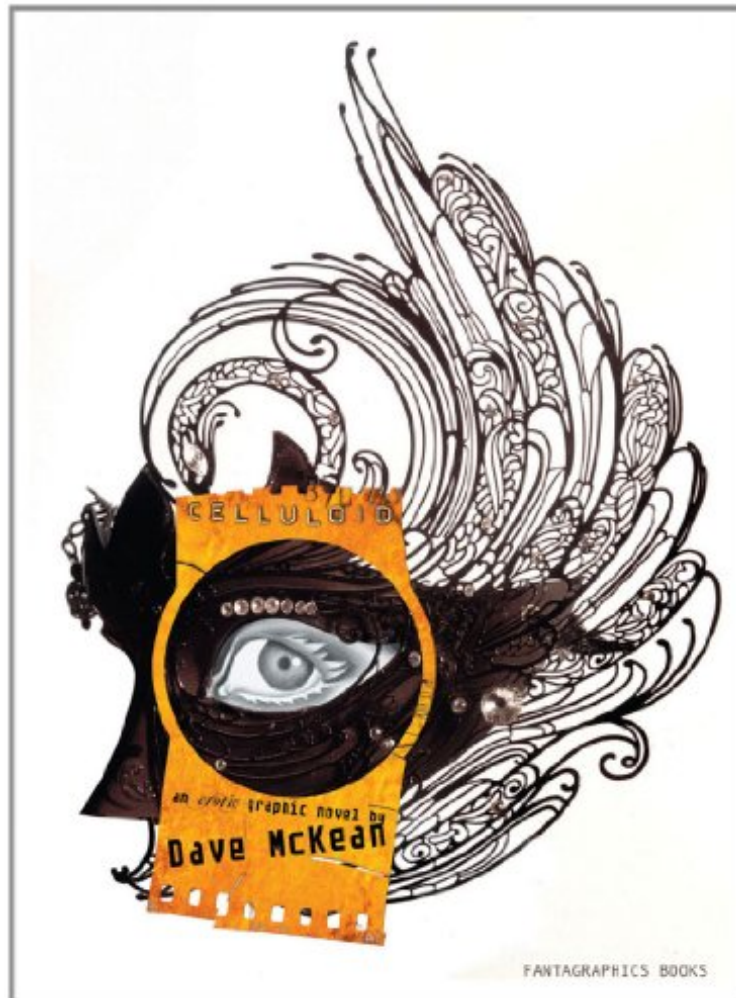


Celluloid

Dave McKean

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Dave McKean : Celluloid before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Celluloid:

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Dave McKean Brings Erotica to Graphic NovelsBy Count Orlok '22Dave McKean (the artist behind "Batman: Arkham Asylum" and "Mr. Punch") is one of my favorite modern artists and his comic book works are astonishingly beautiful and haunting. His unique visual sensibility makes this text-less graphic erotica completely original. In terms of wordless graphic novels, I've only read a few and this one is intriguing since it incorporates fantasy elements with reality and with no textual explanation. Like all of his work it is wondrously imaginative and slightly unnerving, yet in a way that is never gratuitously titillating or disturbing, at least not by my own standards."Celluloid" is a work of art that creatively explores rather than cheaply exploits human sexuality. Whether it will be viewed as such or not remains to be seen, but this is indeed a groundbreaking effort in a

medium that is still perceived by many to be just for kids. To have erotica available within such a medium could be potentially very controversial, but it could also be an important stepping stone along the path to cementing the fact that graphic literature isn't just for children; that it can be artful, complex, and as adult-oriented as any other storytelling media. The book, which is 232 pages, reads (or views rather, since there is no text) very quickly as a work of erotica should and I found that instead of examining each page and the details of the artwork for a long duration, I went through it quickly. I then read/viewed it again. In some ways, the experience of reading the book was similar to that of watching an old silent film, which may very well have been intentional as McKean has stated numerous times that he loves old European silent films and that they were an early influence on his visual style. (In fact McKean is currently working on an evocative series of multi-media paintings entitled "Nitrate" which are an homage to some of the masterpieces of the early cinema. Some of these paintings have been on display as part of the Nitrate + Kinogeists exhibitions, the catalogs of which can be found [here](#) and [here](#).) The story tells the tale of a woman who becomes disappointed when the man she lives with isn't able to come home and make love to her because he's busy with work. So, she resorts to taking a bath and then pleasuring herself on the sofa. But she ends up finding a film projector and curiosity takes hold of her. As the images begin to explode on the wall she realizes that the film is of a sexual nature but before she can absorb the details of the film the reel burns out and in the place of the projection is a set of ornate doors leading into another world. She walks through them and finds herself in a strange, somewhat eerie, and very sexual fantasia where people make love in public view. The woman comes across numerous film projectors in this strangely sensual world and with each viewing of the film she is transported to another locale where she makes love to a startlingly vivid and intriguingly bizarre character. During these sexual encounters she makes love to a woman with fourteen breasts and grape vines for hair, a very well endowed demon whom she satiates orally, and then finally a benevolent shadowy figure who emerges from a vulva-like structure in the ceiling. Meanwhile the woman's lover back in the real world comes home to their apartment and discovers the film projector and plays the reel of film... at which point it is revealed that the couple having sex in the film is the woman he lives with and the shadowy figure. Their eyes lock and the question remains: is this reality or is this a dream? And if so, whose dream is it, his or hers? Regarding the art, the book encompasses many styles that shift and flow seductively from stylized photography to expressionistic pastel drawings, from colorful surrealist paintings to simplistic sepia-toned illustrations. In fact, from a critical standpoint, some of the pictures are gorgeous and would be welcome additions to modern art museums as stand-alone works. McKean was smart to label the book as pornography since many of the images are indeed very graphic in their anatomical depictions of sexual behavior ranging from voyeurism to masturbation, from oral sex to intercourse. Despite their vivid imagery and provocative nature, I never found them to be disturbing or vulgar (though others will have a different reaction, I'm sure). Normally, I have little to no interest in pornography or explicitly graphic erotica (although I do love John Cleland's "Fanny Hill: Memoirs Of A Woman of Pleasure" and the illustrations of French artist douard-Henri Avril). But I consider this to be a mature and artistic approach to the subject matter and at no point did it seem to denigrate sexuality, or devolve to purely exploitative depictions of either gender, nor does it wreak of the overtly misogynistic commercialism of more mainstream - if that word can be applied - erotica and pornography. This work isn't exploitative smut to be viewed at with shame. It's a celebratory expression of mutual pleasure; a sensual reverie to be shared.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Exploring the erotic edge
By Rich Stoehr
There are very few living artists today who I would use the term 'Renaissance Man' to describe. Clive Barker, for example - imaginative writer, visionary artist, dabbler in theatre and film. Dave McKean is another - painter, designer, filmmaker - and his graphic novel 'Celluloid' is one more reason (among many) why. 'Celluloid' is McKean's exploration into the realm of erotic fiction, and typical of McKean's work, he does so with an eye to the fantastic and the strange. This tale of a woman who walks through a doorway created by a film projection into world after world of sexual experience, featuring impossible anatomies and unexpected scenarios, is not your typical erotic story. McKean takes a somewhat trite setup and turns it into something adventurous and new. And amazingly, he does it without words. 'Celluloid' is told completely through McKean's stunning images - sometimes photographs, sometimes painting, sometimes collage, sometimes just a few sketched lines...often a blending of all of these. McKean as a visual stylist is unmatched, and he brings all his different talents to bear here. Whether it's depicting a shadowy, faceless man dominating his masked partner, or coupling with a woman with grapes for hair and a dozen breasts, or intimate explorations of hands and fingers and skin, McKean's images bring new life to the familiar. What the imagery sometimes lacks in narrative drive it makes up for in powerful impressions and sensations of sexuality. 'Celluloid' is sexually graphic without being pornographic, both sensual and sexual, a study in the exploration of the different forms of passion. It's something kind of magical to do all this in the graphic novel art form, and nobody but Dave McKean could pull it off quite like this.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An interesting experiment, but not for everyone.
By Qemuel
This is a hard one to review. Artistically, CELLULOID is a lovely collection of McKean's work. I enjoy the wide range of styles used throughout the graphic novel, and although I am an avid fan of his "sketchy" style admit to being a little saddened that there are not more fully realized paintings throughout. I believe the stylistic variance and choices to be intentional to how the story is told however, and do not see it as detrimental to the book. There is indeed no dialogue or text as other reviews have pointed out, which does not really bother me. I find the

story easy enough to follow, and knew pretty much what I was getting into before purchasing the book (I mainly wanted the art). I will say this though: CELLULOID is not the brilliant and tragically under-appreciated CAGES, and nor should they be compared. McKean is not trying to achieve the same thing with this story; as to what he endeavors to do here, well, that is subjective and in the eye of the beholder. I have actually enjoyed reading reviews of the graphic novel far more than the graphic novel itself, as they have been varied and interesting. So, in short: CELLULOID is lovely to look at, a treat for fans of McKean's artwork. The story is interesting but not groundbreaking, which is not a weakness. Any pleasure garnered from this graphic novel will, like most things, depend on what the reader brings to the table. As an art collection, highly recommended. As a comic narrative, worth having a look and discussing.

Erotica for the mind and eye by a comics giant. A woman arrives at an apartment, but her partner can't get away from work. She is disappointed and settles in for a night alone, but finds a film projector with a reel of film loaded. The film is scratched and blurry, but she can make out a couple making love. When the film burns out, a door is revealed which leads to a misty town square... and a series of fantastical sexual encounters. But the plot doesn't really matter. Celluloid is a rare instance (especially among Anglo-Saxons) of a top-flight cartoonist working within erotic even pornographic, to embrace the word parameters, with the intent of creating a genuine work of art. As the artist says: There are so many comics about violence. I'm not entertained or amused by violence, and I'd rather not have it in my life. Sex, on the other hand, is something the vast majority of us enjoy, yet it rarely seems to be the subject of comics. Pornography is usually bland, repetitive and ugly, and, at most, does the job. I always wanted to make a book that is pornographic, but is also, I hope, beautiful, and mysterious, and engages the mind. Bringing to bear the astonishing range of illustrative and storytelling skills that have served him so well on his collaborations with Neil Gaiman and such solo projects as the (recently re-released) epic graphic novel Cages, Dave McKean forges into new territory with this unique work of erotica. 232 pages of full-color illustrations

The visionary art director behind The Sandman covers creates a coital masterwork that elicits beauty and excitement in equal measure.... Celluloid is a treasure of technical finesse and sensual mystique that transcends its potential controversy. - Sean Edgar, Paste A decidedly adult erotica graphic novel with no dialogue, this is the famed Sandman cover artist going at page after page of a sexy hallucination, whipped up by a magic porno movie projector. Dreamscapes with boners. - Cyriaque Lamar, io9 Dave McKean's art never fails to amaze me... I'll never look at a fig, a pear, or a red tomatillo the same way again. ...I think this would make a good paper anniversary gift. - Gene Ambaum, The Unshelved Book Club About the Author Dave McKean is an illustrator of books and comics, and a maker of films. His graphic novel Cages was recently re-released by Dark Horse Comics. He lives in Kent, England, with a wife, many fish, some millipedes and two children.