

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

CONTACT:

Lisle Peterson (510) 643-6714
lisle@calperfs.berkeley.edu
Christina Kellogg (510) 642-9121
ckellogg@calperfs.berkeley.edu

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR AND ARTIST
ART SPIEGELMAN
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 AT 8:00 P.M. IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

SPIEGELMAN WILL DELIVER “COMIX 101,” AN ILLUSTRATED EVOLUTION OF COMICS

BERKELEY, January 15, 2004 – World-renowned for his Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novels *Maus: A Survivors Tale* and *Maus II*, and his numerous politically and visually arresting *New Yorker* magazine covers, artist **Art Spiegelman** will speak at UC Berkeley for one night only, **Tuesday, February 24 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall, the third offering on Cal Performances’ 2003/04 **Strictly Speaking** series.

In a program entitled “Comix 101,” Art Spiegelman examines the art form of comics, or “comix” as he prefers to call them (referring to the *co-mixing* of words and graphics), through an art-filled lecture hitting the high and low points of the history of comics. Comics are “the bastard offspring of art and commerce,” Spiegelman said in an October, 2003 *New York Times* interview, never truly appreciated for their beauty and innovation. According to Spiegelman, the value of comics is on the rise in our post-literate culture, for “comics echo the way the brain works. People think in iconographic images, not in holograms, and people think in bursts of language, not in paragraphs.”

ART SPIEGELMAN

Art Spiegelman was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1948 and raised in Queens, New York. Embracing the subversive humor and art of *Mad Magazine* while rejecting Disney’s sanitized creations, Spiegelman knew early on that cartooning was for him. By age 15 he was earning money from his drawings and his vocation was set.

Spiegelman’s career has spanned a wide variety of creative endeavors: in the mid-1970s he co-founded *Arcade*, a legendary comics anthology with fellow artist Bill Griffith (creator of

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the Zippy the Pinhead character); taught history and aesthetics of comics at the School for Visual Arts in New York; created Wacky Packages, Garbage Pail Kids and other novelty items for Topps brand bubble gum where he also served as creative director; and in 1980 co-founded and edited, with his wife, Francoise Mouly, *RAW*, the acclaimed avant-garde comics magazine that published his work as well as that of many others. While *RAW* the magazine no longer exists, *RAW* the publishing arts graphics company continues to thrive.

Art Spiegelman's work in *RAW* eventually lead to *Maus: A Survivors Tale* and *Maus II*, his comic-strip narrative based on his parents' experiences as Holocaust survivors, where Jews are drawn as mice and Nazis as cats, for which he won a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992. It was the success of *Maus* that demonstrated the value of comics as art and literature. This new respectability bore a new name for the genre: graphic novel. The potential for the form beyond teenage boys became clear. Like all of Spiegelman's work, *Maus* required a great deal of time to complete—13 years from start to finish. "I live inside my head, inside a room away from other people almost all the time," he commented in the *New York Times*.

Spiegelman's work is published in many periodicals, including *The New Yorker* where he was staff artist and writer from 1993 to 2003. The cover of *The New Yorker* has showcased many of his most controversial and memorable drawings. In 1993, during the Crown Heights racial conflict, he created a Valentine's Day cover picturing a black woman kissing a Hassidic man. Following the wrongful shooting death of a Haitian immigrant by New York City Police, Spiegelman drew an illustration of a cop at a shooting gallery with a sign reading "41 Shots for 10 cents." For immediacy of meaning, Spiegelman believes cartoons are unrivaled by any other art form.

His current projects include the dark and politically-charged, broadsheet-sized color comics pages "In the Shadow of No Towers," which tap into his fears unleashed by the incidents of September 11, 2001 (he lives and works a short walk from ground zero). One frame shows Spiegelman at his drawing board with Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush hovering above him, each brandishing a weapon. "In the Shadow of No Towers" is published in a number of

European newspapers and magazines, including *Die Zeit* and *The London Review of Books*. Each installment takes Spiegelman five weeks to create.

On the lighter side, Spiegelman, again in collaboration with his wife, recently finished editing the third in a series of *Little Lit* cartoon books for children. The books give an underground comic book twist to the children's picture book genre. Spiegelman wants cartoons to become the first step to children's literature as they are in much of Europe. American comics, he says, "have an odd aroma that goes back to the 1950s," referring to the Senate hearings on comics and juvenile delinquency that severely limited the kinds of cartoons that could be published.

Continuing his quest to elevate the comics, Spiegelman is writing the libretto and designing sets for a new opera with composer Phillip Johnston, *Drawn to Death: A Three Panel Opera*. Similar to "Comix 101," the opera traces the history of the comics with the Senate hearings figuring predominantly in the story.

STRICTLY SPEAKING

With the 2003/04 season Cal Performances introduces **Strictly Speaking**, a series of events designed to bring the most intriguing literary, cultural, scientific and political voices of the day to Bay Area audiences. This season's Strictly Speaking guests have included **Al Franken**, political satirist renowned for his contributions to *Saturday Night Live* and his most recent book, *LIES and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right*, and **Alice Sebold**, author of *The New York Times*' Best Seller *The Lovely Bones*. Novelist **Michael Cunningham**, whose rich, triple-layered narrative *The Hours* earned a 1999 Pulitzer Prize and inspired the screenplay for the Oscar-winning film of the same name, will speak at Zellerbach Hall April 3, 2004.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Art Spiegelman** on **Tuesday, February 24** at **8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$18.00**, **\$22.00**, and **\$28.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at

www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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San Francisco Chronicle, *San Francisco* magazine, and KDFC Classical 102.1 FM are media sponsors of Cal Performances' 2003/04 performing arts season.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Tuesday, February 24 at 8:00 p.m.

**Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley**

Strictly Speaking

Art Spiegelman

Comix 101: an Evening with Art Spiegelman

Program:

Creator of countless *New Yorker* magazine covers and the *Maus* graphic novels, Pulitzer Prize-winner Art Spiegelman presents "Comix 101," a visual travelogue of past and present comic artists that illuminates the evolution of comics as an art form.

Please note: Mr. Spiegelman will smoke on stage as part of his appearance.

Tickets: \$18.00, \$22.00 and \$28.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.

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