



ART

The Adventures of Hergé

BY INTI LANDAURO

FOUR DECADES AFTER the Belgian cartoonist known as Hergé complained that comic book art wasn't truly appreciated, the Grand Palais in Paris is hosting an extensive retrospective of his work.

"I hope [comic book art] will have its rightful place, that it will become an expression in itself like literature or cinema," Hergé, whose real name was Georges Remi, told biographer Philippe Goddin in 1969.

Running Sept. 28 to Jan. 15, "Hergé" marks the second time in a decade that the cartoonist's work has been on display in a major French museum and follows a wave of renewed interest globally. His signature character, Tintin, has been the subject of recent shows in London and Barcelona, a 2011 Hollywood adaptation, a videogame and an app. At auction, his work is leading an increasing demand for comic art. In April, original drawings of the last two pages of his "King Ottokar's Sceptre," from 1939, sold for €1.05 million (\$1.2 million). The €2.6 million fetched at a 2014 Artcurial auction, for drawings that graced the cover pages of Tintin books from 1937 to 1958, is the highest price paid for a piece of comic art.

"Hergé was a great art master, not just within comic books," says Jérôme Neutres, the Grand Palais's strategy director who co-commissioned the new show.

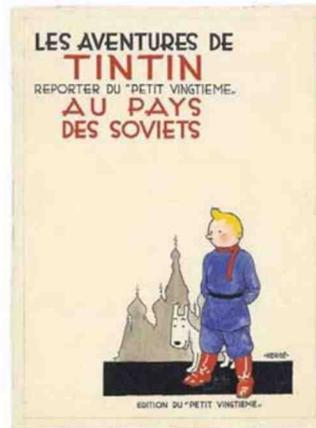
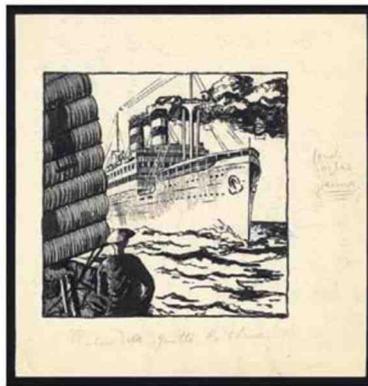
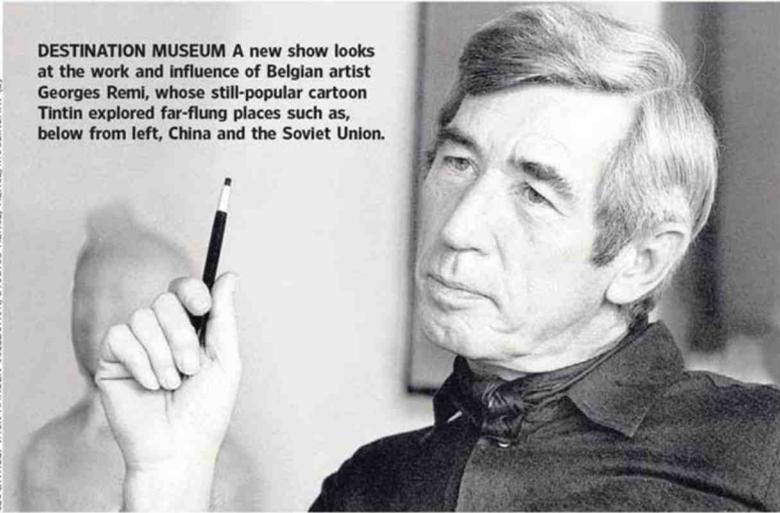
The show highlights that breadth by featuring not only original cartoons, but posters and lettering from Hergé's advertising work and abstract canvases he painted in the 1960s. Most of the pieces, some rarely seen, are on loan from the Hergé Foundation, which runs the Hergé Museum in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

Born in Brussels in 1907, Hergé is considered the father of Franco-Belgian comics, known as *bandes dessinées*. His quasi-realistic style—which used a single line to create objects and characters and became known as *la ligne claire*—influenced artists worldwide, and his success paved the way for cartoonists such as Pierre Culliford (Smurfs) and Albert Uderzo (Asterix).

But at the start of his career, Hergé saw his cartoons as secondary to his work in advertising graphic design, says Mr. Goddin.

DESTINATION MUSEUM A new show looks at the work and influence of Belgian artist Georges Remi, whose still-popular cartoon Tintin explored far-flung places such as, below from left, China and the Soviet Union.

CLOCKWISE: VAGN HANSEN COLLECTION/STUDIOS HERGÉ; HERGÉ/MOULINSART (2)



nese war in the 1936 "The Blue Lotus" to the emergence of big oil companies in the 1950 "Land of Black Gold"—it only briefly touches on the controversies that have dogged his legacy: His time during World War II working for a newspaper controlled by pro-Nazi owners in occupied Belgium and the overt racism in the 1930 "Tintin in the Congo."

Hergé, who died in 1983 at 76, later lamented the work, saying it reflected a prejudiced view common at the time. "He said in

the 1960s that he wouldn't have made the album the same way," says Mr. Goddin.

As he aged, Hergé became a contemporary art enthusiast, creating a collection with works by artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, and painting his own abstract canvases. One 1963 untitled work shows colorful, Joan Miró-like amoebas floating on a brown background. But Hergé was never fully convinced by his paintings, Mr. Goddin says, and kept most of them in an attic. The Grand Palais is one of the first times the works will be on display, adding a dose of avant-garde to an otherwise action-packed show.

Though far removed from his comic art in many senses, his ad work had the same minimalist touch as *la ligne claire*. For example, the landscape he designed for the cover of "La tente," the official newsletter of a Belgian camping club, was created in just a dozen strokes.

Gradually, though, Tintin became so popular that Hergé dedicated all of his time to the boy reporter's adventures, creating a studio and hiring other artists to work with him. By the late 1930s, almost all of his commercial work was based on his cartoon characters.

While the exhibition delves into Hergé's adventurous, and sometimes prescient, geopolitical explorations—from the Sino-Japa-