

MUSÉES DE LA VILLE DE STRASBOURG

Strasbourg, 9 September 2025

## “Robert Weaver/Tomi Ungerer. Illustration in action”

Musée Tomi Ungerer – Centre international de l’Illustration

17 October 2025 – 15 February 2026

“The artist should not merely reflect; in an atomic era he should be the reactor.” Robert Weaver, American Artist magazine, 1959

“Bob Weaver [...] had a huge influence on me. He showed me the visual potential of America.” Tomi Ungerer, 2008

The collections of the Musée Tomi Ungerer – Centre international de l’Illustration feature a series of 83 drawings and sketches made by the American artist Robert Weaver between the late 1950s and the 1970s. This new exhibition brings these illustrations together with those by Tomi Ungerer and two other artists in the collection, Ronald Searle and Olivier Dangla, to explore the genre of visual journalism. This practice, intended for the press, is based on the principle of an artist’s direct observation of socio-political and cultural events.

Echoing the tradition of 18th-century travel writing, visual journalism became increasingly popular in post-1945 news magazines, reaching a new peak in 1960s America. After the Second World War and the Great Depression, the decline in magazine sales prompted the remaining publishers to take a more innovative approach, which included hiring leading art directors such as Leo Lionni (*Fortune*) and Richard Gangel (*Sports Illustrated*). They would send illustrators such as **Robert Weaver**, **Franklin McMahon**, **Ronald Searle** and **Tomi Ungerer** into the field to capture presidential debates, car or horse races, baseball games and more.

Illustration became more than just images to accompany written articles; instead, it was now a voice in its own right, conveying both information and real-life experience. It combined journalistic reporting with an artistic approach, seeking to render an atmosphere, context or sensitive narrative. Robert Weaver was one of the pioneers of visual journalism. Influenced by urban life and social tensions, he used drawing as an investigative and narrative tool, rooted in modern reality.

At the same time, Tomi Ungerer was also working for *Sports Illustrated*, covering football and baseball games and even derbies, where he sketched American society enjoying its popular pastimes. *America* is a collection of his drawings, often sketched on the spot, produced between 1956 and 1971. In them, Ungerer explores American society through portraits, leisure and sporting scenes, alternating between realism – inspired by his mentor Robert Weaver – and satire. As a politically active observer, he reveals social fractures with great finesse, as demonstrated in his sketchbook on the prison environment. Years later, in 1985, he made *Schutzengel der Hölle*, a written and illustrated report on the *dominas* scene in Hamburg. Taking an almost sociological approach, he immersed himself in the worlds of Simone, Astrid

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and Tina, collecting their stories, observing, photographing and drawing places, faces and accessories.

While visual journalism has a less prominent role in today's press, the tradition of depicting trials through drawing remains. In courtrooms, where cameras are often forbidden – as was the case in France until 2022 – courtroom sketch artists share the progress of the case. In this exhibition, visitors can see drawings by **Olivier Dangla**, who covered the 2015 Paris attacks trial (*Charlie Hebdo*, Montrouge et Hyper Cacher) for *Le Monde*.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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### **Musée Tomi Ungerer – Centre International de l'Illustration**

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