A study in early caricatures

Cartoonists have had years to hone their portraits of George W. Bush. But artists face new challenges when a fresh face bursts on the political scene. As talk of Barak Obama as a potential presidential candidate increased in 2006, so did his presence in political cartoons. In his 1991 book, *The Complete Book of Caricature*, Bob Staake points out: “The fascinating thing about editorial caricature is that an image will grow and develop with the passage of time.” In early toons, there is no consensus on how to draw the new face. As time goes on, certain common characteristics will emerge.

Talking points

1. What are the common elements in these relatively early sketches of Barak Obama? What facial features do the tooners choose to exaggerate and why?
2. Obama is not yet as recognizable a face as say, President Bush. And there are big differences in each cartoonist’s approach. Do each of these look like portraits of the same man? Or does each portrait look like a different person?
3. Caricatures can be insulting or complimentary. Without the context of the original cartoons, do you consider these caricatures critical or flattering?

Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
http://editorialcartoonists.com/
Daryl Cagle’s Professional Cartoonists Index
http://cagle.com/