



Book's Face

'Any artist can benefit from a second set of eyes'

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Gauthier Van Meerbeeck, Editorial Director, Le Lombard
Photo: © Le Lombard

I am Gauthier Van Meerbeeck. I was born in 1976 in Brussels... and I still live here. After a brief career as a lawyer, I became a publisher. It was 20 years

ago. I am now the editorial director of 'Les Editions du Lombard' where we have been publishing comic books since 1946.

1. Can you please describe your job in 100 words?

My job consists in publishing comic books. As publishers, we get to choose the projects that have the potential of standing out and being the most successful. That is the essential commitment of a publisher to the authors: helping them to find their audience. This starts by defining the subject dealt with, making sure of the coherence of the scenario and the exactness of the drawings. Then, it's financing the production, defining the format and the best model, printing it and carrying out the distribution and the promotion of the finished product.

2. What did you want to be when you were five years old?

At 5 years old I really wanted to become the pilot of a giant robot, but that was too ambitious. At 18 I read an interview of the editorial director of 'les Editions du Lombard' at the time. I learned that there was actually a job that allowed to work in the place where 'le Journal Tintin' was created and to work with comic books creators. I did my utmost to be able to do this job: I studied law with a speciality in intellectual property rights, worked in legal publishing and was constantly reading new comic books. I was even ready to resort to bribery, but it was not necessary after all.

3. Can you describe a typical working day?

It would start by an update meeting with the members of my team about the production planning of the albums. To make a comic book, you need a scenario, illustrated pages but there's also the process of colouring and lettering. We need to coordinate everyone's schedule before it can go to printing. The day would go on with a discussion with an author about the sketch or the cover art of their album. Then, there would be a meeting with our distributors to present the next sales cycle and establish the objectives of the implementation of a new product. Between all that, I would receive new projects to read.

4. What would happen to the books if you were not here?

Some would be less polished. Any artist can benefit from a second set of eyes, distance often gives a pertinent perspective. But the main thing is that the books would suffer from a lack of visibility. The comic book market has been oversaturated for at least ten years. This means that there is a significant number of new comic books every day that no bookseller can properly promote. The role of publishers is to pick their battles and to defend their choices the best they can.

Whether via press, marketing or social media, we don't publish anything without a minimum of promotional support.

5. What is the most exciting/ striking thing that ever happened in your job?

A month after I started the job, I attended my first 'sandwich-bar', an annual event at the office where the authors were invited. I was surrounded by a dozen of legendary artists whose characters have been with me since childhood. The humour of Tibet, the kindness of Gilles Chaillet... I only met with humble people, welcoming me, little inexperienced publisher that I was, with grace. It was as intimidating as it was magical...

Do you know what working in publishing involves?

EDITORIAL

- Reading panel
- Commissioning or acquisition
- Copy editing / Full text editing
- Proofreading
- Index making
- Translation
- Technical revision
- Infographics
- Legal or sensitivity reading
- Relations with the author



PRODUCTION

- Typesetting
- File conversion
- Layout and design
- Paper buying and storage
- Printing
- Insurance and shipping



SALES AND MARKETING

- Representation
- Marketing plans
- Foreign rights
- Publicity
- Contacts with the media and PR approaches of opinion
- Leaders and institutions
- Social media
- Events

FINANCIAL

- Authors' royalties and copyright fees
- Managements accounts
- Creditors and debtors
- Legal procurement
- Sponsors
- Audits
- Tax



FULLFILMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

- Order processing and servicing
- Fulfilment and delivery
- IT systems
- Warehouse management
- Digital warehouses and distribution
 - Physical bookstores and other stores selling books
 - Online bookstores and retailers
 - Libraries
- Consignment processing, returns, used/damaged books sales
- Management of unsold stock

