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# ISSUE ZERO

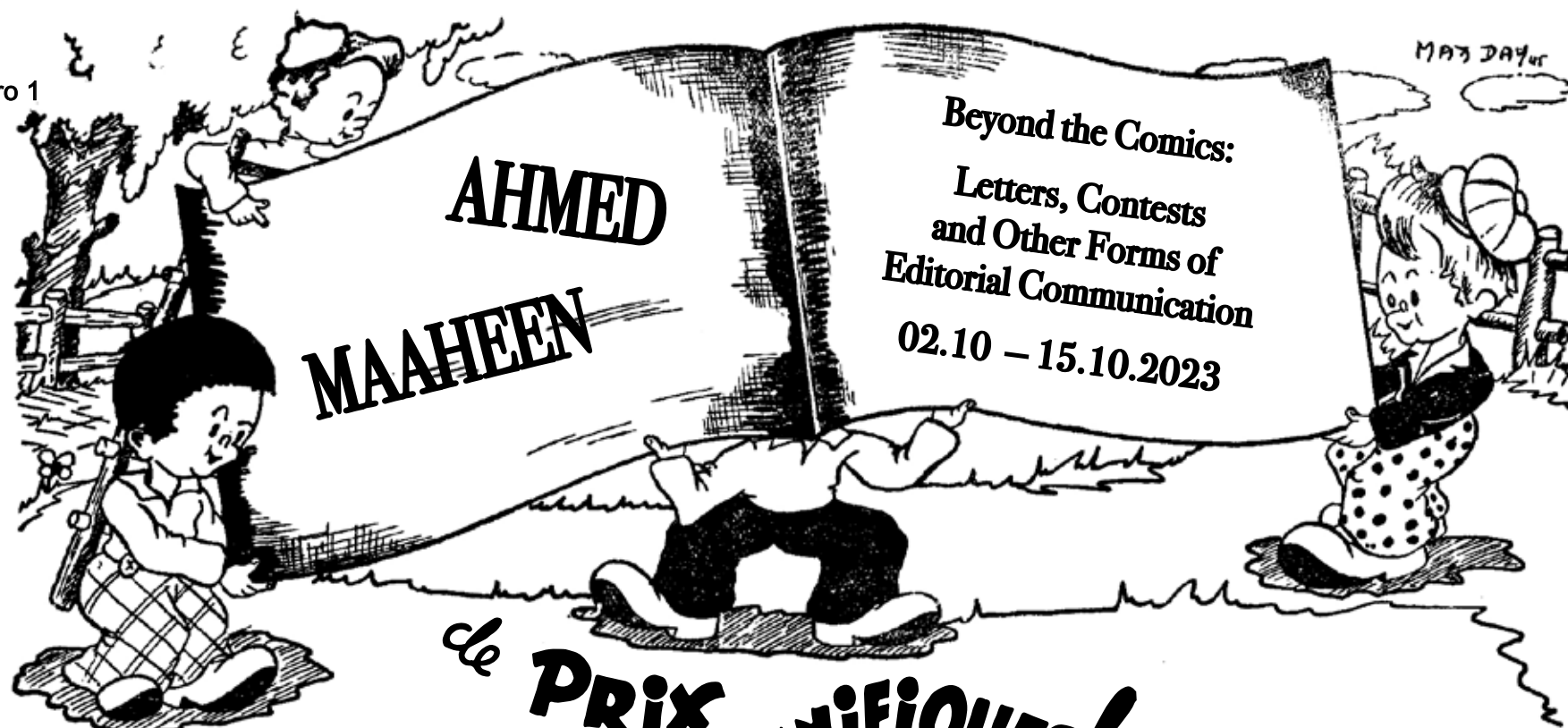
présente

16

PAGES  
WITH FULL  
COLOUR  
IMAGES

... AND MORE!

*Lisez attentivement ce numéro.*



**GRAND PRIX!**

**Prix MAGNIFIQUES!**

*dont  
DES VOYAGES!  
DES SÉJOURS À LA MER  
ET À LA CAMPAGNE!  
... ET D'AUTRES!  
ET D'AUTRES!*

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*Grand Concours*

Uncle Léon, the Missionary Uncle, Miche and the Pilot... these are only a handful of magazine correspondents, imaginary letter writers, confectioners of editorials, personifications of magazines, who formed the precious link between magazine readers and the often, but not always, anonymous editorial team curating the periodical. Letters and advice columns and competitions reveal how magazines established emotional connections with their readers. These connections, in turn, are interconnected with commercial desires.

The magazine titles selected range from the unabashedly American and commercial, Journal de Mickey, originally published in Paris, to the extremely local Wrill, originally published in Liège to the extremely local and Catholic, Tam-Tam, published in Ghent. The period covered range from the late 1930s to 1949: from the earliest periodicals included in the Van Passen collection to the French law of 1949 restraining imported and pictorial content in children's magazines – a law that also had an impact on the burgeoning production of Francophone Belgian comics and magazines. Selections from magazine archives are, to a certain extent, inevitably arbitrary. Such arbitrariness is fitting because it mimics the habits of a magazine reader: readers rarely read magazines from the beginning to the end but pick and choose, reading some parts first, others later, while also ignoring a few (or many) parts altogether. It is in the hands of the reader that the magazine acquires a new life after emerging

from the printing press. This issue is particularly interested in how the magazines established connections between the editorial team behind its production and its readers and how reader reception and responses were prompted and curated.

The diverse channels of magazine communication – letters, contest announcements and results – are, at first blush, not the most striking element of a magazine. Tucked in the inner pages of the magazines, occupying a corner, a column or two, but never too much space, these text-heavy sections contrast starkly with the richly illustrated – and sometimes even brightly colored – pages of comics and illustrated stories. It is in these unassuming sections that connections with readers are established and reinforced: readers can write to the editorial persona, Onc' Léon in Mickey, Miche in Wrill, the Missionary Uncle in Tam Tam or they can post or respond to pen pal announcements. They can also contribute to contests and, with a little luck savor the pleasure of seeing their names and art printed and win prizes, which covered a broad range, including books, toys and even money.

These humble, text-heavy sections of editorial communication combine the very human need for making connections, socializing and learning about others and building communities, with the desire for competition, to play and to win, what the French sociologist, Roger Caillois called *agôn*. The stakes for the big contests were often high, offering expensive, irresistible prizes, as the magazines did not forget to repeatedly remind their readers.



## Letters: from launching a magazine to WARTIME COMMUNICATION

Most magazines had some kind of editorial note announcing, with much pomp and fervor, the rise of a new, irresistible magazine. Magazines were often introduced as companions of their readers, a new friend and a means of establishing a network with other readers.

Nevertheless, editorial communication is rarely identical, just like almost every magazine has distinctive characteristics, even among magazines from the same publisher carrying comparable content. During the turbulent period of the Second World War, which had been preceded by an influx of American comics, including the Disney comics, communication was often limited. This is the case with the short-lived Les Grandes aventures, published during the Occupation (and with the tacit approval of the German

occupiers), which includes a note in gothic lettering, ironically vaunting the modernity of the magazine, in its first issue of 26 September 1940<sup>1</sup>:

"Finally!!! Here is the long-awaited journal... "The Great Adventures"! Carefully designed for you in a very modern and very attractive way, we are convinced that it will have the result we hope for you: to entertain you!!! by making you live exciting adventures in the most diverse settings."

The note is confident that the varied stories will please all readers and encourages them to suggest the magazine to their friends "so that they can share your joy" The note is also eager for reactions and even contributions (which do not seem to have been published...):

*"We would be delighted to receive your opinions, and to even collaborate with you. If you can send us your poems or the amusing drawings that you have made yourselves, we would be very happy to publish them in our magazine (...)  
Dear readers, this magazine must become yours! For this we must have your full trust, so do not hesitate to make yourself known, so that we become great friends."*

Despite all these promises, exchanges were limited, possibly because of the danger of censorship but also because not every magazine prioritized the personalized and hence labor-intensive letter columns. Both hold for Grandes aventures which exuded a strong preference for comics materials.



1

## MICKEY

The editorial communication in Les Grandes aventures contrasts starkly with the close and long-lasting rapport established between readers and magazine through the letter columns in the Journal de Mickey. The very first issue, dated 21 October 1934, introduces Uncle Léon who promises to write a letter every week and encourages the readers, his nephews and nieces, to write to him. He promises to try and answer as many

of the numerous questions he will be asked depending, of course, on the amount of space available to him. The promises don't end there. A Mickey Club is in the making, open to all and permitting readers to interact with each other, through the intermediary of the letter column.

"What are you waiting for, boys and girls from Auvergne and Limousin, do you want to be left behind the Provençals and the Normands?"

This idea of a Mickey Club, probably the first of its kind in France, attracts much enthusiasm from the readers, which is reflected in Léon's second letter (from the third issue dated 4 November 1934). Léon's evocations of the club are shrouded in secrecy :

"I shouldn't tell you about it because it's still almost a secret, but it doesn't matter if I'm caught by Mickey!"

On 9 December 1934, Léon boasts receiving many, many letters about starting the Mickey Club, most of which are, unsurprisingly, from Paris and the North of France, where more children had access to the magazine. He rallies readers from less responsive and less densely populated regions:

The Club would unite all magazine readers, and accord them special privileges, more than what was ever offered by an organization to its members: parties, sporty meetings, opportunities to travel, discounts in theaters, cinemas, and shops. A badge is also in the making which would allow club members to identify each other. Léon coyly ends his letter by saying that next week's letter might offer more information.

The avalanche of questions about the club leads Uncle Léon to declare on 11 November 1934: "This era is merciless!". Titillating his readers' curiosity, Léon elaborates on the many wonderful surprises connected to the Mickey Club: meetings, contests, all sorts of entertainment and, possibly, sports events. The letter from 25 November, which replaces the Letter Box (Boîte aux Lettres) title for Uncle Léon's column with The Mickey Club (Le Club Mickey), mentions a visit from a René Lachliger for advice on how to publish a periodical using a cheap copying machine instead of a professional press. Léon goes further to suggest the possibility of establishing an International Federation of School Magazines.

In the same letter Léon also calls for letters from those willing to collaborate in the organization of the Mickey Club in their city. And this, despite the impossibility for Léon to answer all the letters or even publish all the pen pal announcements that were apparently arriving in thousands. Both responses and pen pal announcements were published in the "Petite Correspondance" column. The brief responses in the "Petite Correspondance" column were necessarily to-the-point but sometimes also strikingly direct as in the case of Léon's answer, in rhyme to the Globe Trotter from Clermont-Ferrand in issue no. 31 (19 May 1935):  
"You are wrong to clown about in class. You're the one who's going to be the butt of jokes."

Testifying to the magazine's growing popularity and worldwide spread, by issue no. 49 (22 September 1935), the Journal de Mickey boasted about incorporating correspondence and pen pal announcements from not only France and its neighboring countries but from all over the world. In addition to discussing topics that could interest his young readers, for which the readers' letters provided crucial information, Léon occasionally lets further details about himself slip through. To the Vibrant Wallon from Couillet, Léon writes : "I am not a priest and even less so a young elegant sportsman.

I'm just an old, unpretentious Uncle Léon" (issue no. 43, 11 August 1935). These early letter columns also include repeated requests to the readers to avoid sending in stamps. This seemingly banal request offers precious insight into the habits of letter writers and the different ways in which magazines responded to letters. While some magazines would have posted responses to letters if stamps were enclosed, the Journal de Mickey did not encourage such practices. In the 6 January 1935 issue, in between thanking readers for their drawings and answering

questions about the Mickey Club, Léon jokingly mentions "disinheriting" a certain writer, with the pseudonym P'tits gas Boulonnais: "If you continue sending me stamps for a reply... I'll disinherit you!" In the same issue, the following note appears in bold, suggesting that in certain, commercially lucrative contexts, stamps for replies were acceptable!

*"Write to us when your parents are at a loss about what to buy, tell them to consult us. We have just set up a specialized service that can give them all the advice that they need, free of charge (Add a stamp for a response)."*

As can be seen from these snippets of exchanges, the magazine established a crucial balance between encouraging consumerism, establishing emotional connections and

The magazine not only created new desires – such as the desire to join the club or to buy Mickey merchandise – it also tried to satisfy readers, especially when that satisfaction increased the magazine's profitability. It is thanks to the reader's letters that the distribution day of Mickey changed from Friday to Thursday, the day French children did not have to go to school. In announcing this, Léon, points out that the magazine tries its best to accommodate the desires of the reader: "You see that it strives to please you"

In addition to pleasing readers, Léon's letters offer tips and

advice covering different aspects of his readers' lives, including how to perform well at school. In issue no. 187 (15 May 1938) Léon, apparently by popular demand, shares a famous Prosper Mérimée paragraph offered for dictation in the imperial court resulting in 45 mistakes from Napoleon III, 62 mistakes from his wife, Eugénie, 24 from Alexander Dumas fils. Although Léon mentions the results of the Princess of Metternich, he leaves out the results of her husband, the Prince of Metternich, the Austrian ambassador to France, who made only 3 mistakes. The magazine was then interactive, responsive and generous in useful advice on how children should behave

and how they could do better. It also did not hesitate in milking every opportunity to reinforce emotional and affective connections with the Disney enterprise. Hence, in announcing Walt Disney's visit to France on 7 July 1935 (issue no. 38) Léon introduces him by citing unnamed major critics, as the greatest poet our modern times. Contrary to expectations, Disney (according to Léon) was not visiting France to enjoy his celebrity status but for a reason far more intimate and touching: he was visiting to recover memories of his youth. Despite being too young to be enlisted, Disney had followed



2

striving for universal satisfaction. It strove to both sell itself and derivative products (unprecedentedly plentiful in the case of Le Journal de Mickey) while forming and reinforcing a community of reader-consumers (and maintaining their parents' approval). Consider, for instance, the rubber Mickey that



3

was presented in different ways, as the readers best friend (23 December 1934)<sup>2</sup>.

Or as a hurried Mickey, ever smiling and happy, eager to visit his numerous young friends in issue no. 27 from 21 April 1935<sup>3</sup>.

his older brother to France as soon as the United States declared war in 1917. He had served the Allies by driving Red Cross vans. Léon is careful to establish further connections between the readers and Disney: he was a school-going child, just like the magazine's readers, who dreamt of making cinema. To welcome Disney who shied from grand ceremonies, Léon proposes creating a "livre d'or" full of letters from all the readers, in their best writing (with drawings for those who were inclined to do so), thanking Disney for all the joy he had offered.

The letter from 9 July 1939 (issue no. 247) opens with a question from Jacques Le Goff – who would grow up to be the future medieval historian? - who has been told that there are too many people on the planet because of which humankind is destined to fight in order to not die of hunger. The young Jacques finds the idea terrifying and Léon assures him that it is false. Once the Second World War breaks out, it does not take over Léon's letters as one might have expected and even though it would have dire consequences on the magazine's existence: the periodical would cease to be published from Paris from 16 June 1940 and would re-emerge as a combined title, with locally-produced cartoons, Journal de Mickey et Hop-Là réunis, published from Marseille from 22 September 1940 until 2 July 1944.

In the issue from 15 October 1939, Léon reprints a letter from a young Lucie F., who begins with the observation that Léon was probably not mobilized due to his age. Her father left for the front soon after the war was declared leaving the house quite empty. She mentions how she and her siblings are especially attentive and kind to their mother and ends with the note that these details are simply uninteresting little nothings. Léon and the editorial team of



the Journal de Mickey clearly thought the contrary because Lucie's letter is the one of the few to be published in its entirety in the letter column. And Léon adds a note mentioning how touched he was by the letter and how he would have loved to receive such beautiful letters every week.

Lucie's letter captures an experience familiar to many readers and describes the ideal reaction, more kindness to the mother on the home front. If the letter column mentions. The war, it is often to take up the perspective of the home front. The letter column from issue no. 271 opens with a reaction

## WRILL

from a fellow magazine reader and scout against the debris left behind by the exodus from the cities in the East of France. Léon points out the dangers of the different kinds of rubbish left behind and encourages his readers to form a collective front to prevent such careless throwing and accumulation of waste. In the column from the following week (no. 272), Léon points out other ways in which those not participating directly in the war (those too old, like himself, or too young) could contribute in "thousands of ways" to the war effort by being more frugal and also by working hard at school and thereby increasing the intellectual capital of the country.

Although the war receded in most letter columns after the liberation, it continued to haunt certain magazines, such as the Belgian periodical Wrill. Wrill, hebdomadaire des jeunes! was launched almost immediately after the war ended, in 1945. It was deeply anchored in the war experience. Published by the historical publisher, Gordinne, based in Liège, the magazine's pre-World War Two life began in 1845. In the new Wrill, military language prevails and stories about the war and war personalities are abundant. Reasons for this are offered on the cover of the first issue<sup>4</sup> where Wrill the fox introduces himself:

*"Hello!*

*I am Wrill, I am good humour, joy, laughter. Nevertheless, I was created during the Occupation by a group of young male and female refractory artists under constant pursuit by the Gestapo. The enthusiasm of these young people, led by Albert Fromenteau, also refractory and Commander of a Resistance group has made me the hero with a big heart of this magazine and the animated cartoon.*

Albert Fromenteau's creation, Wrill, the hero with a big heart, was not only the mascot of the magazine but also the hero of several animated shorts, including the clandestine Wrill écoute la BBC (1945). Many of these films were immortalized as animated films in book form, including Wrill le renard dans la capture de Frok-Manoir.

Wrill the fox is, however, only one snippet of editorial communication in this inaugural issue. An introductory letter, "Our Magazine" offers more details: the artists worked at the Charles Gordinne press, one of the most important publishers

of the region, founded in 1839. Refusing to be sent to forced labor camps in Germany, the young people secretly worked on an animated feature film during the Occupation that, the magazine hoped, would soon be aired. The magazine, we are told, was created to both entertain and educate the readers. For this project, the team behind the animated film had been reinforced by French and Belgian artists. Due to shortages of materials, the magazine was only four pages long, but those pages were broadsheet-sized. The periodical aspires to become the favorite magazine of young



4

readers, both boys and girls. Among the many promises, readers are assured that their questions will be answered through a letter column.

What does this letter ask of its young readers? To help the magazine by advertising it amongst their friends. It ends with the familiar wish that the children will appreciate the weekly and that nothing would make the editorial team happier than to receive the reader's criticism, suggestions, and they hoped, praise.

Communication in this issue does not stop there but continues in a third letter titled, "Our Squadron": It announces the creation of a club, "Wrill Squadron" comprising the editorial team and the readers. The general aim is to facilitate collaboration and to create a sense of camaraderie amongst the members. All sorts of contests – drawing, writing, game-making – will be initiated. Contests, as we will see below, will play a central role in the early issues of Wrill. While subscribers, committed to at least a year's worth of Wrill automatically acquire the status of a pilot. The rank of second lieutenant is accorded to readers who have sold at least twenty-four quarterly subscriptions (or its equivalent). The higher ranks of captain, commander and major can only be acquired through winning contests. This notice was printed repeatedly in the early issues of Wrill.

The military rhetoric did not age out as can be seen from a club membership advertisement, under the guise of acquiring a pilot certificate, from 4 September 1947 (no. 114)<sup>5</sup>.

Alongside the obsession with war and the recurrence of military jargon, Wrill makes a concerted effort to speak to both boy and girl readers. Cousin Miche writes to both, addressing the girl readers (Wrill no. 2) before the boys (Wrill no. 4). Miche is careful to insist that Belgian and French girls too aspired to attain titles such as Captain and Commander. She mentions personalities such as nurses and resistance group members, Edith Cavell and Gabrielle



5



6

asking her readers whether they have found better means of quickly joining the squadron.

Wrill incessantly and repeatedly encouraged its readers to subscribe, within and across issues. In the ninth issue, a section in bold titled ABONNEZ-VOUS or SUBSCRIBE explains that Wrill might still be difficult to find because of the continuing paper shortage. The editorial team suggests that subscription is the easiest means of ensuring that the magazine is available on a weekly basis. Subscriptions are simple: the children could buy the subscription at their nearest bookstore or stationery shop.

In contrast to the letter columns of other magazines, Miche's letters and a considerable part of the other forms of communication from the editorial board are more insistent with their encouragements to their readers to subscribe, reflecting the magazine's high dependence on subscribers for

its existence. In the fourteenth issue, Miche goes a step further by providing a new incentive: the badges of the club are finally ready and they were available to all who could pay 5 Belgian francs. This badge would help readers identify each other and hence socialize beyond the pages of the magazine. She adds a

postscript requesting readers to write their names and addresses as legibly as possible.

Miche's columns also announce the magazine's aspirations. This occurs in issue 17 in which she recounts a fantastic dream – the dream of Wrill's editorial team since its inception – the creation of an animated film. In sharing her dream, Miche tells us more about her and the readers' joy in watching the film than the content or quality of the film itself. Once again, then, the letter column places the reader under the limelight, for reasons that are simultaneously commercial and emotional.

Petit as role models. In addition to campaigning for equal rights, this approach also ensured a greater number of potential subscribers, as confirmed by Miche's penultimate sentence in the second issue: "Well, bon courage, send us your subscriptions, you'll find the conditions on the opposite page".

In her letter to the boys in issue no. 4, Miche dreams of a community encompassing French, Dutch and Belgian readers. Extending beyond national boundaries has numerous advantages, as Miche points out (in the order mentioned in the letter): learning about war events and heroes in the neighboring countries, possi-

lities to exchange stamps and airplane blueprints because "you are fond of entertaining and interesting things".

She also looks forward to eventually having a magazine of 8 to 16 pages.

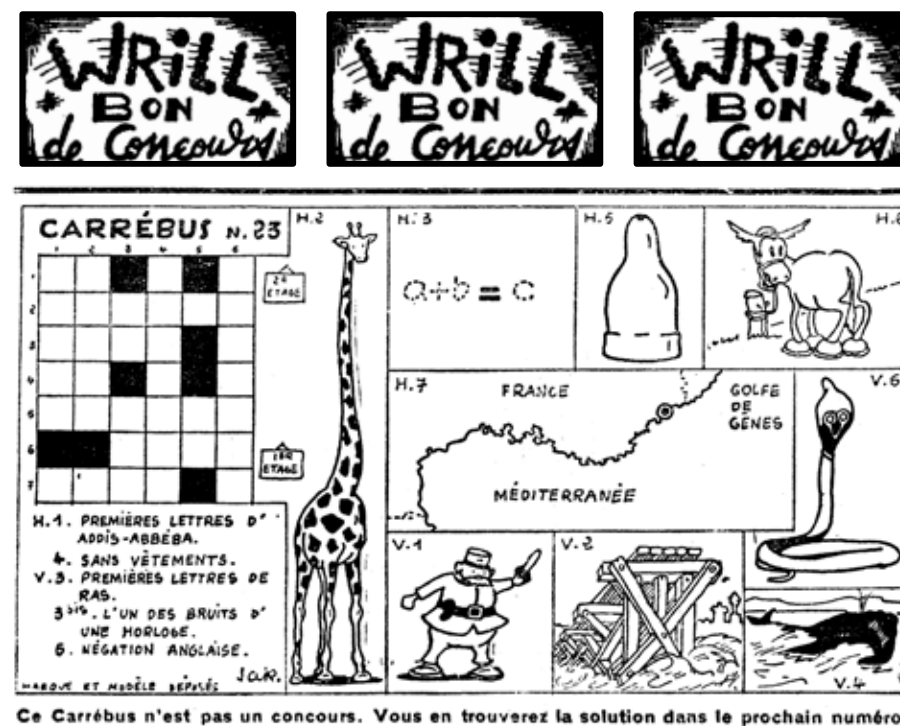
In the fifth issue, readers are introduced to the first subscriber, who happens to be a girl from the Ardennes, Marie Nadrin. Her dream of flying is printed next to her picture<sup>6</sup>.

The readers were pushed to obtain subscription money as can be seen from the account of the seven-year-old Jean-Marie from the seventh issue of Wrill: Jean-Marie, "no higher than a boot, messy hair, hands damaged by the cold and

brambles, is proud, because since this morning he knows how to whistle between his teeth."

He longs to attain the status of bomber in the Wrill Squadron and to travel the world. Miche approves and points out that since Easter, Jean-Marie is rich enough to acquire this status. Jean-Marie regrets that he has lost much of this money through several maladroit acts (including damaging his sister's doll). All is not lost because Jean-Marie succeeds in making himself useful in the house and being kinder to sister. As a result, his mother rewards him with a contribution to his subscription to Wrill (and the squadron). Miche ends this anecdote by

"Wonderful news" is announced in issue 20 in the "Notre Escadrille" (Our Squadron) column signed by the Pilot. The first of these is the reduction – by half! – of the format, which is compensated by the increase in the number of pages from 4 to 12. Note the reasons given for this change in format: inconvenience ("You will admit that the large WRILL was not easy to handle. If you opened it on the table, it covered it almost entirely; if you spread it out on the table, it covered it almost entirely; if you unfurled it in the street, the wind would quickly transform it into a kite!"). The editorial board is convinced that the readers will prefer the new format and, as an additional incentive, readers will be able to bind it (in a beautiful binding of course) and place it on their shelves. Reduced in size but never in spirit, Wrill would continue for another four years.



Ce Carrébus n'est pas un concours. Vous en trouverez la solution dans le prochain numéro.



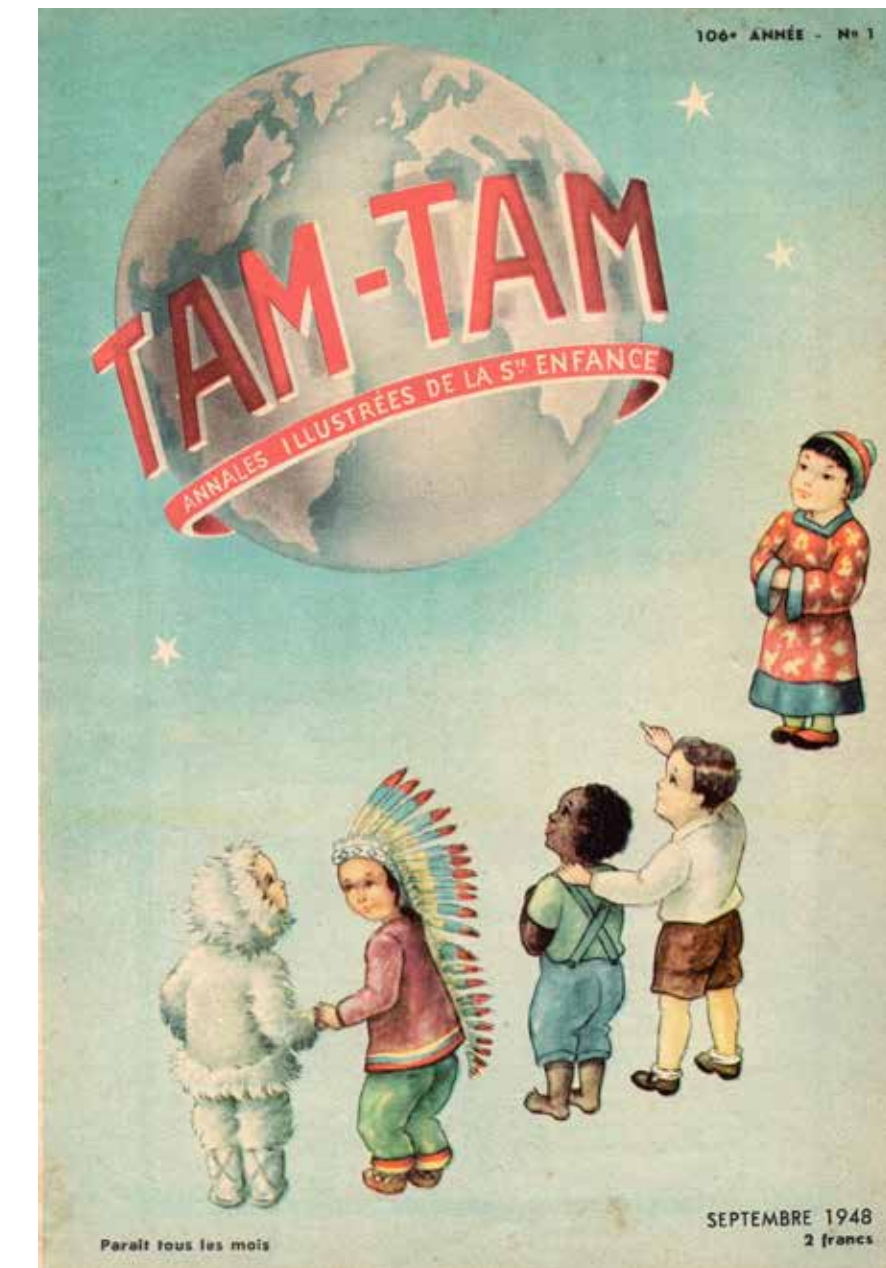


variety of contests letters, and columns dedicated to stamp collection and drawing. A rarity for the majority of these early magazines, the editorial team's portraits were also published, especially in the early

issues of the magazine. This corresponds to the importance accorded to communication from different people, possibly invented characters in their own rights: recurrent letters and notes in these early issues, before 1949, stemmed from the Missionary Uncle, Aunt Annie who replied to letters but also

Tam-Tam, was a Ghent-based monthly published by Santa Infantia (now known as the Missionary Childhood Association) soon after the Second World War, in 1946. Its early issues reveal a rich variety of contests letters, and columns dedicated to stamp collection and drawing. A rarity for the majority of these early magazines, the editorial team's portraits were also published, especially in the early

The April 1949 issue presents the editorial team with their names and portraits. Such representations of the editorial team (or more accurately the personas of the editorial team) recur in these early issues of Tam-Tam. The respondents are shown again as a team of four in the following issue from May 1949 but this time without name captions. Striking is the youth of all the team members, alongside the fact that so many of the columns had different people attached to them. Equally striking is the length of the letter column, "Entre Nous", which extends across three pages.



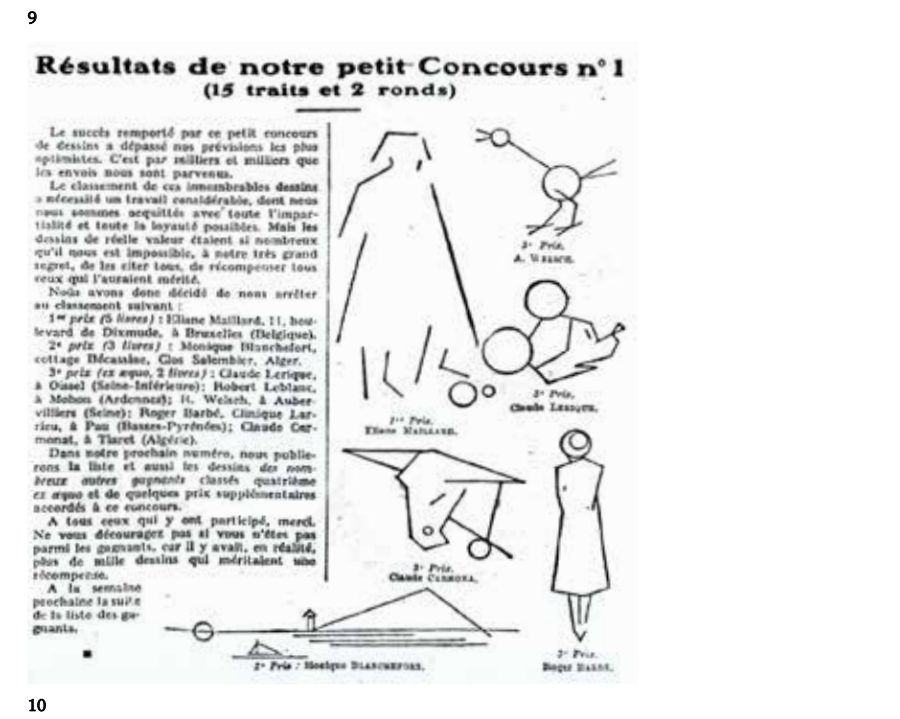
More than the other magazines discussed here, Tam-Tam strove to create a strong sense of community. In lieu of clubs, which was the preferred strategy of the Journal de Mickey and Wrill, Tam-Tam relied on extensive correspondence sections and communication from the different members of its editorial team. Auntie Annie's letters column, for instance, could sometimes extend over three pages of the magazine and Annie's responses to readers were often much longer than those by Léon or Miché.

This doesn't mean that Tam-Tam didn't eagerly seek subscribers as can be seen from the slogan from September 1949, which opens with emphasizing the sonorous nature of Tam-Tam and the gong it refers to:

*Tam-da-ga-ram-dam tam-tam  
Tam-Tam is a big family  
Who, with us, is looking to increase it?  
Read Tam-Tam! Spread Tam-Tam!  
Talk about Tam-Tam to your friends and mates!  
Create a buzz (tam-tam) around Tam-Tam!*

The slogan also reinforces the notion of connection and community-building. The missionary magazine went to great lengths to establish and strengthen such connections with readers, amongst local readers but also amongst a global community established through missionary activities. The February 1952 issue promises a Sainte Enfance brooch to all Tam-Tam subscribers and to those who attract new subscribers.

In contrast to the more commercial Wrill and Journal de Mickey, subscriptions to Tam-Tam and their rewards were channeled through schoolteachers and nuns.



Not far on the same page of the inaugural issue of Journal de Mickey, we find a little drawing contest: readers are encouraged to draw by incorporating the constraints of 15 straight lines and 2 circles. Winners would not only see their art in print but would also receive one of 50 wonderful books! The results, published on 25 November 1934 reveal the extent of the reader's innovative – and modernist – visual solutions!<sup>10 & 11</sup>

Geometric drawings would reappear, as can be seen from the results of a similar contest published in issue no. 194 (3 July 1938)<sup>12</sup> From the magazines discussed here, it is perhaps in the Journal de Mickey that the contests are the most innovative and varied, ranging from contests testing readers' drawing skills with different kinds of constraints, asking readers to complete unfinished drawings, and "a caricatlas" contest (caricatures based on the shapes of countries, including one of Hitler) to contests contributing to the commercial Mickey and Disney machine:

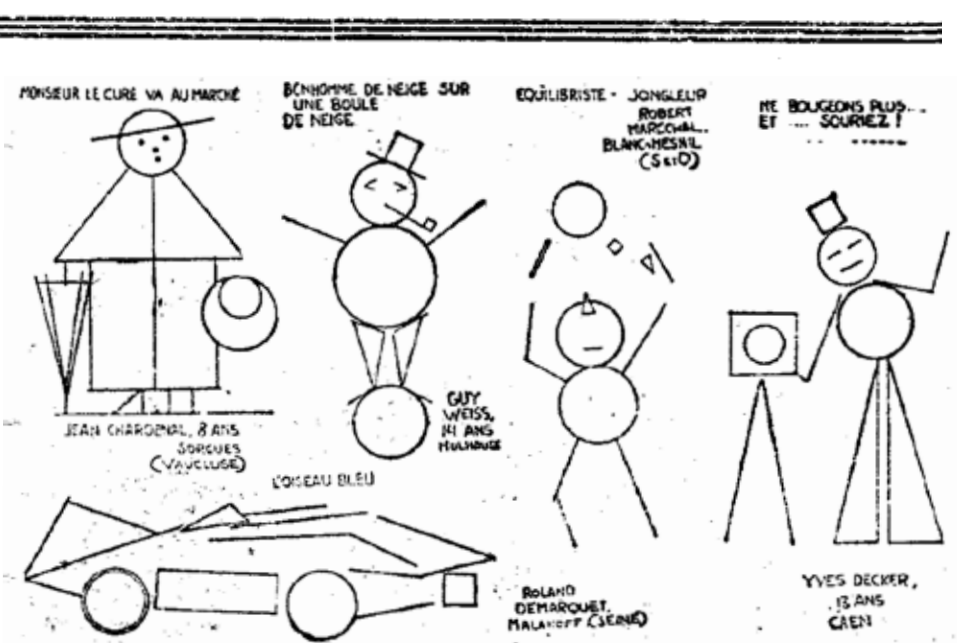
readers were encouraged to come up with slogans for the magazine, write songs dedicated to the magazine, imagine a coat of arms for Mickey, rank their favorite columns or suggest ideas for new contests. This was complemented by the advertisements selling Disney products such as the lively, rubber Mickey introduced above.

One of the smaller contests, the Méli-Mélo (mishmash) contest published on 2 January 1938 (issue no. 168) exemplifies the scope and diversity of the contests present in the Journal de Mickey: it invites readers to cut up characters, animals and objects from the same issue to create the funniest scene possible.

While the smaller contests often gave away books as prizes, the bigger contests offered an impressive range of prizes. The drawing competition in issue no. 16 (3 February 1935), announced as one of the most important contests, promises a real exhibition of the

*Magazine contests:  
PRIZES, FAME & GLORY*  
"If you can send us your poems on the amusing drawings that you have made yourselves, we would be very happy to publish them in our magazine."  
(Announced Les Grandes Aventures in its very first issue.)  
While Les Grandes Aventures does not seem to have printed material from its readers, most magazines were eager for reader interaction and response, which was not limited to letters alone.

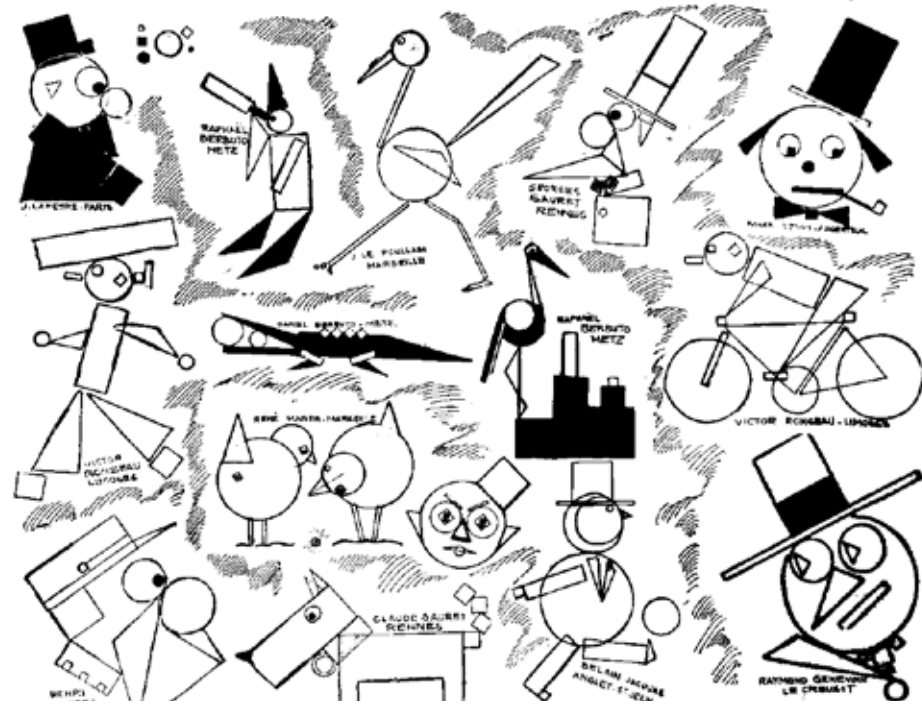
Contests were a privileged means of encouraging submissions and assuring that readers would read the magazine week after week to check for reactions to, or even publications of, their submissions and the results of the contests. A key means of attracting and maintaining readerships through establishing stronger interactions with the readers, contests abound in these magazines both before and after the war. As suggested in the responses to the letters, readers also regularly sent in drawings and even texts. Both were often even critiqued in the letter columns: in the early days of Mickey, drawings by gifted readers were praised and had the honor of being pinned on the wall above Uncle Léon's desk, others were told their drawings were not sufficiently good.  
The very first issue of Journal de Mickey also announces, with considerable sobriety, a major contest offering the opportunity to win numerous major prizes, promising to be the most important competition of the year and necessitating, of course,



successful artists in Paris and 750 prizes, with the first prize being a cash prize of 10,000 francs, a wonderful cruise, an airplane trip, five additional cash prizes of 1000 francs, radios, phonographs, cycles...  
Another early major contest testing geographical knowledge offered numerous prizes, including a tricolor jersey. Many readers doubted the existence of the winner of that contest, to which Léon responded by reproducing the letter of the winner, Gratiennne Rocher, complemented by small drawings of her, one with her proudly wearing her Mickey jersey. He also adds a little note at the end of his letter to counter another reason for suspicion: the sharpness of the lines. Léon attributes this to the printing process and points out that the jury had considered the originals and was interested more in the idea and the ingenuity rather than the line itself. Readers would have to wait until issue no. 39 to see Gratiennne Rocher's portrait,



## NOTRE CONCOURS: UN DESSIN GÉOMÉTRIQUE



12

published alongside three other winners aka Mickey's Great Aces. Issue no. 59 (24 November 1935) launches the strange animals drawing contest. The first results start appearing intermittently from issue no. 64 (5 January 1936). The winners of the contest received books for their efforts. While only a few animals were published, they



are fascinating in their combination of technical skill with a vivid imagination<sup>13</sup>. And the stylized animal contest from issue no. 84 which, unsurprisingly, shows a geometrical Mickey head<sup>14</sup>

As Léon mentioned in his letters, these drawing contests were a means of honing technical skill with ingenuity. The "little guys" (petits bonhommes) contest launched in issue no. 76, with results published in issue no. 82 confirms the encouragement to experiment with different kinds of drawings, ranging from the elaborate strange animals, to the many forms of caricatural and expressive faces, to the "lively" animated drawings that emerged from the "little guys" contest<sup>15</sup>.



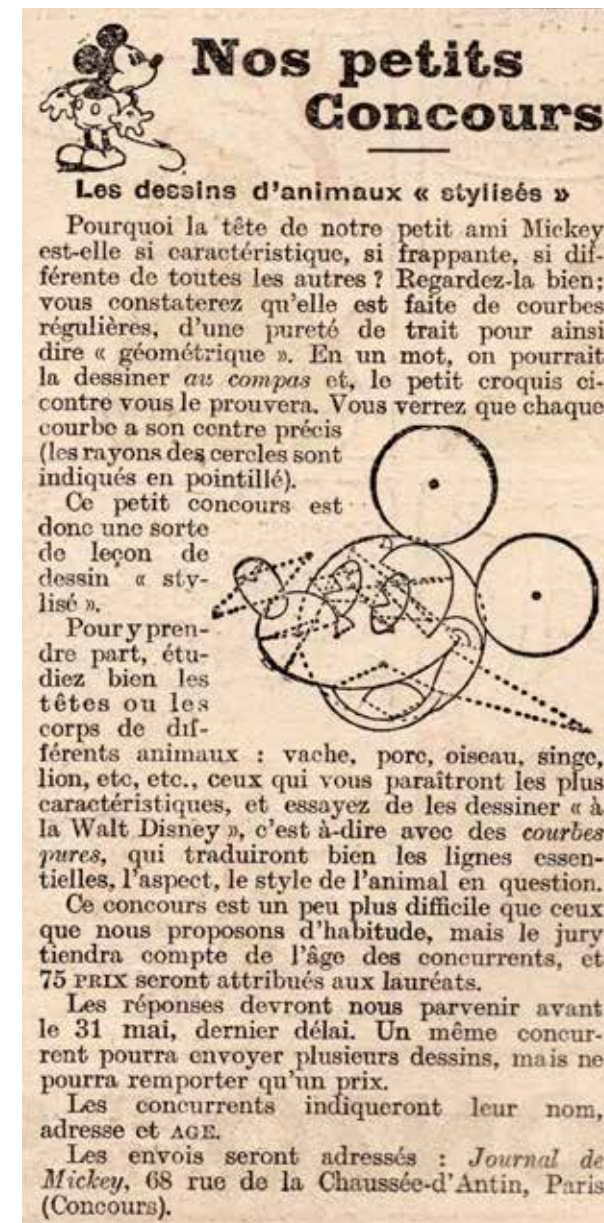
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## La galerie des "Animaux étranges"



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Other animal-based contests included the dressed-up animal contest from issue no. 283 (17 March 1940):



14



21



These drawings respond effectively to the contest's instructions (from issue no. 76) of producing the most entertaining scene, group or posture using stickmen:

"Have you noticed that one can succeed in drawing very entertaining little men, full of life and movement, by using a simple line for the body, legs and arms. One can, if one wants, add a circle for the head, add eyes, nose, mouth, the hat and the shoes but a simple line will be used to indicate the body parts and the torso."

Contests were also the highlight of Wrill, promised as of its very first issue and actively advertised. Anticipation for the contest was built up across several issues and seems to have been successful, if the letter column is anything to go by. In issue 19, for instance, J. Leclercq from Chercq-les-Tournai clearly awaits the contest with considerable impatience. To this, Miche replies, somewhat laconically, "Patience!".

The advertisements for the contest increased and diversified as of the twenty-third issue, underscoring their importance for a young magazine.

One advertisement from issue no. 27 reads:

*Knock, knock!  
Who's there?*

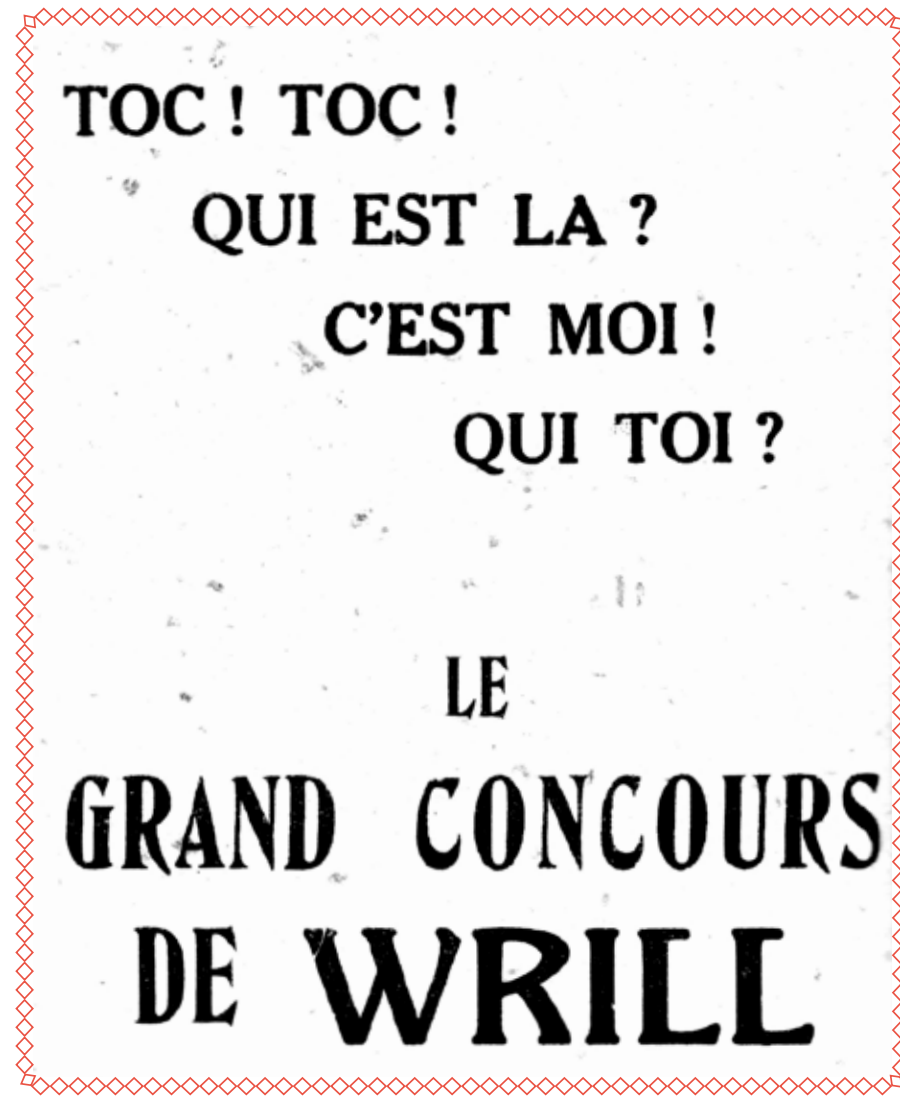
*It's me?*

*Who?*

*The Great Wrill  
Contest!*<sup>15</sup>

Wrill worked with coupons for its contests that had to be cut out of each issue, as can be seen from this set of instructions, and contest advertisement from issue no. 30<sup>16</sup>.

The contest advertisement, promising prizes amounting to 50,000 francs



15

already dominate half of the cover of the same issue<sup>17</sup>. Wrill extended its contest across several issues, advertising it aggressively and consequently trying to ensure the maximum numbers of buyers, subscribers and participants<sup>18</sup>.

Tam-Tam too organized a variety of contests, ranging from naming three major Belgian missionaries and the location of their statues (September 1949, vol. 107, no. 11), to the best missionary journals sent by schools (February 1952, vol. 109, no. 5) to an Easter contest from April 1949 based on identifying the church bells portrayed

in Belgian and European stamps. The same Easter issue also promotes a Brussels radio appearance by Tipo, the first of its kind for the magazine<sup>19</sup>.

We also find an entire page to showing Rudy, a recurrent comics character drawn by Tipo, participating in a contest<sup>20</sup>. In June 1949 (vol. 106, no. 10), as a treat for the end of another year of publication, Tam-Tam organized a "monster contest" involving identifying characters appearing in different Tam-Tam sections<sup>21</sup>.

Even in Tam-Tam, the prizes connected to the competitions could be quite worldly, extending to watches and dolls or the leather schoolbags offered in the December 1949 issue to those who succeeded in catching the balloons sent out by the magazine every day, from 4 to 24 December at 10 am from Ghent, followed by 10 mini-balloons launched twice on Christmas morning.

Readers were asked to look out for the balloons and to grab the cards attached to their tails. Readers could also write to the magazine and receive a consolation prize if they had sighted a balloon and remembered its color. Such contests fall under Roger Caillois' category of games of chance or alea.



16

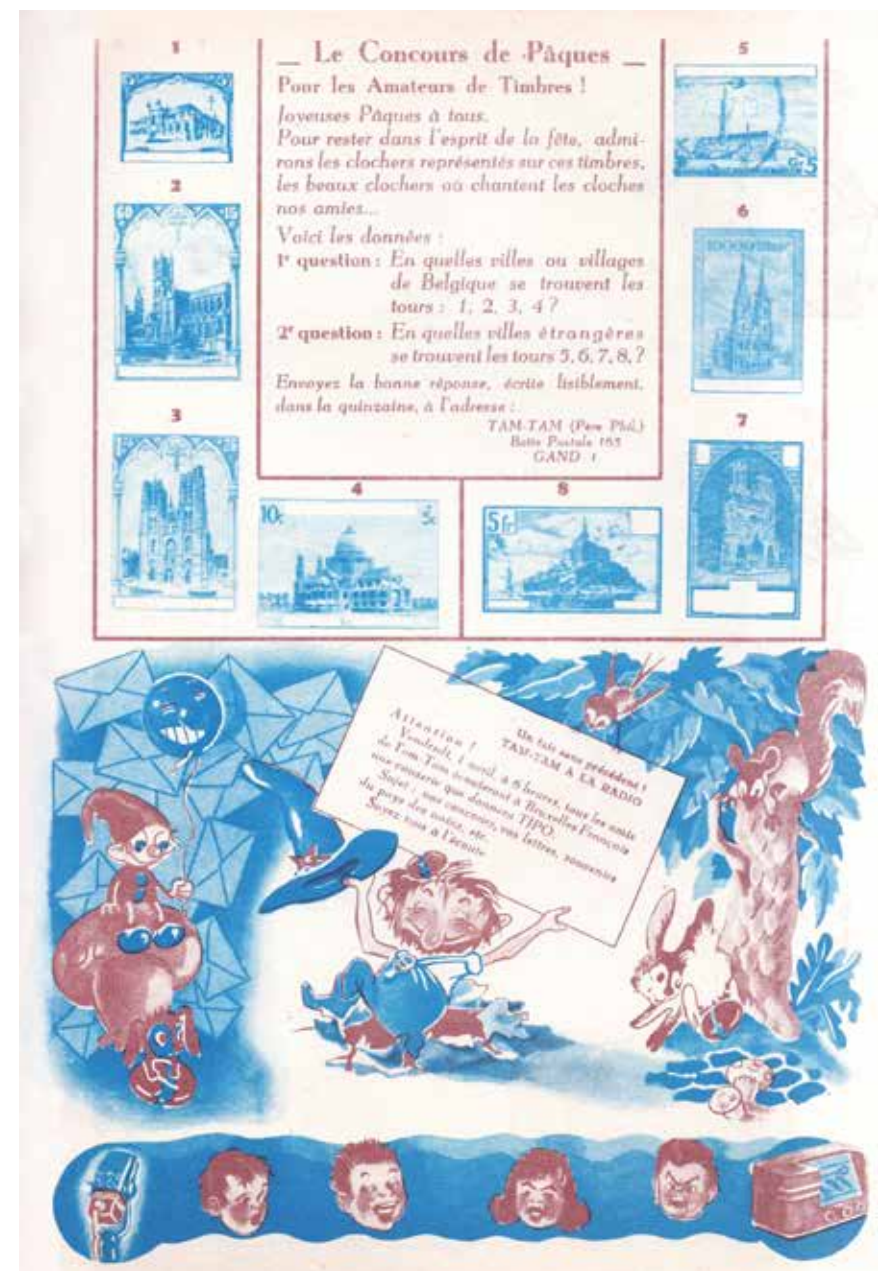
In addition to alea and agon, some drawing contests also fall under the category of mimicry since they encourage readers and budding artists to imitate or incorporate certain aspects of a drawing. Such drawing and teaching-how-to-look exercises and games were more recurrent in Tam-Tam than contests offering prizes. In the "I want to be an illustrator" section, Tipo offered line drawings that readers could copy as precisely as possible and then color in as can be seen from the examples below from May 1949<sup>22</sup> and February 1950<sup>23</sup>.



17



18



19



20





Ceci n'est guère compliqué et ne demande vraiment aucun effort d'intelligence. Cette question permettra de départager éventuellement des concurrents qui auraient tous réussi parfaitement le concours. Le premier sera celui qui aura donné le chiffre s'approchant le plus de la réalité.

Pour que vous ne soyez pas trop li-

vrés au hasard, nous vous disons que « WRILL », votre journal, le plus beau journal, le plus répandu, est distribué dans toute la Belgique, dans les grandes comme dans les petites villes, dans les bourgs et les hameaux, dans les gares et les kiosques à journaux. Il est lu par les filles et les garçons, qui savent lire évidemment, il est regardé par ceux et celles qui ne savent pas encore lire et qui ne comptent donc pas, puisqu'ils ne nous enverront pas de réponses. Les en-

fants qui lisent « WRILL », vous vous en doutez bien, sont des milliers. Répondront-ils tous aux questions du concours?

Evidemment, non! Alors? Alors, choisissez un nombre, vous verrez après si vous avez bien visé.

Prenez votre temps, mais ne traînez cependant pas trop: le concours se clôture le 15 mars à minuit... et souvenez-vous de la fable: Le lièvre et la tortue...

## Voici la liste des prix de notre Grand Concours



### Premier prix:

le grade de lieutenant plus un voyage (valeur fr. 1.500)

ou un séjour à la mer ou à la campagne (valeur fr. 1.500)

ou une lanterne magique (Baby cinéscope) avec 3 films fixes en couleurs, pouvant marcher sur 3 courants

ou un mécano en bois DESKATOR n° 2

ou une JEEP à pédales pour enfant

ou un canon grand modèle pouvant tirer obus

ou un éléphant en peluche sur roues (50 cm.)

ou une raquette RAM plus 10 livres

ou un ballon de foot-ball officiel complet (420 gr.) plus 10 livres.

### Du 2e au 4e prix:

le grade de sous-lieutenant plus un voyage (valeur fr. 1.000)

ou un séjour à la mer ou à la campagne (valeur fr. 1.000)

ou un canon grand modèle pouvant tirer obus

ou un éléphant en peluche sur roues (50 cm.)

ou une raquette RAM plus 5 livres

ou un camion tracteur et tank américain plus 5 livres

ou un mécano en bois DESKATOR n° 1 plus 5 livres

ou un ours blanc en peluche et 5 livres

ou un ballon de foot-ball officiel complet (420 gr.) plus 5 livres.

### Du 5e au 7e prix:

un camion tracteur et tank américain

ou un mécano en bois DESKATOR n° 1

ou un ours blanc en peluche

ou une raquette

ou un ballon de foot-ball (enfant), n° 3

ou un mécano en métal MECABEL n° 3 plus 5 livres

ou un voilier (45 cm.) plus 5 livres

ou un sous-marin (explose au moyen de torpilles) plus 5 livres

ou un Mickey en fourrure plus 5 livres

ou un stylo plus 5 livres

### Du 8e au 20e prix:

5 livres

ou un mécano en métal MECABEL n° 3

ou un voilier (45 cm.)

ou un sous-marin (explose au moyen de torpilles)

ou un Mickey en fourrure

ou un stylo.

### Du 21e au 50e prix:

4 livres

ou un stylo

ou un mécano en métal MECABEL n° 2

ou un jeu d'échecs

ou un mécano en bois MECABOIS n° 3

ou un jeu complet de ping-pong RAM.

### Du 51e au 100e prix:

3 livres

ou un mécano en métal MECABEL n° 1

ou un mécano en bois MECABOIS n° 2.

### Du 101e au 200e prix:

2 livres.

### Du 201e au 500e prix:

un livre.

Tous les gagnants recevront le brevet de pilote et l'enseigne E.W.

Tous les participants, gagnants ou non, seront invités à une séance de cinéma où notre héros Wrill leur sera présenté.



In addition to the text-heavy letters, the mixed-media games and contests sections, magazine front pages or covers are also an important form of editorial communication, concretizing the visual identity of the magazine, offering a recognizable public face, familiar to regular readers and enticing for both established and new readers. Perhaps some of the most elaborate covers are to be found in *Le Journal de Mickey*, punctuating key moments in children's year such as Easter, Christmas, the summer holidays and the start of the new school year, which occurred in October instead of September until the 1960s so that the children could help out with harvesting

and other agricultural tasks. Covers from the other magazines correspond to their specific penchants but also the means of production and drawing talent available. The rich special issue covers of *Journal de Mickey* contrast starkly with the more amateurly drawn *Wrill* covers and the carefully designed and ideologically marked *Tam-Tam* covers.

## READ, REACT, INTERACT, RÉPÉTÉ

Scholars such as Emmanuël Souchier have highlighted the power of editorial expression or enunciation, with a focus on

the presentation of texts, their paratexts and intertextual and intermedial networks. Marie-Eve Thérienty introduces a poetics of material supports to this discussion by turning to the serialized novels or feuilletons of the nineteenth century. Occupying a specific space, usually at the bottom of the page, feuilletons also enjoyed certain liberties and established expectations (regarding content and periodicity) that differed from other sections of the periodical. The sections displayed here are no different: from the different kinds of letter columns to the contests, each adopts a specific tone and caters to specific needs both from the ends of production (advertising the magazine,

making it attractive for existing readers and new subscribers, merchandising incentives) and reception (entertainment, connection, support, socialization). They also connect to other sections, as is the case with the advertisements generating anticipation for the contests but also through cross-referencing magazine mascots, contents, events organized by the magazine. The letters section in particular curates the magazine's content, especially its moral message and socializing opportunities for its readers.

Editorial expression or communication is a liminal entity, ensconced in a collage of visual and textual components, layouts and typographies. The examples introduced here have focused on the moments when a magazine's editorial team directly addresses and interacts with the reader, traversing that liminal space through a persona – the receiver of letters and writer of responses, but also the creator of contests – or through an array of interactive possibilities. These selections, despite their limitations, suffice in highlighting how editorial communication, alongside the comics, was the wind in the sails of the children's magazines.

### Secondary sources and further reading

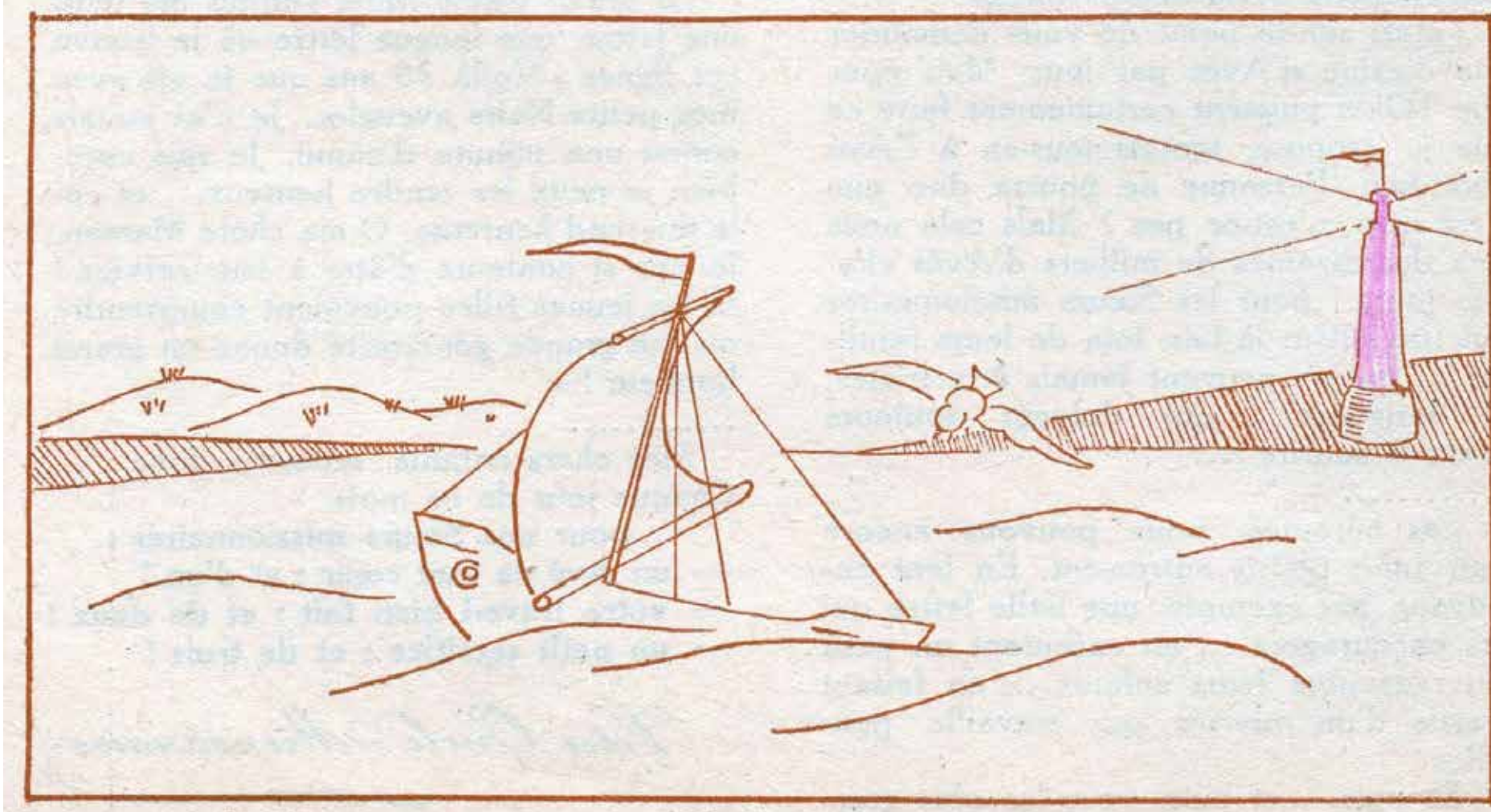
- Roger Caillois, *Les jeux et les hommes: le masque et le vertige*. Gallimard 1967.
- Thierry Crépin. *Haro sur le Gangster: La moralisation de la presse enfantine, 1934-1952*. Éditions CNRS 2001.
- Emmanuël Souchier, « Formes et pouvoirs de l'énonciation éditoriale, » *Communication et Langages* 154 (2007), 23-38.

- Marie-Eve Thérienty. « Poétique historique du support et énonciation éditoriale: la case feuilleton au XIXe siècle », *Communication & langages*, vol. 166, no. 4, 2010, pp. 3-19.
- Carol Tilley. "The Open Road for Boys Cartooning Contest: A Prosopography" *Comicalités: Études de culture graphique*. Forthcoming.

## JE VEUX DEVENIR ARTISTE DESSINATEUR.

A copier et à colorier

N° 2





# Pour nos Artistes A COLORIER



et - pour les meilleurs - à copier.







In 2018 the Ghent University library acquired a large collection of illustrated children's periodicals from Belgian comics collector Alain Van Passen.

In collaboration with Ghent University's COMICS research group, KIOSK offers a first-ever glimpse of this extensive collection. The exhibition spans three months and unfolds across seven two-week chapters, each chapter curated by a researcher from the COMICS research group or a specialist on the history of comics.

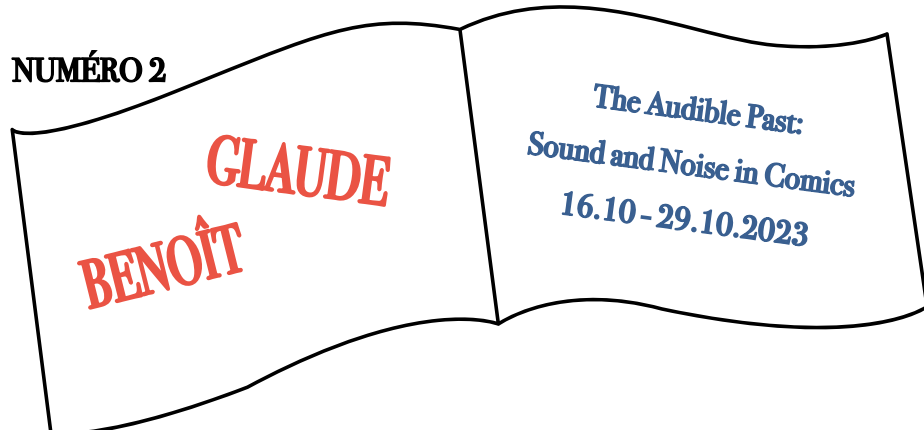
Accompanying each chapter are a publication and a poster designed by former masters students from KASK Graphic Design department.

The exhibition is curated by Simon Delobel & Felipe Muhr.

#### NUMÉRO 1



#### NUMÉRO 2



#### NUMÉRO 3



#### NUMÉRO 4



#### NUMÉRO 5



This newspaper is published on the occasion of the exhibition ISSUE ZERO: Reading the Van Passen Collection at KIOSK, Ghent. September 16 - December 22, 2023

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KIOSK  
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Design by Enid Stassyns  
Show curated by Simon Delobel & Felipe Muhr

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#### NUMÉRO 6

