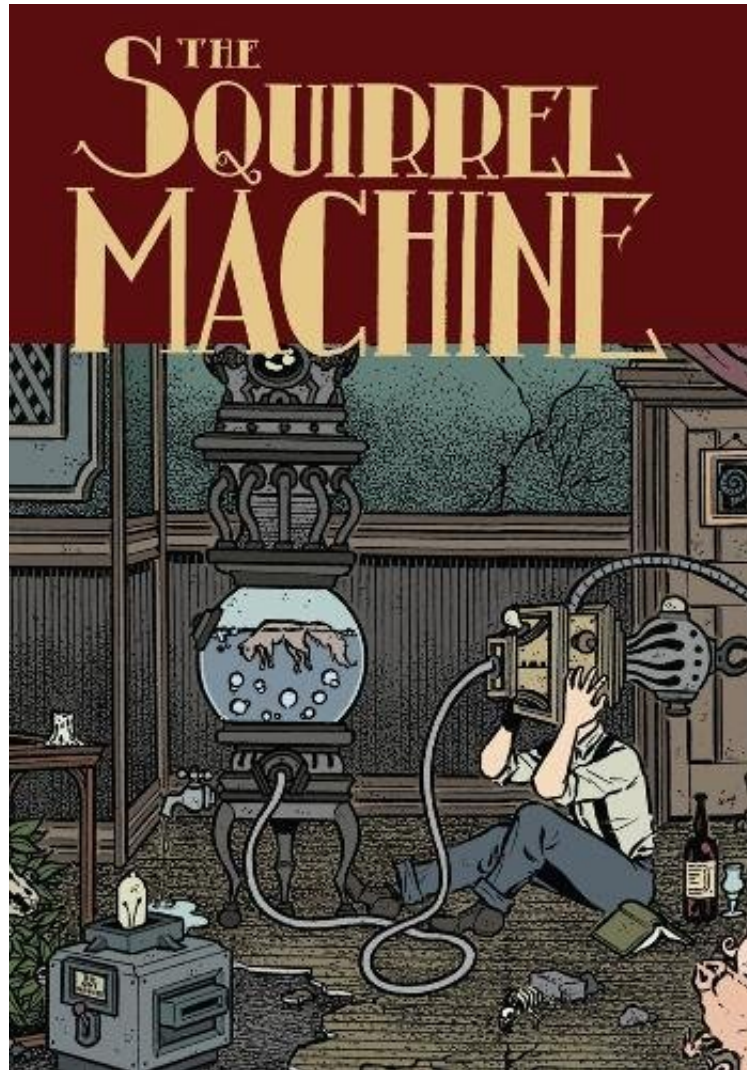


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The Squirrel Machine

Hans Rickheit

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#1793743 in Books 2013-09-07 Original language: English PDF # 1 10.00 x .60 x 7.10l, 1.25 #File Name: 1606996460192 pages | File size: 60.Mb

Hans Rickheit : The Squirrel Machine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Squirrel Machine:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Disturbing is not even the word By I. Schaeffer A look into madness. If serial killers and animal mutilation creeps you out, don't read this. I wouldn't be surprised if someone vomited once after reading this. It was more disturbing than I thought it would be but the art is very interesting. It's definitely unique and is extremely dark and twisted. The mother is an interesting character, though you know little about her besides her husband is long dead. The overall point of this comic? I really think it's creepy for the sake of being creepy. The boys are obsessed with their horrid devices and everything else is meaningless. They're really weird

and how the younger brother becomes a bedridden bloated mass I will never know. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Amazing and shocking at the same time

By M. T. Crenshaw

What What What?! WTF!

The Squirrel Machine is a BW graphic novel set in 19th century New England, structured in four parts, through which we see the Torpor Brothers go from teens to old people in a non-linear narrative. This novel has everything I want in a graphic book to be memorable: good graphics, great dose of imagination, uniqueness in style and story, they tease my emotions and/or my intellect, and the story keeps me thinking well after I finish the book. The Squirrel Machine has all of that, but it is not the usual moderate dose, it is the baddaboom dose. This novel is fast, slippery and naughty as a mutant squirrel. The Squirrel Machine is provocative, weird, macabre, disgusting, shocking, erotic, gory, trippy, disturbing, dark, irreverent, thought-provoking, deeply oneiric and sweet and funny at times. All of those ingredients are given to the reader with generosity, not a pinch of spices, more like a whole tin of them. Can you stomach it? Can you forget the pungent flavour of the spices to discover the ingredient that lies underneath?

MAIN THEMES AND MAIN SUBJECT

To me, this novel is a triptych that creates a whole. The three main panels or themes are: The interrelation between oniric and awoken state, the communication between the conscious and subconscious, and the process of creating Art.

1/ If you tend to your dreams or a dream-worker you will find easier to go through some of the pages in this book. Rickheit might not be a dream-worker but he knows dream language and transposes into his images and story, and I find something amazing. There is a fine line separating the real world and the oneiric work and Rickheit gives readers several clues, first in the written introduction and then in some of the images that directly connect both worlds. It is raining, Edmund is sleeping and his dream reflect how the exterior world affects the story going in the dream. Most importantly, the world of dreams is symbolic and metaphorical and none of the images and words said is literal, and what is literal is like you have it in front of your nose and cannot see it. The world of dreams is a world of constant puns and metaphors, sometimes very obvious, others very hidden. For example, the erotic scene in the snails is apparently nonsense, but is it? What is the imagery telling? Doesn't intercourse feels like a constant generation and expulsion of slimy juices coming out of the body? Many of the scenes in the book can be read that way. Instead of seeing what you have in the vignette and taking it literally, ask yourself, what would be the message the image is conveying if translated, literally, into words? Is Edmund entering a secret world underneath the bed, or underneath the blankets? Is the image of William's empty skin a way of saying that he is a hollow man that has been discarded and whose life has been shattered into pieces? Is the image of a man falling from a cliff when talking about his love of a woman, a way of depicting the saying "he has fallen for her"? I read many of the images in the book this way and they seemed to make more sense than in another way. It is also more rewarding, because it forces one to see reality for what is removing the lens of perception. It also forces to properly look at things for what they are not for what they provoke in us or the way we see them.

2/ The squirrel seems to sending messages from the upper or conscious world to the underground or the world of the unconscious, from the upper awoken world to the underground world or vice versa. The underground world is always the world of the unconscious, all our hidden self is: the surprising, the shocking, the trauma, the repressed stuff, the genius, the creativity, the fear, the wholly-molly of our inner world, a world that we don't know anything about but influences how we behave in the world. The Squirrel Machine is a constant going and coming to the underground, to the unconscious/subconscious, and the dark stuff comes from there. The relation of the unconscious the irrational v. the conscious rational is also exposed in the images and story in ways that aren't apparent either. It shows in the relationship between the Torpors and Emma the pig-keeper, who looks and behaves mostly like an animal, moves and acts out of her basic instincts, the animal part in all of us; however, Emma is also the owner of the book on the Squirrel Machine. She and Edmund connect directly themselves and what Edmund sees made him sick for days. Like looking inside ourselves and seeing our inner monster, our basic animality. The play of conscious/unconscious and rational/irrational are constantly used in the novel. Mrs Torpor, seems to be the only person among the main characters that has some sort of equilibrium.

3/ The exploration of the oneiric, the conscious, the unconscious, the rational and the irrational are are not the subjects of this book, they are as aids to the main subject of the book -- the artistic creative process, the way artistic creation works, the things that artistic creation brings up for the artist, and for society, and what needs to stay and what needs to be destroyed or will destroy the artist. In a way, the artist is presented as a constant explorer of the inner world, an explorer of the unconscious, the explorer of the irrational, the magician that confronts face to face the psyche and its monsters and gets its secrets. What are the Torpor boys dreaming of? It is mostly of Art, even though their creations turn out to be monstrous and socially unacceptable. It came to me that some of the biggest artist in the 19th and early 20th century, those who revolutionised the world of Art and whose Art creations are now called masterpieces, were considered mad men at the time, and their Art disgusting, revolting and monstrous. Like these artists, the Torpors have a hunger for creating and for creating something different, for experimentation, and for accessing that magic well (pun!) from where inspiration comes from. The creative world has no end, keeps growing and growing, yet it is not a matter of growth, is a matter of the creative side being organic, healthy and beneficial mostly to the creator.

WHAT IS THE SQUIRREL MACHINE?

Taking into account all of that, what is the Squirrel Machine and what does do? To me, it is that magic "thing" that connects the inner and outer self, all the parts that form who we are as persons and as human beings. The main question is not what the squirrel machine does, the question is that is beneficial to you and to

your Art. Is beneficial for the Torpors? Can they stand it? What does it do to them? Are they ready to face the machine? There are things inside us that should never be seen by any other person, or just for those who are willing and ready, things that we are not even prepared to face without losing ourselves in them and losing who we are. FUNNY MOMENTS The book has also some very funny moments, which serve as a sort of release of the accumulated dark tension. Some of the scene sex are very comic, as are Mrs Torpor's paintings, and the use of the word torpor as surname. Torpor is "a state of mental or physical inactivity", which is the contrary of which these guys are, even the mother is far from torpor. There are little elements depicted in the backgrounds that are really cute. THE ARTWORK I have a natural preference for minimalist BW images and for gorgeous coloured drawings, for which very busy vignettes, as the ones in this book, are never going to be my cup of tea. However, I cannot but recognise Rickheit's visual talent, and the way he is able to create amazing detailed indoor images, baroque surrealist images, cityscapes and a bit of country escape. I found that facial expressions are, on the contrary, a bit loose or not fully detailed. It might be intentional as most of the characters look a bit under the effects of hallucinogens or just hyperventilated. I like Mrs Torpor, she is balanced and has a face :)) WARNING Despite the cute title and intriguing book cover, The Squirrel Machine is not a book for children, and certainly not for most adults. Gory, violent, sexual and everything you want your children not to read until they are mature enough to understand it. Strictly for open minded adults, as well. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Weird Nightmarish Journey By David Swan I discovered a mention of The Squirrel Machine on a web site that recommended it for fans of Al Columbia's brand of nightmarish art. It was described as a horror book but I would more classify it as some sort of macabre fantasy. The story revolves around two brothers, Edmund and William Torpor, who have one driving passion in life. They live to turn animal corpses into musical instruments. Let that sink in for a moment because it's far worse than you might imagine. Early in the story the two create an elaborate organ where the musical notes are connected to 43 severed pigs' heads. It is a grotesque monstrosity and I have no idea whether the horrible thing actually played music or simply squeaked and squealed like pigs. Even as the two brothers reveal their horrifying, putrid creations there is never even the slightest bit of malice evident and the reader might actually sympathize with the misunderstood pair who only want to create unspeakable, nightmarish instruments of *ahem* music. The two boys live in an enormous house with their aging mother and much of the book is spent on Edmund's exploration of the house's cavernous secret passages and rooms filled with bizarre items like broken pianos, strange mechanical equipment and singing urinals. It is their relationship with the strange 'pig lady' that possibly inspires them to their depraved hobby and ultimately to far worse but there exist horrors possibly even worse than the pig lady. I'm not a huge fan of Rickheit's character drawings with their blank expressions but the backgrounds are positively stunning in their level of detail. The black and white drawings and dreamlike quality remind me somewhat of Jim Woodring who is also quite obsessed with organic grotesqueries. When Edmund slips beneath his bed into the bizarre inner workings of the house it has a sort of David Lynchesque feel to it and I'm not sure if the author was intending for this to be allegorical, hallucinations or straight out fantasy. The secret rooms contain cold mechanical gears and levers attached to animal corpses, the occasional human body part and organic pieces that defy description. There is no indication as to who created this hideous realm of death and sexual perversion, possibly the boys' deceased father but that is pure speculation since it's never even implied. Within this Willy Wonka like factory of horrors the Torpor boys engage in activities so far outside the social mores of society that only a mind as creative as it is twisted could conceive of it and yet the boys seem as innocent as any young boy with not a shred of visible evil. The only writer/artist I have ever seen who took it even further than Hans Rickheit is Al Columbia whose Biologic Show is as sickening as anything I have ever read in comics. Between Rickheit, Columbia and another extreme cartoonist Tony Millionaire, Columbia is the one who truly seems to have no boundaries. Actually Millionaire is also about as uncensored as they come but I have this feeling that Columbia and Millionaire are completely nuts. Rickheit's 'Squirrel Machine' is truly out there with countless disturbing images that just come from out of nowhere such a decapitated dog with wires and machinery coming from the neck and a horn in the anus. This is a story that's not going to appeal to everyone but it's one that will haunt the reader and for that alone I recommend it.

Kramers Ergot cartoonists achronistic parable for the convulsive elite is now in paperback. What is The Squirrel Machine? An immutably strange and haunting narrative that transcends known logics and presumptive dream-barriers; A distillation of subconscious beauty and inspired madness; A dangerous object for the incautious; A revelation for the undernourished crypto-seeker; The virgin caress of unconsummated apocalypse; The unspeakable thing that you always knew. Its also the longest and most ambitious graphic novel by legendary obscurantist cartoonist Hans Rickheit, 200 pages of exquisitely rendered pictorial narrative. Meticulous, strange, and hauntingly beautiful, this enigmatic work will ensure the inquisitive reader a spleenful of cerebral serenity that will take exposure to vast quantities of mediocrity to dispel. Set in a fictional 19th Century New England town, the narrative initially details the relationship and maturation of Edmund and William Torpor. But the two brothers quickly elicit the scorn and recrimination of an unamused public when they reveal their musical creations built from strange technologies and scavenged animal carcasses. Driven to seek a concealment for their aberrant activities, they make a startling discovery. Perhaps they will divine the mystery of the squirrel machine... Black white illustrations throughout

From Publishers Weekly This darkly disturbing, brilliantly drawn story is the first major publication from cartoonist Rickheit, whose earlier works garnered him a Xeric award and a cult following. Brothers William and Edward are odd-ball inventors who raise the ire of New England townspeople when they make elaborate and stomach-turning musical instruments using animal carcasses. Bw pen and ink drawings elucidate complex machines and Victorian-era architecture in baroque detail, while surrealist imaginings take turns for the truly repugnant. Sexual perversion, putrefaction and serial-killer style artworks are all ornately portrayed, as are the buildings, shops, horse-drawn carriages and crumbling mansions of a 19th-century small town. The story, while told primarily in pictures, includes a stilted and formal dialogue that only adds to the perversity. A character called the Pig Lady, who lives, sleeps and does other horrific things with pigs, speaks in a Latinate crypto-language that is eventually adopted by one of the brothers, whose fate is bound up with her odd eating habits. Though not for the faint of heart, this obscure tale will offer rich rewards to the right kind of reader, one who appreciates grotesque horror, angry mobs and the creative explosion of a repressed Victorian sexuality. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Like a collaboration between David Cronenberg and Damien Hirst. - Paste

About the Author Hans Rickheit was born in 1973 and grew up in New England, lived in the basement of an eccentric art gallery/performance space called the Zeitgeist Gallery from 1997 to 2002, and currently resides in Massachusetts. He is the author of the graphic novel Chloe, the comics series Chrome Fetus, and has appeared in various anthologies, including Paper Rodeo, Hoax, and Kramers Ergot.