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By Christopher Henning April 1, 2011

A *New York Times* insider celebrates work that makes readers laugh out loud or froth at the mouth.

New York Times art director Jerelle Kraus, who managed the look of the first-ever Op-Ed page for 13 years, records conversations with her editors and their decisions. She worked with the world's best artists: Ralph Steadman, Ronald Searle, Brad Holland, among many others in a vast array of talent that includes Australians Matthew Martin and Victoria Roberts.

Good editors offer reasons to keep reading; they make their readers laugh or froth and stamp by turns. Bad editors worry that readers are tender souls who must never be offended.

Some *NY Times* editors see in illustrations plots to sneak genitals into the paper. Or they cavil at details or whinge that the artist hasn't precisely reflected the writer's argument. Kraus saved rejected drawings and publishes many of them here.

Howell Raines was in a class of his own. His predecessors as the *Times's* editorial page editor were "visually savvy and unafraid of art's power," Kraus writes. But Raines insisted illustrations be neutral. His crimes get three chapters.

This book is more than an engaging collection of images and anecdotes about artists and editors - though it is both those. It's an argument for good editors. And the Internet's many shortcomings show that we still need them.

Christopher Henning, a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist and cartoonist, was the *Herald's* first Op-Ed editor.