



## News

For immediate release

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### **Penn State announces winner of the Lynd Ward Prize for Graphic Novel of the Year**

University Park, PA--Penn State University Libraries and the Pennsylvania Center for the Book are pleased to announce that “Fran,” by Jim Woodring and published by Fantagraphics Books, has won the Lynd Ward Prize for Graphic Novel of the Year for 2014.

“Woodring's pen-and-ink technique is staggeringly lush and absorbing, yet he is equally proficient at ordering his panels into sequential art, thus driving his wordless story. These formal elements are critical to the book's episodes of hilariously violent slapstick, distortions of time and space and depictions of a bizarre world vibrating with psychedelic energy. Characters seem like embodied archetypes or allegories of psychological states, expressing themselves through their interactions with the fluid and unpredictable world they inhabit. Hypnotic and subliminal while entertaining and compelling, ‘Fran’s’ dream world is at once familiar and unsettling, a conduit to mental states that, in many ways, only the graphic novel can achieve. Woodring’s work poses a refreshing change from the trend towards wordy graphic memoir, entreating the reader to reckon with a world whose language we cannot capture in our own,” comments the jury.

The Lynd Ward Graphic Novel Prize honors Ward’s influence in the development of the graphic novel and celebrates the gift of an extensive collection of Ward’s wood engravings, original book illustrations and other graphic art donated to Penn State's University Libraries by his daughters Robin Ward Savage and Nanda Weedon Ward. Between 1929 and 1937, Ward published his six groundbreaking wordless novels: “Gods’ Man,” “Madman’s Drum,” “Wild Pilgrimage,” “Prelude to a Million Years,” “Song without Words” and “Vertigo.”

Sponsored by Penn State's University Libraries and administered by the Pennsylvania Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, the Lynd Ward Graphic Novel Prize is presented annually to the best graphic novel, fiction or non-fiction, published in the previous calendar year by a living U.S. or Canadian citizen or resident. Woodring will receive a cash prize of \$2500, the two-volume set of Ward’s six novels published by The Library of America, and a suitable commemorative at a ceremony at Penn State in the fall.

The jury also awarded two honor books: “Boxers & Saints,” by Gene Luen Yang and published by First Second Books, an imprint of Roaring Brook Press, and “Heck,” by Zander Cannon and published by Top Shelf Productions. Of “Boxers & Saints” the jury says, “In its exploration of the Boxer Rebellion, ‘Boxers & Saints’ works against the serial format so ingrained in the comics tradition. Yang uses each text to refract the other, showing the contradictions and failures of both sides as well as their resonances.” Of “Heck,” the jury says, “It is a thoroughly engaging story despite its seemingly simple presentation. It draws its intellectual inheritance from Dante’s ‘Inferno’ to explore memory, amnesia and morality with grace and wit. Cannon’s style is characterized by deft and confident thick line work combined with dark shadows, creating a stark black and white affair that hides nothing.”

The selection jury had representatives from various Penn State academic departments who use the graphic novel in their teaching or research, as well as representatives with graphic novel expertise from among Penn State’s alumni and students.

The selection jury for the 2014 prize included Chair J. Harlan Ritchey, freelance illustrator, designer, videographer and library assistant, Engineering Library, University Libraries; B. Stephen Carpenter, II, professor of art education and professor in charge of the Art Education Program; Michelle N. Huang, University graduate fellow and Ph.D. candidate, Department of English; Benjamin Schreier, the Malvin and Lea Bank Assistant Professor of English and Jewish Studies and Kaity Watts, senior majoring in English, with emphases in publishing and creative writing, and minoring in world literature.

For more information about the selection criteria and how to submit books for consideration for the 2015 Lynd Ward Graphic Novel Prize, contact Ellysa Cahoy at [ellysa@psu.edu](mailto:ellysa@psu.edu) or 814-865-9696 or visit the Pennsylvania Center for the Book website: <http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/activities/ward/index.html>.

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