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Photo by Brian Erb

In 10 minutes, cartoonist Trina Robbins can whip out drawings like this one, which she is doing for her next comic book — even though she once was kicked out of art school for her unconventional style.

Creating art in her own image

By Melissa Martin
Of the Emerald

They told Trina Robbins, "Thou art not an artist, with a capital 'A'" and kicked her out of art school, she says, because she didn't conform to the institute's teaching style.

Today she is a leading illustrator and cartoonist and her work has been in magazines such as National Lampoon, Ms., Village Voice, Heavy Metal, Playboy and High Times.

Five years after her first visit to Eugene, Trina is back to display her work, give a slide show and have a question-and-answer session today in Room 214, Allen Hall, at 2:30.

Trina is proof that being kicked out of art school won't hinder a professional career.

"I'd like to say I was kicked out because I drew little real things on paper," Robbins says. But when she lost interest in the style the school taught, she quit going to classes and her grades fell, she says.

"They were teaching what the style of the day was — huge, wall-size abstracts and sculptures made with a welding tool," she says.

Then, in 1965, Trina says she got turned on to Marvel superhero characters and realized the stuff she had been drawing in art school while others were doing sculptures was actually comic strip material.

Although the Marvel books encouraged Trina to develop her own style, she didn't want to draw superhero style, she says.

Her family never doubted she would someday become an artist, she says.

"Nobody took it for granted I would grow up and do comics," she says.

As a kid, Trina says, she "gobbled up comics," until her mother convinced her to toss them out. Then Trina turned to science fiction.

"If I weren't drawing professionally, I'd still be drawing."

"If there's anything I like to do better than draw and drink coffee it is to talk," she says.

In her "cluttered" studio in her San Francisco home, Trina says she draws during the day with the radio turned on and at night with the television turned to an old movie.

"I never have enough space," Trina says about her studio.

When Trina sits down to draw she thinks, "Here's this blank piece of paper and how am I going to fill it?"

Trina hangs the "cute little drawings" of her 13 year-old daughter, Casey, in the kitchen because, "you can tell a lot about a person by looking at their refrigerator," she says.

"I have an addiction to flea markets and garage sales," she says. She collects representations of women from the early 1920s through the 1940s.

Currently, Trina is working on a book about the history of women cartoonists.

"It was such fun researching that book," Trina says, referring to how she met an Australian woman cartoonist by mail.

"I dream of going to Australia someday to meet her personally," she says.

Is Trina's work political??

"I think just about anything done by a woman, if she's honest about her own feelings, tends to be feminist and if it's feminist, it's political," she says.

Latin American artists to display works

Two Latin American artists bring their work to Eugene for an unusual display at the Eugene Council for Human Rights in Latin America at 1236 Kincaid St. The exhibit runs through Nov. 19, in La Galeria, which is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Through his art, Nicaraguan Alejandro Canales will present the reality of Nicaragua and paint a mural reflecting the friendship between the two countries. His large mural, which is in ECHRLA's La Galeria, depicts images of education, agriculture and peace. The mural's doves, women, flowers and fruit express

Nicaragua's spirit, he says.

Chilean artist Orlando Letelier's bold, colorful work shows images of women in work and real-life situations. They are painted in tempura color and colorful hues are combined with rich browns.

Letelier, son of the assassinated Chilean Ambassador to the United States, has etchings, intaglio and serigraph pieces in the exhibition. He has exhibited and taught in California, and has murals in Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago and throughout the Western United States and Nicaragua, including

the mural which graces ECHRLA's outer wall.

Probably Letelier's strongest etching is done in the spirit of a Goya print. The etching is inspired by the incident of the four Maryknoll missionaries who were found murdered.

Letelier's display also will include serigraphs of Chilean oceans, memories and dream images. In his print "Que se abran las puertas," the birds represent peace, hope, freedom, and a better future. In several of these prints Letelier has used pastels over the tops of his prints.

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