

TWENTIETH-CENTURY CROSSROADS

Maaheen Ahmed

DRAWING GAMES AND CONTESTS IN CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES: LE JOURNAL DE MICKEY (1934-1936)

Curating Children's Drawings in the Early Issues of *Journal de Mickey*

The *Journal de Mickey*, launched in Paris in 1934, revolutionized the way children's periodicals looked and interacted with their readers.

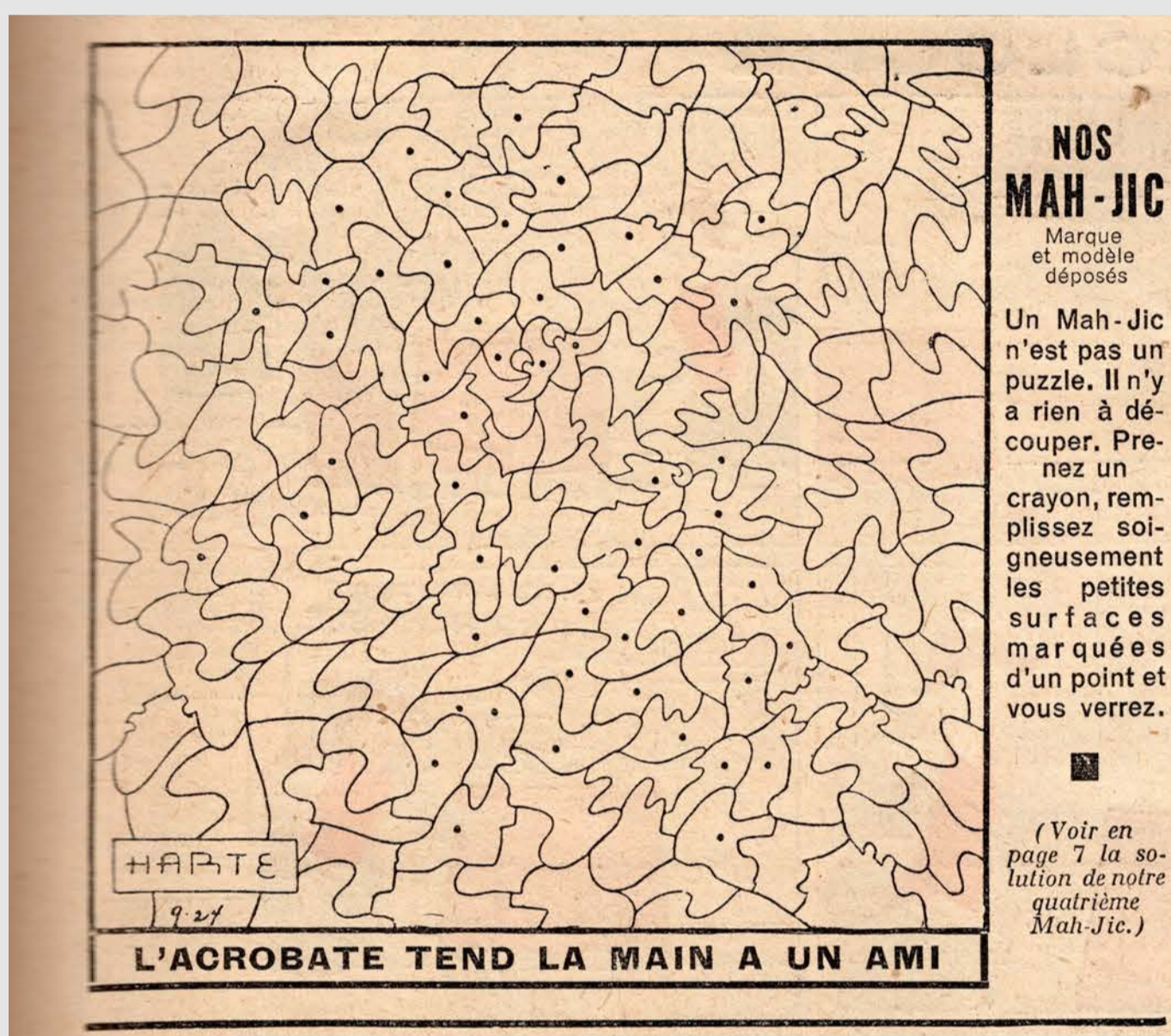
In addition to more American (especially Disney) comics, the magazine also launched the Mickey Club and, in its early years, several drawing games and competitions. These labor-intensive but humble, less colorful columns of the magazine offer precious traces of potential readerly interactions.



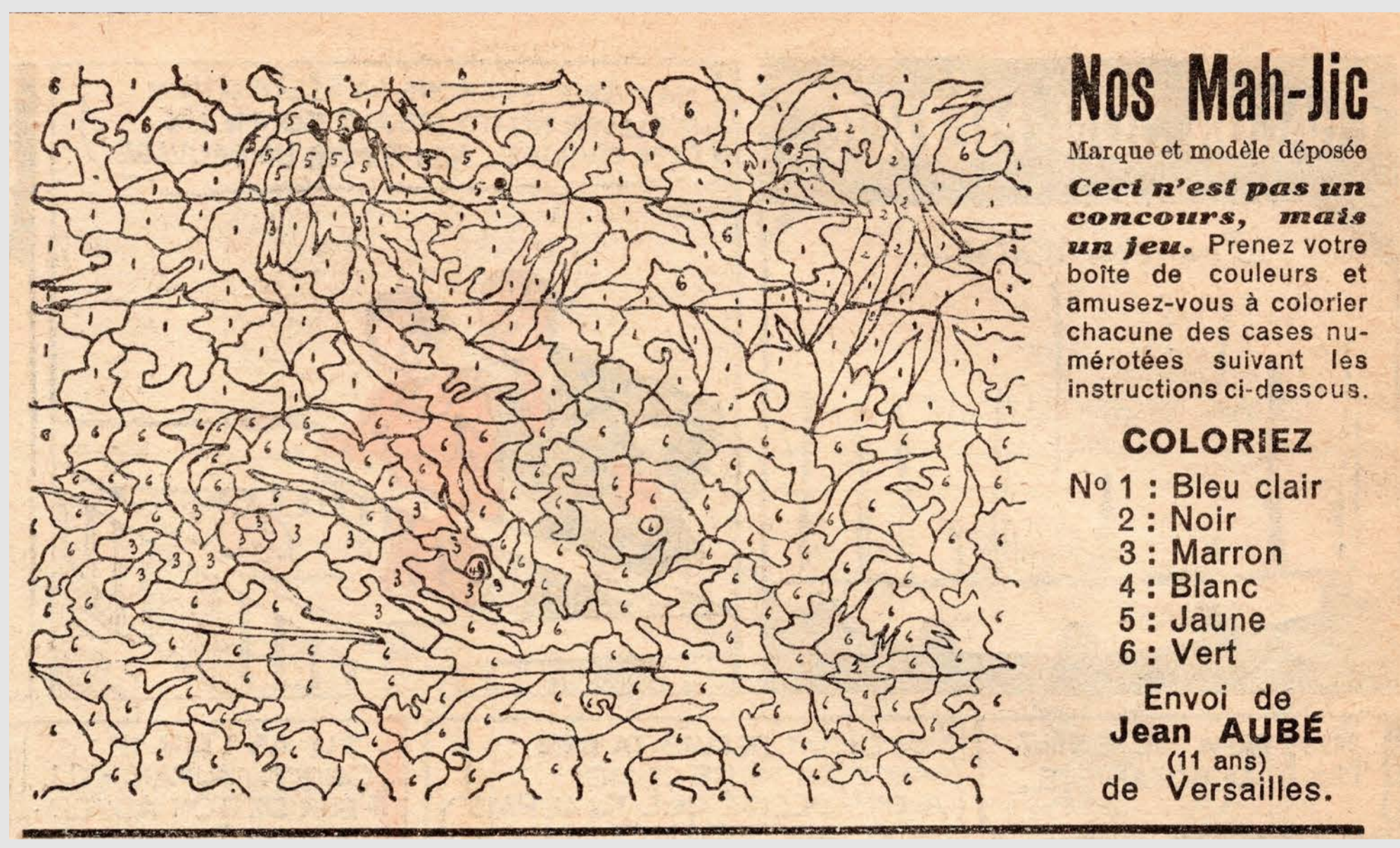
Mah-Jic Games

The issue zero, or free supplement announcing the magazine mentions "Mah-Jic," a game, we are promised, that will be all the rage in winter 1934.

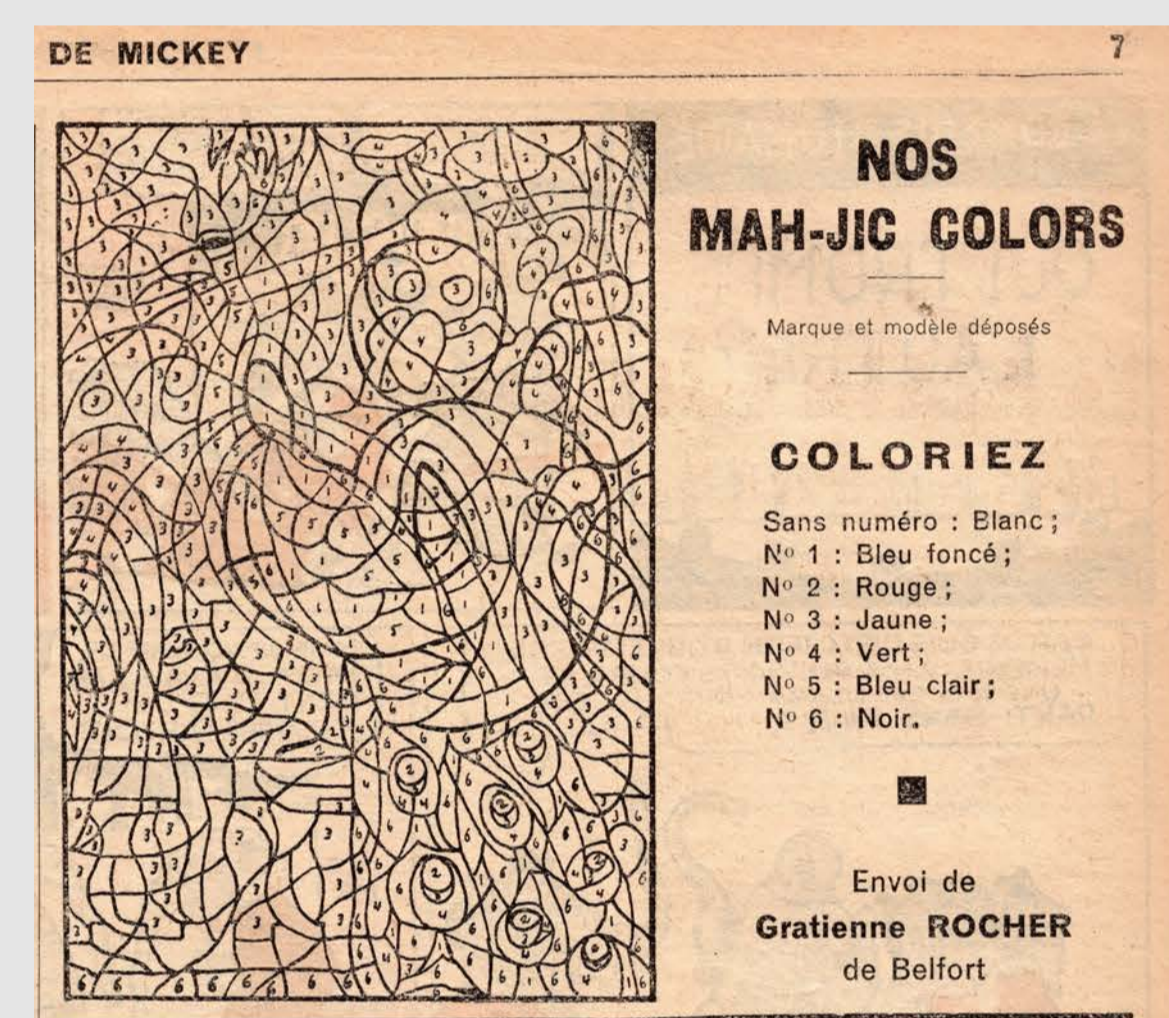
The early Mah-Jic are designed by a certain Harte. The game involved pencilling in the dotted shapes to reveal a picture illustrating the caption accompanying it. Readers were soon encouraged to send their own Mah-Jic... in color!



Journal de Mickey, no. 5, 18 November 1934

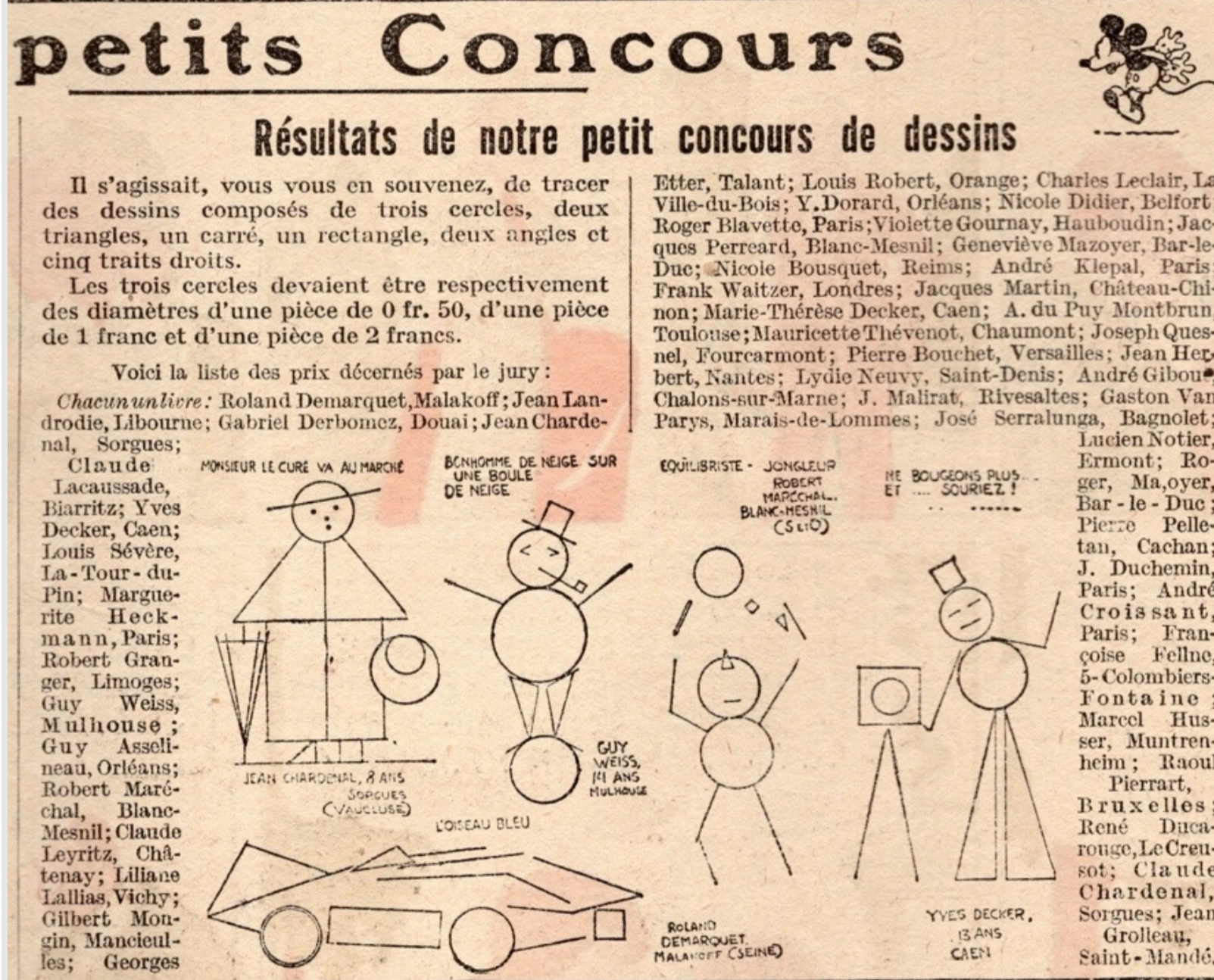
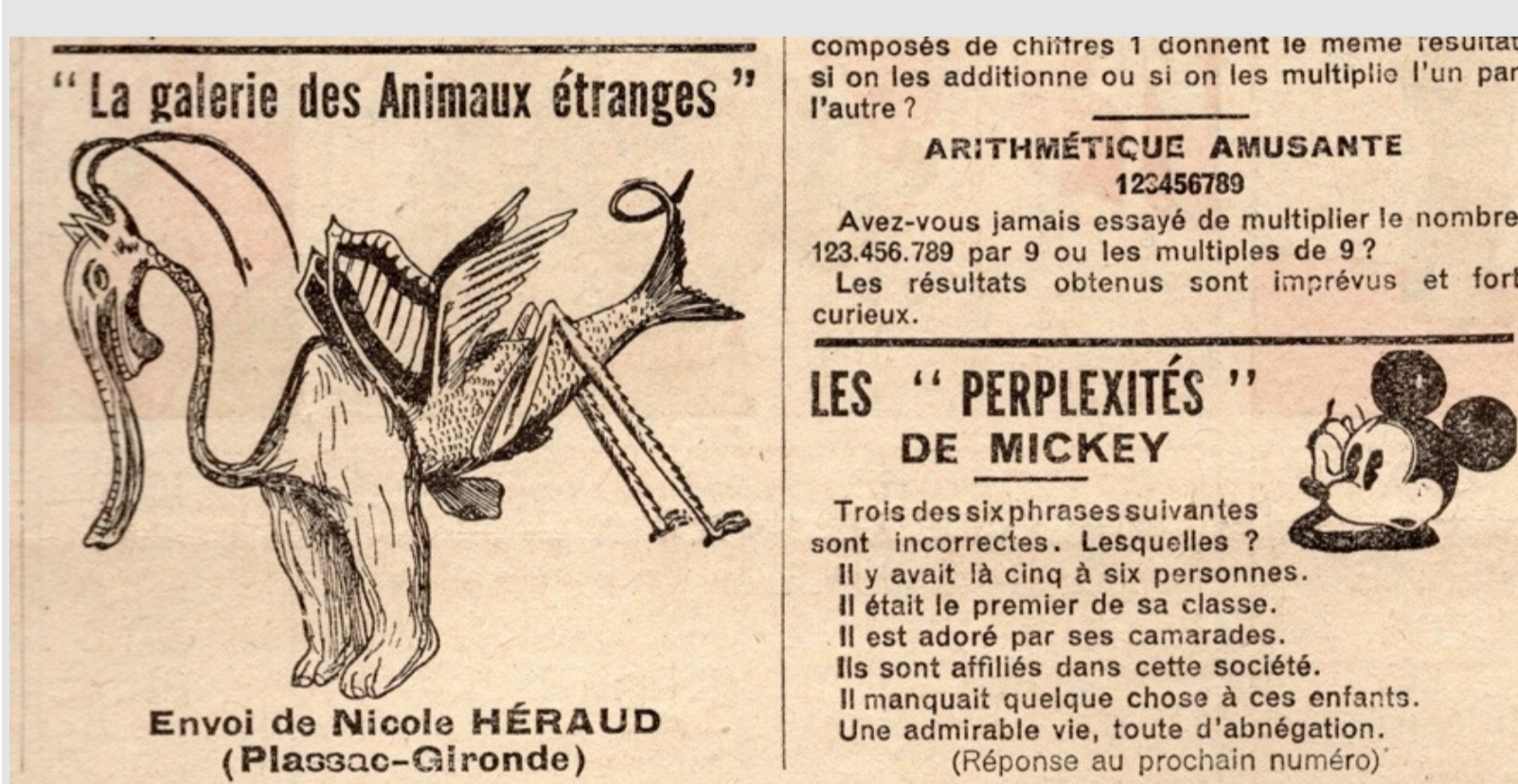


Journal de Mickey, no. 24, 31 March 1935



Journal de Mickey, no. 20, 3 March 1935

Gratiene Rocher's name appears all too frequently in these early issues, as a contributor and, above all, as a winner of the many competitions organized by the magazine. Such was her success that the young readers even doubted her existence, prompting a long letter from Oncle Léon (sportsman and journalist, Léon Sée), responsible for the letter column.



Journal de Mickey, no. 69, 9 February 1936

Lots More Games and Drawing with Prompts

The Mah-Jic games were only one, seemingly successful feature of the magazine, to the extent that Harte's versions of the games, published in the early issues from 1934 to 1935, reappeared in other periodicals, such as *Jumbo* (1935-1944) in 1937 and intermittently in *Spirou* (1938-) from its early issues through 1946.

The *Journal de Mickey* did not stop at drawing games. It organized numerous drawing contests, involving different kinds of constraints, such as the very first drawing contest based on fifteen lines and two circles to the stunning "strange animals" contest encouraging readers to create hybrid creatures and others to guess the constituents of those creatures. One game or contest could easily lead to another, maximizing reader interaction and, of course, loyalty to the magazine.



Journal de Mickey, no. 86, 10 May 1936

While the precise authorship of these drawings is difficult to determine, these games and contests confirm the magazine's interest in involving its readers and even teaching and critiquing drawing skills. Such extensive possibilities of creative interaction, especially the contests, remain unique and limited to these early years of *Journal de Mickey*, probably because of the degree of editorial involvement they required.



Journal de Mickey, no. 64, 5 January 1936

Contact
maaheen.ahmed@ugent.be

Scan QR code for bibliography and more comics and periodicals projects

