

## VISUAL ARTS

# Bio/Graphic puts comics in context

Six artists featured in new Seymour Art Gallery show

■ **Bio/Graphic: Autobiography in Comics**, on now until Nov. 16 at Deep Cove's Seymour Art Gallery. [seymourartgallery.com](http://seymourartgallery.com)

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The latest exhibition at the Seymour Art Gallery explores autobiography in the comic form and offers gallery goers an opportunity to see what goes into printed works, hoping to inspire them to experiment with telling their own stories through the medium.

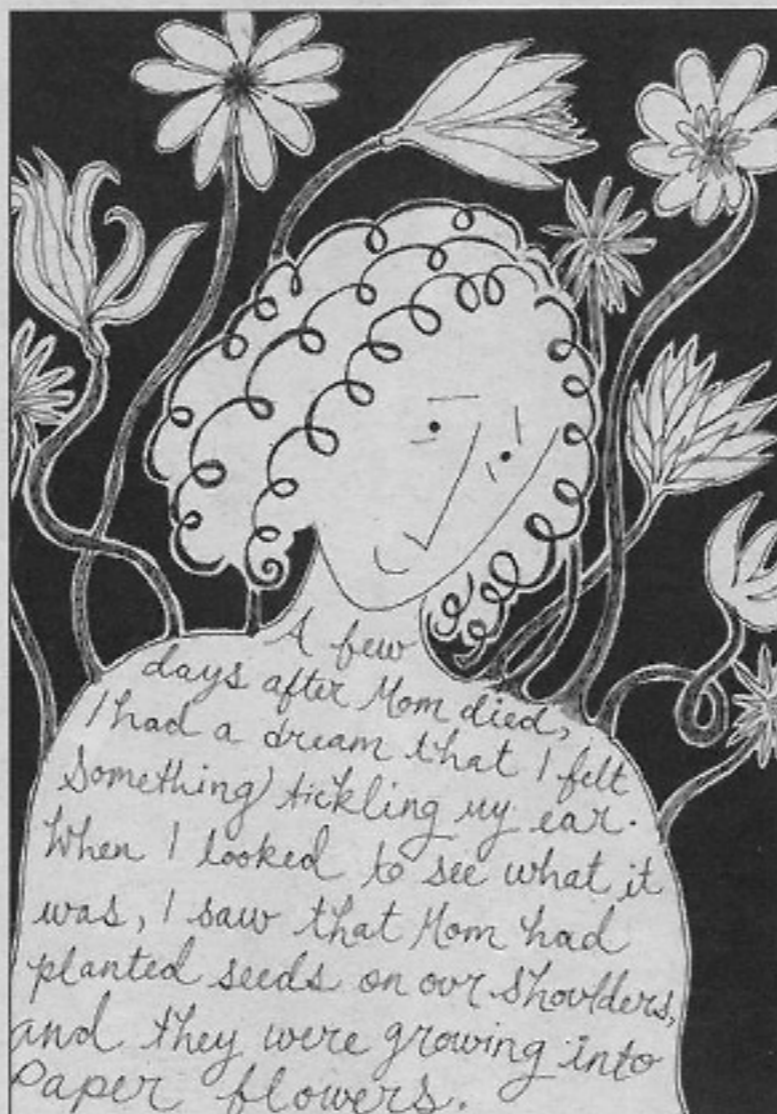
**Bio/Graphic: Autobiography in Comics** opened Oct. 9. On until Nov. 16, the show is curated by Seymour Gallery curator Sarah Cavanaugh and guest curator Luke Krienke. Cavanaugh decided to partner with Krienke due to his

background as a Vancouver-based comics artist, as well as his experience as a writer, illustrator and publisher.

Getting to know one another, Krienke would bring her stacks of comics to peruse. "What I was really attracted to of the works that he presented to me was autobiographical work," says Cavanaugh. "I think it's because there's this immediate connection that you have with people when they're telling their own stories. Certainly there's a voyeur aspect to it as well. But I think the fact that the stories are of such a personal nature really comes across in kind of a raw way."

**Bio/Graphic** focuses on six Lower Mainland artists: Megan Speers, Jason Turner, Sarah Leavitt, Sean Karemaker, Miriam Libicki

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**Bio/Graphic: Autobiography in Comics**, the latest show at the Seymour Art Gallery, examines the craft of telling personal stories through comics. On until Nov. 16, the exhibition showcases the work of six Lower Mainland artists including Sarah Leavitt and Jason Turner, their self-portraits shown above, respectively, from left to right.



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## Turner drawn to directness of form

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and Colin Upton.

"What we're trying to do is really introduce people to the process of making comics and give them some context for what goes into the product when you pick it up at a bookstore or at a comic shop," says Cavanaugh.

Featured artist Speers' autobiographical book *Wanderlust*, the tale of a young punk finding her way through a city's underground, is a pantomime, made of woodblock prints. On display in the gallery are: a row of the original blocks Speers carved that are inked; a copy of her original printed book, a handmade version; and the final printed version of the work that can be bought in bookstores.

Turner, a North Vancouver resident, has pages from his autobiographical comics series on display, including: *Year 40*, about the year leading up to his 40th

birthday; *Vinegar*, a series he started in 1996; and *Walk to Work*, inspired by his daily walk from Keith and Chesterfield in North Vancouver to Park Royal.

Turner started drawing comics when he was in high school in the late '80s. When asked what attracted him to the medium, he says, "It's just so direct, particularly the way that I've gotten to doing my autobiographical comics. I just draw them straight into ink, and not on fancy paper or anything so I can be on a bus or just sitting in a restaurant or something and easily draw something about whatever's on my mind at that time."

While he also produces works of fiction (like series *True Loves* that he wrote with his wife Manien), he enjoys doing stories about his own life, feeling, "it's interesting to notice the small details of everyday life," he says.

Turner currently pens a column in *Broken Pencil*, entitled *Jason and the Comics: A Column*

about *Comics in Comic Form*. His next project is a supernatural mystery story set in a North Vancouver-inspired city.

In the show, Vancouver resident Sarah Leavitt is offering insight into her graphic memoir *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother, and Me*. Leavitt started work on *Tangles* while she was working on her masters in creative writing at the University of British Columbia. Initially thinking she would focus her thesis project on a book-length work of prose about her mother's illness, one of her instructors suggested she move in a slightly different direction.

Throughout her mother's illness, she kept a journal. "It was a really natural way for me to express myself just as I was writing about my own life, I would draw little pictures, not to show anybody but just as part of my diary," she says.

Leavitt put some of them together in a photocopied

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## Gallery has installed a 'comic nook'

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zine that caught the attention of her teacher, who told her it seemed like it was her medium. She produced a graphic thesis version of the book and later redrew the pages in

advance of its publication in 2010.

Leavitt has been teaching for the last two years in UBC's creative writing department. Her courses have included Introduction to Graphic Narrative and Writing for Graphic Form.

Within the Seymour gallery exhibition space is a "comic nook" where people can contribute to the show by making their own three-panel autobiographical comic.

Cavanaugh is excited to be presenting some

school programs related to the show and those involved will present a panel discussion at Canzine West, a festival of zines and underground culture, Nov. 2 at Vancouver's Ukrainian Hall ([brokenpencil.com/canzine-vancouver](http://brokenpencil.com/canzine-vancouver)).