

Influence

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With a “short and sweet” comic as the project goal, this is a four page comic with four symmetrical panels on each page, and each page is kinda a scene-let from the artist’s life; different moments of “influence” in the webcomic style.

As far as general aesthetic of the piece, in my mind I imagine really simple linework, as minimal as possible, trying to land in kinda boring realism. The crux of the piece is the juxtaposition between bombastic narration and a just kinda mundane “real life” existence, so as “normal” as possible. I keep thinking of Calvin and Hobbes, especially his dad.

As for the narration, I’m not exactly sure how to do it. I’m writing them kinda in the tone of excerpts of a biography, but art gallery plaques were my initial inspiration, so I’m not exactly sure what the most effective way to visualize them would be.

Another additional fun thing is that the second page is about how ducks are a motif throughout his work, so we can play with that being present in all the art he makes.

PAGE 1

Panel 1: JAMES is sitting at his drafting table, center of the panel, working on a water color, and next to him is his friend RONALDO, also at a drafting table, also working on some project or another. They are both intently focused on their own work. The tables are up against the back wall of the room, so the guy's backs are to the audience.

1. NARRATOR:

In his mid-20s, artistic giant James Christopher Nichols would often collaborate with his close friend and fellow artist, Ronaldo Carvalho.

Panel 2: Same exact shot as Panel 1, but now JAMES is leaning over, looking at RONALDO's piece, smiling in appreciation of the work. RONALDO is pleasantly proud of his piece.

1. NARRATOR:

During this time, the two operated out of a small studio that they rented together. Here, they would go back and forth, bouncing ideas off one another.

1. JAMES:

Cool.

2. RONALDO:

Thanks.

3. NARRATOR

One can see Carvalho's influence throughout Nichols's body of work, a imprint of this time working together.

3. RONALD:

You wanna check out that party at Steve's?

4. JAMES:

Yeah. Sure.

Panel 3: In the kitchen portion of a typical, crappy house party. The regular denizens of a crappy house party are mingling in the back ground JAMES and RONALDO are standing in the foreground, kinda bored, just looking around. RONALDO is midway taking a swig of shitty beer.

1. NARRATOR:

Both Carvalho and Nichols would frequent social events hosted by fellow artistic pioneer, Steven Dean Pawlowski.

2. NARRATOR:

Pawlowski's monthly festivities would also be host to other famous contemporaries of Nichols such as Pulitzer prize winner Adrianna Virag and poet laureate Saijad Jones.

Panel 4: Now in the family room of the same party, people still being crappy around the couch, where JAMES and STEVE are sitting. JAMES is very bored, staring straight ahead and totally not paying attention to STEVE, as STEVE is ranting and ranting passionately at JAMES. STEVE's speech bubble is beyond full, one of those walls of text that fill up the bubble completely instead of a normal proportion. Also, perhaps STEVE is mid-taking a hit from a bong.

1. NARRATOR:

It was here that Nichols would interact with Pawlowski and Pawlowski's circle of confidantes-- given the name The Serious Six for their moving depictions of the stark realities of war.

2. STEVE (USE AS MUCH OF THIS AS YOU NEED):

The thing about art right now is that it is so stagnant and derivative! Day in, day out, painting in, painting out, you know man!? You feel me!? I mean, just look past the ends your post modern noses you sheeple! If you really unpack what I'm trying to do with this piece, I'm trying to look through a prism of the intersectionality of now and the liminal space has this certain gestural nothingness that I think juxtaposes with the deconstruction that, in my honest opinion, I am achieving!

3. JAMES:

Mmm

4. NARRATOR:

Though never one of the Six, Nichols would remain loosely associated with the group for many years.

PAGE 2

Panel 1: A flashback to when JAMES was a kid, 4-5 years old. Real cute. He's out in a park, maybe by pond, and he is toddling towards a couple of ducks, amused by this new discover of such fascinating animals.

1. NARRATOR:

One motif consistently seen throughout James Christopher Nichols's work is water fowl, and most usually, ducks.

Panel 2: JAMES is terrified as he runs as fast as he can away from an irate and furious flock of ducks that are chasing him.

1. NARRATOR:

With each piece, the animal takes on new meaning, though often the duck represents a sense of tranquility in Nichols's works.

2. JAMES:

Ahh!

Panel 3: JAMES is buried in the knees of his mother, who is depicted just from the waist down. He very upset and his mother is trying to console him.

1. NARRATOR:

When asked what drives this interest, Nichols often refers back to his early life and the warm summers he would spend at his family's lake house in rural Wisconsin

Panel 4: Tight shot over JAMES'S shoulder in the foreground as he continues to clutch his mother. He has locked eyes with a solitary duck, standing in the distance, staring back at JAMES, looking menacing.

1. NARRATOR:

In an interview for *The New Yorker* magazine, Nichols remarked that, "It was a distinct moment of peace in my otherwise turbulent childhood. Ducks are just emblematic of a happy time in my life."

PAGE 3

Panel 1: Back in the present, a birds eye view of JAMES is laying on his back on his bed, head at the foot of the bed, his feet on the pillows, staring up at the ceiling. Around him his room is a complete mess, clothing everywhere, pictures and scraps of paper strewn about, food plates abandoned. He his looking despondent.

1. NARRATOR:

The career of James Christopher Nichols can be categorized into distinct “periods” and no period was more prolific than the time immediately after the dissolution of his relationship with long time romantic partner Jessica Konig.

Panel 2: Late at night, a single desk lamp illuminates, JAMES sitting at his drafting board. He is furiously writing something down, with much concentration on his face.

1. NARRATOR:

It was during this period of isolation in which he really pushed his craft and experimented with forms such as poetry and prose, which he would later go on to perfect.

Panel 3: JAMES is standing, embarrassed and awkward at the front door to a house. Next to the stoop there is a bush (which will be used in the next panel) He is clutching a piece of paper in one hand and flowers in the other.

1. NARRATOR:

These now priceless works are a snapshot of man deeply wounded and desperate to make peace with himself, Konig, and the world.

Panel 4: JAMES is clearly hiding in the bush next to the stoop watching JESSICA, who is now leaning out of the door, confused, having just answered it to no one being there.

1. NARRATOR:

These earliest pieces of poetry were found sheer luck, as a former landlord of Nichols discovered them in an attic, stuffed in a desk of his, presumably put there by Nichols soon after writing them.

PAGE 4

Panel 1: The scene is set in the office of an ad agency. In the foreground, JAMES aimlessly is emptying a desk's trash can, looking up to see FRANCESCO a flamboyant, artistic rock star walking past in the background, gesticulating wildly to his gaggle of sycophants.

1. NARRATOR:

Though he trained at the Scharwartzburg School of Design, James Christopher Nichols honed his craft under the employ of the great Francesco Belluci.

Panel 2: A shot from behind the desk of JAMES is at his drafting table at the office, focussed on working on his assignment.

1. NARRATOR:

It was under Belluci that Nichols would develop his own unique voice.

Panel 3: Same shot, but now FRANCESCO is moving away from the table waiving a barely interested hand at JAMES'S work, having just glanced over it, found it to be unimpressive, told JAMES to change it, and is now on his way to his next thing. JAMES is crushed by this careless brush off.

1. NARRATOR:

Belluci was a pivotal mentor, giving Nichols the crucial feedback he required to flourish.

Panel 4: With one hand, JAMES is most of the way towards shoving everything on the table off it, and into the garbage. His head is in his other hand, looking straight forward, totally angry and frustrated and despondent.

1. NARRATOR:

It only took five years for Nichols to leave Belluci's firm, strike out on his own, and change the world himself.

2. NARRATOR:

Though faced with many hardships throughout his career, it was Nichols's undaunted perseverance and ability to rise above that made him the legend that he is today.