



# DRAWING THE HUMAN LAW, COMICS, JUSTICE

GRAPHIC JUSTICE RESEARCH ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

28 -29 NOVEMBER 2019

UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST

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*Hosted by the USC School of Law and Criminology  
University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia*

*Drawing the Human: Law, Comics, Justice*, seeks to examine the role of comics, graphic novels and graphic art in constituting as well as critiquing law, rights and justice as they relate to and extend beyond the human.

Comics and law are intertwined, not only through the stories which appear in the comics medium, but in the comics *form*—multifaceted, layered, capturing the human in its imagery and imaginary with the viewer becoming an active participant in the construction and reading of the image. Law too operates through such participatory but also coercive means. Like comics, law is both subjected to interpretation *and* creates the subjects which read it. Just as the comics artist uses a combination of lines, colour, shading, perspective, framing, grading and grids to articulate the human, and facilitate its human interpretation, law creates and constitutes the human—by an authority constructed through the harmonisation of aesthetics, rhetoric, discourse, image, hierarchy, custom and sovereign power. Both law and comics draw the human, determine its bounds whilst representing and operating through our own shared humanity.

But graphic art also transcends legality, constructing forms of the human which exist in a space beyond and between the frames of law. Court reporters, for example, enliven the space of the judicial chamber, capturing law in action, bringing to life the space of law and allowing the reader to interpret the operation of justice by presenting those who stand trial. These static images become a record of what occurs within this juridically determined space, an aesthetic representation of the human confronted by legality and subjected to its judgment, but *also* facilitating judgment from the court of public opinion. Graphic art not only constructs the human, but is instantiated as an object of law, justice and power.

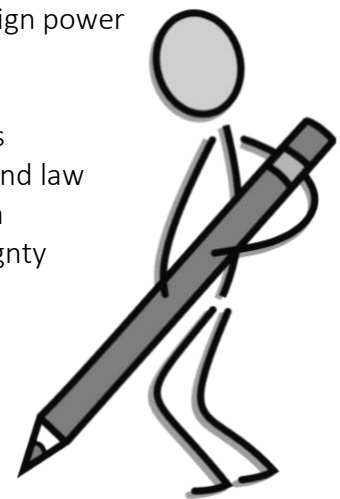
Graphic journalism, by contrast, captures the human devalued by law. By deploying a medium so typically defined by fiction to facilitate non-fiction, artists and writers have used comics to tell the true stories of injustice which exist in realms beyond the sight of citizens and the lens of the camera. These artists not only show the way law reduces and devalues the human, but use comics to frustrate and re-orientate our perceptions of humanity and our lived experience

# DRAWING THE HUMAN

of it. Such art not only becomes a representation of injustice, but facilitates the making of it: evidence, exhibit *and* entertainment. Comics as a medium therefore enables the telling of stories—fictional or factual, fantastic or historical, abstract or real—that force us to re-think our own perceived notions of what is possible and legal, what it means to be human or non-human, speculative realities and possible legalities where the human is represented, re-imagined and re-cast.

The 2019 *Graphic Justice Research Alliance Conference* calls for papers which examine not only the way in which comics and graphic art present narratives of law and justice, or representations of human rights and their abuses, but the way in which comics in their form and multimodality call into question the law's drawing of the boundaries of the human as it is challenged by its relation to the animal, the environment and technology. Such questions are of importance today, not just because of the techno-mediation of human interactions and intersubjectivity (which open potential for both the enhancement as well as sidelining of the human by technology), but also because of the situatedness, complicity and responsibility of the human within its broader environment. Papers are invited which cover any topic related broadly to comics, graphic art and law, human rights, justice and crime, but potential themes could include:

- Capturing the human within comics and law
- Superheroes, masks and biopolitics
- Representations of the post-human within graphic art
- *Techne*, telos and Tomorrowland across the graphic horizon
- Comics as legality—the use and abuse of graphic art by sovereign power
- The law of/as comics—from comics contracts to copyright
- Law/lore, story and Indigenous art
- Representations of justice and law/lore in First Nations' comics
- Drawing and re-drawing gender, race and sexuality in comics and law
- Comics' visual afterlife: adaptation, translation and transmedia
- The visual re-mediation, extension and constitution of sovereignty
- Comics as/and criminality
- Graphic reporting and human rights
- The form of the comic and the forms of justice



## Conference hosts:

Dr Timothy Peters, Mr Dale Mitchell and Ms Ashley Pearson

## Paper and Panel Proposals Due Date: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019

Proposals should consist of a short abstract (max. 250 words), 3 keywords and a short biography (100 words). Panel proposals should include a title/theme for the panel, and abstracts, keywords and biographies for **each** presenter (up to 4 presenters per panel).

[Submit your paper/panel proposal here](#)

Conference contact: [tpeters@usc.edu.au](mailto:tpeters@usc.edu.au)