



San Diego Comic Con 2018



Attending San Diego International Comic Convention has been a must do at least once item on my list for as long as I have been reading comics and became aware of it. Each year my desire to go seemed to wane a bit more. Most of the feedback I hear about the show is not that great. It is too big. It is too busy. It is all about the media and not about comics. Prices are too high to buy anything. Hotels sell out in minutes. Tickets are near impossible to get. It was getting to the point that I was either going to go soon or just give up on it. Having decide to say

it to all the barrier to getting to Angouleme this year and finding the whole process quite easy once I had the determination to do it I decided this was my year to do the same for San Diego. Angouleme was absolutely amazing and please refer to my article in a preveious CFA-APA on that experience.

My first step was getting tickets. I have had offers from several dealers for help with passes in the past. I reached out to Steve Morger who has helped me before and he was able to secure me a dealers pass for his cost of \$500. That is a lot but I am happy to pay



if it means no lines and normally I will not travel for conventions unless I am getting a dealers pass. I knew the trip was going to be expensive but I figured it was part of a life experience and if you spend too much time focusing on the costs, you miss out on the experience and I wanted to optimize that. Once that was secure I went on Expedia and booked a flight and found a number of hotels available. They were not cheap, on

average about \$500 a night. I booked one with two beds thinking perhaps I could split it with someone and bring down my costs but finding a place

was not that bad and I got very reasonable flights. I should mention that my attack plan for all conventions is to get there the day of or the day before and hit the show early to do everything and leave before the show ends and gets super busy. I scheduled myself to arrive on Wednesday morning and had a flight out Saturday morning. Fellow CFA-APA member Alan Dion who I have met several times before (Heroes and Dragon



con) and have spoken to on the phone for hours in the past was going to be my roommate for part of the con. My hotel cancelled on me as they changed ownership but I had no trouble finding another hotel but in the end ended up cancelling that and Alan found us rooms. So, in total, I was booked into 3 hotels for San Diego so although expensive and perhaps a little ways out, there are easily rooms to be had for the convention, even last minute.



I had decided that it was unlikely I was going to get art so I packed light. A small portfolio bag and a suitcase it would fit in. A month before the show I bought some art from a Romitaman.com update and Mike Burkey agreed to bring the art to San Diego where I was to pay him for it and take the art home with me. So, I figured I had pre-spent for the con and knew I'd come home with some art. I had no other expectations other than to go there, experience it all, meet up with people for dinner, have fun and hopefully survive the hordes of people and the media booths.



I flew in on the first direct flight from Toronto that morning. Having just come off a night schedule at work, I was glad to get a bit of sleep.

On the plane with me were a few collectors and artist from the Toronto area including Jeff Lemire. I met up with my buddies Mike Kirton and Brett Feschuk in the airport and we shared a cab into the city. The cab dropped



Mike off first who was doing the Mankuta San Diego experience and then Brett got off at the same location near the conventi

on center. The cabbie took me to the wrong Sheraton hotel and lucky I noticed before I got out. It turned from a \$15 cab ride into an over \$40 cab ride to an "up and coming" area of San Diego a few minutes from the airport. I got in about 10am and was happy to find out our room was ready. I went up and had a nap before heading out to the convention center around noon. The hotel was close to the tram line, just a 8 minute walk through a desolate, sketchy industrial area past chop-shops and strip bars to get there. I was having some doubts about my choice of roommates based on the location of the hotel but the hotel itself was safe and quite nice. None of the cabbies, Uber or Lyft drivers we had knew of it as I suspect it is not a popular tourist destination. Alan later apologized profusely about getting this location mixed up with the other



Sheraton and thinks perhaps the website did a bait and switch on him. I look at it as all part of the experience. There was a Denny's on the corner which we had breakfast at on the Friday.

The transit system in San Diego, at least the Tram was very efficient and quick. I was at the con in 10 minutes and since it runs on dedicated lanes, it was not caught up in street traffic. We used the Tram to get to the show on all the mornings. At night we returning late and decided given the locale it was better to take ride shares back. This all worked out fantastically.



The San Diego Convention center is a long, tall glass and concrete structure that is of modern design circa 1990's. It is bright and airy. It sits on the waterfront overlooking the bay and is a beautiful venue. The tram tracks run right in front with a tram stop right at the beginning of the entrances. The

halls are numbered A through H and are spaced out in a linear fashion. There is a large walkway in front of the elevated building as well as a large foyer inside the front doors that runs the length of the pavilion. Inside the convention halls are all connected but I believe are separable for smaller events. It is one of the nicer convention centers I have been to for a comic convention although none will beat Big Sight Tokyo for coolness.



Across the tracks from the center is gaslight district of San Diego which is a very nice area full of tourists. For the convention, the first 3 consecutive streets leading away for the first 4 or 5 blocks seem to be part of the convention. Various media and entertainment corporations have pavilions and other structures set up. Up a few blocks they had a Taco Bell designed like the Taco Bell in Demolition Man



(recall that Taco Bell had won the fast food wars and now all restaurants were Taco Bell) and featured 4 course fine dining just like in the movie. There was a



large Purge store so you could stock up on your supplies for Purge night but what exactly was in there, I don't know as I didn't venture in. Lots of other cool things, parades, bands, evangelists, hecklers and more cosplay than you could keep track of. In fact, I suspect that is where a lot of the cosplaying took place. You don't need a badge to participate in the events around the convention center. I'd call the events around the convention a festival and was something quite unique



compared to other conventions I attend.

Around Hall H at the end there were long lines and large tents to keep the throngs of people from the heat. Several large Pavillions were set up by various Television companies with various promotional props and events. Around back there were large lines of squatters. People come and set up tents and wait in line for the Hall H activities the next day. I am still not sure what all this is about but it is not why I came to the show so I left them on their own. It was quite a sight to

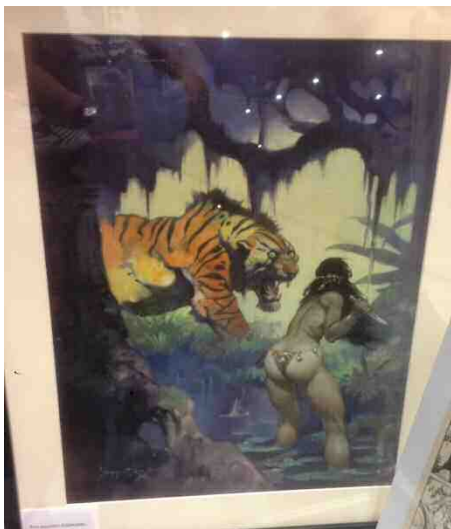


see and Alan and I came to the conclusion that perhaps the squatters were the smart ones since they were not paying for hotels. I am getting to old to do things like this but I think it might have been fun 20 years ago. Also around the back were some food trucks and many



yachts docked along the piers. Several of these boats were being used by corporations to promote events or host special events. Upstairs on some of the back patios of the convention center there were different events that you needed

to be a pass holder to get too. They had some real sword fighting which I watched for a while one afternoon. Lots of rag tag, makeshift armored people taking turns attacking each other with swords. It was fun to watch as most were on the heavy side and their armor stuck out in places way more than it should. I suspect these groups are the ones that normally do the medieval fairs and re-enactments but I can't verify this.

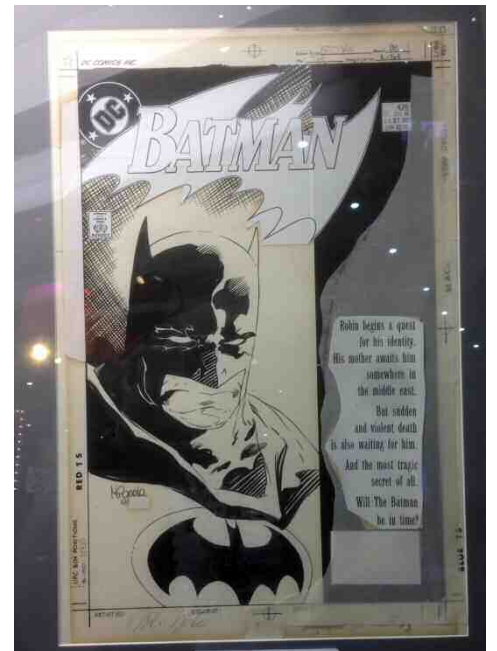


The convention center is in very close proximity to hotels on either side. There were multiple events planned at all these hotels. The only event in a hotel I attended was the Eisner

Awards with Alan. We stayed for about 3 hours and got a good sense of the awards but they take some time. Some really great speeches. The ball room is set up so the first half near the stage are tables set up for nominee and guests. The back half of the room is general seating for everyone else. It seemed like some



books seemed to be favorites and cleaned up multiple awards. **Monstress** was doing very well and one of the few books I had read. I had liked the art a lot but was not moved enough with the story to continue reading the book but obviously very popular and successful even without my support. I have since picked up a few books that I saw nominated for awards at the show. **My Favorite Thing is Monsters** is an interesting read and I am about two thirds done reading at the time I am writing this article. The author had a very moving speech about her battle with paralysis from West Nile Virus and the recovery that was happening as she wrote and illustrated her first graphic novel. I also picked up **How to Read Nancy** from Fantagraphics which looks like fun look



into how to understand and dissect comic strip design and layouts taught entirely through looking at Nancy comic strips. I have more to read on my list from the awards this year but have not gotten around to chasing them down yet.

Ok, enough about everything around the convention, now to talk about the show itself.

Once off the street car I texted Steve to see about meeting to get my badge. I had preplanned the time I'd arrive at the con. He was out having lunch with a French collector and co-promoter for the Italian Lake Cumo Comic Convention (one I hope to have a report for you on in the future). I got my badge and decided to go in early to walk around and see some art before the show opened for preview night. I walked in and headed for Hall G where most of the comic art dealers were set up as well as artist alley. I had been through the list prior to the show to see if there were any artists I wanted to visit with who I had not previously met but not much in the must meet category. So, I started with the dealer booths including Mitch's Graphic Collectibles booth which I have been told is where everyone starts as Mitch gets many new pieces for the show and there have been in the past potentials for good deals as other dealers pick things up and reprice them an hour later at their booths. I enjoyed the art Mitch had up including a nice Elektra Saga pin-up piece by Frank Miller and a mid-level Sickels Scorchy Smith daily. I still need one of those in my collection but this was not the right one for me. I went over to Mike Burkey's booth to give him money so I wouldn't spend that which I owed him and I picked up the two Vampirella pages I had pre-agreed to purchase. So much great art on his wall. I went over to Albert Moy's booth to say hello and to pick up a Bruce Timm commission for a friend in Toronto whom I had told I'd get the piece for. I wandered around the dealer booths and saw so much amazing art with prices that were beyond where I would value the art at but in the past few years this is not uncommon. I don't think I appreciated a "San Diego premium" on art prices as others have reported but outside of what I collect, I don't follow super-hero art very closely. There were several dealers and galleries set up that don't do other conventions so San Diego is the only place to see them. The dealers that I saw included Romitaman (Mike Burkey), Mitch Ikwitz, Mike Thibedeaux, Albert Moy, Anthony Snyder, Bechara, Rob Hughes/Nick Katradis, Big Wow, Cool Line art, Metropolis, Illustration House, Tri-State, Splashpages and I am sure I am forgetting more than another 2. Also set up with lots of eye candy was Heritage Auctions, Comiclindak and Comicconnect. The Twice ASM Doc Ock cover was there as well as the Sienkiewicz Batman 400 page. I spent preview night mostly talking to other collectors and looking at the art the dealer brought. There wasn't time to do anything else even though I got in early. I met up with so many collectors including fellow CFA-APA members John Butler, Nick

Katradis, Ron Sonenthal and of course my roommate Alan Dion. Several former members as well including Chris Kilackey and Rob Pistella. It was my first time meeting both Rob Pistella and John Bulter in person so a great honor. At this point, I think I have met about



Rob Pistella, Nick Katradis and Myself

half the APA members. I met a lot of other collectors for the first time including the elusive Steve Kroziere who has been a good friend for years. I brought some art down for him from a mutual friend and took some art back. There was an art collector's dinner that Felix Lu normally arranges for Thursday but Felix was unable to attend this year yet the party still went on and we attended. We had the dinner at the Edgewater Grill which I can recommend avoiding in future. Nice venue but empty during comic con which speaks volumes about the food. Our table of about 20 had the place to ourselves so it was a fun time.



Since I had thought I had spent what I was going to spend before the show, we were not in a rush to get to the convention on Thursday so we had a breakfast at the hotel and headed in. Alan and I parted ways and after a quick round in the art area I decided to walk the entire convention hall. I started at the beginning of Salon A and walked up and down each aisle. It took about 4 hours to walk the whole show. It was a pleasant surprise how uncrowded it was. I encountered very few bottlenecks or packed areas. The long lines for exclusives were well managed and out of the way of traffic. Although the world of comic fandom seems to have grown to include a lot of other media, there was still a decent number of comic dealers around and many had pieces of art for sale. I was at Alan Bahr from Hero Comics booth and he had some art. I was flipping through a portfolio and came across a nice Caniff specialty piece. I thought I had seen it before but Alan was pretty sure he had had it for years. It made no difference to me as I liked it and were able to agree on a price that I thought was fair. It also came with a nice letter from Caniff to the recipient, Frank Nicht who was an executive with King Features. I continued walking the show and came to artist alley. I spent a few hours going up and down the aisles there but not much came of that other than finding the Cool Line art booth which I had managed to miss on Preview night as they were way over by artists alley. I have spent time talking with the brothers in the past about art and deals and their reputation precedes them. I saw a nice Bill Ward Torchy from his time in the army. I had a ballpark value in mind and couldn't recall seeing one in many years and so I thought I'd ask. The price was already lower than my threshold and so I sensed a deal might be possible. I had been talking with Rich about a Bill Sienkiewicz Dazzler Pin-up from Marvel Fanfare #8 for years. We were always about \$500 apart on the deal and it never came together. The Torchy belonged to Steven. We started talking about a combined deal and working with both of them we came up with a number I was happy with and deal was done. I managed to do a deal with both brothers at the same time and walked away feeling like I had done well. It is one of the stories I will remember from this con for years to come.

I was really done. No more art I told myself and although I was tempted by some Frank Thorne art Zaddick had, I held off on anymore purchases. That evening Alan and I attended Brian Peck's annual original art collector's dinner and the venue was changed at the last minute to the Edgewater Grill. A fun time again. A few people had cancelled last minute which made room for a new friend of mine. Enrique and I met on line about 8

months ago. He is a Spanish Editorial cartoonist but also collects comic art. He lives about 45 minutes out of the city and had invited me to stay with him for the con or visit. The schedule was too tight for that but he was in the city for the con on Thursday and so we met up at the end of the show and he, Alan and I went for a beer before heading out to the original art dinner. There Enrique showed us some sketchbooks he had from various political and editorial cartoonists that he knows from South America, Central America and Mexico. There was some really powerful stuff in there and he would have been a great contributor to our most recent issue on the art of Parody. We had a very nice evening and I was able to pass around the page I bought that day. Others showed off the art they had. We headed back to the hotel for the night.



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Friday we got up a little later, went to Denny's for breakfast and then took our bags and took a cab to another Sheraton that Alan had booked for the weekend as his wife would be coming down to join him



after I left. From there we took the Comicon free shuttle to the show and it was a nice quick ride. Since I was over spent and had walked the show I spent time doing other things at the show. I went to a few panels which were held on the upper level and then walked around the outside of the con and through the city a bit to get a feel for the festival that was going on outside. I got to

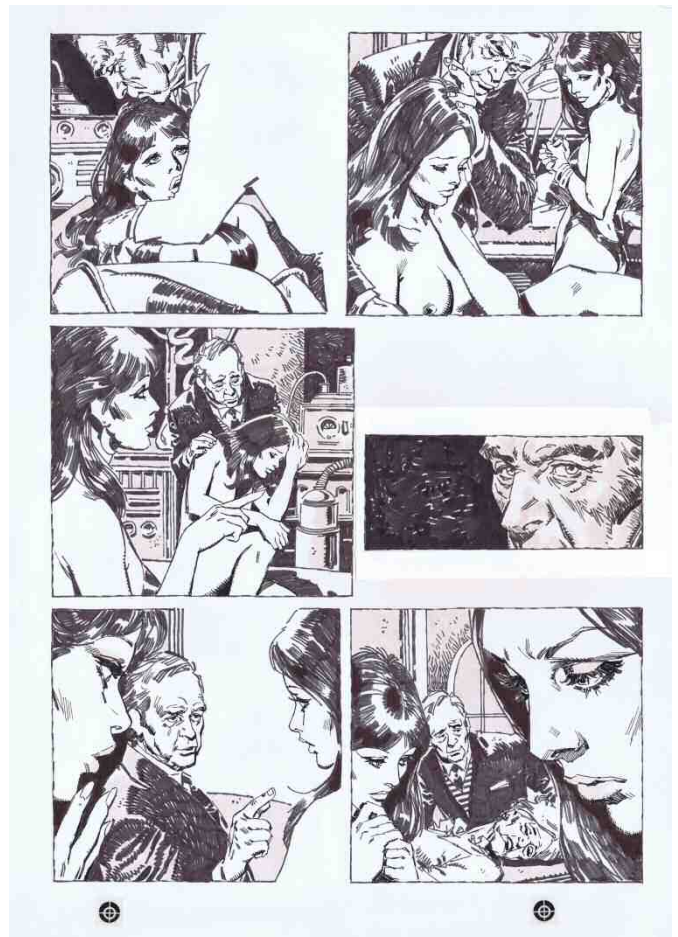


see Lynn Johnson speak for an hour which was very enriching and then I headed over the Fantagraphics booth to get a small sketch and

signature from her. I met up with Sergio Aragones at his booth and talked for a while. Simon Bisley's panel was fun and then I attended a Steve Ditko Tribute panel. The day flew by and Alan and I later met up with Mike Kirton and Dan from Toronto and we headed up to get a quick meal at a great Mexican restaurant before Alan and I went to the Eisner Awards. When that was done, we were able to catch a shuttle back to the hotel. I was off early in the morning to catch a plane.

I think one of the things that makes it less busy is the way they only sell only individual day passes and no more full show passes. My understanding is there is the same number of tickets available for each of the 5 days. Some people get tickets for all 5 days but many just for the days they will attend. Theoretically, each day should be equally as busy since they sell out. I think the festivities outside draw a lot of attendees too so this all makes for a less crowded con floor experience. I was not there on the Saturday or Sunday so I can't comment on if they felt any busier.

Overall, it was a great convention and experience. All the bad things I had heard about the show didn't bare out for me. I never found it very crowded except on the outside. Other than lines for Hall H and exclusives I didn't find any lines anywhere. The panels were great and well attended. Lots of art and I came home with more than I expected. I thought San Diego would be the show I would do once and say it was done but it was such a great show that I do hope to have the



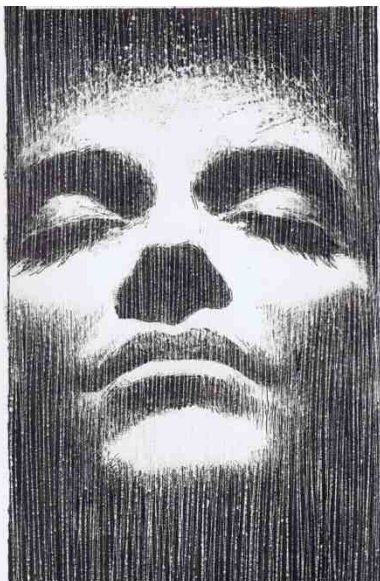
opportunity to return in the future a few more times.

Here are the two Vampirella pages I picked up from Mike. Jose Gonzalez and Gonazlo Mayo art from their finest hour. In recent years I have been falling in love more with the Spanish artist of the 60's to 80's and that means I have been more of a Warren fan in recent years. Warren employed the talents of many of this generation of artists from Spain and they all had distinctive styles but similar aesthetics in terms of flowing panels and using layouts in a way that seemed to drip off the page. Every time I discover a new artist from Spain and I get into their work, I seem to find that they also had worked at Warren. On that note, I was absorbing the David Roach book, The Masters of Spanish Comic Book Art by Dynamite Press and came across the art of Luis Garcia Mozos. I had never heard of him before but the art that David had in that book from the artist blew me away. I decided to try and find

out more about the artist and found he had a page on Facebook. On the off chance he was active, I sent a private message to him asking about art. I didn't hear back and had forgotten about it but then about six months later I got a reply message on the site. Over



the next few months we talked about art and he agreed to sell me some art. I didn't have any reference for his art and so he took some scans for me and sent me a dozen pages to choose from. I picked four and the deal came together very quickly. I have to say it is some of the most amazing art I own and in person, it is breathtaking. I later found out that he worked for



Warren as well and some of his Spanish comics were later reprinted in Warren books. It always amazes me how different areas of the hobby converge in unexpected ways. In this particular case, my love Spanish comic art leading to me buying pages I'd go to San Diego to pick up only to return home to have a package of art from Spain waiting for me. It tied these two



themes together for me.

Here are the four Mozos pages I picked up. They are all from the 1970's. I have taken the liberty of including a few close ups. I did do a short interview with the artist for CFA-APA and that is included. I mostly focused on his Warren experience but he had a very interesting life and was friends with Salvador Dali.



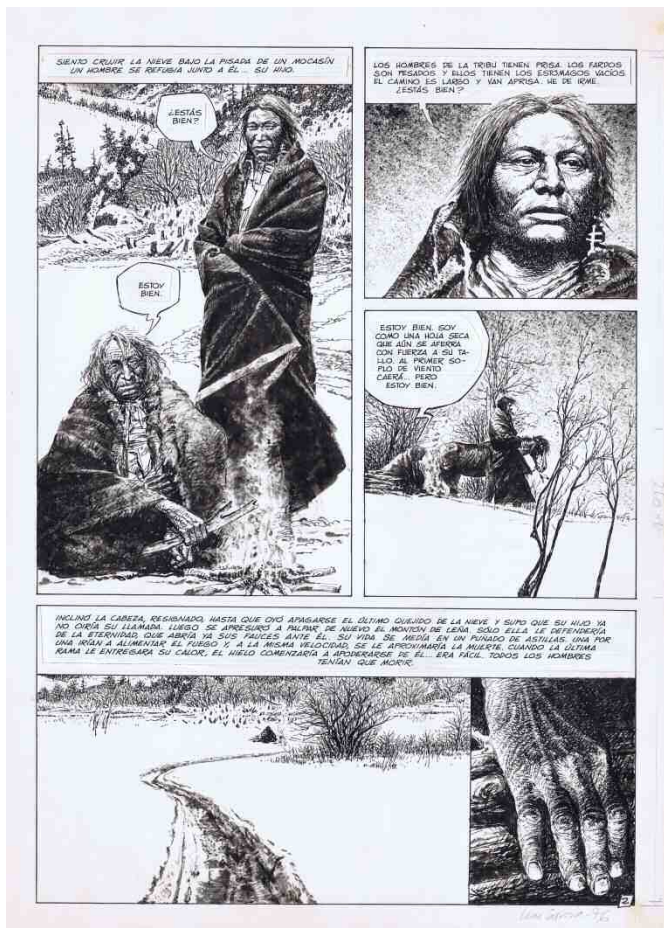
Interview August 2018 via email.

Who were your influences?

As a professional, the first was Alex Raimond and, later, the works of Alberto Breccia, Dino Battaglia and the engravings of Rembrandt.

Did you have the chance to work with or meet other Spanish artists working for Warren?

Practically, I met all the Spanish artists who worked for Warren.



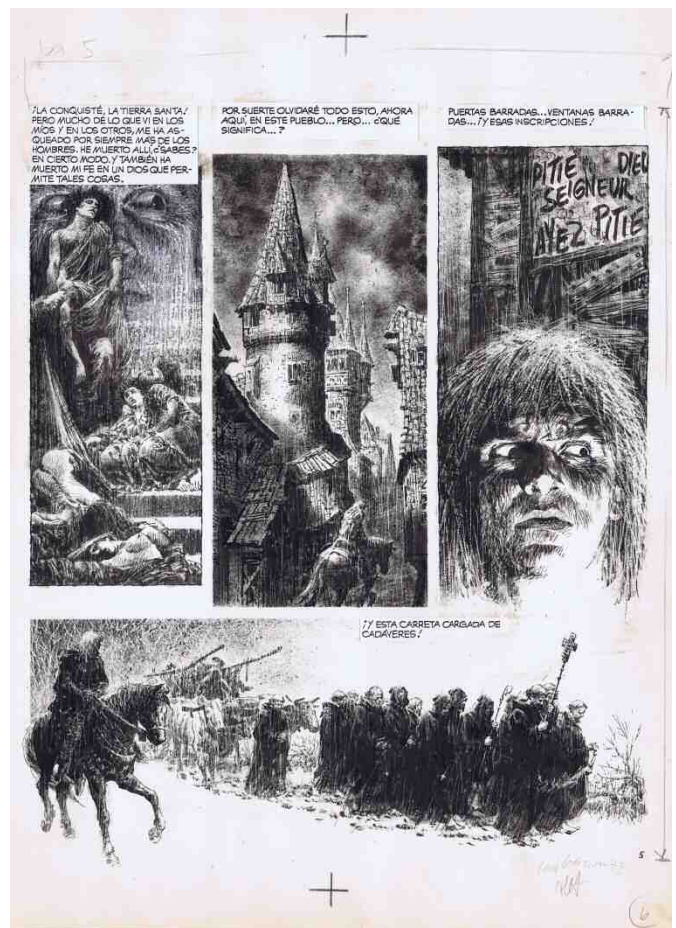
Did you share studio space with other comic artists?

Yes, we organized ourselves in studios, in groups of 3 to 6 artists. In one of the studios, called "Grupo de la Floresta", we created the series "5 x Infinito", which Esteban Maroto then continued alone.



Working in studios, did other artists have input into your work (assisting or giving ideas/techniques). Did you do this for other artists (assist or give ideas/solutions)?

Yes, in the collective work studios, when we needed it, we helped each other, but not too much. And, technically, less in my beginnings, I did



not need help, on the contrary; I was the one who helped them, because I have always had some facility for various techniques.

When you and other artists were working on Warren material, was there friendly competition between the group to see who could out do each other and bring up the level of art another level. if so, what was that like and did it ever lead to hard feelings?

Yes, I suppose there was "friendly" competition ... It happens that, when I returned from London to Barcelona, in 1971, I started working for Warren, but since I lived with Juana de Haro, model of Pepe González's Vampirella, I was just going to the Selecciones Ilustradas agency, to deliver the pages of my comics for Warren. That is, during the year 71-72, when I worked for Warren (after I went to the Pilote magazine), I did not participate in any study with



¿NO SENTISTE EN TU OÍDO DE VIRGEN/ LAS SILENCIOSAS Y TRÁGICAS NOTAS/ QUE MIS DEDOS DE MUERTO ARRAN-
CABAN/ A LA LUNA ROTAS/ ¿NO SENTISTE UNA LAGRIMA MIA/ DESLIZARSE EN TU BOCA/ ¿NO SENTISTE TU MA-
NO DE MEVE/ ESTRECHAR A LA TUBA DE ROSA/ ¿NO VISTE ENTRE SUEÑOS/ POR EL AIRE VAGAR UNA SOMBRA/ ¿NO
SINTIERON TUS LABIOS UN BESO/ QUE ESTALLO MISTERIOSO EN LA ALCABA?



any of my colleagues; I lived with Juana de Haro. In the 28 years that I was in the field of comics, only about three years, in total, I participated in studies with my coworkers. The rest of the time, about 25 years, I was alone (or with some sentimental partner) in my work studies.



I notice that many of the Spanish Warren artists like to blend elements like hair and clothing to tie panel designs together. In particular Maroto and Fernandez did this a lot and i think these transitions were very unique to Spanish artists at the time. Any thoughts on where that particular idea came from? It reminds me very

much of Mucha and art deco sensibilities.

I do not know, that question should be answered by them. However, I think it was the influence of Mucha and Klimt, and the posters of the films of great

North American illustrators, from my point of view, that most influenced those artists.

Did Warren publishing treat you fairly in terms of paying well, paying on time, providing positive feedback? Who did you deal with at warren directly?

I did not work directly for Warren, I had an agent or representative, José Toutain, director of the agency "SELECCIONES ILUSTRADAS". And he paid me well and without delays, but they did not return the originals... I mean, I just had to deal with Toutain..



Other than comic work, what other art did you do during this period?

Illustrations for women's magazines and, when I lived in London, I also did charcoal portraits on Sundays, on the railing of Jay Park, in front of Marble Arch.

In this link you can see a video, of a demo of my style of drawing that I started for the Warren Magazines in 1971. You will be able to see how I drew, technically, your pages. Although the video is not translated, the images are very graphic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CQsC-TqvrY>