A Companion to Illustration
These invigorating reference volumes chart the influence of key ideas, discourses, and theories on art, and the way that it is taught, thought of, and talked about throughout the English-speaking world. Each volume brings together a team of respected international scholars to debate the state of research within traditional subfields of art history as well as in more innovative, thematic configurations. Representing the best of the scholarship governing the field and pointing toward future trends and across disciplines, the Blackwell Companions to Art History series provides a magisterial, state-of-the-art synthesis of art history.

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Alan Male is an illustrator, writer, and academic. He directed the Illustration Program at Falmouth University for 18 years, leading it to become one of the most reputable with an international distinction for excellence and having distinguished alumni. He was conferred Professor of Illustration in 2009, has lectured throughout the United States, and is a keynote speaker on the international stage.

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Series Editor’s Preface

*Wiley Blackwell Companions to Art History* is a series of edited collections designed to cover the discipline of art history in all its complexities. Each volume is edited by specialists who lead a team of essayists, representing the best of leading scholarship, in mapping the state of research within the sub-field under review, as well as pointing toward future trends in research.

This *Companion to Illustration* aims to consider the intellectual, creative, and material processes of illustration. These are explored within their philosophical, theoretical, and historical contexts in relation to the contemporary practice of illustration. In this way we comprehend illustration as a visual thought process and as a means of communicating ideas. The essays present a broad view of illustration from animation to children’s books, and from illustrations of science to the representations of the uncanny.

Each of the four sections of the volume provides a multilayered, interdisciplinary re-evaluation of illustration. The opening three sections look at “The Theory, Character, and Making of Imagery,” “Education and Research,” and “Context”; whilst the final part, “Contemporary and Post-Contemporary Practice,” offers a more nuanced examination of the various ways we encounter illustration and future pathways for its evolution both as image and as practice.

Together, these essays combine to provide a new and thought-provoking revision of our conception and understanding of illustration that will be essential reading for students, researchers, and teachers working on the history, theory, and practice of illustration, and in related fields.

*A Companion to Illustration* is a very welcome addition to the series.

*Dana Arnold, 2018*
Preface

Illustration practice is not judged purely by visual literacy and technical qualities, but is a discipline that is firmly established as one that engenders the best intellectual engagement with subject matter, problem solving and visual communication; the practitioner disclosing and interpreting content with authority and un-ambiguity with the pursuit of knowledge and information being a pre-requisite to eminent professional illustration practice. (Male 2017)

At the time of writing, this book has no equal; there is no comparative volume as the majority of books about illustration contain relatively scant critique or objective evaluation. Most are either celebratory such as the lauding of an individual illustrator, period, or genre; are rudimentary technique and media guides; or how to be an illustrator and get work. The principal objective for this publication is to be a benchmark reference volume, setting the agenda for the discipline of illustration and influencing the shape of the intellectual conversation around the discipline moving forward. It is ambitious in scope and makes the most significant statement about the subject in a contemporary context.

The purpose of illustration is to serve society, particularly where there is a need to convey a message or to communicate in some way. All aspects of our daily lives, including the cultural infrastructure within which we live and operate, are touched by illustration: education and knowledge; advertising, persuasion, propaganda and promotion; branding and identity; commentary and journalism; entertainment and all forms of narrative fiction. However, the parameters of illustration practice have changed considerably in recent years and have had to respond accordingly to the vicissitudes in vogue and culture; the impact of globalization; economic and technological advancements and the ever-expanding media and communications industry. There is also an insatiable need in many audiences around the world for imagery that satisfies their desire for fresh knowledge, news, entertainment, and products. The implication will be insurmountable for some practitioners and students of visual communication: it clearly transcends the traditional concept of the narrowly focused commercial illustrator being chosen for their style in order to undertake a prescribed and heavily directed brief. What does this mean and what are the consequences for it?
I believe that with regard to contemporary, professional visual communication we are beginning to see a return of the Polymath Principle, in other words, an illustration practice that exudes authority facilitated by a breadth of intellectual skills and learning supported by the ability to multitask across a range of creative and practical disciplines: a precept that significantly underpins the discourse contained within this book.

This book is aimed at a global spectrum of scholars, commentators, students, professional visual communicators, and other genuinely interested parties. The chapters are authored by an inimitable roster of academics, creative practitioners, researchers, and critics from around the world with contributors coming from the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, and Germany: clear evidence regarding the status of illustration and its growth and influence in an international context.

To have ambition and embark on a successful career in illustration, practitioners will need to be educated, socially and culturally aware communicators, playing to global audiences and utilising a breadth of intellectual and creative skills.

Alan Male
Author, Academic, Editor, and Illustrator
Professor Emeritus and Former Head of Illustration, Falmouth University
Truro, England, February 2016

Reference

Introduction
The Paradigm of Illustration
Alan Male

Illustration educates, informs and bears knowledge; it is uncompromising and elicits propaganda and provocation; it persuades, advertises and promotes; it comments, documents and bears witness; it is a raconteur and narrator of fiction; it enriches culture and dispenses identity; it serves society. (Male 2019)

The initial question asks “what is illustration?” I would further this by proposing, where do the intellectual, creative, and material processes of illustration lie and what supports the methodologies for its practice? The answer is a clear assertion for The Paradigm of Illustration. This is the philosophical, theoretical, and practical framework that determines the definition of the discipline and its influence and impact through cognition, research, and cultural hypotheses. It is a paradigm that denotes a clear configuration of practices and provides the discipline with its boundaries and archetypal distinction. The inflected forms of its parameters, its professional, contextual, educational, and creative applications are supported, formulated, and debated within this framework. This introduction uses the paradigm of illustration throughout as a construct for reference.

What Is Illustration?

Illustration is a contextualized problematic surrounded by a string of narratives: the problematic is the assignment or given brief to be undertaken and the narratives comprise the objectives required for completion such as subject research, conceptual strategies, critical appraisal, production, and output. David Blaiklock, Discipline Leader, Bachelor of Design (Illustration and Animation), University of South Australia, describes “a way of explaining and constructing visual experiences of contemporary society, in which pictures, language, and meaning are inextricably entwined” (Chapter 8).
In order to exemplify this, it may be expedient to determine a differentiation between Illustration and Fine Art. The term *illustration* is an enigma to many, in spite of its history and status as an important and influential discipline of visual communication. It is often confused with Fine Art, most likely because many illustrators use the same methods and media for producing imagery. However, fine art tends to be cultivated for its own sake and will appeal to the minds and emotions that experience it. Its conception and production is usually driven by a subjective rationale, often without recourse for any commercial drivers. Illustration on the other hand is *contextualized visual communication* conceived and produced for specific audiences, often reproduced in large quantities and distributed via the ever-expanding creative, publishing, media, and communication industries.

What is meant by contextualized visual communication? Context means *frame of reference or the situation within which something exists or happens*. The broad parameters of illustration, context defines its “work,” the nature and thrust of its messages, and the reach and impact on its given audience. Without context, an image cannot be classed as illustration. Context defines the raison d’être for the image and underpins the essence of the assignment. There are five such obligations:

- **Knowledge**: education, documentation, information, instruction, research
- **Persuasion**: advertising, promotion, publicity, inducement, propaganda
- **Identity**: corporate literature, branding, packaging
- **Fiction**: literature, young audience picture books, sequential fiction, general entertainment
- **Commentary**: journalism, editorial review, critique, reportage

**Dr. Susan Hagan**, Teaching Professor of English from Carnegie Mellon University, is slightly more succinct in defining the contexts of illustration practice, yet no less profound in determining intellectual and creative accountability (Chapter 7). Hagan’s thesis expounds the following three contextualized domains or environments based upon an analysis of the synergy and symbiosis between the illustrator and the principal essence of text and originator:

- **Argument**: journalistic commentary, critique, review
- **Description**: knowledge, pedagogy, information
- **Narrative**: storytelling, chronicle, report

There is an omission in Dr. Hagan’s chapter regarding persuasion and identity: this might reflect the heavily directed and prescriptive manner in which illustrators are briefed. However, the Three Environments offer significant scope for authorial practice and intellectual curiosity that facilitates the creation and determination of both content and message. **Franziska Walther**, designer, illustrator, architect, doctoral researcher, and university lecturer at Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften, Hamburg, presents a more elementary assertion: “We commonly understand illustration to be two-dimensional visual reproduction of reality rendered by hand. This reproduction is achieved through drawing, painting or other design techniques like collage, 3D modeling, or photography. What is significant here is the *applied context*; the final work is only manifest in its serial reproduction” (Chapter 13).

How might the meaning of illustration be explained? A generalized dictionary definition of illustration states the *act or process of illuminating* and the *act of clarifying or
explaining: elucidation: and from the Middle English, the act of making vivid: illumination: spiritual or intellectual enlightenment. A more contemporary and specific dictionary definition affirms a picture illustrating a book or newspaper and a more appropriate description, elucidation or embellishment of a literary or scientific article or book by pictorial representations. Although conventional and platitudinous regarding assumptions for visual language and contextual value, there is some proffering to illustration’s contemporary position.

In a historical context, the term illustration was used multivariously and for a range of disparate contexts. However, over a considerable period of time, the discipline as recognized today – a discrete form of visual communication – began to take shape. Dr. Christopher Lukasik, Associate Professor of English and American Studies, Purdue University, points out “the relationship between illustration and print culture during the first half of the nineteenth century is much more complex, nuanced, and fluid than simply a ‘picture in a book’ which variously illuminates or interprets its accompanying text. In fact, it would not be until well after the first quarter of the nineteenth century that our now familiar understanding of illustration as a picture (an optical medium) in a print medium began to emerge and that the medium of illustration began to determine what the action of illustration was, so much so, that the two would become inseparable” (Chapter 18).

Both historically and contemporaneously, it is the production of knowledge and its epistemological relationship with the term “illustration” that has facilitated the most insightful dialog regarding any notions of status and definition. Scientific illustration came into existence in classical times when scholars and “illuminators” observed and recorded details of the natural world. As time progressed, the Renaissance gave rise to an intense and prolific interaction with science and art. But, since medieval times, the visual representation of knowledge witnessed a steady relegation for illustration from its polymathic heyday to a status of “low art”; imagery produced by technical engravers purely for the function of providing no more than a cursory overview of the subjects in question. Kathrin Mira Amelung, Investigator in the working group Morphology and the History of Form, Cluster of Excellence: “Image Knowledge Gestaltung,” Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, is principally concerned with the philosophical and cultural-historical meaning and a possible need for a change of the term illustration. She further expounds a renouncement of the term illumination because it follows a different etymology from illustration. She also emphasizes that the history of illustration does not coincide with the history of book illustration and, in the tradition of Cicero, is a practice aimed at explanation and elucidation (Chapter 14).

However, Kathrin Mira Amelung also promotes the need for a significant reversal in status regarding the production of knowledge-bearing imagery: “The inclusion of scientific illustrators in the author list of a natural science publication might not seem unusual at first glance, especially given the long tradition of using scientific illustrations in the natural sciences. On closer inspection, however, there is a peculiarity here that requires explanation: up to the present day scientific illustrators have usually been included in the natural sciences to make research results accessible to a broader (lay) public. Commissions for such work generally follow the widespread notion that the images produced will be merely ‘illustrations’. In this context ‘illustrations’ are understood to have a purely ‘repetitive function’ in the sense of presenting scientific results through visual means. While these means do elucidate what has been said, they offer ‘no important new information on the issue. They provide no alternative standpoint or additional knowledge.’ Thus illustrations are not – according to this common
conception – epistemically relevant, which is why illustrators are often thanked in the acknowledgments, but rarely included in the list of authors.”

It is in current and more informed sources that one must acquire the most felicitous of definitions. Illustration has been described by many as *art at the service of the people* presumably because of the growth and popularity of certain contexts and themes. One such theme is that of sequential fiction and entertainment, the most favored aspect being comics, graphic novels, and animated films. This in turn gives illustration a cultural association with audiences of all description and demographic. However, it must be noted that the term *illustrator* is still not widely used or understood; many media presenters and commentators, particularly from television and the press, will refer to “artists” illustrating and designing book and music album covers, posters, children’s books, and computer games. Other terms frequently used and understood are *cartoonist* and perhaps the most ubiquitous, *commercial artist*. When “artists” are brought into the paradigm of commercial graphic arts practice, they are the ones usually commended for gifting “taste and exquisiteness,” emotion and seduction, qualities traditionally associated with *fine art*. Some consider Fine Art to be more illustrious than Illustration, possibly because of its ubiquity and celebrity. However, it might be expedient to consider illustration’s understated reputation for its power of communication and for comprising a diversity of visual language. Audiences also enjoy unimpeded accessibility to illustration via global publishing and broadcasting, thus enabling the discipline to wield considerable effect and impact on society. What of the future?

The discipline of illustration and its recognized parameters are in a state of flux and transition. Prudent speculation might conceive how its future status will manifest and how its methodologies and professional practices will function – in other words, what illustration will actually become! The rationale for this prediction relates directly to the multidisciplinary, authorial, and polymath-driven focus that currently underpins the education, ambitions, and commercial drivers of contemporary illustration and other visual communication practitioners. Roderick Mills, Course Leader, BA (Hons) Illustration, University of Brighton, succinctly comments: “the growing influence of research agendas is also having an impact upon what would be considered illustration. Cross-disciplinary approaches to investigative projects; an ethnographic practice that communicates ideas from the illustrator that have future outlets beyond the accepted commercial area” (Chapter 21). Alice A. Carter, Professor Emeritus, Animation and Illustration, San Jose State University, determines a positive future and observes: “After five hundred years of relative stability, the illustration profession is evolving and expanding in response to the digital revolution. The changes are momentous, and their speed completely unparalleled. New global audiences, largely urban and accustomed to individual empowerment, will expect innovative images that tell relevant, immersive stories. Illustrators who can adapt to this environment will have more creative choices than any other time in history” (Chapter 23).

**Influence and Significance**

People connect with illustration every day of their lives and in most instances are not aware that it is illustration: corporate imagery that instills recognition in the subconscious; the adornment of product packaging and services that entice and beguile; information and identification systems providing instruction and direction; the news media illustrations that comment, confound, infuriate, and captivate. These contextual
examples reveal the inherent potency of illustration; it is the strength and originality imbued in its messages that define cause and purpose. Further exemplification is the devising of new forms of creative expression through the vast gamut of literature and entertainment; substantive contributions to economic and societal prosperity through commerce, media, and design and the preservation of cultural heritage through education, museums, knowledge exchange, and documentary broadcast.

Historically and contemporaneously, the visual linguistics, conceptual and pictorial power of illustration cannot be underestimated, notably by the “tone” of messages communicated. Some messages are, or have been, lauded and considered essential, some are damned and castigated as unprincipled and degenerate. Illustration will lampoon, shock, insult, threaten, subvert, ridicule, express discontentment and proclaim political or religious allegiance; stir up disagreeable reactions; worship and celebrate; be satirical and entertaining; be unashamedly persuasive and “hard selling”; be serious and present original knowledge, educative or documentary material with great authority and integrity.

Lasting power and influence are determined by significance: memorable, “ground-breaking,” and controversial, with measurable and recorded impact on the society or culture in question. The history of illustration provides us with thousands of examples, some that have “changed the world” such as the global religious iconography that has instilled fear and suppression, reminding adherents that their best afterlife option was a “heavenly one”; jingoistic and propagandist paintings of “glorious victories in battle”; the birth of visual communication through archaic cave art and hieroglyphics; the polymath-driven explications of the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment; the invention of printing with mechanical movable type that propagated the modern knowledge-based economy; the Fascist and Stalinist propaganda of the early twentieth century; the cultural maelstrom of Disney and their subsequent acolytes of style. But what of today and the future?

In order to dispense influence and be contextually significant, one must delve into the paradigm of illustration and seek out the modus for communicating successful impact, reach, and standpoint. It is here that the taxonomic breakdown of measurable benchmarks and principles defining the critique of illustration is “played out” and put into practice: what has to be said and how; understanding the reactions required from a target audience; the successful integration of subject matter and the principal line of communication; the presentation through illustration of an individual critical voice with expectations to be challenging and provocative; to use experience and a knowledge base to take ideas and move into fresh, captivating, and inspiring realms, and where appropriate, confront and contradict the wider communications world; and finally, to apply esthetic discernment by having a complete and objective appreciation and working knowledge of visual languages and subject matter.

Contemporaneously and in the future, successful visual communication, particularly that which commands national and international recognition and influences audiences by its significance and status, will have to satisfy professionally exacting criteria. The following is a generic taxonomic breakdown of measurable benchmarks and principles:

**Impact:** Cultural, academic, and educational value measured by insights with which the public, prescribed audience or user have engaged, measured by evaluation, user feedback or testimony, and national or international review; the creation and interpretation of cultural capital in all of its forms to enrich and expand the lives, imaginations, and sensibilities of individuals and groups and the level of public engagement measured by critique and repercussion.
Reach: Extent and diversity of individuals, organizations, and communities who have
or will benefit, engage with or be influenced by the impact; extent of the informa-
tion and influence to the form and content of education and knowledge transfer to
any group in a global context.

Content: Credibility and authoritativeness regarding topic or subject matter; the
creation and inspiration for supporting and generating new and original forms of
artistic, literary, linguistic, persuasive, propagandist, and other expression.

Standpoint: Thematic and scientific uniqueness, thrust, context, argument, opinion,
consequence, and effect; strength and rationale regarding message, expression,
narrative concept.

Methodology: Quality of research; the integration of intellectual, theoretical, and practical
processes.

Concept: Creativity and originality; appropriate and considered use of ideas; discernment
regarding audience receptivity, purpose, and appropriation of media and outreach into
the public domain.

Language: Quality of and appropriate use of esthetics, design, genre, iconography,
visual, verbal, and textual syntax.

Technical Application: Use of media; craft, product, or artifact construction, perform-
ance, presentation, publication, exhibition, or broadcast; drawing skills and image
construction; oral and written skills; unambiguity of message, connectivity and
outreach.

For illustration to assign its potential power and administer any influence on its audi-
ence, the practitioner must deploy the inherent proficiencies and knowledge that are
directly associated with visual communication professional practice. Illustrators need to
become intrinsically aligned to their readers. David Blaiklock again: “Expertise in visual
culture is determined by participants in society and evolves through what is physically
seen, how it is understood, how we are able to, made to, allowed to see the world around
us.” Dr. Nanette Hoogslag, Course Leader, BA (Hons) Illustration and Animation,
Anglia Ruskin University, has devised a clear paradigm, determining how illustration
needs to communicate effectively; a model of key attributes that maps directly on to the
aforementioned benchmarks and principles: a model that “gives insight into the signifi-
cant role of illustration, and the way illustration is shaped and the manner in which it
shapes the communicative texts and contexts of which it is part.” This model is based on
four key attributes: “translation, reflection, engagement, and manifestation” (Chapter 12).
This is a directive that provides an opportunity for the readership to interpret, under-
stand, interact with message and content, and to reflect on their own values and interests:
“This model presents illustration as a mode of communication, which can be expressed
through a wide differentiation in appearance, defined by the maker, social practices as
well as the material qualities of the publishing technologies.”

Authorship, Interdisciplinary Practice,
and the Polymath Principle

We are beginning to see a return of the Polymath Principle, in other words an illustra-
tion practice that exudes authority and a breadth of intellectual skills and learning. The
consequence is that many illustrators will have wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge
of subject matter and acquire an esteem-driven ownership for their work. (Male 2014)