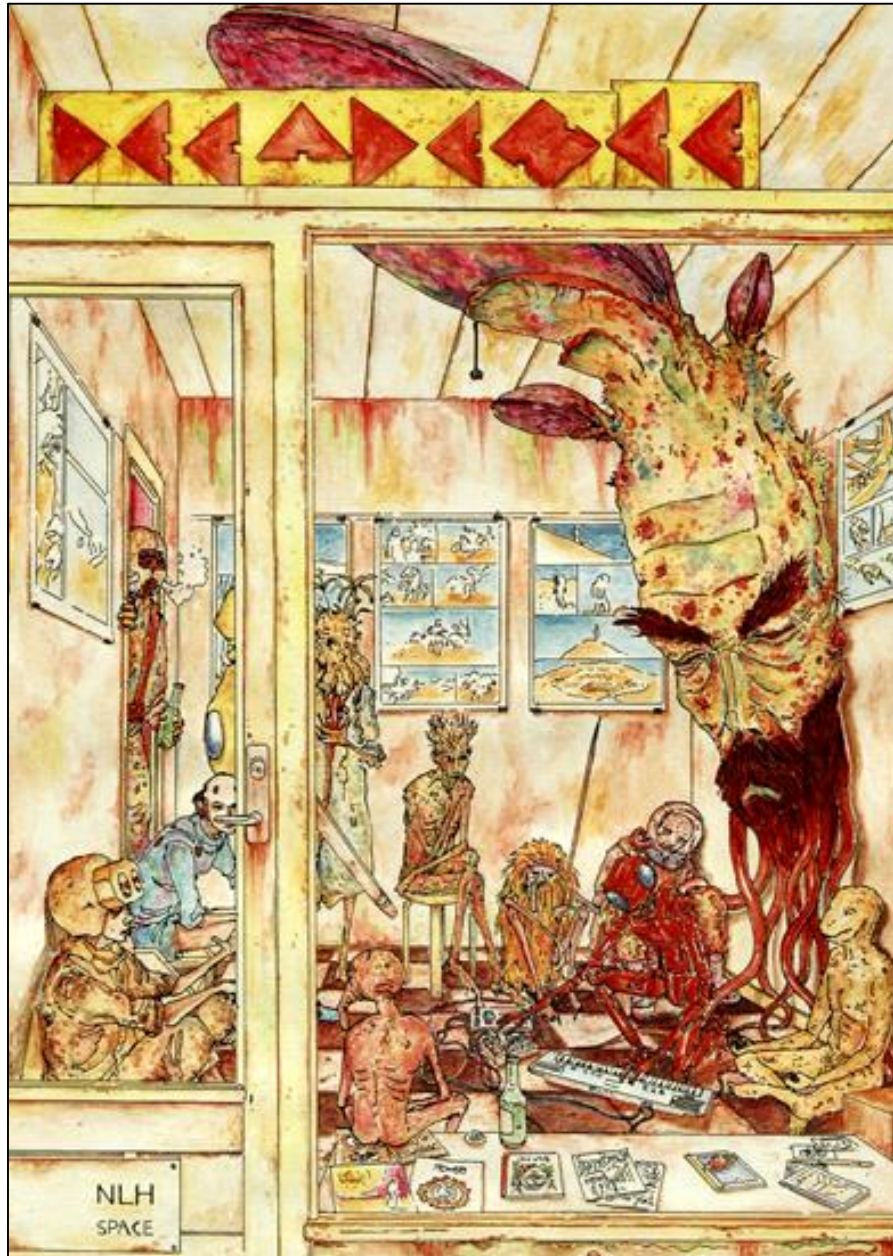


Decadence Comics 2003-2015

A case study of a contemporary underground comics collective



University of Jyväskylä 2015

Department of Art and Cultural Studies

Art History

Bachelor's thesis

Urho Tulonen

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Researching contemporary underground comics.....	1
1.2 An overview of underground comics.....	3
2. Decadence Comics 2003-2015.....	5
2.1 The early years.....	6
2.2 Expansion and development.....	7
2.3 The latter years.....	8
3. Original content.....	10
3.1 The comics.....	11
3.1.1 Lando.....	12
3.1.2 Stathis Tsemberlidis.....	16
3.1.3 The anthology contributors.....	20
3.2 Animation projects and miscellaneous artworks.....	23
4. Cultural disposition.....	25
4.1 Self-representation in public communications.....	27
4.2 Experimentation and liminality.....	28
5. Conclusion.....	30
6. Figures.....	31
7. Appendices.....	44
8. List of References.....	47

1. Introduction

I stumbled upon the subject of my research in a bookstore in London during a four day vacation as I was browsing for zines from the lower shelves of the tiny establishment that was "Book Art Bookshop". Crouched down on the shop's floor, cramping my legs off, I eventually found something that I wasn't quite expecting. The covers of the album exhibited no particular visual or cultural code and I wasn't able to categorize its contents into the confines of any pre-established genre or format of subcultural publications that I was aware of. It was a Decadence Comics album: "Untranslated #3" by Lando, released in 2009. Of course, as the album displayed no information regarding the album's title, author or release date.

I had been familiar with underground comics and the alternative press community long before I came across the Decadence Comics collective. I had seen my share of the crude, the weird, the radical and the experimental, yet there was something rather uncommon about this particular comic book that I couldn't quite put my finger on. It wasn't blatantly satirical or critical of anything in particular, and in fact, due to its ambiguous narrative structure and complete lack of textual communication, it didn't really address anything directly.

After my visit to London I read and reread Lando's album countless times, never fully understanding what it was trying to tell me. At some point I decided to find out more about the label and order some more albums in the hopes that they would shed some light on this mysterious piece of underground literature. As I expanded my collection of the Decadence Comics collective's releases over the years, some sort of vague picture was slowly but surely starting to form in my mind, but I still wasn't able to explain to myself what exactly it was that I had encountered. Eventually I realized that my problem resulted from the fact that what the Decadence Comics collective was doing in its comics was something rather contemporary and original, that couldn't be simply categorized into old and perhaps dated models. Truly understanding Decadence Comics, I thought, would require a much deeper inquiry into the albums themselves as well as to the historical and social backgrounds from which they emerged.

1.1 Researching contemporary underground comics

In this case study I will be pursuing a holistic inquiry into the Decadence Comics collective, examining its historical, aesthetic, social and to a lesser extent economical dimensions, ultimately attempting to trace out a conception of the collective's cultural disposition. After offering a brief overview of underground comics and the alternative press community in order to establish a historical and conceptual context for this particular research topic, I will move on to examine the general

characteristics and history of the Decadence Comics collective. From this section the paper will move on to a content based thematic analysis of some of the collective's releases and artwork, after which the identity-related dimensions of the collective will be placed under further analysis. In the end of this paper these interconnected sections will be reviewed in relation to each other in order to trace out an understanding of the collective's cultural disposition as well as the general nature of its activity and organization.

As the study is a broad one, the variety of methods and materials that are used in its course is correspondingly extensive. As there are no previous studies on the collective, a significant portion of the research has been dedicated to the collection and arrangement of historical data concerning the collective as an organizational whole as well as its members, releases and general chronological development. This information has been gathered from interviews made both by myself and several comics related websites, as well as from the collective's own web content.

The section in which the creative output of the collective is examined is more analytical than historical, as the visual and thematic analysis of the contents of the collective's comics albums, animation projects and other artworks requires no supplementary historical research or attribution. While I will be retaining from an in-depth visual and structural analysis of the material, I will be examining several examples of the collective's releases in the hopes of finding recurrent themes and a basic understanding of its visual language and tone of expression.

So far it has been impossible for me to observe the collective's activity in the physical world, so the section in which the aspects that relate to the collective's identity and cultural disposition will rely heavily on the internet as a source of information. The information related to these dimensions of the collective is gathered almost entirely from the official Decadence Comics blog, which has been an incredibly important source of information for the other sections of this paper as well, and which will be cited frequently in this paper.

The background literature that is cited in this paper revolves heavily around comics and subcultural studies, and as this research concentrates heavily on the collection and arrangement of new information, these sources will be used mainly in the compositional analysis of said content. The great majority of past comics studies has concentrated on more conventional and popular examples of comics that are more representative of the format as a whole, and through which scholarly generalizations can be made more fluently. Research that deals with alternatives to the more popular examples of the medium are harder to come by and they tend to concentrate more on the universal characteristics of these more marginal representatives of the world of comics. While these works may provide an extensive background and starting point for the research and analysis of more

contemporary examples of underground comics such as the Decadence Comics collective, they shouldn't be applied as primary sources of reference, as the contemporary underground comics and alternative press communities are heterogeneous and complex cultural entities that should perhaps be approached individually, rather than try to make them fit into old and perhaps dated models.

While the structure and methodology of this research is rather broad in relation to its rather small size, I have found it necessary not to exclude any of the fore mentioned sections from the paper. Although narrowing the research down to provide perhaps more detailed information about fewer dimensions of the Decadence Comics collective, I believe it would have ultimately resulted in a shallower end result. I have chosen this holistic approach because the research topic is marginal and it is not supported by any definitively established academic discipline, making the combination of several research methods a necessity.

1.2 An overview of underground comics

The emergence of comic books as a form of popular media in the early decades of the 19th century did not occur due to any breakthroughs in technology, as the means to produce comics had existed long before they became a mass media item. The growing production and popularity of the comic book was rather due to social and economical changes of the time.¹ The audience of comic books was later widely diminished by the spread of television, but before that, comics were one of the most widely consumed forms of mass media, along with the newspaper, cinema and radio². The popularity of the comic book was due to its cheap price, its simplicity, and the fact that it was equally accessible for all audiences, regardless of social or economical status³.

In the 1950's, American mainstream comic books had become under the scrutiny of a great number of people concerned with the violence and lewd activity that comic books portrayed. This concern ultimately led to the enforcement of the so called "Comics Code" censorship act of 1954. The Comics Code led to heavy monitoring and censorship of commercial comic books from within the comic book industry itself, changing the face of comics significantly.⁴ The Comics Code remained in effect for many decades to come, but as it could only censor mass produced commercial comics efficiently, the restraint that it imposed on comic books didn't affect smaller scale publications and in fact ended up doing what such reckless censorship usually does: make whatever it was trying to quell even more

¹ Silberman & Dyroff 1986, 79-80.

² Ibid., 85.

³ Ibid., 90.

⁴ Arffman 2004, 11.

extreme.

Underground comics, also known as "comix" started to emerge on a notable scale in the 1960's as an alternative to the commercial comic book. There's no clear consensus regarding when exactly the first underground comics appeared, as amateur made comics had been appearing irregularly in a wide variety of small-press publications, often related to some subculture or other particularly unified group with a small population⁵. During this time, groups and individuals working outside commercial and mainstream institutions began to publish comic books that undermined and consciously broke the restrictions imposed by the Comics Code and conventional comics. The rise of the first wave of underground comics was heavily connected with the turbulent social climate that prevailed throughout the United States in the 1960's, and comix may actually never have been born without the influences of the anti-war movement, the hippies and civil-rights activists of that era.⁶

Much unlike their commercial counterparts, comix were visually raw, unpolished and darker in their aesthetic. Underground artists could experiment more with their comics, which often had them working with a wide variety of different styles of drawing and narration.⁷ Stories in underground comics were often very satirical, commenting and sometimes even ridiculing conventional culture and contemporary social phenomenon, such as politics and power, war and militarism, commercialism and the prevailing lifestyles and values of conventional society.⁸

The grass roots organization of underground comic book artists enabled them with new modes of visual expression and the freedom to say what they wanted about what they wanted. This lack of restrictions made the great variety of styles and content that can be found in underground comics possible. There was practically nothing that couldn't be done. Underground artists came from a wide range of different backgrounds, some being professionally trained in the arts and some being complete amateurs. Correspondingly their stories covered a wide variety of subjects and genres, ranging from mundane depictions of everyday life to vulgarities and low-brow humor, pushing even further into formal experimentations, psychedelia, fantasy and science fiction.⁹

This artistic freedom enabled artists to approach the production of comic books from new angles and on a very personal level, but on the other hand this independence also meant that the artists would have to organize themselves with whatever means they had at their disposal. While some underground publications were consciously made to look raw and unpolished, at other times the crudeness of the

⁵ Hatfield 2005, 8

⁶ Arffman 2004, 11-12.

⁷ Ibid., 179.

⁸ Ibid., 207

⁹ Ibid., 181.

comics was simply due to a lack of resources. Underground publications were usually printed on the cheapest paper available, with colored cover pages and black and white contents¹⁰. Ironically, as the early comic books were so heavily commercialized and thus produced as cheaply and efficiently as possible, the underground comic book's typical packaging became almost identical to its commercial counterpart. What made the underground comics stand apart was the fact that they were produced by a single artist, rather than an entire team of staff working on the comics, that were in fact originally formatted for assembly-line style production¹¹

The form of underground comics as a countercultural medium developed as comix albums spread and new artists emerged alongside the more experienced creators who continued to further hone their craft. After their initial boom during the 1960's and early 1970's, comix became perhaps a tad bit less quintessential as a media, but they continued to spread all the same, giving birth to new artists and channels of expression throughout the decades that followed.

2. Decadence Comics 2003-2015

Defining the organizational structures of subcultural and other more unconventional groups is problematic due to their often unsystematic and unofficial configurations. Decadence Comics is often described, both by itself as well as other sources, as an underground comics collective, which seems to be a term vague enough to be used in the context of this paper as well. The collective is organized and its activities are conducted in a grass roots fashion, with complete operational autonomy being retained within the collective's key members. The collective's creative output is often esoteric, experimental and socio-politically critical, in addition to which the collective is economically self-reliant and non-commercially motivated.

The collective is primarily run by its founding members Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis, who maintain a key position within the collective, in terms of both organizational responsibilities and creative output. Apart from Lando and Tsemberlidis, who are the only static and permanent members of the collective, a number of other artists from various backgrounds participate in the collective's quasi-annual anthology releases, and since 2012 an intern has been participating in the maintenance of the label's various social media sites and the distribution of the collective's products.

Decadence Comics publications are known for their bleak aesthetic, ambiguous narratives and the heavy influences that they draw from science fiction. Lando and Tsemberlidis have both listed such

¹⁰ Arffman 2004, 179-180

¹¹ Hatfield 2005, 9-11.

sci-fi authors as J.G Ballard, Philip K. Dick and Arthur C. Clarke as important sources of inspiration. From the field of comics, both have mentioned Tetsuhiro Otomo, creator of Akira, and Moebius, a.k.a Jean Giraud, creator of such comic books as Arzach and The Incal trilogy and the co-founder of the famous "Metal Hurlant" anthology magazine¹² as important and influential characters.^{13,14}

Lando and Tsemberlidis both emphasize the allegorical and metaphorical dimensions of science fiction along with its grotesque and fantastic capacities. For them, the genre is a platform that provides an expansive and diverse possibility of settings through which one can examine contemporary reality.¹⁵ This idea of conceiving the world through abstraction is of utmost importance to Decadence Comics, whose seemingly ambiguous art and esoteric philosophy is at its core socio-politically charged and critical of contemporary western society.

2.1 The early years

Decadence Comics was established in 2003 by Lando (David Lander) and Stathis Tsemberlidis. Lando was born in a commuter town near London and still resides in the U.K. Tsemberlidis is originally from Athens, although he currently resides in Copenhagen. Lando and Tsemberlidis met in London while they were studying animation together in the same school. As the shared ideological views, artistic motivations and other shared interests of the two artists became clear, Lando and Tsemberlidis eventually decided to take a break from their regular studies and start working on a creative project of their own, which turned out as the very first Decadence Comics anthology album.

That year was a real eye opener for me. I ended up knocking about with Stathis (from Greece) and another dude from Portugal. It was a total culture shock. They were getting to grips with London's hectic and alienated culture, and meanwhile the government was building towards the invasion of Iraq. There seemed to be an atmosphere of complete apathy towards what was going on in the wider world. I was in Athens with Stathis when the invasion did finally take place, with every detail of it covered live on the news. Everyone I spoke to wanted to know what my take on it was, when back in the UK most people didn't seem to give a fuck. The West was knee deep in hyper-consumerism, and had little concern for long term problems in other parts of the world. Both of us also shared an interest in sci-fi and a strong desire to do some radical shit that tackled these issues. I think that was, and still is what

¹² Malloy 1993, 252.

¹³ "Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

¹⁴ "Decadence Comics Q&A", Lee Henderson, <http://leehenderson.com/archives/747> (20.10.2012).

¹⁵ "Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

defines Decadence.¹⁶ -Lando

The first anthology included works by both Lando and Tsemberlidis, as well as several fellow students from the animation school that the two artists had recruited to participate. During these early years, the collective was still in the margins of the alternative press community and had yet to form any meaningful contacts to other underground comics artists or distributors. The first three issues of the anthology album were still rather short and unelaborate, with every artist contributing no more than two to three pages of material and the pressing size remaining at no more than 50 copies. During these early years, the Decadence Comics aesthetic was still in development, and the visuality of the collective's releases borrowed a lot from other subcultural zines, which can be seen especially clearly in the cover art of the early anthology albums.

With the first 3 issues we didnt take the covers seriously at all, and made trashy collages and always made the title almost unreadable. Issue number 4 I figured out how to hand bind them myself so we could have a few more pages which made the zine feel a bit more like a proper book. We used a cheap off white recycled paper and it started to have a nice pulpy aesthetic. We did this for a couple of issues printing them on photocopiers and then on a laser printer and we later started getting reprints done in bigger runs at a print shop. I got them stocked in a couple of shops in London and gradually we met a few people that we invited to contribute, like Leon Sadler, Jon Chandler and Emix Regulus. We were slowly printing more copies of each issue in print runs of about 100 as we ran out and I was still hand binding the loose printed pages at home.¹⁷ -Lando

The first solo-album by Lando came out in 2004, and after the collective's fourth anthology album, that was released in 2005, the solo-albums by Lando and Tsemberlidis started to become an increasingly important part of the collective's catalogue. It was the solo-albums that also began to truly outline the visual and thematic core of Decadence Comics that its contemporary audience is familiar with, as it was through them that Lando and Tsemberlidis could truly begin to outline the thematic and aesthetic core of the collective's repertoire.

2.2 Expansion and development

After the first few years of slower activity in the periphery of the underground comics scene, the collective began to network with other artists and labels by means of numerous collaborations with various artists and underground publications. Since 2007 the collective also began to promote their

¹⁶ "Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

¹⁷ Tulonen, U. 2015. Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

works and network with other representatives of the underground comics scene in various comics and alternative press related events. Since then the collective has established strong connections with numerous artists and distributors from the alternative press community, and in more recent years, the collective has also begun to establish its connection to the more conventional art world through various exhibitions of their original works in galleries and other art spaces as well as miscellaneous publications outside of the context of underground comics.¹⁸

Since 2003 there have been over thirty albums released under the Decadence Comics label, and they have spread to at least 16 different distributors worldwide. Although the majority of the distribution still happens in the United Kingdom, comics by Decadence have travelled vast distances and are available in countries such as the United States, Spain and Japan.¹⁹ The collective has collaborated with at least 17 different artists in its anthology releases²⁰ and it tours actively between the many alternative press and art events and exhibitions that are held internationally.

In addition to their own public activities, the collective has also begun to attract attention from the rest of the alternative press community and other alternative media sources. Even a brief search on google will yield dozens of comics blogs and other sites that have interviewed, reviewed or otherwise highlighted the collective, and artwork by Lando and Tsemberlidis has been featured in several anthology albums and zines by other comics publishers, such as the Bear Pit zine²¹. In 2014 the London based comics publisher "Breakdown Press"²² released an expansive and professionally printed retrospective collection album of Lando's comics, titled "Gardens of Glass"²³. In addition to the comics, animation projects by Lando and Tsemberlidis²⁴ have also become an increasingly important part of the collective's repertoire, both expanding and rehashing the visual and thematic contents of their comics²⁵.

2.3 The latter years

As the collective has begun to establish itself more thoroughly and as its auxiliary activities have

¹⁸ Tulonen, U. 2015. Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

¹⁹ "Contact/Links", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/contact-links>, (n.d)

²⁰ Appendix 1

²¹ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=60>, (09.03.2011)

²² "About", Breakdown Press, <http://www.breakdownpress.com/about/>, (2015)

²³ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship>, (25.08.2014)

²⁴ "Cinema", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/cinema>, (n.d)

²⁵ "Decadence Comics Q&A", Lee Henderson, <http://leehenderson.com/archives/747> (20.10.2012).

increased, the frequency and scale of the collective's releases has developed as well, with the number of albums released in the latter half of the collective's history (2010-2014) seeing a slight rise in the total number of albums published²⁶. In addition to this, most of the more expansive and more elaborately formatted albums have been released after 2010²⁷. As the pace at which new material is released has increased, so have the pressing sizes of said releases. The first anthology albums were released in batches of as little as 50 copies, while more recent albums have been made into pressings of as many as 500²⁸. To keep up with this increasing volume of releases, the collective began to employ the services of external printing houses. Since 2012, only the smaller and simpler albums are printed independently by the label.

Along with the active participation in gallery exhibitions and comics festivals, the collective has built a strong presence in the internet and social media in its own blog that was added as a part of the collective's website in 2009²⁹, as well as in its Tumblr and Twitter sites. The internet has in fact become the primary distribution channel of the collective's publications as well as an important tool for networking with other artists and distributors³⁰. While these various sites are important for the distribution of the collective's products and information, Lando and Tsemberlidis both maintain some reservations about the collective's presence in the internet. Apart from being a drain on the collective's limited resources, the internet is also seen as something that can end up distancing people from each other on the contrary to its capacities to bring them together. To ease the workload that the maintenance of the collective's presence in the internet creates, the collective employed the help of an intern who began updating the collective's social media sites in 2012.³¹

Although the visual, ideological and functional structures of Decadence Comics have remained essentially unchanged throughout its twelve years of existence, the collective has significantly expanded its organizational capacities, the scope of its creative output as well as its field of activity. In the next sections of this paper the details of all these different dimensions of the Decadence Comics collective as well as its creative output will be placed under a more thorough inquiry, in order to attain a clearer picture of how this particular subcultural agent operates.

²⁶ Appendix 1

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Tulonen, U. 2015. Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

²⁹ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=90>, (04.11.2009)

³⁰ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

³¹ Ibid.

3. Original content

The general aesthetic and thematic substance that flows through all of the collective's releases has been moulded along the years by the mutual efforts of Lando and Tsemberlidis. The two artists have maintained a strong line of communication throughout the entire history of the collective's activity, and the unified style has to a large extent been a consequence of cooperative planning and a continuous exchange of influences and ideas between Lando and Tsemberlidis.³²

Generally speaking, art by the Decadence Comics collective is bleak and surreal, and although there are some exceptions to this among the anthology contributors³³, the great majority of the content that is released under the collective's name is to at least some extent dark or otherwise outlandish. The stories of the comics are often set in barren deserts, ruined cities, the far reaches of space or in another dimension altogether. The narratives of the stories are often problematic to interpret in just one definitive way, as they usually lack any dialogue or conventional structure, seeming more like brief glimpses into alternative worlds rather than comprehensive narratives.

The collective's publications cover a wide range of themes that are approached from various angles. Some works examine more politically charged subjects that are often depicted with some allegorical elements, while others delve into more existential and contemplative matters that are often portrayed from a more subjective point of view. The majority of content by Lando and Tsemberlidis falls into either one of these categories, but the artists who contribute to the collective's anthology releases exhibit a wider and more irregular range of material, which is understandable if not unavoidable, as although Lando and Tsemberlidis are active in curating and editing the anthology albums³⁴, the variety and quantity of these contributive artists simply must result in a corresponding variety of exceptional material as only a matter of course.

While the comics albums form the great majority of Decadence Comics publications and will be in the focus of this particular research, the numerous animation projects and the wide assortment of poster art that has been released under the collective's name throughout the years will be briefly examined in this section as well. The importance of these more miscellaneous projects should definitely not be ignored, as it would undermine the holistic nature of this research, and even more importantly because Lando and Tsemberlidis have both claimed animation as a key influence to their interest in the narrative possibilities of the comic book format³⁵.

³² Tulonen, U. 2015. Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

³³ For example Leon Sadler in Decadence #10 (2014, 40-54)

³⁴ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

³⁵ Tulonen, U. 2015. Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

3.1 The comics

Decadence Comics albums can be divided into four basic categories: solo-albums by Lando, solo-albums by Stathis Tsemberlidis, the anthology albums and special releases, which include more erratic and anomalous material that strays from the established motifs and tone of the labels other publications. A good example of the latter category is the "Decadentia on Crack!" (2012) album, that represents a cruder and less serious album³⁶, with contents more reminiscent of the collective's earlier aesthetic that was more influenced by subcultural and graffiti zines³⁷ than its more contemporary and refined mode of visuality³⁸. These albums have been printed in smaller quantities than the collectives more conventional releases due to their anomalous nature³⁹.

The most typical Decadence album has dimensions of 5 x 8 inches and black and white interiors and covers⁴⁰. These albums are often referred to as "minis". Many mini-albums have a widely similar layout⁴¹, but some are printed with colored covers or on to colored paper. The mini-albums form the bulk of the collective's catalogue and are the only ones that are still printed independently by the collective, due to their simple layout and small size that are easier to handle by one's self⁴². Although the early albums were printed on cheaper paper⁴³, more recent albums are usually printed on a fine paper stock, setting them apart from the great majority of underground albums and zines which are often printed on the cheapest paper possible⁴⁴.

Larger albums have more variations in their layout⁴⁵, ranging from roughly 12,5 x 9 to 11,7 x 8,27 inches. These albums can contain just a single longer story, but they are often collection albums that bring together several stories that have been previously printed independently. Most of these larger albums by Lando are perfect bound from the spine with tape, while the larger comics by Tsemberlidis are usually bound from the spine with staples. Both artists use more colors and include more detailed and vivid illustrations in the covers of the larger albums.⁴⁶

The "Decadence" or "Decadentia" anthology releases are usually a bit thicker than the solo albums put out by the collective. As the anthology albums feature a wide variety of different artists of whose

³⁶ Figure 1

³⁷ Figure 2

³⁸ Figure 3

³⁹ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

⁴⁰ Appendix ? (katalogi)

⁴¹ Figure 4

⁴² Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Arffman 2004, 179-180

⁴⁵ Figure 5

⁴⁶ Appendix 1

work the contents consist of. In addition to the variety in their contents, the anthology albums also display more variety in their layout and cover art as well, and they are often not as prolific as the rest of the Decadence catalogue⁴⁷.

The lengths of Decadence Comics albums range from 12 to as many as 114 pages. The anthologies are understandably the longest as they include individual segments anywhere from four to nine different artists. The shortest anthology release contains 40 pages while the longest one has 114, making the average page count of the anthologies approximately 60. Lando's albums span from 8 pages to 52, with the average page count resulting in approximately 25 per album. Albums by Tsemberlidis have between 12 and 56 pages with an average length of 24 pages.⁴⁸ The collective tries to keep the price of their releases low so they will retain their accessibility, and the pricing of the comics albums seems to correspond with album sizes, paper qualities and assumed correspondence of their printing expenses⁴⁹. Out of the albums that are listed on the collective's webstore, eighteen fall under the price category of 0-5 GBP, representing the mini-albums, with six of the larger albums falling under the price range of 6-11 GBP, with only one album having a price tag as high as 15 GBP. A brief examination of the U.S based comics distributor "Neoglyphic Media" corresponds with the claim that the collective tries to keep its prices low in order to maintain the accessibility of their products, as releases by Decadence Comics represent the lower half of the webstore's price range⁵⁰.

The archetypal form and layout for Decadence Comics was established in the mini-albums and anthology releases that are formatted to the archetypal 5 x 8" dimensions. The lengthier comics and the special releases are on the other hand elaborations rather than renewals of the layout that the label's more frequent and uniform releases have established throughout the years. Experimentations upon the format have become more common in Decadence Comics publications in recent years, but the archetypal mini-albums have nevertheless kept appearing frequently alongside these more varied albums⁵¹.

3.1.1 Lando

Lando's style is distinguishable from his dynamic line drawings and heavy use of negative space, as well as his careful application of shading, coloring and other texturing devices⁵². Many of his stories

⁴⁷ Figure 6

⁴⁸ Appendix 1

⁴⁹ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

⁵⁰ Appendix 2

⁵¹ Appendix 1

⁵² Figure 7

take place in post-apocalyptic or otherwise desolate and barren settings, where humans, aliens and other imaginative creatures struggle to survive either from war with each other or from the many scarcities and dangers of the hostile environments that they inhabit. The desolation that warfare wreaks upon populations and their living environments is indeed such a strong theme in Lando's work that it is strongly present already in his early album "Redeath" (2004), in which the main character must confront his delusionary fantasies of a peaceful existence and confront the horrors of reality⁵³.

The Redeath album still featured dialogue between the central characters as a part of the narrative, but in later albums Lando began to steer clear of linguistic communication and started to employ a purely visual narrative in his stories. In his three part story "Untranslated" (2008-2009) Lando depicts a war between humanity and an extra-terrestrial race through symbolic languages that he had himself designed specifically for the stories.

In my 'Untranslated' comics I create an alternative reality, but it's essentially about what's going on now, and has gone on throughout history. It's about mainstream news sources giving us a skewed version of reality. I'm just trying to view it from a different perspective by using aliens and untranslated languages. It's a more distant, alien picture of the same situations we face. The viewer has to figure out what's going on rather than by following a conventional narrative.⁵⁴ -Lando

The language used by the humans, who are depicted as technologically sophisticated and emotionally distant, is depicted as correspondingly mechanical, while the language of the aliens is depicted with more natural shapes, curves and warmth⁵⁵. The story has no clear ending and there are considerable gaps between the three albums that further distort the narrative whole. The reader is given three separate glimpses into the conflict without offering him any background information or insight of why the two forces are fighting one another or where all of this is even taking place, although judging from the emphasis on the atrocious and dehumanizing aspects of war⁵⁶, battle scenes with weaponry that is reminiscent of modern arsenals⁵⁵, as well as the environments of the albums that are filled with vast deserts⁵⁶, it could be argued that the trilogy was inspired by conflicts in the Middle East, the opposition towards which Lando has previously mentioned as an important influence for the activity of the Decadence Comics collective.

While the "Untranslated" trilogy is more of a commentary on the wider themes of contemporary mass

⁵³ Lando 2004, 10-35.

⁵⁴ "Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

⁵⁵ Figure 8

⁵⁶ Lando 2008, 11-13

⁵⁵ Lando 2009, 1-8

⁵⁶ Ibid., 16-19

media and modern warfare, a more outspokenly allegorical example of his work can be found in his 2011 album "Olympic Games", which depicts a story of an imagined future of the Olympic Games, where contestants fight to the death on a desolate planet to win the recognition of hedonistic Greek gods who survey the bloody spectacle from their home in the heavens, far away from the turmoil below. The story presents a clear critical allegory of the current state of the Olympic Games as a popular spectacle as well as an institution, which is made clear already in the album's official page at the official Decadence Comics webstore:

Originally a festival of arts, sport and religion, to pay homage to the Gods, now a celebration of consumerism, building contracts and surface to air missiles. This is a non sci-fi comic about modern day values. Choose a weapon, follow the tv narrative, work as a team but don't hesitate to betray comrades in the later rounds. Be ruthless and get to the top. We spoke to Zeus and he told us this shit is the official London 2012 Olympic Comic.⁵⁷ -Decadence Comics

Although the story includes content that is heavily influenced by science fiction and fantasy such as space crafts, zombies and futuristic technology that are combined with Greco Roman mythology and imagery⁵⁸, it is described by the collective as a "non sci-fi comic", in a semantic effort to highlight the allegorical and socio-political connotations of the story. The brutal competition that Lando depicts between the contestants⁵⁹ serves as a metaphor of the many controversies and injustices that have surrounded the Olympic Games in recent years.

Lando's story from 2011 entitled "Flood Tablet" also has its roots in the real world, but only in its setting. The story was reprinted in 2012 in the Decadence Comics album "Pyramid Scheme and Other Stories", that collected four of Lando's stories that had been released between 2009 and 2012. "Flood Tablet" is a reimagining of the part of the ancient Gilgamesh epic from which it received its name as well. The arc of the original story is replaced by a shopping mall that was built near where Lando lives in 2011, towards which he displays strong discontent in a blog post from 2011: "The story is set in the huge new shopping development that they just fucking built here to enrich our lives and provide meaning to our existence."⁶⁰

The ruin of the shopping mall, which is depicted as the last remaining structure in the desolate landscape, is inhabited by a single human, who leads a solitary existence, tending to the animals he has brought with him along with the fields he has planted inside the overgrown shopping mall. As the

⁵⁷ "Olympic Games", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/olympic-games>, (n.d.)

⁵⁸ Lando 2011, 5-13

⁵⁹ Ibid., 35-37.

⁶⁰ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=60>, (09.03.2011)

solitary protagonist is fetching water from the pool that has accumulated into what used to be the ground floor of the shopping center, he is confronted by a floating credit card, who plays the role of the serpent of the original Gilgamesh epic, who steals the main character's life force and transforms itself into a reptilian creature.⁶¹ Although this is just one possible interpretation of this short yet cryptic story, I argue that it is based on some valid notions that should yield to more general consistencies of the wider thematic context of Lando's work. Considering the nature of the blog post that Lando released in relation to the story, it should be considered that the story is most likely intended to be a critical one. By making the ruined shopping mall into the symbolic arc of his reimagined epic, he implies that the potential heritage of contemporary western culture is not something to be proud of. This theme is further stressed later in the story by making the credit card, another symbol of rampant consumerism, into the antagonist of the story.

Flood Tablet and Olympic Games are not the only story by Lando that combine elements from antiquity to stories that deal with more contemporary issues. In his story "Pyramid Scheme" (2012) that was originally published in the ninth Decadence Comics anthology album⁶² and later reprinted in the Pyramid Scheme collection as well, Lando tells the story of the downfall of an idyllic Greco Roman family, that rather interestingly live on a set of floating marble platforms that float in the sky. The family consists of a man who wears a pyramid on his head, a woman whose head is covered by a hemisphere, and a small child who stands out of the trio only by the lack of any peculiar objects about his person.⁶³

The arcadian life of the family begins to crumble as the man, who is portrayed as being deep in thought, suddenly gets an idea that is somehow related to another pyramid object that is floating in the sky near the family's home. This startles the woman, who immediately leaves to tend over the child. The man goes on thinking, which affects both his geometric headgear as well as the pyramid in the sky, which begins to change its form into new geometric shapes and multiply.⁶⁴ After a while, the man seems to have achieved some sort of power over the geometrical forces that surround him⁶⁵, and continues to further distort their forms and quantity to the extent that he again loses control over the unsustainable formations that he has created. In the end, the overwhelming geometrical structures lose their form and turn into a mass of liquid that floods the family's home and destroys it, leaving the family dead in its ruins.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Lando 2012, 44-49.

⁶² "Decadence 9", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/decadence-9>, (n.d)

⁶³ Lando 2012, 21-24.

⁶⁴ Lando 2012, 25-27.

⁶⁵ Figure 9

⁶⁶ Lando 2012, 28-42.

The story is, in all of its surrealism, a very simple one, and is therefore difficult to interpret in just one definitive way, but again, taking into consideration the rest of the material that is at hand, it is possible to analyze at least the wider themes of the story. In the context of this particular story, Lando has borrowed the term "pyramid scheme" from the terminology of economics and has transformed it into a title that has a broader and more metaphorical meaning. In the story, the man with the pyramid headgear is depicted as being entirely consumed into his own trail of thought that brings him more and more power over the world that surrounds him⁶⁷. In Greek philosophy, which is commonly considered to be the basis of modern western culture, and more specifically Pythagorean and Platonic thought, geometry and geometric shapes were important modes of thought and could sometimes even be used as a symbol of an idea. Continuing in this trail of thought, it could easily be interpreted that the story is a metaphor of the dangers of the yearning for continuous progress that can easily spiral out of control and become unsustainable, which has become a reasonable fear in today's world in both an economic and environmental sense.

3.1.2 Stathis Tsemberlidis

Lando's comics are far from being straightforward or by any means representational of conventional comics, but with Tsemberlidis's work the thematic and narrative structures of the format are bent, broken and obscured to the point that it becomes questionable whether it is at all possible to analyze some of his comics by examining their narrative structures alone. His work is distinguishable from his detailed surfaces and textures and heavy usage of a sort of surface pollution that covers the backgrounds of almost all of his works⁶⁸. Drawing his inspiration from mysticism, alchemy, psychedelia⁶⁹ and employing an intuitive method of storytelling⁷⁰, it is only a matter of course that his stories are correspondingly extraordinary. Tsemberlidis's stories leap from the unexplored endlessness of outer space into the depths of the subconscious mind, and his stories are filled with esoteric symbolism that is portrayed through geometrical shapes, animal characters, surreal environments and the distortion of the pace and perspective of his narratives.

...In most of my comics there's a continuous transformative power that originates from the functions of the cosmos. In many of my stories, the present is constantly challenged in favor of a more circular movement, like a spiral that has its own continuum. Life and death are part of that continuum, and

⁶⁷ Lando 2012, 32-35

⁶⁸ Figure 10

⁶⁹ Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview”, Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

⁷⁰ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

rebirth is the driving force that propels things forwards into the future. What I'm trying to do is offer up a more complex and dynamic interpretation of reality through my stories. I have an interest in things like alchemy, advances in modern physics, the Tibetan Book of the Dead and the writings of Rick Strassman on the use of psychedelics. I'm interested in different levels of consciousness; the space that exists between the conscious and subconscious mind.⁷¹ - Stathis Tsemberlidis

Death, transcendence, transformation and rebirth are strong and frequently recurring themes in Tsemberlidis's work, and they are present in almost all of his comics in one way or another. These themes are explored thoroughly in his narratives and they are usually placed at key points of the stories, but Tsemberlidis also seems to have a purely visual fascination towards the reorganizing and altering of the material world. In most of his albums, the scenes that portray transcendence and transformation take up as much as a third of the entire story, and they almost always slow the narrative down significantly, with the number of panels per page often increasing significantly. These scenes also often include multiple changes in perspective and more close-up pictures than in the rest of the stories.⁷²

The visual exploration of the transformation of living organisms is perhaps at its peak in Tsemberlidis's non-narrative solo album "Transmutation of Human Bodies and Flora" (2013). In this album, Tsemberlidis explores the transformation and aesthetic symbiosis of the human form and natural flora in grotesque and imaginative character studies, where the physicality of man comes one with the wild and uncontrollable powers of nature, challenging and reinventing the ways we look at ourselves as human beings and our connection to the nature around them.⁷³

In Transmutation of Human Bodies and Flora the reader is given an in-depth visual study of the final stages of the transformative processes that Tsemberlidis strives to depict in his work. As has already been said, these transformative scenes are also given great amounts of space and they are often portrayed in great detail, but in most stories they are ultimately used as a narrative tool rather than an end in themselves. In his stories "Protoconscious" and "Hyperbolic", both of which are part of the larger "MOA-192B" (2010) collection album, as well as in his later album "Neptune's Fungi" (2012) the transformation of the solitary central characters is approached from an angle that is rather reminiscent to the stories of the classic horror author H.P Lovecraft, whose work is actually said to be a strong source of inspiration for the latter story⁷⁴. All of these stories share a similar pattern, in

⁷¹ Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

⁷² Figure 11

⁷³ Figure 12.

⁷⁴ "Neptune's Fungi", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/neptune-s-fungi>, (n.d)

which a solitary central character is set out on a journey or exploration, inspired by curiosity, conquest or some other all too human motive, towards an unknown and uncivilized environment where he encounters supernatural forces far beyond his own capacities and is either transformed into a new form of being or transported into a strange place beyond space and time or deep within his own subconscious mind. These scenes often break the narrative and structure of the story, with the supernatural events changing the world and natural laws that surround the central characters significantly⁷⁵.

In Protoconscious and Hyperbolic the transcendental transformative journeys of the characters end with them staying outside of the natural world whence they came, trapped in their reformed state⁷⁶. In Neptune's Fungi the main character is able to return from his trip into the unknown but his mind is forever lost to the madness that the unnatural things he witnessed embedded into his mind⁷⁷. This theme of an individual's struggle against the fears and other obstacles within his mind as well as against the oppressive universe around him is strongly present in these stories where the main character is set outside of the context of known reality and where he must face the confusion of the universe by himself.

Tsemberlidis often uses symbolic animal characters, gurus and strange and powerful geometrical shapes to depict these transformative scenes⁷⁸. The animal characters are usually reptilians, lions, birds or insects, and the type of animal used is determined by the animal's specific symbolic meaning⁷⁹. While it is unclear what all of the individual symbolic meanings behind the animals are, it is clear that they along with the other symbolic narrative devices serve to challenge conventional cultural codes and narrow mindsets in favor of more contemplative and broad conceptions of reality.

The cyclical element has more to do with the notion of eternal movement and change. This has been a main theme that re occur very often in many of the stories. It has been the ground for speculating on the mono culture and the belief that there in nothing beyond certain political systems, the re organisation of the social and economical system, the simplified explanatory of reality, the mechanisation of the mind and the body, the fear of inertia, the tyranny of growth, The brut force of anarchic capitalism, the freedom of the markets beyond any regulation. ⁸⁰ -Stathis Tsemberlidis

In addition to the stories that revolve around more contemplative and conceptual subjects, Tsemberlidis's work deals with some more earthly themes as well. Whereas these stories are more

⁷⁵ Figure 13

⁷⁶ Tsemberlidis 2010, 17, 35

⁷⁷ Tsemberlidis 2012, 14-19

⁷⁸ Figure 14

⁷⁹ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

⁸⁰ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

allegorical and perhaps a bit narrower in their margin of interpretation, they flow in an equally dreamlike and cyclical pattern as the ones with more subjective points of view and fantastical dimensions. What sets these albums apart from the rest is that their settings and characters are significantly more reminiscent of reality and the fact that these realistic elements often carry some underlying critical undertones. Good examples of these sorts of albums are "Upheaval" (2011) and "Adamao" (2011).

In Upheaval, Tsemberlidis tells the story of a rioter who is shot dead by riot police and undergoes a process of transformation after his death, only to become a riot police himself⁸¹. The transformative scenes of the album are very similar to any transformative scene in Tsemberlidis's stories, and although the structure of the story retains its usual ambiguity, choosing the riot as the story's setting is hard to see as a coincidence, considering that the album came out only five months after the riots in Athens in 2011, and that Tsemberlidis, an Athenian himself, was in the city during that time⁸². Although the subject is to at least some extent a personal one and although Decadence Comics has established itself as more or less in contempt with such figures of authority as the police, the story pertains to Tsemberlidis's cyclical and symbolic style of narration in which there is no clear good and evil. The rioter of the story is given no pardons for his activity but is rather violently transformed into a part of the very establishment against which he was fighting, underlining the oppressive complexities of the western socio-political system, in which even direct opposition can be turned against itself.

In Adamao, Tsemberlidis once again departs from a realistic setting to depict a story of two factions that wage war on one another in a strange construct that floats in the vast emptiness of outer space. The construct is created, maintained and surveilled by a group of interconnected brains that float some distance away from the it. The construct is inhabited by two factions of humans who are depicted as impersonal and apathetic masses who spawn their leaders from within their corporeal masses to fight the opposing side.⁸³ The leaders of the factions fight each other to the death while the huddled masses observe the bloody spectacle. As the leader of the losing side dies to a fatal blow from his opponent, his people die with him in a storm of gore.⁸⁴ After this, the victorious leader is granted some sort of enlightenment or elevation by the emergence of three geometric orbs that float before him, eventually melting into one unified shape. As the masses of the victorious side cheer their leader onwards, he flies out of the construct and into the space outside, heading for a planet nearby.

⁸¹ Tsemberlidis 2011, 1-2, 10-12

⁸² "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=50>, (04.07.2011)

⁸³ Tsemberlidis 2011, 1-4.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 5-8.

He lands upon the planet's surface and finds four men sitting in a semi-circle amidst the planets terrain. The men, initially depicted as military, religious, and political leaders are later shown to be animal characters, masquerading as birds, reptilians and insects. The man from the construct joins these masquerading figures of power and assumes his place as their leader. In the last panel of the story the man is depicted as having lost his facial characteristics, sitting on a throne positioned in the middle of the four men with a triangle hanging above his head, symbolizing his new status and power.⁸⁵

Adamao depicts an allegorical story of the aggressive nature of human society and its violent development, which is often guided from the shadows by small elite groups. The choice to depict the four men of power as masquerading animal characters and more specifically reptilians could easily be connected to several conspiracy theories which claim that the elite of the world is in reality governed by malevolent reptilian creatures who masquerade as religious, political and economical leaders, manipulating human society for their own personal gain. While it shouldn't be assumed that the reptilian characters are a direct reference to these theories, it must be said that in a very broad way, they would fit in some of the collective's established politics. In addition to this, the fact that similar references come up in some of Lando's work and even in the collectives home websites banner image and Twitter profile image and description⁸⁶, would indicate that the use of these particular characters as representatives of the upper levels of society be interpreted more broadly as serving as a symbolic depiction of how the real powers that drive human progress are often hidden away from the masses and indeed held by characters who themselves operate on another level entirely, hidden away from the conflicts and struggles that they perpetrate.

3.1.3 The anthology contributors

There are several problems that arise when trying to sum up the aesthetic and thematic qualities of the artists who contribute to the Decadence anthology albums. The first and foremost problem is the diversity of this group. Between the ten anthology albums that have been released so far, there have been at least seventeen different artists⁸⁷ whose individual and cumulative contributions have molded the nature of the Decadence Comics anthologies. As this group is so large and varied, it is practically impossible to include every representative of this it into a paper this brief. In addition to this, there is a significant lack of material concerning both the artists themselves as well as the anthology albums,

⁸⁵ Tsemberlidis 2011, 9-13.

⁸⁶ Figures 15-17

⁸⁷ Appendix 1

most of which have been already sold out. Due to these material limitations, this section will concentrate only on the artworks of the artists who have contributed to the most recent anthology album "Decadence #10" (2014).

Apart from the content by Lando and Tsemberlidis, the tenth anthology features works from Leon Sadler, Jon Chandler, and Emix Regulus, who have a long history of working in collaboration with the Decadence Comics collective, going back as far as the seventh anthology album which was released in 2009. In addition to these artists who are more familiar to the collective, the tenth anthology album features works by Nick Soucek, Zosimos, Patrick Crotty and Dunja Jankovich, who are collaborating with the collective for the first time⁸⁸. This group represents a wide range of different kinds of artists who work in various styles and come from different backgrounds. Leon Sadler⁸⁹, Nick Soucek⁹⁰ and Patrick Crotty⁹¹ are heavily involved in the underground comics and alternative press scene, creating their own comics while participating in the publishing and printing of comics by others as well. Emix Regulus⁹² and Jonathan Chandler⁹³ are also representative of the underground comics scene, but they are not as involved in the organization of the community but concentrate more on their personal creative output. Dunja Jankovich⁹⁴ on the other hand represents a completely different kind of artist, with a formal education in fine arts. Jankovich has numerous comics releases but she is heavily inclined towards the more conventional art world in which she participates actively.

Nick Soucek's work in the tenth anthology album is drawn in a rather traditional style for comics with a clear line, functional coloring and simplified characters⁹⁵. In his short story, Soucek depicts the effects of an environmental catastrophe on a laid back young couple. Despite the iconic drawing style, the story is essentially a realistic one with no added drama, underlining the dangers of a careless attitude towards global and in this case particularly environmental issues.⁹⁶ Jonathan Chandler's story, titled "Another Boring Life" is on the other hand rather reminiscent of several stories by Lando and Tsemberlidis, with the solitary main character wandering in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, struggling to survive in the hostile environment. Chandler's story, drawn in a crude yet lively style, is rather straightforward, with the emphasis on the disposition of the main character⁹⁷. The story is more of a

⁸⁸ Appendix 1

⁸⁹ "Project Index", Leon Michael Sadler, <http://lmsn.eu/> (2013)

⁹⁰ "Misinterpreted Complications", Nick Soucek, <http://mis-comp.com/> (2014)

⁹¹ "Boys Fantasy", Patrick Crotty, <http://boysfantasy.tumblr.com/>, (n.d)

⁹² "The Microcosmic Orbit of Emix Regulus", Emix Regulus, <http://cargocollective.com/microcosmicorbit> (n.d)

⁹³ Untitled Tumblr site, Jonathan Chandler, <http://jonathanchandler.tumblr.com/>, (2015)

⁹⁴ "Cv", Dunja Jankovich, <http://www.tripica.org/cv/>, (n.d)

⁹⁵ Figure 18

⁹⁶ Decadence Comics 2014, 1-4.

⁹⁷ Figure 19

glimpse into the ragged main character's world rather than an exhaustive narrative, in which the hostility and aggression that living creatures hold towards one another is emphasized.⁹⁸

Emix Regulus's story is set in a seemingly idyllic rural environment and depicted with a fragile and innocent aesthetic. The rural environment and light aesthetic of the story are contrasted with some rather heavy sci-fi themes and vague narration that are delivered in a somber tone. The two main characters of the story are in the process of saying their goodbyes to one another, as it is revealed that one of them is an extra-terrestrial being with supernatural powers who must leave the planet and her male companion behind as she returns to space.⁹⁹ Most of the story revolves around her departure and transformation into a cosmic vessel that stores the essence of several animals from earth, leaving the background narrative aspects of the story into relative obscurity. Regulus's transformative scenes are rather reminiscent of many of Tsemberlidis's works, and they are depicted in great detail, going down to a microscopic level¹⁰⁰.

Leon Sadler's contribution to the anthology is perhaps the most light in its content, as he tells a story of the pleasures of dropping out of the daily grind of conventional society. The story, drawn in a crude fairy tale style, is titled "My Only Clone", and it tells the story of a peaceful planet colonized by aliens, which is populated by a lonely clone, who looks after the planet's agriculture and other industries¹⁰¹. The planet is inspected by a group of administrative aliens, during whose visit the planet is attacked by anarchists, which forces the planet to be evacuated. Only a single alien stays on the arcadian planet in secret to live the rest of his life on the planet in peace.¹⁰²

The untitled story by Zosimos is short and open ended. It is portrayed with a mixture of a sci-fi aesthetic rather reminiscent to Lando's sketchy yet detailed drawing style and abstract graphics that dominate the backgrounds of the panels. Zosimos tells the story of a human and an alien who are travelling towards the edge of time and space¹⁰³. It is unknown what the purpose or motivation behind this trip is, or how the two characters have ended up travelling together. The story is rather a short and ambiguous contemplation on facing the limits of one's existence, which is highlighted in the nervous body language and dialogue of the human character.¹⁰⁴

Patrick Crotty's story is a portrayal of student life in futuristic Sweden that is portrayed in a mixed aesthetic that combines simplified characters with detailed and futuristic environments. In the story,

⁹⁸ Decadence Comics 2014, 5-11.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 33-39.

¹⁰⁰ Figure 20

¹⁰¹ Figure 21

¹⁰² Decadence Comics 2014, 40-54.

¹⁰³ Figure 22

¹⁰⁴ Decadence Comics 2014, 55-57.

Sweden has become a dystopic and stagnant society, in which life is gray and resources are scarce¹⁰⁵. The main character of the narrative is an organ farmer, who preys on students in order to steal their innards for some extra cash that he then spends on alcohol. The moral of the story seems to be quite similar with what can be found in Jon Chandler's work, where life feeds off of life for what is essentially no more than a pittance.¹⁰⁶

Dunja Jankovich is the only one whose contribution doesn't form a narrative whole. Her section of the anthology consists of abstract drawings, graphics and collages that nevertheless maintain a sense of movement and continuity due to their similarities, repetitiveness and juxtapositional layout that actually serves as a sort of abstracted ending as the preceding story by Lando merges into Jankovich's art with no interruption in between¹⁰⁷. Jankovich's artwork represents several different styles, from graphics that rely heavily on optical experimentation that are quite reminiscent of works by Bridget Riley and other early op-artists to more cartoony line drawings and finally some more minimalistic compositions as well.¹⁰⁸

3.2 Animation projects and miscellaneous artworks

Several animation projects by Lando and Tsemberlidis have been released under the collective's label, and although they are not physically distributed, they are exhibited in its various websites¹⁰⁹, with the dedicated "Cinema" section of their homepage serving as the most official example of a distribution channel. While some of the animation projects seem to present content that is more exempt from the collective's established repertoire, there are some instances in which the visual and thematic content that Decadence Comics is known for is more visible.

In his short animation film titled "Terminal", that was in fact his graduate project from all the way back in 2003¹¹⁰, Lando depicts the downfall of a city in the grips of a violent uproar. In the film, Lando employs a very similar aesthetic to what he uses in his comics, with similar characters and a heavy emphasis on the contrast between his dynamic line drawings and the negative space that surrounds them. His often employed theme of a world in decline is also strongly present in the film's

¹⁰⁵ Figure 23

¹⁰⁶ Decadence Comics 2014, 58-61.

¹⁰⁷ Figure 24

¹⁰⁸ Decadence Comics 2014, 103-114.

¹⁰⁹ The collective embeds its videos to the Cinema section of its website from external Vimeo and Youtube accounts. New projects are often exhibited in the collective's blog.

¹¹⁰ "Dave Lander", Tio Ilar International Art Exhibition, <http://tioilar.eu/index.php/artist-cvs/2012-01-31-09-55-36/lander-david>, (2014)

violent imagery and pessimistic narrative¹¹¹. In his later short animation titled "Immortality", which he made for the Portland based hip-hop artist "Sole", these same themes and aesthetic motifs are also strongly present. The world depicted in the animation is once again in a sorry state, with war, ecological perils and all kinds of humanitarian crises wreaking havoc on the planet. In the animation, the dystopic setting is combined with transhumanism and other futuristic themes, depicting a story of a human's quest for immortality and safety from the many perils of the world, which ultimately turns against itself.¹¹²

...I had read a bit about transhumanism and post-humanity. I'd wanted to do a story about it for a while, so the 'Immortality' track was the perfect chance to do that. I watched a documentary that described these hypothetical near future situations such as a 'grey goo' scenario, which is where self replicating nano robots could suddenly take over the world if we weren't able to regulate them. This was accompanied by some cheap cgi animation. I thought it would be cool to try and depict the same thing in a different way, using more traditional and hand drawn animation techniques.¹¹³ -Lando

Tsemberlidis's animation and film projects display a bit more variety than Lando's works, exhibiting more divergence from the aesthetic established in his comic books, although his post-apocalyptic animation "Shelter-E" (2012) is very faithful to his usual drawing style, and much like Lando's animations it replicates the style that the artist has established in his comic books¹¹⁴. On the other hand, in his film "MOA-192B" (2012), which expands upon the themes of the comic book released by him two years prior to the animation, Tsemberlidis combines computer animation, material from the comic book and what look like live action segments to further expand the form of his ambiguous narration. Unlike his black and white comics art, the film is colorful and saturated with numerous filters that serve to establish the same surreal atmosphere that is strongly present in his comics. The film's narrative is open in its structure and concentrates heavily on textures and the overall atmosphere of the piece.¹¹⁵

Apart from the comics and animation projects, Decadence Comics exhibits and distributes several miscellaneous categories of products, such as poster art¹¹⁶ and fan-apparel¹¹⁷, in addition to which Lando and Tsemberlidis have both started to sell their original artworks from their comics and

¹¹¹ "Terminal", Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUVUL0ZF_EY (n.d)

¹¹² "Immortality by Sole and The Skyriders Band (HD QUALITY!!!)", Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mis-hAhban8>, (n.d)

¹¹³ "Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2012).

¹¹⁴ "Shelter-E", Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/36131325>, (n.d)

¹¹⁵ "MOA-192B", Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6cWV0AOAzE>, (n.d)

¹¹⁶ "Posters", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/posters>, (n.d)

¹¹⁷ "Decadence Vuitton", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/decadence-vuitton>, (n.d)

animation projects^{118,119}. Much like the original artworks, the fan-apparel is also essentially a repackaging of earlier content by the collective into an accessory format, as they don't expand upon the collective's aesthetic in any significant way, but rather make use of the imagery of the collective's other releases.

The poster art is made for the exhibition of the collective itself as well as for external parties, for example comics events that the collective is organizing or attending in. Some posters feature excerpts from the collective's prior releases¹²⁰ while others are made from scratch. The original poster art retains the collective's general aesthetic and often serves to highlight its identity as a subcultural agent as well, as is the case in the "OG Decadence poster" from 2011, in which the members of the comics collective are portrayed as paramilitaries hiding out in a cave in the desert, highlighting the collective's underground status and critical ideologies in a humorously exaggerated way¹²¹.

A less hyperbolic example of this sort of imagery can be found in the poster that was drawn as a collaborative effort by Lando and Tsemberlidis for their exhibition in the NLH art space in Copenhagen that was held in 2010¹²². In this poster, several characters that have been featured in the comics of Lando and Tsemberlidis are portrayed as inhabiting the NLH space, on the walls of which the Decadence Comics exhibition is on display. The poster's colors are warm and lively, and the characters are depicted as a calm and friendly bunch, despite their outlandish and aggressive external features. While the "OG Decadence" poster highlights the label's marginality and critical mindset, the "Decadence family" poster is by contrast more inviting to its viewer, and appeals to him less by negation and more through a sense of community and broad-mindedness.¹²³

4. Cultural disposition

Self-publishing is often strongly related to a will to have total control over one's own work and production process¹²⁴. In the case of Decadence Comics, this desire was initially connected to an even more foundational will to simply find an outlet through which this work could be done in the first place. During the first few years of the collective's existence its activity was done on such a small scale that complete independence over the collective's content and means of production was more of

¹¹⁸ "Decadence Comics Q&A", Lee Henderson, <http://leehenderson.com/archives/747> (20.10.2012).

¹¹⁹ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis

¹²⁰ Figure 25

¹²¹ Figure 26

¹²² "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=80>, (20.05.2010)

¹²³ Figure 27

¹²⁴ Duncombe 1997, 99

a necessity than a matter of choice. In later years, as the collective has expanded its organizational capacity and volume of output significantly, it still retains the basic principles behind its autonomous and self-sufficient model.

Decadence publishing is a platform for us and an art project in its own right. The philosophy behind it is simple. We have the total control over of what we do and put out, (web-site-comics-film-animation). This is very important for creating a solid and consistent space for exploring our ideas further as well as the freedom to explore our individual ideas.¹²⁵ -Stathis Tsemberlidis

All decision making and most of the day to day activities related to the planning, production and distribution of the label's content is to this day mostly maintained by Lando and Tsemberlidis, although the expansion and development of the label's capacities has also led to a partial fragmentation of the collective's structure and production processes. This trend is evident in the outside help that the collective has employed from the intern who helps with the maintenance collective's websites and distribution of their products, and from the external printing houses that cater to the more complicated layouts and larger printing runs of the collective's products. In addition to the collaborations with these auxiliaries, the collective has also become more interconnected to broader spheres of culture, as it has started to attract interest from external publishers, with the Gardens of Glass album being published by Breakdown Press and a publisher as big as "Image Comics" showing interest towards the collective's work.¹²⁶

Growth is normal, and any active cultural agent is likely to expand the scope of its activity as much as it can in order to further fulfill its capacities and ambitions. After all, at least some degree of reliance to external parties that operate in different levels of society is practically a necessity for any cultural agent in today's commercially driven society, no matter what their ideological basis might be.

The position that the Decadence Comics collective adopts in relation to these various institutions and phenomenon that surround it and influence its activities are by no means clear-cut or definite, even though it is clear that on a fundamental level the collective represents non-commercial and socially liberal values. Although many of the collective's core values are in clear contrast with many aspects of contemporary western culture, the collective can't be placed in a simplified and dichotomous setting of subculture versus dominant culture. Instead, the collective displays a great variety of attitudes, motivations and operational models that can't and definitely shouldn't be forced into any pre-existing models of subcultural agents.

¹²⁵ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

4.1 Self-representation in public communications

The tensions between the Decadence Comics collective and the dominant commercial culture are especially visible in the collective's activity in the internet. In general, subcultural activity in the internet is often built within the confines of the dominant, most often commercial culture, but it is often organized in opposition to it, with subcultural agents often using the services provided on the internet by the very corporations that they oppose, but using them for their own purposes¹²⁷. The websites of Decadence Comics are no exceptions from this, as they are provided by commercially established and motivated companies, perhaps most notably Google, whose services are used for the collective's home website¹²⁸.

In fact, this commercial virtual platform is used to communicate the collective's critical ideology even more directly than in the comics which communicate more ambiguously through a layer of creative obscurity. This sort of communication is especially frequent in the collective's blog that is embedded on to the Google provided site. The language that is used throughout the blog is full of all sorts of informalities and slang, and blog posts are on many occasions packed with humor and satire, often directed towards authority figures and other authoritative representatives of conventional society. For example, in a blog post from 2012, a promotional piece of Lando's Olympic Games album is satirically paired with a picture of some official representatives of the 2012 London Olympics. In superimposing the official Olympic Games with the Decadence Comics collective, the blog post serves to both underline the validity of the collective's critical ideology and at the same time ridicule its opposition.¹²⁹

Another good example of this sort of joke can be found in a post that announces that the webstore will be temporarily closed down, titled "Coolant Leak at the Decadence Processing Plant", in which the information concerning the temporary shutdown of the webstore is paired with the megalomaniac title and a picture of two hazmat workers sucking out a greenish goo from the ground. While this post doesn't include any direct stabs at any parties that the collective would have contempt for, it does again use irony to play with the collective's relatively marginal disposition by means of exaggeration.¹³⁰

On the other hand, news of collaborations and communications dealing with certain parties are met

¹²⁷ Leistyna 2005, 217-221

¹²⁸ "Decadence Megastore Home", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/>, (n.d)

¹²⁹ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=40> (02.03.2012)

¹³⁰ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=70> (28.06.2010)

with more enthusiasm, and the label's collaborations with for example the institutions of the art world seem to be more welcomed within the collective. These more positive attitudes are visible in for instance the collective's blog updates concerning the exhibition that they held in the NLH space in Copenhagen in 2010. The tone of the communication regarding the event is positive, appropriate and informative, carrying no negative connotations.¹³¹ Even in the poster that the collective released in connection to the exhibition, the NLH space is portrayed as a welcoming, safe and open facility. These attitudes are in relative contrast to the portrayal of another exhibitive event in 2010: The Manga Jiman competition held in London by the Japanese embassy, in which Lando won the third prize with his "Last Drink" comic. In a blog post where he announced his participation in the competition and the exhibition connected to it, Lando underlined the sense of otherness that the administrative and authoritative procedures of the embassy provoked in relation to his own status as an underground artist¹³².

Although the critical nature and the relatively marginal status of the collective are clearly acknowledged within its membership and explicitly communicated to its audience, there do seem to be instances where more positive attitudes and co-operational tendencies are displayed as well. As is the case with many subcultural entities, the collective exhibits negation in some of its communications to underline its socio-politically critical disposition¹³³, while at the same time displaying a more welcoming attitude towards new aspects that are deemed to fit together with the collective's identity.

4.2 Experimentation and liminality

The Decadence Comics collective maintains many similarities with numerous examples of earlier underground comics going all the way back to the 1960's, and to at least some extent fits together with some popular conceptions of what underground comics have been and still are all about. The collective's creative content shares a broadly similar thematic context with its early predecessors, with numerous works offering criticisms on conventional western lifestyles and ideologies. While these themes were indeed important cornerstones of the early underground comics as well¹³⁴, the Decadence Comics collective approaches them from a very different angle, redefining the ways in

¹³¹ "Blog/News", Decadence Comics,
<http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=80>, (10.04.2010-20.05.2010)

¹³² "Blog/News", Decadence Comics,
<http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=80>, (19.02.2010)

¹³³ Duncombe 1997, 40-42

¹³⁴ Arffman 2004, 200, 207

which abrasive visual culture can operate.

Early underground comics artists employed a great amount of satire and humor in their works, depicting their stories through more iconic and often caricatural drawing styles¹³⁵. Critical content was often clearly pronounced and there was not much left to the imagination in terms of the moral landscapes of the stories. In contrast to this more direct and traditional mode of narration, Decadence Comics works in much more somber tones, telling their stories through more ambiguous and open narratives in which the reader must actively involve himself in order to get a grasp of their narrative and moral connotations. The combination of the continuous abstraction that is present throughout the collective's repertoire with the socio-political connotations of the works seems to underline the increasingly complex dynamics of contemporary society and the forces that drive it.

In depicting their stories through a layer of fantasy, obscurity and metaphor, while using only a minimal amount of any explicit content that would serve to guide the reader towards any notions of an intended interpretation, the artists of the collective are engaged in actively bringing their audience a step closer to understanding what reality is for them personally, and involving them in an intellectual process much greater than what one might expect from a more conventional comic book. Thus, personal contemplation and involvement seem to be emphasized by the collective perhaps above all, allowing their creative productions to be read, interpreted and experienced in essentially any number of ways, while still leaving just enough references, obscured as they may be, to make the formation of meaningful interpretations of the collective's creative content possible.

In addition to challenging their readers with their experimental style, the label's inclination towards other forms of media and communication is also indicative of a will to challenge and change the ways and forums in which their artworks can be experienced. The collective is constantly exploring new ideas and themes, forms of media as well as cultural arenas through which their work and shared concepts can be shared. In accordance to this, the collective also tries to keep the accessibility of its releases high through its reasonable pricing system and an extensive distributive network. However, the often challenging contents and deviations from the conventions of the format are on the other hand effectively capable of widening the gap between the collective and its potential audience as well. While the collective's experimental style may limit its audience to some extent, it has on the other hand also been able to attract new readers from outside the world of comics, whose interests are primarily in the contents themselves instead of the medium in which they are delivered¹³⁶. It would also seem apparent that the collective seeks out this sort of diversity within its own membership as

¹³⁵ Arffman 2004, 203

¹³⁶ Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

well, as its auxiliary members represent such a wide array of artists with varied styles and backgrounds.

The experimental nature of the collective and its expansions to new audiences and forms of media may also be accountable for its recent success in expanding its activity outside the alternative press and comics community and into the art world. Through its abilities to diversify and expand its organizational capacities and functional range while simultaneously developing its original thematic and aesthetic ideas, the collective has effectively grown out from the margins from whence it came and developed itself into a complex and dynamic cultural agent that is actively involved in creating its own operational boundaries and identity.

5. Conclusion

The Decadence Comics collective is a dynamic and complex subcultural entity, the identity, disposition and operational axioms of which are by no means clearly defined or categorical. Although in some more fundamental respects the collective fits into certain pre-established conceptions regarding subcultural agents and more specifically underground comics artists, the information that has arisen in the course of this research would suggest that at least some agents in the field of underground comics are expanding and diversifying beyond these prior models.

Subcultures are in general a tricky subject in academic study due to their often esoteric and introverted natures, and the understanding of them can require heavy involvement and knowledge of unspoken and invisible axioms that are shared within them. Underground comics can in this sense be an even more difficult subject for research than other more clearly defined subcultures, as underground comics can often include several subcultural codes within themselves rather than just one. Underground comics are ultimately defined by their format rather than their contents, and it should be expected that because of this they don't always communicate their specific codes or dispositions explicitly.

Although this paper has its limitations, especially in its brevity and partial lack of materials, I believe that it has succeeded in at least forming an elementary outline of the nature of the Decadence Comics collective and some of its specific dynamics, while also revealing some preliminary information of the scene that surrounds it as well, and can perhaps be applied in future research as well.

Figures

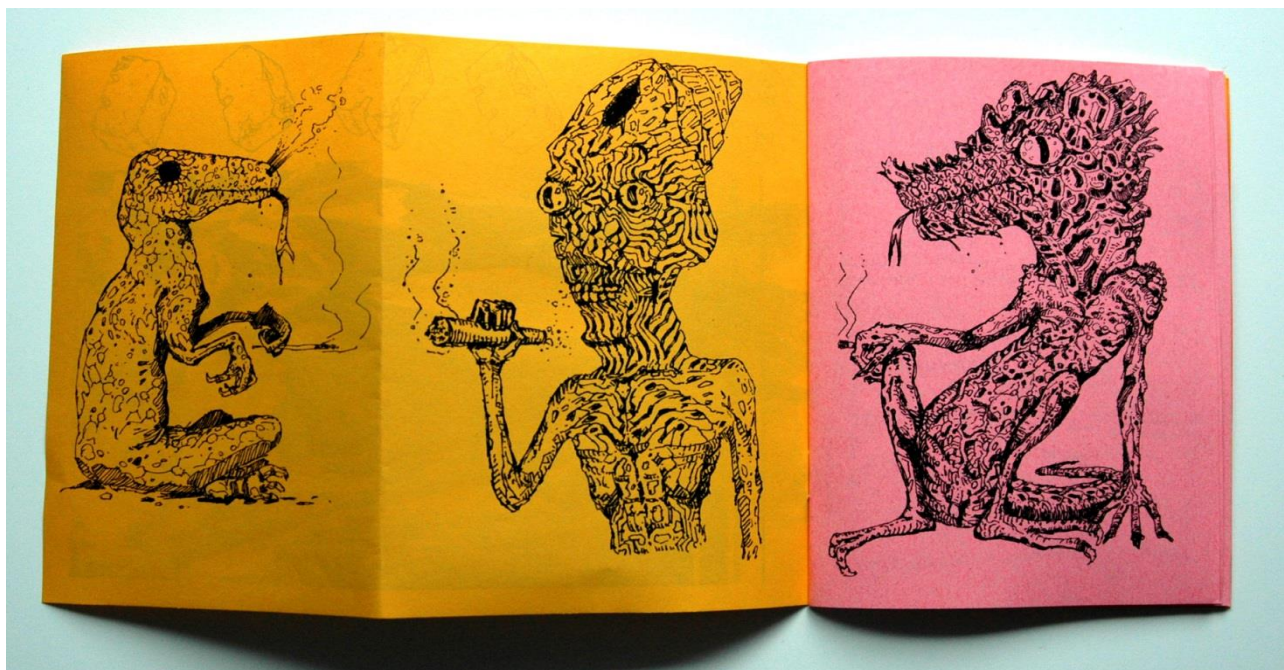


Figure 1. Content from "Decadentia on Crack!" (2012)

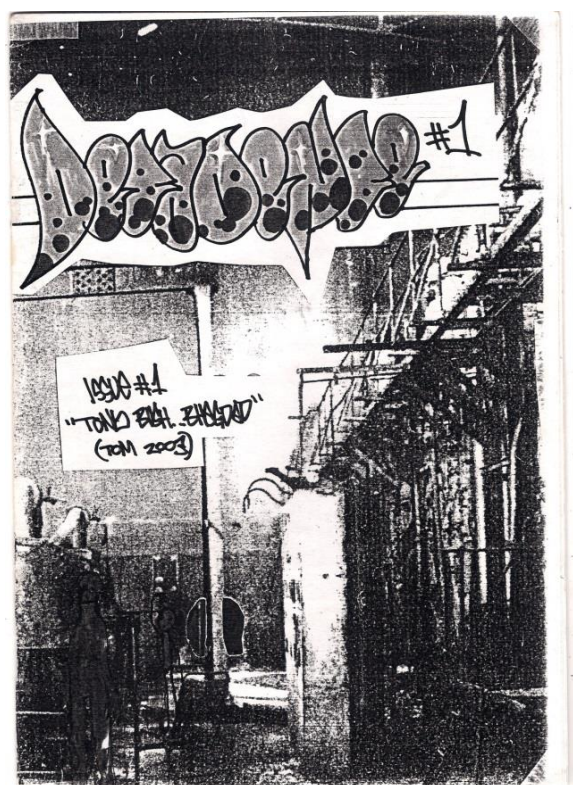


Figure 2. Cover of "Decadence #1" (2003)

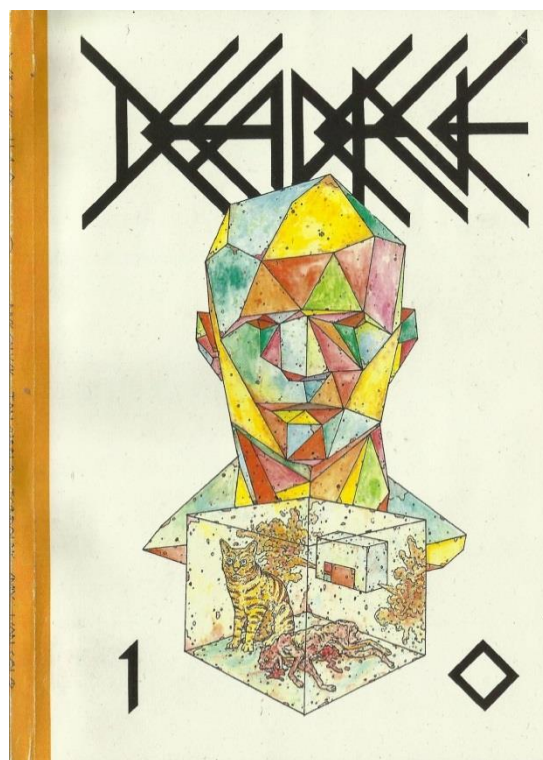


Figure 3. Cover of "Decadence #10" (2014)

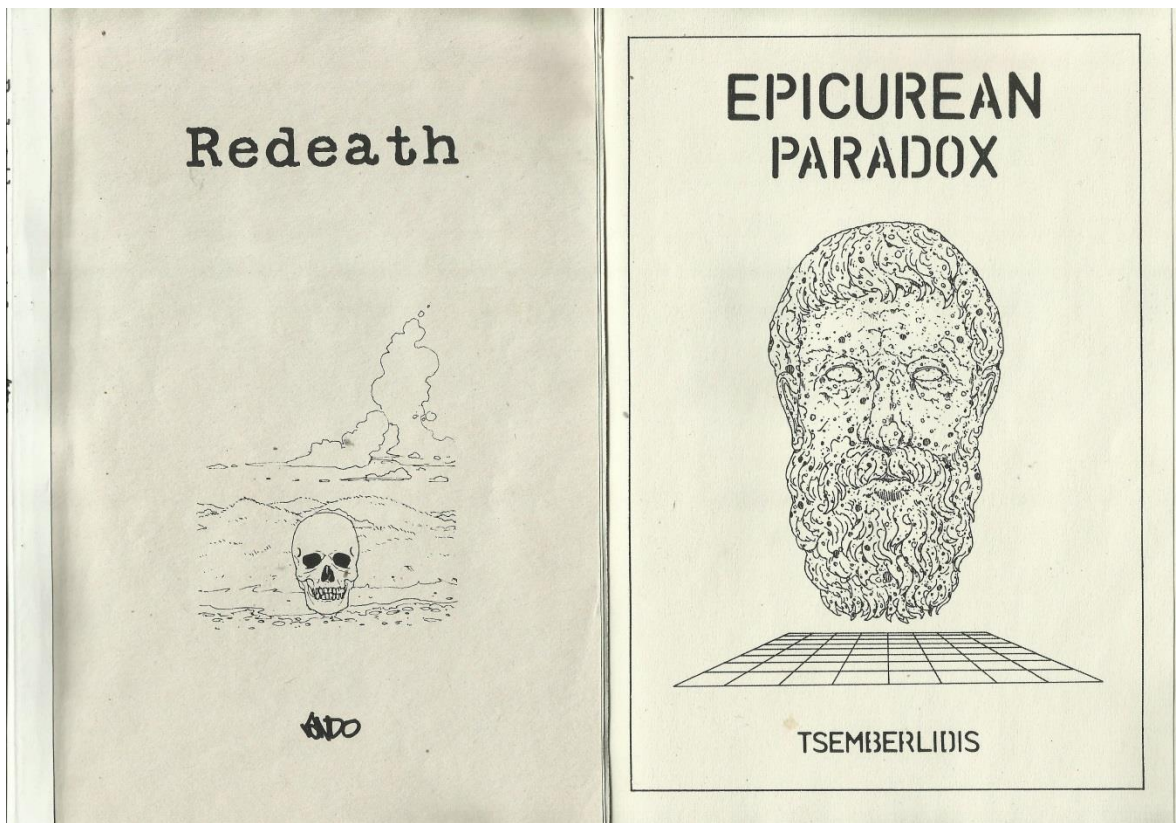


Figure 4. Cover art from Lando's "Redeath" (2004) and Tsemberlidis's "Epicurean Paradox" (2013)



Figure 5. Cover art from Lando's "Pyramid Scheme and Other Stories" (2012) and Tsemberlidis's "MOA-192B" (2010)

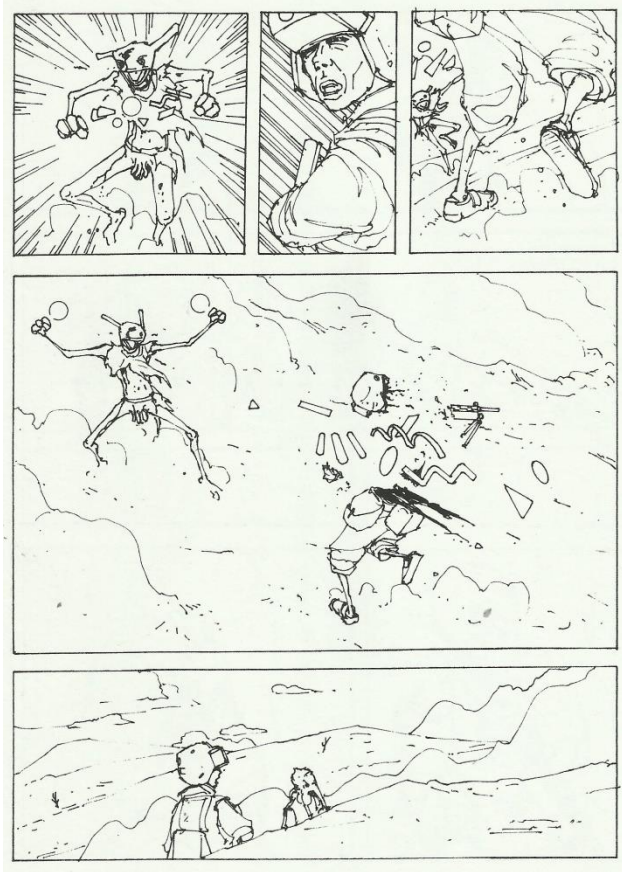


Figure 6. Covers of Decadence anthologies 1-9. Figure 7. Lando's art in "Untranslated #2" (2009)



Figure 8. Dialogue from "Untranslated #2" (2009)

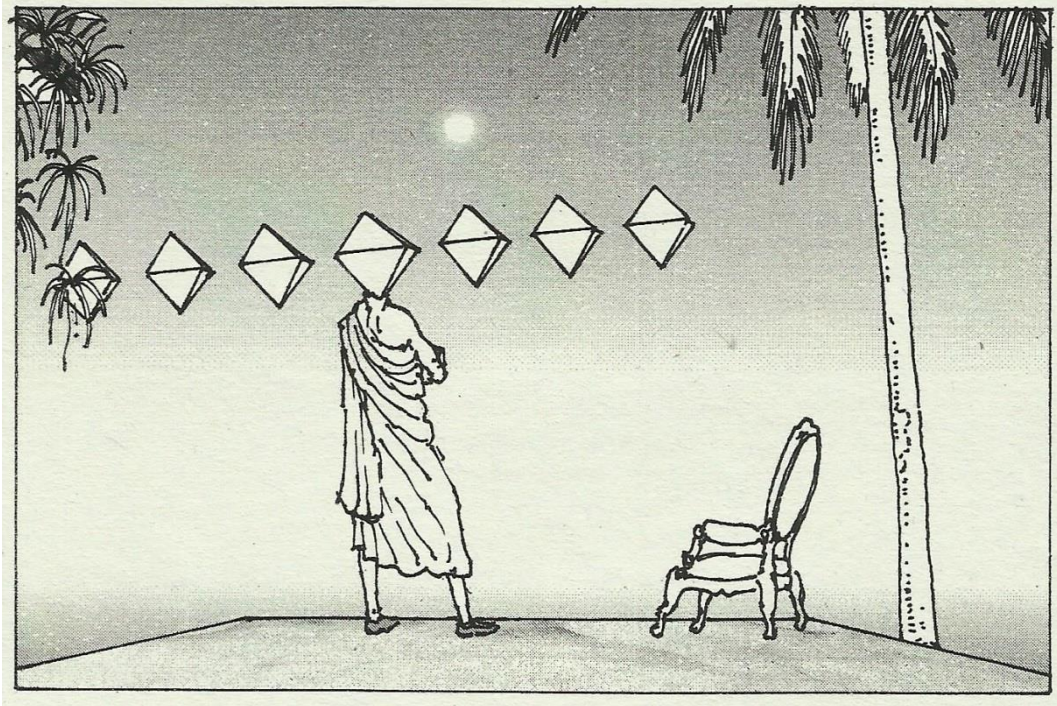


Figure 9. Excerpt from Lando's "Pyramid Scheme" (2012)



Figure 10. Example of Tsemberlidis's surface textures from "Upheaval" (2011)

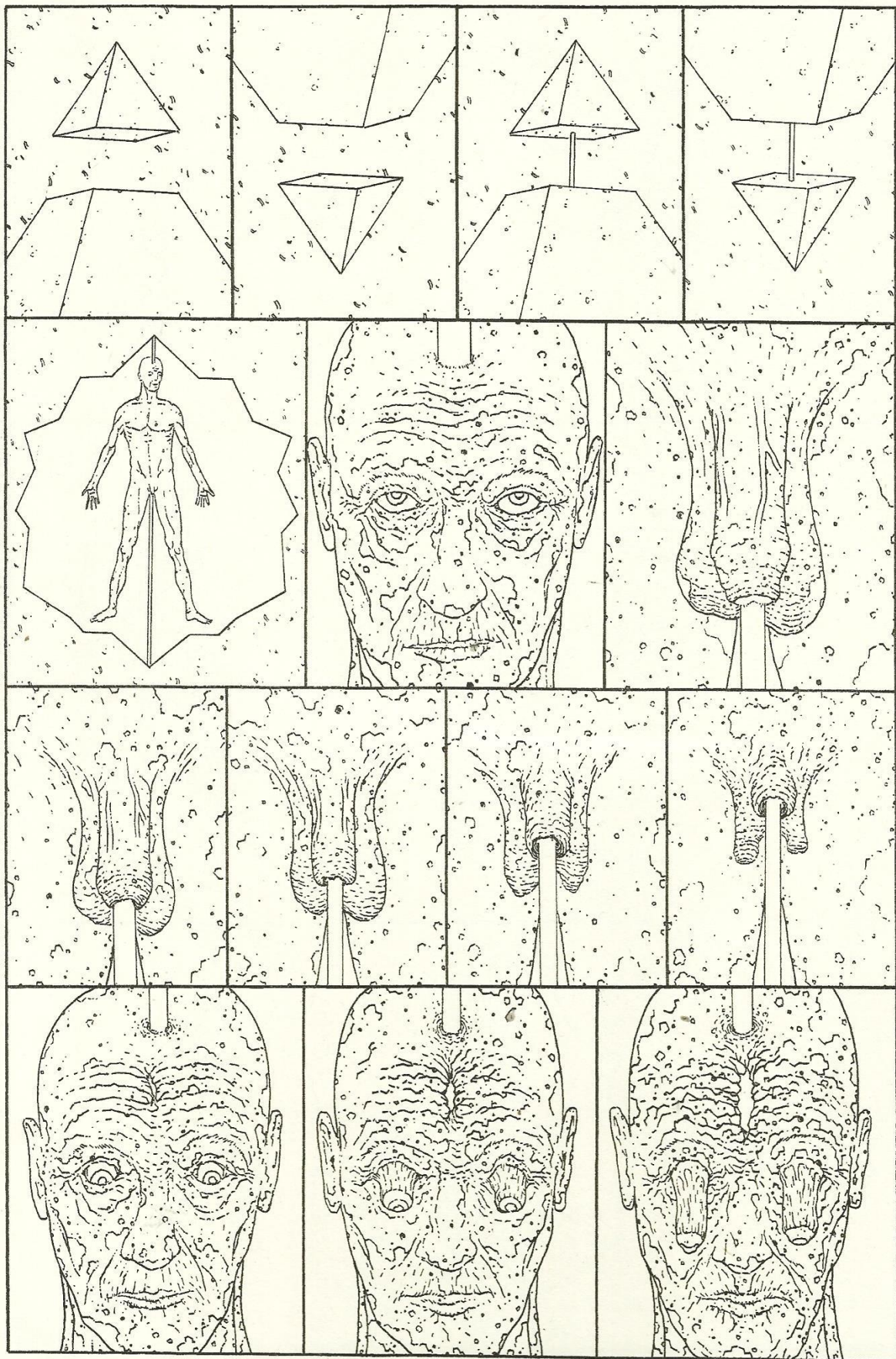


Figure 11. Example of Tsemberlidis's transformative scenes from "MOA-192B" (2010).

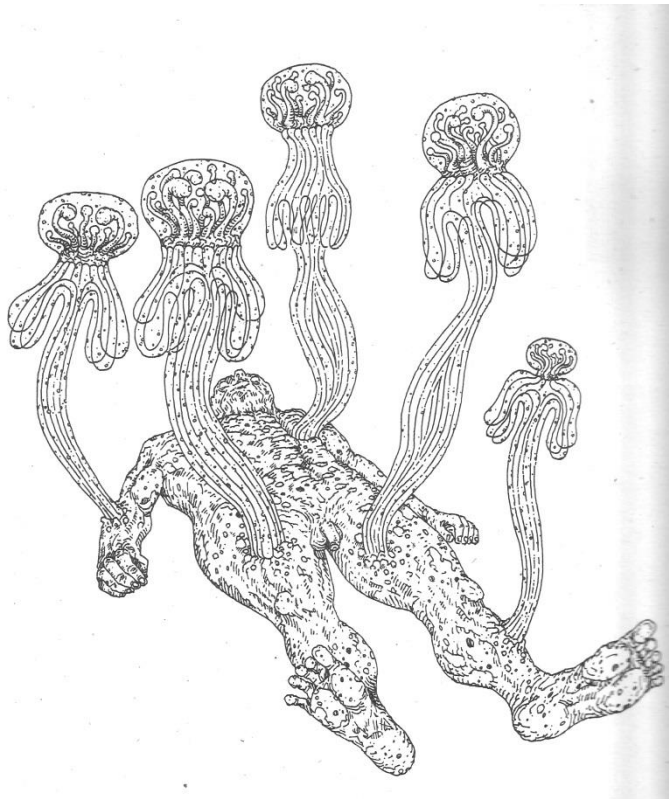


Figure 12. Excerpt from Tsemberlidis's "Transformation of Human Bodies and Flora" (2013)

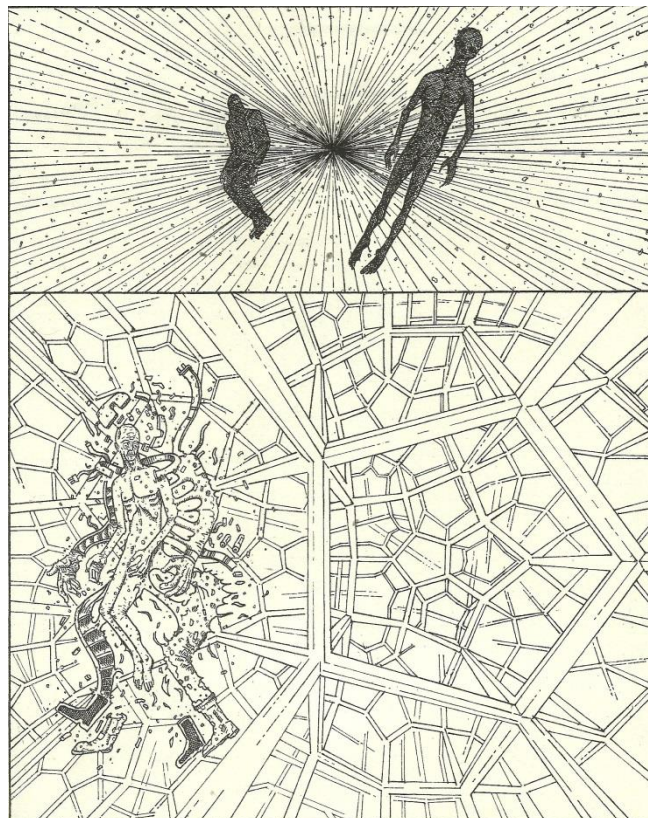


Figure 13. Excerpt from Tsemberlidis's "MOA-192B" (2010)

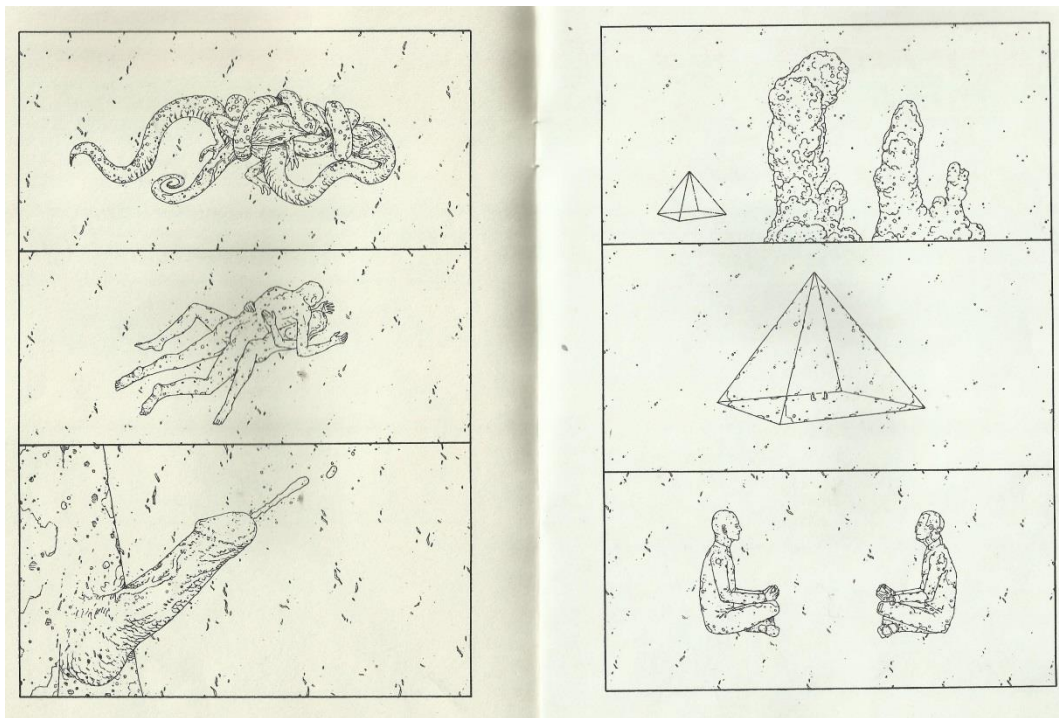


Figure 14. Tsemberlidis's symbolic motifs in "Cyborg M85" (2014)



Figure 15. Excerpt from Lando's "Flood Tablet" (2012)

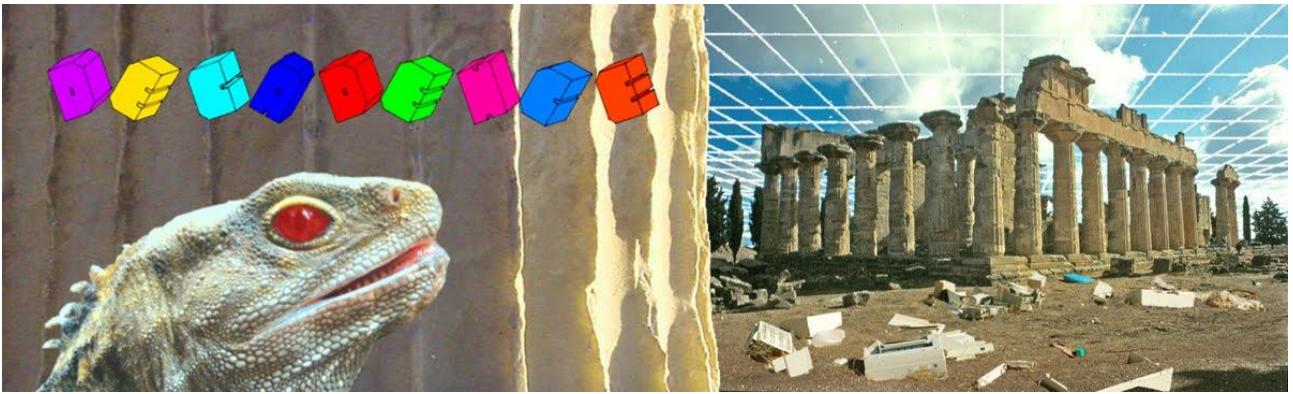


Figure 16. Decadence Comics home websites banner.



Figure 17. Decadence Comics Twitter accounts profile picture.



Figure 18. Nick Soucek's art from Decadence #10 (2014)



Figure 19. Jonathan Chandler in Decadence #10 (2014)

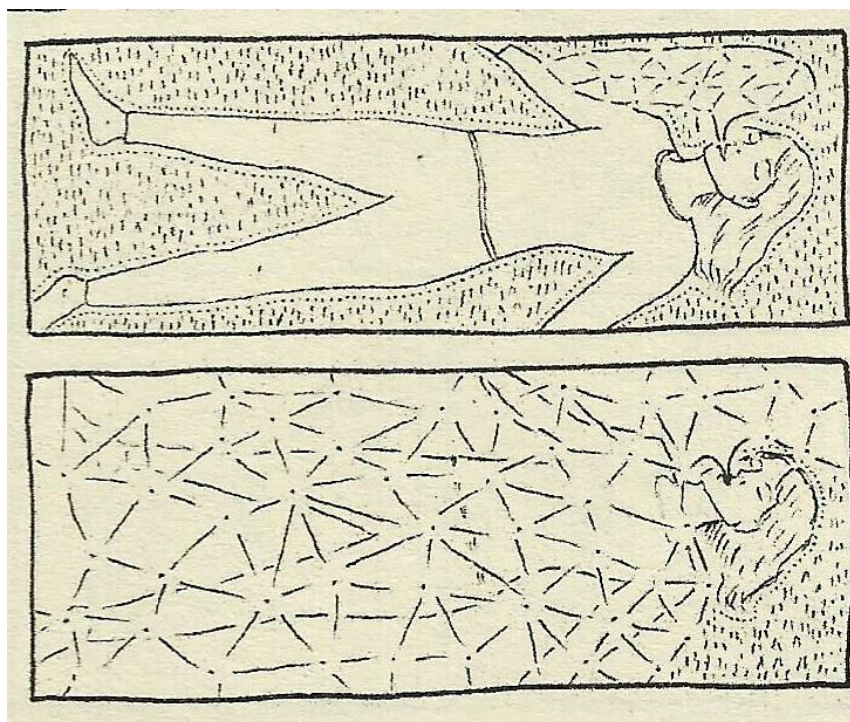


Figure 20. Excerpt from Emix Regulus in "Decadence #10" (2014)



Figure 21. Leon Sadler in "Decadence #10" (2014)

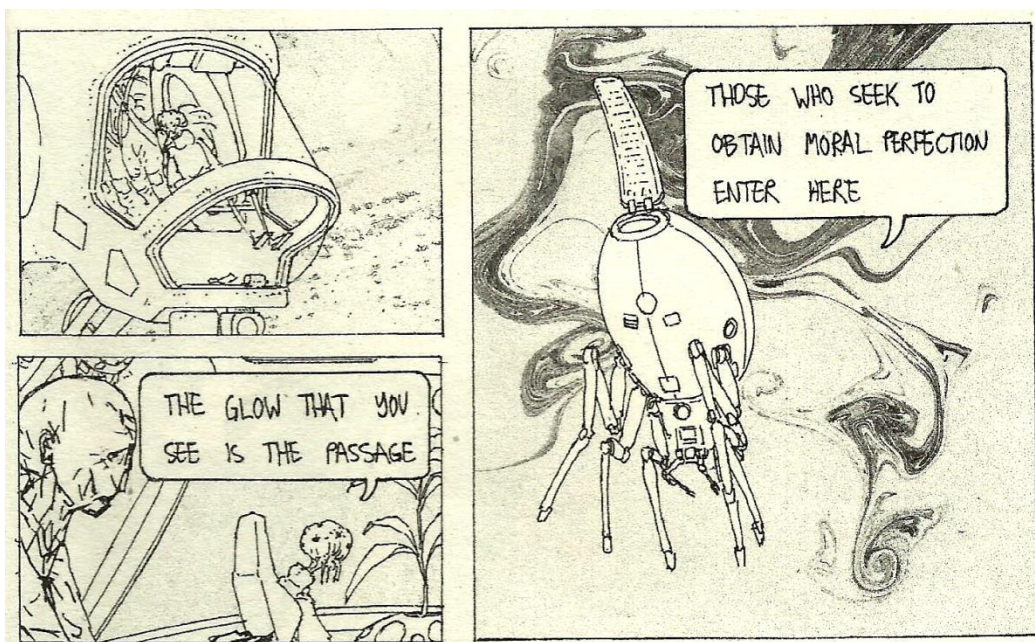


Figure 22. The art of Zosimos in "Decadence 10" (2014)

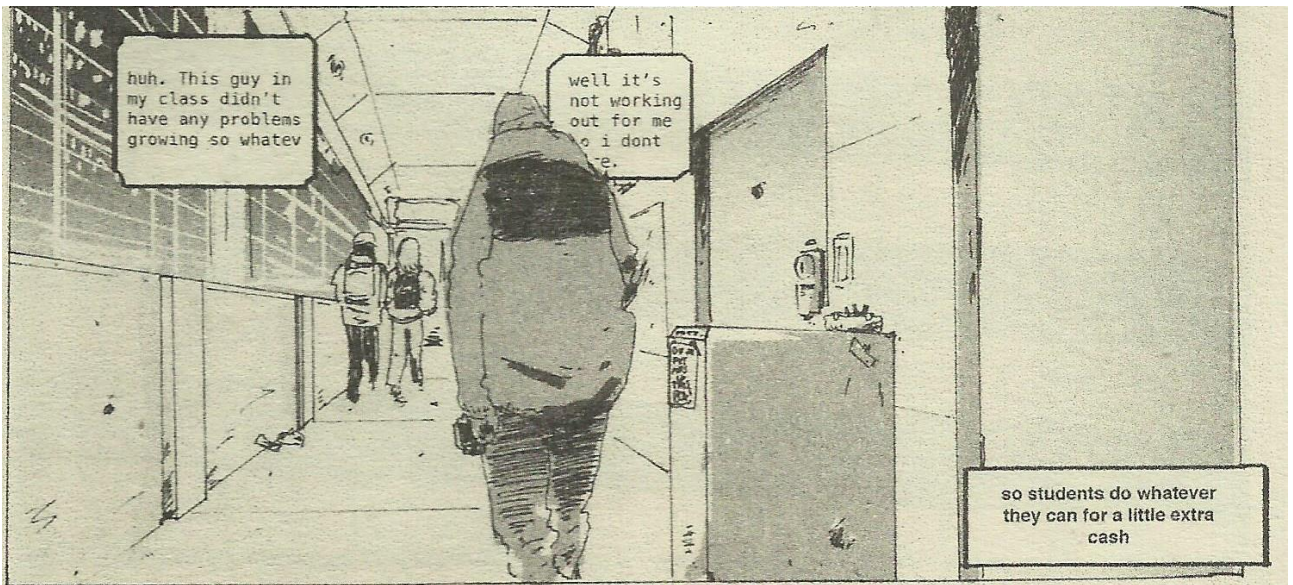


Figure 23. Patrick Crotty in "Decadence #10" (2014)

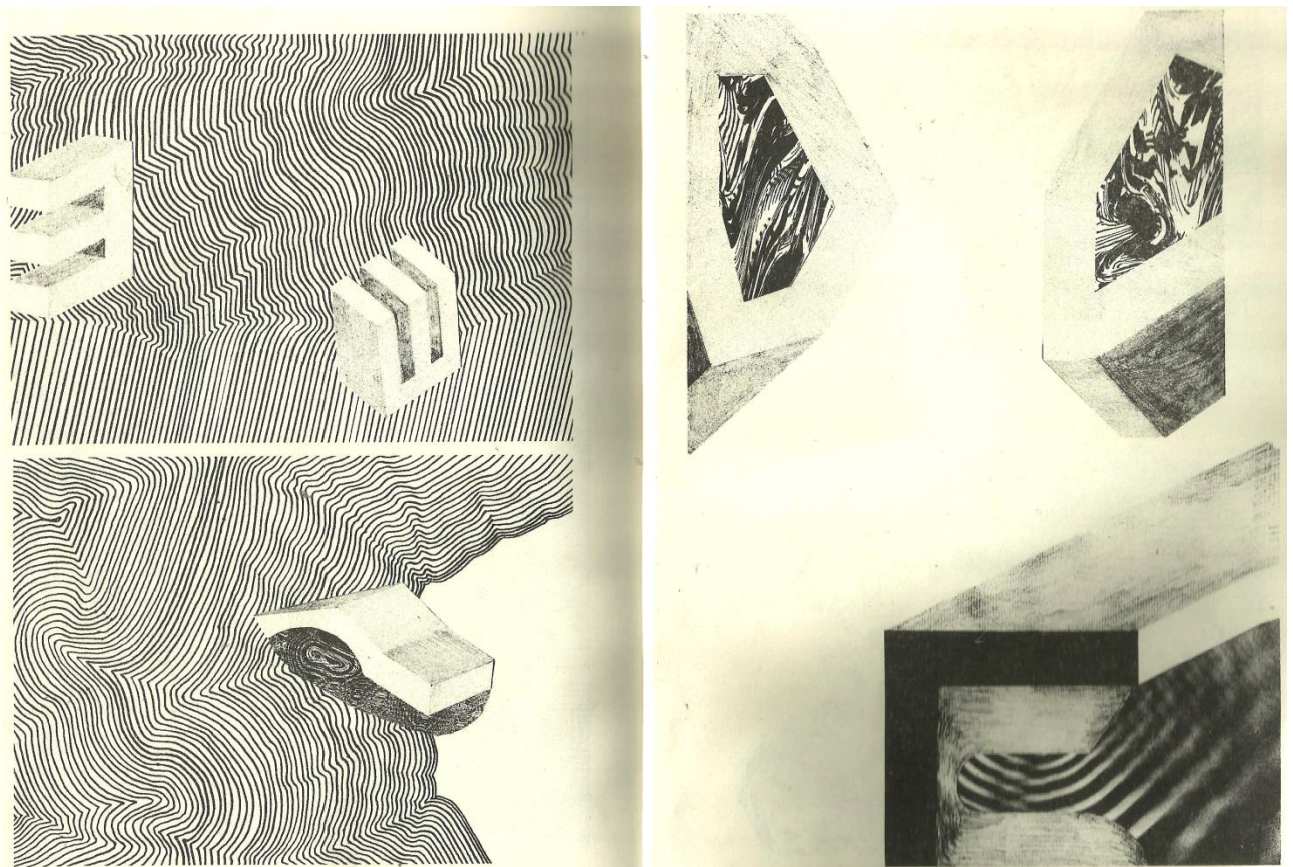


Figure 24. The first two pages of Dunja Jankovich's art in "Decadence #10" (2014)

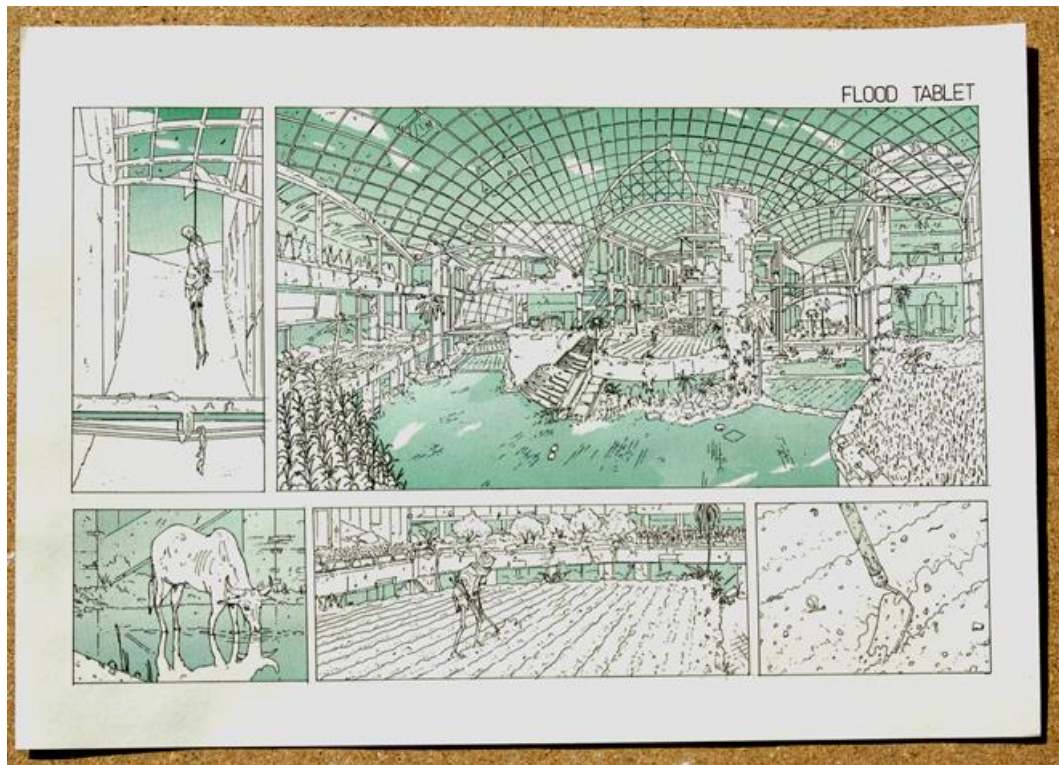


Figure 25. Poster with content from Lando's album "Flood Tablet".

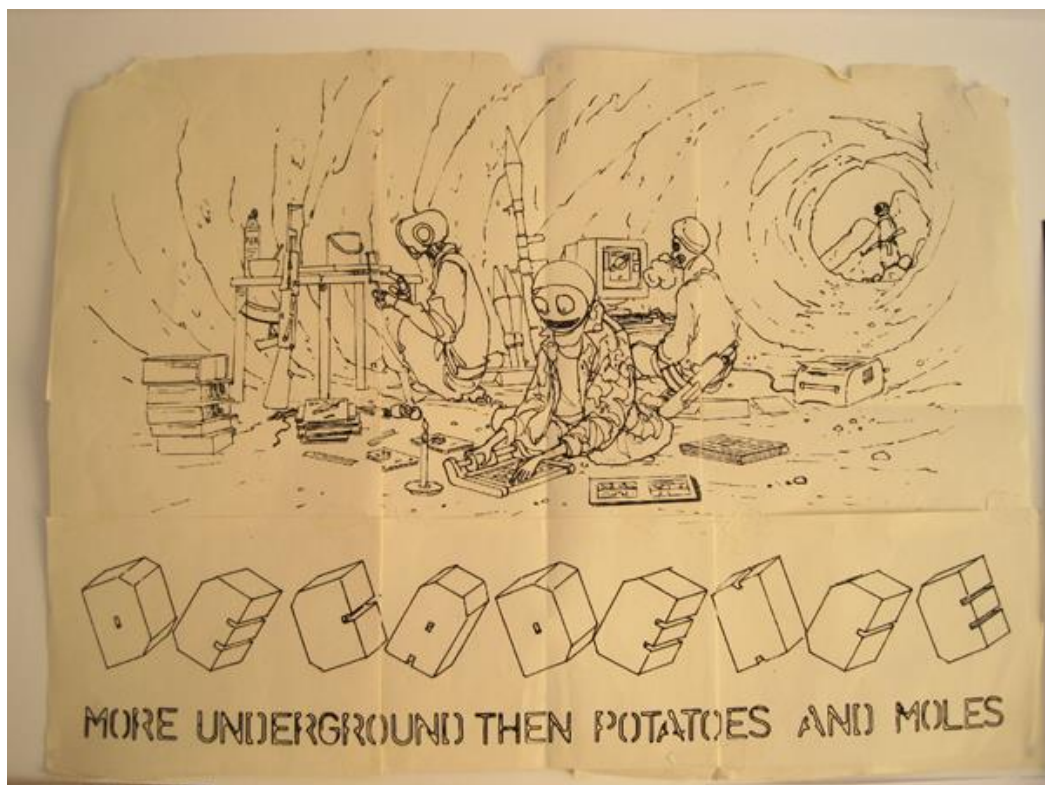


Figure 26. "OG Decadence Poster"



Figure 27. Poster made for the collective exhibition at the NLH art space.

Appendices:

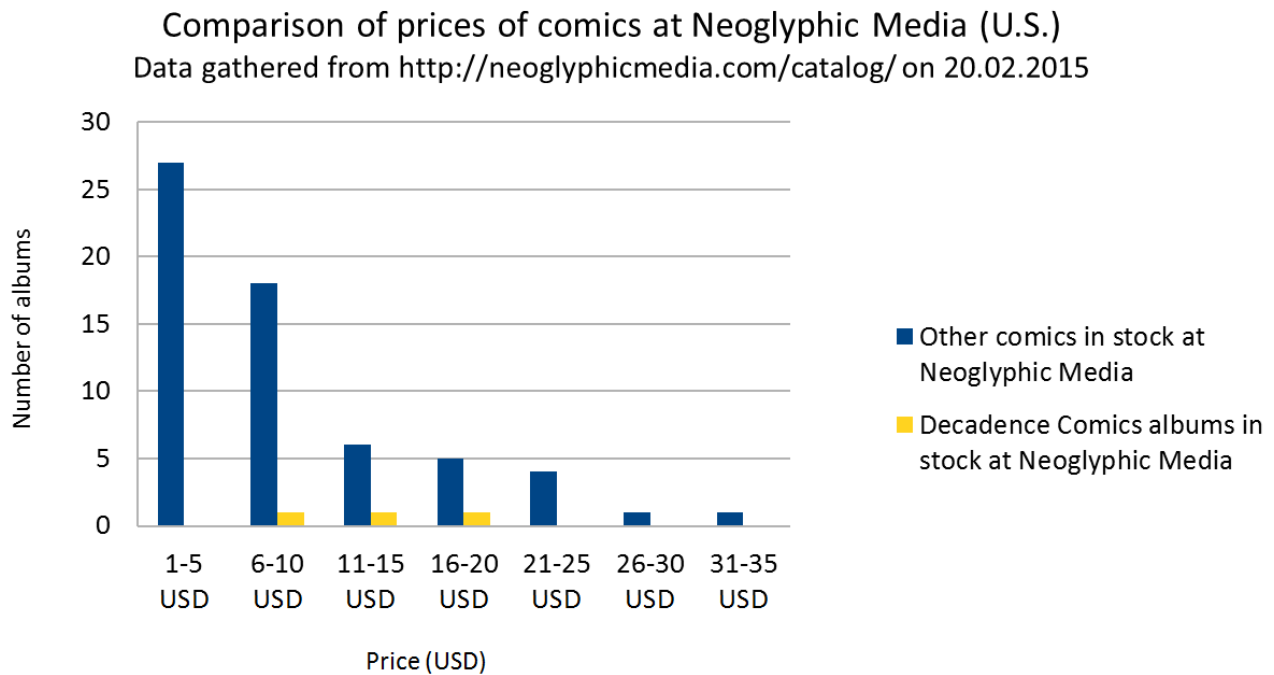
Appendix #1. List of Decadence Comics albums arranged by year. List is as of yet incomplete.

Name	Artist	Year	Price	Miscellaneous information	Ref. *
Decadence #1	Lando, Stathis Tsemberlidis, unspecified	2003	N/A	Pressing of 50 copies	1
Decadence #2	Lando, Stathis Tsemberlidis	2003	N/A	N/A	1
Redeath	Lando	2004	4,90 GBP	5 x 8"	2,1
Decadence #3	Lando, Stathis Tsemberlidis, unspecified	2004	N/A	N/A	1
Decadence #4	Dan Hallett, Martin Lander, Stathis Tsemberlidis, Lando, Isko, Glen Taylor	2005	3,50 GBP	52 pages	2
Decadence #5	Stathis Tsemberlidis, Dan Hallett, Martin Lander, Lando	2007	3,50 GBP	40 pages, includes bonus cd-r with music by Lando	1,2
Alpha	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2007	6 GBP	32 pages, 8.3 x 11.7"	1,2
Decadence #6	Dan Hallett, Lando, "Martlar", Stathis Tsemberlidis	2008	3,50 GBP	44 pages, includes bonus cd with ambient music by Lando	1,2
Untranslated #1	Lando	2008	1,50 GBP	13 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Decadence #7	Leon Sadler, Daniel Swan, Jon Chandler, Stathis Tsemberlidis, Alex Payne, Daniel Hallett, Lando	2009	5 GBP	68 pages	1,2
Last Drink	Lando	2009	1,50 GBP	8 pages, 8.3 x 11.7"	2
Untranslated #2	Lando	2009	2,50 GBP	23 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Untranslated #3	Lando	2009	1,50 GBP	11 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Decadence #8	Mark Oliver, Jon Chandler, Dan Hallett, Stathis Tsemberlidis, Lando, Emix, Leon Sadler. Decadence Comics. 46 pages, colour front and back covers	2010	4 GBP	46 pages	1, 2
MOA 198B	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2010	10 GBP	56 pages, 8.3 x 11.7"	2
Olympic Games	Lando	2011	8 GBP	44 pages, 8.3 x 11.7"	2

* #1 refers to Tulonen, U. (2015) Email interview with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis, #2 refers to "Decadence Megastore Home", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/>, (n.d), #3 refers to "Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship> (n.d), #4 refers to personal collection

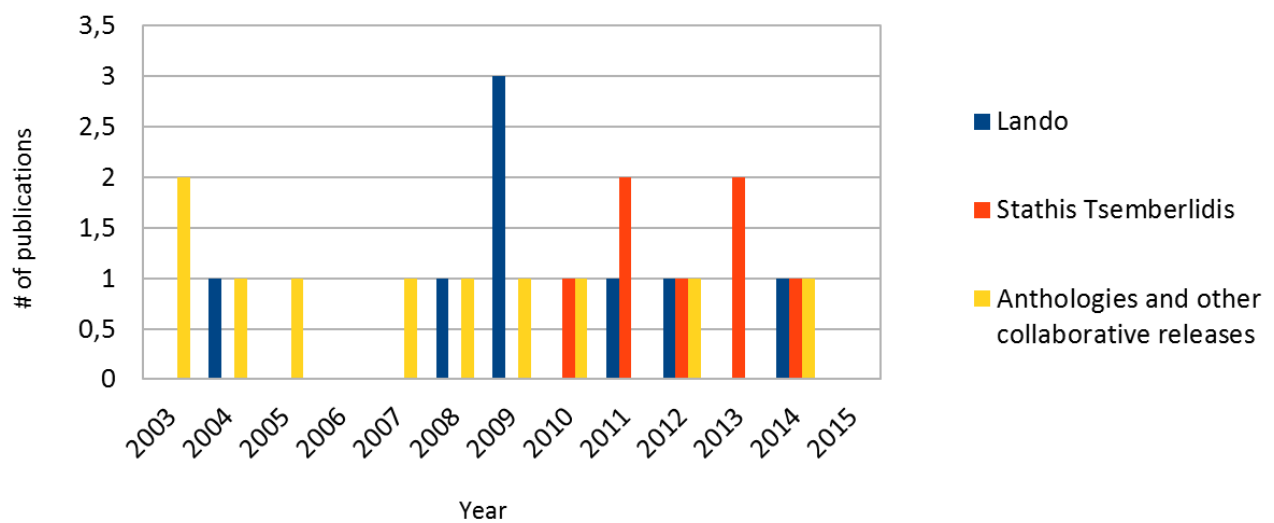
Upheaval	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2011	2,50 GBP	12 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Adamao	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2011	2,50 GBP	13 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Decadence #9	Sebastian Jefford, Jon Chandler, Emix Regulus, Lando, Leon Sadler, Stathis Tsemberlidis, Simon Moreton, Dan Hallett	2012	4 GBP	58 pages	2
Decadentia on Crack!	N/A	2012	2 GBP	18 pages, A6	2,3
Decadentia on Crackmas	N/A	2012	3 GBP	28 pages, 5 x 8"	2,3
Pyramid Scheme and Other Stories	Lando	2012	10 GBP	52 pages, riso printed, 8.3 x 11.7"	2
Neptune's Fungi	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2012	3,50 GBP	18 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Transformation of Human Bodies and Flora	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2013	15 GBP	25 pages, 12.8 x 9.4"	2
Epicurean Paradox	Stathis Tsemberlidis	2013	N/A	19 pages, 5 x 8"	4
Decadence #10	Nick Soucek, Jon Chandler, Stathis Tsemberlidis, Emix Regulus, Leon Sadler, Zosimos, Patrick Crotty, Lando, Dunja Jankovic. Decadence Comics	2014	7 GBP	114 pages, 5 x 8"	2
Island 3, Part 3	Lando	N/A	3 GBP	28 pages	2
Island 3, Part 4	Lando	2014	3 GBP	32 pages	2
MK ULTRA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix #2.



Appendix #3.

Number of Decadence Comics publications per year (2003-2015)



List of references

Non-printed sources:

Tulonen, U. 2015. Email interviews with Lando and Stathis Tsemberlidis.

Electronic sources:

Untitled Tumblr site, Jonathan Chandler, <http://jonathanchandler.tumblr.com/>, (2015). Accessed on 30.03.2015.

"Boys Fantasy", Patrick Crotty, <http://boysfantasy.tumblr.com/>, (03.05.2015). Accessed on 30.03.2015.

"Drawing the Future – The Decadence Comics Interview", Exquisite Things, <http://exquisitething.blogspot.fi/2011/12/drawing-future-decadence-comics.html> (05.12.2011). Accessed on 28.12.2014.

"Decadence Comics Q&A", Lee Henderson, <http://leehenderson.com/archives/747> (20.10.2012). Accessed on 26.12.2014.

"Project Index", Leon Michael Sadler, <http://lmsn.eu/> (n.d). Accessed on 30.03.2015.

"Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship> (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=50> (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=60> (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"Blog/News, Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=70> (n.d) Accessed on 02.05.2012.

Blog/News", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=80>, (n.d). Accessed on

02.05.2012.

"Blog/News", Decadence Comics,

<http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/updatesfromthesinkingship?offset=90>, (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015

"Cinema", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/cinema>, n.d. (Cited 01.05.2015)

"Contact/Links", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/contact-links> (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Decadence 9", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/decadence-9> (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Decadence Vuitton", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/decadence-vuitton>, (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Decadentia on Crack!", Decadence Comics, https://4159df4a-a-62cb3a1a-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/decadencemegastore/Home/decadentia-on-crack/dec%20crack%20foldout.jpg?attachauth=ANoY7cpiyZcDhsTvQ3tDlbB9zQBkiDbEvxXOIkjHqm-CYpVvV_6D0-tUN3DzATwG_j-x34uOiI3AaRV7jmaMQMlumenOjnZVzf9W2Nuh-o5NccwKGr2wKfnAIV_r-F7HpEeQBTEY-HYYliWlf2byw5cdqLoh8qnukMTXoUerFB7M5Z7tKPR8BM69w59FULSG7h9DLdoPd9BmgxuU2e3YfhNGFEaspTgJHwwfjHqFwPovCWag8ii4IBPCdlo1KJnbn7cprXbqJyKjhOQZlmU24tBE7vGj_XTsPA%3D%3D&attredirects=0, (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Neptune's Fungi", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/neptune-s-fungi> (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Olympic Games", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/olympic-games> (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Posters", Decadence Comics, <http://www.decadencecomics.com/Home/posters>, (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

"Cv", Dunja Jankovich, <http://www.tripica.org/cv/>, (n.d). Accessed on 30.03.2015.

"The Microcosmic Orbit of Emix Regulus", Emix Regulus, <http://cargocollective.com/microcosmicorbit> (n.d). Accessed on 30.03.2015.

Figure 1. Retrieved from: https://4159df4a-a-62cb3a1a-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/decadencemegastore/Home/decadentia-on-crack/dec%20crack%20foldout.jpg?attachauth=ANoY7cpiyZcDhsTvQ3tDlbB9zQBkiDbEvxXOIkjHqm-CYpVvV_6D0-tUN3DzATwG_j-x34uOiI3AaRV7jmaMQMlumenOjnZVzf9W2Nuh-o5NccwKGr2wKfnAIV_r-F7HpEeQBTEY-HYYliWlf2byw5cdqLoh8qnukMTXoUerFB7M5Z7tKPR8BM69w59FULSG7h9DLdoPd9BmgxuU2e3YfhNGFEaspTgJHwwfjHqFwPovCWag8ii4IBPCdlo1KJnbn7cprXbqJyKjhOQZlmU24tBE7vGj_XTsPA%3D%3D&attredirects=0

crack/dec%20crack%20foldout.jpg?attachauth=ANoY7cpYzCdHsTvQ3tDlB9zQBkiDbEvxXOIkj
Hqm-CYpVvV_6D0-tUN3DzATwG_j-x34uOi3AaRV7jmaMQMlumenOjnZVzf9W2Nuh-
o5NccwKGr2wKfnAIV_r-F7HpEeQBTEY-
HYYliWlf2byw5cdqLoh8qnukMTXoUerFB7M5Z7tKPR8BM69w59FULSG7h9DLdoPd9Bmgxu
U2e3YfhNGFEaspTgJHwwfjHqFwPovCWag8ii4IBPCdlo1KJnbn7cprXbqJyKjhOQZlmU24tBE7v
Gj_XTsPA%3D%3D&attredirects=0, (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

Figure 2. Retrieved from: <http://decadencecomics.tumblr.com/image/51030639743>, (n.d). Accessed on 16.04.2015.

Figure 6. Retrieved from: http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m41hk9u8z41qb5w0wo1_1280.jpg, (n.d). Accessed on 16.04.2015.

Figure 15. Retrieved from:
http://www.decadencecomics.com/_/rsrc/1363829964654/config/customLogo.gif?revision=18 (n.d).
Accessed on 03.05.2015.

Figure 16. Retrieved from:
https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/2941667232/e6842b5fba8ccf87785482180c2e634d_400x400.jpeg, (n.d). Accessed on 03.05.2015.

Figure 25. Retrieved from: [https://4159df4a-a-62cb3a1a-sites.googlegroups.com/site/decadencemegastore/Home/posters/flood tablet poster.jpg?attachauth=ANoY7coG0emnf4lirLMPY3kWFjvgnXvaUWUd3HX_N1Do3XSShF6_-kOcJRp2DASStMGkXAYZndUrqJdQCtfdLI0IR1WUMETQb1oTyIdmlbZ96d58Zpc6M8c92-2z5FUEnqbiPCvaaRtiOIzi6Q3upS5nyTe7yPJRUeTNiHUIqSPTJVvE6Du-VKPyWilA-9jjhMPCqju79ATmBp3g1JjW0-VH2tOmMH8wkU73nBFVP4CNCndru29pY33Aw-ParoH3x1x9soHbJQab&attredirects=0](https://4159df4a-a-62cb3a1a-sites.googlegroups.com/site/decadencemegastore/Home/posters/flood%20tablet%20poster.jpg?attachauth=ANoY7coG0emnf4lirLMPY3kWFjvgnXvaUWUd3HX_N1Do3XSShF6_-kOcJRp2DASStMGkXAYZndUrqJdQCtfdLI0IR1WUMETQb1oTyIdmlbZ96d58Zpc6M8c92-2z5FUEnqbiPCvaaRtiOIzi6Q3upS5nyTe7yPJRUeTNiHUIqSPTJVvE6Du-VKPyWilA-9jjhMPCqju79ATmBp3g1JjW0-VH2tOmMH8wkU73nBFVP4CNCndru29pY33Aw-ParoH3x1x9soHbJQab&attredirects=0), (n.d). Accessed on 26.03.2015.

Figure 26. Retrieved from: <http://img192.imageshack.us/img192/3323/decadenceogposter.jpg>, (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

”Catalogue”, Neoglyphic Media, <http://neoglyphicmedia.com/catalog/>, (n.d). Accessed on 20.02.2015.

”Misinterpreted Complications”, Nick Soucek, <http://mis-comp.com/>, (n.d). Accessed on 30.03.2015.

”Dave Lander”, Tio Ilar International Art Exhibition, <http://tioilar.eu/index.php/artist-cvs/2012-01-31-09-55-36/lander-david>, (2014). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"Shelter-E", Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/36131325>, (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"Immortality by Sole and The Skyrider Band (HD QUALITY!!!)", Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mis-hAhban8>, (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"MOA-192B", Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6cWV0AOAzE>, (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

"Terminal", Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUVUL0ZF_EY, (n.d). Accessed on 02.05.2015.

Printed sources:

Arffman, Päivi (2004): Comics Go Underground: Underground Sarjakuva Vastakulttuurina Vuosien 1967-1974 Yhdysvalloissa. Tammer-Paino Oy.

Hatfield, Charles (2005): Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature. University Press of Mississippi.

Duncombe, Steven (1997): Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture. Verso, London.

Lando & Tsemberlidis, Stathis (edit.). (2014): Decadence #10. Decadence Comics.

Lando (2004): Redeath. Decadence Comics.

Lando (2008): Untranslated #1. Decadence Comics.

Lando (2009): Untranslated #2. Decadence Comics.

Lando (2009): Untranslated #3. Decadence Comics.

Lando (2011): Olympic Games. Decadence Comics.

Lando (2012): Pyramid Scheme and Other Stories. Decadence Comics.

Leistyna, Pepi (edit.) (2005): Cultural Studies: From Theory to Action. Blackwell Publishing.

Malloy, Alex G. ; Kelly, Brian ; Ohlandt Kevin (1993): Comic Book Artists. Attic Books.

Silbermann, Alphons & Dyroff, H.-D. (edit.) (1986): Comics and Visual Culture – Research Studies From Ten Countries. K.G. Saur. München.

Tsemberlidis, Stathis (2010): MOA-192B. Decadence Comics.

Tsemberlidis, Stathis (2011): Adamao. Decadence Comics.

Tsemberlidis, Stathis (2011): Upheaval. Decadence Comics.

Tsemberlidis, Stathis (2012): Neptune's Fungi. Decadence Comics.

Tsemberlidis, Stathis (2013): Transformation of Human Bodies and Flora. Decadence Comics.