Foreword

Ambassador
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At first glance,
a collection of stories about children’s games, about humans with morphing animal heads and about old Celtic myths may seem to have nothing in common. But a closer look at them reveals the power of comics as a storytelling medium; all these stories address issues that affect us in a globalised, interdependent world.

ASEF initiated the Lingua Comica programme in 2006, as a way of promoting cultural dialogue and mutual understanding through a format that is accessible to all. Since then, a total of three artistic residencies were held in Singapore, in the UK and in Japan, which brought together over 60 artists from Asia and Europe. On these occasions, participants were able to share their experiences and exchange their perspectives on different global issues that touch their lives. The artists were then asked to work together to create new stories of ‘universal’ value, covering topics such as migration, the social impact of financial crises, global warming and environment.

Despite their language and cultural differences, participants have bonded instinctively as fellow artists, while teaming up on common projects that dealt with topics close to their hearts. The ties they have forged during the Lingua Comica programme remain strong to this day, with many of them continuing their collaborations long after their residencies were over.

The results of these collaborations have been presented at important comics related venues and exhibitions, including the London International Comics Festival (COMICA) in the UK; the Kyoto International Manga Museum in Japan; and the 12th Bucheon International Comics Festival (BICOF) in Korea. A number of them were also featured in premier comics and gaming magazines, such as the Malaysian magazine Gempak.

This publication Lingua Comica Reloaded is part of a publication series which includes two previous Lingua Comica editions, namely Lingua Comica: Graphic Novels from Asia and Europe and Lingua Comica: Go Home!

This latest edition presents the works of 13 Lingua Comica alumni who were invited to reconnect and to further their collaboration through online exchanges. The ideas for these new stories have therefore been developed across geographical distances and time differences. Through this innovative approach, the group of Asian and European artists has managed to sustain their dialogue and their common passion to carry out this project.

A passionate reader of comics myself, I have always been inspired by the beauty and imagination of graphic tales, which are able to transport readers to a different world. Comics and graphic novels have the power to instil curiosity for the lives and experiences of the other. And in doing so, readers often realise that the other is not so different from us after all!

My hope is that the stories of this Lingua Comica edition will be able to show you something from the other that can capture and inspire you as well.
To “reload” means:

to have something more to give; to be restored with highly-charged energy, ready to be released for a second shot. In the information age, this word also means: to be refreshed with content for viewing and sharing, with the expectation of something current and meaningful. It is this creative energy and curiosity that the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) sought to harness with Lingua Comica Reloaded, the most recent project of its Lingua Comica programme.

Since 2006, the Lingua Comica programme has actively promoted cultural dialogue through the platform of comics and graphic novels, a universal and popular storytelling medium. Lingua Comica residencies were organised in Singapore (2006), London (2007) and Kyoto (2008), bringing together over 60 artists from countries taking part in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). These artists met and put together their imagination and creativity, while collaborating on a wide spectrum of comic works.

After these residencies, the Lingua Comica alumni network showed untapped creative potential. Therefore, ASEF launched a new call for proposals for follow-up collaborations in April 2009. The follow-up project titled Lingua Comica Reloaded created another opportunity for creative co-productions, engaging successful past participants to focus this time on a few selected themes.

The goals of Lingua Comica Reloaded were threefold: first, to promote the building of new relationships among Lingua Comica alumni, based on their common ideas and aspirations; second, to support emerging comic artists in their professional development; and thirdly, to foster the production of new comics and graphic novels addressing issues relevant to both Asia and Europe.

The publication you hold in your hands is the final outcome of this project, documenting the artists’ work and creative process. Through their stories, you will hear their voices in conversation as they speak about their social backgrounds, their cultural values, their passions and their concerns.

These stories are culturally specific in style and content. And yet, through their brilliant humour and graphical expression, they allow people with different backgrounds to grasp their emotional meanings and socio-political insights. It is a compelling testament to the role that comics and graphic novels can play in promoting intercultural dialogue.
Wires*
Nele Bronner (Germany), Pier Gajewski (France) and Faezal Muniran (Malaysia)

Three different portrayals show the artists’ ambivalent perspectives on the incredible impact of globalisation on their societies. Through these stories, the artists reveal their awareness of how “everything is connected and influenced by everything else”.

Numbers
Titus Ackermann (Germany), Matei Branea (Romania), Tsuyoshi Ogawa (Japan) and Budi Wijaya (Indonesia)

A four-layered compilation of narratives based on abstract numbers, which reflects the artists’ reflection on the global economic downturn and its possible effects on the ‘common people’ in each of their societies.

Play!
Amélie Clément (France) and Rommel Joson (Philippines)

The stories reflect an in-depth exploration of children’s games, which emphasises the cultural aspects of the act of ‘playing’ in the context of different societies. The artists address the role of ‘pretending’ in a child’s development, showing how children’s games can be a social and cultural mirror of adult concerns.

The Salmon of Knowledge
Kim Dae-Joong (Korea) and Tanitoc (France)

A tale inspired by Celtic mythology which infuses contemporary comics with the universal appeal of traditional myths. The story emphasises the importance of old values, centred on wisdom and knowledge, over the power of the superheroes’ ‘muscle’ shown in today’s comics.

The impact that Reloaded has had on the artists’ creative and professional development should not be underestimated. The project has fostered different types of collaborations and built unexpected connections within the Lingua Comica network. For example, Amélie and Rommel had never met before interacting for their project Play!. They connected thanks to their common background as Lingua Comica alumni. On the other hand, artists like Budi and Matei had worked together in Lingua Comica 3, and then included Tsuyoshi and Titus along for this second leg of collaboration for the project Numbers.

Through these long-term approaches, ASEF succeeded in creating a platform with cascading effects. The artists were given the time and space to interact and innovate, while different publishers, editors and art organisations were encouraged to work together to support their work.

Finally, the Lingua Comica publication series allowed the sharing of these experiences with a wider audience. As such, ASEF’s initiative goes well beyond that of a one-off project or event, to create a sustainable network that encourages further meetings and exchanges. Through the powerful and creative medium of comics and graphic tales, ASEF aims to promote another way to bring people closer together and encourage them to reflect on their common humanity.
Wires* is a collaborative project between Nele Brönner from Germany, Pier Gajewski from France and Faezal Muniran from Malaysia. The artists met for the first time as participants of Lingua Comica 3, a project to promote cross-cultural collaborations among comic artists in Asia and Europe, organised by ASEF in 2008.

Part of the programme involved an intensive eight-day workshop held at a beautiful mountain retreat in Kyoto, Japan. Here, the artists found mutually recognisable links in their artistic sensibilities and world-views. Out of this stimulating meeting, they decided to extend their creative exploration by collaborating online. In 2009, through ASEF’s Lingua Comica Reloaded project, they were able to push their initial concept further.

The title of the project, Wires*, conveys the interconnected nature of their different stories, where each artist spins his creative contribution according to his own country and socio-political context. The concept of Wires* also highlights the methodology through which the project was conducted. It refers to the invisible lines that carry messages from one locality to the other through blogging, email, mail, and mobile communication – the so-called ‘existential hardware’ of the comic.

Wires* shows us that it is possible to create collective poetic action and to achieve tight, intimate connections despite geographical distances and cultural differences. Such was the artists’ creative process. They found ways of being physically far, and yet feeling psychologically near to each other, as they developed their individual stories and characters, while in their own daily rhythms. In this way, Wires* demonstrates how communication can transform the nature of international social links.

The stories mix fantasy and prophecy, like science fiction, and tell of reality-bending narratives interconnected through hidden conjunctions and meanings. They express personal perspectives of global issues that explore various implications of globalization: issues such as the value of an individual in an economically-driven world; the role of culture and poetic action as a way of preserving independent thought; and the impact of the worldwide obsession with technology on the lives of individuals.

Through the process of their collaboration and the stories of the head-changing characters that ensue from it, the artists artistically act out the premise that ‘everything is connected and influenced everything else’, so as to meditate on the ambivalent nature of globalisation.
Wires* by Faezal Muniran
THESE TOWERS HAVE BEEN OUR LANDMARK SINCE IT WAS BUILT. WHEN THE CITY BURNED AND FALL, WE STILL STAND.

BUT MAYBE YOU BOTH WERE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER.

INSPECTOR, WE ARE NOW THE BIGGEST EXPORT OF 'ARTIFICIAL WORKERS' IN THE WORLD...

THE DIRECTOR'S SUITE, KLOC TWIN TOWER, KUALA LUMPUR.
ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, LEVEL 10, KLCC TWIN TOWERS.

DATABASE...

RIGHT, HERE’S THE LOWDOWN...

THE GOOD NEWS, SO FAR THE VIRUS ONLY INFECTED THE ARTIFICIAL WORKERS....

LET’S SEE WHAT YOU’VE BEEN HIDING IN THERE...

DATABASE...

MORNING TRAXX, GIVE ME THE GOOD NEWS.

HEY BOSS, GOOD MORNING TO YOU TOO.

COULD YOU GIVE ME JUST A MINUTE?

MORNING BOSS, WHAT’S THE UPDATE?

HELLO BOSS, WE HAVE FILTERED AND SCREENED EVERYTHING. IT IS SAFE TO ENTER THE PREMISE NOW.

WE STILL HAVEN’T FIGURED OUT WHAT CAUSED THE OUTBREAK THOUGH. TRAXX IS INSIDE NOW, EXAMINING THE INFECTED.

HEY TRAXX, BOSS IS HERE!
Well, that's the bad news.

Boss, looking at the circumstances, it looks like we are going to be here the whole day, probably longer.

I guess we have no other option than to close down the entire building until we know what we are dealing with here.

Well, Trakk, that's all I needed to hear.

Wait a minute, this cannot be right.

I'll display it for you.

Boss, you got to see this!

Weird.

Humph! I have never seen anything like this before.

What is this...

All the screens are blank?
WHAT NOW?

CHECK THIS OUT.

WHAT?

HEY! STOP RIGHT THERE! WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING?!

AND GO BACK TO YOUR DESKS! WE WON'T TELL YOU TWICE!

WHAT?

THEY ARE WAKING UP!
ERKK! CODE... CODE CODE RED!

CODE RED!

GO! GO! GO!

CODE RED!

HEY! LEMME GO!

FIRE!
BOSS, IF THE VIRUS CAUSED THIS MUTATION...

THEIR ABILITIES TO MUTATE MECHANICAL STRUCTURES ARE REMARKABLE!

I HAVE NEVER SEEN A VIRUS THAT COULD REACT AND MUTATE BIO-MECHANICAL HOSTS THIS ADVANCED BEFORE...

THE QUESTION IS...

WE COULD ASK THEM...

ARE THEY FRIENDLY?

I THINK YOU BETTER CALL IN THE CAVALRY...

HELLO? GROUND CONTROL...? JUST IN CASE THINGS ARE GETTING OUT OF HAND...
GOOD THINKING BOSS! SHOOT TO PARALYZE.

YOU KNOW WHAT? I DON'T THINK THEY ARE ACTUALLY IMPOSING ANY THREAT...

BUT THEY SURE LOOK SCARY AND QUITE INTIMIDATING...

DAN IS RIGHT.

IF THE VIRUS CAUSED THIS MUTATION, I HAVE TO SAY THIS SITUATION IS MORE SERIOUS THAN WE ANTICIPATED.

BOSS, DO YOU THINK WE COULD CONVINCE THE DIRECTOR TO CLOSE DOWN THE TOWER NOW?

THE DIRECTOR!

DIRECTOR'S SUITE, UPSTAIR.

THE SUITE'S DOOR IS OPEN, BOSS.

YEAH, SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT.

DIRECTOR? THIS IS THE INSPECTOR, MAY WE COME IN?

DIRECTOR? IS EVERYTHING ALL...

RIGHT?

SHIT.

DAN, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO CALL EVERYBODY IN...
DID YOU SAY EVERYBODY? WHOA...

YES. THINGS JUST GOT OUT OF HAND.

INSPECTOR, DO YOU CARE TO TELL ME IN ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

THE 'CSU' GUYS WILL BE HERE ANY MINUTE, THEY WILL EXAMINE THE CRIME SCENE...

MAYBE THEY COULD ENLIGHTEN US.

WE NEED ONE "SPECIAL" BODY BAG TO THE SUITE. ASAP!

I WISH I COULD, DETECTIVE. BUT I AM IN THE DARK AS EVERYONE ELSE.

WE HAVE TO BRING THE BODY BACK TO THE LAB IF WE WANT TO KNOW MORE, BOSS.

UNOFFICIAL REPORT ALSO SPECULATES ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF AN OUTBREAK.

AFTER THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH CLOSED DOWN THE TOWER EARLY THIS MORNING, WE ARE STILL WAITING TO FIND OUT ABOUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED HERE.

EARLY THIS MORNING, THE CDC AGENTS FROM MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAS BEEN INSIDE THE TOWER.

BREAKING NEWS AT 7, REPORTING LIVE FROM KUALA LUMPUR TWIN TOWER SQUARE...
MR. DIRECTOR!
FINALLY, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CALL YOU THE WHOLE DAY! REGARDING OUR 'BUSINESS'.

MR. CIBLE'S PENTHOUSE, PARIS.

WAIT A MINUTE...
URGH!

YOU ARE NOT THE DIRECTOR! YOU ARE TOO SHORT AND TOO UGLY...

HEH, WHATEVER...

YOU'RE STILL WAITING FOR THE 'WORKER' HE PROMISED TO DELIVER.

AND TELL HIM TO FIND A NEW SECRETARY, A BEAUTIFUL, SEXY...

TAP! klick!

HELLO, BOSS?

YEAH?

ARE YOU READY?

QUICK REPORTS FROM THE LAB. I'M AFRAID WE GET MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS...

ARE YOU READY?

THE SUBSTANCE THAT WE FOUND FROM THE DECEASED DIRECTOR'S HAND WAS SOME KIND OF NEW BIO-TICHI PLANT...

CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED IN A BIOTECH LAB IN BERLIN.

THE RESEARCHER WHO IS WORKING ON IT SAID SOMETHING ABOUT STOLEN DATA AND SAMPLE FROM THEIR LAB WEEKS AGO.

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ACCORDING TO DR. MINNA, THE MISSING DIRECTOR'S HEAD WAS REMOVED ACCURATELY.

THAT WAS THE C.O.D.?

THEY COULDN'T BE SURE ABOUT THE CAUSE OF DEATH JUST YET BOSS.

THE VIRUS AND THE MUTATED ARTIFICIAL WORKERS, THAT IS STILL BUSINESS ME. IT WAS PROBABLY AN ELABORATE 'DISTRACTION' FOR US WHILE THE KILLER WAS FINISHING THE TASK...

OR IT COULD BE THE KILLER TRYING TO SEND US SOME KIND OF 'MESSAGE' ABOUT THE ARTIFICIAL WORKERS.

OH! GET THIS, THE TRANSFER AGENT FROM ARCHIVE DEPARTMENT...

WELL, THERE WAS NO SUCH TRANSFER AND HE DID NOT EXIST.

ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?

I'VE TRIPLE CHECKED IT.

HE WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF OUR FACE...

DAMN!

PTUUH!
"LOOK AT THIS CITY, ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?"

"DO NOT BLAME ME. IF YOU COULD SEE THE REAL FACE OF THIS CITY, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME THING."

"...THIS CITY IS ROTTEN AND CORRUPTED TO THE CORE. I AM HERE TO CLEANSE IT ALL..."

"YES, I AM TRYING TO SEND A MESSAGE. TECHNOLOGY CANNOT BE TRUSTED."

"THE PLAN? THAT WAS MY GIFT TO YOU. IT SAYS SOMEBODY ACTUALLY CARE ENOUGH ABOUT THE WORLD AND TRYING TO MAKE IT BETTER..."

"IF ONLY WE WERE NOT TOO SELFISH TO SEE BEYOND OURSELVES."

"JUDGE ME ALL YOU WANT..."

"...BUT SOMEONE HAD TO SAVE THE WORLD, RIGHT?"

"I WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW THE TRUTH..."

"THEY MADE 'MACHINE' TO REPLACE US FOR SOME PROFIT?"

"IT MAKE ME SICK JUST TO THINK ABOUT IT."
HELLO MR. DIRECTOR. YOU ARE LOOKING GOOD TODAY.

NOW, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT DOING A REAL "CONTRIBUTION" TO THE WORLD?

HERE, LET ME HELP YOU...

SOON, THE REST OF THE WORLD WILL 'SEE' AND 'APPRECIATE' WHAT YOU HAVE DONE...

REQUEST PERMISSION FOR INCOMING COMM THROUGH SECURITY LINE....

YES RIGHT ON TIME.

BONJOUR POETRY SQUAD! I HAVE SOMETHING THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU...

Tamat?

SHALL WE ARRANGE A MEETING?
This is Paris and my name is Leo, aka Leo the Cleaner... but even this I'm not sure about anymore...

Everything used to be simple: waking up at 6:48, then taking the 342 air-navette at 7:23 till the T.E. stop.

Everyday travelling with the same people. Even if they change their heads I still know it's them.
WE NEVER TALK TO EACH OTHER... WE'RE TOO ABSORBED BY OUR P-SCREEN, BRAIN PHONES OR OUR PERSONAL WHATEVER!

I WORK AT THE EIFFEL TOWER ANTENNA. NO ONE KNOWS WHERE IT COMES FROM NOT EVEN WHAT AN "EIFFEL" IS.

A LONG TIME AGO, WE ALL DECIDED TO STOP QUESTIONING Ourselves. FAR TOO COMPLEX...

ONLY ONE MOJO REMAINS: ONE WORLD, ONE THINKING!
THIS IS THE KNOWLEDGE MASTER.

HE IS ONE OF THE LAST GIANT ELEPHANTS. HE RECEIVES MILLIONS OF IDEAS AND HE CHOSES WHICH ONE IS THE BEST FOR THE WORLD. ONE WORLD, ONE THINKING.

I USED TO FIND HIM SO BEAUTIFUL...
I work in the cleaning department. With my friend Muffin, we’re in charge of the “artist room” 0011. He’s my only friend. I tell him everything.

Just in this room alone, there are millions of brains all linked together in a super virtual brain. I used to be one of them.

All their ideas for a better world go to the knowledge master: one world, one thinking.

This morning, like everyday, I was working. I was having a hard time with a strange stain... when it all started.
À LA FIN DE L'ENVOI...

JE TOUCHE!

GET RID OF THE DEAD AND FIND HIM!

HE JUST DISAPPEARED! POOF!

BROOOOFF

CUT THIS! NOW!

YOU!!

YES SIR!

MUUFFIN HELP!

"At the end of the refrain... I strike!"
Cyrano de Bergerac - Edmond Rostand
LATER...

STUPID ME! WHY DID I TAKE THAT BOX HOME? AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THIS?

THANKS FOR CHOOING OUR SERVICES!

PROCESSING DATA...

TAKE ALL THE WIRES...

FEEL READY? PUSH THE BUTTON...

KLANK!

ZAP!
UNGLAUBLICH!
AND BABY -
DO YOU LIKE YOUR NEW HEAD?

YES

NAMED AFTER ITS DESIGNER, GUSTAVE EIFFEL, THE TOWER WAS BUILT FOR THE 1889 WORLD'S FAIR.

IN 2089, STEVE CASTOR DESTROYED AND REBUILT IT TOTALLY.
IT’S SO BEAUTIFUL!
I COULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED!

ONE WORLD
ONE THINKING

HELLO POETRY SQUAD—
YOU’RE CONNECTED
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO
CHANGE THE WORLD?_
WIRES
by Nele Brönner
TINA - COULD YOU GIVE ME A HAND? I HAVE A DATE AND DON'T KNOW WHAT TO WEAR.

WHAT TO WEAR?

MR. CIBLE

REALLY?

OUR BOSS?

YES?

WOW!

WEAR THE CAT-HEAD?

IT IS SO FEMININE.
SNAP
SNAP
HEY TINA
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WHAT A PRETTY CAT YOU ARE
TELL ME – DO YOU LIKE HIM AS A MAN?

WOW

I GUESS.

YES

THEN HAVE FUN GIRL!
I invited you out
To talk to you
About the
Plant-Head!
I went to
Versace this morning.

To confirm that we
deliver 12 heads...

We can't!

There is no way to com-
plete them within schedule
or test them.

The Plant-Head is not
technically not
for a human.

Memory loss
or even death.

Are you telling me...
That you haven't tested
It on a human yet?

It is not
technically mature.

Stop this
sentimental
shit! I don't care.

You'll test the
head immediately.

At all.

You don't?

No...
YOU'RE ACTING RIDICULOUS.
IN MALAYSIA THEY WEAR SNAILS,
INSECT-HEADS! SO WHAT?

I'VE ORDERED A MALAYSIAN
GUY. A GUINEA PIG!
HE ARRIVES
TOMORROW!

I EXPECT YOU TO PRESENT
HIM WITH THE PLANT HEAD ON THURSDAY:
ALIVE, GAGA OR DEAD!
I DON'T CARE.
DO IT OR YOU'LL NEVER
WORK AS A SCIENTIST
AGAIN!

BELIEVE ME.

THIS IS SO WRONG.

THAT WAS JUST THE WORST DATE EVER.
I'LL NEVER WEAR THIS FUCKING CAT HEAD AGAIN.
WHAT THE FUCK?
STOP IT!
Uh - my head!
Computer! Open the windows!

GOOD MORNING, MRS FRANK!

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MRS BERG, SPEAKING FROM MALAYSIA.

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MRS BERG, SPEAKING FROM MALAYSIA.

GOOD MORNING, MRS FRANK!

MRS BERG, SPEAKING FROM MALAYSIA.
Please identify yourself.

Thank you, Mrs. Trank. The living cargo will be delivered in 4.5 seconds.

Thank you.

Please don’t talk in binary code. Didn’t you watch the news? The code might transmit a very dangerous virus.

Brr.

Let’s get you out.

Brr.

Brr.

Brr.

Brr.

Ah-hah.

Yes.

Thanks. This is so great. For years I dream to go to Germany. And now I’ll even work here!
I'm so glad you have ordered me to work for you. This is such a modern laboratory, and it is a privilege to work for such a beautiful doctor.

In Malaysia, we don't have labs like yours and your plants - I believed most had died out years ago.

I need to tell you something. We didn't order you to really work here. We need you for a bio-tech experiment as a guinea pig.
YES - I KNOW!

THIS IS QUITE SURPRISING

BUT COME OVER HERE AND LOOK AT THE DESIGN OF MY PLANT HEAD!

YOU SEE...

THE DATA TRANSFER, THE UPDATES AND THE NERV CONTROLE PRETTY MUCH WORK THE SAME WAY AS WHEN CHANGING FROM A HUMAN TO AN ANIMAL OR FROM ANIMAL TO ANIMAL... THEORETICALLY!

ALL YOUR PERSONAL DATA - LIKE YOUR MEMORIES - ARE SAVED ON YOUR BODY BOARDS. THAT WORKS VERY, VERY WELL!

BECAUSE PLANTS HAVE NO BRAIN TO CONTROLE THE INFORMATION ARE RIGHT ON THE CONNECTION BARS AND INTERRUPT IN THE FLOW TO THE BODY BOARDS I INVENTED THE MINI-BRAINS. THEY THE FREE FLOW.
FUCKING HELL!
WHAT HAPPENED?
SHE MUST HAVE SNAKED
IN THE LAB LAST NIGHT AND TESTED THE
PLANT-HEAD ON HERSELF
IS SHE DEAD?

HEY!
HEY-COME ON!
WHAT DID YOU DO?
YOU STUPID GIRL!

FUCKING OWL!
SHE IS OFF!

ARRG!
Numbers is a collaboration between Titus Ackermann from Germany, Matei Branea from Romania, Tsuyoshi Ogawa from Japan and Budi Wijaya from Indonesia. Created in late 2008 in response to the global economic recession – one of the worst in history – the story investigates through comics the layman’s perspective of the event in each of the artists’ respective societies.

As the statistics of unemployment, prices and violent incidents (such as the burning of luxury cars in Berlin) rose, consumerist values increasingly dominated the landscape. In Numbers, the artists zoom past these factors to meditate on the truly important and non-quantifiable aspects of life. By communicating the stories from contemporary life on the ground, the story unearths the impact of numerically-determined values and statistically-driven policies that affect people’s everyday lives in each country through the visual form of comic illustrations.

In the first edition of Numbers, four story lines by the four artists were interspersed as episodes to be read concurrently on a large double-sided folded poster format. Titus’ strip, revolving around one man’s number-filled journey through the day, is devoid of dialogue and narrated through numbers to humorous and poignant effect. A series of comical shopping mishaps, told in pictures and minimal text, forms the crux of Tsuyoshi’s strip. While in Budi’s, characters at home count according to their different worldviews: a father recounting past failures, successes and dreams; a mother counting her years and memories; a child counting everything in the house; and a dog counting down the hours to its meals and playtimes. And all this happens while possessions in the house are individually tagged by an officer handling the family’s bankruptcy. Lastly, Matei’s story meditates on the phenomenon of the wildly popular DACIA car from Communist Russia from the perspective of a man who works in its assembly line.

Each of these stories based on numbers illustrates the personal style and cultural background of the artists. The stories’ narratives and visual approaches reflect the artists’ origins, their quirks and sense of humour. In this way, Numbers is as much a work of social observation, as a reflection upon the artists themselves.
When children play, not only do their playing advance a narrative within the game, they also re-enact their way of understanding the world as children. Cultural differences are put aside; the line between reality and imagination blurs.

What happens when artists collaborate to play through the comic form? What can their playful work tell us about themselves, as adults, as artists and as people from different cultures?

"Play!" is a comic project conceived by Amélie Clément, a French artist based in Belgium, and Rommel Joson from the Philippines. The collaboration was borne out of a common fascination and desire to explore children’s games, as a basis to explore several narrative layers.

Rommel was interested in exploring his childhood memories through short narratives. He researched the cultural and vernacular elements of Filipino games such as ‘A Preso’ (Falling Prisoner) and ‘Langit Lupa’ (Heaven and Earth) and explored the links between the games, stories and comics in his country. Amélie was inspired by games she used to play with her siblings. She explored the psychological aspects of children’s games: the emotional nuances, the petty intrigues and the fragile line between reality and imagination.

The comic includes a board game that features four characters of their two stories, based on an old European racing board game ‘Game of the Goose’. The desire, as Rommel describes, was to play with the format of the comic genre, and to make it game-like as opposed to a linear narrative. By creating an alternative experience through real-time play, the readers themselves could become interactive players of the game-story universe where their characters reside.

The artists’ collaboration allowed them to mix the more universal children’s games, with more culturally detailed mythology, such as the monsters and magical creatures that lord over forests.
PLAY!

by Amélie Clément
You're dead, man!

Bang!

You won't be staying the whole day glued to the TV. Go out and play!

Are you kidding?

Another bonus and I'll be immortal.

Reading, Grand'Ma!

Boys, what are you busy doing?

Remember, I said no TV today.

We are reading for real!

We were playing a video game. It's not like TV!

And it's raining outside!
Grand'Ma just gets up my nose, sometimes!

Well, I know, but...

If I were a wolf, I would have her for breakfast!

Don't be so silly!

By the way, your shoelace is undone.

Don't you think she has big ears?

Old people always have big ears.

We're not allowed to step on the black squares, ok?

Ok!

Black... white...

Black...
And what about her teeth, Pierre? Have you seen the big canine teeth she has?

Sharp teeth? Well, nothing special about it... it runs in the family.

Leo, do you think it's still raining?

Whatever! We can play in the room.
A french counting-out rhyme, usually used as a preliminary to games, to designate the child who will play the role. 

Oh, I've got it wrong! Let's do it again.
Oh, sorry, I've got it all wrong again.

Bour et bour et rata-ratam...
Pic et pic, et colegram...

You cheater! All that fuss because the rhyme ends on your foot each time!
You always want to be the first!

Don't move... Am stram gram...

Pick him up... Put your foot here. I'll count out.

Which game are we going to play?
Do you mind if I start?
It's not fair! You always want to be the first!
It’s complete gibberish to me. I should have won...

You can’t stop cheating!

Don’t be sulky! You’re first.

It’s about time!

Hey! How do you stop this thing?

Where have you put the dice?

Here you are! But let me warn you that playing first doesn’t mean that you’ll win.

Hey!
3... Is that all?

Hi, old bag!

Pierre! It's your turn!

I play again...

Only 3 this time...

I overtook you, na na na!

Well... I'm in good company.

Guess whom I met in jail: the Little Red Riding Hood!

Isn't it too boring in there?

Oh no! Bad luck!

Aaa!

That'll teach you well! You miss your turn.

And my score is 6.

Well... because of the... you know... she says that she feels safer in jail.

Coward!
Let's play another game, ok?

Which one?

Let's play tag.

I'd rather not...

I expected that. Well... Hide-and-seek?

Just the two of us?

Anyway, it's not worth playing together: don't you always cheat?

NO!!

Can I play?

Ah! Ah! You lost!

It's not fair! You didn't say that we were playing the yes–no game!

Don't be a bad loser. Come on, it's stopped raining, let's play outside.
I hold you... you hold me...

the first one... of us two... who will laugh...

will get a wee slap!

You're insane! I didn't laugh!

We'd better be playing close to the house.

So what was that noise?

* This nursery rhyme is very popular in France and seems to have no exact equivalent in English.
Hopscotch is such a boring game... I have a better idea!

Simon said "Jump on one foot".

But that's the way you normally play hopscotch!

Oh, really?

Well... Simon said "Walk on your hands".

You've never played hopscotch, have you?

Come on, it's a game for girls!

Leo? Did Simon say "Go to Hell"?
Aaaaahahahahahah

Aaaahhrrrrh...

Ouch!

Paf!

Paf!

Ouch!

Simon said: "On your arse", ah, ah, ah!

What was that?

...

What shall we do?

Simon said "RUN!"
Pierre! Look! Some light!

Well...

What about you?

Yes, Leo?

Pierre?

Leo? Can you still hear it?

You're mad! Only girls would in the Big Bad Wolf.
Cool! The weather’s great now.

Oh, oh... We must start again from the beginning.

BAM!

Good! That thing in there will not be able to go out anymore.

After all, hopscotch is not such a boring game...

There’s no denying, I feel better here.
1...2...3...
Sun!*
Leo! Stop making those faces!

1...2...3...
Sun!
You moved!

I swear I didn't!
Mmm...

1...
2...3...
Su....

The... the...

* «Un, deux, trois, soleil» is a French equivalent for «Mother May I» in the UK or «Red Light, Green Light» in the US.
Leo?
Leo?!

Are you lost?

Oh... It's you...

I know how you can get out of here.

Listen...
Next time, don’t count on me to eat the Grandmother.

So what? Older women are not to your taste?

You’re a fussy eater, the Wolf... her flesh was delicious!

Why?! You too ate the Grandmother?

I bet I did! That’s the true version of the story. Forget the Grimms!

Oh my god! My castle!

I must do it all over again...
The very last card...
slowly... there!

Done!

It's not that bad...

Listen there!
Guards!
Open the gate!

Your master is coming in!
Leo? Where are you?

Stop!

No trespassing!

How come? It is my castle!

We took orders.

Please... I'm looking for my cousin.

That back-haired boy?

You'd better forget him!

Your shoelace is undone.

He must have been eaten by the Wolf by now, ah, ah!

Oh... and where does the Wolf live?

Good luck, ah, ah, ah!

Over there, in the woods...
Young gentleman! Are you craving for fame and glory?

Beware! Don't play the fool with me.

Let's see if you can answer a few riddles...

Don't be afraid... Let's play cards together. Rummi? Bridge? Blackjack? We can also play poker if you want. Do you have cash?

Be nice to me... I'm lonely... Nobody will play with me...

My cousin? Where has he gone?

This way. You've been warned. So don't call me in if you need a joker.

Well, I know, it's because I cheat. But how dull it is when you don't cheat, don't you agree?

Gosh! You're as boring as that black-haired boy...

By the way, your shoelace is undone.
It's not the right moment to play hide-and-seek!

Look, I met her on the way. Do you remember her?

Oh...

...it's you...

Can I play with you?

No! We don't play with girls!

Sure...
Let's stroll in the woods
While the wolf is not here
If the wolf were here
He would eat us *

But as he's not here
He won't eat us.

"Wolf, are you here?
Do you hear?
What are you doing?"

« I'm putting on my shirt! »

Ah, ah,
ah!!

I WEAR NO SHIRT!

What was that?

RUN!!!
Sure you still do not believe in it?

It's virtual!

That's not fair, there're several of them! Rewind!

STOP!!
Ah, ah! We smashed them into pieces!

Oh... you here... Are you ok?

I feel a bit puzzled...

I'm going to help you.

What are you doing?

Can't you see? Come and help!

Even in bits and pieces, she remains a heavyweight in literature!

But it's just half a girl!

So what?!

Thanks, guys.

You're welcome.

Actually you're a nice girl.

You are...

Of course! But wait for us right here, we'll be back in a minute.

Can I play with you?
Grand'Ma, d'you know what! The Big Bad Wolf, we smashed it to bits!

Oh, really?

Did you enjoy your games?

I guess you're hungry, boys?

A piece of cake, some butter and jam, is that ok? And take this third piece for your new friend...

How come you know?

Yes!

Yep!

Next time, bring her to dinner...

LEO!!

What the hell is going on?
TALA! MARINA!
COMING LOLO!!

I TOLD BOTH OF YOU NOT TO STAY OUT TOO LATE. WHAT WERE YOU DOING OUT HERE ANYWAY?

SADLY, LOLO, WE WERE PLAYING WITH THE OTHER KIDS AND WE LOST TRACK OF TIME.

THEY TOLD US TO COME BACK AS OFTEN AS WE COULD --

WE ALSO LEARNED A LOT OF NEW GAMES LIKE BULONG PATT AND LANGST -LUPA AND SHEATU--

SO WE CAN PLAY TAGUAN AND PATINTERO AND TUWBANG PRESO!

AND TASTING BOL AND BUNAN-BUNAN AND...

OKAY! OKAY!

WHEN YOU GET TO FINISHING EACH OTHER'S SENTENCES, I KNOW YOU'RE GANGING UP ON ME.

BUT YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL. YOU CAN'T JUST PLAY WITH ANYBODY AND YOU SHOULD NEVER STAY OUT TO LATE.

YOU KIDS MAKE MY HAIR EVEN WHITER!

OH, LOLO...

YOU WORRY TOO MUCH!
I'M BORED.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH READING A BOOK? I THINK READING IS FUN.

I DON'T SAY THERE WAS ANYTHING WRONG WITH READING, MARINA!

I'M JUST SAYING RIGHT NOW, I'D RATHER BE OUTSIDE PLAYING.

OF COURSE YOU THINK READING IS FUN. YOU CAN SPEND A DAY READING.

I DON'T WANT TO READ RIGHT NOW, I WANT TO PLAY.

WELL, I THINK READING IS FUN.

WELL, YOU WOULDN'T BE IF SAT DOWN WITH A BOOK.

NIGHT. I'M BORED.

NOTHING. FORGET IT.
BY THE WAY, WHERE'S LOLO?

OLD PEOPLE LIKE SLEEPING IN THE AFTERNOON. I JUST CAN'T...

SLEEPING. TAKING A NAP.

MARINA! COME HERE! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!

A BALL? WHERE'D THAT COME FROM?

I DUNNO... IT JUST POPPED OUT OF THE FOREST.

HEY! MAYBE IF YOU CAN PEEL YOURSELF AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK A BIT...

"...WE CAN GO DOWN AND TAKE A LOOK"
THE BALL'S LIGHT AND HOLLOW.

LIGHT ENOUGH FOR SIPA*.

HERE CATCH!

*LITERALLY "ROCK" — A TRADITIONAL FILIPINO OUTDOOR GAME

WATCH THIS...

THWAP!

BEHIND THE BACK!
OKAY, NOW THAT WAS WEIRD.

ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?

YES, BUT MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T....

SPASH!

WHY NOT? LOLO'S TAKING A NAP. WE'LL BE BACK BEFORE HE WAKES UP.

WELL...

I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.

RELAX...

WHAT COULD HAPPEN?
REMEMBER WHAT LOLO SAID WE SHOULD SAY WHEN PASSING THIS PLACE?

OF COURSE...WE DON'T WANT THE SCARY FOREST SPIRITS GETTING ANGRY NOW WOULD WE?

* MAY WE PASS

WEIRD. NOBODY'S HERE.

TABI-TABI PO...*

BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE! HOW DID THE BALL BOUNCE BACK?

BUT WHERE DID THE BALL COME FROM IN THE FIRST PLACE?

MAYBE IT BOUNCED OFF A TREE...A BIG TREE.

YOU THINK MAYBE SOMEBODY LEFT IT THERE AND RAN AWAY?

TALA?

UH...

MAYBE IT BELONGS TO HIM.
HELLO.
YES, THE BALL BELONGS TO ME.

OH, WOW! WHEN! YOU STARTLED US. WE DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE THERE.

WELL, I DON'T LIVE FAR FROM HERE. MAYBE YOU CAN VISIT LATER?
I hope you say yes. It's lonely where I live. I'm all alone there.

All alone? What about your parents? Don't your parents live with you? Or anyone at all?

I don't have parents. None at all.

We know how that feels! We don't have any parents either, but we do live with our loolo at least. He can be a bit of a killjoy sometimes but...

Hey...

Do you want to see some magic?

You know magic?

Yes.
WATCH.
WHAT ARE YOU...

...DOING?

KEEP YOUR EYES ON MY HANDS. NOW THEY'RE EMPTY...

NOW THEY'RE NOT!

THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL.
WHERE'D YOU GET THIS? HOW'D YOU DO THAT?

ACTUALLY, I HAVE ONE TOO...

AND NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE MAYBE WE CAN PLAY A GAME.

JUST LET ME PREPARE SOMETHING. I THINK YOU'LL LIKE THIS. JUST WAIT.
Hey, this looks familiar. What game is this?

I think it's something like hopscotch! Except it has these little drawings instead of numbers.

That's right. So you know how to play the game, right? Will you play with me?

Well, we know the game alright, but it's getting a bit late...

Aww, c'mon! One little game won't hurt!

Oh, alright. Maybe just one game.
THEN LET'S GO!
GO, GO, GO, MARINA! YOU CAN DO IT!

NOT IF YOU KEEP SHOUTING AT MY EAR. LET ME CONCENTRATE...

2...

AAAHHHHH!!

MARINA!!

HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON?! DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS?! BECAUSE IF YOU CAN STOP RIGHT NOW OR I'LL...

I'LL...

I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE GONE HOME.
“LOLO, TELL US A SCARY STORY!”

“Yeah, LoLo, tell us something creepy!”

“Haha, are you sure? You girls might have trouble sleeping again.”

“Hmm... okay maybe just a little bit scary.”

“Yeah, just the right amount of scary.”

“Okay, just a little bit scary then.”

“Have I told you girls about the NIINO.”
The Nuno is a creature of the earth that inhabits large rocks, trees, caves or even termite hills. It hates trespassers who cause even the slightest bit of disturbance in its home.

What happens to someone if the Nuno gets angry at them?

Well, it isn't very nice.

Trespassers become afflicted with all sorts of illnesses. Body parts mysteriously swell, others vomit uncontrollably or lay in bed for weeks suffering boils and fever that never seems to go away.

And of course there are times when the Nuno takes little children.

Children?!?

* LOOSELY TRANSLATED AS "GRANDFATHER OF THE HILL"
"Why, yes. Little boys or even little girls just like yourself."

"That's why you girls should never play out in the fields during dusk because the NUNO might be out there."

"Uh, so what happens to the children?"

"Well, the NUNO is very mischievous and loves playing all sorts of games on hapless intruders. And it takes certain little children to his domain and keeps them trapped there forever."

"Forever?!!"
YOU MEAN NOBODY ESCAPES?!

I THINK IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR LITTLE CHILDREN TO ESCAPE.

WHY NOT? I BET I CAN TAKE ON THE NUNO!

WELL, TALA. ESCAPING IS DIFFICULT IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOU'RE A PRISONER.

BECAUSE THE CHILDREN THE NUNO KEEPS IN HIS DOMAIN DON'T KNOW THEY'RE TRAPPED.

HUUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IN FACT, I'D SAY THEY'RE LIVING OUT THEIR CHILDHOOD FOREVER AND EVER.

PLAYING THEIR LITTLE CHILDHOOD GAMES.

THINKING THAT THEY'VE NEVER ACTUALLY LEFT HOME.
Starting the Game
One player sings a counting rhyme to eliminate the players one by one. The remaining player chooses a piece and plays first. Everything you need to play the game is on the opposite page. Cut, fold and paste the pieces and you're ready to go!

How to Play
The first player throws the dice and puts his/her piece on the square corresponding to the number obtained with the dice. The players play in turn. The first player to reach the last square wins. If the number thrown is higher than necessary to reach the last square, the surplus is counted backwards.

There are specially marked squares scattered throughout the game track. You must follow the instructions each time you land on one of these special squares.

Special Squares

1, 5, 9, 14, 18, 23, 27, 32, 36, 41, 45, 50, 54, 59 – The Sun: move 1 step forward
6 – Play Hopscotch: Hop to 12
16 – The Wolf: Retreat 1 step!
19 – Grandmother's House: Lose a turn while you eat some tasty cake, butter and jam
21 – The Soldiers: Lose a turn
25 – The Nuno's Trap: Lose a turn
26 – The Joker: Play again
29 – The Ball: Jump to 31 into the Woods
34 – Play a game of "sipa": Move 6 steps forward
38 – Lolo's House: Miss a turn while you listen to a Filipino tale
42 – The French Woods: You will get lost in the dark woods and move backwards to 37
47 – Nuno sa Punso: 4 squares backward!
52 – The Jail: Miss a turn
53 – The Joker: Play again
58 – The Skull: you have to go back to square 1 and start all over again.
62 – The Nuno Returns: Move back 1 square
CUT, PASTE AND PLAY!
Everything you need to play the game is here! Cut out the characters and the dice, fold them (you may paste them on thick card if you wish) and stick the ends together as indicated. Now, play on!

Pierre  Leo
Marina  Tala

Note: If you don’t want to cut up your book, you can download a printable version of the gameboard as well as all the components on this page at http://tiptoeoncircles.wordpress.com/
Salmon of Knowledge

Drawing from powerfully imaginative Celtic tales, The Salmon of Knowledge is a re-telling of Celtic traditions in comic form which explores the universal aspects of such stories, like love and courage.

The project originated from a conversation between French artist Tanitoc (Yves Cotinat) and Korean avant-garde comics publisher Kim Dae-Joong that took place in Kyoto, Japan, where they met as facilitators of ASEF’s Lingua Comica residency. Tanitoc and Kim talked about various aspects of their respective cultures, such as the names, customs, language, people’s connection to the land, mythology and founding stories.

Seeking to diverge from the path of typical comics, which are often based on clichés, explained as “reduced versions of heroic mythological stories”, that have lost their original connection - Tanitoc sought to explore a more poetic and in-depth way of researching the hidden keys to human nature. Through comics, he wanted to represent the ‘hard, stimulating and refreshing connection to reality in mythological stories.’

The resulting comics tale The Salmon of Knowledge is, therefore, more about the wisdom and transmission of knowledge than about the muscles and superpowers of the comic characters. Featuring the mythical hunter-warrior Finn MacCumhaill who catches the fabled salmon of knowledge, the project is part of a wider publishing effort to adapt mythology into comics.
I AM FINTAN,

THE SALMON OF KNOWLEDGE.
MAN OR WOMAN,

WHOEVER WILL CATCH ME, COOK ME, AND

EAT MY FLESH

WILL KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE

LAND OF THE LIVING,
EVERYTHING ABOUT THE LAND OF THE DEAD

AND EVERYTHING ABOUT THE PASSAGES IN-BETWEEN
HE WAS STILL NESTLING IN HER WOMB WHEN HE HEARD THE HORNs, CLAMOURS AND DRUMS...

WHEN THEY CAME TO MURDER HIS FATHER, CUMHALL,

FINN COULD REMEMBER WHY HE HAD BEEN ON THE RUN FOR SO LONG...

THE RESPECTED LEADER OF THE FIANNA - THE KING’S GUARDS.
"But it didn't make it any easier to live his life..."

I am sick to death of hiding in the woods!
FINN

HIS MOTHER...

FINN
MAC CUMAILL!

SHE TOOK HIM TO TWO WOMEN WARRIORS, IN THE HILLS...

WHEN HE WAS FIVE,
...and asked them to train him.

For she knew that one day he would become one of the Fianna.

The Fianna, uh?
When the women had taught him all the fighting skills they knew.

How am I supposed to retain all this?!

They sent him to Fínneigas the poet...

... for no one could ever hope to serve the king if he did not learn the twelve books of poetry.

Sick of all this!

Finn!
MASTER?

HERE, MY BOY!
This is Fintan, the salmon of knowledge! And I, Finnégas, was born to capture this marvellous creature.

Quick, knock him dead with a stone.

Gut him and

Set a big fire!!!
DON'T LET A MORSEL PASS YOUR LIPS!
EVERYTHING ABOUT THE LAND OF THE LIVING

"EVERYTHING ABOUT THE PASSAGES IN-BETWEEN.

EVERYTHING ABOUT THE LAND OF THE DEAD..."
The name of this salmon is Fintan – he ate the hazelnuts of knowledge which had fallen into the well of Nechtan, which overflowed...

"...and became this river, the River Boyne – I know. All this."

Of course you do.

Go now, and follow your path.
Two of the alumni, Nguyen Thanh Phong (Vietnam) and Tomas Kucerovsky (Czech Republic), also had another special task: to chronicle their daily experiences at BICOF 2009 through a comic journal.

Phong participated in the second edition of Lingua Comica. He is interested in narrative portrait and autobiography and uses his daily life experiences as his artistic focus.

Tomas took part in the 1st Asia-Europe Comics Project. His participation gave him an impetus for his work and he later continued to work with many of the artists he met through the project. At BICOF he presented his experiences with ASEF as an example of the collaborations that resulted from the Lingua Comica projects.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) was invited to present its comics and graphic novels exchange programme, Lingua Comic, at the 12th Bucheon International Comics Festival (BICOF) in September 2009. BICOF is one of the most prestigious comic festivals in Korea, held annually in Bucheon since 1998.

BICOF organisers saw Lingua Comica as a good model for artistic collaboration. It sought ASEF’s involvement in order to broaden the scope of the Festival with an Asia-Europe dimension and to tap on the experiences that ASEF has built up in the field of comics and graphic novels over the years.

ASEF took this opportunity to reconnect with its Lingua Comica network by inviting five alumni to present an exhibition and to facilitate a workshop at the Festival. The alumni evaluated the impact of Lingua Comica on their professional development and shared their experiences with the audience.
This short comic is about my trip to Bucheon, Korea.

The 12th Bucheon International Comics Festival
My very first impression:
Korean girls are so hot!

Day 1

David. His hair is longer than it was 2 years ago when we met at London ‘07.

Jean Philippe
Gilles Ciment
These 2 guys are from Angouleme

Aom, whom I thought as a serious old man through email.

I met them at Koryo hotel when I first came here.

From the map, it seems not so far from our hotel to BICOF area so I decided to walk there...

... Withough anticipating all the problems I can get asking local people for direction...
When the Mayor of Bucheon stepped on the stage, some guys in ninja suits put on him a bling-bling robe. It was so humorous!

Buffet dinner time...

Aom  Titus  Hyeon  Tae  Joon  David
I love the freaking wood sculpture so much!

What a crazy faces!

Day 2

We had an interesting conference about Lingua comica projects (although there were not so many attenders). I introduced some about comics in Vietnam.

That evening we had a delicious dinner with awesome grilled dishes!

Yum!
Grilled duck
Pork sausage

This reminded me of my college time, when we used to bake potatoes inside the coal heaters.

(Below here is sweet potatoes)
I and Titus stopped by some exhibitions in the festival Special Exhibition of Milo Manara

Next to these books I look like a small sized action figure.

Wow!

"Make Mine Manhwa!"
Looking back and looking ahead at the Export of Korean Comics to the English Language Naziit by Paul Gravett

That afternoon, Paul did a great talking about Manhwa in the UK.

I grabbed some Manhwa pans - BICOF symbol red bean pancakes for lunch.

End of the talk, he gave me his book as a gift. Thanks so much Paul!
...And an attractive talking of John Weeks about Cambodian comics. A lot of cool and amazing stuffs, and you know more about comics history of a country that so near from you. It was quite similar to our comics in the past...

After the buffet dinner with Korean webtoon artists (in the Cartoonist's 1night 2days) it was the funniest part of the party.

It was so terrific knowing that Manhwa is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Korean has read and loved comics for a long time. It was one important thing that led Manhwa to its today success.

a real-sized replica of an usual Korean comics shop in the past.
Now it’s time to step out and try some Korean Street food! I think!

Tteokbokki: (Spicy Rice Cakes)

Eomuk 어묵
Skewered Fish Cakes

Budae Dduk: Korean Bean Pancakes

They usually drink it in a bowl!

Nak Gulbi: Korean Rice Liquor
(Sweet and sour and lighter than the Soju)

24시 온천
This is something you must try when you come to Korea: the Jimjilbang (public sauna & bath house) 24 hours a day.

Day 5
Last day of the Festival!

I got up earlier than usual for having breakfast together with Tomas, the Czech comic artist who is flying back home this morning.
We come and say goodbye to our (seems to be) very good new friends and to Lingua Comica sector before leaving...

Farewell Bucheon, the city gave me very good impression and friends. My next stop is SEOUL!
4 DAYS IN KOREA

Tomáš Kučerovský
In 2006 I participated in Asia-Europe comics project in Singapore, the first of international workshops held by Asia-European Foundation (ASEF) and named later "Lingua Comica". Three years later ASEF chose me again to attend BICOF comics festival in Korea where they held a presentation of their comics projects.

So actually, I went to Korea to talk about Singapore...

Before the journey I managed to meet Czech ambassador in Korea Jaroslav Olša Jr., an expert at African and Southeast Asian fantastic literature and a big sci-fi and comics fan...

Don’t expect second Singapore. Singapore is utopia, while Seoul is, let’s say, closer to Blade Runner. Where is the festival held?

Bucheon? I see - well, Bucheon isn’t Seoul, it’s a city between Seoul and Incheon, but it’s a part of Seoul metropolitan area. You can make a trip to Seoul by a city train it’s easy...

Prepare business cards. Lots of them. Don’t even go to Korea without lots of business cards.

I tried to finish all my work before the departure, but no matter how much in advance I start, the night before the deadline is always crucial...

Hi! You’ll have it in your mail in the morning... Yeah, thanks.

Hi, working on it, in two hours I’m uploading... great, take care.

Hi,.... canceled? That’s great! Um, I mean - what a shame...

-CLICK-

-CLICK-
Despite all my effort, some deadlines are just impossible to catch...

I'm sorry, but I don't have it... Look, I can finish it when I come back,...

(long silence)

I... I'm sorry...?

-CLICK-

No wonder I was leaving a little bit...

... distracted.

Even the Korean stewardesses, all absolutely perfect, beautiful and freaking identical didn't manage to make me relax.

Neither the Mexican flu paranoia on the Incheon airport, ...

... nor the over-luxurious Koryo hotel in Bucheon changed my mood.
BICOF was held in a newly opened building of Korean Manhwa Contents Agency (KOHACON), actually in two buildings (Manhwa museum and Manhwa business center) with exhibition spaces, libraries, auditoriums, and 40 workrooms for manhwa artists.

Impressive architecture, impossible to draw.

Later I met all of the Lingua Comica team: David Ocen and Sasuwimon Wongjarin from ASEF, ...

... Paul Gravett, a theoretician, a director of London Comica festival, and the only person I had ever heard using the word "splendid", ...

But even that didn't lighten up my mood.

... Titus Ackermann, a German artist and a publisher of MOGA MOBO anthologies, ...

... Kim Dae-joong, a Korean publisher of Sai comics, ...

... and Nguyen Thanh Phong from Vietnam who participated on the second Lingua comica in 2007.

And finally, Deuk, whom I met in Singapore three years ago and who was on festival on his own.

I knew I would find you "in the lobby"!

= (our meeting place back then)

Sitting outside with some fellow Korean artists, recalling Singapore, we tried unsuccessfully not to get too nostalgic...

Pity we didn't have more time, but at long last my head was clear.
September 24, morning. Time shift. For me it’s actually 2 in the morning European time.

With Bucheon tall buildings peeking over our shoulders we tried to put our presentation together.

The ASEF lecture was held in one of the KOMACON lecture rooms, hidden deep inside the building. Maybe that was why the audience wasn’t very large...

From David’s speech it was clear our workshop in Singapore three years ago was only the beginning and the Lingua Comica project lives on its own already.

Anyway, some of the audience seemed to enjoy us quite a lot:

Svetlana Chezhina from Russia, who draws manga for foreign publishers.

John Weeks, living in Cambodia.

Reima Hakin, an artist from Finland currently residing in Nairobi.

And of course, artists from Korea, who listened very carefully all the time to propose their own projects in the end.
A dinner in the Korean restaurant:

- A low wooden table to kneel around
- Chimneys for a smoke exhaustion
- Wooden coal with a grill above
- Sweet potatoes baked in the hot coil under the grill
- Metal Korean food sticks (extremely slippery)
- Leaves of lettuce, cabbage and spinach, to wrap the grilled meat
- Dozens of little bowls with sauces (from spicy to very spicy) to dip the meat wrapped in lettuce
Night streets of Bucheon with buildings covered up to the roof with flashing and moving neons.

Public fitness in green parks, similar to children playgrounds, at midnight for some reason full of people.

And Korean schoolgirls in the streets, all with the same clothes, haircut and cellphones, all typing text messages with identical movements.

When I met second or third, I was pleased. When I met eleventh, I ran back to my hotel room in horror.
September 25. Time shift again. Somehow I managed to turn off the alarm clock yesterday evening...

... but finally I visited some of the BICOF lectures. Jean-Philippe Martin from Angouleme talked about perception of manhwa in France, ...

... Paul Gravet's speech "Make my own manhwa" ended with the finding there is no "effective strategy" how to succeed on western market, ...

... but probably most interesting was John Weeks' lecture about history of comics in Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries.

The exhibition spaces of KOMACON varied from artist self-decorated boxes and stands outside the building, ...

... to impressive exhibition on the upper floor, celebrating the history of 100 years of Korean comics.
Seemed everything that could have a face had one (or more): flowerpots, sign at the entrance, even Bicof logo itself.

Long queue, both adult and children, in front of Kitaro, the character I knew only from a movie adaptation,

... scenes from the history of Korean comics visible through the holes in the old wall,...

... statues of famous Korean comics heroes,...

... oversized books,...

... or exhibition of works of Lee Hee-jae, the winner of the last year’s Bucheon Comics Award. His sketchbooks I admired for a long time.
September 26. I suspect the alarm clock not to ring at all. Again I almost overslept my trip to Seoul.

Since I had only one day for the visit, I picked a place from travel guide which seemed interesting enough and decided just to walk around.

So, more or less randomly I went to Free Market near Hongik university.

An open air space where young artists and craftsmans sell their goods, mostly hand-made accessories, toys, jewellery, ...

... little keyboards robots,...

... stuffed puppets,...

... or hand painted baseball caps.

Unlike Singapore, this was Asia as I always have imagined it.
The place around the university is called Hongdae. In the end it was much more trendy than I expected.

Guess what, they built a small replica of Prague’s Old Town Hall recently. Worth seeing if you’ll have time, there is an infocentre there and a “Czech” restaurant...
The way the traffic is handled in Bucheon - almost like a dance:

Last evening in Korea I finally tried some weird dishes.

The dried squid looked spooky, but it wasn’t bad at all...

But I definitely couldn’t resist to taste the silkworms, in fact their roasted pupas.

Eek, it’s bitter. How am I supposed to take care of those Europeans when they are eating bugs?

Oh no, he’s really eating it! I always knew those Czech are just weird.

Delicious, aren’t they?
September 27. Yes! I woke up in time! My inner clock finally adjusted to Korea...

It's time to leave.

The journey to the airport together with Svetlana, both of us loaded with BiC OF merchandising.

I was leaving Bucheon after four days. Not much time to actually experience Korea of course...

But to stick to the topic, it was great to see a country where comics has been a part of the culture for 100 years, and is supported as something that Korea can offer to the rest of the world.

A small course - exchanging business cards in Korea:

You give and receive it with both hands, it's polite.

You look at it before putting it in your pocket.

You slightly bow your head as an expression of gratitude.

Couldn't he write it in English, or better, in Czech? How am I supposed to read those strange letters?

Cheap paper, bad print, what a loser!

The End
In Wires*, the characters engage in the curious act of head-changing. For the Wires* interview, we invited the artists to swop heads as well, answering on behalf of one another. In the spirit of the project, Nele donned Pier’s head, Pier wore Faezal’s and Faezal put on Nele’s. As they answer what they think should be the personal opinions of each other, an interesting mayhem comes out of this method of inter-cultural exchange.

Nele answering as Pier

Q The poverty that you show in your work is of the mind, where everyone starts to converge towards One World, One Thinking. Besides joining Poetry Squad, how else can the man on the street break free from this trap?

A Breaking free from a trap is definitely more difficult than not stepping into it. My hope is that we can keep our minds self-controlled, flexible and independent. Less mass media and less TV would be a good start.

Q Please complete this, “I create comics because”

A I believe that the combination of images, text and time gives the ability to tell stories to many different readers and people of many nationalities.
Q Faezal answering as Nele

How many heads do you, Nele, have in your closet? Describe the head that you are wearing now?

A Hmmm... I think I have around four heads. The one that I am using right now is a Norwegian Forest Cat.

It is summer now in Berlin, and every day is a beautiful day to go for a walk in the park, just to enjoy the scenery. I’m feeling somewhat adventurous to go explore the city today. I’ve been working non-stop lately and I think I need a break. Who knows, maybe I will discover something new and different.

Q Your protagonist Martha went through a wide range of emotions in just 13 pages. Is she closely based on someone you know, or perhaps yourself?

A I believe a part of Martha comes from my collective experiences (although not directly). The rest of Martha’s character is fabricated from other people’s lives and experiences. Her surname “Frank”, for example, is stolen from a close friend of mine.

In telling the character’s story, rather than taking it directly from my own, I find it quite liberating to step out of myself so that I can create this character to be more free and believable, although my own personal experiences might add some honesty and feelings to the character.

Q Nele’s characters are animal heads on human bodies, whereas yours are animals who are human-like. Is there a difference?

A Actually not really. My characters are animal heads on human bodies but all three of us have a different way to draw it.

A Faezal answering as Nele

Q Faezal, you said you started drawing comics for yourself because you were too poor to buy them when you were a child. Who are you drawing for now?

A I think I am still making comics for myself, in the sense that I’m doing things that I would like to read. Except in this instance, I think I keep on going because I haven’t done the perfect comic yet!

Q Pier answering as Faezal

You said you started drawing comics for yourself because you were too poor to buy them when you were a child. Who are you drawing for now?

A I think I am still making comics for myself, in the sense that I’m doing things that I would like to read. Except in this instance, I think I keep on going because I haven’t done the perfect comic yet!
Our publication deepened the existing relationship with ASEF, and the artists involved and also opened up for us new connections with exhibition spaces and international operating institutes.

Nele

Using comics as a medium in intercultural dialogue is extremely wise. When you don’t share a common language you use visual codes (signs or images). Comics, through images and text, allows you to go very deep into the culture and people’s personal feelings.

Pier

Connecting with the people, (who are not just any people but great and wonderful artists) is one of the wonderful outcomes from Lingua Comica. It doesn’t matter where we all come from, we all speak the same language. It helped me realize that I am not alone and never will be when working in comics.

Faezal
Beyond Reloaded

The first edition of Wires* sold out, and was extremely well-received by readers. In order to extend the success of the project, the artists are actively tapping on their respective connections to promote their artworks as well as the experience of using comic art to engage in intercultural dialogue to new audiences.

Through their spirited efforts, the project has also surfaced a network of venues and institutions which support such intercultural and artistic collaboration. In turn, it was a platform for them to discover new opportunities to take their work to the next level, and for interested readers and comics enthusiasts to discover their work.

28 March 2010
Pekomikon, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Pekomikon is a comic convention that is part of the Kuala Lumpur International Book Festival, the largest Book Fair event in Malaysia. Faezal presented on the Lingua Comica 3 programme and Lingua Comica: Reloaded Wires*.

Gempak

Gempak is a premier Malaysian comics and gaming magazine. Lingua Comica 3, Wires* and the artists themselves have been featured in issues 251, 252 and 253.

5 - 20 June 2010
Kyoto International Manga Museum, Kyoto, Japan

Pier had a solo exhibition here. The entire Wires* compilation was presented, as well as observation drawings from Pier’s six-month residency at the French Villa Kujoyama.

May and June 2010
Japan

Pier spoke at conferences about comics and the Wires* project at the French Institute of Fukuoka, University of Ritsumeikan of Kyoto, French Alliance of Sendai and at the Tohoku University of Sendai.
Having explored their ideas through comics, the artists now engage in a roundtable of ruminations and meditations about numbers in their societies. They compare their surroundings and mental states with each other, retrospectively thinking aloud and catching up with each other after the publication’s successful run.

Matei to Tsuyoshi

Q Sometimes you have to make money with your art. You can be paid to be yourself, or to do some anonymous work, to do commercial projects or artistic projects. How do you deal with compromise?
A Matei, I understand exactly what you’re trying to say! I’ve also struggled with this. In Japan, some people work for the money, while others choose to work more freely while also making money. But most of what I want to do is creating work for myself, not for the money.

Budi to Tsuyoshi

Q Have you had a personal shopping experience similar to your comic’s character?
A I thought the story up after hearing people’s conversations around town. Things like “I bought these clothes cause they were 70% off” and “these are delicious cause they’re organic vegetables”. Surely people buy things because they want them, and food tastes delicious because it is? I realised that they weren’t buying commodities so much as they were consuming information, and the money they were paying wasn’t for the goods, but rather, for the information. My story is just an exaggeration of this state of affairs in modern society.

Titus to Budi

Q How does the current situation feel to you, compared to when we started “Numbers”?
A This year, the projected GDP (gross domestic product) growth in Singapore may be higher than China’s. On the ground, economic indicators such as retail activity, rental fees and property prices are booming. It shows that both as a country and society, we are doing well financially at this moment.

I couldn’t have imagined this last year; yet I have mixed feelings about it.

On one hand, I am grateful for Singapore’s rebound in such a short time since the crisis began. However, for a society of “newly rich” (Singapore was transformed from a third world into a first world state within one generation), we still have much to learn about our relationship with money. A slower economy would provide a space to reflect and learn more about this important relationship. What I was trying to point towards in “Family Values” (the story I did in “Numbers”) is my belief that we are richer than we think, that placing our highest value on money makes us poorer.

I must quickly add that my point of view is from someone belonging to the middle-income majority. I hope that the country’s economic rebound is helping low-income Singaporeans tremendously.
Beyond Reloaded

‘Numbers’ is being sold in Japan, Singapore and Germany.

In Japan, ‘Numbers’ has been sold at the Manga Museum, and during Echo Tour 2010, an exhibition in Kyoto. It has received positive reviews in Japan, especially for the publication’s poster-like design.

The story reflects my coming home after a stressful day with the “global problems”, represented by all the numbers spinning around in the man’s head, which are reduced to minor importance by what I feel is really important.

Titus

Comics is a great medium for intercultural dialogue. All you need is good promotion, distribution and - ka-boom! - it’s done!

Matei

I feel so grateful to have made friends with other people around the world who are also making comics and manga. I’ve also received a lot of exciting emails about other members’ successes. It makes me feel as happy as if it were my own success, and at the same time it inspires me to work hard, too. I’m really happy to still stay connected with Lingua Comica.

Tsuyoshi

Lingua Comica is a well-conceived and organised platform that tremendously benefit comic artists from both Asia and Europe. Kudos to ASEP! I am grateful for the cultural exposure and the wonderful friends I met through this initiative.

Budi
Friendship, dreams, jealousy, strategy, competition, discovery, imitation, excitement, solidarity, loneliness [...] a few of these things that a child puts into games, experimenting while playing. Where does the border between playing and living in reality stand for a kid?

This theme attracted us because of its rich visual and storytelling possibilities. For children, a simple object can be used as a means of escape into dreams and realms of fancy. Games can offer even more possibilities because of the imagination and social dynamics at work whenever children play their games.

Amélie
Q: You both participated in different editions of Lingua Comica. How did you get to collaborate in Reloaded?

Rommel: When the call for applications came out, I couldn’t find a partner to team up with. Amélie sent out an email to all Lingua participants asking for potential collaborators. I saw her work through her website, loved it, and sent her an email. What followed was a series of emails with various ideas on how we could proceed. I was surprised to find out that we shared similar sensibilities on how to go about it, even if our styles were very different. And then the rest worked out!

Q: How was the residency in Angouleme arranged?

Amélie: Maison des Auteurs is a residency place for comic artists and the administrators of the Maison des Auteurs had already heard of Lingua Comica. Rommel and I had decided that it was very important to see each other during our collaboration, given the distance from Brussels to Manila, and to share an atelier and spend a few days working together. I contacted Maison des Auteurs to ask for a short-term residency and they kindly said yes.

Q: Why the blog name ‘Tiptoe on Circles’?

Rommel: The name seemed to evoke a game in itself, of lightly treading around circles drawn on the floor. The word tiptoe felt childlike, almost dainty and done with care. While circles drawn on the floor reminded us of children’s games and how boundaries are often established and how these boundaries must be navigated in any game.

Q: Your works explore common themes through children’s games, even though you are from different cultures. What do you find similar or different about each other?

Rommel: What I found interesting when we were looking at games from both our cultures, was how similar a lot of the games were (like Hopscotch). The differences seem to lie in the board-based games. Traditional Filipino culture didn’t have “board” games. Most of the games in my research involved games played in the backyard.

In terms of each other, I found our tastes in art somewhat similar. When we were tossing around ideas for the project, I appreciated the fact that we could engage each other on the level of ideas.

We had lengthy emails at the start of the project on different ways to go and I really found that a lot of the ideas we had were similar in their basic direction. Although we belong to different cultures, the desire to make art was something we both shared.

Amélie: Our styles are different but they both have a dark side that we used in our comics. We both agreed that talking about games doesn’t mean painting something light and colorful and naïve. We tried to evoke the “dark side of the game”.

However, my way of telling the story has something “boyish” in it. The style is quite direct and linear. My characters are very active, very much engaged in pure action. I can feel a more poetical and thoughtful approach in Rommel’s work. He takes time to build an atmosphere.

One of the main differences I noticed during our conversations was precisely about that: it seems that, in Western Europe, games and stories have lost the link to their roots, though in the Philippines they are still wrapped into traditions and beliefs.
We plumb the depths of Tanitoc’s mind with an interview on his process and reflections on intercultural dialogue.

Q How did you and Dae-Joong both decide to collaborate on this project?
A When Lingua Comica Reloaded happened, I seized the opportunity to submit this story; but the starting point really was this exciting conversation about mythology I had with Dae-Joong one night in Japan, while the room was filled with the creative energy of all these talented participants working away on their pages.

Q As a publisher, did Kim give any input during the creative process?
A Not at all, it all sprung out of our continuing conversation, and the chat we had during the workshop when we showed each other samples of our work. Our English is far from perfect! I think Dae-Joong’s sensitivity gives him that capacity to give you a hint, a few words that could carry you through a project like this.

Q What impact did Lingua Comica have on your professional development?
A The benefits of Lingua Comica are undoubtedly present in many levels of my work today. When I was offered the unexpected role as one of the facilitators for Lingua Comica, I felt like I was about to be part of a special experience: that of selecting Asian and European artists, connecting their aspirations, and helping to promote a fruitful dialogue for each of the three pairs I was involved with.

This meeting of minds took place in what I consider the ideal working environment for any creator, in this field: a museum with a research department, a place where creation means both practice and theory, with a vision...
for preserving a unique heritage and nurturing contemporary talents. I would challenge anyone engaged in this unique set-up to come out unchanged, unmoved, and uninspired by the experience!

Q: What were the connections made during Lingua Comica that helped you?
A: The connections I made with everyone involved are not mere friendly encounters on my road. They have had a deeper impact, on a creative level. The isolation is often a reality of comics creation. It can be difficult at times to cultivate an understanding of what you are trying to achieve over the years, to keep a discerning eye on your creative steps. This project certainly broadened my horizons, particularly when it comes to Asian comic strips, thanks to the quality and generosity of exchanges. The creative discussions were so stimulating that these conversations are in my mind right now, in my studio, while I work on my next book.

The Lingua Comica Reloaded project was yet again a brilliant opportunity to continue feeding and questioning my creative practice. How was I to produce a story based on Celtic mythology for a Korean audience? What role were the words and pictures going to play in the act of storytelling? How could we reconcile the fact that creative people all around the world have so much in common and ideas to share, despite coming from different cultural environments? I have a great deal of respect for Sai Comics for their uncompromising way of patiently building a remarkable catalogue.

Q: What is your view on comics being used as a medium in intercultural dialogue?
A: Comics are the best form for intercultural communication I have come across, whether they contain words or whether they don’t. We live a very exciting time, when calibrated walled-up genres in comics are being challenged by the necessity of trying to make sense of the world as it is: a complex place to live in. Almost any topic or issue can therefore become a story to be told, an experience to share.

Comics by nature reach a large number of people who all have their own active reading experience to go through, whether on the Net, at the kitchen table, in a field or in a suburban train. Drawings, pictures and the tools used to produce them enrich the characters with delightful and incredibly rich nuances: irony, fear, joy, sarcasm, calmness, anxiety, contempt, etc.

Comics can bring emotional, political or philosophical ramifications to a narrative. What more can one expect to create in an intercultural dialogue?