

## RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne Canadian Art Review

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Susan Doyle, Jaleen Grove, and Whitney Sherman (eds.),  
*History of Illustration*, London and New York: Fairchild  
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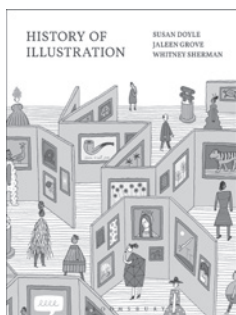
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objects by transforming and combining found or manufactured materials. Geoffrey Farmer represented Canada at the 2017 Venice Biennale in what was one of the most celebrated installations of the 57th International Art Exhibition. Titled *A Way Out of The Mirror*, it dismantled much of the Canada Pavilion to leave only a shell in which a geyser of water exploded periodically and in which visitors were also showered from spigots of water concealed in objects fabricated from acid-etched brass. Finally, Rachel Harrison continued to garner international acclaim with her retrospective *Life Hack* at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, which ran from October 2019 to January 2020.

By focusing on these four key artists, Adler's examination provides historical context as well as critical analysis and even intuitive guidance concerning the intrinsic value of assemblage and the cultural role this reinvigorated genre continues to play. His book will appeal to specialist and generalist alike and particularly to those who hanker for a skilled appraisal based on a cross-disciplinary knowledge of modernism and the post-modern machinations that characterized the opening decade of this century. ¶

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Beautifully illustrated, with colour reproductions on every one of its 592 pages, *History of Illustration* is a welcome and impressive book, offering the reader an introduction to the global scope and breadth of the field. It sits comfortably with previous studies in the history of illustration, which have mostly appeared as inclusions in volumes concerned with the history of art or design. *History of Illustration* collects these approaches into one volume and extends them through its global reach. The history of illustration (and indeed other fields within the umbrella of visual culture) have traditionally been constructed by scholars from other fields.<sup>1</sup> Those interested have needed to weed their way through the few volumes dedicated to specific illustrators or genres (books for children, medical/fashion illustration, comics) as well as a few attempts at a comprehensive overviews such as Heller and Chwast's *Illustration: a visual history* (2008) or Zeegans' *Fifty Years of Illustration* (2014). Both make a good attempt at consolidating examples from the history of illustration. Here, the effort is much larger. The editors have assembled an interesting group of authors from a great many areas of illustration. The layout and content make it accessible to all readers with interest in visual communication, from the overall design and colour-coding of sections for easy access, through clear signposting of topics, a comprehensive index, and a glossary. These, together with insets that appear throughout

the book, allow the reader either to dip in and out of the text or to read it cover to cover. The inclusion of such an array of authors from the field presents a variety of voices and perspectives.

As a compendium, the volume introduces global traditions (specifically India, China, Japan, United States, Britain, Canada and generally the Islamic world, Africa, Latin and North America, and Europe), situating these traditions within discussion of the power of images, mass media, and digital production. The volume is arranged as a chronology extending from prehistory to the present day, although most of the focus is on the 1800s–2010s. Within these large subject areas, the authors drill down to examine the uses of illustration as meaning-making through representations of the natural world (scientific and medical illustration); popular culture, i.e., printed ephemera, posters, advertising, fashion, science fiction, comics, pulp, and social media; journalism and caricature; control (propaganda, wartime imagery, posters, advertising); technological and historical developments; and global approaches.

There are interesting chronological arcs in some chapters. For instance, Chapter Eight, "Illustration in the African Context," by Bolaji Campbell, features a very strong history and analysis of illustration and editorial work in the modern era on that continent. Chapter Seventeen, "Six Centuries of Fashion Illustration, 1540–early 2000s," by Pamela Parmal, ends with a rich and highly relevant discussion of the revival of fashion in the twenty-first century. Chapter Twenty, "Diverse American Illustration Trends in Periodicals, 1915–1940," by Roger Reed with a contribution by Grove, features a thought-provoking discussion questioning whether murals and prints are art or illustration—although I wondered if this might have been a useful discussion for in the first part of the book. The last chapter, Chapter Twenty-Nine,

"Digital Forms," by Nanette Hoogslag and Whitney Sherman, deals with contemporary digital illustration and extends the volume's encyclopedic approach meaningfully by presenting the field in relation to technological advances, social media, and the self-agency/self-promotion of illustrators.

Although there is an interesting dialogue amongst the chapters, I get the feeling that some attempt has been made to encourage the reader to progress through the book from beginning to end, revisiting information and building on it. The links between theme boxes send the reader to earlier/later chapters to provide context and support for their contents. The historical transitions between forms of production, in which one witnesses a pushback against mechanical reproduction, is an interesting theme which is presented in several chapters. In a way, it returns the reader to the big questions of the book: what is illustration, and do illustrators create culture or reflect it?

There are chapter-specific bibliographies, some more thorough than others. For example, Chapter Twenty-Three, "Overview of Comics and Narratives," includes an annotated bibliography and a list of biographies as well as other excellent resources. It would have been helpful to include a book-wide list of sources for further reading. The book also incorporates digital teaching/learning tools by subscription, including an instructor's guide, a test bank, and PowerPoint presentations (xv). There are also useful features such as a thorough and complete table of contents as well as a glossary, timeline, and list of key terms. The carefully considered design of the volume deftly incorporates these study aids as well as inset sections in each chapter that provide additional context. The theme boxes, most authored by the editors themselves with additional content from others, cover many "big ideas"

in cultural studies, critical theory topics, and -isms, with a good mix of subject-specific historical, contextual, and technological developments in illustration, art, and design. Some examples: Avant-garde and Kitsch, hegemony, appropriation, semiotics, Queer studies, and theories of representation. Some are more successful than others. For instance, the theme box about education (294) could have been more far-reaching, as it mainly deals with the United States. This is less a criticism than an acknowledgement of the gargantuan task undertaken by the editors. The theme boxes help to explain and expand the scope of the chapter topics, allowing this book to sit easily in many milieus, including illustration, media, cultural studies, and art or design history.

Another strength of the book is the exploration of various topics within the production and study of illustration, such as modes of support (religious, patronage, class, industry, star system), cycles of production, technology, power dynamics and inclusion, the power of the image, modes of control through codification, modes of protest and propaganda through visual narrative, and the identity of the illustrator. There is a fantastic exploration of illustration in use as tied to developments in technology and in mass media and popular culture. There are also a few moments of overlap, which are not altogether problematic; for example, the introduction and Chapter One begin almost identically, i.e., with the etymologic origins of the term illustration.

When asked to teach an introduction to the history of illustration (or contextual studies for an illustration studio) one starts with the search for an appropriate course text and usually ends up bemoaning the lack of a comprehensive volume. Doyle, Grove, and Sherman have decided to take on this tough brief and to create a global and all-encompassing survey. The result is impressive,

although through its global and temporal reach it does lose a little in a lack of specificity. The editors' global mandate is obvious from the beginning: in "Part One: Illustrative Traditions from Around the World," they lay out the terms of this mandate. In this section the reader also encounters many crossovers with art history, anthropology, and material and visual culture. Such crossovers continue through the book as the history of graphic design, advertising, and popular and cultural studies are added to the roster. At times, the links seem a little tenuous, and I occasionally felt the text could be discussing visual narrative or communication rather than illustration. This was true, for example, in Chapter Thirteen, "Illustration on British and North American Printed Ephemera, 1800–1910," Chapter Nineteen, "Avant-Garde Illustration, 1900–1950," and Chapter Twenty-Four, "The Shifting Postwar Marketplace: Illustration in the US and Canada, 1940–1970." The editors' definition of illustration as "visual communication through pictorial means" (xvii) is laid out in the introduction along with the precept for the book, based on Gowans' four purposes of illustration: to document, to narrate, to persuade, and to ornament (xvii).

The book raises two points for consideration in future developments of illustration studies: first, there is a need for the expansion of global studies within the history of illustration. The hope is that this book will start future scholars on this path. Second, one wonders whether attempts at inclusivity such as this one, which stretch the structure of the field, are a good or a bad thing.

The discussion in some chapters does include careful unpacking of the impacts of illustration (visual communication) on various groups as subjects and/or audiences (i.e., Chapter Eight, "Illustration in the African Context, Prehistory–Early 2000s," Chapter Twenty, "Diverse American Illustration Trends, 1915–1940," and

Chapter Twenty-Four, “The Shifting Postwar Marketplace: Illustration in the US and Canada, 1940–1970”). Despite the toll it takes on specificity, the book’s far reach across subject areas is, I argue, to the benefit of readers, as it exposes them to a variety of methods and overlapping information, which helps to build understanding. There is some possibility of confusion, as the reader is presented with a great many examples of what “illustration” is and can be, and this fluidity is especially obvious later in the book when the discussion, I would suggest, becomes about illustration and graphic design simultaneously, although in some chapters this slip and the debate it has generated is acknowledged (Chapter Nineteen) while, elsewhere, the relationships with other fields is drawn out (Chapter Twenty on art versus craft, art versus messaging). In Chapters Nine and Ten there is a return to the original definition presented in the introduction, which provides some clarity as the book progresses.

This is a much-needed volume and my hope is that it inspires more writing in the field. The forthcoming *Illustration Research Methods* by Rachel Gannon and Mireille Fauchon (due September 2020 from Bloomsbury) promises to be an excellent start. The editors of *History of Illustration* are to be applauded; it is heartening to see such a strong contribution to the maturation of the field. ¶

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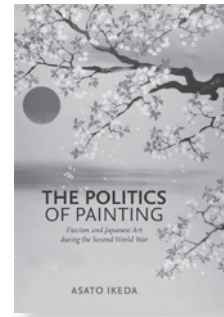
1. Maziar Raean, “Integration of studio and theory in the teaching of graphic design,” in *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education* 3, no. 3 (December 2004); Elkins (1995) in Erk, Selen, and Wilson, “Teaching Art History to Design Students,” *The International Journal of the Humanities* 5, no. 7 (2007).

Asato Ikeda  
*The Politics of Painting: Fascism and Japanese Art during the Second World War*  
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,  
2018

144 pp. 33 colour and 12 b/w illus.  
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Victoria Nolte

Renowned modern painter and Japanese nationalist Uemura Shōen’s 1939 painting *Sudden Blast* (*Kaze*) pictures a woman wearing an elegant, bright blue kimono. Her body leans forward as she moves to the right of the frame. Slightly bowing her head, she protects her hair with her left hand while her right hand modestly gathers a part of her garment, revealing her footwear (*geta*). Though the painting does not depict the explicitly militaristic subject matter one might find in official War Campaign Record Paintings (*Sensō sakusen kirokuga*), its message is still political. *Bijin-ga*, or paintings of beautiful women, are a popular genre of Japanese art that can be traced back to the Nara period (710–784). In the early twentieth century, *bijin-ga* were criticized for upholding beauty standards and social expectations of women that no longer reflected their modern status. Many modern Japanese-style painters subverted this genre by depicting unconventional subject matter, such as working-class women or those with physical maladies. Shōen,<sup>1</sup> in contrast, sought to reclaim the artistic legacy of *bijin-ga* as a method for re-articulating Japan’s traditional culture. Relating to this genre’s history of representing and actively constituting idealized aesthetic and moral standards, Shōen’s female subjects affirm their wartime gender roles and closely align with prevailing discourses in the 1930s and 1940s that centred on cultural nationalism (73). Like much of her work, *Sudden Blast*



codifies beautiful women as figures of traditional Japan. When examined within the wider scope of Japan’s wartime artistic output, the painting reflects the many ways in which fascism operated as state ideology that paradoxically both rejected and embraced modernity (24).

Seemingly apolitical paintings are the focus of Asato Ikeda’s book *The Politics of Painting: Fascism and Japanese Art during the Second World War*. As Ikeda reveals, apolitical subject matter played a key role in contributing to the moral education of Japanese citizens during wartime in a way similar to how battle paintings were used to instill national pride (67). Seeking to reframe the study of non-militaristic paintings through the lens of fascism, Ikeda makes a significant contribution to scholarship on Japanese art in the twentieth century, bringing to light issues in the history of art that are often left unexamined. While there exists a substantial body of scholarly literature on topics in the history of modern art in Japan, most scholarship in English focuses exclusively on the pre- and post-war decades (for example, see Conant 1995; Foxwell 2015; Munro 1994; Rimer 2011; Tiampo 2011; Tomii 2016; Weston 2004; Weisenfeld 2002; and Winther-Tamaki 2012, among others). Further, the limited Japanese scholarship on wartime art focuses overwhelmingly on Western-style (*yōga*) War Campaign Record Paintings, whose subject matter is overtly political. Artists were commissioned