

Bibliothèque publique d'information EXPOSITION
8 juin au 10 octobre 2022

Chris Ware

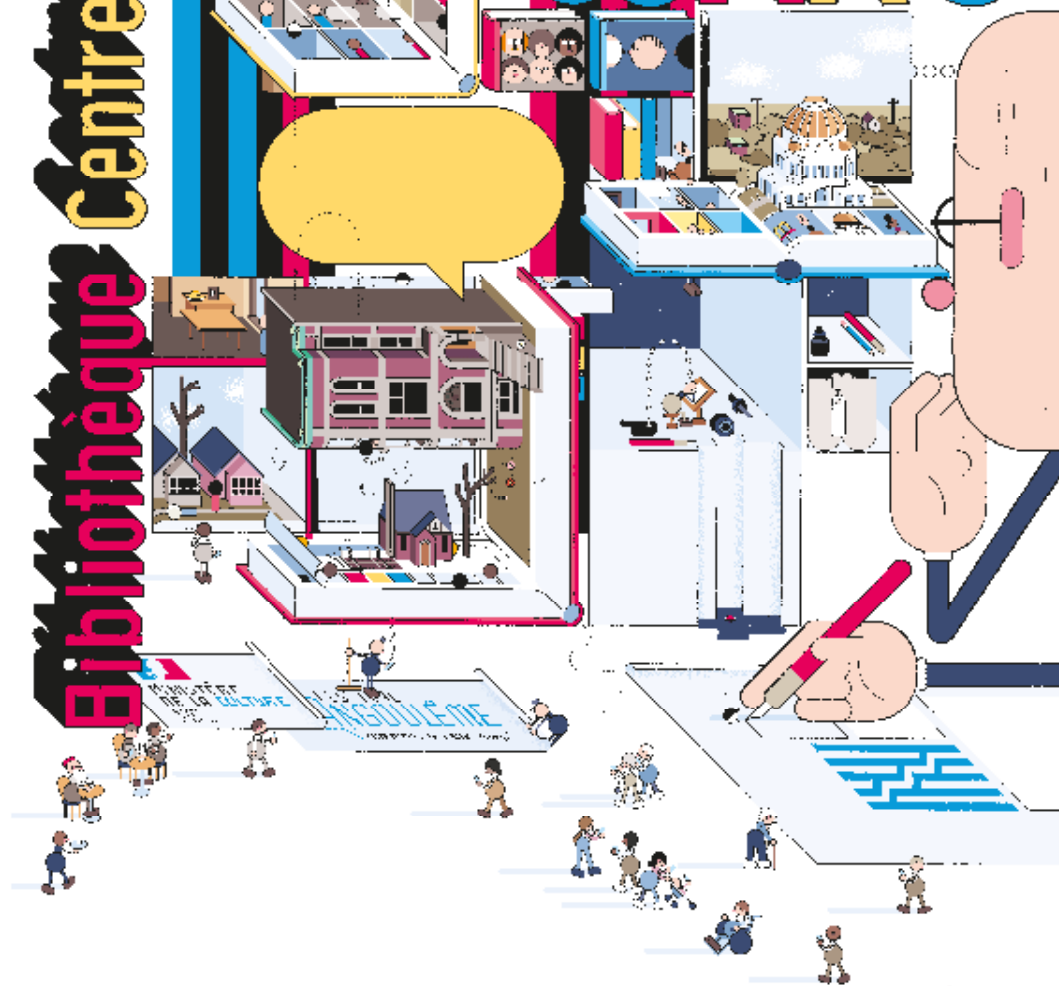


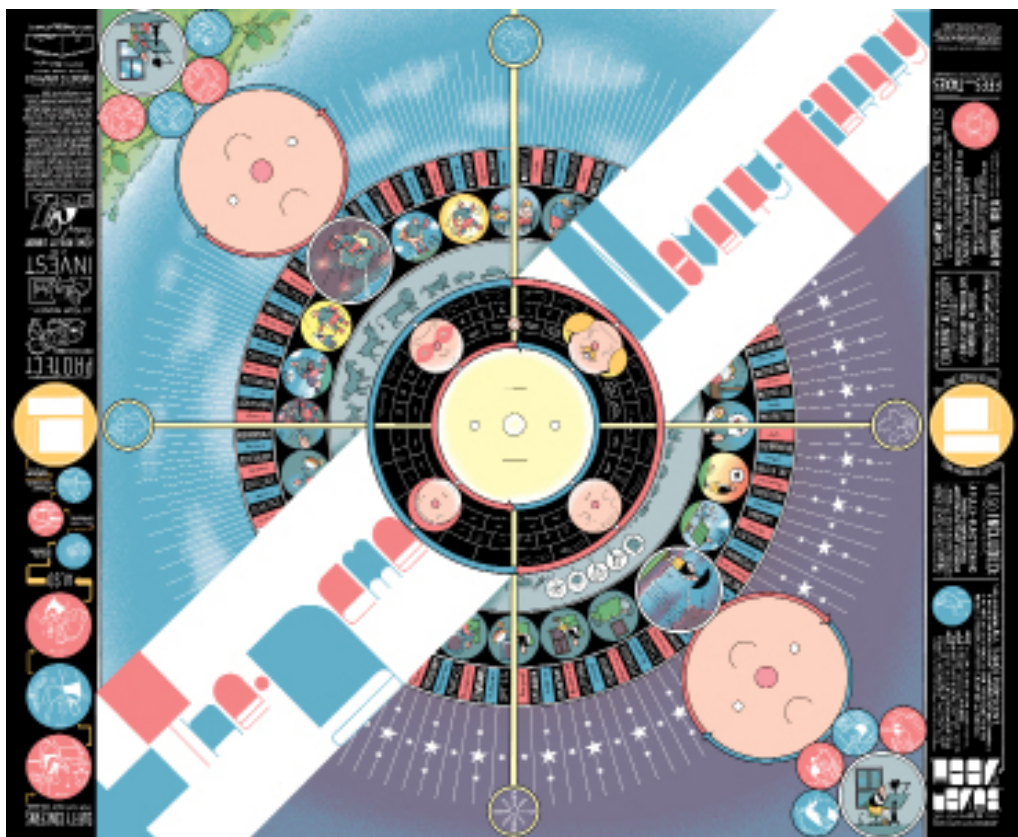
Pompidou

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WARE





ACME Novelty Library #15, cover (and back cover), 2001 © Chris Ware

Chris Ware

Exhibition June 8th – October 10th

Keeping up a work essentially dedicated to print, and distinguished by numerous international prizes, Chris Ware has established himself as a leading contemporary cartoonist, by exploring the full linguistic potential of graphic fiction.

One of the most outstanding aspects of Chris Ware's work is his attention to all parameters of comics design: panel and page, lettering, covers and endpapers, everything is granted the same perfectionist and inventive treatment. The traditional separation between the cartoonist's

and the editor's work is no longer valid. Chris Ware masters his albums from start to finish, and conception to production, even overseeing the translation of his books around the world.

Far beyond formalism, his work pulsates with the very sensations of life, in a touching and melancholic way: *Jimmy Corrigan*, *Building Stories*, and *Rusty Brown* opened comics to the fictional expression of a moment captured in all its dimensions. Though the aesthetic of some designs is tinged with nostalgia, Chris Ware's works

demonstrate an increasingly visible sensitivity to the events and cultural mutations stirring the contemporary world.

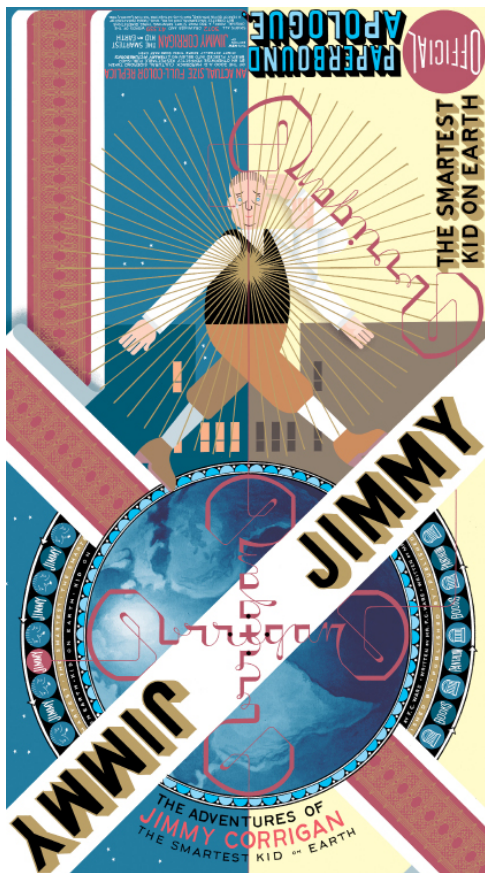
The itinerary of this exhibition is overall chronological. A large part is given to original pages: both their size and the traces of blue pencil they bear let us perceive Chris Ware's drawing in its precision and beauty. These pages are displayed alongside large-format reproductions highlighting the importance of color and the artist's innovative use of the comics language. And since Ware's work is essentially book-object-minded, the wide selection of publications shows the diversity of his approach to print. A complete artist, Chris Ware also created numerous objects – models, sculptures and various constructions, all playful extensions of his stories.

Chris Ware was born in 1967 and lives in Chicago.

The ACME Novelty Library adventure An editorial experience

While still a student, in Austin then in Chicago, Chris Ware published several comic strips for the local press, and four pages in *RAW*, the influential avant-garde anthology magazine co-edited by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly. But he really launched his career through one of the most unusual editorial adventures in comics. From 1993 onward, low-key at first, he published a series of booklets in a wide range of formats, titled *ACME Novelty Library*.

The baroque anthology was the laboratory where Chris Ware began to develop iconic characters such as Quimby the Mouse, Potato Guy, Sparky, and especially frail and moving Jimmy Corrigan. Readily experimental, it mixed the comics pages with mock advertisements, real-fake letters to the editor, and self-assembly models. The constant play with typography is particularly impressive.



Jimmy Corrigan, cover, 2000. © Chris Ware

As co-founder of the Association Jean-Christophe Menu wrote in 1997:

"What firstly sets Chris Ware apart from the other young American authors is the scope of his global project. Form, content, display, sidelines, everything in the ACME Novelty Library participates in a kind of superior organization so rigorous that the smallest detail, line or letter is coherent with the overall project."

Jimmy Corrigan Searching for a father

Released in the United-States in 2000 by Pantheon Books and translated into numerous languages, *Jimmy Corrigan* is the book that revealed Chris Ware to a wide audience. In 2003, the French version published by Delcourt won both the Critics' and Best Album awards at the Angouleme Festival. The 380-page comic book was the outcome of a creative endeavor started eight years before in a small weekly magazine of Chicago, then published as chapters in the *ACME Novelty Library*, before being thoroughly reworked.

One day, Jimmy Corrigan – “the smartest kid on earth”, but also the most introverted and anguished of all – receives a letter from a father he never knew, who is finally offering to meet him. Chris Ware says he started the narrative “*like a personal experience, some sort of dress rehearsal of the situation*” where someone would meet a parent for the first time, like he did.

But the book reaches far further than the obvious autobiographical family quest. The demanding nature and the creativity of *Jimmy Corrigan* paved the way to formal – and emotional – innovation, and proposed a deeply transformational reading experience.

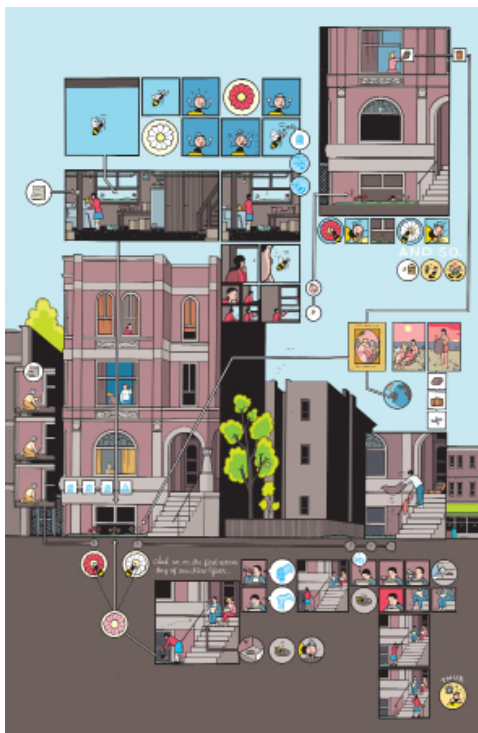
Building Stories Much more than a book

The ambition of the project is clearly exposed from the title : *Building Stories* evokes not only the stories of a building, but also stories in the making. Here, Chris Ware combines mediums, formats and styles, offering a radically new type of experience.

Inside a small Chicago building (and a mysterious box), a number of fates intersect and suggest countless stories. The fourteen printed objects, coming in various but eminently complementary

sizes, paginations, and shapes, are all fragments of a jigsaw the readers organize as they invent it. Much like in Georges Perec’s *Life : A User’s Manual*, we maneuver through description and narrative, layered stor(e)ys and interlacing memories.

But as spectacular as the challenge was, the qualities of *Building Stories* were far more than formal. It also gradually sketches the subtle and moving portrait of a woman, the one-legged florist. Never before had the author’s empathy been so outward-facing, thus marking a real opening to the world and others. Chris Ware became a father, and his creative universe has expanded considerably.



Comics & co

A multimedia artist

Chris Ware's corpus consistently demonstrates his demanding nature, whether he produces personal works or answers to exterior commissions like the *in situ* artist he is, in an ever rigorous and inventive manner.

When a Nebraska museum offered to host a retrospective of his oeuvre, he designed an exhibition catalog worthy of inclusion into the *ACME* library. Steeped in love for a bunch of classic comics of the first half of the 20th century, like George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* and Frank King's *Gasoline Alley*, Chris Ware fervently laid out their new versions, as if they were his own books. His passion for ragtime, the precursor genre of jazz, led him to produce several specialist magazines.

And when his Japanese editor proposed to issue a jigsaw, he went so far as to redraw the cutting of the pieces in his desire to avoid standardization. More ambitious productions also find their place in the Warian agenda: the remarkable series of covers he created for *The New Yorker* reveals the acuity of the artist's view of American society and the contemporary world. These covers are in dialogue with each other and play with interdisciplinarity, completing Chris Ware's definitely unique status, between cartoon, graphic novel and contemporary art.



Animated film *Quimby the Mouse*, original comic strip, 2009



The New Yorker - Thanksgiving conversation, 2006 © Chris Ware



CREDITS

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In partnership with

Le Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême

La Galerie Martel et les éditions Delcourt

Media partners

Beaux Arts magazine, Télérama, Libération, France Culture
and CANAL BD

The Bpi warmly thanks Chris Ware.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Bibliothèque publique d'information

25 rue du Renard - 75004 Paris

01 44 78 43 51 - www.bpi.fr

Subway station : Hôtel de Ville / Rambuteau

Hours

Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays : 12-10pm

Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays : 11am-10pm

Closed on Tuesdays

PLEASE NOTE that due to upcoming works, access to the exhibition is subject to change !

Please consult our website before your coming.

Our partners



WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS, VISITS & ACCESS

• **30-minute guided tours, open to all**, without reservation, every day at 5PM

(Except Tuesdays, week-ends and public holidays)

• **45-minute guided tours for groups** by reservation, possible every morning

(Except Tuesdays, week-ends and public holidays)

• **Workshops** for the general public or specific audiences, by inscription

Contact, information and booking

01 44 78 13 83 - 01 44 78 44 45

visites@bpi.fr

• **Texts of the exhibition are available in audio version and LSF** (*French sign language*) thanks to QR codes.

Bring your smartphone and headphones !



• **Tours adapted for people with disabilities**

- for people using the French sign language (LSF)

Wednesday, June 29 • 10-12am

Saturday July 23 • 3-5pm

Friday September 9 • 6-8pm

Monday October 3 • 5-7pm

Information and reservation

lecture-handicap@bpi.fr

- for the visually impaired,

upon request to the Souffleurs d'Images association :

Association Souffleurs d'Images

01 42 74 17 87

contact@souffleursdesens.org



• **A filmed tour** commented will be available after the opening of the exhibition.

• **Meeting around the work of Chris Ware**

(Program in progress)

Monday, October 3 • 7pm • Petite Salle • Centre Pompidou

You will find a selection of publications and gifts

at the bookstore of the Centre Pompidou (Forum, level 0).

EXHIBITION PLAN

