

**PULPHOPE**





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PULPHOPE: The Art of Paul Pope  
Published by AdHouse Books.

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ISBN 0-9770304-2-3  
ISBN 978-0-9770304-3-9  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Design: Pitzer+Pope

AdHouse Books  
1224 Greycourt Ave.  
Richmond, VA 23227-4042  
www.adhousebooks.com

First Printing, June 2007

Printed in Singapore

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Acknowledgements: To Jonas Hjertberg and  
Andrew Johnstone, who pushed me to do this.  
To Doug Jaeger, Matt Spangler, Ben Neighbors,  
Adrian "Air Conditioner" Clifford, Joshua Davis,  
Yuko Shimizu, Istvan Banyai, James Jean, Dustin  
Harbin, Mark Borg, and Calvin Reid...all of whom  
are the "without whoms..."

To Tod Jatriss, Stephen Daldry, Scott Rudin, James  
Queen, Peter Birkemoe, and Leslie Converse.

To Aliya, Scott, Harvest, Luana, and Erika.  
To Cass and Frank and Bob.

And finally, to Pitzer, for the firepower.

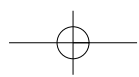
Fonts: Glypha for text, Sinaloa for essay headlines,  
Vienna Black for title pages.

Proofreading: Lisa Pitzer

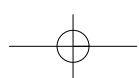
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Richmond, VA



ET IN  
ARCADE  
ECO

**GOOD LUCK**

**A**



# A PICTURE IS A SUM OF DESTRUCTION- TIONS

*"In the old days pictures went forward towards completion by stages. Everyday brought something new. A picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture — then I destroy it. In the end, though, nothing is lost: the red I took away one place turns up somewhere else.*

*It would be very interesting to preserve photographically, not the stages, but the metamorphoses of a picture. Possibly one might then discover the path followed by the brain in materializing a dream. But there is one very odd thing — to notice that basically a picture doesn't change, that the first "vision"*

*remains almost intact, in spite of appearances. I often ponder on a light and a dark when I have put them into a picture; I try hard to break them up by interpolating a color that will create a different effect. When the work is photographed, I note that what I put in to correct my first vision has disappeared, and that, after all, the photographic image corresponds with my first vision before the transformation I insisted on."*

— Picasso to Christian Zervos, 1935

A sum of destructions. Even from beyond the grave, this prolific painter-sculptor-printmaker

telegraphs to us the startling, singular image of artist-as-destroyer. Every cheerful demolitionist, loving his job, knows this — in order to create you must first create space. You must remove what was there before. You must demolish it — destroy the blankness of the white canvas or the white page as the demolitionist flattens the old building or carpark or bridge. You must consume the arctic blankness with your colors and lines and forms as the cheerful demolitionist consumes his with dynamite, nitro, and implosion-physics. You must swallow the thing with work in order to build something new. Some destructions lead to new buildings, some only to more

destruction. Picasso's destructions led to Cubism.

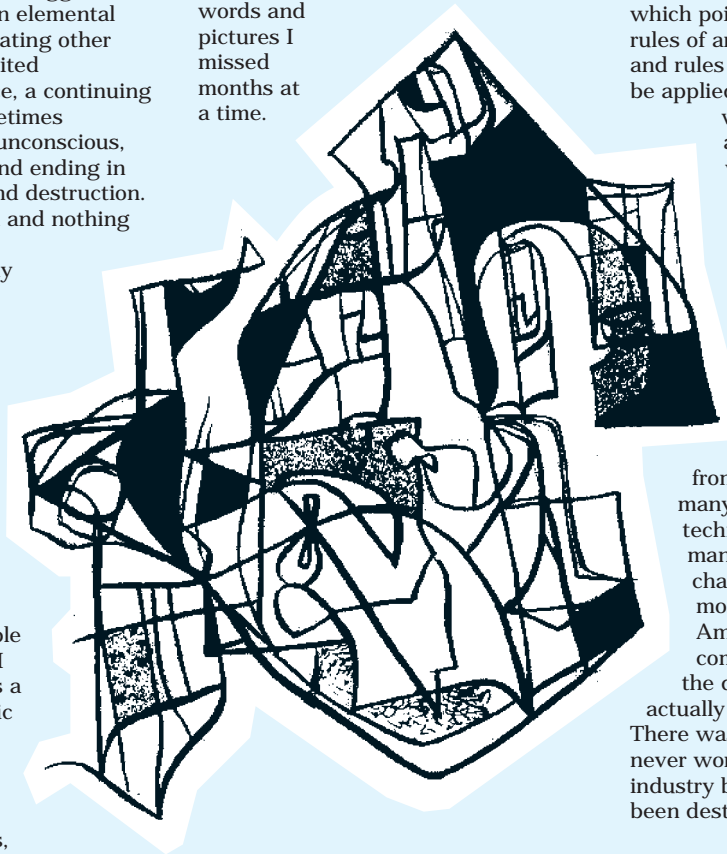
One must destroy in order to create. This is a poetic notion and perhaps not properly a philosophy. We mustn't forget Picasso was an arch-prankster as well as a Spaniard, so it is possible he was pulling the leg of the world. I think he meant what he was saying and the idea suggests to me what I take to be an elemental truth — life exists by eating other life. Life itself is an ignited consumption, a violence, a continuing energy exchange, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, beginning with birth and ending in death, consumption, and destruction. It is a cheerful fatalism and nothing new. Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.

This is the key to "Comics Destroyer".

For a working cartoonist to call himself a "destroyer" of comics, when what he primarily does is create comics, it must be understood to be a form of the Greek double negative. It is to say, "I do not not create". It is a kind of playful linguistic trick, my own Spanish prank, reiterated through the visual metaphor of the cartoonist as a soulless, mechanical machine-man — the "Popemek". This image itself is intended to be humorous — since technically a machine cannot create anything, it can only perform a task it was designed to accomplish. The Popemek is the agent of the Comics Destroyer.

When I first started thinking along these lines, I was doing nothing but eating, sleeping, and making comics. I felt like a machine of comics. I remember one time going to my back door, looking out over the greened trees and realizing that not only was it the middle of the night, it was also the middle of the summer. It was pouring down rain in that languid

summer way and as I sat on the stoop and drank it all in, it occurred to me the last time I noticed the weather it was snowing. I wondered if perhaps the artist, the art-machine, is only capable of doing what it was created to do. A sewing machine sews, a jack-hammer jack-hammers, a cartoonist cartoons. I was so absorbed in the act of making stories with words and pictures I missed months at a time.



The "Comics Destroyer" became a kind of personal symbol, a self-assigned mandala, magic, a new-name. It was secret initiate's knowledge, it was amusing, and it helped push a tired brush through many long lonely nights.

"In order to save comics, I had to destroy it." It is agitprop, of course, and like all agitprop, it is shallow, misleading, and blunt, intended to confuse and alarm the uninitiated and reward those who know. It is a way of saying both "I embrace change", and "Comics must change if they're to survive." As indeed I do, and indeed they must — continually

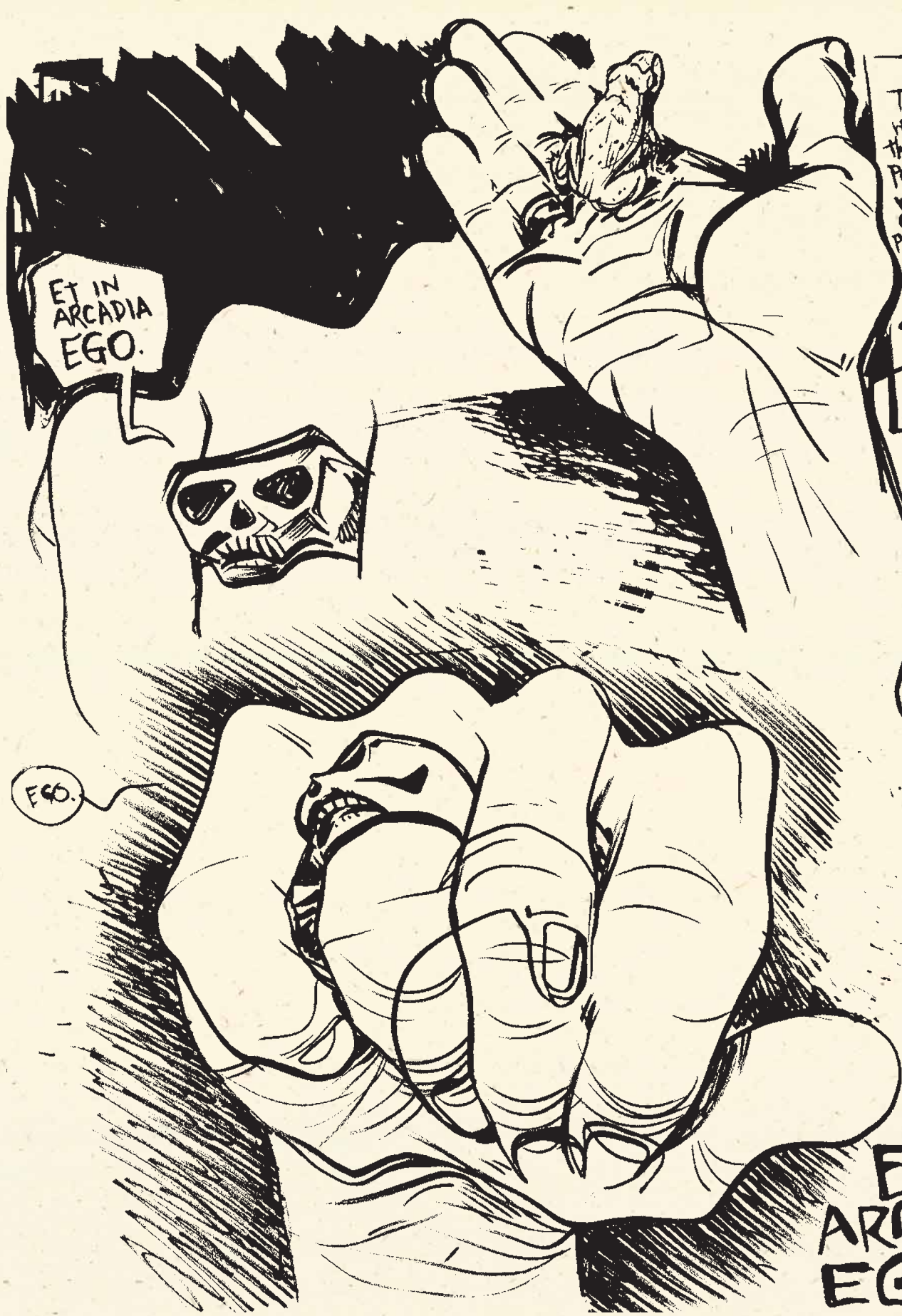
and evermore. Comics is a fertile seedbed of image, story, and myth, with rich plots, hybrid strains, and long-legged furroughs. Our proud medium shakes ideas off its vines like ripened fruit.

I take it as a moral imperative to question all traditions and presumed rules of the comics medium. As an artist, I will cleave to the traditions which point to real, true, and vital rules of art. I will borrow traditions and rules of other media if they can be applied successfully to comics. I will discard (i.e. "destroy") all local, static, inflated, and worn-out edicts which serve only to keep the medium of comics in stasis — rules which may've worked at one time and in one place, but no longer do.

This intolerance of the shop-worn and trite applies even to my own standards and rules, as it did when returning from Japan, having learned so many new traditions and techniques from manga, so many new ideas which challenged or broke even the most basic presumptions of American and European comics. I realized at the end of the day the only comics I was actually destroying was my own. There was a time when I thought I'd never work in film or the fashion industry but that presumption has been destroyed, too.

In the end is this Destroyer's affirmation: Comics, like all other arts, is elastic, open-ended and expansive. The medium has the power to contain and express all human thought, all feeling and experience, from the most sacred to the most profane, to heaven and hell and back again. There is absolutely nothing you can't express through the medium of comics. Nothing is beyond its scope. As long as there are artists-of-comics who wish to create, and ideas they wish to express, this one true and unchanging rule remains indestructible.





ET IN  
ARCADIA  
EGO.

HH

TINY FROG  
WHICH WAS IN  
THE SWIMMING  
POOL... BROWN  
WITH OLIVE  
GREEN "LEAF"  
PATTERN ON  
HIS BODY...  
WHITE UNDER  
BELLY... SO  
SMALL HE  
COULD FIT  
IN YOUR  
SHIRTPOCKET.

7/20/04  
TUESDAY  
10:00AM

MISTER  
FROGGY!

...alexander  
called him  
MR. FROGGY.

EGO.

ET IN  
ARCADIA  
EGO.



