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# Beyond Words: Exploring the Craft of Visual Storytelling in Graphic Novels

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**ABSTRACT:** We often think of the comic strip as a rather recent invention, but the history of sequential narrative begins with the history of art. This exhibition picks up this thread toward the end of the Middle Ages, when early book printers in the West used carved wooden blocks to stamp words and images onto the page. Because of their method of production, these books later came to be known as “block books.”

New mechanical printing processes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made books and printed pictures much more widely available than they had ever been before. As a result, artists produced humorous, satirical cartoons, and sequential art for serialized publication.

In the United States, comics first appeared in newspapers in the late nineteenth century. Newspapers attracted readership by recruiting popular cartoonists to draw comic strips, some of which were later syndicated nationally.

The comic book developed in the early twentieth century as a way to resell collections of newspaper strips, but the single-storyline comic book, devoted to a particular character, did not emerge until Superman became a hit in the late 1930s. This development allowed artists and writers freedom to expand stories and artwork beyond the single page.

**KEYWORDS-** visual storytelling, graphic, novels, beyond words

## I. INTRODUCTION

While commercial artists were busy pioneering the first newspaper and magazine comics, a similar interest in sequential art was forming in the fine art world. Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward, two artists working in and around the Expressionist movement, translated their interest in the medieval woodcut into something entirely new: the woodcut novel. Other artists followed Ward and Masereel, and the genre flourished in the 1920s and 1930s.[1,2,3]

Masereel and Ward are often cited by scholars as fathers of the graphic novel movement that started in the 1970s and 1980s with the work of Will Eisner, Art Spiegelman, and others. Before the 1960s, comics were seen as decidedly low-brow. In 1978, with the publication of Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God*, the perception of comics started to shift. It was a graphic novel, and although the term had been in use since the 1960s, *A Contract with God* established the genre.

Rather than presenting an evolutionary history of visual storytelling, the works selected for this exhibition allow us to situate woodcuts, engravings, comic strips, and graphic novels in a long tradition of word-and image-making, to consider the roles of image and narrative in our cultures, and to examine storytelling techniques in different media.

The works in *Beyond Words* are from the Rare Book Collection and the Comic Art Collection in the Division of Special Collections, Archives, and Rare Books at the University of Missouri Libraries. The exhibition was curated by Kelli Hansen, librarian, University of Missouri Libraries, Special Collections and Rare Books, Columbia, Missouri, and organized by ExhibitsUSA, a program of Mid-America Arts Alliance.

A Program of ExhibitsUSA, a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance with The Texas Commission on the Arts and The National Endowment for the Arts.

Imagine a child gazing at a bright, colorful mural. The vibrant hues and shapes create a tale of adventure and discovery. No words are spoken, yet the story unfolds vividly before their eyes. This is the essence of storytelling through visuals.



Visual storytelling is an art that brings narratives to life through imagery that surpasses the need for written or spoken words. Such a story, told through a blend of images, colors, and symbols, engages the imagination to create a universal connection with the audience.

Renowned graphic designer Paula Scher once said, “Good design is about effective communication, not decoration at the expense of legibility.” Her words highlight the essence of graphic narratives. They are not just about looking good. They are about conveying a message clearly and effectively.

Graphic narratives stand out in communication for their ability to simplify complex ideas.

- They make stories engaging and memorable.
- They connect the storyteller's vision with the audience's imagination.

This storytelling form appears in various media, such as comics, movies, and advertising. Each medium combines storytelling with visual elements. They create unique experiences.

In this article, we'll discuss visual storytelling in more detail. Each section will talk about the unique aspects that blend to make the complete picture of storytelling through visuals.[4,5,6]

So, let's get started!

### The Psychology of Visual Storytelling

Visuals significantly impact storytelling effectiveness. They do more than decorate a story. They become the story. Since the human brain processes images faster than text, it makes visual storytelling a powerful tool. It captures and holds the audience's attention quickly.

Cognitive science reveals interesting facts about visual memory and emotional connection. Images can evoke emotions more directly than words. They can also create stronger memories. It makes visual stories more impactful and memorable.

Visual storytelling plays a crucial role in engaging audiences. It keeps their attention longer. A well-crafted visual narrative can convey complex messages in a simple manner to make them more understandable. This simplicity holds more importance in today's time.

People often prefer quick, clear visual stories over lengthy texts, and visuals can convey a message at a glance. This makes them more effective in retaining audience attention.

### Elements of Compelling Graphic Narratives

Successful graphic narratives begin with thoughtful composition and layout. This involves arranging visual elements harmoniously. It guides the viewer's eye through the story. A well-structured layout captures attention and enhances the story's impact.

A cohesive storytelling experience emerges when text and visuals work together. The text complements the imagery. The visuals reinforce the narrative. This synergy creates a seamless, engaging experience for the viewer. You need the synergy between three important elements to make your visual storytelling set the narrative's tone.

**Color:** Color influences mood and emotion. **Typography:** Typography adds personality and emphasis to the text. **Images:** Through photographs or illustrations, imagery plays a direct role in storytelling.

Each element contributes to the overall feel and message of the narrative.



Sequential Art:[7,8,9] The Language of Comics and Graphic Novels

Comics, or "graphic storytelling," uniquely blend words and pictures to tell a story. This medium is distinct in its treatment of time. Unlike film or video, readers of comics have control over the pace. They can read faster or slower or dwell on certain passages. This interactivity sets comics apart from other visual mediums.

Comics share storytelling techniques with film and prose, yet it is its language with a unique system of visual grammar. People often overlook this aspect of comics.

Case studies of iconic graphic novels often reveal the narrative impact and unique storytelling techniques. Two such case studies are:

The Best We Could Do

This graphic novel by Thi Bui delves into themes of displacement and diaspora. It narrates Bui's family's escape from war-torn Vietnam to the United States. The illustrated memoir shows a blend of her upbringing in suburban California and her parents' complicated memories from Vietnam. It vividly depicts her mother and father's childhood amidst the country's upheaval.

This narrative highlights the emotional depth and complexity that graphic novels can convey, particularly regarding personal and historical experiences.

Maus

Art Spiegelman's "Maus" is a seminal work in graphic novels. It focuses on a son's quest to learn about his father's history as a Polish Jew who survived the Holocaust. The novel alternates between two stories: one in the present, featuring interviews with Spiegelman's estranged father, and the other depicting his father's life during the Holocaust as a graphic novel.

This work is known for its unique narrative technique, where it depicts different races as different animals – Jews as mice, Germans as cats,[10,11,12] and Poles as pigs. This method challenges traditional narrative forms and highlights the complexities of race and identity.

"Maus" was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1992. He became the first graphic novel to receive such an honor. This recognition shows the profound narrative impact that graphic novels can have.

Infographics and Data Storytelling

Infographics transform data into compelling visual stories. They turn numbers and statistics into understandable and engaging visuals. This transformation holds a lot of importance in the information-heavy world.

Infographics play a significant role in simplifying complex or raw information. They use charts, graphs, and imagery to make data more accessible. This simplification helps audiences grasp complicated concepts quickly and easily.

Successful data visualizations often become iconic. "We Feel Fine" by Jonathan Harris and Sep Kamvar is a groundbreaking data visualization. The website actively searches the internet every 10 minutes. It gathers expressions of human emotion from blogs. Then, it displays these emotions in dynamic, visually engaging formats.

Running on Java, this early data story greatly influenced data visualization professionals. It turned a large amount of internet data into a vivid emotional aspect.

Visual Storytelling in Branding and Marketing



Brands use logos, color schemes, and imagery to tell their stories. These elements shape how customers perceive and connect with the brand. Utilizing a logo maker app can streamline the process of creating a visually compelling logo that effectively communicates the brand's narrative and values.

Visual storytelling significantly impacts consumer perceptions. It makes brands relatable and memorable. A well-crafted visual narrative can evoke emotions and create lasting impressions.

Case studies of memorable brand campaigns often highlight the effectiveness of graphic narratives.

- Nike's "Just Do It" campaign used striking images of athletes in action with the iconic tagline. These visuals captured the essence of determination and achievement, resonating deeply with audiences. The graphic narrative was key in defining Nike's brand identity as inspiring and motivational.
- Apple's "Think Different" ads featured black-and-white portraits of influential figures. These visuals, coupled with the powerful tagline, [13,14,15] celebrated creativity and innovation. The campaign's graphic narrative effectively positioned Apple as a brand for creative thinkers and change-makers

These campaigns used powerful visuals and minimal text to convey their brand stories.

#### Intuitive and Digital Visual Storytelling

With new technologies like Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) gaining traction, we'll see immersive visual storytelling experiences. It lets storytellers engage audiences in interactive ways, using everything from web interfaces to virtual environments.

Intuitive design principles engage user participation. They make stories more experiential with intuitive navigation and interactive elements. This approach transforms viewers into active participants.

AR and VR technologies create immersive experiences that merge digital and physical worlds. Users step inside stories to form a deep, personal connection with the narrative. These technologies are changing how someone tells and experiences stories.

#### Cultural and Social Impact of Visual Narratives

Visual narratives hold a mirror to society that reflects and shapes cultural narratives. They capture the essence of a time, place, and people, often conveying deeper truths about society.

#### Reflection of Cultural Narratives

Visual narratives, like graphic novels and comics, serve as windows into different cultures. They showcase everyday norms, values, and traditions to make the unfamiliar relatable.

For example, Japanese manga often highlights aspects of Japanese culture and societal norms. This helps global audiences understand and appreciate cultural diversity. These narratives offer a unique perspective on the human condition by presenting real-life scenarios. It makes cultural learning engaging and impactful.

#### Commentary on Social and Political Issues

Visual narratives are powerful tools for discussing social and political issues. They simplify complex topics and make them more approachable. Comics and graphic novels can address inequality, war, and environmental crises.

Art Spiegelman's "Maus," for instance, uses a graphic novel format to explore the horrors of the Holocaust, as we discussed earlier. This approach makes difficult subjects more accessible and encourages dialogue and understanding among readers.



### Driving Social Change

Graphic narratives can be catalysts for change. They raise awareness about critical issues like human rights, climate change, and social justice. These narratives can inspire action and influence public opinion by engaging readers emotionally.

For example, Marjane Satrapi's "Persepolis" sheds light on the impact of the Iranian Revolution. It invites readers to empathize and reflect. Such narratives have the power to mobilize communities and drive real-world [16,17,18] change.

### Collaboration in Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling is inherently interdisciplinary. Projects often require a harmonious blend of skills from writers, artists, and designers.

Each contributor plays a vital role. Writers craft the narrative, artists bring it to life visually, and designers focus on creating a cohesive and engaging final product. You have visual design feedback tools available in the market where all the collaborators can work together to create an excellent final product.

Effective collaboration in this field leads to successful projects that leave lasting impacts.

Take the example of film productions where directors, scriptwriters, and visual effects teams work together. Such collaborations demonstrate the incredible potential of combining diverse talents and perspectives in visual storytelling. This teamwork enhances the creative process and broadens the reach and resonance of the stories told.

### Educational Applications of Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling in education, mainly through graphic narratives, uniquely enhances learning. It makes educational content more engaging and memorable.

### Visual Storytelling in Educational Materials and E-Learning

Graphic narratives are increasingly used in educational materials and e-learning platforms. They make learning more interactive and enjoyable. For example, "Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales" is a graphic novel that presents major historical events and figures in an engaging format. This approach makes learning history appealing and accessible to younger audiences.

### Enhancing Learning Retention Through Visuals

Visuals in education also help in better retention of information. They simplify complex ideas and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Graphic novels like "American Born Chinese," "Stitches," and "Lunch Lady Series" are used in classrooms to teach various subjects. [15,16,17] These books combine art and storytelling to make learning more impactful and enjoyable for students.

Using graphic narratives and visual storytelling in education is not just about making learning fun. It's about creating a more effective and immersive learning experience. These methods tap into the brain's visual and narrative processing strengths. It leads to a more holistic and engaging educational experience.

### Ethical Considerations in Visual Storytelling

You must consider ethical considerations to tell your stories responsibly and respectfully. You can shape perceptions and influence opinions as a visual storyteller. With this power comes a responsibility to consider the impact of your narratives.



- Representation and Cultural Sensitivity: It's important to represent cultures and groups accurately and respectfully. This avoids perpetuating stereotypes or cultural misappropriation.
- Avoid Visual Stereotypes: Stereotypes can lead to misinterpretations and reinforce harmful biases. Ethical storytelling involves avoiding these stereotypes.
- Responsibility in Shaping Perceptions: Visual storytellers influence how people see the world. They must know this influence and strive to present balanced and fair narratives.

You play a significant role in how people receive and understand your stories. Your choices can have a lasting impact on audiences and society.

#### Future Trends in Graphic Narratives

The future of graphic narratives embraces technological innovation and audience engagement. Emerging technologies and interactive storytelling mediums have the power to drive significant changes.

#### AI and Machine Learning in Visual Storytelling

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning enable you to create dynamic, complex narratives with unique art styles. AI can analyze and learn from existing art, generating new, innovative visual elements. This technology also allows for personalized storytelling, where narratives adapt to individual viewer preferences.

For example, an AI-driven graphic novel might change its storyline based on a reader's previous interactions. It can offer a unique experience to each user.

#### VR and AR in Interactive Storytelling

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) transform storytelling into interactive experiences. These technologies immerse users in stories to make narratives more engaging and personal.[18,19,20]

VR places users directly into story environments. It allows them to explore and interact with the narrative world. AR brings story elements into the real world. It enhances the reading experience with interactive visuals.

For instance, a VR graphic novel could let users explore a fictional city, while an AR comic book might make characters leap off the page into the reader's environment.

#### Digital Platforms for Storytelling

The digital era offers new storytelling platforms like online comics and graphic novels. These formats provide flexible storytelling methods and a wider audience reach.

Online platforms enable creators to update stories regularly, engage with readers directly, and incorporate multimedia elements like sound and animation. Digital distribution also makes it easier for stories to reach a global audience. It helps break the geographical and language barriers.

This accessibility encourages diverse storytelling where creators from various backgrounds can share their narratives.

Technological integration with creativity will redefine storytelling to meet the demands for immersive and interactive experiences. The future of graphic narratives looks promising, with technology playing a key role in shaping its path.

## II. DISCUSSION

Visual storytelling holds immense power in communication. It goes beyond words, shaping how we perceive and understand stories. As a designer and storyteller, embrace the visual magic! Let visuals tell tales, evoke emotions, and simplify complexities.

The canvas is yours—paint narratives that captivate and resonate to make every story a vivid, memorable experience. Embrace the art of visual storytelling for impactful communication!

The world of storytelling has evolved beyond the traditional realms of novels and short stories, embracing the visual medium as a powerful means of communication. Graphic novels, manga, and doodle fiction have soared in popularity, captivating audiences with their unique blend of art and narrative. In this article, we will delve into the fascinating world of these visual storytelling forms, uncovering their historical origins and cultural influences.



<https://news.stanford.edu/2022/02/10/graphic-novels-can-accelerate-critical-thinking-capture-nuance-complexity-history/>

### I. Understanding Graphic Novels

Graphic novels, also known as sequential art, are a form of storytelling that combines illustrations and text to convey a narrative. Unlike traditional comics, graphic novels are often longer and encompass a complete story arc. They utilize a wide range of artistic techniques to evoke emotions and immerse readers in the tale.

From the bold and dynamic illustrations in superhero comics to the intricately detailed and atmospheric illustrations in fantasy graphic novels, artistic styles in graphic novels are incredibly diverse. Visual storytelling techniques, such as panel layout, composition, and use of color, play a vital role in guiding the reader's perception and enhancing the overall storytelling experience.

Graphic novels have come a long way since their humble beginnings as comic books. They have gained recognition as a legitimate form of literature, blending complex narratives with stunning visuals. These stories have not only captured the hearts of avid readers but have also made a significant impact on popular culture, inspiring movies, television shows, and even video games.





<https://news.cnrs.fr/articles/how-manga-conquered-the-world>

## II. Exploring Manga

Manga, a Japanese form of visual storytelling, has a rich and vibrant history deeply rooted in Japanese culture. It encompasses a wide range of genres and is enjoyed by people of all ages. In Japan, manga holds immense cultural significance, with dedicated manga cafes, conventions, and even manga museums celebrating its artistry and influence.

Distinctive characteristics set manga apart from other visual storytelling forms. The use of large eyes to convey emotions, exaggerated facial expressions, and intricate backgrounds are trademarks of manga art. Additionally, manga often utilizes varying panel shapes and sizes to create dynamic visual narratives.

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fmarkjayolivera.code.blog%2F2020%2F12%2F05%2Fdoodle-fiction-manga-and-graphic-novel%2F&psig=AOvVaw3QURLP0Eh-yKOyGJ7Iui7t&ust=1697525450706000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBMQjhxqFwoTCNiZnqX9-YEDFQAAAAAAdAAAAABAJ>

Manga encompasses a vast array of genres, catering to diverse interests and tastes. From action-packed shonen manga to heartwarming romance stories found in shoujo manga, there is something for everyone. Manga also explores a wide range of themes, including slice-of-life, science fiction, historical fiction, and even supernatural elements.

## III. Unveiling Doodle Fiction

Doodle fiction is a relatively new form of visual storytelling that embraces spontaneous doodles and expressive illustrations. Unlike traditional graphic novels and manga, doodle fiction often involves quick sketches and improvised storytelling. It celebrates the freedom to create without the pressure of creating intricately detailed artwork.



With the advent of digital technology, doodle fiction has flourished, finding popularity on various online platforms and social media. Artists now have the tools to bring their doodles to life, incorporating animations and interactivity into their narratives.[10,11,12] This modern expression of creativity allows for quick and accessible storytelling that resonates with a digitally connected audience.

Doodle fiction stands out through its raw and unfiltered nature, embracing imperfections as part of its charm. Artists often utilize a mix of simple linework, vibrant colors, and handwritten text to convey their stories. The key focus is on conveying emotions and evoking a personal connection with the audience.

#### IV. Comparing the Techniques

Graphic novels excel in structuring narratives within panels and pages. Through carefully designed layouts, they control the reader's pace, allowing the story to unfold with a well-defined beginning, middle, and end. The balance between text and visuals determines the flow and impact of the story.

Manga utilizes sequential storytelling techniques to guide readers through a series of panels. The placement and order of these panels create a sense of motion and rhythm. Unlike graphic novels, manga often continues the narrative across multiple volumes, allowing for more complex and immersive storylines.

Doodle fiction embraces a more spontaneous and flexible approach to storytelling. Artists can create and adapt their narratives as they go, giving birth to unexpected twists and turns. This form of storytelling encourages experimentation and improvisation, inviting readers to experience the creative process alongside the artist.

#### VI. Artistic Styles and Expressive Elements

Graphic novels employ various panel layouts and compositions to enhance storytelling. From the use of grid structures to present multiple perspectives to full-page spreads that depict dramatic moments, each layout choice contributes to the overall atmosphere and impact of the story.

Art styles in manga range from highly detailed and realistic to simplified and stylized, each with its own unique appeal. These art styles play a crucial role in conveying different emotions and immersing readers in the story. Visual cues, such as sweat drops or teardrop-shaped eyes, are cleverly used to evoke specific feelings or reactions.

Doodle fiction celebrates individuality and self-expression. Artists are encouraged to experiment with various art styles, allowing their personalities to shine through in their work. The focus is not on technical perfection but on conveying personal experiences and emotions through the medium of doodles.

After exploring the rich tapestry of graphic novels, manga, and doodle fiction, it becomes evident that each form possesses its own unique qualities and contributions to visual storytelling. Graphic novels astound with their carefully crafted narratives and stunning visuals. Manga captivates through its cultural significance and diverse genres. Doodle fiction offers a platform for personal expression and creative spontaneity. Together, they showcase the boundless potential of visual storytelling to engage and captivate audiences.

As visual storytelling continues to evolve, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the power and evolution of these art forms. Each provides a gateway into imaginative worlds filled with emotions, ideas, and cultural perspectives. So, take the plunge, explore the diverse world of graphic novels, manga, and doodle fiction, and embark on an unforgettable journey of visual storytelling.[6,7,8]



### III. RESULTS

It's debatable whether the woodcut novel died out, or whether it transformed. Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward are often cited by scholars as founders of the graphic novel movement that blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s with the work of Will Eisner, Art Spiegelman, and others.

Before the 1960s, comics were seen as decidedly low-brow, a somewhat disreputable art form created primarily as entertainment aimed at children. In 1978, with the publication of Will Eisner's *A Contract with God*, the perception of comics started to shift. Inspired by Ward, Eisner deliberately created a new, more mature use for sequential art. Comic historian Douglas Wolk has noted that *A Contract with God* was something new: "It wasn't serialized, it didn't belong to any particular genre, it didn't look like either mainstream comics or 'underground comix.'" It was a graphic novel, and although the term had been in use since the 1960s, *A Contract with God* established the genre.

Recent comic artists and critics have pointed out that Masereel and Ward were not inspired by the comic art of their own time, and they probably would have objected to the idea that their works could be viewed as comics today. Even so, they have provided an important and ongoing influence on the graphic novels of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Will Eisner started his career in the late 1930s as a cartoonist for comic strips and the newspaper supplement *The Spirit*, which featured a masked, crime-fighting vigilante. By the 1970s, Eisner wanted to move to a more sophisticated form of visual narrative. Inspired by the woodcut novels of Lynd Ward, Eisner experimented with telling stories of a more literary nature through sequential art. The result was *A Contract with God*, which presents four semi-autobiographical short stories about the inhabitants of a Brooklyn, New York, tenement.

Although the term "graphic novel" had been used as early as 1964, *A Contract with God* is often considered to be the first true graphic novel, and it was a milestone for comics. Eisner's work, which broke with conventions such as the strip and the framed panel, was hailed as a masterpiece, and it paved the way for the alternative comics of the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition to being a pioneer of the graphic novel, Will Eisner was an early theorist of comics as a distinct art form. Art Spiegelman was involved with the underground comix movement in San Francisco in the 1960s and 1970s at the beginning of his career. In the late 1970s, he taught at the School of Visual Arts and co-edited the influential magazine *RAW* with editor Françoise Mouly (b. 1955).

*Maus* is the story of his parents' experience as Polish Jews in Auschwitz during the Holocaust<sup>[1,12,13]</sup> and was the first graphic novel to gain recognition from literary critics. The first six chapters were published in 1972 in the underground comic *Funny Animals*, but Spiegelman later produced it in book-length form. Unlike Will Eisner's *Contract with God*, *Maus* was published by a mainstream publishing house and was available in bookstores, not just comic book shops. Perhaps partly because of its greater availability and visibility, *Maus* popularized the graphic novel format as a vehicle for literary fiction or memoir.

Like Eisner, Spiegelman lists Lynd Ward among his most important artistic influences. He has been instrumental in the revival of interest in Ward's work. Spiegelman was also familiar with Frans Masereel's work, and he was fascinated with the idea of creating a "great American novel" in comics.

Marjane Satrapi recounts her childhood in Iran up to the Islamic Revolution in this autobiographical graphic novel. Her high-contrast, simple images distill characters down to only their distinguishing characteristics, breaking down the differences among them. This technique also removes barriers between the characters and the reader, suggesting that they are all part of the same group and making the events of the narrative even more immediate.

Satrapi suggests that she developed her simple style for other reasons, however. In a *Guardian* article in 2004, she is quoted as saying "I had gaps....I never learned how to draw a body, for example, because in that art school in Iran, we couldn't learn it. I didn't have any notion of perspective. So there were many things I didn't do because I couldn't do them. But I was clever enough to take my lack and make a style out of it."

Satrapi came to comics after being trained as an illustrator, and she notes that the two modes of working are quite different. In *Persepolis*, she learned how to combine series of images to tell a compelling story. "You can't show static



images one after the other—which is what I did in the first part of the first book, because I was not a cartoonist." *Fun Home* is a graphic memoir that explores the themes of sexual orientation and death in author Alison Bechdel's adolescence. She recounts her relationship with her father, a high school English teacher and part-time funeral director, who commits suicide shortly after Bechdel comes out as a lesbian. The structure of the plot is circular, going over the same scenes from different points of view. Bechdel herself describes it as a labyrinth, "going over the same material, but starting from the outside and spiraling in to the [14,15] center of the story."

*Fun Home* was a finalist for the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award in autobiography.

Eric Drooker is an artist with a wide repertoire; he works as a painter, illustrator, graphic novelist, and animator. *Flood* was his first novel in pictures. Like *A Contract with God*, it is made up of three interconnected, semi-autobiographical short stories: "Home," "L," and "Flood." "Flood," the longest of the three chapters, follows an artist as he walks through the streets of New York on a rainy day. Perhaps in a nod to Frans Masereel's examination of artistic fantasy in *Die Sonne*, Drooker's artist overtakes reality and floods the entire city.

Drooker acknowledges the political and stylistic influence of both Lynd Ward and Frans Masereel on his work. When this novel was published in 1992, Art Spiegelman reviewed it for *The New York Times*, placing it squarely within the tradition pioneered by Masereel and Ward.

The main character of *The Number* is a prison executioner who finds a slip of paper with a strange sequence of numbers on the body of a convicted murderer. He pockets the slip of paper, wondering what the numbers mean. Over the next few days, he begins to see the sequence of numbers everywhere. At the same time, he meets and falls in love with a mysterious woman, and together, they win a huge sum of money at a casino. The next morning, the woman, the money, and even the casino are gone. Driven insane by his attempts to interpret the numbers, the man eventually reenacts the prisoner's crime and is himself executed.

Thomas Ott's novel is entirely wordless. He carries the narrative through grids of small images, with more important scenes occupying an entire page. Ott's scratchboard drawings show the clear influence of Lynd Ward, and Ott even includes one direct quotation. The artist in Ward's *Gods' Man* recoils from a dollar sign tattooed on his mistress's shoulder; Ott's main character has the same reaction to an eight ball tattooed on the shoulder of the mysterious woman at the casino. This book launched the *I Live Here* project, a series of four "paper documentaries" intended to record the stories of displaced people and refugees in four areas around the world. A team of journalists, creative writers, and artists came together to transform firsthand accounts into the complex combinations of words and images in these four volumes.

This volume of *I Live Here* focuses on a children's prison in Malawi, Africa. It is based on photographs and interviews with child prisoners conducted by Mia Kirschner and journalist J.B. MacKinnon, as well as stories and artwork made by the children themselves. This section focuses on the AIDS epidemic by telling the story of a young girl who is worried about her pregnant mother because she is sick with the [18,19] "wasting disease." Many of the child prisoners interviewed by Kirschner and MacKinnon were AIDS orphans.

The publication of *I Live Here* was partially underwritten by Amnesty International, and the book's success led to the formation of a foundation dedicated to telling unheard stories from around the world.

Chris Ware's work draws stylistically from early newspaper comic strips to explore themes of depression, isolation, and family conflict. Ware's work has won numerous awards, including awards usually reserved for text-based, non-illustrated literature. ← Wordless Novels About the Exhibition →

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In *Building Stories*, the graphic novel meets the artist's book as Ware questions how the physical structure of a book affects its storytelling capabilities. *Building Stories* is a boxed set of fourteen separate materials: books, pamphlets, newspapers, broadsheets, flip books, and a game board. These materials tell a complex set of interconnected stories centered around a brownstone apartment building in Chicago. The inhabitants interact through various stories carried across various materials, which also trace their lives before and after they live in the building.



In Building Stories, Ware breaks down the narrative sequence, leaving groups of sequential images intact, but not providing clues as to how these groups fit together. The reader must piece them together in order to form a story.[20]

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