CURT SWAN!

Featuring a Gallery of the Greatest Images by The Superman Family Artist!

Written & Designed by Arlen Schumer
Curt Swan depicted the nobility inherent in Superman, in an extension of all of us, and the idea born from the fact that ultimate we must shoulder our burdens and make our decisions in solitude.

He set these quiet moments of reflection in landscapes like this one from World's Finest #166, 1966, “Exit Batman, Enter Nightwing,” (penned by Klein), that in their melancholy stillness...

And goodbye to Smallville. I'll have to come back in the morning. I'm looking on one vital strand, and then I'll never return.

And a little later, alone in the gardens of the Kandarian mansion... these flowers... these birds... all just as on old Krypton! It makes me think of when I went back through the time-barrier to Krypton before it perished, and met...

Swan's Superman seldom expressed feelings of melancholy. Rarely did he droop (below left, inked by Murphy Anderson in ’71). Yet there was often an air of palpable sadness about him, taken to the extreme in “the death of Superman!” (inked by Stan Kaye, ’80) above, and in Swan's last Superman story in ’85, inked by George Perez, below.

He looked as if he'd been crying.
NOWHERE WAS THE UNMISTAKABLE ROCKWELLIAN APPEAL OF CURT SWAN'S ART MORE EVIDENT THAN IN HIS LONG RUN ON SUPERBOY, ILLUSTRATING 17 YEARS' WORTH OF STORIES AND OVER 200 COVERS!

PASTORAL SCENES OF THE BOX OF STEEL FLYING WITH HIS GIRL, PLAYING WITH HIS DOG KRYPTO, EVEN CHANGING IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLOSET...

...ALONG WITH SUCH BONAFIDE AMERICANA AS SMALLTOWN AND THE KENTS' GENERAL STORE COUNTERED THE ALIEN LANDSCAPES OF KRYPTON LOCKED IN SUPERBOY'S MEASURY. ALL WERE APT BACKDROPS FOR SWAN'S SINGULAR PORTRAITS OF CLARK KENT AND SUPERBOY!
Swan's Legion run reached its apogee in the epic showdown with the Fatal Five, which, in addition to featuring some of Swan's most action-packed artwork (like the cover, left, of issue #333, 1967), concluded with the death of the short-lived, cult-favorite superhero Ferro Lad!
MAKING THE KIRBY-LIKE RUN OF CURT SWAN'S STORIES AND COVERs FOR THE FIRST 338 ISSUES OF JIMMY OLSEN CAN BE EXPLAINED IN ONE WORD: FUN! SWAN CLEARLY HAD AN AFFECTION FOR THE ENDLESS PARADE OF OLSEN'S BIZARRE TRANSFORMATIONS, FROM SUPER- FREAK PATSO TO SUPER-HERO ALTER-EGO ELASTIC LAD (BOTH FROM 1963, INKED BY KLEIN!).

THE INTERMITTENT SERIES OF ÖMOTHEI NY AND FLAMEBIRD STORIES IN WHICH JIMMY AND SUPERMAN DONNED ERSATZ BATMAN AND ROBIN COSTUMES AND ENTERED THE BOTTLED CITY OF KANDOR GAVE SWAN'S IMAGINATION GREATER REIGN TO CREATE BRAND NEW COSTUMES, ARCHITECTURE AND INTERPLANETARY WONDERS!
Curt Swan was no stranger to Batman, prior to his role as cover artist of the Batman books (1968-69). Swan had drawn the first post-Superman-Batman team-ups in World's Finest that started in '59 (as well as many guest shots of the Dynamic Duo in Superman's books)! Swan's 1964-68 run on the title is marked by the requisite interplanetary adventures, punctuated by clashes between the heroes!

Sizzling suns: some kind of Paradise Planet... look at this place...

Ah... you have arrived... I am Memphis...

...and there's our welcoming committee.

Meanwhile, the Man of Steel has come upon the most ominous discovery of all.

Arguably the most memorable of Swan's images were those of the Composite Superman (1969, inked by Klein), a perfectly split hybrid of the two heroes, every readers when fulfilled.

Diorama-like tableaux, like the panel above (penciled by Sheldon Moldoff), allegorical in some instances, was a common motif in the Swan/Weisinger Oracle!
OF ALL THE RECURRENT IAGERY IN CURT SWAN'S SUPERMAN FAMILY CAREER, IT IS FINALLY THE STATUES, MONUMENTS, AND MEMORIALS THAT ARE THE MOST REVEALING OF SWAN'S NATURE, FOR THEY SHOW AN ARTIST WHOSE STYLE MIRRORED HIS NAME...

THAT OF A SWAN ITSELF, GRACEFUL AND DISPOSED, YET STRONG AND RESOLUTE, PERMEATED WITH AN AIR OF SOLEMNITY.

IN HONOR OF LEX LUTHOR FOR HIS MANY SCIENTIFICS

THE SUPER-STRENGTH OF THE MAN OF STEEL FORCES THE GREAT DOORS, AND...

A GREAT FIGURE OF COMPROMISE SUPERMAN, HAVING HIM WITH! SO TELL ME WHAT HE DOWNS OF!

THEY'LL LOOK THROUGH THE WHOLE PLACE, IF HE HAS A WEAKNESS THE KEY TO IT MAY BE HIDDEN HERE!

HE WAS BORN A ROBOT BUT HE DIED A MAN... THEY FORM THE SIGNATURE MILEU OF CURT SWAN'S ARTISTIC LEGACY!

The End...