

NEW WORK NEW AUDIENCES
UK COMIC BOOKS

REPORT

Study tour 12 > 16 December 2010, London



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: BRITISH COUNCIL AND LITERATURE	3
COMIC BOOK STUDY TOUR PROGRAMME Sunday 12 to Thursday 16 December 2010	4
REPORT	5
Film screening of documentary on Grant Morrison <i>Grant Morrison: Talking with Gods</i>	5
Overview of Comic Books in the UK by Paul Gravett	6
Laydeez do Comics	9
An evening with Posy Simmonds at Laydeez do Comics.....	11
SelfMadeHero	13
Introduction by Emma Hayley.....	13
Marketing & Press at SelfMadeHero by Doug Wallace	15
Jonathan Cape by Dan Franklin	16
Londonprintstudio.....	18
Walker Books.....	20
Lizzie Spratt, Commissioning Editor	20
Alice Burden, head of press and publicity	22
Viviane Schwartz, <i>The Sleepwalkers</i>	22
Knockabout comics by Tony Bennett and Hunt Emerson.....	23
Hypercomics by Daniel Merlin Goodbrey	24
Academia & Comics With Jason Dittmer, Maggie Gray, Roger Sabin and Tony Venezia.....	25
CONCLUSION	26
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES	27
APPENDIX	28
ORGANISERS BIOGRAPHIES	29
PARTICIPANTS BIOGRAPHIES	29
SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES	30

INTRODUCTION: BRITISH COUNCIL AND LITERATURE

The British Council is the **UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations**. We work in over 100 countries to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide. Our global arts team works with the best of British creative talent to develop innovative, high-quality events and collaborations that link thousands of artists and cultural institutions around the world, drawing them into a closer relationship with the UK.¹

The Literature team works with British writers and sector professionals to develop projects including, workshops, festivals, conferences, live literature events and residencies. The team works extensively with artists and cultural organisation to build skills, capacity and cultural awareness, create access to audiences and markets, and promote international collaboration and creative exchange.

We cover a wide range of literature work including, creative writing, creative reading, live literature, publishing, translation and literature in education. Projects are developed in close partnership with our overseas offices and locally-based partners and focus on building long-term partnerships and mutually beneficial relationships. The projects are carefully planned according to British Council strategic objectives and local aims, our target audiences and the quality and appropriateness of a project or piece of work to the local context. Throughout all our work we aim to give a modern, diverse picture of the UK and to promote the debate of issues and ideas by challenging opinions and increasing understanding between cultures.

Currently in the UK the interest in **comics and graphic novels** is growing as specialised independent companies are growing and major publishing houses are developing their graphic novel lists. More comics artists are reaching mainstream audiences through books, film adaptations and exhibitions and this is resulting in an explosion of creative talent. The UK does not have a strong tradition of comics as in other European countries or in the US, but this allows for more innovative and unique work. Comics provide an approach to reading that reflects the multimedia nature of contemporary culture and, through comics, the British Council works with new artists and reaches readers reluctant to engage with other forms of literature.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY TOUR

British Council Benelux has been approached by [Strip Turnhout](#), a non-profit organisation in Belgium which is organising, among other activities, the **Strip Turnhout festival**, a well established, bi-annual, **comic book festival in Belgium**. Having started to work with country guest of honour programmes with the USA in 2007, followed by Spain in 2009, they will invite the [UK as guest of honour from 9 to 11 December 2011](#).

British Council Benelux is working in consultation with British Council Arts department, and more specifically with Literature department on Comic Books, to present new work within the wider **New Work New Audiences** project that has been launched globally by the British Council to showcase new talent from the UK overseas.

The UK Comic Books study tour aims to build international networks, change perception of UK comic book scene, introduce producers in Benelux to exciting new UK work, help our overseas partners to have the expertise to show UK art to their audiences in the best way possible, show the UK as having an innovative and contemporary comic book scene and show how comic books can be used in cultural relations.

Following an invitation of literature department to their network, delegates from Helsinki and Algiers have also joined the Belgian delegation during this study tour.

¹ Note that unlike the Arts Council, the British Council is not a funding organisation. The UK also has a system of agencies and government organisations to serve UK based artists within the UK. Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, the Arts Council of Wales and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland are national funding bodies that are responsible for developing, sustaining and promoting the arts through the distribution of public money from central government and revenue generated by the National Lottery.

COMIC BOOK STUDY TOUR PROGRAMME
Sunday 12 to Thursday 16 December 2010

SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER

1600-1800 Film screening of documentary on Grant Morrison: Grant Morrison: Talking With Gods at the *Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), The Mall*, www.ica.org.uk

MONDAY 13 DECEMBER

1000-1200 Introduction to the British Council by Susanna Nicklin and overview of comic books in the UK by Paul Gravett

1300-1600 Lunch hosted by Flanders House with writers and illustrators at the Institute of Directors (IoD)

1630-1830 Nicola Streeten and Sarah Lightman, *Laydeez do Comics*

1830-2130 Laydeez do Comics evening with Posy Simmonds

TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER

1000-1200 Emma Hayley, Publishing Director, *SelfMadeHero*

1430-1600 Dan Franklin, Publishing Director, *Jonathan Cape*

1700-1830 Tour of *That's Novel* Exhibition, London Print Studio with Karrie Fransman

WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER

1000-1200 Lizzie Spratt, Commissioning Editor, *Walker Books*

1200-1330 Lunch with *Walker Books*

1400-1530 Tony Bennett, Publishing Director, *Knockabout* and Hunt Emerson, writer

1530-1700 Daniel Merlin Goodbrey on comics in new media

1800 Exhibition at the Illustration Art Gallery

THURSDAY 16 DECEMBER

1000-1200 Jason Dittmer, Maggie Gray, Tony Venezia, Roger Sabin on comic books and academia

1300-1500 Wrap up lunch

Special thanks:

Geert De Proost, Lotte Ysenbrandt and Karel Ooms from Flanders House and Tourism Flanders-Brussels in London, Paul Gravett (Comica Festival), Susanna Nicklin (British Council Literature Department), and to all the speakers who have generously hosted the Belgian, Algerian and Finish delegation and shared their work and views about comics in the UK.

REPORT

The study tour programme has been organised and coordinated by Canan Marasligil (British Council Benelux) and Karen Brodie (British Council London, Literature department).

This report has been written and edited by Canan Marasligil, with the support of Karen Brodie, the delegates and the various speakers.



Delegates at the londonprintstudio

Film screening of documentary on Grant Morrison Grant Morrison: Talking with Gods

As a special Comica '10 event in association with the ICA, Comica has presented an exclusive first UK big-screen showing of *Talking With Gods* (<http://grantmorrisonmovie.com>), a documentary about Scottish comic book writer and playwright Grant Morrison. The screening was followed by a panel discussion where American director Patrick Meany has joined via Skype, while in person were Morrison collaborators Frazer Irving (*Seven Soldiers: Klarion the Witch Boy, Batman & Robin*), Rian Hughes (*Dare, Really & Truly* collected in *Yesterday's Tomorrows*) and designer and photographer Steve Cook.

The fascinating film documentary *Grant Morrison: Talking With Gods* details the vision of one of the comic world's most popular and controversial writers. Famous for such works as *The Invisibles*, *Arkham Asylum* and *All-Star Superman*, Morrison talks extensively here about his comic book creations and his connections with the magical world. The film also includes contributions from Geoff Johns, Douglas Rushkoff and Mark Waid, amongst others.

Panel discussion

Director Patrick Meany tells about the incentive to make a documentary film about Grant Morrison: "I first met Grant Morrison as a fan five or six years ago at a signing" says Meany. "A couple of years ago, I was researching for my book about *The Invisibles*, and interviewed Grant Morrison. This interview led to the idea that a documentary film could be made." The film very much focuses on how Morrison's life influenced his work.

Talking about superhero comics, Rian Hughes explains that he did not grow up with superhero comics and that he likes Morrison's work because he is "one of the best writers going through these super heroes, describing these archetypes, making them work. For me, it doesn't have so much resonance, a bit like the Greek gods; Grant knows the *DC comics* mythology inside

out. The work he does is more self contained and doesn't require knowledge of the DC mythology", and he adds "I find it more *him*."

On the relationship with Mark Millar and what contemporary UK culture does in the USA, coming out of Glasgow in this case, Meaney explains that he experienced Glasgow as really cosmopolitan and fun. But he could unfortunately not interview Millar for the documentary. Meaney adds, "Grant hasn't been successful in Hollywood yet, but it can come once he does something good on Hollywood, like Alan Moore or Millar did."

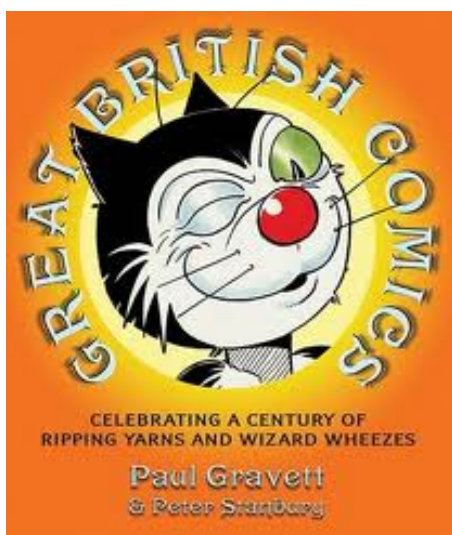
"It was amazing for me" says Meaney "to have moved from being a fan to telling his story through this documentary."

Patrick Meaney has told the audience he wants to shoot a similar movie about Warren Ellis.

You can read The Guardian's review of the film here:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/dec/19/grant-morrison-the-invisibles-comics>

Overview of Comic Books in the UK by Paul Gravett



Cover of Paul Gravett's book about British Comics

On Monday, delegates were welcomed at the British Council headquarters in Spring Gardens, where Director of the British Council Literature department Susie Nicklin introduced the work of the British Council as a leading cultural relations organisation (see introduction to this report). This was followed by an overview of the comic books sector in the UK presented by journalist, curator, writer and broadcaster Paul Gravett.

Gravett has worked in comics publishing and promotion for over twenty years. In this session, he has presented the landscape of British Comics. "There's an idea of the UK not being a comics country, unlike Belgium or France" says Gravett, explaining that the UK is mostly in the shadows of the US and Europe. However, there is a lot of comics culture going on and happening in many directions. "A real Renaissance" says Gravett. He explains that comics see more and more support from cultural and educational

institutions compared to twenty years ago. Only one example of institutional support towards comics is the exhibition *God save the comics*, a survey of British comic art that was held during the Angoulême festival in 1990 and was opened by then French minister of culture Jacques Lang.



The UK has many **comics events** including: [Comica festival](#), [London's Expo Comic Con](#), [MCMEXPO](#) (Movie Comics Media), the [International Alternative Press Festival](#), [BICS](#) - British International Comics Show in

Birmingham, [Comic Expo in Bristol](#), [Thought Bubble in Leeds](#) - attracting audiences that cannot make it down to London but also raising the city's sector credibility, Oxford's annual comics convention [Caption](#) – a really small festival, friendly, supporting people making their own comics, the [London Book Fair](#) started a Comic Books pavilion where they host a programme of panels etc. Other UK book fairs are also accommodating graphic novels, like the [International Edinburgh Book Festival](#).

Another obvious boom in comics can be seen with movie adaptations, with UK works like Posy Simmonds's *Tamara Drewe* or Mark Millar's *Kick Ass*. Both have woken up film festivals to graphic novels.

“Comics cannot just be talking to itself, it has to reach out” says Gravett.



Competitions play an important role in finding new UK talent: the [graphic short story competition](#) organised with the Observer and Publishing House Jonathan Cape, the [Manga Jiman competition](#)... Jonathan Cape has discovered remarkable

new talent thanks to the graphic short story competition.

Social groups are blooming too: like *Laydeez do Comics*, a very well organised group not just for ladies but led by women; a new charity launched this year, *Comic Book Alliance*: a new voice for the industry and the art form... and there are many more.

Exhibitions grow in importance and enable wider impact on the medium and the industry: a new gallery in Lincoln had a wonderfully well-curated exhibition on comics entitled *Silent Witnesses*, Tate Britain made a major exhibition on comics and cartoons: [Rude Britannia: British Comic Arts](#), Pumphouse Gallery in London presented Adam Dant, Daniel Merlin Goodbrey, Dave McKean and Warren Pleece in the exhibition [Hypercomics: The Shapes of Comics to Come](#).

Literary acceptance of comics has also been important: Posy Simmonds and Raymond Briggs have been introduced to the Royal Society of Literature, Chris Ware has contributed to *Granta* –magazine that also has interest in introducing short graphic stories, Nick Hornby and Posy Simmonds have a short story in the anthology edited by Zadie Smith *The Book of other People* and in 2001, Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* was the first graphic novel to win a major literary award in the UK: the Guardian First Book Award. Additionally, more and more reviewers write about comics in major newspapers.



The academic field is also turning to comics with related articles appearing in peer-reviewed journals, academic conferences organised in major universities... e.g: *Transitions* conference and more focusing on women in comics.

Newsstands: The *Dandy* and *Beano* comics for children are still in good health. Other comics to be found in newsstands include: weekly science fiction-oriented comic *2000 AD* that was first published in 1977 (nobody believed it will last that long therefore the title) ; *Viz*, a popular comics magazine, once reached a million at a period now distributes a hundred thousand copies ; *Clint*, published by Titan presents reprints of American material including UK material too ; *Comic Heroes*, very mainstream, super hero and film based introduces new material too ; *Neo* presents anime and manga.

UK Graphic Novels publishers

Gravett offers an overview of major publishing houses incorporating or working solely on comics and graphic novels.

- **Jonathan Cape (Random House):** They are passionate about graphic novels. They had a big success with Raymond Briggs *Ethel and Ernest* and *Alice in Sunderland* by Bryan Talbot. Jonathan Cape also launched new graphic novels by UK talent (e.g: *The Art of Pho* Julian Hanshaw).
- **Walker Books:** originates children's & young adult titles, classics and modern. They published *Salem Brownstone*, quite a dark and gothic book. They are also giving a new breath of fresh air to legends with works like *Excalibur*, *The Savage* by David Almond and Dave McKean. Well-known fiction writers or series are adapted for graphic novels to widen their reach. These graphic novels are placed on the same shelf as the prose novel in bookshops.
- **David Fickling Books:** among the first to publish Philip Pullman. They have also compiled serials from their suspended weekly comic *The DFC Library*, with among others works by

Ben Haggarty and Adam Brockbank, two major writer and artist, and works like *Mo-Bot High* by Neil Cameron and *Good Dog, Bad Dog* by Dave Shelton.

- **Myriad**, not a solely graphic novel publisher, started small with comics with *Rumble Strip* by Woodrow Phoenix, *The Food Of Love* by Kate Evans, *Billy, Me and You* by Laydeez do comics co-creator Nicola Streeten. They are developing a line of politically and socially engaged graphic novels, some with a focus on women's concerns.
- **Titan Books**: the UK's largest specialist graphic novel publisher, however they do not originate much new material, relying mainly on US buy-ins. They secured the rights of successful material and do not have a lot to offer in terms of 'new' talent.
- **Panini UK** handles the rights to Marvel characters releasing American comics as newsstand monthlies.
- **Rebellion** is a games company which purchased *2000 AD* and publishes a range of related graphic novels, a.o. *Judge Dredd Magazine*. They have done a lot to keep the properties successful and developed new ones.
- Masterpieces of British comics are reprinted in high quality hardbacks, one example is *A celebration of the life and art of Frank Hampson - Tomorrow Revisited* which tells the story of how Frank Hampson created Dan Dare, the shocking truth about why he left Eagle, and his career in later life (<http://www.frankhampson-tomorrowrevisited.co.uk/>).
- **Knockabout comics** publishes veterans of the underground comics scene like Hunt Emerson and Alan Moore.
- **SelfMadeHero**: small publisher, buying material from Belgium and France. Their first success was with the Manga Shakespeare series. They have shown that manga is an approach, one way to narrate, to tell stories. They have launched new series: Eye Classics, adapting literature, Sherlock Holmes in colour & graphic biographies. These are being used in schools. Ian Rankin talked about his son's reading manga Macbeth and wanting to see the play! This approach makes the classics more accessible and brings young or reluctant readers to the literary canon, and those who enjoy the classics are introduced to graphic novels.
- **Nobrow Press**: a new young publisher, having published among others *Hidafolk*, *A Graphic Cosmogony*, *Bela Lugosi...*
- **Blank Slate Press**: a recent small publisher.
- Self publishing can also result in sophisticated and well-produced titles like *Metaphrog*, *Astral Gipsy*, *Solipsistic Pop...*



Paul Gravett speaks to the delegates and artists at the lunch hosted by Flanders House at the Institute of Directors

Gender and diversity

Comics world has always been seen as a male world –creators and audience wise, but there are many women comic book artists and writers, as well as publishers. “It is a crucial development for comics” says Gravett. Bloomsbury has commissioned [Asia Alfasi](#), a Libyan-British comic writer and artist, to write an autobiographical graphic novel. The industry is more and more inspired by manga and the success of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*.

Mainstream comics do not yet represent the diversity of the UK. Gravett explains that one reason for this could be that comics is not yet an art form widely acknowledged as a means of expression.

Education and New Talent

Comic book artists and writers usually come from a wide range of disciplines and fields, including literature, visual arts, film. There are some courses and modules offered in London and in other UK cities, like the London cartoon centre (David Lloyd was teaching there) or Birbeck, Royal College of Art which has a whole module of visual editing and authorial illustration (comics basically!).

Comics are not widely distributed but artists are surviving: most young British comics artists do not have an agent and they are directly dealing with publishers. Jonathan Cape for instance is publishing new artists fairly modestly. Publishers find talent through competitions or newspaper serials, exhibitions and other outlets for talent. Many talents also do get recommended by other artists and writers.

Gravett suggests that **web comics** is also an important place to look at as much happens there, attracting big audiences. Mostly free, web comics can be monetized through merchandising and ads. Works are "born digital", i.e. initially born on digital not for print. Examples: Mark Ellerby, *Ellerbisms* (autobiography), *Chloe* (a sort of British Buffy), John Allison - pioneer of web comics in the UK, *Freak Angels* a most successful web comics that does not sell so well in book version; *Tozo*, a science fiction story; Philippa Rice, crafting (gluing, collage...), *My Cardboard Life*, more online based; Lizzy Luney lizzlizz.com. There has been a hyper Comics exhibition organized at Pumphouse gallery in London with artists Dave McKean, Daniel Merlin Goodbrey, Warren Pleece. Each floor at the Pumphouse was aimed to develop an original story, bringing them "beyond the book". Another good example of a web comic is [Alien ink](#), commissioned by Channel4 TV to present work dealing with urban and teenage issues. This production had a big response from audience of teenagers particularly.

The study tour gives the opportunity to the delegates to meet many of the above mentioned publishers and artists.

Laydeez do Comics

By Nicola Streeten and Sarah Lightman



Founded by Nicola Streeten and Sarah Lightman, Laydeez do Comics is a graphic novel reading group and forum with a focus on comic works based on life narrative, the drama of the domestic and the everyday. Monthly meetings are organised with guest speakers, giving the opportunity to discuss, share and test ideas and new work. "There is a new wave of comic work that is more domestic than superheroes," explain Streeten and Lightman, "and yet little space to discuss these books." Both Streeten and Lightman came to the world of comics from art and illustration backgrounds and became aware of many others passionate for this type of work.

Women in comics

"Gender is important. Where are the women?" ask Streeten and Lightman. That is why they have created Laydeez do Comics, a women led forum for graphic novels, offering a friendly, inclusive, and supportive platform for creative, publishers, commentators, and festival organisers. Laydeez do comics meetings have a diverse audience and growing following, gathering forty people monthly.

It is not only "for women but we are women led", insists Streeten. "We also have a male audience. It's time that comics widen beyond the ghetto of the fan, the convention..., particularly for women." Sharing in an informative way at the monthly meetings gives the space for a lot of generosity.

Streeten and Lightman are interested in the female experience. "Their lives can be featured and expressed through comics. Women's interest in magazine can be linked to comics in a sense" says Streeten. Linking her research and work as an artist, Lightman has been working on the exhibition *Graphic Details: Women Jewish Graphic Artists*.

Women in comics include: Asia Alfasi, Melinda Gebbie, Dominique Goblet, Maureen Burdock (South Mexico), Karen Hansen (Denmark).

Are there any groups like Laydeez do Comics in other countries?



Delegates open the welcome packs they receive at Laydeez do Comics

Otto Sinisalo explains that there are lots of female comic writers and artists in Finland. The web comics scene has exploded with many women active there. "I'm not denying that it is still male oriented in some sectors, but it is getting more democratic" says Otto.

Johan Stuyck, professor at Sint-Lukas in Brussels explains that most of his students are girls, "they tend to get away from the autobiographical; one is making a zombie comic, another is doing an autobiographical comic using a middle aged man" says Johan "I think gender balance is changing in Belgium."

"Ten years ago, when a comic was made by a woman, it was an issue. Now it's not anymore" says Toon Horsten.

"In Algiers there's a bubble comic collective of young artists, led by two girls. One of them, Rymantis tells stories about her life, like the comic *Rapunzella*... The other one, Nawel draws politics. Women are active in that field, even if it's the beginning. The older generation of comic artists was exclusively men. It's a big progress" says Rachid Alik from Algiers comics festival FIBDA.

"I always had the feeling that comic strips were a men's world," says Willem Degraeve from the Belgian Comic Strip Center in Brussels. "Besides the fact that there are not so many female artists in Belgium, I have seen at several occasions that the persons who are active with comic strips (journalists, collectors, organisers of festivals, etc.) are mostly male. Therefore, it was a really nice surprise for me to see that in the UK many girls and women are so enthusiastic about comic strips. I hope that the Belgian comic strip scene will open to both genders!"

"The perception is changing more quickly than the market," says Toon. "Judith Vanistendael sold about 8000 copies at first in a week, it was unexpected in such a short time, even if it's not the numbers sold by fantasy writers..."

When mentioning women working in comics, Willem also adds that Professor Jane Chapman from the University of Lincoln visited Belgium during her research on comparing UK and Belgian comic books regarding history of WWII. The delegates also get the chance to meet academics on the last day of the study tour (see more information further below).

Willem shares a recent anecdote involving gender in comics. The Belgian Comic Strip Center has a small gallery in the museum where publishers can suggest works to be shown as a small

exhibition. "The Gallery" is dedicated to those works that make up today's landscape in comics. In the beginning of 2010, they showed an exhibition about the graphic novel *1H25* of the young French artist Judith Forrest. "Due to the insisting requests of journalists to interview Judith Forrest, we discovered that she doesn't exist and that the graphic novel had been created by two male artists!"

Comics may still be considered as predominantly male oriented, but delegates see a diverse booming creativity across the sector, going out of superhero only comics made by men for men or autobiographies written by women for women. Creators and audiences alike are getting more diverse.

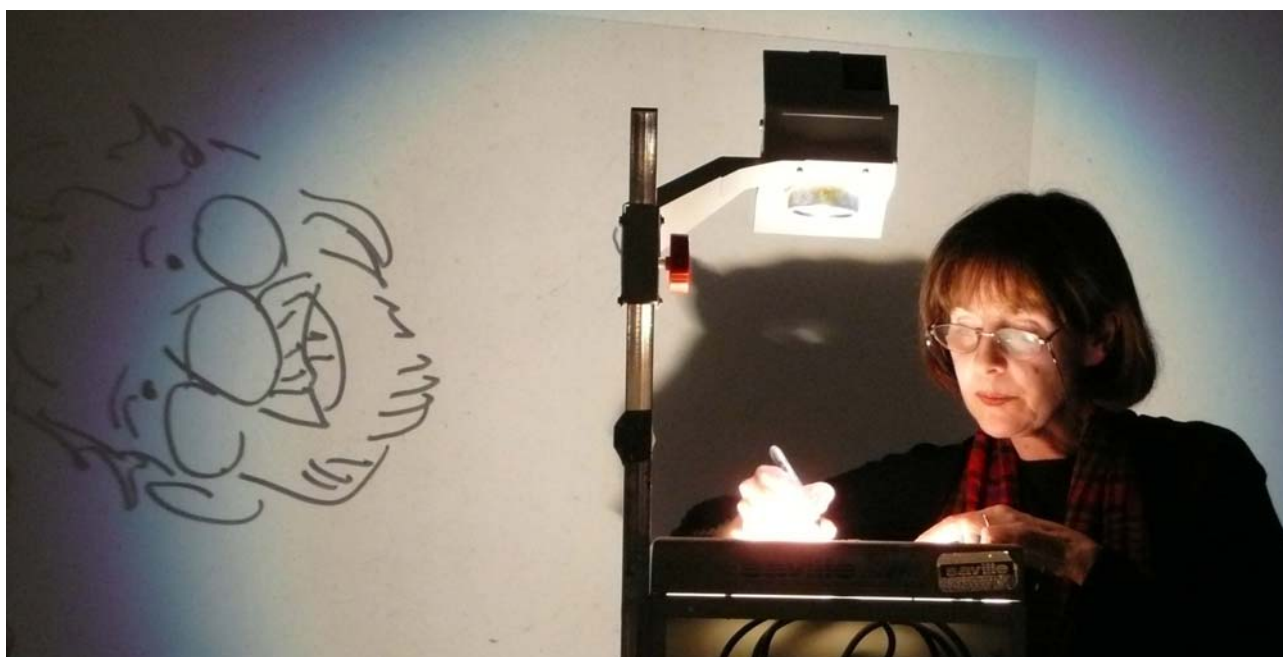
An evening with Posy Simmonds at Laydeez do Comics

Following the meeting with Laydeez do Comics creators, delegates have the opportunity to attend the monthly Laydeez do Comics meeting at the Rag Factory. Tonight, Posy Simmonds is the guest artist.

The "Sewing Room" at the Rag Factory is packed for a special Laydeez do Comics event with Posy Simmonds.



Ms Simmonds drawing live for the Laydeez do Comics audience.





While recreating her characters, Ms Simmonds gives the audience some insights on how she works, "I like observing people" she says.

After some drawings, Ms Simmonds shows her notebook and some of her sketches to the audience.



You can read Laydeez do Comics's blogess Ellen Lindner's report of the evening on the following website: <http://laydeezdocomics.blogspot.com/2010/12/posy-simmonds-mbe-at-laydeez-do-comics.html>

SelfMadeHero

Introduction by Emma Hayley

SelfMadeHero (<http://www.selfmadehero.com/>) is an independent graphic novel publisher based in London. Since its launch in 2007, SelfMadeHero has gained huge critical acclaim for its various series including Manga Shakespeare and Eye Classics. In 2009, it broadened its series to include Crime Classics and Graphic Biography. In 2010 the acquisition of *The Moomins Cook Book* began a new line of Gift Books inspired by iconic cartoon characters.



Emma Hayley explains that SelfMadeHero was launched in response to the market: "there's been a huge growth in graphic novels in the UK, particularly from 2004 to 2005 when the graphic novel market doubled," says Hayley. "In response to this, I decided to launch a graphic novel and manga publishing house."

Delegates at the SelfMadeHero office listening to Emma Hayley's presentation

SelfMadeHero began with the **Manga Shakespeare** series, "Manga was becoming really hip among school children at that time" says Hayley, "with after-school manga clubs springing up all over the UK." Each Manga Shakespeare edition starts with a colour section which introduces all the characters to the reader, then moves to B/W. "We had concerns about how people would react to combining a British cultural icon like Shakespeare with a comic book medium, but the reaction was phenomenal" explains Hayley. "We were reviewed in depth in newspapers like the Independent, Financial Times, Telegraph..." Hayley also explains that the market expansion was global, with countries like the US where the manga gathered huge audiences. "The last five years have been exciting in this world" adds Hayley.

Following the launch of the Manga Shakespeare series in 2007, SelfMadeHero was invited to Japan where Aichi University had started using SelfMadeHero's manga to introduce English Literature students to Shakespeare. "Manga wasn't just being created by Japanese artists anymore, UK artists were drawing manga too! SelfMadeHero now has 14 Manga Shakespeare books, selling in schools and bookstores across the country and globally: the Manga Shakespeare books have been translated into many languages including Czech, Korean, Italian, Chinese, Portuguese, and Turkish (the market is apparently booming in Turkey at the moment)" explains Hayley. "Only two of our artists are Japanese" says Hayley, "You don't have to be Japanese to draw manga."

As part of their **Eye Classics** collection, SelfMadeHero created literary adaptations like *The Master and Margerita* in graphic novel form. SelfMadeHero has made many adaptations using different artists who bring their own unique styles to each of the books.

The **Crime Classics** series is another series from SelfMadeHero, with adaptations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective stories – Sherlock Holmes. The release of the series coincided with the Sherlock Holmes film which helped raise awareness.

The **Graphic Biography** series tell the fascinating life stories of both public and private figures. It includes era-defining pop-culture icons such as Johnny Cash and Hunter S. Thompson. *Cash*, was originally published in Germany, but caught the eye of the SelfMadeHero team. "SelfMadeHero bought the rights in 2009 and it was an amazing success" says Hayley.

More recently SelfMadeHero published *Gonzo: a graphic biography of Hunter S. Thompson*. Other recent and future titles include: *Kiki de Montparnasse* (February 2011), originally

published by Casterman in French, which sold many copies in French. *Baby's in Black* (March 2011), was originally published in Germany, and the UK rights snapped up by SelfMadeHero.

Another series is **Real Lives**, presenting true stories from everyday lives. *Dance by the Light of the Moon* by Judith Vanistendael (originally published in Flemish), *Chico & Rita* by Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal (originally published in Spanish).

The **Original Fiction** series presents a collection of SelfMadeHero originals and the very best, contemporary fiction in graphic novel form from some of the world's most exciting creators, like *Hair Shirt* by Patrick McEown (originally published by Gallimard).

The **Moomins collection** presents non-fiction titles based on Tove Jansson's iconic characters, "this one is a bit different to the other series" says Hayley, explaining that The Moomins series has expanded. "After we published *Heart of Darkness* which is a depressing, although important and powerful story, the Moomins brought a little light to the office."

By creating such categories, SelfMadeHero can target different audiences and becomes



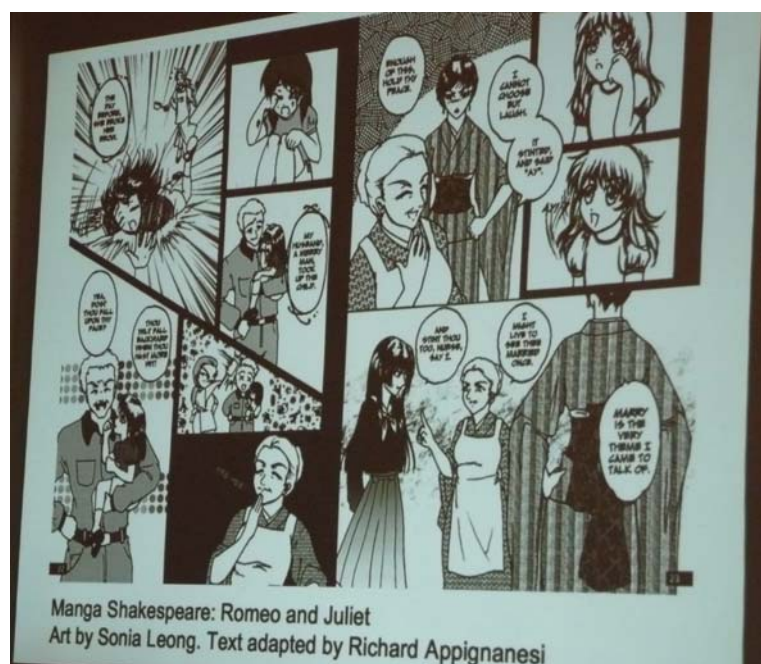
The Eye Classics

recognisable in bookstores: "We're trying to show that within the medium of comic books you can have different things. You don't have to be into comics to read our books" says Hayley. SelfMadeHero's books get sold in most shops: indie bookstores, comic shops, Waterstones, Foyles, Blackwells, Amazon... "Bookstores don't always have the expertise to understand comics but they are becoming more organised," says Hayley "Foyles on Charing Cross for instance has a wonderful graphic novel section. It will depend on the store, for instance not every Waterstones present graphic novels the same way."

SelfMadeHero is not a children's book publisher, "we aim our books at sophisticated readers" says Hayley. For instance, the language of the Manga Shakespeare is not simplified but condensed and is not just aimed for kids.

Towards New Work

The idea of SelfMadeHero was to start off with classic adaptations in order to grab the attention of the mainstream market. The book buyer, if he/she didn't necessarily have experience of graphic novels, would see something instantly recognizable like *Crime and Punishment* and that would hook them. "The idea was always to progress towards original work" says Hayley, "It's a gradual process and we're a small company." The Manga Shakespeare series was really popular and they continue to sell. "They're a great backlist to have" says Hayley, explaining that there's more risk involved with new titles. However, these also bring a more dedicated audience.



Marketing & Press at SelfMadeHero by Doug Wallace

Doug Wallace started by giving some important figures regarding the comic book market:

- The value of UK graphic novel market in 2010 was £11.5 million.
- There are 14 independent houses publishing comics, graphic novels and manga.
- There are 13 general publishers publishing comics and graphic novels.

"We help grow the market in the UK" says Wallace, "we represent the sector within the book trade (i.e. our presence at the London book Fair)." Wallace explains that some of SelfMadeHero's work involves changing perception of graphic novels, e.g. towards the book buyers (Borders was a good buyer).

"We experiment, we innovate, we value community and audience equally, we work across different sectors (education and trade), we work as book publishers and comic book publishers (we're known and respected in the comic book world and with the general trade), we are proactive, we believe in what we publish," says Wallace.

One of the important communications tools is **Social Media**. "We have an integrated approach to social media," says Wallace, "increasing creator engagement with publicity, we maintain a dialogue with readers and new readers. It also allows us to set the agenda. We can have our authors write pieces about how they created their work..." By engaging in this way with their audience, SelfMadeHero helps create publicity for the books and their publishing house.

Audience building: "it's about selling books and finding the right people" says Wallace, "we work in schools, with the trade... We need different messages for these different audiences. We need to find the right partners and get the right message across. Getting visibility and being in the right place, building our brand. We've established an education and trade brand, a consumer brand, all different with the same identity."

Community: an emerging specialised press is growing in the UK (eg Clint, film magazines, sfx,...). Wallace explains that SelfMadeHero does not simply invite people to join their community (film, anime...) but do join others.



Emma Hayley in conversation with Koen Van Rompaey

Face to face meetings: SelfMadeHero participates in conventions, festivals, book signings... "We get to see who buys our books," says Wallace, emphasizing the importance of face to face encounters.

The American market: SelfMadeHero licenses to USA publishers. They either co-publish or just sell the rights for them to print their own edition. They also sell a number of books in continental Europe.

"Where possible, we combine the launch of a book with an exhibition... But it's not always easy and it can cost a lot," explains Wallace. In order to achieve the various possible links between

exhibitions, academia and publishing of comics and graphic novels, SelfMadeHero works a lot with Paul Gravett.

Press coverage: Everyone gets bad reviews from time to time but at least we have reviews, which is good. There's no such thing as a bad review. Praising our work highly without criticism isn't so good either. We still have to fight for every review, even with a friendly like *the Guardian*. They've cut their review coverage to once a month.

Bookstores: By providing bookstores with signed copies, SelfMadeHero creates a way of building trust with the bookstore. Even though there is a sale or return policy in most bookstores and retailers, the signed copies strategy does work and bookstores get more books. Amazon is good for the consumer but not for the bookstores. "It is also more difficult to sell an unknown book online" says Wallace, "so it is also about display space."

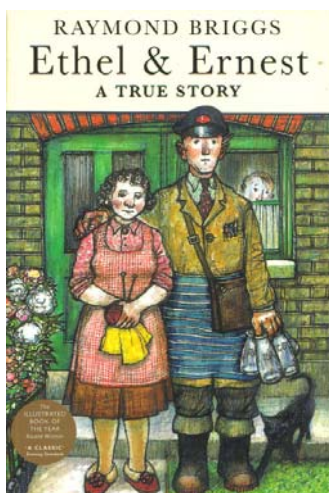
Digital: ebooks are getting more important everyday. "We've been developing books for iPads and iPhones" explains Wallace, "it's the first digital medium we believe in" add Toon and Johan. Wallace explains that it is mainly a marketing tool for now. Johan adds that digital can offer opportunities to tell the story in a different way. "We developed all our Manga Shakespeare and *Cash* as an iPhone application" says Wallace. "It's a completely different reading experience. You can also add a soundtrack (e.g. Johnny Cash). Book and apps can live next to one another because they offer different opportunities, they are different mediums" says Wallace, giving the example of the Johnny Cash application: "you can buy the tracks from iTunes... We don't have to pay royalties then. It's a different kind of experience. It's also a way of expanding the market and going mainstream."

Comics and graphic novels still seem to be out of the eBook debate as the ePub cannot deal with the sophistication of illustration, whereas the iPad really is an option for publishers like SelfMadeHero. "There is resistance" say Wallace and Hayley, "But it's an exciting time of change."

Jonathan Cape by Dan Franklin

Dan Franklin, Publishing Director of Jonathan Cape welcomes the delegation: "You're now in the centre of a large conglomerate international publishing house." Slightly different from the other publishers included in this study tour. "Jonathan Cape, which I run" explains Franklin, "is one of the finest literary imprints in this country. We publish a mixture of fiction and non-fiction. A small number of photographic books (niche audience), and we have a small poetry list which comprises of four new books a year."

Examples of authors published by Jonathan Cape include Ian McEwan, Philip Roth, Salman Rushdie.... "A staggering list" says Franklin, "with a non fiction list just as strong." It is about 1999 that Jonathan Cape published their first graphic novel as such. Tom Maschler (Head of Jonathan Cape in the 60s and 70s), who published an extraordinary wide range of books (Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Bruce Chatwin...), started publishing Posy Simmonds when her work was just published in the Guardian. "There were some precedents for us going to this field" says Franklin.



The success of Raymond Briggs

According to Franklin, Raymond Briggs –who was initially published in the children's book section, gave a distorted impression of what the graphic novel was capable in terms of reach. When Briggs sent in the pencil roughs for his book, editors decided this was not aimed for children but for adults, and so they published *Ethel & Ernest* as an adult fiction. *Ethel & Ernest* is the story of Raymond Briggs's parents' marriage, from their first chance encounter to their deaths told in Briggs's unique strip-cartoon format. "Nothing is invented, nothing embroidered-this is the reality of two decent, ordinary lives of two people who, as Briggs tells the story, become representative of us all" says Franklin. The book is also social history; we see the dark days of the Second World War, the birth of the Welfare State, the advent of television and all the changes which were so exhilarating and bewildering for Ethel and Ernest. "It was a tremendous success" adds Franklin, "400,000 copies have been sold now and we have a paperback version." This is what gave Franklin a distorted view of publishing graphic novel.

"Dan Frank from Random House America said he was about to start publishing graphic novels and he ended up publishing this in America." Frank also suggested *Ghost World* by Daniel Clowes to Franklin: "I thought that this was the most wonderful thing I've ever seen!" says Franklin. "It sold around 60,000 copies. It was a tremendous success."

Jonathan Cape pioneered getting these books into mainstream bookshops and getting them reviewed in the mainstream broadsheet papers: "They would just be dealt with like any other Jonathan Cape book" explains Franklin. "Then one thing led to another, *Jimmy Corrigan* was the third or fourth book we did. That was a key moment. We entered it for the Guardian first book award, which is normally for first novels and Chris Ware won it!" It was the first time a graphic novel had such attention from a mainstream media and prize. In the ten years since then, we went through a period when they expanded the list.

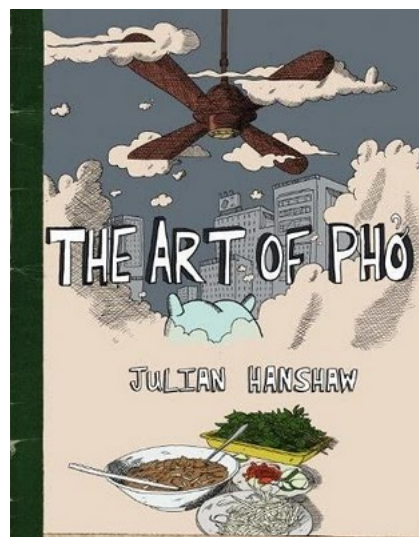
Franklin explains that Jonathan Cape had also been contracted along with everybody else, because of the recession: "We went down from eighty titles a year to sixty (all genres and medium)."

From American authors to UK ones

Other graphic novelists published by Jonathan Cape include Americans Daniel Clowes, Joe Sacco, Alison Bechdel (another huge success for Cape). "We started publishing authors from this country, which was badly represented" explains Franklin, "we had Posy Simmonds with *Gemma Boverly*, *Tamara Drewe*... Two absolutely classic books that will go on and on.... Bryan Talbot, veteran English comic artist, has been working for years and years, claiming he has done the first British graphic novel. He's done *Alice in Sunderland*. It got incredible attention, two pages in The Observer."

Finding New Talent

Jonathan Cape, together with the Observer and Paul Gravett, started the Graphic Short Story Prize. "Paul is key to this whole thing" says Franklin (Gravett suggested Joe Sacco to Franklin). Gravett, Franklin and Rachel Cooke have set up this competition where you enter a four page story, win a thousand pounds, and get published in The Observer (once in the print and permanently on their website). The story is judged by eminent people including Franklin, Cooke, Gravett and guest writers/illustrators. "If you're lucky, you get a contract out of us" says Franklin, which is what happened to Julian Hanshaw, the first winner who is now published by Jonathan Cape with *The Art of Pho*. When Hanshaw first approached Jonathan Cape, Franklin could not publish him yet but suggested he enters the competition, "and we ended up publishing him."



Other examples of young artists published by Jonathan Cape include *Britten and Brulightly* by Hannah Berry, *Walking the Dog* by David Hughes, "the *Finnegan's Wake* of the graphic novel" says Franklin, "but it sells slowly and slowly," Steve Bell, political cartoonist of the UK. Audrey Niffenegger, their top three words book author (*Time Traveller's Wife*) has started out as an artist, was commissioned by the Guardian to fill in the slot ran by Posy Simmonds, has now her graphic novel *The Night Bookmobile* published by Cape. John Broadley entered the competition, did not win, but was in the end published by Cape as well, *John Broadley's Books* was chosen by the Times as the best 2010 graphic novel.

"We now publish four or five graphic novels a year. We do it as a hobby almost, it is not the main part of the list but gets incredible recognition" explains Franklin, "people think you're cool, I give talks at the Royal Society of Literature to people who haven't read a comic in their life and are afraid of them, and it's fun and profitable!" He adds, "Almost everything we do is printed in China, it wouldn't be possible otherwise, and we couldn't publish so much without cheap Chinese print." When asked if a separate imprint could be profitable, Franklin says "I could argue to Random House that it would be worth setting up a separate imprint just to do graphic novels, that they should employ somebody else to do this... But I'm employed to publish Ian McEwan, it's difficult for me, if I'm doing more graphic novels, I'm doing fewer

fiction. We publish first novels, we like it and we're quite good at it I think." Jonathan Cape could therefore print more graphic novels only if Random House sets up a separate imprint, "or if the whole economy booms again and we move back to publishing eighty books a year, but I don't think we would ever go back that way again" says Franklin with disappointment.

Jonathan Cape has its own dedicated publicity department with three people working full time. They do not advertise and rely only on press and reviews "which is still hard work and there is also a lot of online activity, of which I suspect I only see a tiny part" says Franklin.

Translation

Jonathan Cape publishes very few continental titles, "editors here are unbelievably ignorant and badly educated because of only speaking English" admits Franklin. "When I go to the Frankfurt Book Fair, I can have meetings with people who can judge a novel in a different language, which is not the case from many UK and American editors." Franklin says he used to publish a lot of translated work until he arrived at Jonathan Cape, "I leave translation to others. I can't make an absolutely perfect judgment on whether the book is going to work or not" admits Franklin.

Digital

Dan Franklin touched very slightly on e-books and the digital opportunities. Because of the absence of borders for e-books, Franklin thinks the current model cannot survive. "The English version is always more expensive than the American one. It is also difficult to get the colours right in e-books and none of these famous guys would sell their rights." Adding to this the piracy problem, digital opportunities still seem far away when it comes to graphic novels.

Franklin ends his presentation by telling how extremely lucky they are for having great authors: "The successful ones compensate the other less good sales."

Londonprintstudio

With Karrie Fransman, John Philips and the five interns: Joe Kelly, Rachel Emily Taylor, William Goldsmith, Freya Harrison and Isabel Greenberg.



Karrie Fransman shows her work exhibited at the londonprintstudio

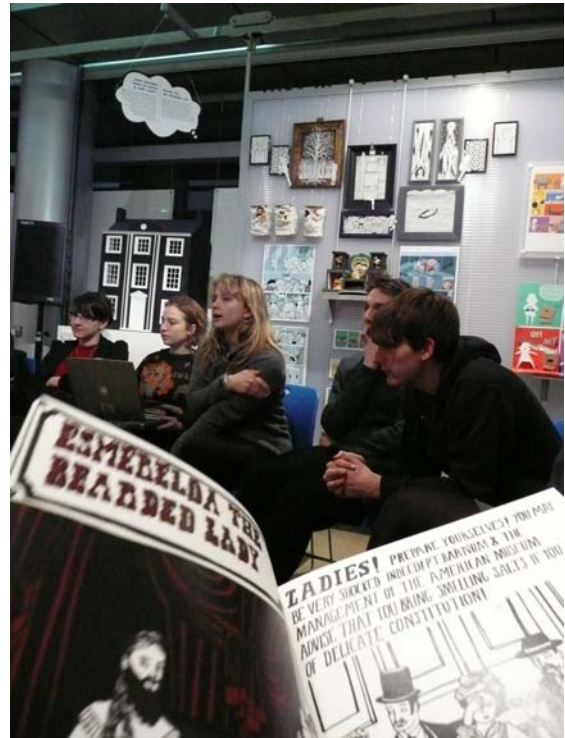
london**print**studio (<http://www.londonprintstudio.org.uk/>) is a small not-for-profit organisation that provides educational resources in the graphic arts for artists, community organisations, education institutions and the public.

london**print**studio seeks to empower people and communities through practical engagement with the visual and graphic arts. It achieves these goals through:

- Education, training and the provision of graphic arts resources
- The development and delivery of innovative visual arts projects
- Presenting exhibitions and related education programmes
- Facilitating cultural exchange between individuals and groups from diverse communities
- The provision and dissemination of information and research findings to artists, education institutions, communities and the public

london**print**studio is committed to creative practices that:

- Foster personal growth
- Improve the quality of life for communities
- Deepen cross-cultural understanding
- Respect the environment
- Increase the understanding of visual and emotional intelligence



"I think of the studio as a bridge," says John Phillips, director of the london**print**studio, "on the one side you have people approaching us with a problem, and on the other side we offer a solution."

A project of internship to overcome social issues

london**print**studio hosts a group of interns "there's a huge problem for young people to find jobs" says Philips. "Many work in the arts and in prestigious galleries where they gain little to stick stamps on envelopes! Our ethos is very much to develop artists, support them, to give people control. Everyone who works here is trained as an artist, it is an environment understanding how artists think." There are lots of immigrant communities living in the london**print**studio area, a poor area situated right in the middle of very rich areas, which make it even more significant to carry on working with the community.



The five interns of the londonprintstudio

The five interns in "Comic and Comic Production" will be at london**print**studio for 6 months where they will:

- Receive workshops from comic artists, screen writers and publishers
- Run workshops for 16-20 year olds
- Compile an anthology

You can keep up to date with their blogs at: www.londonprintstudiocomics.blogspot.com/ or join their [Facebook page](#).

The course is run by professional comic creator Karrie Fransman whose comics have appeared in The Times, The Guardian and who is currently working on her first graphic novel due to be published by Random House.

Walker Books

Gill Evans (Fiction Publishing Director) and Lizzie Spratt (Commissioning Editor)



Also present from Walker Books:
Alice Burden, Head of press and publicity
Harry Gwinner, *Head of Special Sales*
Jessica Maslen, *Foreign Rights Manager*
Ben Norland, *Executive Art Director at Walker Books*
Hannah Pajunen-Walsh, *Foreign Rights Manager (Scandinavia)*

Lizzie Spratt, Commissioning Editor

Walker Books has always put a real emphasis on the importance of words and pictures, and illustrated young fiction. Stepping into graphic novels was a natural move. Walker Books publishes 200-250 titles a year across the whole publishing programme. And, of those, Walker publishes 8 to 10 graphic novels a year.

Lizzie Spratt spoke about the current trends and evolutions in the UK today.

"It's a great time for graphic novels, comics and manga," says Spratt, "Graphic novels and comics used to be published predominantly by specialised publishers or imported from abroad, but now it is becoming more mainstream in the UK book publishing scene."

Spratt reported that graphic novel sales had increased by 28% in 2009 according to Nielsen Bookscan data, which she felt was encouraging in these uncertain economic times. She went on to describe how although it is still sometimes a novelty to walk into a UK bookshop and see graphic novels racked in the fiction section, gradually they are becoming more accessible.

Spratt said that there is a genuine audience for these books in the UK and "as a culture we are becoming more and more open to a variety of formats."

The *Beano* magazine has been around for decades in the UK, and this is what people most likely think of when talking about British children's comics. However, the Tintin adventures are still the most dominant force in the UK children's book trade. However over the past few years there has been a steady growth in sales of new and dynamic versions of Shakespeare, retellings, and adaptations of best-selling novels. Walker publishes into all of these popular areas of the market but Spratt has also been keen to support and publish stories from fantastic new talents. "Authors and illustrators are being given more voice," says Spratt.

Authoritative figures in the children's literary world have also praised graphic novels and comics, among other things as a means of encouraging reluctant readers. Wendy Cooling, an expert on children's books and literacy, says many read more thanks to comics and illustrated children's books. After extensive research as part of a government initiative looking into the reading habits of children, editor of the report Chris Brown stated that graphic novels are

proven to help getting boys into reading. "Graphic novels have great appeal for many boys and can be of enormous educational benefit because of the way they stimulate the imagination."

Spratt held up Shaun Tan's wordless graphic novel *The Arrival* to demonstrate the unique value inherent in a format of storytelling that can communicate the same message to the widest possible audience, regardless of where they come from in the world, and regardless of the language they speak. Walker Books champions this unique format for the power it has to communicate stories and ideas to all kinds of readers, of all ages. And at Walker Books they have been experimenting with different formats to appeal to the different areas of the market. One example is *Tyranny* by Lesley Fairfield, a portrayal of a young woman's struggle with anorexia, published as a standard fiction paperback format.

Walker Books uses different formats to position itself in the mainstream market. "Although there is a great deal of support for the new books we are publishing, we're still having to overcome a certain amount of prejudice about graphic novels or picture books for older readers. In Britain there is a culture among parents to encourage their kids to leave picture books behind after a certain age," adds Spratt.

Toon Horsten emphasised how strange it was to hear that Tintin can be called a graphic novel whereas in Belgium it is a strip. Ben Norland responded that comics tend to apply to magazine publishing, and much thinner volumes in the UK.



Delegates at the Walker Books offices in London

Els Aerts about graphic novels for children: "It's not that there are no graphic novels for children in Flanders. Not in the way that Walker Books calls those graphic novels. We call them comics, but they do exist. There's Jommeke, Kiekeboe, Nero, Suske&Wiske, Kuifje, and comics based on TV-series and famous people, like FC De Kampioenen or Kim, on the famous tennis player Kim Clijsters. Most of the time, these books are part of series. But we do have some books on the edge of picture books and comics, like De Zuurtjes (Benjamin Leroy and Jaap Robben) and Roodlapje (Pieter Gaudesaboos). We call that a picture book, in the Walker Books strategy it would definitely be a graphic novel."

Flemish children's books publishers already experiment with the boundary between picture books, novels, comics and graphic novels. But they would never call them graphic novels. Els thinks Walker Books uses that term for promotional reasons, because

people think highly of the term in the UK. Belgium is not that far yet, thinks Els.

Lizzie explains that Walker Books had had good media coverage and enormous critical acclaim for certain books, like *Salem Brownstone*. And that prizes and media attention can really impact on the success and prestige of a book, increasing positive awareness and trust in the product. For instance *American Born Chinese* won an award chosen by librarian's, which was a significant marker in the USA, because of this specific market.

Entertainment and information is image rich and so visual communication is a language kids immediately relate to. The rise in production of graphic novels is also generational, owing to current gatekeepers really caring about comic books.

When talking about the acceptance of comics as a literary genre, Els gives the example of the Libris prize in Flanders: "a graphic novel won one year and they changed the guidelines so no

other graphic novel could win in the future." Even in Belgium, there still is an ongoing discussion whether or not to accept comics as "literature".

Johan emphasises that when they use the term graphic novels in Belgium, it is usually thought of a medium for adults and not for children.

Lizzie speaks about how new talent appears everywhere in the country, within various comics communities, "these artists and writers care about each other's careers and their own as well. That's where new talent blooms."

Alice Burden, head of press and publicity

Alice explains how Walker Books approach graphic novels through PR. She explains the need to reeducate their audience as a PR team: reviewers, librarians, influencers in the children books market... "The graphic novel is different and we are taking people out of their comfort zone" says Alice, reminding them Walker Books has been publishing graphic novels a long time ago without calling them as such.

Alice emphasises the importance of community: "We want to work collaboratively to raise awareness, promote... We want to lead the way but want other people to be involved. It's new for many of us." The PR team targets journalists and the readers themselves, who have the power of blogging and who are part of online communities... building trust with these people, getting the conversation starting. "They're the most loyal people you could get on board" says Alice.

On the Walker Books blog, they have teenage bloggers they invited to the office, showing them book jackets etc in advance of what they would work on, giving them the message that they are important and that their opinion matters. "These are relationships we're nurturing" adds Alice.

Reluctant readers market is not the only market for Graphic Novels, Alice explains, "Being a graphic novel doesn't stop it being a book!"

Viviane Schwartz, *The Sleepwalkers*

Illustrator and writer Viviane Schwartz joined the conversation to present her work and her latest book *The Sleepwalkers* to be published by Walker Books in the second half of 2012, a transition from picture books to comic strip.



"I did a bit of work for a magazine in Germany before. It's really exciting that I get to draw more stuff that I like to draw. It's more but freer. Because of the dream setting I'm allowing myself a lot of freedom, continuity errors..."

I've always had a lot of nightmares and have them as a child. My mother taught me how to deal with it, she would say, call me into your dream. So I have a mental image of my mother coming to my dream, duck taping guns, aliens... I found it really helpful. I talked to a friend who also had nightmares at that time, and have toy creature coming into a dream, so many come from that. It's also a book about fear. It's a very honest book, good for a child who needs to overcome nightmare fears.

Children's books have a lot to offer, also to adults! It can be relevant for your lives."

Viviane Schwartz shows her work to the delegates

Knockabout comics by Tony Bennett and Hunt Emerson

Publisher and distributor of underground and alternative comics, *Knockabout Comics* presents different formats and ideas from the UK and from abroad.

Their bestselling book is Alan Moore's *From Hell*, but "we still consider ourselves as underground" says Tony Bennett. "Our readers are not only weekly readers. Most of our print runs go about 3000 and we print more if necessary."

Tony Bennett explains that the evolution of reception of comics in the UK has evolved over the last twenty years: "there's been a false door in the 80s but since the 2000s it is getting more respectable, you get more reviews in respected newspapers. It has taken a bit more than twenty years to get into the mainstream." Bennett explains that although manga has become influential, actual sales have come down a bit, giving room to other things, and that a lot more women are interested in comics thanks to manga for instance.

"The more people are doing comics the best it is. It doesn't stop our books selling, it means that people read and produce" says Bennett.



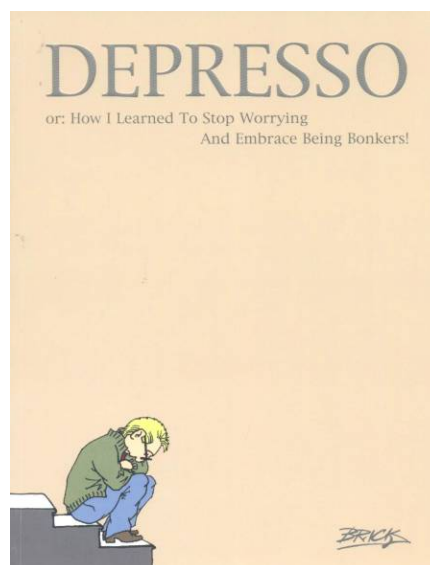
The term 'graphic novel' also helped getting into the mainstream, but "I don't see anything wrong in the term 'comics' really" adds Emerson.

Reviews also influence sales and awareness, Paul Gravett started writing reviews years ago. There has been a significant evolution in comics that can be felt in the sales as well. "If a comic gets a review in a serious newspaper or appear on TV, bookshops start presenting them" explains Bennett. Despite the raise of awareness and respect towards the medium, Tony Bennett seems a bit more pessimistic when it comes to the future of comics in the UK: "we'll never get what Angoulême gets here in the UK."

Finding new talent

Comic book artists "come to us or we go to small comic fairs, we look at fanzines, we don't search much on the Internet we're old fashioned" says Bennett. He explains that *Knockabout* also participate to 'talent finding projects' or 'education projects' aimed at cartoonists. Self-publishing is also important as artists working that way filter back into the mainstream publishing because they get better and they evolve. Bennett and Emerson also explain that very few British illustrators earn from comics. "We just keep going at *Knockabout comics*" says Bennett, "I used to drive myself to the bookshops with piles of books, now we have a distributor." He also explains that their returns are as low as 5% and that they are happy about the sales on Amazon.

Hunt Emerson currently works for three magazines: the sex magazine *Fiesta*, *Unexplained Phenomena*, and the *Beano*, doing additional teaching, workshop delivery, school trips and library work. One of the best experiences Emerson had, he explains, was as a consultant in Kenya: "I worked with a group to make a monthly comic for youth distributed through safaricom and the local newspaper. The comic offers ideas through a set of four characters to improve your life: how to stop the hoax taking your chicken (you paint it pink!), how to get better quality grain to grow crop, how to get access to government money you won't have access to etc... All told through comics and for young people. They celebrated their fifth million comic distributed recently. There's this network of information going around, it's an amazing project and I'm proud having been working there, although I didn't draw for them."



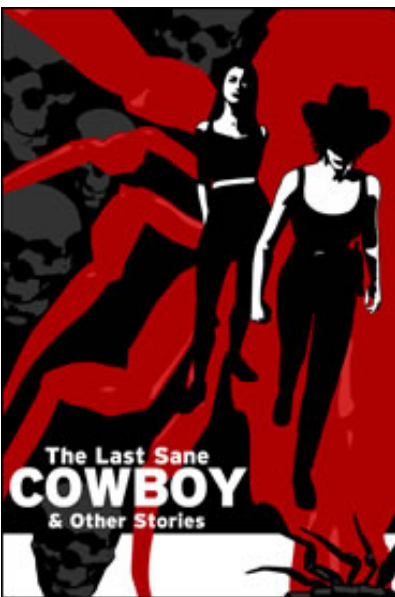
BRICK (aka John Stuart Clark)'s comic book *Depresso*

Emerson is currently working on his latest comic, *Dante's Inferno*.

His work has also been published in Finland, France... and translated into ten languages, not all being graphic novels. "We do get work in from European countries, and would like to sell more of our books abroad of course" says Bennett.

Bennett explains that most of the comics festivals in the UK are not as good as they are dominated by superhero fans and rarely offer exhibitions. "Britain has never learned to do comics festival, it has to do with local politics, too tied to central government. Local governments in continental Europe work better independently. And comics festivals work better in smaller cities than capitals as in Angoulême, Turnhout or Haarlem."

Hypercomics by Daniel Merlin Goodbrey



Daniel Merlin Goodbrey has been working digitally since 1999, moving to print in the past five years, and now back to digital. Goodbrey discovered the many opportunities of comics by reading Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. "Starting to work on the web was an eye opening experience for me" says Goodbrey, "I wanted to write my own work as well, not just work as an artist. I've always been interested of what comics can do digitally."

Goodbrey presents [Sixgun](#), a project of his end of Masters experimenting with the different ways comics might work on the screen. Working like a strip, it has been designed to match dimensions of the screen rather than the page. Goodbrey also likes to experiment how various online tools like the hyperlink might work in comics. "Comics is all about spatial relationships" says Goodbrey, "thinking about reinventing the canvas, I continued trying out ideas after reading McCloud's *Reinventing Comics*." He goes on "Click/Read, click/read, you get used to the pace of reading. Early proto comics like the Bailleux tapestry

made me want to work without panel boards and looking into how the story will work without borders."

The screen offers the reader to establish the pace of reading and gives many opportunities that cannot be done on print. Goodbrey also adds that he wants to experiment comics as a game, "but it's in my head at this stage."

Goodbrey also explains that there are opportunities to monetize web comics as it has a certain kind of audience, especially interested in serials. However, he adds that working more experimentally may gather interest but not money.

[Hyper comics](#) is a separate medium; "you use space to show time in a comic whereas you use time to show time in animation, and games are somewhere in between, the player not the reader makes decisions... Hyper comics are close to games in that sense" says Goodbrey.



Goodbrey also wants to work on sound and comics: "it is hard to make sound and comic work, which I'd like to work on and collaborate with someone on this," and he adds "I still want to do the comics to do the storytelling."

Academia & Comics

With Jason Dittmer, Maggie Gray, Roger Sabin and Tony Venezia

Jason Dittmer hosts a session with his colleagues Maggie Gray, Roger Sabin and Tony Venezia to discuss comics and academia.

Dittmer, a geographer, explains his entry to comics as thinking about space as key to understand time, "topologies within geography have emerged" says Dittmer. He mentions another geographer in Germany who looks at comics too; looking at nationality, "what makes a French, British or Belgian comic?" asks Dittmer. "There is a global dimension to the whole notion of nationality -it is cheaper to work with illustrators from outside UK for instance but these would still be producing a 'UK' work."

Linked to the nationality theme, Toon mentions the French comic strip *Superdupont* created in 1972 by Marcel Gotlib and Jacques Lob, with the collaboration of Alexis, a parody of both Superman and French national attitudes -and, rather, their caricatural perception outside and inside France.

The multidisciplinary aspect of comics can also be witnessed within academia. One recent example is the *Transitions: New Directions in Comics Studies* symposium organised by Tony Venezia, showing that comics is a growing field in academia, "even though there are no comics department in the UK at the moment, whereas there are many film studies department" says Venezia.

The medium of comics also opens the door to interdisciplinary work: e.g. CFP: Comics & Medicine: The Sequential Art of Illness, or Jason Dittmer's work within geography, where he is preparing an anthology of comics and geography. IBDS, the International Bande Dessinee Society has also been organising conferences in the UK.

However, Dittmer, Gray, Sabin and Venezia all agree that there is still a lot of prejudice in the academia towards comics, "but it is doable," and all four are good examples that it is possible to study comics in academia.

Even in Belgium, there is still some prejudice academically, but Toon confirms that comics are reviewed weekly and there is more activity around comics in academia. Pascale Lefèvre for instance is one major academic working on comics in Belgium.

Johan gives the Sint Lukas example explaining that they the academic curriculum they offer is taken very seriously and that one of their aims is to try to combine theory and practice.

Willem also adds the Comic Strip Center in Brussels as a major example that comics are taken seriously in Belgium. Although the Belgian Comic Strip Center has become one of the most popular museums of Brussels, welcoming every year 200,000 visitors, it remains a non-profit organisation which manages to finance its original cultural project largely thanks to its numerous visitors and the hundred or so events which take place there every year (the part of the budget financed by state support is no more than 10%).

"In Algiers, it's simple," says Rachid, "comic books are called Mickey books! There are few studies around comic books. Next February, Rymantis will present her *doctorat* about Algerian comics, but it is very new. The most popular comics in Algeria are Algerian. We do have famous authors, but it is not yet respected as a serious art or literary form in society." There are many artists in the Maghreb, many unknown, not visible outside their countries and even in their own countries, especially for young audience. The adults, 30 and more, do remember popular comic heroes like "Bouzid", "Mquidéche", and so. Historically, Algerians were used to read popular and cheap "Fumettis", mostly Italian, like "Yuma" or "Blek le Rock". Our main purpose is to rebuild and introduce life into the Algerian comics scene and I think we're being successful, since 2008. But it's a long process. Young artists, like Togui are now publishing but they aren't too many (may be 10 books per year), because publishers are still not convinced that's profitable for them, even in terms of image. We still have to work, and you know, comics are only part of the cultural area, which was destroyed by the civil war,

during the 90's and early 2000. We have to rebuild arts after the civil war, make that gap between generations disappear.

Gray spoke about the major UK publishers who are publishing UK work, among those some visited by the delegation during this study tour: Jonathan Cape (*The Art of Pho*), SelfMadeHero (*At the Mountains of Madness*), Nobrow Press: experimental arty comics- high quality prints, expensive production, they contrast with the UK small press, The Comix Reader: accessible underground, bastardscomic, www.ninja-bunny.com (producing comics as one of their many activities), simonelia.com, ...

America is still a big influence and the British art scene is always going to reflect that. "In a broader sense, we're still very much influenced by the US" says Gray. Manga also had a big influence; most bookshops would have a manga section in the UK, even though the future of manga can be questioned.

In the 1960's comics for kids were selling millions whereas nowadays comics has become a niche market for adults. It is historically part of a trend and commercially debatable. "It's probably better than poetry commercially, but still not too much" adds Gray.

There are no historical British comics reprinted, the only exception being *2000AD* and even then it is not older than editions from the 70s. "It is sort of easier to buy a Billy Bunter original than a reprint!" says Gray.

CONCLUSION

Delegates from Belgium, Finland and Algiers have all mentioned how little they knew about UK comics before the study tour. Most English language comics are misperceived as American to most comics audiences across the globe. Most famous comic book artists such as Alan Moore and Grant Morrison are not always known as being from the UK.



Koen Van Rompaey and Toon Horsten at the londonprintstudio

This study tour definitely managed to **change perceptions** of the delegates towards the UK comic book sector, as a rich and talented sector with whom collaboration is possible. It has introduced new talent and young artists like Karrie Fransman and Daniel Merlin Goodbrey to the delegates. It also opened up doors for **new collaborations**, such as between the londonprintstudio and Sint-Lukas in Belgium to organise student exchanges. A **new international network** including comics professionals from the UK, Belgium, Finland and Algeria has been built through this study tour and will be followed up through a wide range of activities.

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

INTERNATIONAL COMICS NETWORK

The study tour in London has created opportunities to start building a strong network of professionals working in comics from the UK, Belgium, Finland and Algeria. Although the British Council Benelux will prioritise links between Belgium and the UK, expanding the network further to the Netherlands when possible, opportunities to build an international network do exist and will be discussed and implemented independently from the British Council by the delegates themselves. Koen Van Rompaey has already taken steps forward to consult and collaborate with the comic book festival in Naples and other potential partners.



STUDY TOUR TO TURNHOUT 22 February 2011

Koen Van Rompaey has organised a short study tour to Turnhout in which Canan Marasligil from the British Council and Rachid Alik from FIBDA (Algiers) have participated, joined by Toon Horsten (Strip Turnhout) and Els Aerts (Flemish Literature Fund).

The programme included a meeting with the Strip Turnhout crew, a visit of the festival venues: De Warande and the Turnhout library, an introduction to Turnhout as comics capital of Flanders by Koen Van Rompaey including a meeting with Turnhout City coordinator Nico Verhoeven and a visit to Proost (www.proost.be), the legendary comics printer in Turnhout.

The picture shown on the right is the statue of Adhemar, a character from Marc Sleen's *Nero* comic strip. The statue, *Bronze Adhemar*, has been made by Lilet Goovaerts and designed by Frank Ivo van Damme. During the Strip Turnhout festival, the Bronze Adhemar is awarded as a prize for best comic artist in the Dutch language.



EXPERT MEETING

"Afternoon Tea around British Comics"

Comics professionals from Belgium and the UK meet.

With Paul Gravett, Woodrow Phoenix and Karrie Fransman



Date and time:

Thursday 19 May from 14:00 to 18:00

Venue:

Belgian Comic Strip Center
<http://www.comicscenter.net/>
20 rue des Sables (Zandstraat)
1000 Brussels

Programme (a report will be made available)

14.00-14.45: **Introductory section**, moderated by *Canan Marasligil*

- Welcome and Introduction, *Canan Marasligil*
- Short welcome by host, *Willem De Graeve*
- Comics and cultural relations, *Manon de Ruijter/Robin Davies (British Council)*
- Comic Book Study Tour to London: the Belgian delegation shares their experience, *Els Aerts, Willem Degraeve, Toon Horsten, Johan Stuyck, Koen Van Rompaey*

14.45-15.15: Networking break

15.15-17.30: **UK Comics in Belgium: sharing, developing and exchanging talent**, moderated by *Els Aerts*.

The view from the UK

- Overview of UK comics sector by *Paul Gravett*
- *Woodrow Phoenix* on being a comic book artist in the UK
- *Karrie Fansman* on her comics and comic youth work

The view from Belgium

- *Johan Stuyck* on the student exchange programme and the Oogachtend graphic novels translated into English
- *Koen Van Rompaey* presents the UK as a guest of honour at the Strip Turnhout Festival 2011

16.45–17.45: Plenary discussion, moderated by *Els Aerts*

17.45–18.00 Closing remarks

This expert meeting is a direct result of the partnership between British Council and Strip Turnhout, and the network that has been built during the study tour, including the Comic Strip Center in Brussels, the Flemish Literature Fund, Oogachtend, Sint-Lukas Brussels.

STRIP TURNHOUT FESTIVAL 2011 9 to 11 December 2011



“UK as a guest of honour”

The starting point of the comics adventure between the British Council and Strip Turnhout was to showcase UK comics at the 2011 Strip Turnhout festival. The study tour and the follow up activities are key to building a strong programme of UK comics involving well-known artists and writers, and including new talent to the Belgian audiences. This programme presenting UK comics in Turnhout will be curated by Paul Gravett.

More info can be found on Strip Turnhout’s website <http://www.stripturnhout.be/>

APPENDIX

“Rule Britannia. De Renaissance van de Britse strip” door Toon Horsten. *Strip Gids*, April 2011 (pp.12-18).

ORGANISERS BIOGRAPHIES

Canan Marasligil

British Council Benelux

Canan works as a project manager for the British Council across the Benelux. As part of her portfolio, she delivers arts projects in Belgium and in the Netherlands. Comics is a medium she is truly passionate about and she has been working on this comics project for the British Council since April 2010. Before joining the British Council, Canan worked as a press officer for BOZAR (Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels). Canan is also a writer and a literary translator, trained to work from English to French, she has chosen to focus on contemporary Turkish literature in the last few years. She is currently preparing an anthology of Turkish contemporary writers for the French e-book publisher Publie.Net. She has also recently started to research Turkish Comics.

Karen Brodie

British Council Arts Group, Literature Advisor

Karen Brodie is a literature adviser for the British Council. Based in London, she works with colleagues in Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa along with writers, translators, publishers and sector experts from the UK to plan and deliver literature projects. Karen works on a wide variety of projects including, international literature festivals, the Market Focus programme at The London Book Fair and an international radio series highlighting contemporary British literature. Before joining the British Council, Karen worked in international and domestic rights for Penguin, HarperCollins and Mainstream Publishing.

PARTICIPANTS BIOGRAPHIES

ALGERIA

Rachid Alik (1968) is today Public Relations of The Algiers International Comics Festival (FIBDA) since 2009. He deals with the media and publishers and is strongly involved in the programming of this young but quickly growing festival. Before, he was journalist during 13 years, specialized in cultural issues but worked also in social and political pages of *Le Matin* and *Liberté*, and in the national radio in French, *Alger Chaîne 3*. In a first life, before the civil war in Algeria, Rachid had a PHD in Astrophysics (University of Lausanne-ENS Lyon-USTHB).

BELGIUM

Els Aerts

Since October 2006, Els Aerts (1977) has been grants manager for children's books and graphic novels at the Flemish Literature Fund (www.flemishliterature.be). She organizes projects to promote those genres abroad, for example in coordinating the Flemish presence as guest of honour at the international comics festival of Angoulême in 2009. Els regularly meets international publishers at book fairs, and advises and guides them in their realisation of high-quality translations from Dutch. Before, she was a cultural journalist for the regional newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* and an editor of the financial newspaper *De Tijd*.

Willem De Graeve

A Master of Romance Linguistics and Literature (Ghent University) and of Business Intelligence and Communication (Ghent University), Willem De Graeve (1975) has been working at the Belgian Comic Strip Center since 1999. Today, he is director and communication manager. He has written several articles about comics, including a literary analysis of an album by Jacques Martin. He also regularly gives lectures on the history of Belgian comic strips, at home and abroad (including at MIT in Boston).

Toon Horsten

Toon Horsten has been the director of the Strip Turnhout-comics festival until 2010 and is editor in chief of *Strippgids*, the leading Flemish magazine on comics since 2006. Next to that he writes on literature for *De Standaard* and *Knack*. His first book, 'Het geluk van de lezer', was published in the spring of 2010 (Linkeroever/Houtekiet-publishers). Toon studied English and Dutch at the universities of Leuven and Leiden, worked in the University Library in Leuven,

and as an editor for *Gazet van Antwerpen*. From 2000 to 2006 he was responsible for programming *Warande* in Turnhout, an important Flemish arts centre. There he not only staged 100 to 150 productions a year, but also worked as an executive producer for cd's and books by a.o. Robin Verheyen, Jef Neve, Stefan Brijs, Leen Huet and Chika Unigwe. He was a founding member of *Het Convent vzw*, an organisation that took care of the restoration of the beguinage of Hoogstraten. (The restoration won the Europa Nostra Award, The Henry Ford Conservation Award, and The Flemish Heritage Award. The beguinage has since then been recognized as Unesco World Heritage.)

Johan Stuyck (Leuven, 1958) is a graphic designer and author. He is also professor at the 'Sint-Lukas School of Arts' (department of comic design and illustration) in Brussels and publisher at Oogachtend (Leuven). He publishes mostly graphic novels of the 'new Flemish generation' and books on graphic design and illustration. Recently two of the Oogachtend authors were translated in English: 'Sleepyheads' by Randall Casaer was published in october by Blank Slate Books and 'The wrong place' by Brecht Evens was published by Drawn and Quarterly. Another novel 'Paris' by Maarten Vande Wiele will probably be published by Knockabout Comics in 2011.

Koen Van Rompaey

Koen Van Rompaey is currently general director of the non-profit organisation *Strip Turnhout*, which promotes the comics medium in all its forms. In association with different levels of the government, he works on a wide range of projects and activities about comics, including: the largest and oldest comics festival in Belgium, a comics information magazine, several publications and books about comics, a website, an archives centre, various annual exhibitions, exchange of collections, lectures, and a librarians' study group. Before his current activities, Koen worked for numerous media and organisations as a journalist and an expert on comics.

FINLAND

Warda Ahmed (Hargeisa, 1985) has been working for The Finnish Comics Society since 2005 and as an artist director of The Helsinki Comics Festival since 2010. Warda Ahmed studies pedagogy, history and geography at the University of Helsinki and comics at the (School of Art and Design) Aalto University.

She has been teaching comics to children and youth since 2004. She has published comics and illustration in domestic and foreign anthologies and newspapers.

Otto Sinisalo (born 1979) has been working for the Finnish Comics Society (est. 1971) since 2002. He has written extensively about comics art, doing articles, interviews and critiques for different publications, including *Sarjainfo*, the Finnish Comics Society's quarterly journal. Since 2006 he has worked as the producer for the Helsinki Comics Festival, an annual comics event in Helsinki. Gathering around 15 000 visitors per annum, the Helsinki festival is the largest comics-related event in northern Europe. Sinisalo has also collaborated with different festivals and conventions, coordinating exhibitions, participating in jurys and giving talks on the Finnish comics' scene as a representative of the Finnish Comics Society.

By trade, Sinisalo is a BBA working in IT and as a freelance journalist.

SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES

Paul Gravett

Paul Gravett is a London-based freelance journalist, curator, lecturer, writer and broadcaster, who has worked in comics publishing and promotion since 1981.

In the early 1980s he manned the Fast Fiction table at the bi-monthly Saturday comic marts held in London's Westminster Hall, inviting anybody to sell their homemade comics from it, with all proceeds going to the creator. This role earned him the nickname '*Man At The Crossroads*' from Eddie Campbell in his graphic novel **Alec: How To Be An Artist**, "He will be the purest, most fresh-faced wee fellow you have ever met. His ingenuous enthusiasm will beam from his cheery countenance."

In 1981 he started his first proper paid job at **pssst!** magazine, a brave but misguided attempt at a British version of a luxurious monthly bande dessinée magazine that typically sold well in France. He worked in a variety of positions at **pssst!** - as promotions man, traffic manager, coordinating artwork and interviewing potential contributors - but crucially he had no say in the magazine's content and eventually he became frustrated seeing great material being rejected.

In 1983 he launched **Escape Magazine**, which he co-edited/published with Peter Stanbury, showcasing the cream of the alternative cartoonists of the 1980s. **Escape** lasted for 19 issues before closing its doors in 1989. For six years, **Escape** helped to promote an evolving bunch of distinctive British creators, many of whom were quickly picked up by other comics publishers and by the UK music press, newspapers, magazines and galleries. **The Comics Journal** in #210 said of **Escape**, "This now-defunct London based anthology remains one of the most sorely missed comics of all time not simply because of its tremendous track record of translating European comics but simply because it was always good in so many ways."

Under the Escape Publishing imprint, he co-published **Violent Cases** in 1987, the first collaboration between Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, three volumes of Eddie Campbell's **Alec** between 1984 and 1986, and **London's Dark** in 1988 by James Robinson and Paul Johnson.

Noted comic writer Warren Ellis latter commented, "...Paul, with his longtime partner Peter Stanbury, was running the small press anthology **Fast Fiction**, the **Fast Fiction** stand at the bimonthly Westminster Comics Marts where the small press books were sold, and launching **Escape** - an excellent European-style professional comics magazine whose book-publishing arm led directly to the careers of James Robinson, Dave McKean and Neil Gaiman."

Between 1992 and 2001 he was the director of The Cartoon Art Trust, a UK charity established in 1988, dedicated to preserving and promoting the best of British cartoon art and caricature and to establish a museum of cartoon art with gallery, archives and reference library.

He has curated numerous exhibitions of comic art in Britain and in Europe, including 'God Save The Comics!', a survey of British comic art at the National Comics and Image Centre in Angoulême, France and the first exhibit devoted to the writer Alan Moore and his collaborators at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi, Belgium. As Project Director of The Cartoon Art Trust in London, he worked on tributes to Carl Giles and Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts, and The 100 British Cartoonists of the Century. Since 2003, Paul has been the director of [Comica](#), London's International Comics Festival at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Paul is the co-author, with Peter Stanbury, of the books **Manga: 60 Years Of Japanese Comics** (2004), **Graphic Novels: Stories To Change Your Life** (2005), **Great British Comics: Celebrating A Century Of Ripping Yarns & Wizard Wheezes** (2006), **The Leather Nun & Other Incredibly Strange Comics** (2008) and he is the editor of **The Mammoth Book Of Best Crime Comics** (2008).

On television he has been a consultant and interview subject on **The South Bank Show's** programme **Manga Mania** (2006) and BBC4's documentary series **Comics Britannia** (2007). Also, he appeared as interview subject in the DVD documentary **The Mindscape Of Alan Moore** (2007).

He continues to write about comics for various periodicals, including **The Guardian**, **The Times**, **The Independent**, **The Daily Telegraph**, **The Comics Journal**, **Comic Art**, **Comics International**, **Time Out**, **Blueprint**, **Neo**, **The Bookseller**, **Dazed & Confused**, **New Internationalist**, **Third Text**, **9eme Art** and **The Jewish Quarterly**.

Susanna Nicklin

British Council Arts Group, Director Literature

Susanna Nicklin, Director Literature, joined the British Council from English PEN, the London branch of the international writers' association, in November 2005. Before that, she worked as an international literary agent, selling translation rights to publishers worldwide. Susanna

manages a team of specialist advisors and directs the British Council's global literature programme, with special responsibility for China, India and Russia and major partnerships. She has co-chaired the British Council's Oxford conference and Cambridge seminar as well as debates and events at international book fairs and festivals. She sits on a variety of literature committees and has judged UK and international prizes, both literary and for literature entrepreneurs.

PUBLISHERS

Tony Bennett was importing and distributing American underground comics in the late 60s, along with some self-published British titles. He formed *Knockabout* in 1975 and started publishing *The Freak Brothers* and *Fat Freddy's Cat* comics in the UK; titles which are still selling well. Tony then commenced working with Hunt Emerson and other people from the Birmingham Arts Lab, where they printed their own comics and over the years *Knockabout* have published some fifteen or more titles by Hunt Emerson, three books by Robert Crumb and many other underground cartoonists in their anthology titles. Although the majority of *Knockabout* titles over the years could be described as 'underground' Tony has also worked with mainstream figures like Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean. *From Hell* by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell has been one of *Knockabout's* best-selling books and they are also publishing Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Century*, drawn by Kevin O'Neill. Tony has always been interested and excited by the comics' scene outside of the UK and he has exhibited *Knockabout* books at many festivals in Europe where the range of books is so much greater than the superhero-dominated British comics' world. *Knockabout* is currently working on translations of books from France and Belgium and one of their current titles *Depresso*, a semi-autobiographical story about mental illness, is helping to get comics recognised in places outside of usual comic shops.

Dan Franklin was born in 1949 and has been in publishing since 1970. He is currently the Publishing Director of Jonathan Cape and the Publisher of CCV (Random House UK's literary division, comprising Cape, Chatto & Windus, Harvill Secker, The Bodley Head, Vintage, Pimlico, Yellow Jersey and Square Peg). Cape is one of the premier literary imprints in the UK, publishing Ian McEwan, Martin Amis, Thomas Pynchon, Philip Roth, Salman Rushdie, Julian Barnes, Roddy Doyle, Tom McCarthy, Anne Enright, Mark Haddon and Audrey Niffenegger. Cape's graphic list began in 1999 with Raymond Briggs' *Ethel & Ernest*. Since then we have published, among others, Chris Ware, Dan Clowes, Posy Simmonds, Joe Sacco, Bryan Talbot, Robert Crumb, David B., Guy de Lisle, Hannah Berry, David Hughes, Charles Burns, Seth, Alison Bechdel and Rutu Modan.

Emma Hayley is Director SelfMadeHero. After setting up Metro Media in 2003, which provided editorial and design services to book publishers, Emma went on to launch SelfMadeHero in 2007. Emma's background in publishing, following a postgraduate diploma in journalism at City University, London, has seen her work as a journalist, a film PR and as an editorial director for several small publishers. Since launching her own company, while Emma is still very hands-on in commissioning new titles, her focus has shifted to the business and entrepreneurial face of book publishing. She was named UK Young Publishing Entrepreneur of the Year, as part of the British Book Industry Awards 2008. Her aim is to create a publishing house relevant in the 21st century, developing new inspirational concepts and publishing across multi-platforms.

Lizzie Spratt is a commissioning editor of comic books and graphic novels at the leading independent children's publishing house, Walker Books. Lizzie works on a wide range of stories for newly independent readers, young adults and books with adult-crossover appeal. Her list includes *Salem Brownstone: All Along the Watchtowers* by John Harris Dunning and Nikhil Singh which was longlisted for the 2010 Branford Boase Award and the 2010 Kate Greenaway Medal, *Skim* by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki and *Glisters* by Andi Watson, among many others. Walker Books has been publishing [Marcia Williams](#) since 1997 but has been encouraged to expand the range of books available to young readers by the successful adaptations of Anthony Horowitz's *Stormbreaker* and *Point Blanc*; since May 2009 at least one book has come out every month. There has been a lot of research into the benefits of how stories told in this unique way can encourage reading. More details of Walker's involvement in graphic novels can be found at www.walker.co.uk and to keep up to date follow their Twitter feed @walkerbooks.

ARTISTS

Hunt Emerson was born in the north of England in 1952, and moved to Birmingham in 1971, initially to attend Art College. After a year at college Hunt dropped out of the course, and began to involve himself with what were known at the time as Underground Comics. He started drawing and self-publishing his own comics, which he called **Large Cow Comix**. Hunt worked at the Birmingham Arts Lab, a centre for alternative and experimental arts, for about 7 years, with the Lab's printing press, initially running a machine, but quickly moving to darkroom, layout and design work. At the Arts Lab Press Hunt worked with a small group, publishing underground and alternative comics. Though never commercially successful, these comics are fondly remembered, and are now collectors' items. Hunt began finding freelance work with magazines and publishers, so that around 1980 he was able to leave employment at the Arts Lab and become self employed. At that time he teamed up with **Knockabout Comics** and Tony Bennett, and has worked with them on a number of comic books, both his own and anthologies of other artists, since then. During the 1970s and 80s Hunt was a regular contributor to many independent comics titles, and his work became very well-known among the readership of those comics. Hunt continues to make his living mainly drawing comics for a number of magazines. He has drawn a regular monthly comic page in *Fiesta* (Galaxy Publications), called "Firkin the Cat", which has run since 1981. *Fortean Times* magazine, a journal of the paranormal and unexplained, has featured a page of his, "Phenomenomix" (Dennis Publications), since the mid-1980s, and he is currently working for the well-known children's comic *The Beano* (DC Thomson). With Knockabout, Hunt has published some 30 comic books under his own name, including several "graphic novel" adaptations of literary classics - *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Casanova*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and his current work-in-progress, *Dante's Inferno*. Hunt has made many trips abroad in the name of comics, being an invited guest at comics festivals and expos throughout Europe. He's also been involved in teaching and workshop projects with children, students, young cartoonists, recovering addicts, libraries, special needs groups and community organisations. Recently this has included a tri-national comics project called StripSearch, including the UK, Bulgaria and Spain, and a consultation exercise in Nairobi, Kenya, to help a group there to establish a new, and subsequently very successful, comic to help inspire Kenyan youth, called *Shujaaz.fm*. Several comics organisations have been kind enough to present Hunt with awards. In 2000 he was chosen as one of 75 *Maîtres de la Bande Dessinée Européenne*, by the CNBDI in Angoulême; in 1989 his *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was given a LEMPI by the town of Kemi in Finland; and the Cartoon Arts Trust of Great Britain has made him Strip Cartoonist of the Year. Hunt's comics work has been widely exhibited, and is part of the permanent collections of The Cartoon Museum in London, the CNBDI in France, and the Wordsworth Trust Collection, also in Britain. After nearly 40 years drawing comics, Hunt finds himself on occasion referred to as the "Dean", the "High Priest", or the "Grandfather" of British Underground comics. He's not sure whether he likes this. Hunt's web site features a lot of his drawing, at www.largecow.com

Karrie Fransman has scribbled strips for *The Guardian*, created comics for *The Times* and is currently grafting a graphic novel, 'The House That Groaned' for *Random House's Square Peg*. In 2010 she was shortlisted for the *Arts Foundation Award*. Her 'sequential art sculptures' are currently on show at the 'That's Novel! Lifting Comics from The Page' exhibition at londonprintstudio where she is also running an Internship in 'Comics and Comics Production'. You can see her work at www.karriefransman.com

Ed Hillyer (working under the artist name of **ILYA**) is a comic book creator (writer and artist). His works have been published internationally; by Marvel, DC and Dark Horse in the USA; Kodansha in Japan; and numerous independent companies worldwide. They include *The End of the Century Club* (Best Graphic Novel, UK Comic Art Convention award 1997) and its sequel, *Time Warp*; *It's Dark in London*, for *Serpent's Tail*; and *Skidmarks*, a charming kitchen-sink drama (Active Images 2004). Editor for 3 volumes of *The Mammoth Book of BEST NEW MANGA* (Robinson 2006-8), marshalling a host of international talent, he also designs and tutors workshops and courses on the art of comics and manga for colleges, galleries, libraries, schools and prisons, across the UK as well as abroad. His latest graphic novel was *Manga Shakespeare's KING LEAR*. *THE CLAY DREAMING*, his debut prose novel, is one of Waterstone's New Voices for 2010.

Sarah Lightman is an award-winning fine artist, comics researcher, curator and arts journalist. Sarah creates diary drawings of her life, autobiographical drawings and texts of her life, that panel by panel form an ongoing graphic novel of her life. Sarah studied at The Slade School Of Art (UCL) for her BA and MFA, where she won numerous scholarships. Sarah has exhibited widely in the UK and her most recent solo show was [In Memoriam](#) at [The New Hall Art Collection](#), at the University of Cambridge. Sarah presented her work at The International Auto/Biography Association Conference, University of Sussex in June 2010. Her art work and curatorial projects have also been featured in [The International Journal of Comic Art](#), Time Out, The Independent, Hampstead and Highgate Express, The London Jewish News and The Jewish Chronicle. Sarah is researching a PhD in *Autobiography in Comics* at the University of Glasgow. She chairs the annual Women in Comics Conference, which celebrates and examines women's contribution to comics. The first [Women in Comics](#) conference was held at The University of Cambridge in October 2009 and was reviewed in The International Journal of Comic Art. Sarah is Director of [Laydeez do Comics](#) with Nicola Streeten, a comics forum open to all, that explores autobiography and domestic drama in graphic novels and comics. Sarah is curating [Graphic Details, Confessional Comics by Jewish Women](#) with Michael Kaminer. The show opened at [The Cartoon Art Museum](#), San Francisco in October 2010, and tours in February. [Women in Comics II](#) was held at Leeds Art Gallery, on November 18th 2010 and was reviewed in [The Times Higher Education Supplement](#).

Woodrow Phoenix (personal testimony):

"As an artist and as a writer I am interested in working with comics because the narrative tools of this form allow me to extend and challenge what stories can do and what they can say. The way a story is structured affects the way it is interpreted and understood by the reader. Comics are pure structure. I love the comics form for the possibilities it offers. The power of the comic strip comes from its ability to sculpt time and space in a simple, incremental way that can result in amazingly complex and sophisticated narratives. Film and literature both have their distinct areas of pre-eminence; film can deliver spectacle, novels can offer an unmatched interiority. But the juxtaposition of image and text in a comic strip can support, contradict, flatten, augment, underline, collapse and surprise over and over again in nuanced ways that filmic image alone cannot and novelistic text alone cannot. Ours is a text-based culture that privileges the written word above all things. The visual has been and continues to be undervalued as merely decorative. Despite the fact that unpicking the layers of information contained in the simplest picture requires a formidable level of interpretive skill, those skills are not valued because the subject matter is often thought to be not worth the effort.

The magical quality of the drawn image (ideogram, logo, cartoon, diagram) and the way in which reductive marks can somehow add up to more than just lines also fascinates me. A drawing brings a new reality to life which can have incredible resonance considering how flimsy the tools are. In a way all drawing is metaphor, is symbols made into characters. Drawings, especially cartoon and caricature, are ways to reconfigure information. They capture emotion. They represent what is unseen, they "look how things feel".

I believe there are still huge areas of narrative potential untapped in the comics form, partly because the subject matter has been so constrained by commercial demands that neither creators nor readers were able to imagine where the form could be expanded before new technologies have removed a lot of those barriers.

I am concerned with finding new ways to make the invisible visible. To bring to conscious attention so much of what passes unseen and unquestioned in everyday life. To examine the ideas that get taken for granted and perhaps find a different way to see what might seem exhausted. Sometimes this might just mean finding a new way to draw something, or experimenting with the presentation. Other times it may mean finding a new way to present information. My most recent book, "Rumble Strip", uses no characters at all and addresses the reader directly through narrative captions. This approach has not been previously used in a comic book, as far as I know. It seems odd at first but eliminating the fictional construct of a protagonist leads to a more direct and far more visceral experience for the reader. Most reviewers - many of whom have little familiarity with the comics medium - have been surprised by how effectively this works. It was reviewed by Neel Mukherjee in The Times as "One utterly original work of genius. It should be made mandatory reading for everyone, everywhere." As a non-fiction technique it has all kinds of possibilities and it is one direction that I will continue to explore."

Posy Simmonds

Rosemary Elizabeth "Posy" Simmonds [MBE](#) is a [British newspaper cartoonist](#) and [writer](#) and [illustrator](#) of [children's books](#). She is best known for her long association with [The Guardian](#), for which she has drawn the cartoons [Gemma Boverly](#) (2000) and [Tamara Drewe](#) (2005–06), both later published as books. Her style gently satirises the [English middle classes](#) and in particular those of a literary bent. Both of the published books feature a "doomed heroine", much in the style of the 18th- and 19th-century gothic romantic novel, to which they often allude, but with an ironic, modernist slant.

Nicola Streeten is currently working on a graphic novel, *Billy, Me & You* which will be published by [Myriad Editions](#) in Sept 2011. Nicola set up [Laydeez do Comics](#) in 2009 with artist Sarah Lightman. It is the first women led UK graphic novel forum which focuses more on the domestic than the superhero. Guests are invited to present their work and it meets once a month in London. To embed the anecdotal into the academic, Nicola is studying part time for a Masters of Research (Mres) at The University of Lincoln. Her area is gender and the graphic novel. She will be presenting papers at Transitions, a one day symposium as part of [Comica](#) on 5 November 2010. She will also be presenting at [Women in Comics II](#) conference that will take place as part of Thought Bubble on 18 November 2010.

Nicola Streeten studied Social Anthropology at Sussex University and Art and Design at Middlesex Polytechnic. She has worked as a freelance illustrator since 1996, applying a humorous cartoon style to people, maps and buildings.

ACADEMICS

Dr Jason Dittmer is a geographer with interests in popular geopolitics. Popular geopolitics refers to the ways in which discourses of space and power circulate among everyday people. Within popular geopolitics Dr Dittmer is known for his work studying nationalist superheroes, or heroes who claim to embody the values of a nation-state. At present, Dr Dittmer is writing a book about nationalist superheroes in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, in which he analyzes the narratives of nation that are produced through this form of serial culture. More recently, Dr Dittmer has become interested in the particular importance of space to the production of narrative in the comic book form, and his future work will be in this arena. He has recently written about the potential of comic book visualities to inform academic narrations of the social realm in new, more theoretically sophisticated ways. He is currently working on the production of narrative in site-specific comics installations. Jason Dittmer received his PhD at Florida State University in 2003 and took up his lectureship at UCL in 2007 after a stint of teaching in the United States.

Dr Maggie Gray completed her PhD in the History of Art at University College London (UCL) this year. Her thesis, entitled *'Love Your Rage, Not Your Cage' Comics as Cultural Resistance: Alan Moore 1971-1989*, addressed the early work of the legendary British creator as a case study to consider the potential for adversarial mass culture in the context of the rise of Thatcherism. She has spoken at many conferences and events relating to comics, and has had work published in *Studies in Comics*, *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* and *Kunst und Politik*, as well as a chapter in the forthcoming *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* book, to be published by Manchester University Press. She is currently employed as a dissertation supervisor for illustration students at Middlesex University, and has previously taught comics, aesthetics and art history at Middlesex, UCL and Central St Martins College of Art and Design. She also works part-time at Mega-City Comics shop in Camden Town, London. www.maggigray.co.uk

Dr Roger Sabin is a cultural critic, and Reader in Popular Culture at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. He is the author of several books, including **Adult Comics: An Introduction** (Routledge) and **Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels** (Phaidon). His research into 19th century comics won the Franco Fossatti Award in 2006, and his collection of comics memorabilia was lent to the Tate Gallery for their exhibition 'Rude Britannia' in 2010. He has reviewed graphic novels for the UK national press, including a column in **The Observer**, and appears frequently on BBC radio. He is currently working on a book about the British comics character Ally Sloper, and is trying his hand at writing scripts for humorous comic strips.

Tony Venezia is a PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London with a background in English literature studies, and is currently writing a thesis on constructions of history in the works of Alan Moore. For his MA thesis, Tony focused on narrative in the comics of Frank Miller, Harvey Pekar and Jaime Hernandez. His wider research interests include genre fiction, critical theory, historiography and cultural history. Prior to moving into academia, Tony worked as a nurse for ten years in a South London hospital. He has published articles on Anglophone comics in *Peer English* and the *International Journal of Comic Art*, has given conference papers on comics around the UK and have also reviewed books and exhibitions for numerous academic publications, including *New Formations*, *Radical Philosophy*, and *Studies in Comics*. Tony organised the *Transitions: New Directions in Comics Studies* symposium held at Birkbeck in November 2010, at which Dr. Roger Sabin acted as respondent and Maggie Gray presented a paper, and hopes to run a follow up event next year. One of the possible outcomes of *Transitions* is a cross-disciplinary anthology on comics and geography that Dr. Jason Dittmer of UCL is in the process of putting together. In addition, Tony has contributed chapters on Alan Moore for two forthcoming anthologies coming out next year: *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* and *Re-genre-ations: Mediating Contemporary Gothic Fictions*. As co-convenor at Birkbeck of the Contemporary Fiction Seminar he is currently involved in organising a symposium on short fiction next year, which will include papers and guest speakers on comics.

THE LONDONPRINTSTUDIO INTERNS

[Joe Kelly](#) is a comic creator with a passion for stories based on real life. He studied Visual Communications at *Leeds College of Art and Design* where he first sold his comics at *Travelling Man*. Since graduating in 2009 he has worked as a freelance illustrator and cartoonist creating flyers and posters for clubs and bands, storyboards, and t-shirt designs. His style is influenced by 70's and 80's comics and he is currently working on a graphic novel based in a cake factory in the North.

At an early age, [Rachel Emily Taylor](#) was passionate about drawing, especially with her mother's best Chanel lipstick. Having just graduated from *London College of Communication*, she is a keen visual storyteller, working in a variety of mediums from comics to narrative 3D sculpture and film. She has exhibited at *The Rag Factory* and was recently featured in the *Sunday Telegraph's* "Tall Tales" article about the key players in the new wave of British storytelling. She is currently working on graphic stories exploring folklore and the darker side of human nature.

[William Goldsmith](#) is an illustrator and comic creator living and working in Brighton. He recently graduated from *Glasgow School Of Art* and has since exhibited at *DA&AD New Blood*, *Museum of London* and the *Goethe Institute*. His short story 'Like A Wagon' was Highly Commended in the *Observer Graphic Story* prize in 2009. His debut graphic novel 'Vignettes of Ystov' is published by *Jonathan Cape* and *Random House* in March 2011.

[Freya Harrison](#) is a comic creator who graduated from *LCC* in 2008. She won the 1st place *Design4Scienceillustration* award in 2007, has produced illustrations for *Time Out*, *Google* and *Macmillan* and has just had a solo exhibition at *The Old Sweet Shop* gallery. Freya is currently working on a graphic novel that combines her life long passion for comics with music.

[Isabel Greenberg](#) recently graduated from the *University of Brighton* Illustration course. In 2008 she came second in the *Jonathan Cape/Observer graphic short story prize*. Since graduating she has appeared in *Nobrow's* anthology 'A Graphic Cosmogony' and in *Nobrow 4* 'Like Night and Day'. Currently she is working on a series of short comics.