

Ivan Art: Raising Cannabis Consciousness

A Cartoon Strip at a Time

By Mary Lou Smart
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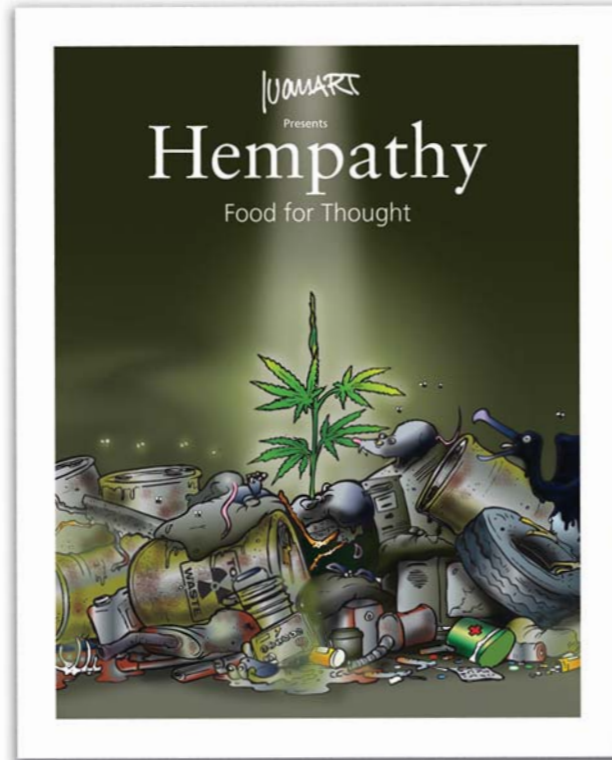
In an insane world, cartoons tell the story fast and painlessly. No need to belabor the point when a full, rich graphic can cut to the chase.

Hempathy – Food for Thought, the premier compilation of Ivan Art's Why? Why Not? strips, portrays a tale of cannabis dysfunction throughout the ages. Why an age-old plant treasured by so many is sidelined, and why the same harmless plant makes a good deal of sense are messages conveyed in humorous and poignant detail. Straightforward copy is cram-packed with tidbits about prohibition, pharmaceutical overload, a gun-crazed culture and environmental malaise.

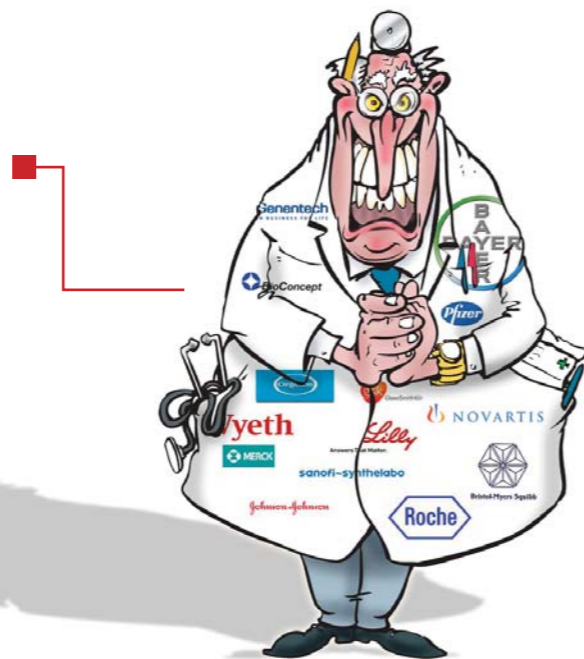
Readers of *Treating Yourself* magazine are familiar with Why? Why Not? comic strips encapsulating good and evil down to a color code of sinister shades of green, black and purple next to vibrant, joyous yellow, turquoise and pink. The artist's intricate drawings bring to comical life an entire spectrum of events that are usually obscured by the complexities of life.

The delicate marijuana plant next to the fat and sassy legal pusher sporting a white lab coat emblazoned with pharmaceutical logos pretty much says it all. A greedy doctor with large gaping teeth is terrifically entertaining in the moment, whereas the fact that the number of Americans dying from prescription drug overdoses has tripled in the past 20 years is fodder for a longer tale at another time.

Delivering the essence of a situation in illustration, caricature and cartoon translates very well to the cannabis trade. As graphic designer of *Treating Yourself*, he's overseen the creative design of 24 issues over four years, creating overall layout, cover art, comic strips, article artwork and advertisement graphics.



For anyone new to the world of medical marijuana, *Hempathy* will ease the transition. To those who know next to nothing about cannabis, the book is educational. For the seasoned advocate, sit back and enjoy.



Hempathy – Food for Thought is available on www.why-why-not.net and at familiar online resources such as Amazon.com.



He was the graphic designer for the CannaTrade.ch, the Swiss hemp fair, for a decade, and has also contributed for several years to the Italian magazine *Dolce Vita* and the Spanish publication of *Canna Habla*. His comic strips have been translated into Dutch, German, Italian and Spanish. He still enjoys meeting people and doing caricatures at fairs and other public events.

Ivan Art's work is warm, lighthearted and humorous. *Hempathy* begins with a gleeful Thomas Jefferson dancing around with a bag of cannabis seeds next to his quote about its value to the country's economy. The book ends with a plump and euphoric farmer running past a message about the need to promote the landslide of scientific research documenting the benefits of cannabis.

While Ivan no longer partakes of the recreational use of cannabis, he fully supports the idea of deregulation and the importance of medical cannabis in a world suffering from a reliance on pill popping.

"It's illogical that cannabis is still illegal," he said. "I mean, nobody's ever died from it, and that alone should be enough."

QUICK BIO

Born Estaban Ivan Artucovich, the artist known as Ivan Art even prefers his shorter name, professionally. His view is worldly; Ivan Art gets around. Born in Los Angeles at the edge of southern California's surf culture, he was raised by South American — Peruvian and Argentinian — parents of European — Italian, Basque and Croatian — descent. His mother also loved to get around, and so by age 18 he had attended a dozen schools and was familiar with Europe and North and South America.

Self-taught, the artist was a childhood fan of Warner Brother cartoons. Early idols were Mad Magazine caricaturist Mort Drucker and cartoonist Gilbert Sheldon, creator of Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers. While attending Saddleback College in southern California, he worked full time as a graphic artist in a print shop. Exposure to the arts instilled a desire for more. Moving to Italy at age 22, he was introduced to the fantastic world of European comics culture, found French and Belgian comic amazing, and was especially drawn to the works of Uderzo and Goscinny, authors of *Asterix*, and underground cartoonists like Mäester and Daniel Franquien. He studied the art of graphics in Florence; attended Scuola del Fumetto (School of Cartooning) in Milan, and furthered an aptitude for graphic illustration at the Superior School of Applied Arts in Lugano.

After years of travel - from Baja, California, across North and South America, throughout Asia and around Europe, he finally settled in a quiet corner of Switzerland. At 48, he is a full-time, freelance artist. Samples of his art can be seen on www.ivanart.net. Happily married to Simona, he is busy working and raising two children, ages 13 and 11.