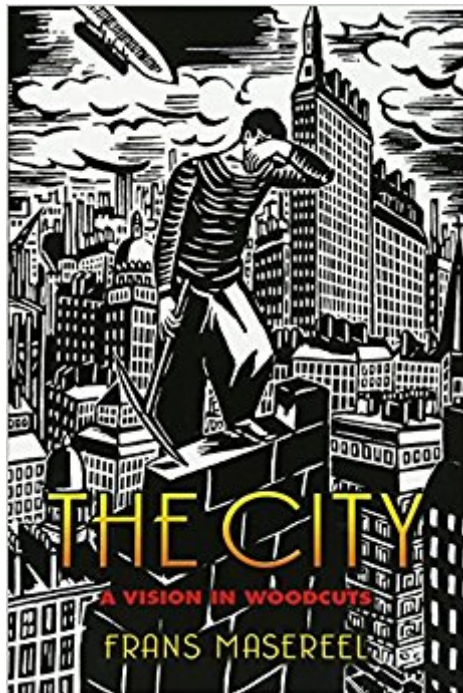




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# The City: A Vision In Woodcuts (Dover Fine Art, History Of Art)



## Synopsis

"An absolute song for an ongoing visit with timelessness." — The New York Times

This graphic novel by an Expressionist master offers a stunning depiction of urban Europe between the world wars. First published in Germany in 1925, it presents unforgettable images from the tense and dynamic Weimar period, rendered in 100 woodcuts of remarkable force and beauty. A pacifist during World War I, Belgian-born Frans Masereel (1889-1972) sympathized with the struggles of the working classes and strived to make his art accessible to ordinary people. His evocative woodcuts convey scenes of work and leisure, wealth and deprivation, and joy and loneliness. Banned by the Nazis, Masereel's works were championed in Communist countries; however, the artist steered clear of political affiliations. His clarity of vision transcends any propagandist use of the images, which stand as timeless indictments of oppression and injustice. Thomas Mann described Masereel's works as "so strangely compelling, so deeply felt, so rich in ideas that one never tires of looking at them." Epic and unflinching in its scope, *The City* continues to influence modern fine and graphic art, while recapturing the mood of a vanished era.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book contains no dialogue, but is a series of woodcuts by Frans Masereel depicting life in *The City*. The art is intricate, meticulous and stunning in its detail. The reader must decide for himself or herself what the renderings depict. Take your time with this wonderful book. It is not a "graphic

novel" one can breeze through, but a substantial work of art and thought. Highly recommended. Steveland On the Waves

I'm not used to seeing Masereel printed on the kind of glossy stock that Dover uses for this edition, but it works. It is as if the black and white images are more vibrant, and the stark lines even starker. A couple of years ago I got the Thames and Hudson edition of MASEREEL as a gift, and, even though I knew him from the odd illustration and even more so from his work on Tijl Uilenspiegel, this was the real eye opener to the great talent of this woodcut master. I highly recommend this book that sporadically appears on Amazon and eBay, and, though not cheap, worth every cent.

No "writing". Story told with pictures.

Masereel's work, as one of Will Eisner's inspirations, is an ancestor of the modern graphic novel. That historical insight is a freebie, though. Reading this slim book offers many rewards of much more direct sorts. It's not a graphic novel itself, no matter what some have said about it. Instead of a novel's narrative coherence, this presents a sequence of still images. They relate to each other only loosely and conceptually, not in causal flow. This criticism applies only to how Masereel's work is presented, however, and not to the work itself. That is exceptional. Woodcut may look crude, if your eye isn't attuned to it. Edges are hard; delicacy arises from the subject matter and composition, not from the medium. That works well in this case, since Masereel uses it to document the hard parts of city life between the two world wars. He shows love freely given, but also physical love for hire or taken by force. There is death, violence, and military hardware in the streets. Masereel shows both sides of everything, though: medical students harvest life for others from a woman's cadaver, and a steel mill's torrent of fire reminds the reader of how society's tools and materials are formed. Masereel's visual style tends toward the primitive, despite the city sophistication of his subjects. It works. His primitive lines emphasize the primitive urges of life, love, control, and violence. He fills his visual field with detail. Even though woodcut is a medium of contrasts, many of these prints tend toward a uniform texture and "gray." That sometimes makes it hard to focus on the central points of an image. It also conveys that very urban sense of closeness and distraction, the feeling that everything everywhere is competing for attention, and confusion about what really needs the attention. Dover has recently brought this and similar work (including Lynd Ward's) back into print after decades of obscurity. Perhaps the copyright limit expired and the work has fallen into the public domain. Whatever the reason, it has fallen back into public awareness, too, and I'm glad of

The author captured very interesting viewpoints. It made me see things a little bit different. This was very interesting. I think i enjoyed a bit more than books containing words because while i was "reading" the pictures, it made me think of what each pictures represented. I enjoyed reading this.

Everything that is in the city is in Masereel's woodcuts: the good, the bad, the ugly...it is all here in powerful images done in woodcut. Masereel's woodcuts translate city life in every aspect,...rich, poor, work, play, night, day, life, and death. The simplicity he uses to convey his message, results in emotionally charged images that feel timeless. These woodcuts were originally done in 1930's, but everything in this books still has a great relative value todays living.

Masereel is a champion of visual storytelling and The City is one of his greatest accomplishments.

Frans Masereel is, basically, the inventor of the graphic novel in these woodcuts of urban and industrial life in Berlin in the 1920s. Great stuff.

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