



Mary Fleener

Artist's name: Mary Fleener

Style: High-contrast, geometric impressionism
Continuing themes: Black magic, interpretations of song lyrics, real life situations

Publications include: Chicken Slacks, HooDoo, Slutburger Stories

How long have you been a cartoonist?

In my mind, all my life, but I guess a more accurate answer would be when I sold my first piece to Robert Armstrong for *The Tubor's Voice* (The Couch Potato Newsletter). The pay was \$10, but it felt like \$1,000; I was hooked immediately. That was 1986.

What artists or strips have influenced you?

Egyptian art, Aztec, Mexican folk art, the surrealists, the Sunday L.A. Times comic section of the late '50s, Robert Crumb, Robert Armstrong, Rock 'n Roll posters and flyers, Aline Kominsky, Mad Magazine, Los Bros Hernandez, and the Rocky and Bullwinkle Show.

What motivates you?

Anger and fear.

Are there any messages you're trying to get across through your strips?

No. I just try to make no bullshit yet compassionate statements on what I'm exposed to.

What are some of your other occupations and/or hobbies?

If I had to work tomorrow, I'd do custom picture framing. I can grow food and herbs and play music with the best of 'em; electric bass guitar and rhythm guitar. I can, on occasion, belt out a tune. My political sympathies run into animal rights and the pro-choice abortion issue.

What sparked your interest in black magic?

In music, especially R&B, there are lotsa references to sympathetic magic, or HooDoo. That the power of the mind could be channeled into rituals is fascinating but *we* conjure up the wrong forces for power and a price must *always* be paid. I don't mess with it myself, and never have. All cultures have some sort of HooDoo.

What are some of your favorite characters and/or strips that you've done?

I like drawing hussies. My favorite stories are: 1) The Hawk and the Buzzard (from HooDoo), 2) Trauma Mama (from Slutburger Stories), and 3) The Long Way Home (also from Slutburger Stories).

In your opinion, what is wrong with the world?

Overpopulation.

What projects are you currently working on?

I just finished a full color page for *Drawn and Quarterly* (from Toronto, Canada) and am doing a two-pager for *Rip Off Comics*' "Dream Issue" (edited by George Parsons) and a five-pager written by Dennis Eichhorn that will be in a collection of his stories, published by Fantagraphics. Then, in October, another full color two-page story for *Drawn and Quarterly*. I hope *Rip Off* wants me to do *Slutburger* #2.

What are your goals in your work? What do you hope to accomplish?

I just wanna be part of the gang of current cartoonists that are respected. Since I plan on doing paintings that use my comix images, I hope to sell lots of 'em and eventually feel like I'm actually earning a living, something few cartoonists are currently able to do. I want to do an animated film someday with me composing the music, and I want to help my husband so he can retire early and/or we can both work at home, through the mail. When people think of me, I hope they will say "original."