

Spiegelman to draw on forbidden images for Speaker Series speech

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There are few people the Students' Union would allow to smoke on the Myer Horowitz Theatre's stage—legendary comic artist Art Spiegelman being one of them.

Spiegelman will be at the University of Alberta tomorrow night as part of the SU's Revolutionary Speakers Series, where he's scheduled to discuss forbidden images and freedom of speech.

"It's been interesting to see how [comics have] been rejected and held at arm's length by the mainstream culture," Spiegelman said in a phone interview. "And yet more and more, we're living in a world where comics are somehow permeating the whole culture in the form of cinema, in the form of cartoon art, and that cartoon art occasionally is running up into world events in ways that are creating enormous clashes—the most recent is the Muhammad cartoons that we're living with the hangover of still."

Spiegelman is best known as the man who depicted Jews as mice and the Nazi Germans as cats in the graphic novel, *MAUS: A Survivor's Tale*. The work, which described his parents' experiences as Holocaust concentration camp survivors, won him

the Pulitzer Prize in 1992. However, more recently, some of his work has raised eyebrows and in some cases even faced censorship.

The June 2006 issue of *Harper's* magazine was pulled from Canadian bookshelves by Indigo and Chapters after his article, "Drawing Blood: Outrageous Cartoons and the Art of Outrage," which focused on Spiegelman's ideology of forbidden images, faced political controversy in the wake of the Muhammad cartoons.

"I figure, even if I just have to read the article out loud to people in Canada, [I will], if you want to allow discourse to continue," he said.

He argues that freedom of speech is an appropriate reason for printing material that could be considered offensive, so long as it opens up real dialogue and "not when it just beats up people who are already being beaten up."

Spiegelman said that he tends to lean towards the freedom of speech side of the equation despite the negative consequences it sometimes brings.

"Even when it leads to insane holocaust denial and speeches or whatever, I just tend to have ... faith in the notion that discourse eventually leads to better understanding," he said. "That's it's better to keep arguing about it until it lands—so long as blood isn't being

shed or about to be shed because of something said, then the longer solution's the better solution."

His goal as a comic artist is to try and be entertaining while at the same time saying something that needs to be said. And since his involvement as one of the founding members of the American underground comix in the '60s and '70s, Spiegelman says he's seen an enormous shift in the way society views the role of comics.

"Things that I thought and was in a minority, often of one, in 1966 or '67 have become the dominant take now that we've moved through a kind of sea change of how comics are being seen," he said. "Which is to say, the notion of comics might be some sort of art doesn't seem hallucinatory anymore."

Spiegelman explained he accepted to come speak at the U of A for much of the same reason that he chose to teach at Columbia University—because of the opportunities for dialogue the experiences offer.

"[Universities] used to be a place where social revolutions could be fermented. I don't know if that's as true anymore," he said. "But it's about the only place where you have the time out to actually reflect and think and take input without getting caught up in the mad squirrel cage run of what usually makes up a life."



KRYSTINA SULATYCKI

ONE HUNDRED PER CENT (HU)MAN Dollansky is facing off against Energon-swiping Transformer Soundwave for VPX.

National outlook for VPX candidate

JEN HUYGEN
News Writer

The position of Vice-President (External) involves acting as the Students' Union's voice to the community at large and to the provincial government. This year Steven Dollansky, a third-year Science student, is running against the Decepticon Soundwave.

1 How do you intend to improve the public profile of students within the larger community?

I believe that the first thing we need to do is engage students a little bit more to get better attended events—advocacy-related events—and then I think that will really improve our profile within the community because we'll have a stronger and more unified voice. Other than that, I think that just being professional and really treating people that we need to meet with with respect; I think that that will really improve the profile of students in the public.

2 What is the biggest challenge you see currently facing the relationship between the U of A and the provincial government?

Funding. No question. The University needs more money in order to be able to do what they want to do. We need to make sure that we're lobbying with the University in a lot of cases and making sure the undergraduate voice is heard. We've seen a lot of the money that the University does receive go to research, and we need to see a lot more of that go towards the student experience in the classroom. I think the key is that we need to work with the University in order to see them get more funding to improve education as a whole.

3 The VPX is effectively the lobby voice for students. How do you plan to coordinate national and provincial lobbying efforts?

I think that we need to look into a national lobby group, specifically CASA (Canadian Alliance of Student Associations), and just evaluate whether or not we would receive benefits that would warrant the investment. I think that that's important and it's something we haven't looked into in the past few years and we should. I'd definitely give it a thought. At the same time we need to continue to work with CAUS (Council

of Alberta University Students) at a provincial level to get our voice heard at that level and at the same time I think I'd like to see CAUS step up to a national level as well, just to get the Alberta student voice as a whole heard at the national level.

4 If you could improve focus on any issue within postsecondary education, other than the cost of tuition, what would it be?

That would be housing, for sure. I think it's something the Students' Union needs to do more of—work with the City and work with the provincial government to see things like property taxes on residences and the power taxation be changed. That's an \$850 000-a-year hit that the University takes, and I'd like to see that funnelled back into improved quality and reduced rent. At the same time, I'd like to work with the City to see more affordable housing projects dedicated to students.

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