

Arts & Humanities

# **A Life in Comics: The Graphic Adventures of Karen Green**

How a Butler librarian became Columbia's first curator for comics and cartoons.

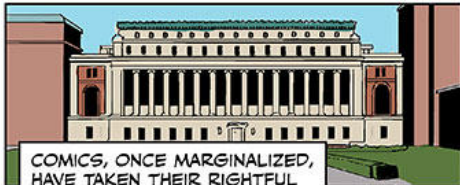
By

Nick Sousanis '14TC

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COMICS, ONCE MARGINALIZED, HAVE TAKEN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THIS VENERABLE REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE,



THANKS TO THE VISION AND PERSISTENCE OF LIBRARIAN KAREN GREEN,



WHO RECENTLY BECAME THE FIRST CURATOR FOR COMICS AND CARTOONS IN COLUMBIA'S RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY.

# A LIFE IN COMICS

The Graphic Adventures of Karen Green '97GSAS  
How a Butler Librarian Became Columbia's First Curator for Comics and Cartoons  
by Nick Sousanis '14TC



GREEN, WHO GREW UP IN MICHIGAN, WAS A SOLITARY KID WHO LOVED BOOKS.

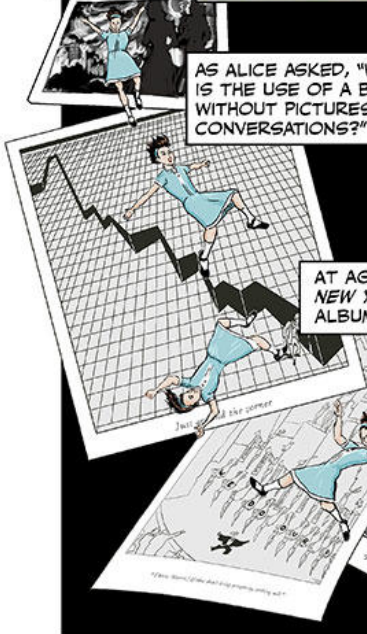


HER PARENTS TRIED TO GET HER TO PLAY OUTSIDE,

BUT SHE'D TAKE HER BOOK AND KEEP READING.



ONE BOOK, ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND, SENT HER DOWN A RABBIT HOLE THAT LED TO A LIFELONG PASSION FOR PICTURE STORIES.



AS ALICE ASKED, "WHAT IS THE USE OF A BOOK WITHOUT PICTURES OR CONVERSATIONS?"



AT AGE 6 SHE DISCOVERED HER PARENTS' NEW YORKER 25TH ANNIVERSARY CARTOON ALBUM (1925-1950). SHE WAS OBSESSED.

AND IT HELPED HER CULTIVATE A STRONG INDEPENDENT ATTITUDE AND A FASCINATION FOR THE CITY SHE WOULD SOON CALL HOME.



THIS WAS HER INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING HISTORY,



"It's broccoli, dear."  
"I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it."



WHEN GREEN WAS TEN, HER MOM ANNOUNCED:

MOVING TO NEW YORK CITY



COMICS SEEMED TO FOLLOW HER EVERYWHERE.

BACK WHEN GREEN WAS 11 SHE GOT BRACES. TO HER DELIGHT, HER ORTHODONTIST HAD STACKS OF ARCHIE COMICS.



SHE ENDED UP STAYING FOR HOURS AFTER HER APPOINTMENTS READING...



"I LOVED THOSE COMICS. I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT HIGH SCHOOL WAS GOING TO BE LIKE. I WAS MISTAKEN."



HIGH SCHOOL PROVED TO BE A DIFFICULT AND TROUBLED TIME FOR GREEN.

IT'S THERE SHE DISCOVERED UNDERGROUND COMICS AND THE COMICS MAGAZINE

**HEAVY METAL**



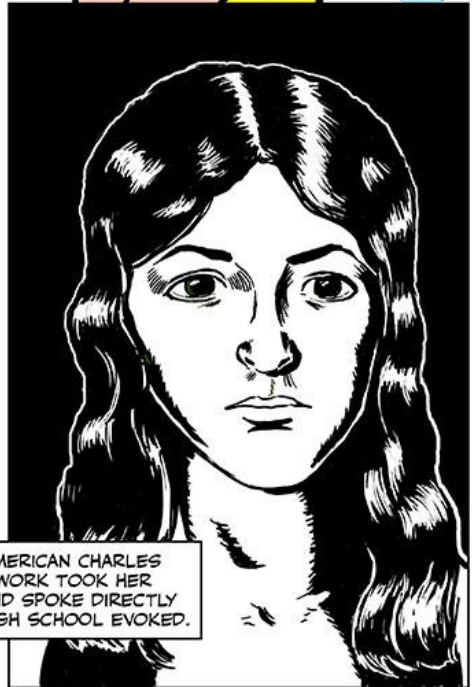
- WHICH BLEW HER MIND WITH ITS SLATE OF EUROPEAN CARTOONISTS

after Jim Cherry



- AS WELL AS AMERICAN CHARLES BURNS, WHOSE WORK TOOK HER BREATH AWAY AND SPOKE DIRECTLY TO FEELINGS HIGH SCHOOL EVOKED.

after C. Burns



SHE MADE IT TO COLLEGE IN 1978, BUT DROPPED OUT AFTER ONE SEMESTER AND STARTED BARTENDING, WHICH SHE WOULD DO FOR THE NEXT 15 YEARS.



BARTENDING TAUGHT HER HOW TO WORK WITH AND TALK TO DIFFICULT PEOPLE AND GRIN LIKE A CHESHIRE CAT WHEN SHE WASN'T "FEELING SMILEY."

DURING THIS TIME, GREEN CHASED MANY DIFFERENT DREAMS TRYING TO FIND HER WAY.



IN 1989 SHE WENT TO MASSAGE THERAPY SCHOOL.





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