

# CATACRACK! 1ª Jornada d'Estudis dels Còmics.

UIB - Clúster de Còmic i Nous Mèdia de Mallorca

## Resum de les ponències



### «On Visual Storytelling»

Dr. Benjamin Fraser

University of Arizona, United States

What can a body do? This is the question that has surfaced in various discourses, among which the most notable are the exploration of the body in the philosophical-phenomenological sense, in the artistic and aesthetic sense, and as it concerns us now in the present context, in the area of comics and graphic novels. Following the parameters enunciated by Gilles Deleuze in his book entitled *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 'A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity'. Inspired by Spinozist thought, Deleuze returns to his philosophy in search of some propositions to better understand life, movement, consciousness and action. The body is revealed to us as the centre of two relations, one kinetic and the other dynamic. Spinoza has said: 'For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do.' Proposition: let us understand comics as bodies. They can speak, through words but also through movements. Bodies move, through space and through time. They shout, whisper, point, indicate, and otherwise direct attention. Bodies stretch, contort, push, jump, speed up, slow down, contract, retreat, and rest. Bodies breathe, digest, pump blood. From this point of view, narrative in comics is not just a speech act, but a bodily movement that involves all aspects of the comic's body—line, graphic style, lettering, colouring, page layout, structure and everything that comics theorist Thierry Groensteen has called iconic solidarity, 'the relational play of a plurality of interdependent images as the unique ontological foundation of comics'. With a variety of examples drawn from the corpus of global comics, we will observe the corporeal substance of comics narration in action: e.g. Pere Joan, Julie Doucet, Nick Drnaso, Brecht Evens, Emil Ferris, Keum Suk-Gendry Kim, Shigeru Mizuki, Ana Penyas, Joe Sacco, Seth, R. Sikoryak, Marc-Antoine Mathieu and Chris Ware.



## «Hergé. The 20th Century in The Adventures of Tintin»

**Dr. Bartomeu Castell Pons**

**PhD in History from the University of the Balearic Islands**

Georges Remi (under the pseudonym of Hergé) is one of the most influential artists in the world of comic books, also termed the ninth art, as well as the primary author of the so-called 'clear line'—one of the most important artistic trends in Franco-Belgian comics. Hergé's best-known work, *The Adventures of Tintin*, portrays a series of global historical events from the 20th century. The paper reviews the most significant historical events depicted in his early artistic period. It also thoroughly analyses two specific albums he created at two different periods, coinciding with the second and third eras in his artistic production. The presentation starts with an introduction looking into Tintin, the newspapers where Hergé published his cartoons and the publishers that released his work. This is followed by a concise overview of the historical events depicted in each album from his early period, from *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* to *King Ottokar's Sceptre*. It then moves on to an analysis of the global historical context that prevented Hergé from including certain historical events in his second artistic period, with a particular emphasis on *The Crab with the Golden Claws*. Finally, the presentation looks at the historical context and personal circumstances that led Hergé to create the double album *Destination Moon* and *Explorers of the Moon*, as representative examples of his third and final artistic period—a time when he was clearly one step ahead of history.

## «Out of Context. A Look at the Comic Outside the Narrative Fact»

**Pere Joan**

**Clúster de Còmic de Mallorca**

The presentation encourages us to look beyond the strictly narrative function of comic book pages and see them as aesthetic objects in and of themselves. This requires analysing how authors sometimes add layers of meaning that do not necessarily support the story, but rather aim to generate a stand-alone aesthetic or conceptual effect separate from the narrative.

These devices should not have a detrimental effect on the reader's pace, but rather enrich content, highlight the graphic nature of the medium and provide opportunities for subsequent re-creation through contemplation. This enables us to move beyond the story itself and spotlight specificities within print media to take advantage of page and panel distribution with a view to broadening meaning and, at times, even embrace musical, rhythmic, aesthetic or conceptual elements.



From this perspective, the presentation analyses several apparent or hidden effects/ meanings found on the page (taken as an object in itself) or in a single panel. This includes rhythms, the page as a musical performance (Coll, Max, Micharmut) or its similarity to an engraving/lithograph (*Little Nemo*), the importance of uniformity (*The Smurfs*), an aerial shot à la Brueghel for exhaustive descriptions (Opisso, Blanco, the special summer and Christmas issues of older comic books), recurrent devices (Chris Ware), diagrams that explain individual or collective lives, attitudes or backgrounds (again, Chris Ware), single panels comprising a poetic and focused vision which, at first glance, may go unnoticed (Hergé), and the occasional use of comic strips in place of regular features (*Liberation* and *ARA* newspapers).

## «History in Comics. An Approach»

**Dr. Antoni Marimon Riutort**

**Professor in Contemporary History**

**University of the Balearic Islands**

History and comics are both ways of narrating events. History aims to reflect the past in the most objective way possible, whilst comics do so with a much freer approach. In general terms, the presentation looks at different types of comics with regard to history, ranging from the most common (which we could term historical) where history is portrayed more or less accurately as a backdrop to different adventures, to examples that aim to explain or reconstruct the past, either with an educational approach or as true essays akin to academic texts. Comics we could term as journalistic represent a special category, as their panels depict the current world soon to be left behind. In turn, many comics that do not aim to portray historical events (e.g. with a focus on humour or everyday life) actually stand as extraordinary testaments to their era and, as such, are an invaluable historical resource.

## «They Were the Dead: A Synthetic Look at NSLM»

**Josep Maria Nadal Suau**

A local Majorcan fanzine from comic book artists Max and Pere Joan that ran between 1995 and 2007, *Nosotros somos los muertos* (NSLM) played a key role as a showcase of the most disruptive comic art in Spain open to novel international trends without limiting itself to a single style or generation. In addition to the founders themselves, the list of contributing artists is a veritable who's who in the modern Spanish canon: Federico del Barrio, Àlex Fito, Manel Fontdevila, Gallardo, Albert Montey, Javier Olivares and Santiago Sequeiros. Moreover, the magazine was in step with the work of international artists such as Julie Doucet, David Mazzucchelli or Chris Ware.



Today, NSLM's publishing adventure (which, depending on the criteria we apply, had two or three periods) is considered a foundational chapter in comic book history and culture, acquiring a near-mythical status. The presentation aims to review NSLM's legacy and spot the signs anticipating the future work of the contributing authors invited by Max and Pere Joan, taking into account the fanzine's heritage and historical framework.

To this end, we will review all NSLM issues in-depth and listen to the founders themselves to delve into what they originally set out to achieve, all within the framework of the fanzine's 30th anniversary.

## «Science Comics and Science in Comics»

**Dr. Miguel Ángel Miranda**

**Agro-Environmental and Water Economics Research Institute (UIB)**

**Clúster de Còmic i Nous Mèdia de Mallorca**

When the general public thinks of comics, they may well see them solely as entertainment for children and young audiences. A more detailed analysis of the language in comics enables us to see how they can go beyond mere entertainment. Numerous studies explain the advantages and purposes behind using comic language to circulate complex information amongst different age groups. Moreover, this is not an exceptional approach, with many present-day scientific journals now including a so-called 'graphical abstract', i.e. a sequence of images or diagrams that sequentially summarises the most relevant aspects of published research. In the same vein, numerous scientific meetings organise sessions on how to use comics as a tool for outreach and education.

There are many advantages of using comics to promote scientific education. The presentation will highlight the medium's popularity, visual impact, sensory experience and motivational potential. In fact, combining text into a sequential visual narrative enhances readers' motivation. The presentation will also look into a few examples in the field of Biology, including issues in the Balearic Islands such as *Xylella fastidiosa*. Moreover, it will also review some national science comic books and look at several examples of how comics use scientific concepts across different genres.



## «Die, Moron!»

**Florentino Flórez Fernández**

**Coordinator of the Illustration and Comic Series at the Mallorca Art School**

Jordi Bernet has worked in nearly all genres, from adventure to horror, fantasy and western. He has always, however, remained interested in distortion and caricature, eroticism and humour. Although his drawing never falters, the topics he addresses cause strong reactions amongst his many readers. His depictions of racial stereotypes and scenes of violence against women are striking. For example, *Historias Negras* (scripted by Abulí, 1990) shows African characters with stereotypical facial features and speaking in a pidgin language called 'camelo'.

Highlighting racist elements has become increasingly common in recent decades. For example, criticism of Hergé's early works has abounded, with accusations that he promoted colonial stereotypes. In the United States, as respected an author as Eisner created *Ebony* in 1940, a young African American sidekick of *The Spirit*. Although he later wrote and drew many graphic novels condemning xenophobia and racial stereotypes, Eisner has been widely criticised for his 'darkie' character who would almost be unthinkable today.

Critics of these representations are moved by their moral convictions: they not only belittle certain physical or cultural traits, but also help perpetuate discrimination. Toxic attitudes take root when certain types of images are seen as normal. For this reason, critics advocate for changing representational codes to spur social change.

As St Bernard said, 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'. In the 1940s and 50s, many educators and psychologists thought they were doing the right thing by linking juvenile delinquency and comics. In the 1990s, political correctness focused on avoiding racial stereotyping. Today, cancellation and censorship remain a continual threat to authors, underscoring the idea that comics are a social tool that should be subject to the highest moral standards. Lest we forget, all artforms are more than mere vehicles for propaganda or education.



## «About Clusters and Festivals. A Review of Còmic Nostrum and the Clúster de Còmic i Nous Mèdia»

**Joan Miquel Morey**

**Cultural manager**

**Registered member no. 1552 at the College of Marketing and Communication of Catalonia**

All groups of individuals operate as living organisms with roots and constantly evolving internal and external dynamics. In light of this, neither the 'Clúster de Còmic i Nous Mèdia' (2011) nor the 'Còmic Nostrum Festival' (1999) can be understood without referencing the 'Associació d'Amics i Víctimes del Còmic (AAVC)' (1996). Nor can the AAVC be understood without the 1995 opening of the Norma Còmics bookshop.

Norma Còmics opened on 25th March 1995 in Palma in the midst of a Spanish, author and publishing crisis. This crisis had dragged on since the closure of the giant Editorial Bruguera publishing house, as well as the never-ending disappearance of weekly comic magazines for adults that had allowed authors to survive by serialising their work. The emergence of manga and the expansion of American superhero comics meant surviving publishers focused on material from overseas that had much lower copyright and production costs than local creations.

Majorca was a cultural desert in 1995: there were no comic events, workshops, exhibitions, conferences or presentations at all, with the noteworthy exception of the self-published *Nosotros somos los muertos nº1* fanzine by Max and Pere Joan, in collaboration with Monograma Ediciones run by Tótem bookshop in Palma.

This is where our story begins. The AAVC's initial activities were promoted by Norma bookshop in December 1996 with a group show of young Balearic authors and a series of four conferences. The first 'Còmic Nostrum, setmanes del Còmic a Mallorca' event was held in 1999, jointly organised by the AAVC, Sa Nostra and Palma City Council. The comic book event included a series of 10 conferences and two exhibitions: 'Còmic, 3 mirades (Ibáñez, Prado & Díaz)' and 'Territori Vaquer.'

In 2011, the AAVC passed the baton to the newly founded 'Clúster de Còmic i Nous Mèdia', leading to a broader commitment to continue revitalising and promoting comics across the Balearic Islands and the rest of Spain.



## «History, Fiction and Activism: Comics in Greece»

**Dra. Kristina Gedgaudaite**  
**University of Vienna**

When it comes to Greek graphic novels from the past decade, we quickly see most draw from the Greek literary canon, on the one hand, and watershed moments in Greek national history, on the other. At the same time, there is cross-fertilization between these two types of narratives: novels adapted into comics are usually regarded as reflecting the historical periods they narrate, whilst historical narratives often blur the boundaries between reality and fiction through visual metaphors from the fantasy genre. The first part of the presentation will draw on examples from Greek graphic novels in order to discern voices, genres and cultural trends that come to the fore when narrating Greek history today. The second part will then move from history to the present, and from comics in book form to alternative formats in order to examine instances of comic activism. By juxtaposing these two perspectives, the presentation will frame comics as a way of thinking that can provide alternative visions onto contemporary Greece.

## «PROJECT MUCBAL. Comic Museum of the Balearic Islands»

**Jorge Isaurralde Gómez**  
**Comic book author and designer**  
**Clúster de Còmic i Nous Mèdia de Mallorca**

**Jaume Vaquer**  
**Comic book promoter,**  
**theoretist and collector**

It all began a few years ago when Jaume Vaquer, a comic book promoter, theorist and collector based in Majorca, expressed his desire for his collection (one of the most important private collections of original editions and comic publications in Europe), to remain on the island, although he had received several offers to move it to the mainland. The collection contains over 1,500 originals from the most important international comic book authors and more than 6,000 publications.

Since then, the Cluster de Còmic i Nous Media de Mallorca has been looking for a space to house the collection that would comprise the main collection for a future museum. Several meetings with different institutions led to many promises yet little success. However, this all changed two years ago in an informal conversation with the Mayor of Inca, Virgilio Moreno, and the councillor for urban planning and museums, Andreu Caballero. Caixa Colonya would transfer a house located in the city centre, Ca'n metge Cifre, to the City Council as a permanent home for the Comic Museum.

The project will be presented in November 2025 at the 'Festival Còmic Nostrum' in the very building set to house the museum. The presentation here will explain the current stage of the project and planned future activities. Moreover, Comic Cluster's blueprints will be showcased and explained, after being approved by Inca City Council and the building's owners. Jaume Vaquer will also be in attendance to explain the items in his collection.

