The Cartoon Art of Charles E. Martin
Syracuse University Art Collections
The Cartoon Art of Charles E. Martin

A Catalog of the Charles E. Martin Collection
Petty-Dunn Center for Social Cartooning
Syracuse University Art Collections, 1982
Promoting scholarly interest in cartoon art is one of the primary goals of the Petty-Dunn Center for Social Cartooning at Syracuse University. The Cartoon Art of Charles E. Martin was organized and assembled to provide documentation and information about the work of another social comment artist represented in the Petty-Dunn Center. The comment art of Constantin Alajalov, Fred Ellis, and Boris Arzybasheff will be highlighted in the next several publications of the Center.

We are deeply indebted to Cheryl Saunders, graduate research assistant, for writing the essay and undertaking this study. Also, to Domenic Iacono, for editing and organizing the production of the catalog. Special gratitude is also given to Thomas Piche, assistant to the curator, and Philip La Douceur, assistant to the registrar, for their part in creating the catalog.

We would like to acknowledge the generosity, past and present, of the staff of the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, particularly Joseph A. Scala, Director of the Gallery, and Ruth Ann Appelhof, Curator of Exhibitions.

The contributions by the staff of the George Arents Research Library, especially Sidney Huttner, Carolyn Davis, and Mark Weimer, are greatly appreciated.

Alfred T. Collette
Director
Syracuse University Art Collections
Cartoons by Charles E. Martin (CEM) are included in the Petty-Dunn Center for Social Cartooning at the Syracuse University Art Collections. They typify this collection by gently satirizing man and his society. Alan Dunn once wrote that social cartooning, as a mode of graphic comment art, "looks and laughs at the discrepancies between man's intentions and his realizations," and that "it conveys to the viewer the absurdity of going too far out in either our dreams or our fears." This is certainly true of the cartoons by CEM.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1910, Charles Edward Martin was self-educated as an artist. Starting in 1929, he worked as a set designer for Little Theater in Boston. He was also a sign designer and did illustrations, mostly furniture drawings, for mail-order catalogs. Martin began to draw cartoons at this time to protest what he felt was a crumbling society.

After acting in summer stock in Provincetown, Massachusetts during the summer of 1932, CEM went to New York City to further his career in theater design. The difficulty of obtaining work in that field amidst the Depression caused him to start selling cartoons to small publications and illustrating stories for Fiction Parade. He also began to exhibit some of his paintings.

CEM worked on the Federal Art Project as a teacher to underprivileged children in 1934, and then as a supervisor in the Teaching Division until 1938. He became a staff cartoonist for The New Yorker that year, doing spot illustrations at first, and started to free-lance as a designer and cartoonist. Between 1939 and 1942, he worked on the politically radical newspaper PM as assistant art editor, political cartoonist and general illustrator.

For the next three years, the artist worked in England, Africa and Italy for the Office of War Information. He was art editor, poster designer and cartoonist for newspapers which were air-dropped into occupied countries. Working in a mobile leaflet unit stationed in France, he also illustrated leaflets for enemy persuasion.

After World War II, CEM felt that the audience for cartoons had shifted from one eager for severe criticism and protest, to one more concerned with problems on a more personal level. The type of humor in his cartoons changed accordingly, as there came to be fewer outlets for sharply satirical comment art. In subsequent years, periodicals have been running social cartoons which display a more moderate satire.

Martin's work in this vein has been published in Collier's, The Saturday Evening Post, Look, Saturday Review, This Week, Esquire and Punch, and he has provided illustrations for Time, Life, Harper's and Fortune. He currently submits work...
Charles Martin is also active in printmaking, particularly wood engravings and linocuts. CEM helped to organise the Artist's Guild and the Cartoonists' Guild, later becoming one of its presidents, and was elected to the Newspaper Guild. In addition, he is a member of the Society of Magazine Cartoonists.

The cartoons by CEM in the Syracuse University Art Collections represent the wide range of his artistic style. Most of his ink drawings are free from elaboration, with only a few details to establish the scene (cat. no. 45), while others, such as his ink and wash drawings, show a greater observation of minutiae (cat. no. 54). In general, his cartoons are distinguished by clean, finished lines, rather than rough, sketchy contours. Walt Kelly, creator of the comic strip Pogo, wrote that CEM's "ideas and the execution of them form a style. Always interesting, always clearly presented, Martin's work is a great contribution to clear thinking." 12

The drawing style of CEM conforms to the general trend in contemporary cartooning. Social comment artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as William Hogarth, had filled their images with rich, complex detail in the academic manner common to fine art. As John Ames Mitchell, cartoonist and co-founder of Life magazine, stated, they showed "that playfulness and fancy which are the very life of a drawing." 13 This practice was replaced in the early decades of the twentieth century by a simpler, more direct style, increasing the immediacy of the cartoon's message to the viewer. The target of the cartoonist's satire was thus reduced to its most basic elements, making it seem as if the most naive of persons could grasp the absurdity of the situation, and thereby sharpening the sense of satire. The work of CEM evinces this approach.

Coinciding with the visual simplification of the cartoon was the development and proliferation of the captionless and one-line 'gag' cartoons. These two changes occurred for the same reason—to strengthen the directness and clarity of the message conveyed by the image. This may be attributed to the increasingly rapid pace of modern society, which allows people little time for deliberation over cartoons. 14 Also, cartoons are usually small in scale when printed in magazines, and have to compete with text and other images for the viewer's notice.

A captionless drawing can sometimes be understood more readily than a cartoon with an explanatory comment. An obtuse or verbose caption can hinder the projection of an idea, since the viewer has to synthesize the written word and the pictorial image? Indeed, Charles Martin considers cartoons with gag lines to be merely illustrated captions.

In accordance with this view of the caption, CEM has always looked upon pantomime as a major cartooning device. He feels an affinity for the strip cartoon, and sees the captionless image as being a form of pure humor. His views are manifested in the several multi-scene and captionless cartoons reminiscent of mime artists.

People in ironic situations are the subjects of some of these multi-image and captionless cartoons, as exemplified by the man who finds shelter from a rainstorm in a doorway, (cat. no. 43). Similar to pantomimes, the story is enacted through the man's facial expressions and easily understandable gestures, such as his motioning the dog to join him. Elements of mime are also apparent in another instance of unexpected irony, in which a man on a tiny deserted island spots a ship approaching on the horizon (cat. no. 8). With no captions, we see the man anticipating his rescue, and then his feeling of disappointment as he watches the ship starting to sink. The last image is of the downcast man, sharing his island with new arrivals. CEM depicts irony in a single-image, captionless drawing in which all the trees along the street of a commercial district are healthy, except the ones in front of the garden supply store (cat. no. 31).

Another source of humor in Martin's cartoons is the satirization of character traits believed to be common within a group of people. Stereotyping is portrayed through exaggeration in the scene of the journalism students wearing trench coats and dachshund hats (cat. no. 9). The cartoon of the harassed nurse (cat. no. 65) also depends on standardized preconceived notions for its satire.

Some cartoons by CEM involve topical issues (cat. no. 54), but most comment on the foibles and minor faults of humanity, creating a humor that is timeless in nature. They are based on the innermost anxieties and desires caused by society's daily infringement on our lives, as can be seen in the cartoon of the executive arriving late at the
We are all susceptible to letting our weaknesses overwhelm our sense of self-worth, and worry about others being able to perceive our shortcomings. Such is the plight of the artist who laments after the statue of the nude woman he has just sculpted (cat. no. 29-30).

Mild satire characterizes the art created by CEM for such periodicals as The New Yorker, Collier's and The Saturday Evening Post. His wit is neither biting nor harshly sarcastic. Instead, it humorously alerts our attention to ironic situations and stereotypes, and pokes fun at man's vulnerabilities. The cartoons by Charles Martin in the Syracuse University Art Collections demonstrate his constant focus on the lesser triumphs and defeats of the human spirit.

Cheryl A. Saunders

Notes

4 Ibid, pp. 32-34.
5 Dunn, unpaginated.
"Last year I removed a thorn from his paw and he's never forgotten me."

"It's always his family, his family, his family, until I'm fed to the teeth with it."

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© 1966 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

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© 1956 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

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© 1962 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.
"Oh, Frank! Ralph did come, after all!"
© 1956 Look

"Right where he pinched me."

"If my calculations are correct, every single phone in the Gramercy exchange is ringing."

"Don't get carried away by all this adulation. Remember that it's very easy for an elephant to be a success in a zoo."
© 1961 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

"Remember that it's very easy for an elephant to be a success in a zoo."
## Exhibitions

**One-man Shows:**
- Rockland Foundation (now Rockland Center for the Arts), Suffern, New York, 1956
- Brooklyn Museum Art School, Brooklyn, New York, 1963
- Graham Gallery, New York City, 1973
- Barbara Nicholas Gallery, New York City, 1975

**Collections**
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
- Museum of the City of New York, New York City
- Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
- Syracuse University Art Galleries, Syracuse, New York
- Numerous private collections

## Publications

**Illustrations:**

**Cartoon Anthologies:**

## Checklist Notes

For each work, the dimensions of the image (using publisher's crop marks) are given in inches and centimeters, height preceding width. All works are from the Syracuse University Art Collections, and are gifts of the artist. Publication dates are given for all cartoons published in *The New Yorker* (NY), and for works published in other periodicals when the dates are known. All captions cited are those which appeared in print, descriptive titles are listed parenthetically. Unless otherwise noted, all works are on paper. An asterisk (*) indicates the work is illustrated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>No caption (executive updating chart and picture of factory); 5 images</td>
<td>NY, February 22, 1947, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, p. 35</td>
<td>Ink on board</td>
<td>1. 4 1/2 x 5 3/4 in. (11.7 x 13.9 cm.)</td>
<td>Syracuse University Art Collections, Syracuse, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No caption (professor being prompted)</td>
<td>NY, December 9, 1939, No. 21, p. 16</td>
<td>Ink and wash</td>
<td>8 1/8 x 15 in. (21.3 x 38.1 cm.)</td>
<td>Chicago Institution for Gifted Children, Chicago, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No caption (soldier standing on tank)</td>
<td>NY, March 26, 1949, Vol. XXXII, No. 5, p. 24</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td>10 x 12 3/4 in. (25.4 x 32.3 cm.)</td>
<td>Syracuse University Art Collections, Syracuse, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>No caption (highway dept. men putting up deer-crossing sign); 4 images</td>
<td>NY, August 6, 1949, Vol. XXVI, No. 24, pp. 22-23</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td>3 7/8 x 8 1/8 in. (10.2 x 20.1 cm.)</td>
<td>Syracuse University Art Collections, Syracuse, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>No caption (salesman tied to boat mast during robbery)</td>
<td>NY, October 9, 1949, Vol. XXVIII, No. 36, p. 29</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td>8 7/8 x 11 5/8 in. (22.5 x 29.5 cm.)</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>No caption (family waiting for fisherman to catch dinner)</td>
<td>NY, August 12, 1950, Vol. XXVI, No. 21, p. 16</td>
<td>Ink and wash</td>
<td>5 7/8 x 9 1/2 in. (15.2 x 24.1 cm.)</td>
<td>Syracuse University Art Galleries, Syracuse, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>No caption (laughing hyena); 2 images of 3</td>
<td>NY, December 9, 1950, Vol. XXVI, No. 42, p. 41</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td>9 1/4 x 14 3/8 in. (23.7 x 36.4 cm.)</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>No caption (man on deserted island, joined by passengers of sunken ship); 4 images</td>
<td>NY, September 30, 1949, Vol. XXVI, No. 7, p. 68</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td>5 1/2 x 8 7/8 in. (14.5 x 22.3 cm.)</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- *8.* No caption (salesman tied to boat mast during robbery) NY, October 9, 1949, Vol. XXVIII, No. 36, p. 29
- *8.* No caption (professor being prompted) NY, December 9, 1939, No. 21, p. 16
- *8.* No caption (soldier standing on tank) NY, March 26, 1949, Vol. XXXII, No. 5, p. 24
- *8.* No caption (highway dept. men putting up deer-crossing sign); 4 images NY, August 6, 1949, Vol. XXVI, No. 24, pp. 22-23
- *8.* No caption (man on deserted island, joined by passengers of sunken ship); 4 images NY, September 30, 1949, Vol. XXVI, No. 7, p. 68

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**Syracuse University Art Galleries**

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**Brooklyn Museum Art School,**

**Brooklyn, New York, 1963**

**Ruth White Gallery,**

**New York City, 1957, 1962**

**Center for the Arts,**

**Suffern, New York, 1956**

**Collections**

- Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
ink
6 1/8 x 10 5/8 in. (15.6 x 27.1 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1157

14. No caption (man in desert sees mirage of country club, Part III—man can read sign) NY, January 22, 1955, Vol. XXXI, No. 49, p. 23
ink
6 1/8 x 10 5/8 in. (15.6 x 27.1 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1157

15. "Beat it!" NY, April 50, 1955, Vol. XXXII, No. 11, p. 32
ink
6 1/8 x 5 7/8 in. (15.3 x 14.9 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1118

16. No caption (new neighbors moving in; 4 images) NY, June 11, 1955, Vol. XXXII, No. 17, pp. 54-33
ink and wash
1 3/4 x 4 3/4 in. (9.6 x 12.1 cm)
2 4 x 4 3/4 in. (10.2 x 12.1 cm)
3 4 x 4 3/4 in. (10.1 x 12.1 cm)
4 4 x 4 3/4 in. (10.2 x 12.1 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1135

17. No caption (class of 1950 member asking for hand-outs during class reunion) Collier’s, July 24, 1955, Vol. 113, No. 13, p. 58
ink and wash
8 1/8 x 9 7/8 in. (22.2 x 24.1 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1122

18. "Parties have good points, Ma’am—but you ain’t lived till you’ve seen Dallas." Collier’s, July 22, 1955, Vol. 116, No. 2, p. 40
ink and wash
11 3/8 x 15 1/2 in. (28.7 x 39.2 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1101

19. No caption (scientist makes and takes potion to bolster courage; 12 images) NY, October 13, 1955, Vol. XXXVI, No. 35, pp. 40-61
(except images nos. 6, 8, and 10)
ink
1 3/8 x 7 7/8 in. (8.5 x 19.9 cm)
2 3/8 x 7 7/8 in. (8.4 x 19.9 cm)
3 3/8 x 8 3/4 in. (8.4 x 22.2 cm)
4 3/8 x 8 3/4 in. (8.4 x 22.2 cm)
5 3/8 x 8 3/4 in. (8.4 x 22.2 cm)
6 3/8 x 8 3/4 in. (8.4 x 22.2 cm)
7 3/8 x 8 3/4 in. (8.4 x 22.2 cm)
8 3/8 x 8 7/8 in. (8.5 x 22.2 cm)
9 3/8 x 8 7/8 in. (8.5 x 22.2 cm)
10 3 1/8 x 8 3/4 in. (7.8 x 22.2 cm)
11 3 1/8 x 8 3/4 in. (7.8 x 22.2 cm)
12 3 1/8 x 8 3/4 in. (7.8 x 22.2 cm)
LR of last image, CEM
S.U. 67.1099

20. No caption (boyscout and stubborn old man; 5 images) NY, November 19, 1955, Vol. XXXVI, No. 40, p. 49
ink
1 2 3/8 x 1 1/8 in. (6.7 x 2.9 cm)
2 3/8 x 1 1/8 in. (6.7 x 2.9 cm)
3 7/8 x 1 1/8 in. (6.8 x 2.9 cm)
4 3 7/8 x 1 1/8 in. (6.8 x 2.9 cm)
5 3 7/8 x 1 1/8 in. (6.8 x 2.9 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1116

21. No caption (scientist makes and takes potion to bolster courage; 12 images) NY, January 14, 1956, Vol. XXXVI, No. 68, pp. 30-31
ink
1 3/8 x 7 in. (14.6 x 17.8 cm)
2 3/8 x 7 7/8 in. (14.3 x 20 cm)
3 3 7/8 x 9% in. (13.2 x 23.4 cm)
LR of last image, CEM
S.U. 67.1100

22. "Oh, Frank! Ralph did come, after all!" Punch, March 20, 1956, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 107
ink and wash
11 x 9 3/8 in. (28 x 23.4 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1105

23. "It’s always his family, his family, his family, until I’m fed to the teeth with it!" NY, August 23, 1956, Vol. XXXVI, No. 27, p. 33
ink
9 1/8 x 12 1/4 in. (23.1 x 31.2 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1137

24. No caption (card playing during violin lesson; 12 images) NY, December 1, 1956, Vol. XXXVI, No. 41, pp. 34-35
ink and wash
1 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
2 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
3 3/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
4 3/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
5 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
6 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
7 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
8 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
9 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
10 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
11 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
12 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 7.7 cm)
LR of last image, CEM
S.U. 67.1138

25. No caption (tribal headshrinker; 3 images) Punch, April 7, 1957, Vol. CXXXVII, No. 6096, p. 495
ink and wash
1 3 3/4 x 2 3/4 in. (8.5 x 6.9 cm)
2 3 3/4 x 2 3/4 in. (8.5 x 6.9 cm)
3 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 6.9 cm)
4 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 6.9 cm)
5 3 1/8 x 2 3/4 in. (8 x 6.9 cm)
LR of last image, CEM
S.U. 67.1125

26. No caption (woman in golf cart bucked on to by deputy) NY, June 1, 1957, Vol. XXXVII, No. 13, p. 25
ink and wash
12 x 16 in. (31.6 x 41.3 cm)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1158
*50. No caption (booksellers declare war)
NY, February 17, 1962, Vol. XXXVII, No. 33, p. 28
ink. 131/8 x 13 7/8 in. (33.5 x 40.1 cm.)
LL, CEM
S.U. 67.1148

*51. No caption (dead trees in front of garden supply store)
ink and wash 10 5/8 x 17 in. (27 x 43.2 cm.)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1146

*52. "No one is seated during the orgy."
NY; February 2, 1963, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 50, p. 30
ink and wash 9 x 9 in. (22.7 x 22.7 cm.)
LR, C.E.M.
S.U. 67.1142

*53. "If my calculations are correct, every single phone in the Gramercy exchange is ringing."
Ladies Home Journal, December 1964, Vol. 81, No. 11, p. 162
ink and wash 8 7/8 x 8 in. (22.4 x 20.2 cm.)
LR, C.E.M.
S.U. 67.1102

*54. "Ah, detergent! We must be nearing civilization!"
Look, November 16, 1963, Vol. 29, No. 25, p. 91
ink 13 1/8 x 19 3/8 in. (33.5 x 49.2 cm.)
LR, C.E.M.
S.U. 67.1112

*55. No caption (street-corner violinist)
Publication record unknown
ink 10 1/12 x 10 5/8 in. (26.8 x 27 em.)
LR, CEM
S.U. 67.1129

60. "Hey, Abdullah—guess who’s the sixth atomic power."
The New York Times Book Review
ink and wash 8 7/8 x 11 1/8 in. (22.4 x 28.1 cm.)
UR, CEM
S.U. 67.1129

61. "Ladybird won’t like that."
NY, August 20, 1966, Vol. XXXII, No. 26, p. 33
ink 15 1/8 x 19 3/8 in. (38.3 x 49.2 cm.)
LR, C.E.M.
S.U. 67.1112

*64. "Right where he pinched me."
The Saturday Evening Post
ink and wash 9 1/8 x 8 1/2 in. (23.1 x 21.6. cm.)
LR, C.E.M.
S.U. 67.1127

65. "I never discriminate. Regardless of race, creed, or color...zing! In goes the old stinger."
The Saturday Evening Post
ink and wash 10 1/12 x 10 1/12 in. (26.8 x 25.6 cm.)
LR, C.E.M.
S.U. 67.1130

66. No caption (radio writer and muse)
The New York Times Book Review
ink and wash 7 5/8 x 9 1/8 in. (19.3 x 23.1 cm.)
UK, CEM
S.U. 67.1129
Credits

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Alfred T. Collette, Director

500 copies of this catalog were printed by Syracuse University Printing Services.

Catalog design: Joaquim da Fonseca

Cover illustration: No caption
(sculptor's nude comes to life)
Cat. No. 38-1.

Photograph of CEM by John Walkup

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Publications of the Petty-Dunn Center

1982 The Cartoon Art of Charles E. Martin
1981 New York, New Yorker
1980 Art, Artists and Magazines
1979 Mary Petty, Cover Illustrations for the New Yorker