

David A. Beronä

THE WOODCUT NOVEL: A TRIBUTE TO THE ART OF STORYTELLING

(annotation of the lecture)

Riva Castleman declared in A Century of Artists Books that artists' books are "the work of the artist whose imagery, rather than being subsumed by the text, overcomes it by translating it into a language that has more meanings than words alone can convey." Early in the twentieth century, a distinct form of storytelling evolved from the woodcut called the "novel in pictures," and later referred to as the woodcut novel, a term used to include the medium of not only woodcuts but wood engravings, linocuts and leadcuts. These wordless books were highly imaginative and realistic stories for adults told in black-and-white pictures. They were created by Frans Masereel (Belgium), Lynd Ward (United States), and others like Helena Bochoráková-Dittrichová (Czechoslovakia). These works focused largely on social concerns in a growing industrial culture, the loss of human dignity during the economic Depression, and a general inquiry about our humanity against the backdrop of world wars. The themes from these early woodcut novels have a powerful relevance today and re-emphasize the importance of visual narratives in education and communication.

Although they had a short-lived popularity, woodcut novels played an important role as an avenue of focus in artists' books and the development of comic art, particularly the contemporary graphic novel with its focus on adult themes.

In this presentation, I examine woodcut novels that pay homage to the distinctiveness of artists' books by assorted international artists like Jules Remedios Faye, Barbara Henry, Chris Stern, Ken Currie, Rebecca Anne Blissell, Brendon Deacy, Babette Katz, Harry Sternberg, and George A. Walker with a focus on content and various production methods including paper type and binding. In addition, I examine the social, personal, and literary themes in woodcut novels associated with graphic novels by Palle Nielsen, Olivier Deprez, Eric Drooker, Stefan Berg, Marta Chudolinska, Megan Speers, Sam Motherwell, and Neil Bousfield.

The lecture will be on **Wednesday, April 27, 2011, 3:00 p.m.**, at the lecture room „Freskový sál“ (at the Department of Journalism, Wurmova 7)

David A. Beronä is a woodcut-novel historian, author of *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels* (2008) and a 2009 Harvey Awards nominee. He is the Dean of the Library and Academic Support Services at Plymouth State University, New Hampshire, United States and a member of the visiting faculty at the Center for Cartoon Studies, White River Junction, Vermont.

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