

her work. The experience of being a lesbian in the world is the raw material for her strip.

Having brought the audience up to the present, Bechdel then began to focus on *Dykes to Watch Out For*. One of the things that pleases her most about cartooning is combining words and pictures. This should surprise no one familiar with her highly literate strip. Bechdel's highly developed political consciousness and quirky sense of humor animate the strip. "I alternate between worrying that my strips are too trivial and don't have enough redeeming political content, and the rest of the time I can't believe how much leftist dogma I'm always spouting. But the wonderful characteristic of the lesbian community is that the personal is political. Often you can be romantic and socially responsible at the same time."

A case in point is the first time Mo and Harriet made love, a lengthy sequence that ends her second book. "That was kind of scary for me to do. I really wanted to draw them making love, but on some level I had this homophobic kind of resistance to it. Even now when I look at these drawings, I kind of flinch. But I figured it would be good therapy, so I went ahead and did it."

She had friends pose for her, calling upon her figure drawing training to make pencil sketches, which she then translated into cartoons.

"I think it's really important to make our sexuality visible. Lesbian sex is such a taboo thing in this culture. Either it's not mentioned or it's pornographed. So I just like to show it in a matter of fact kind of way, as part of life."

For readers who want to know what's in store for their favorite cartoon characters, Bechdel dropped a few hints, and the news doesn't look good. Ginger, one of Bechdel's favorites because she's "the only really stable character in the whole strip" is in the midst of a long-distance relationship. "I'm looking forward to exploring this long-distance thing that she's got going with Malika. I just hope she doesn't get hurt." Mo and Harriet have been having problems lately, and Bechdel thinks they're heading for a break-up. "There's a lot of pressure on me not to have them break up. I want to show people having healthy relationships. But people do break up and I'm kind of fascinated by break-ups. Part of me is really looking forward to writing about it in excruciating detail. I'm sure it will be cathartic."

Bechdel then described the steps involved in actually drawing the strip (she starts with the words and then does the pictures), and concluded with a deeply-felt statement of the values that underlie and unify her work and her life (see accompanying story). ▼

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed so we can contact the author should we need to consider editorial revisions. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

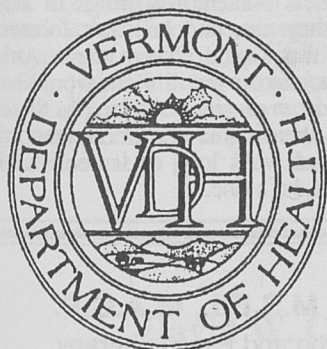
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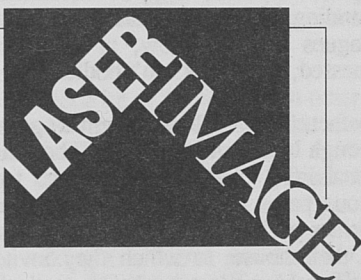
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