

## Superhero of lost art

JOSEPH PROCOPIO '92

**The superhero comics that captivated young Joe Procopio cast a web from which he never escaped.**

Publications director for a Washington, D.C., think tank by day, Procopio has an alter ego: founder of Picture This Press, a publishing house devoted to graphic arts.

Lost Art Books, its flagship series, launched in September with three titles showcasing the work of artists from the first half of the 20th century:

- *The Lost Art of Zim — Cartoons and Caricatures by Eugene 'Zim' Zimmerman*, a humor magazine cartoonist who initiated America's earliest cartooning correspondence course.

- *The Lost Art of E.T. Reed — Prehistoric Peeps* about the father of cavemen-and-dinosaur comics.

- *The Lost Art of Frederick Richardson*, a *Chicago Daily News* artist who produced extravagant pen-and-ink drawings.

Procopio's quest is to rescue these artists from obscurity, preserve their legacies and place their work into historical, social and artistic context. He collaborated with contemporary cartoonists, scholars and other collectors, but 90 percent of the books' material comes from the editor's own collection.

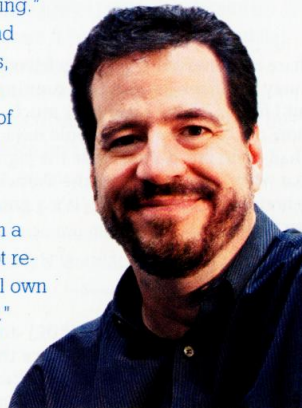
"I suffer from bibliomania. I'm drawn to the tactile, sensuous quality of books," said Procopio, who earned a bachelor's and master's in English at UD. Over-full shelves crowd the library of his Silver Spring, Md., home; another "couple hundred boxes of books" pack the basement.

While he outgrew his comic book collection's subject matter, he said, "I was always interested in the formal and aesthetic properties of visual storytelling."

His collection includes periodicals and ephemera from the 1890s to the 1940s, rare books and original art, including a piece by Heinrich Kley, the subject of Lost Art Books' next release. Amazon.com will soon distribute all titles.

Warring with his inner minimalist, Procopio rationalizes his passion. "I'm a custodian of this collection, but it's not really mine. Someday someone else will own it, or it will go to a library or university."

—Deborah McCarty Smith '93



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