The Image-World: A Found Comic Poem
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Abstract

The text of this comic is excerpted entirely from Susan Sontag's essay, "The Image World", from her 1977 book On Photography. I was assigned to read and respond to this piece when I attended the Adventure School for Ladies Comics Intensive, an alternative graduate program focused on gender, labor, and the comics industry.

Sontag's essay critiques the way contemporary western culture uses photography for "imprisoning reality" and "depersonalizing our relation to the world". Photography creates another reality by the physical impression of light on film: what she calls the "image world".

The idea of a separate and additive reality created through rhetorical action (visual, in this case) made me think of the reality of women comic book characters, born into a world where they are very likely to be naked, silent, and/or without agency (see research by the Ladydrawers collective here and here)

I constructed a found poem from phrases I found in Sontag's piece, which I hope both reflects her argument and forwards her words into a new context. The illustrations I created with an ink wash over the top of the words show women rising up off the page, dismantling panels themselves, and gazing at the reader directly, showing themselves to be "more real than anyone could have supposed".

Keywords
comics; visual rhetoric; Susan Sontag; gender; women; feminist rhetoric; images

Full Text:
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