

newspapers—quickly drawn and quickly consumed. This tradition continued with the appearance of comic books—cheap publications aimed at children. In Europe, however, early comics were generally published in book form—particularly books for children—and usually involved longer stories that were better written, more painstakingly drawn, and printed on better-quality paper. It's *Superman* and *Blondie* printed on newsprint on the one hand versus *Tintin* and *Astérix* sold in bound, hardcover books, on the other.

In the French-speaking world, the artistic element has become important, authors have become stars, and comics have come to be called "the ninth art."

"*Archie*," says Roux, "isn't art. It's meant for quick consumption."

Also, particularly in French, comic books have veered away from children. "Now," says Roux, "for every one children's album, there are 10 adult albums published. It used to be the other way around."

What is being produced in the Outaouais follows more in the French tradition.

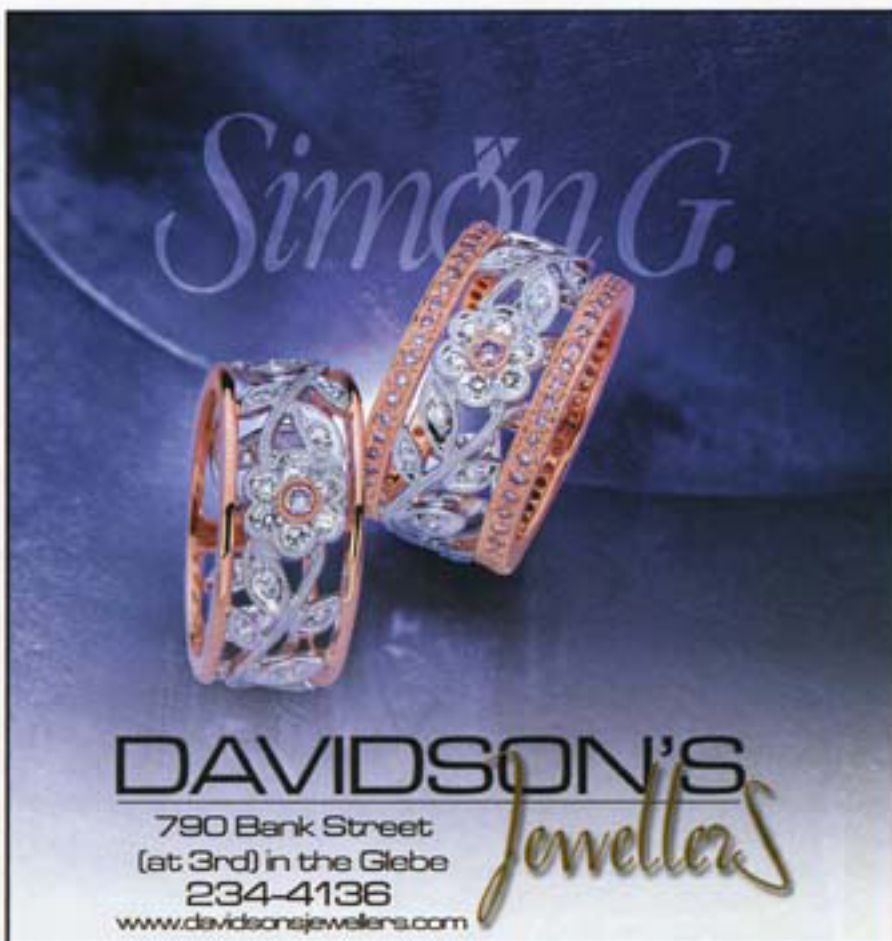
So what are local authors drawing?

First of all, they are drawing us: Christ Oliver has comic books about the cats of Parliament Hill. Christian Quesnel has published a book set in Ste-Cécile-de-Masham and a historical book on the great fire of 1900. Paul Roux's *Max et les bâtisseurs* is a comic-book history of Gatineau. And thanks, to exchanges with European authors, locales such as Gatineau Park and Château Montebello are appearing in works published in Europe.

These local comics come in all styles. While some creators do line drawings that resemble, say, *Doonesbury*, others create works that are essentially paintings. What they do have in common is that all of them tell stories—an essential element of comics—but not necessarily humorous ones. *Imaximu*, the book St-Georges is uncrating, is a futuristic sci-fi story about a young girl. It was officially launched at the Salon du livre in March.

What does it take to be a comic-book creator?

"Talent for drawing helps a lot," says St-Georges, an early graduate of the UQO program. "Imagination helps, too, and so does having something to say."



Simon G.

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