think it was probably the main highlight for others too. Arkham Asylum. You approach through the gates and then into the police processing area before you

enter the cells. Each cell featured a villain with props and art on the walls. Most of the cells you could walk into to get a better look at the art on the walls. The final cell was a large safety enclosed cell with the Joker. After Arkham was the main part of the art exhibition with walls of original art and displays. The art was curated by decade and featured some truly iconic pieces including Bob Kane, Moldoff, Neal Adams, Jim Aparo, Frank Miller, Tim Sale, Bruce Timm, Darwyn Cooke and just about everyone else who ever drew Batman. The exhibition concludes with life sized Lego Batman characters and a store where you could buy all things Batman in French. Sadly there was no catalogue for this exhibition. A Batmobile was set up outside of the exhibition. I have included a lot more pictures of this exhibition as I thought it would be of interest to the group.



