

Comic & Zine Reviews

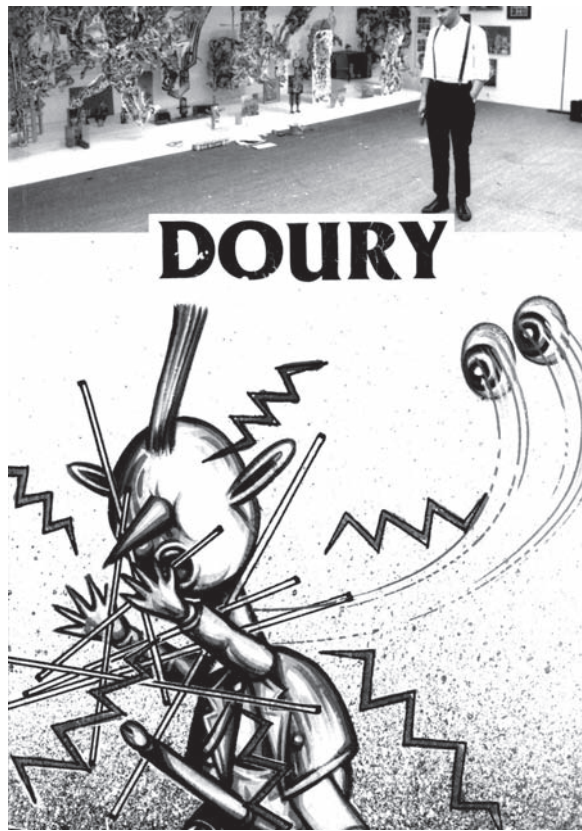
Mark Pawson

French artist **Pascal Doury** is best known for his contributions to the **RAW** comix anthologies – intricate intensely worked black and white scraperboard illustrations, chaotic schematically drawn scenes of a small boy seemingly built from a construction kit with several extra limbs and penises, furiously driving his toy car round-and-round in a graphically precise motion blur. These simultaneously innocent and sexually charged scenes are whirlwinds of action with an entire comic book's content compressed into a single drawing. Pascal Doury was sort of a contemporary of the **Bazooka** group of painters (**Kiki Picasso**, **Loulou Picaso et al**) but his uncompromising attitude coupled with a heroin habit set him apart. Cherishing his outsider status, his work surfaced in a succession of self-published underground magazines, often collaborations with scatological scrawler **Bruno Richard** who he'd know since the age of ten.

I first saw **Pascal Doury** work in 1980s issues of **RAW** and remember staring at his graphic explosions on the oversized pages for ages, trying to find my way into them and decipher the meaning, eventually feeling a bit defeated and flicking forwards to other easier-on-the-eye strips. Attempting to get to grips with Doury's work was not helped by the fact that his drawings were censored. Ridiculously, all the numerous genitalia had been blanked out with small white numbered rectangles. Over 18's who wrote to **RAW** were sent a sheet of stickers to strategically affix in place, and I've still got my 2 sheets of dicks stickers, unused in the original envelope!

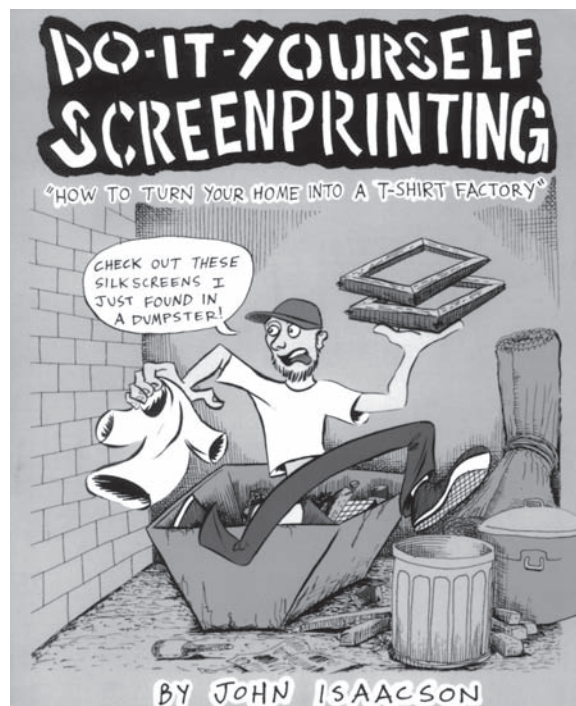
I hadn't thought about **Pascal Doury** for at least 15 years until I picked up a copy of **MOLLSUK #04, Doury** – a special issue of this magazine published by **Bongout** in Berlin. **Doury** died of lung cancer in 2001, having kicked heroin a decade earlier. This is a great, informative collection of exhibition shots, unpublished work, interviews and reminiscences by colleagues and collaborators including **Art Spiegelman** and **Gary Panter**. A fitting tribute to a unique artist. Later issues of **RAW** were published in the UK by Penguin with **Pascal Doury's** work uncensored. Secondhand copies can be found relatively easily.

Just what is it that makes today's sheds so different, so appealing to artists, musicians and illustrators? These prefabricated buildings seem to be a popular subject at the moment. I can envisage a themed park exhibition coming together with **Simon Starling's** shedboatshed (re-purposed, sailed and reassembled) next to **Cornelia Parker's** smithereened Cold Dark Matter, alongside **Mark Dion's** Biological Field Unit Research Station, and there'd be curious sounds at high volume emerging from a shed with **Dj Beekeeper** inside (Wire's **Bruce Gilbert**). The reading area – an essential element of such an exhibition – would be inside **Mark Dion's** **Shed**. Amongst the butterfly nets and sample jars, on the bookshelf of botanists' reference books there would of course be a copy of **Walden** by self-

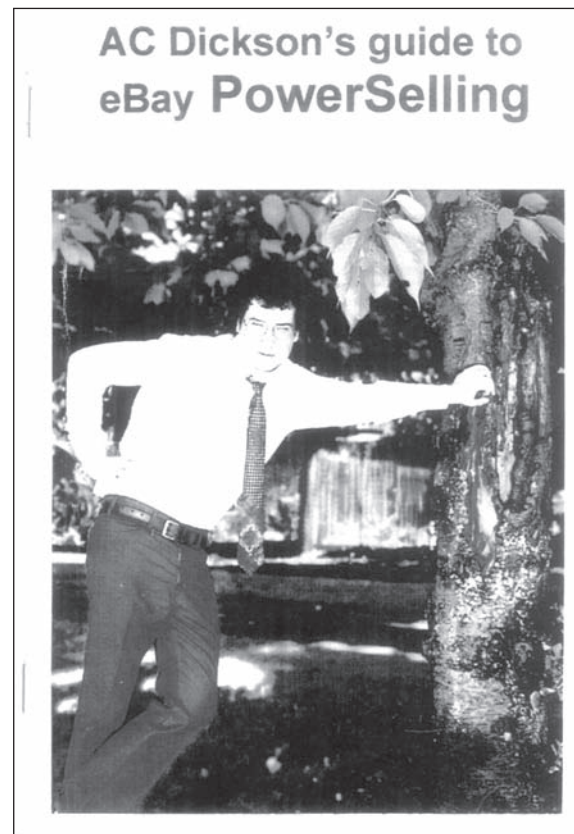


builder with attitude **Thoreau**, some early copies of **Viz Comic** (yes you read correctly, **Viz** were early shed adopters and always included spoof small ads for sheds), plus there'd be copies of the **Men and Sheds** books (UK, NZ and Australian versions which all share the same title). What's this here? A copy of **Sheds** by **Nigel Peake**, a collection of illustrations of sheds real and imagined. I can picture **Nigel Peake** on his travels going into local tourist information offices and asking if they know the locations of any good sheds. His drawings of real shed exteriors focus on the visual effects of being patched up, repaired and weathered. Using accumulations of scavenged materials and never seeming quite finished, these *ad hoc* buildings are meticulously recorded in fine line drawings with cross hatched detail; drawings which could be used as plans for building your own shed. The imaginary structures move into more fantastical but still practical territory. Elaborately patterned with the wooden laths themselves – reminiscent of the work of untutored obsessive self-builders and **Simon Rodia's** **Watts Towers** – these drawings are delicately, sparingly given a watercolour patina.

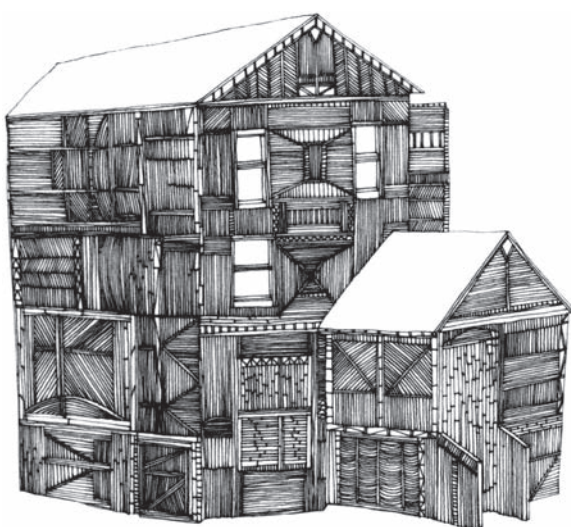
John Isaacson's **Do-It-Yourself Screenprinting** is a collection of 3 self-published comics reprinted by the always good Microcosm Publishing. It's part practical guide, part autobiography as we



follow John on a personal journey into the world of silkscreening. In 'How to turn your home into a t-shirt factory' he does exactly that, starting with the basics of building frames, stretching screens, preparing artwork, exposure, printing and drying all on a nonexistent budget. His enthusiasm is clearly conveyed by the expressive drawings, which improve as the book progresses, and a desire to share his knowledge and experiences. As someone who's printed hundreds of postcards in my living room, laid out flat to dry on every available surface, leaving a small path clear to leave the room by, I can completely identify with this approach. Part 2 is a humorous account of selling his not very good t-shirt designs in Californian street markets. Berkeley is Hippie central so we get to meet an appropriately colourful cast of characters, the other traders and various time-wasting non-customers. In part 3, John somehow gets a job in a professional silkscreen workshop, which he barely has enough experience for. He faces a steep learning curve and asks the other workers every imaginable question about commercial silkscreening. They obligingly explain and demonstrate, conveniently providing perfect material for the comic! It turns out that all the employees sneakily work on their own projects. They quickly bond, working together to conceal their personal print jobs from the boss. For this section of the book the title switches to **Do-It-Together Screenprinting** as John realises that helping each other out and working together is a more efficient and enjoyable way of printing than always stubbornly adhering to the principle of DIY. This book can never teach you everything you need to know about silkscreening, but with some trial and error and lots of practice you'll be on the way. **John Isaacson** successfully conveys the fun and satisfaction, hassles and frustrations of **Do-It-Yourself Screenprinting**, along with lots of useful technical advice.

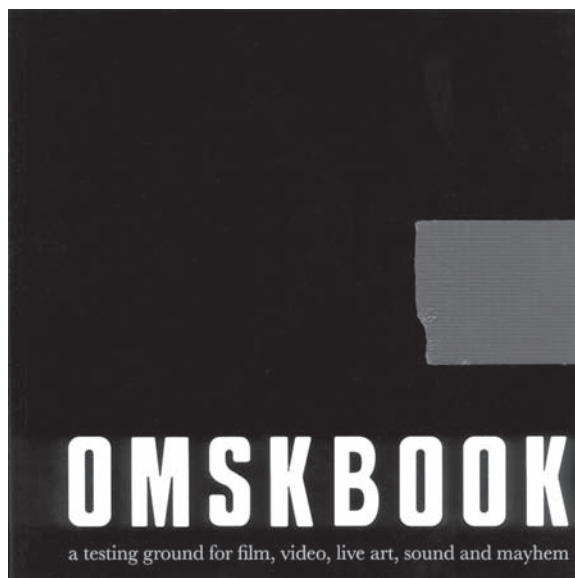


After picking up a copy of **AC Dickson's Guide To eBay Powerselling** zine I realised that I now have a small **eBay** section on my bookshelf! Two are books by artists: **Bill Burns' Everything I Could Buy on eBay About Malaria** and **John Freyer's All My Life For Sale**. The two others are more mainstream books; a 'How to Sell...' book, and a company history. **AC Dickson's Guide To eBay Powerselling** fits neatly between these two categories. **A C Dickson** is a Portland USA-based performance artist and filmmaker and this zine accompanies his



Powerselling Seminar Performances, the theme of which is 'learning-how-to-unlock-the-power-of-the-internet-for-personal-fortune-and-job-freedom-with-eBay'. In 28 practical, down to earth pages, you learn pretty much everything you'll ever need to know about selling stuff on eBay, together with some nuggets of eBay history. **AC Dickson** makes a living by selling items he gets from flea markets and charity shops on eBay, although I just checked and he doesn't have anything up for sale right now. He's highly enthusiastic about the opportunity that eBay has created for liberating people from the drudgery of boring jobs, enabling many sellers to become self-employed; no boss, work when you want, plenty of free time and you don't even have to speak to customers, because everything's done by e-mail. As someone who's been self-employed for years selling books and magazines by mailorder I can thoroughly recommend it, but I haven't actually got into selling on eBay yet, just read a few books about it... **AC Dickson** sees eBay as having democratised the marketplace, allowing millions of consumers worldwide to sell stuff directly to each. He also points out that selling stuff on eBay can be seen as an ecologically sound way to reuse or recycle unwanted items. I can imagine his impassioned presentation of these topics going down especially well in a live seminar situation. It's interesting to remember that there was an idealistic, Libertarian streak to founder **Pierre Omidyar's** original concept for eBay, but any remaining vestiges of these ideals seem to have disappeared as it rapidly grew into a multi-billion dollar business...

This seems to have developed into a how-to book section, so **The Garden Sketchbook** by **Anna-Kaisa Laine & Emma Wills** fits in perfectly. It's a pocket-sized notebook telling the story in words and drawings of their year-long project to turn a barren Cornwall council house back garden into a working vegetable and flower garden. They scavenge materials, go slightly over the top ordering organic seeds from seductive mailorder catalogues, build raised flowerbeds, and much to the amusement of their neighbours have ten tons of topsoil dumped in the front garden which they then carry by hand, two buckets at a time, into the back garden. The drawings begin by showing the garden as it was at the start of the year and how they imagine it will eventually look, then there's monthly updates as it progresses, careful drawings using a palette of green and black with the addition of bright splashes of red in the second half of the book as flowers burst into bloom. These drawings are accompanied by diary entries from both authors and detailed charts showing what they planted and what actually grew. **The Garden Sketchbook** clearly conveys their gentle and slightly haphazard approach to growing. They're delighted when crops



flourish, resigned when their vegetables are eaten by slugs and battered by the rain. Perhaps **The Garden Sketchbook** sticks a bit too literally to its title. I want to see more drawings; pictures of the front garden obliterated with tons of soil, drawings of the neighbours who are alternately bemused and encouraging, illustrations of **Anna-Kaisa & Emma** working in their garden or just sitting out there with a cup of tea enjoying their creation. Less slugs, more people. I want to be encouraged into thinking that I might, just might transform my pigeon shit encrusted East London 5th floor balcony into a verdant herb garden.

Omsk is a roving, collectively organised club night who've been putting on sporadic events around London since 1995. Their slogan, 'A testing ground for film, video, live art, sound and mayhem', sums up the approach perfectly. Their curated but chaotic shows have taken place North and South of the Thames in locations as varied as a squatted Bank, railway arches, and Hoxton's infamous 333 club. The programme for a 2004 show lists 7 performances, 4 installations, 8 musical acts and 25 short films, all for just £6.00 entry fee. Drifting locations and spasmodic occurrence, popping up when and where you'd least expect it, always make **Omsk** nights special events. **Omskbook** with its cover gaffer taped shut and austere black and red print job marks 12 years of activity. Rather than a dry documentation and historifying account of **Omsk's** manifestations, the book is constructed exactly as a show would be programmed: each contributor is allocated a time slot, i.e. a couple of pages to do whatever they want with, the book starts at 4pm and goes all the way through to 6am. Along the way there's a miscellany of artwork, film stills, performance scripts, DJ playlists and short contextualising essays from about 90 contributors, together with an informative how-to-put-on-your-



own-event section, plus there's a CD and a DVD. In fact the only thing that's missing is a close up photo of **Omsk** prime mover **Steven Eastwood's** notorious cycling jersey. Viewing/reading **Omskbook** with both the CD and DVD playing at the same time is recommended.

Ratio: Pan-dimensional Film Guide – with a subtitle like that you know you're in for an interesting ride. At first glance **Ratio** looks like a 1970s film journal; clunky layout with earnest analytical reviews of the latest international avant-garde and 'adult' releases alongside interviews with introverted auteurs backed up with small adverts for private film clubs and scholarly film themed publications. This issue's date is Winter 1973 but there's a barcode on the back cover and a website address inside. Look closer and things get curiously. There's an interview with filmmaker Penelope Nordstrom-Lloyd, living in self-imposed exile in the Carpathian mountains, making films with her tribe of 10 adopted kids and gradually using up her stockpile of vintage film stock; seriously strange sci-fi films; and a frightening free association session between Japanese horror Maestro **Kosei Nakadai** and Finnish Director **Urho Virtanen** (Q. Flesh freaks, knife, demon possession? A. Blood splatter liquids exorcism, shot in head, rotting corpses, child murder, exploding head, lots of blood). Some illustrations are film stills which have been drawn over and drawn through deforming the grey live action film stills into thick black outlined animation cells, others look like mutilated storyboard images with a hint of menace lurking in the background or images from half-remembered children's books. It's all very strange indeed. I felt slightly fuzzy headed before the hay fever medication you understand, but after reading **Ratio: Pan-dimensional Film Guide** now I'm completely confused and disorientated.

Contacts

MOLLSUK #04, Doury A4 88 pages, 17 euros.

www.bongout.org

Bongout Showroom, Torstrasse 110, 10119 Berlin, also from NOG, 187 Brick Lane, London, E2

Sheds, Nigel Peake, A5 36 pages, £8.00.

www.analoguebooks.co.uk

www.secondstreet.co.uk

Do-It-Yourself Screenprinting, John Isaacson, 188pgs, \$10.00 www.microcosmpublishing.com

A C Dickson's Guide To eBay Powerselling

A5 28 pgs \$2.00. andrewdickson.com

The Garden Sketchbook

by **Anna-Kaisa Laine & Emma Wills**

A6 52 pages. £3.50? www.atlanticpressbooks.com

Omskbook 20x20cm, 154 pages inc CD + DVD £14.99 www.omsk.org.uk

Ratio - Pan-Dimensional Film Guide

A4 40 pages, £6.99.

www.thomasbarwick.com