Comics Forum Presents:

COMICS AND CULTURAL WORK
Guest Editor: Casey Brienza

‘All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation,’ wrote sociologist Howard Becker in his seminal monograph on cultural production Art Worlds. Comic art is no exception to Becker’s basic insight. Writers, illustrators, graphic designers, letterers, editors, printers, typesetters, publicists, publishers, distributors, retailers, and countless others are both directly and indirectly involved in the creative production of what is commonly thought of as the comic book.

Yet comics scholars all too often advance a narrow auteurist vision of production in their research. Names such as Art Spiegelman, Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, and Osamu Tezuka continue to loom large in the intellectual firmament, while, despite recent calls for sociological approaches to comics scholarship, the large numbers of people without whom no comic would exist in the first place are routinely overlooked. A clear focus upon these people and the contributions of their labour is therefore long overdue and absolutely necessary to advance the boundaries of the theoretical and methodological study of comics. After all, how are we to understand any work of comic art if we know nothing about the myriad varieties of cultural work that went into its creation?

Possible topics include (but are not limited to): cultures and/or experiences of work in the comics production, distribution, promotion, and consumption circuit; theorizing the cultural work of comics; precarious and freelance labour in comics; feminization and other employment inequality; professional identities and self-identifications in the comics industry; new workflow/publishing models for comics in the digital age; and analyses of autobiographical comics and/or fictionalized narratives about the life of the comic book artist.

Along these lines, we are seeking short contributions of 1000-1500 words for a series of Comics Forum articles on comics and cultural work to be published throughout December 2013 on the Comics Forum website (http://comicsforum.org). Prospective authors should also include a short biographical sketch of 50-100 words. The deadline for submission is October 31, 2013, and you will receive notification of acceptance or rejection by November 15.

Any inquiries and submissions should be directed to Casey Brienza, City University London (casey.brienza.1@city.ac.uk). Please write ‘Comics and Cultural Work’ in the subject line.