

World War 3 Illustrated

Peter Kuper

Kevin Pyle, Editor

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The artists in the venerable anthology series, *World War 3 Illustrated*, now approaching its third decade of more-or-less annual production, have been toying with this form longer than any other comic artists' school in the US. They began mostly with their own situation in the gentrifying Lower East Side of New York, and soon enough found war in the neighborhood mirrored by war abroad, with occupations, violence, resistance, and poetry abundant. Eric Drooker, Seth Tobocman, and Peter Kuper especially worked the process of the wordless comic, deeply influenced by Masereel and Ward among others, but seeking their own path, politically and artistically, in their own time.

Wordless Worlds is so rife with varied artists and styles that no summary could begin to capture it all. There are delightfully oddball subfeatures, like Sabrina Jones'

"Bubel" that could more rightly be titled "The Tower of Bubel," in which a protean creature collaborates in building an architectural empire only to find himself homeless beneath a crumbling speculative edifice. This is clearly a transhistorical folly, willing participation in our own undoing (and that of nature's bounty as well). But sometimes they fight back in their own useful ways. One amazingly delightful two-pager is of a little girl's asthmatic life in the city, probably New York, by Paula Hewitt Amram. Other pieces feature the fight against corporate greed in various Third World zones, notably Belize, a little country that seems off every map except eco-tourists'. Whimsy is slight in these pages, but artistic experimentation is rampant. No reader is likely to enjoy every contribution, but the process of artistic collection, mutual influences now increasingly global in *World War 3*, never becomes less intriguing. This wordless experiment is more than a success: it invents itself in plain sight.

PAUL BUHLE (July 15, 2009)

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