

Inked: Cartoons, Confessions, Rejected Ideas and Secret Sketches from The New Yorker's Joe Dator

Joe Dator

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Joe Dator combines humorous cartoons with fun, behind-the-panels extras in his collection *Inked*.

Some of the book's cartoons were first printed in *The New Yorker*; others have never been published before. Entries of both kinds spark that longtime measure of one-panel cartoon quality: a desire to share the cartoons with others. "The Terror of Folkenstein" shows the flat-headed monster on stage, armed with harmonica and guitar. Elsewhere, a stand-up comedian becomes anxious when, instead of applause, he hears only the sound of crickets chirping from his audience—which consists only of crickets.

The book also includes glimpses of Dator's sketchbook, which, along with his charming written analyses, illuminates the process of taking an idea, experimenting with it, and bringing it to fruition as a finished cartoon. In one example, a seductive image from the 1967 film *The Graduate* is used to comment on modern society, as a woman's foot pauses over a laptop, ready to press a button. The caption reads: "Mrs. Robinson, are you trying to get me to listen to your podcast?" and on the next page, the painstaking process of deciding on that final language is revealed.

The cartoons are enjoyable in their mix of visual humor with language, and of the absurd with the everyday. References to science, movies, and literature come in as baristas and businessmen rub elbows with the Grim Reaper and Captain Ahab; a wordless cartoon shows forest animals using their smartphones to record evidence of a hunter about to shoot a deer.

Witty, insightful commentary and delightful cartoons make *Inked* a joy to read.

PETER DABBENE (November / December 2021)

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