

David as Oscar I (David als Oskar I),
1978

Etching on paper

Oskar Matzerath is the narrator of Grass's first novel, *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*, 1959), and is depicted here with the "heraldic animal" from the novel, the eel. *The Tin Drum* is presented as the autobiography of Oskar written at age 32 from his bed in a mental hospital. As a three-year-old, Oskar had thrown himself down the stairs to arrest his growth. He communicated with others chiefly through his tin drum and a scream that would shatter glass. Oskar's life coincides with the years of the Third Reich, and his exploits in the novel have been interpreted as "a self-parodic allegory of the rise and fall of Nazism."

Shark over Land (Hai über Land),
1973

Etching on paper

Self with Cap and Toad, 1992
(Selbst mit Mütze und Unke)
Etching on paper

In many German fairy tales the toad presages disaster, and “the call of the toad” has come to signify an unheeded prophecy of doom. Here Grass ironically identifies the critical voice of the literary and graphic artist with the “call of the toad.” His book by that title (*Unkenrufe*, 1992) offers a satire on the expansionist tendencies of Germany whose reunification he had vehemently opposed.

Cook Stach (Koch Stach), 1974
Etching on paper

Cook Stach is a character in *The Wicked Cooks* (*Die bösen Köche*, 1967), a play written by Grass in which five cooks attempt to obtain the recipe for a coveted cabbage soup.

Self-Portrait I (Selbstportrat I), 1972
Etching plate

Grass has depicted himself on this copper etching plate wearing a snail shell as a monocle, watching a two-headed snail crawl away. This print dates from the year he published *From the Diary of a Snail* (*Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke*, 1972), a first-person account of his campaign efforts on behalf of the Social Democrats in 1969. In this image, the symbolic creature is the subject of Grass's scrutiny at the same time as it shapes his vision.

With Dead Owl (Mit toter Eule), 1991
Etching on paper

The dead owl no longer sees, while the artist has assumed the wizened gaze of the owl.

Foot-long Plaice (Fußlange Scholle),
1972

Etching on paper

The fish holds a central position both in Grass's writing and in his visual art. This is one of the earliest appearances of the motif in his visual work.

Dream of an Own Home (Traum vom
Eigenheim), 1982

Etching on paper

In this image, the snail has shed its shell and seeks refuge in a WWII Atlantic Wall bunker: a structure that proved unable to provide security against the Allied invasion. Some suggest that in this depiction of a creature that succumbs to its expansionist urge and misguided desire for protection, Grass offers a metaphor for the Germans under the banner of fascism, as well as a symbol of postwar German society, in which the snail is the victim of its own slowness in dealing with the past.

*Cycle: When Only Bone Remained of
the Flounder*

(Zyklus: Als vom Butt nur die Gräte
geblieben war), 1977

This cycle of etchings was published with an accompanying collection of poems in 1977, the same year that Grass published his novel *The Flounder* (*Der Butt*): a complex novel based on the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, involving a magical talking flounder. Grass's print cycle follows a flounder from a naturalistic beginning as a dead fish in the sand, through a rebirth into a mythical creature who whispers into a human ear, to its mundane demise under a knife and subsequent decomposition until "Only Bone Remained of the Flounder."

Flounder Embedded in Sand (Butt in
Sand gebettet), 1977
Etching on paper

Flounder (Butt), 1977
Etching on paper

The Flounder (Der Butt), 1977
Etching on paper

Flounder with Knife (Butt mit Messer),
1977
Etching on paper

The Flounder (Der Butt), 1981
Terracotta

*When Only Bone Remained of the
Flounder* (Als vom Butt nur die
Gräte geblieben war), 1977
Etching on paper

Head and Bone (Kopf und Gräte) 1977
Etching on paper

When the Tale Was Over (Als das Märchen zu Ende war), 1977
Etching on paper

Man in Flounder (Mann im Butt), 1978
Etching plate

In this etching plate, created a year after the cycle, Grass refers more directly to the novel, conflating the image of the narrator with that of the mythical flounder who served as his advisor over the centuries.

Cycle: Requiem to a Glove (Zyklus:
Nachruf auf einen Handschuh),
1981

This print cycle was published with an accompanying poem entitled “Our Garbage.” With this poetic and symbolic requiem to a discarded glove, Grass makes a statement regarding our destruction of the environment, while at the same time creating an homage to a German symbolist artist of a century earlier, Max Klinger, and his cycle of etchings entitled *Paraphrase on the Loss of a Glove* (1881). In Klinger’s cycle, the artist finds a lady’s lost glove that becomes a locus of psychological projections and fantasies. In contrast, Grass’s discarded work glove undergoes a series of symbolic encounters that reflect on issues of our external world, including the environment, the failure of Communism, guilt, violence, and redemption (signified by the thistle, in Grass’s symbolic lexicon). The dual attention to naturalistic detail and symbolic content in the images parallels Grass’s literary strategies.

Pensive with Glove (Mit Handschuh
nachdenklich), 1981
Etching on paper

Shifted Symbol (Verrutschtes Symbol),
1981
Etching on paper

The Sailors' Memorial (Das Denkmal
des Seglers), 1981
Etching on paper

*Naturally, the Flounder Had a Role in
This* (Natürlich war der Butt im
Spiel), 1981
Etching on paper

. . . and Cast the First Stone (. . . und
warf den ersten Stein), 1981
Etching on paper

Reaching into the Void (Der Griff ins
Leere), 1981
Etching on paper

Beloved Thistle (Geliebte Distel), 1981
Etching on paper

Cycle: Father's Day (Zyklus: Vaterdag), 1982

Grass published this cycle of lithographs in 1982, expanding on a story told in the chapter entitled "Eighth Month" in the novel *The Flounder* (*Der Butte*, 1977). The story takes place on Father's Day, as it is being celebrated by male drinking parties in the outskirts of Berlin. The story focuses on a group of four women intent on participating in the day's celebrations as a sign of their emancipation. Many of the images closely reflect the story line. Others, interspersed throughout the cycle, translate the textual metaphors into graphic images, and, in some cases, transform straightforward narrative into visual metaphor.

With Mushroom Hats (Mit Pilzhuten),
1982

Lithograph on paper

In Grass's story of Father's Day, mushrooms are symbolic of lust, and the name of a specific mushroom is used to refer to the phallus. Early in the tale, the women don male attire as they prepare to participate in Father's Day celebrations. The narrative is quoted beneath the image: "Billy was wearing a top hat, Frankie a derby. Siggie has put on her Hell's Angels cap. An oversized, shapeless fedora was pulled down over Maxie's ear..." Here Grass has transformed the narrative into a visual metaphor that signals the underlying motive of the women: to appropriate male behavior. The literal significance of the visual metaphor becomes evident when, later in the story, Siggie, Frankie, and Maxie decide to "beget sons" with Billy and they rape her, aided by an appliance they had brought along to enable male-style urination during their outing.

All the Ten Thousand, No, a Hundred Thousand Men (All die zehntausend, nein underttausend Männer), 1982

Lithograph on paper

“ . . . all four of them, Siggie in the driver’s seat, drove up Hundekehle and Clayallee, meaning to celebrate Ascension-Father’s Day by the Grunewaldsee along with ten thousand, no, a hundred thousand men.”

Much Nobler in Form (Viel edler geformt), 1982

Lithograph on paper

Grass’s mushrooms subtly suggest anatomical forms, corresponding to the verbal metaphor used in the novel in which the mushroom refers to the phallus.

Everyone for Herself (Jeder für sich),
1982

Lithograph on paper

At a certain point in the Father's Day celebrations, all the men begin to perform stunts exhibiting their strength and courage. The women follow suit, and Siggie sews a button to her cheek without flinching. The image on the right reflects a passage later in the story, in which Frankie "laughed the chaste birch tree bare. . . ," commanding "the fresh, May-green leaves to fall as in November."

Horned Pikes (Hornhechte), 1982

Lithograph on paper

"*Hechte*" is the name of a fish that in German slang is used to describe an aggressive male; in Grass's narrative it describes the members of the biker gang that parties near the women and who are responsible for Billy's death. In his essay "On Drawing and Writing" Grass wrote, "A verbal metaphor can only prove itself as a graphic image."

Fish Heads (Fischköpfe), 1982
Lithograph on paper

The Fish Heads in this print, as well as the decapitated geese appearing later in the cycle, portend the violent turn of events in the story.

Women, said Goethe (Sind doch die Frauen wie schon Goethe sagte), 1982
Lithograph on paper

This print translates into visual images the verbal metaphors in a quotation from Goethe used by a fraternity student to protest the women's participation in Father's Day: "We have here a monstrous infringement on ethical norms. Not that we are declared enemies of women. On the contrary. Very much on the contrary. Women, said Goethe, are silver plates upon or into which we men lay, as it were, golden apples."

Fight (Streit), 1982
Lithograph on paper

Late in the afternoon, fights begin to break out within the groups of men around the lake, and the women take part as well: "As the police reported the next day, harmless roughhouses but also serious fights were taking place in other spots, wherever Father's Day was being celebrated. . . ."

Then They Were Lost in Thought (Danach hingen sie ihren Gedanken nach. . . ,) 1982
Lithograph on paper

Siggie and Frankie (Siggi und Fränki),
1982

Lithograph on paper

This print presents several images that relate to the narrative directly or indirectly: the pipes that were part of the women's male costumes; an artificial phallus referring to Billy's rape by her cohorts; a fish head used as a taunting hand puppet; and a figure that embodies the aggression that characterizes the Father's Day revelry—possibly representing Maxie, who sports a crew cut.

The Crows Followed (Die Krähen folgten), 1982

Lithograph on paper

As Billy wandered into the woods to escape her friends, "the crows followed her from pine tree to pine tree."

No Longer Human (War das noch ein Mensch), 1982
Lithograph on paper

At the end of Father's Day, Billy is raped and run over by the motorcycle gang: "That was how Frankie, Siggie, and Maxie found their Billy, mangled, mashed, no longer human, on a bed of pine needles off to one side of the thicket." Grass reintroduces the flounder, tying the chapter back into the larger theme of the book: the cycles of history, personal and political, that circumscribe our lives.

The Rat

In 1986 Grass published a novel entitled *The Rat* (Die Rättin). The narrative is presented as a group of "latter day and decidedly grim fairy tales" set in a Germany devastated by nuclear holocaust, where mutant rats are the new masters and mistresses of the radioactive earth.

The Rat Appearing in My Dreams (Die Rätin, vonder mir träumt), 1985
Etching on paper

As Grass had frequently done, here he presents a self-portrait with the animal protagonist of his novel.

The Rat (Die Rätin), 1985
Etching on paper

The rat is depicted against the skyline of the city of Danzig, Günter Grass's birthplace.

Reading Rat I (Leseratte I), 1985
Etching plate

The German term *Leseratte* (reading rat) is analogous to the English "book-worm."

Memento Mori, 1986
Etching on paper

The traditional *memento mori* still life is characterized by a skull and other objects that serve as reminders of the brevity of life. Here Grass places his own symbol of doom within the context of art historical tradition.

Golgatha, 1986
Red chalk on paper

This image refers to a scene in *The Rat*, in which a historical event is described: “A hundred and thirty un-Christian rats, said the She-rat, were crucified on Bishop’s Mountain.”

Calcutta

During 1987, Grass spent five months in Calcutta. He was deeply affected by the poverty he saw on the streets, and, according to the writer, was unable to find words to express the misery. He created a series of ink drawings based on his observations and later commented on the process: “I, that is, the writer, forced the painter —repeatedly and ridiculing all attempts to cite artistic principles—to look.”

Calcutta 4, 1987
Tusche on paper

Under the Bridge (Unter der Brücke),
1987
Tusche on paper

Night Market (Nächtlicher Markt), 1988
Etching on paper

In the Erz Mountains, 1989 (Im Erzgebirge)

Charcoal on cardboard

This work relates to a series of fifty lithographs entitled *Dead Wood* (Totes Holz), that Grass created between the summer of 1988 and winter of 1989. The cycle, dedicated to the Grimm Brothers, is accompanied by a collection of texts: some are poetic, some are autobiographical, and some are official governmental reports on the demise of the German forests. The works were created in former East Germany and speak directly of the actual deforestation in progress; they were also intended as a metaphor for, in Grass's view, the political and social devastation that has befallen East Germany since reunification.

No Blackbirds Allowed (Hier haben
Amseln nichts zu suchen), 1990
Pencil on paper

This image represents the former East German town of Hoyerswerda: a strip-mining town whose name has become synonymous with environmental destruction. The devastated landscape depicted here is described in detail in the chapter “At the Abyss” in Grass’s most recent novel, *Too Far Afield* (Ein Weites Feld, 1995).

In Large Assembly (for *Too Far Afield*)
(In großer Versammlung; zu Ein
weites Feld), 1995
Lithograph on paper

Up to the Horizon (for Too Far Afield)
(Zum Horizont hin; zu Ein weites
Feld), 1995
Lithograph on paper

These two works relate to Grass's most recent novel, *Ein weites Feld*, to be published in English as *Too Far Afield*. The novel deals with German reunification set against the backdrop of the founding of the German empire. These lithographs feature the novel's hero, Fonty-Fontane and the spy Hof-taller, whose face is covered by a hat pulled over his eyes. The chapter entitled "At the Abyss," describes Hoftaller: "He stood on the remaining stub of the road to Pritzen, legs planted wide, with billowing coat, with hat, just as Fonty stood with hat and billowing coat." In both the literary and visual imagery, Grass uses repetition and uniformity as stylistic metaphors for a number of concepts and literary images in the novel, including "the watchful state"—the ubiquitous governmental apparatus of East Germany, as well as the threatening size of the now 'unified' Germany, and the portrayal of greedy business interests taking over the "people's property" of the former East Germany

Large Toad (Große Unke), 1992
Tusche on paper

Five Cod (Fünf Dorsche), 1992
Etching on paper

Literary Quartet (Literarisches Quartett), 1992
Etching on paper

Fighting Fish (Kampffische), 1992
Etching on paper

Black Sunflowers I (Schwarze Sonnenblumen I), 1993
Etching on paper