

## Graphic Passages - Translating German Graphic Novels into South Asian Languages

### Shortlist

**Davis, Bea: *Super-Gau*. Carlsen, 2025, 208 pages**

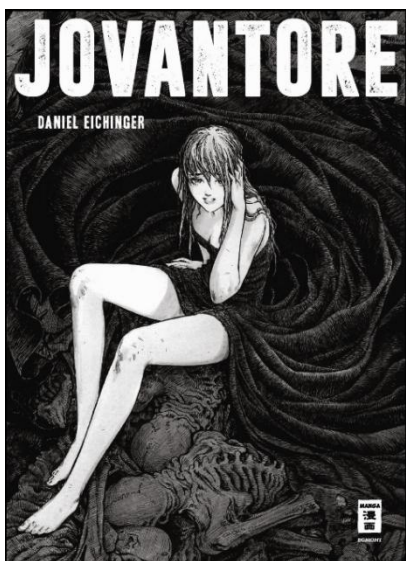


When a tsunami strikes Fukushima on 11 March 2011, it changes the lives of several people - even thousands of kilometres away in Berlin. One of them is Josie, who is deeply worried about her ex-husband, who works at a research institute near Sendai. Unable to reach him, she seeks advice and emotional support from Nacho, who has just emerged from a period of self-imposed isolation. For two years, he has withdrawn from the world to work on a novel, and now finds himself overwhelmed by Josie's crisis. Through eight protagonists, the reader experiences the many different consequences of the nuclear disaster in Japan. All the stories are interconnected in subtle ways. Sometimes the main characters meet only briefly and barely notice one another. Yet a connection is always established between individual lives and the global catastrophe.

*Bea Davies (born 1990) was born in Italy and has already received several awards for her earlier publications. She was also shortlisted for the Berthold Leibinger Foundation Comic Book Prize.*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Eichinger, Daniel: *Jovantore*. Egmont Manga, 2023, 336 pages**



A manga that does not originate in Japan is unusual in itself. With *Jovantore*, Austrian-born Daniel Eichinger makes his debut in the comics scene. Inspired by manga classics such as *Akira* and *Blame!*, he tells the story of a young woman living in a dystopian future. Her name is Rita, and since childhood she has been haunted by a mysterious ticking sound in her head that only she can hear. There seems to be no cure. Suddenly, a mysterious old woman appears and hands her a broken pocket watch. Rita loses consciousness and wakes up in a medieval city called Jovantore. The inhabitants believe her to be an angel sent to liberate the city. Before she fully understands what is happening, Rita finds herself fighting dark forces – struggling not only for her own survival but also to save this new world from destruction.

*For this comic, Daniel Eichinger (born 1992) received the AnimaniA Award in 2024 in the category "Best National Manga."*

[Preview of the book](#)

## **Eshrat, Hamed: *Coming of H*. Avant, 2022, 176 pages**

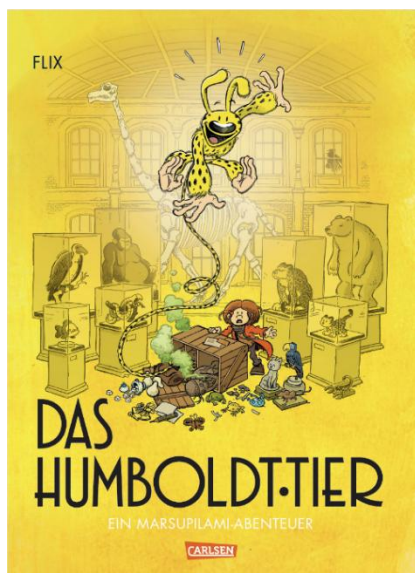


Wordplay in titles is often frowned upon, but in the case of Hamed Eshrat's graphic novel, it can rightly be described as a highly effective idea. The autobiographically inspired story of the young Hamed (a "Coming of Age") gradually builds towards a dramatic turning point: his best friend Sven turns into heroin (H—which may also stand for Hamed himself). For Hamed, light drugs and alcohol serve mainly as a way to escape boredom in the Westphalian countryside of the 1990s. However, he resists the temptation to use hard drugs. An advanced art course at his secondary school gives his life direction. He channels his creativity into work at an advertising agency. Since his parents fled Iran, his father has suffered from depression and struggles to integrate into German society. Hamed, too, feels torn between cultures. Despite his rebellion and his "escape" from small-town life to Berlin, Hamed manages to reconcile with his father before the latter dies of a heart attack.

*Hamed Eshrat was born in Tehran in 1979. With 'Coming of H', he was among the finalists for the Berthold Leibinger Foundation Comic Book Prize in 2020. The following year, he received a Comic Scholarship from the Berlin Senate.*

[Preview of the book](#)

## **Flix: *The Humboldt Animal*. Carlsen, 2022, 72 pages**



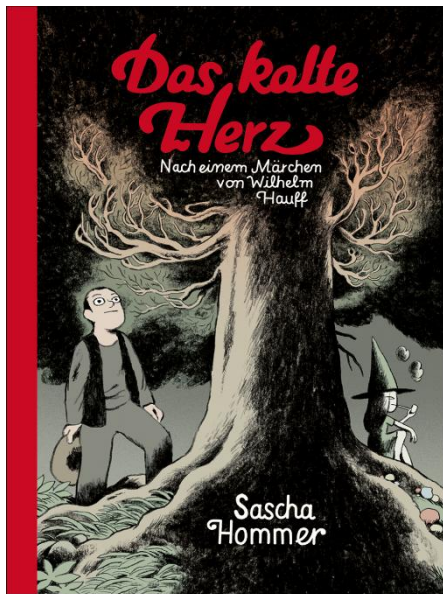
For the first time, a German artist was allowed to draw a story featuring the Marsupilami. Berlin-based illustrator Felix Görmann, known as Flix, took on the task. The classic Franco-Belgian comic character was originally created by André Franquin. Flix naturally relocates part of the story to Berlin. When the famous natural scientist Alexander von Humboldt returns from one of his expeditions, he brings back a crate containing a black-and-yellow-spotted animal. After decades of deep sleep, the Marsupilami is magically brought back to life and, unsurprisingly, causes all kinds of mischief. Of course, the animal must eventually return to the Palumbian jungle—but not before offering numerous playful references, including nods to German classics such as *Emil and the Detectives* by Erich Kästner and Berlin landmarks like the Victory Column.

*The Humboldt Animal* is a loving homage to a timeless classic.

*Felix Görmann (born 1976) has received numerous awards. Among others, he has won Germany's most important comic prize, the Max and Moritz Award at the Erlangen Comic Salon, twice (2004 and 2012). He also won the Munich Comic Prize PENG! twice (2009 and 2019). In 2016, he received the Rudolph Dirks Award in two categories, including for *Münchhausen – The Truth About Lying*.*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Hommer, Sascha: *The Cold Heart*. Reprodukt, 2024, 142 pages**

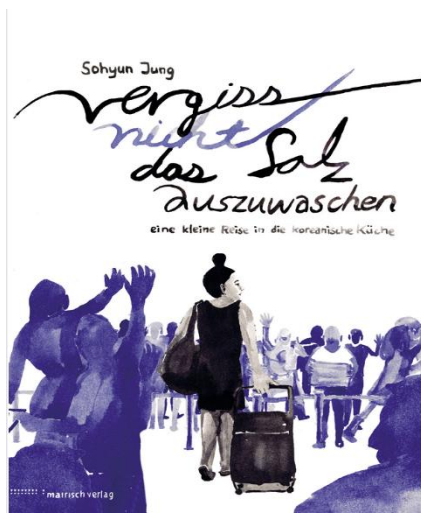


This fairy tale is a classic by the German Romantic writer Wilhelm Hauff. First published in 1827, it tells the story of Peter Munk, known as “Coal Peter.” Dissatisfied with his impoverished life, he makes a pact with dark forces. In order to gain wealth, he must sacrifice his heart. Peter soon realises, however, that money alone cannot bring happiness. His sense of fulfilment is lost, and wealth proves meaningless. Through cleverness, Peter eventually manages to regain his heart, and in the end, even finds true love. For his adaptation, comic artist Sascha Hommer returns to his home region, the Black Forest. Using dark lines and restrained facial expressions, he captures the story’s sombre mood. The forest and its eerie figures repeatedly take centre stage, turning the fairy tale into a parable about the search for true happiness.

*Sascha Hommer (born 1979) has had his comics published internationally, including in Spain, France, and Poland. Several of his projects have also been published by Germany’s Federal Agency for Civic Education.*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Jung, Sohyun: *Don’t Forget to Wash Out the Salt*. Mairisch, 2014, 80 pages**



“There’s no joking when it comes to food,” goes a German saying—especially when one is far from home. This is the case for Hana, a young Korean woman who has moved to Germany on her own. She communicates with her mother via computer, but even that offers little comfort when her longing for kimchi, a staple of Korean cuisine, becomes overwhelming. Where can she find it in her new home?

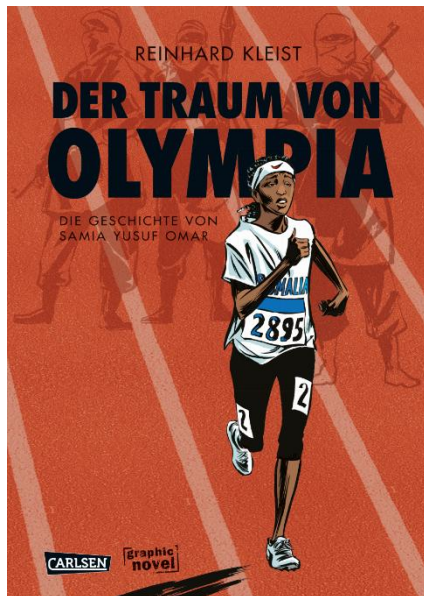
When her search proves unsuccessful, Hana tries her hand at cooking it herself. However, online recipes are only of limited help. Eventually, the spirit of kimchi itself comes to her aid while preparing the dish that is eaten in Korea on almost every occasion. “Did you remember to wash out the salt?”—when Hana follows this advice, everything falls into place, and she captures the soul of Korean culture. Dreams and reality merge as homeland and new surroundings meet.

*Sohyun Jung was born in South Korea in 1982. For this book, she received the Hamburg Graphic Novel Promotion Award (AFKAT) in 2014.*

[Preview of the book](#)



**Kleist, Reinhard: *The Dream of Olympia*. Carlsen, 2017, 160 pages**



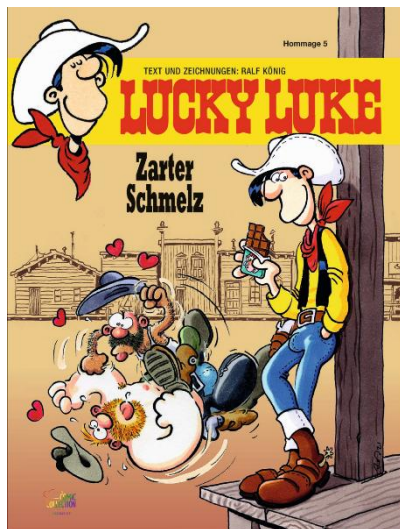
Berlin-based artist Reinhard Kleist is renowned for his graphic biographies of musicians. In addition to Johnny Cash and Nick Cave, he has also recently published two books about David Bowie. In *The Dream of Olympia*, he turns his attention to a lesser-known figure: Somali athlete Samia Yusuf Omar.

At the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, Samia runs a personal best in the 200 metres but finishes far behind the favourites, and yet becomes a crowd favourite. The real story, however, lies beyond the sporting achievement. Back in Somalia, she is forbidden to train by Islamic fundamentalists. Determined to compete in the 2012 London Olympics, she risks everything, flees her country, and ultimately drowns in the Mediterranean shortly before reaching her destination. A true story.

*Reinhard Kleist (born 1970) has received numerous awards, including the Max and Moritz Award three times (1996, 2012, and 2018) and the Munich Comic Prize PENG! (2007).*

[Preview of the book](#)

**König, Ralf: *Lucky Luke – Tender Melting*. Egmont, 2021, 64 pages**



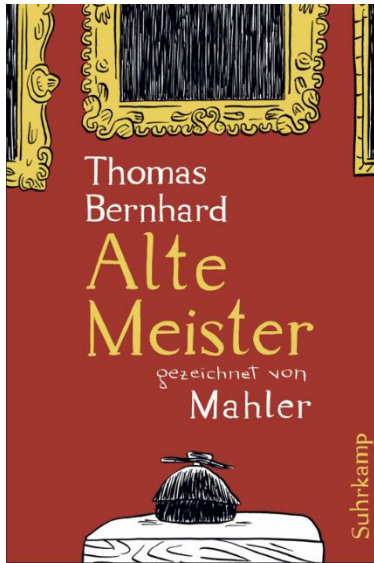
Ralf König is arguably Germany's most successful comic artist. He gained widespread recognition in the early 1990s with *Der bewegte Mann*, which was later adapted into a film. His trademark style—bulbous noses and stories about gay life—also plays a central role in his homage to Lucky Luke.

In *Tender Melting*, Lucky Luke takes a break from chasing criminals and spends his time herding cows. Meanwhile, a gentle love story unfolds between the lonesome cowboys Bud and Terence, who express their affection through playful fistfights—naturally with a happy ending. The cows, incidentally, are purple, a humorous reference to a well-known chocolate brand. The title itself alludes both to chocolate ("tender melting") and romantic yearning. A lifelong Lucky Luke fan, König fulfils a personal dream with this reinterpretation of Morris's Franco-Belgian classic.

*Ralf König (born 1960) has been awarded the Max and Moritz Prize at the Erlangen Comic Salon four times (1992, 2006, 2010, and 2014), including the Special Prize for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement. He has also received several international awards, such as the Joop Klepzeiker Prize (Amsterdam), awards from the 2nd Salon Européen de la Bande Dessinée in Grenoble, and the Prix du Scénario at the Angoulême International Comics Festival in 2005.*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Mahler, Nicolas: *Old Masters*. Suhrkamp, 2011, 158 pages**

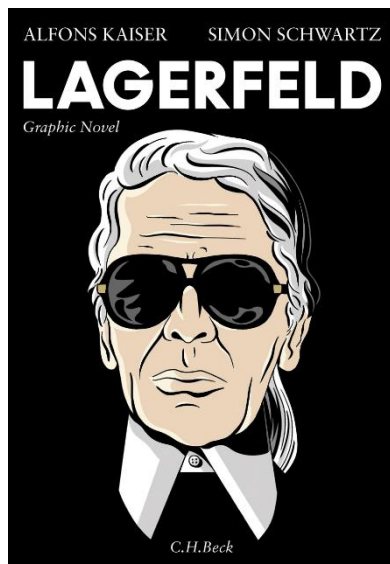


Is there a German-language comic artist with a more minimalist drawing style than Nicolas Mahler? The head of the Vienna School of Poetry has long been adapting modern literary classics, from Elfriede Jelinek to Franz Kafka. With *Old Masters*, based on Thomas Bernhard's novel, he began adapting literature into comics. In 2011, Mahler reinterpreted Bernhard's late work, reducing its linguistic intensity to just a few lines. The main character, Reger, who reflects on art and life every other day at Vienna's Art History Museum, invites his friend Atzbacher to the theatre. Atzbacher resembles Mahler's alter ego: tall, thin, and shaped like an exclamation mark. The result is a masterful example of visual and verbal reduction.

*Nicolas Mahler (born 1969) has received numerous awards, including the Max and Moritz Award three times (2006, 2008 and 2010) and the German Cartoon Prize twice (2007 and 2011).*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Schwartz, Simon / Alfons Kaiser: *Lagerfeld*. C.H. Beck, 2025, 104 pages**



What would fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld have thought of a graphic novel about himself? Did he ever read comics at all? Or would he have dismissed them, much as he once famously dismissed jogging pants? Regardless, the figure who made himself a style icon and a fashion-world myth is now the subject of a new graphic novel by Simon Schwartz. The book is written by journalist Alfons Kaiser, an editor at the national daily newspaper *FAZ*. The comic brings readers closer to Lagerfeld as a person. Schwartz, previously known for portraits of politicians and historical comics, now turns to a contemporary figure, albeit one who has already passed away. The comic explores, among other things, Lagerfeld's relationship with his parents, how his father made considerable money with condensed milk under the brand name Glücksklee, and that his mother denied him breast-feeding. The book depicts lonely drawing sessions in the attic, as well as his rivalry with Yves Saint Laurent and his relationship with his partner Jacques de Bascher. Visually, Schwartz delivers a highly

detailed portrayal—one that Lagerfeld himself might well have approved of.

*Simon Schwartz (born 1982) is also among the recipients of the Max and Moritz Award at the Erlangen Comic Salon (2012). In addition, he has received international honours such as the Independent Publisher Book Award (2016) and the Award of Excellence from the Society for News Design.*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Stetter, Moritz: *The Knef*. Carlsen, 2025, 208 pages**



Hildegard Knef was Germany's last great diva. In 2025, she would have turned 100. To mark the occasion, Moritz Stetter has created a graphic novel tribute to the singer, actress, and author. The book is largely based on original texts and quotations. Using song lyrics as narrative anchors, Stetter retraces Knef's life, with the song *From Then On, It Went Downhill* serving as a central motif. In it, the Berlin-born artist sings in an almost autobiographical manner about her life. Her famous hit *For Me, It Should Rain Red Roses* is also featured. The comic portrays a woman who was both strong and vulnerable. Born in 1925, Knef began her career as an animator and from 1944 onwards received her first film and theatre roles. Her breakthrough came with the controversial film *The Sinner*. Stetter presents a woman torn by inner conflict yet determined to follow her own path. A compelling life rendered in clear, colourful images.

The comics of Moritz Stetter (born 1983) have been widely reviewed in the press, including on Germany's main public television news programme. In 2021, he received the Hamburg Future Scholarship for Visual Arts and Literature from the Ministry of Culture and Media in cooperation with the Hamburg Cultural Foundation. In 2023, he received a residency grant from the Hamburg Ministry of Culture and the Roger Willemsen Foundation for a stay at the Mare Artists' House in Wentorf near Hamburg.

[Preview of the book](#)

**Stulin, Paulina: *The Right Here Right Now Thing*. Jaja, 2014, 54 pages**



Paulina Stulin's comics are largely autobiographical, focusing on issues that concern her and many of her generation—drugs, group sex, alcohol, and excess. In her second comic, *The Right Here Right Now Thing*, published in 2014, the then 29-year-old artist explores these themes with directness and immediacy. She has said that she wants to “grab the reader by the collar right away,” a remark she made at the award ceremony of the ICOM Prize, an award for independent comics, which she received for this work in the category “Outstanding Scenario.” “Keeping a diary is the beginning of everything,” she says. “That’s where I collect what moves, affects, and interests me throughout the day. On that basis, I shape specific situations or scenes, which I then sketch on a double-page spread.” The comic is set in Kraków and tells the story of a brief romance between a young woman and a mysterious man: a pleasant evening, a shared night—and that is all

Paulina Stulin (born 1985) was born in Wrocław. For ‘*The Right Here Right Now Thing*’, she received the ICOM Independent Comic Prize in 2015. The comics magazine *Alfonz* ranked her graphic novel ‘*At My Place*’ tenth among the Comics of the Year in 2020. [Preview of the book](#)



**Vollenweider, Nacha: *Footnotes*. Avant, 2017, 208 pages**

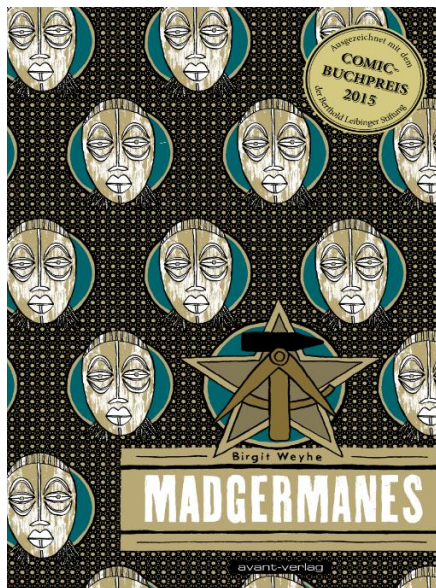


This is a remarkable debut by Nacha Vollenweider. The young author, who has Argentine roots and lived in Hamburg for some time, undertakes an autobiographically inspired search for her family's past during Argentina's military dictatorship. What sets this graphic novel apart is its form: instead of speech bubbles, the narrative unfolds through footnotes. In these footnotes, past and present, memory and observation, German and Argentine realities overlap.

*Nacha Vollenweider (born 1983) was shortlisted for this graphic novel for the Berthold Leibinger Foundation Comic Book Prize. For her graphic novel *Back to the Homeland*, she received the BANDA DIBUJADA Award for Best Argentine Comic for Young Readers.*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Weyhe, Birgit: *Madgermanes*. Avant, 2016, 238 pages**

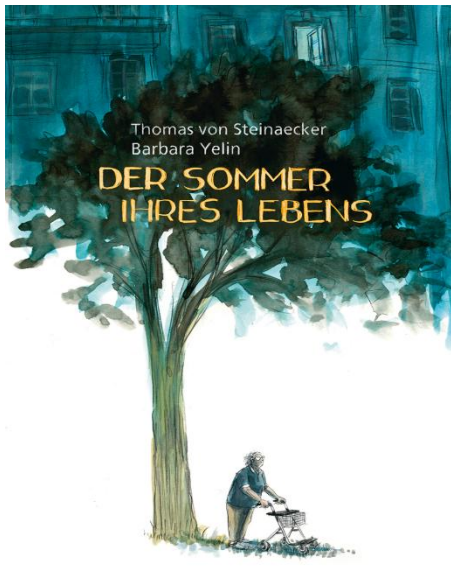


Birgit Weyhe's comics frequently deal with historical subjects. *Madgermanes* addresses a largely overlooked chapter of history: Mozambican contract workers in East Germany during the 1980s. Beginning with reflections on the concept of "home," the artist explains her personal connection to the subject. It was apparently a journey to Mozambique itself that first drew her attention to the topic. Having grown up in Uganda and Kenya, Weyhe reflects on questions of origin and belonging. This autobiographical approach is characteristic of her work. After returning to Hamburg, she conducted interviews and extensive research, constructing a narrative around three fictional characters—José, Basilio, and Anabella. In three interwoven chapters, she tells their stories in East Germany, standing in for approximately 20,000 people who were forced to live and work far from home, often under harsh conditions.

*Birgit Weyhe (born 1969) has received the Max and Moritz Award at the Erlangen Comic Salon twice (2016 and 2022). For 'Madgermanes', she also received the Berthold Leibinger Foundation Comic Book Prize and the Max and Moritz Award (2016). She has also received international recognition, including second prize at the Fumetto Festival in Lucerne (2007) and first prize at the Nextcomic Festival in Linz (2009).*

[Preview of the book](#)

**Yelin, Barbara/Thomas von Steinaecker: *The Summer of Her Life*. Reprodukt, 2017, 80 pages**



Life in a nursing home: for Gerda Wendt, it means wandering down the wrong corridor, enduring loneliness, and reliving memories of the past. She fondly recalls her time as a university assistant, immersed in numbers and stars—her passion, which allows her to forget everything around her and turn her into a proverbial robot.

That is, until a man enters her life who is interested not only in equations. Marriage follows quickly, divorce even more so. As a single mother, Gerda manages her life. The comic moves between flashbacks and the present. As her condition worsens in the nursing home, her memories become increasingly vivid. In the end, her heart gives out. The carers at the home can do nothing to prevent the heart attack. But that no longer matters, because in her mind, Gerda is once again a young, happy girl standing in a field of flowers.

*Barbara Yelin (born 1977) has received the Max and Moritz Award at the Erlangen Comic Salon twice (2016 and 2024). She is also the recipient of the Rudolph Dirks Award (2018 and 2019) and several other honours.*

**[Preview of the book](#)**

Compiled and annotated by Dr. Alex Jakubowski on behalf of the Goethe-Institut South Asia; translated into English by Dr. Neha Kaushik.

*Dr. Alex Jakubowski is a recognized expert on the German-language comic scene. He works as an author and video journalist for ARD and Hessischer Rundfunk, writes for specialist magazines such as "Alfonz – Der Comicreporter", "Reddition", and "Comixene", serves as a jury member for, among others, the "German Cartoon Prize", and runs the comics blog "comic-denkblase.de".*