

# CENSORSHIP

© Malcolm Mc Neill 2008

...The unassembled nature of the artwork wasn't the real issue. Any publisher could see from looking at the dummy and a couple of finished frames what the book would look like. The real problem was content. As Peter put it euphemistically: "...this project is too far out and/or expensive for the more conventional publishing houses." Meaning: the explicit nature of the artwork precludes any mainstream publishing investment whatsoever. Or: the very moment I'd started making pictures of Bill's ideas, *Ah Puch* had been dead in the water. It ended at the beginning.

The first sequence in the book - the two Japanese boys jerking off to sex pictures- was fundamental to the premise of the text: It was the set up for the atomic bomb and the introduction to Control. When the same idea was represented pictorially however, with the same 'cinematic realism', it wasn't fine at all. Certainly not in terms of mainstream publication.

In keeping with the reciprocal nature of the process, I'd done exactly what Mr. Hart had told me to do : "GO OUT AND GET THE PICTURES... AND ESPECIALLY THE ONES WE CAN'T PRINT." The

book had demonstrated its basic contention: the Images of Sex and Death are tightly censored by the status quo in order to effect Control.

Job done. Q.E.D. after six years of work.

Cheaply produced comics and magazines that feature this kind of material are tolerated because they're marginal publications. Similarly, the porno industry, being a fundamental part of the status quo, is allowed to publish so called 'explicit' material, but that environment is also tightly controlled.

*Ah Puch* fell into neither of these categories. It wasn't cheap to produce and the material was far too intellectual to pass as pornography. Porno and ideas are antithetical. "Less plot more twat" is axiomatic to the idiom.

Despite the reality being the sine qua non of all mammalian life, representations of penile erections *shall not* be found in any section of Barnes and Noble Booksellers. It's likely to be that way for a long time to come. It was only a few years earlier, that Bob Guccione had shocked America by revealing that women had pubic hair. Penthouse was a landmark publication, but in order to soften the blow, it still had to photograph the precious four square-inches of turf as Lenny Bruce put it, through a pantyhose screen.

Hard on its heels came Richard Nixon's "War on Pornography". The year we signed the contract with Straight Arrow, he declared that so long as he was "in the White House there [would] be no relaxation of the national effort to control and eliminate smut from our national life." Nixon had a particular problem with gay folks. In San Francisco he said, they were everywhere. Not "just in the ratty part of town", but in the "upper classes" as well. It was "the most faggy goddamned thing you can imagine." So pervasive in fact, that he wouldn't "shake hands with anybody from San Francisco."

And as for The Comics Code Authority:

General Standards Part C:

Costume:

- 1) Nudity in any form is prohibited, as is indecent or undue exposure.
- 2) Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable.
- 3) All characters shall be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society.
- 4) Females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities.

Women as human skin suits becomes a complicated issue within these restraints. Even if their "physical qualities" *aren't* exaggerated. Quality is an impossible thing to illustrate anyway, although it could be

argued that few things are as honest as an erection\*: It's one of the sincerest indications of feeling and intent. (Which is probably why politicians are so afraid of them). To complicate matters, the erections depicted in *Ah Puch* were mostly being passed around amongst guys - some of whom were part something else. A factor that goes beyond the pale as far as obscenity is concerned and one which further diminished the possibilities of mainstream investment.

Obscenity and pornography had obviously been issues that Bill had made more relevant, but they weren't going to get in the way of me making pictures. If I thought about it all, I imagined if push came to shove I could always put black bars over the offending parts. Fig leafs that is, a defining feature of Mr. Hart's Bible- based universe in the first place. *Ah Puch* was the Death god. Putting black bars here and there was justifiable. I could even put them over random objects - noses, trees, shoes etc. just to point up the absurdity.

It wouldn't however solve the other problem.