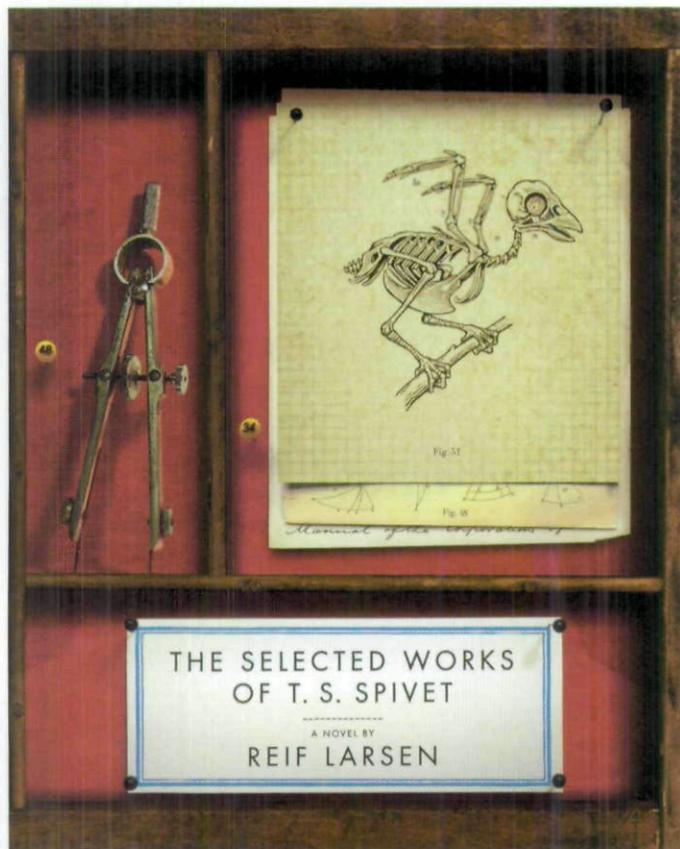


Fiction for Designers



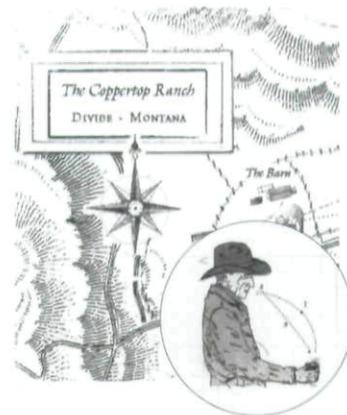
WRITERS HAVE LONG USED graphic design to enhance their fiction—iconic novels like *Tristram Shandy*, *The Tunnel*, and *House of Leaves* are indebted to crucial typographic and visual tricks—but the technique seems to have become more commonplace lately. *The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet* (Penguin), by first-time novelist Reif Larsen, uses annotated, diagrammatic drawings—one shows the flight patterns of bats, another depicts various McDonald's locations—to tell the story of 12-year-old cartographer T. S. Spivet, who travels from Montana to Washington, D.C., to accept an award at the Smithsonian. These authors often double as illustrators, designers, and painters, helping situate the work and its readers in our image-reliant culture. In the past year, several examples have appeared: *Important Artifacts* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), *Donogoo-Tonka or The Miracles of Science* (Princeton Architectural Press), and *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor* (Fuel) have married text and illustrative material to further the narrative.

But don't call the books graphic novels. "Graphic novels are exactly that: graphic," says Fuel co-director Damon Murray. "Fiction is all about what's going on in your head.... This, for me, is the appeal with illustrated fiction—you don't have to be so explicit. You can still let the readers find their own path rather than defining it for them."

BUZZ POOLE

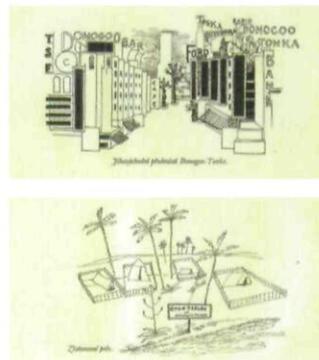
The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet

Although elements of our hero's story require a rigorous suspension of disbelief—how many 12-year-olds chart different kinds of boredom?—the story is stunningly executed. Visual studies of Spivet's bedroom shelving system and his father's facial expressions do indeed help flesh out the characters. The marginalia illustrates (literally and figuratively) the dynamics of Spivet's life and adventures.



Donogoo-Tonka or The Miracles of Science

This "cinematographic tale," first published in 1920 and only now available in English, unfolds through boxed "intertitles" meant to be projected on screens. The story, by French novelist Jules Romains, hinges on a campaign to make a fictional city real, and is told through stark, black-and-white drawings and deadpan captions.



The Marriage of Reason and Squalor

Artist Jake Chapman presented this novel replete with facsimile pages of his character's edited manuscripts and crinkled rejection letters. The book's publisher, Fuel, suggested that Chapman also provide watercolors to shed light on the mental states of the main character, Chlamydia Love.



Hey 45

Playwright Morwyn Brebner has crafted a novella around a cache of found high school sports photographs that collectively form a "moving tale of family, adolescence, and shame." The book is scheduled for publication next spring by J&L Books, the indie publisher co-founded by *Important Artifacts* author Leanne Shapton.

