Making (the) Subject Matter: Illustration as interactive, collaborative practice*

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Abstract

Traditional models for operating as a commercial illustrator are being affected by a rapidly changing media landscape and a reduction in commissioning budgets. Illustration as a discipline can use this time of financial uncertainty and change to reflect upon related fields in the creative industries and as well as referring back to its own core values, skills and objectives.

In the context of fine art there have been a number of terms and practices discussed over the last decades that centre around social engagement and collaboration: Relational aesthetics (Nicolas Bourriaud), new genre public art (Suzanne Lacy), connective aesthetics (Suzy Gablik), dialogical aesthetics (Grant Kester). Similarly design has seen a variety of initiatives and organizations that focus on engaging with communities in order to improve people's lives in meaningful ways while taking into account complex social, political and environmental challenges.

Illustrators can use elements of these practices to expand their remit while continuing to take advantage of their core skill of giving visual form to externally given content for a particular audience. Taking responsibility for generating content through outward facing engagement while also having a stake in the methods of distribution opens up a wealth of opportunities that promise to be productive for the discipline.

Introduction

Illustration, as a profession, is currently faced with vast changes in its traditional client base: advertising and publishing clients are adapting to an increasingly digital and social media landscape. The global financial crisis has also dramatically affected advertising budgets (Dennis 2012). As a result conventional commissioning patterns for illustrators have been affected. Advertising agencies are reacting by expecting designers and illustrators to produce more work for reduced budgets (Dennis 2012), while publishers are yet to take full advantage of the visual potential of digital platforms such as illustrated book apps (Brocklehurst 2013). Illustrators meanwhile find themselves in a situation where their two traditional income streams are noticeably reduced.

Faced with these challenges, it is a good moment to examine related fields in the creative industries, to see which ideas and methodologies may inspire illustrators to expand and develop their practice.

In the context of fine art, a number of terms and practices have emerged over the last decades that center around social engagement and collaboration. They have been discussed and labeled in numerous ways, including: relational aesthetics (Nicolas Bourriaud 2002), new genre public art (Suzanne Lacy 1995), connective aesthetics (Suzy Gablik 1992), and dialogical aesthetics (Grant Kester 2004). Some of these forms of practice build on sensibilities and methodologies more commonly associated with illustration and design practice: empathetically assessing the needs of a community or audience, collaboratively developing a response to those needs and giving that response aesthetic form.

At the same time the world of design has seen a flourishing of initiatives and methodologies that emphasize social and ethical factors. Examples include enterprises such as the 'What Design Can Do' initiative in Amsterdam (www.whatdesigncando. nl), 'Design to Improve Life' in Copenhagen (www. designtoimprovelife.dk) and IDEO's 'Human Centered Design' (www.hcdconnect.org). These new fields of design have been called 'design thinking' (eg. Tim Brown 2009), 'social design' (eg. Jocelyn Bailey 2012) or 'participatory design' (eg. Henry Sanoff 2006). While these initiatives and methodologies embody a variety of values and goals, they all share an emphasis on ethical, social and environmental considerations above aesthetic or commercial drivers.

Meanwhile the illustration industry has continued expanding individuals' practices to include self-initiated work, exhibitions in gallery contexts and sale of prints and objects (canvas bags, zines, tea towels, toys, etc.) at least in part to make up for the lack of traditional commissions. In the UK, the biggest and best known manifestation of this trend is the 'Pick Me Up' fair at Somerset House – now in it's fourth successive year, where the work is labeled 'graphic art' and the majority of it is for sale. Pick Me Up was famously criticized by Lawrence Zeegen in the March 2012 issue of Creative Review magazine, in which he provocatively asks whether the work is anything more than 'eye candy' and 'mere nothingness,' describing it as a symptom of an inward-looking discipline 'unable to peer over the fence at a world outside its own garden' (Zeegen 2012).

The conclusion to be drawn from the existence of Pick Me Up and similar events and sales-outlets is that there is a great willingness to create and an enormous surplus of energy amongst the contemporary illustration community that is not being exhausted by traditional commissions.

But couldn't this energy be channeled into other directions, too? Indeed, the discipline is already witnessing some emerging practices such as illustrated 'reportage' journalism and innovative educational platforms such as House of Illustration's 'Picture It' program. The alternative proposed in this article is of illustration as a dialogical, socially engaged practice, in which content is generated through dialogue and engagement with communities or individuals.

Image on previous page: Luise Vormittag working with a participant in one of the waiting areas of The Royal London Hospital. Part of 'The Most Powerful Cabinet in Whitechapel' (2012).

RELATIONAL, DIALOGICAL, CONNECTIVE:
A SURVEY OF FINE ART PRACTICES

The world of fine art has produced some interesting models of practice – two examples of which are now examined.

 Rikrit Tiravanija, born in Argentina to Thai parents, is known for constructing hybrid installations: socially inclusive environments in art-establishment contexts, often accompanied by the preparation and consumption of Thai food. These are communicative situations in which Tiravanija aims to erode distinctions between the institutional and social space, as well as between artist and viewer. The involvement of the audience is the main focus of the work, which is often accompanied by a rhetoric of democracy and emancipation[1]. The relationships and the lived moment constitute the work of art, the food acts as a 'social lubricant', a tool, to bring about the atmosphere of conviviality.

Untitled (Tomorrow is another day) (1996) was produced at the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany. It saw the artist reconstructing a full sized replica of his New York apartment and making it available to the public 24 hours a day. People used it to come together, cook, eat, take baths, and rest (Kittelmann, 1996).

Tiravanija's practice has been celebrated by the art world and general public alike and is cited as one of the most prominent examples in Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2004).

A second interesting model of practice is provided by Suzanne Lacy, a performance artist, academic and educator, who coined the term 'new genre public art'. Her work developed in the context of 1970s West Coast feminist performance art and is partially based on the idea of practice as a healing process: not only for the artist themselves but also for members of the audience (Lacy 2011). Her work generally revolves around interactions with groups on social questions, often relating to the women's movement and she frequently blurs the boundaries between activism, art, pedagogical practice and curation.

Lacy's best-known piece, *The Crystal Quilt*, was produced in Minneapolis between 1985 and 1987. She describes this piece as both 'social strategy' as well as a performance piece (Lacy 2012). Over a three-year period Lacy worked with a group of 400 to 500 volunteers – all women over the age of 55 – and engaged them in 'sculpted conversations' framed around key questions regarding their present and future lives as older women (Lacy 2012). The piece culminated in a performance on Mother's Day 1987, in a commercial center in Minneapolis, where 430 women dressed in black sat around tables unfolding the table cloths to reveal colours, coordinating their hand positions to evoke the idea of quilt making. Fifteen of the women went on to organize leadership training programs for older women after the event.

These are just two examples from an area of practice that is diverse and has prompted a range of different labels and contextualizations. There is however significant overlap in terms of how these kinds of work are discussed. Suzanne Lacy herself describes the terrain she calls 'new genre public art' as:

> […] working in a manner that resembles political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility. […] [This kind of art, that] communicates with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives, is based on engagement. (Lacy 1995: 19)

Writer and critic Grant Kester (2004) describes the field thus:

> These projects share a concern with the facilitation of dialogue and exchange. […] In these projects […] conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself. […] [These artists produce] provocative assumptions about the relationship between art and the broader social and political world and about the kind of knowledge that aesthetic experience is capable of producing. (Kester 2004: 8-9)

Other writers have described comparable practice using similar terms. The common themes are dialogue, intersubjective relations and various forms of social or political engagement.

When the discussion turns to methods of evaluating this type of practice problems become apparent. The main questions arising in these discussions are: Do you prioritize ethical over aesthetic criteria? Is a piece automatically laudable for it's particular political position or intention? (Lacy 1995: 32) Is an art project successful if it works on the level of social intervention even though it flounders on the level of art? (Bishop 2006: 180-181)

It appears that as soon as artists start making claims of their work having a direct impact on social or political issues they find themselves confronted with a dilemma. The modernist maxim of art's detachment from society comes to the fore, a key point being that art should stay autonomous and to a degree unreadable, in order to resist cooption by political or economic forces[2]. Greenberg discusses this stance in 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' by analyzing how art's retreat from society is internally mirrored as the retreat from subject matter and how this in turn has estranged a significant proportion of art's potential audience. He regards this move, although somewhat problematic, as necessary for the survival of 'high' culture (Greenberg 1939 in Harrison, Charles & Wood (Eds.) 1992).

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For example: '[…] this unique combination of art and life offered an impressive experience of togetherness for everybody. The art-space lost its institutional function and finally turned into a free social space.' (Kittelmann, 1996, no page number given).

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See Grant Kester's analysis of the art world's reaction to Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1993-1994) for an insightful analysis of what elements contribute to a work being deemed successful within a modernist tradition. (Kester, 2004, pp.17-25.).

Critic Claire Bishop has been particularly vocal in highlighting reoccurring dilemmas in evaluating socially engaged practice (see Bishop 2004, 2006, 2012). She criticizes artists that draw heavily on the tradition of political activism and the intellectual trends of identity politics such as 'respect for the other, recognition of difference, and an inflexible mode of political correctness.' (Bishop 2004: 181) Her concern is that in prioritizing ethical and social values over 'aesthetic criteria'[3], socially engaged practices rely on ideals of the Christian 'good soul' and self-sacrifice. They relinquish art's capacity to generate discomfort and frustration, and to remain contradictory in order to question the status quo – a set of ideas about art's function derived from 20th century avant-garde movements. Socially engaged practices, she believes, often result in pieces that overemphasize the feel-good factor of social-harmony. For Bishop, this represents an altogether unsatisfactory outcome. She concludes that trying to apply social as well as aesthetic judgments in one and the same project represents an impasse impossible to bridge (see Bishop 2004, 2006).

It is striking that, while these relational, dialogical or socially engaged practices might represent innovative aspects in fine art practice, some of the methodologies commonly employed are very similar to those of design disciplines. These include:

- An awareness of the audience and their sociopolitical background
- Considerations as to how and under what circumstances people will actively engage with the work
- Collaborative models of production as opposed to single authorship
- Intentionality – the overt desire to achieve a specific aim

All of these elements are well-established components of a designer's approach, and, for that matter, an illustrator's. A designer tends to factor the audience into their work. A 'relational' element – thinking about how to capture and engage an audience – is always present from the beginning. A designer's practice is often collaborative from the outset: not only is there considerable external input (the brief, the client's feedback, revisions), but work is often produced as part of a team or studio. Illustrators share many of those working practices.

The designer (and illustrator) also avoids some of the tricky problems of evaluation that present themselves in the fine art context. Broadly speaking, they are used to evaluating a project both in terms of effectiveness ('How well does this piece of work achieve its stated aims?') and aesthetics ('How elegantly does it do this?').

DESIGN: HUMAN CENTERED AND SOCIAL

Cheryl Heller, program director of Design for Social Innovation at SVA, New York, has suggested that designers should not think of the finished design, the poster, the logo, as the point in itself – but should instead keep asking: "What will we accomplish with this?" (Heller 2012). This question shifts design's focus from aesthetics and problem solving to potential impact. Indeed she is echoing a sentiment that is currently being brought to the fore by a variety of initiatives and organizations in the design world: IDEO's HCD toolkit, the annual 'What Design Can Do' conference in Amsterdam, 'INDEX: Design to Improve Life' awards in Denmark, and the newly created 'White Pencil' D&AD award in London that seeks to award creative ideas 'that change the world for the better' (D&AD 2012). There are now a range of approaches, 'social design', 'design to improve life', 'design thinking' and 'human centered design': that focus on the potential of design to improve people's lives in meaningful ways while taking into account complex social, political and environmental challenges.

Kigge Hvid, co-founder and CEO of INDEX; Design to Improve Life talks about the challenges she attempts to address through her organization:

> In today's world, the most important question for designers is not how to design things, but what to design. […] Good design can no longer be assessed by its form and function alone. Instead good design should be focused on addressing the form, the impact and the context in which the design will be used and produced. (Hvig cited in Van der Laken 2012: 14-17)

The *What Design Can Do* publication sums up the goals of the organization:

> The conference is about the impact of design. […] How design can bring the world further, […] how design can help people. […] What almost all speakers have in common was a genuine interest in real people, in their needs and demands. Their work starts by listening to and looking at people to find out what they really want.[…]
> (Van der Laken 2012: 90)

How do these initiatives differ, and how are they similar, to the kind of fine art work discussed above? They share the buzzwords 'social' and 'community' – but is there a genuine connection?

The link is an outward facing practice that has a strong element of actual engagement with a particular community of people as part of the process. But with most projects that have grown out of a design background 'social engagement' is not the final outcome or the focus of the project, as is the case with many practices that are grouped together by Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics', and exemplified in this article by Rikrit Tiravanija. Designers use engagement as an initial phase in their design practice. They are focused on proposing a solution, usually in a challenging sociopolitical or environmentally precarious context that will improve the living conditions of a specific community. While Bishop criticizes the desire to 'do good' in the context of fine art as potentially problematic this criticism can't hold for design, a discipline that often defines itself by its ability to solve problems.

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Bishop uses the term 'aesthetic' here to signify 'belonging to the art world'. (Bishop 2004, 2006)

An example of this working method is IDEO's 'Human Centered Design Toolkit', which suggest a simple project structure: hear, create, deliver. (IDEO 2012). The social engagement ('hear') is only part of the project. The design team continues to work with the results of the initial engagement phase attempting to address a particular problem. According to the IDEO website this toolkit 'has led to innovations such as the HeartStart defibrillator, CleanWell natural antibacterial products, and the Blood Donor System for the Red Cross—all of which have enhanced the lives of millions of people.' (IDEO 2012)

Proximity Design, an agency based in Yangon, Myanmar, has put these principles into practice. Through in-depth primary research the needs of rural communities are assessed, resulting in the development of projects and services that directly improve the lives of people in the communities. Projects can include financial services, farming-related projects (such as irrigation systems) or infrastructure systems. Proximity co-founder Debbie Aung-Din Taylor explains why their work is different from the traditional aid model.

> Having good design is all about being close to your customers. Our products and services are designed to improve their lives on a daily basis, help them be more productive and earn better incomes. In order to do that we have to look for ways to spend a lot of time with them, to observe them, to see how they live and to have in-depth conversations with them. […] It's about having a close relationship with people you are trying to help, and that means a relationship of trust, a relationship based on empathy, not sympathy. […] Human centered design is a participatory approach. You are designing for people you are intimate with. (Taylor 2013)

So what strategies might be available to illustrators at this juncture, where the economic downturn has brought fee erosion and a dwindling number of commissions? Is seeking to produce, exhibit and sell self-initiated work (exemplified by Pick Me Up) the only solution[4]?

ILLUSTRATION: AN EXPANDED PERSPECTIVE

I will now introduce two projects of my own (undertaken as 'Container' with my colleagues Nicola Carter and Patricia Niven) that attempt to expand the discipline of illustration in a way that reflects some of the ideas discussed above. Both projects were commissioned and financed by VitalArts, an independently funded UK National Health Service associated arts charity that works to support the wellbeing of patients and staff.

In *Throw Caution to the Wind* (2011–12), the brief was to deliver a project that engaged elderly patients in the orthopaedic ward of the Royal London Hospital and the chemotherapy ward at St Bartholomew's Hospital. We responded with a series of semi-structured conversations that were designed to guide patients to narrate an event or a period in their life that they remembered as invigorating. We spent 30-60 min with each patient, and recorded our conversations. Later we transcribed and edited their stories and illustrated them – using drawing, photography, set design, or a mixture of techniques – collating all the spoken transcripts and images in a small booklet. In addition to sending a copy to all contributors this booklet was distributed free to new patients in the two hospitals via the tea trolley. These new patients were invited to write to us with their adventures – which they did. After a certain period we selected a mixture of the old and new stories and created accompanying three-dimensional illustrations,

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This brief survey of contemporary practices emphasizing social engagement has been restricted to the last three decades. Historically, one could mention practices like Alan Kaprow's 'Activities' and Joseph Beuys' 'Social Sculpture', which can be interpreted as precedents to 'relational aesthetics'. Similarly for designers the idea of focusing their attention on their immediate community and their needs is not new. Ken Garland's 'First Things First' manifesto (1964) and Sheila de Bretteville's graphic design and pedagogic practice work during the 1970s are but two examples of a rich historical lineage.
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Above:
'Throw Caution to the Wind' (2011–2012), by Container (Nicola Carter, Patricia Niven & Luise Vormittag). Booklet designed by Jessie Price.

which now form permanent exhibits in the new Royal London Hospital building.

A second project, *The Most Powerful Cabinet in Whitechapel* (2012), consisted of a series of activities with staff and patients that culminated in a permanent piece installed in the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. In this case the brief was to engage people in the hospital's waiting areas with a creative activity.

We responded with a project that involved a mobile environment reminiscent of a living room that we transported around the hospital in a way that evoked the idea of a traveling circus – an old trolley with furniture and boxes piled on top of it, more furniture strapped to our backs and my colleague Nicola Carter and myself wearing coordinated 'superpower' costumes. Moving around the hospital and entering waiting areas in this way generated immediate attention and once the space had been set up people were invited to join us in a conversation about their special talents – their 'superpowers'. We then went through the materials we had brought with the patients and looked for ways of visualizing or symbolizing these 'powers'. The pictures and objects made together with patients were labeled and collected in the cabinet. Over time, the cabinet started to fill, and this too became a talking point for patients and staff. The cabinet with all its contents is now a permanent exhibit at the Royal London Hospital.

Right:
'The Most Powerful Cabinet in Whitechapel' (2012), event in various waiting areas of The Royal London Hospital, which resulted in the permanent display of the cabinet containing the collaboratively produced object-'illustraions' on site.

While these projects were produced under particular conditions in and for a health care environment, a similar methodology could be used in a variety of settings catering to a broad range of communities. What makes this kind of work promising for the discipline of illustration, is a twofold expansion of the illustrator's remit and project range. Illustrators continue to use their core skills: visualizing content in order to communicate with a specific audience. Additionally they take responsibility for generating content through outward facing engagement with community, while also having a stake in the methods of distribution.

In traditional editorial or advertising commissions neither content generation nor distribution is the responsibility of the illustrator. Including these areas in a projects' scope provides higher levels of control over the illustrator's own practice as well as a wealth of new creative considerations and challenges.

By conceiving a project holistically there is a shift from only considering the actual image, its technique, composition, narrativity, expression etc, and a whole set of additional questions is brought into play: How was the content generated? Whose interests are being served? Who are the stakeholders? Who contributed? How did they contribute? How did this affect the image making process? How was the content edited and utilized? How does the end product operate? What form does it take? How is it distributed? How does this relate to the brief, the stakeholders, and the contributors? What is the overall internal logic of the project?

Other illustrators taking on social or political themes in their practice have responded by depicting the issue with which they have aligned themselves. The goal is to shock and raise awareness. Sue Coe's work on abattoirs or her *Aids portfolio* are good examples of this type of work, presenting us with disturbing images of people or animals experiencing extreme hardship. This form of practice can be associated more closely with journalism than the practices discussed in this article: it is inherently problem focused, rather than proposing an alternative or embodying an intervention.

Mirroring the current trajectory of Container's practice is Mitch Miller's work. His impressive and highly ambitious project *Drawing Duke Street* (2012) saw him attempting to visually capture a stretch of the East Glaswegian road in his self-titled 'dialectograms': a hybrid visual form made up from elements of comic strips, diagrams and architectural drawings. Based on the ethnographic idea of the 'insider's view' he spent six weeks fully immersed in the community,

Below:
An example of Mitch Miller's 'dialectograms'.
'The Nivens from S(i)even (Red Road, Glasgow)' (2011)
A reconstruction of the family home occupied for over forty years by Bob Niven and his family. Pencil and ink on mountboard, 1189mm x 841mm.
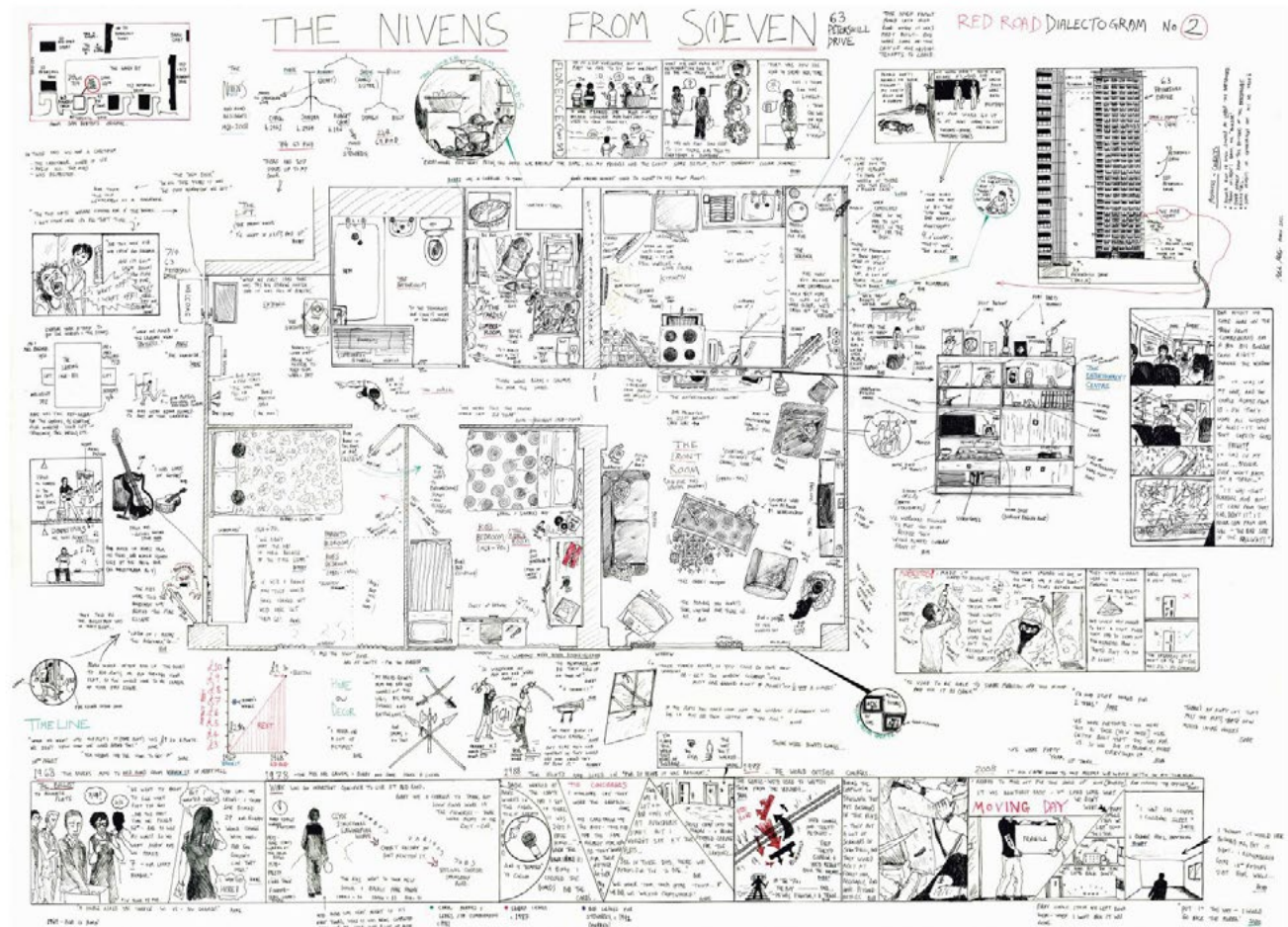
collecting testimony from local residents with a group of volunteers and translating the content into his drawings. He set up a temporary studio in a local art gallery, where he operated an open-house policy, inviting residents in to have tea and snacks with him. During these encounters residents told him stories about the street, which fed into the work. During Miller's residency the space took on some of the functions of a community center, with notices hung in the window, while also functioning as a studio, and, finally, reverting to its original function of a gallery at the end of the project.

In Miller's practice we can see a similar process of content generation to the one employed in the two projects described above. Due to the nature and scale of his project Miller had to largely rely on additional content collected with the help of volunteers, lending the research and engagement process a slightly different quality. While Miller's research was undoubtedly more in-depth and thorough, Container placed a stronger emphasis on engineering and sculpting playful encounters and considers these important elements of their practice.
In the fine art practices discussed earlier in this article the 'work' is situated in the exchange that takes place – not in any final object. The dialogue or the interaction constitutes the work. In a recent article for *Varoom* magazine, scholar Stephanie Black picks up on how this might lead to a situation where the work is missed (Black, 2012). It is possible that debris, having accumulated as a result of an interaction or dialogue might be mistaken for the work[5].

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She is referring here to an account by Claire Bishop of a disappointing and confusing experience when visiting a Tiravanija piece, when no activity was taking place (Bishop, 2006). The leftover rubbish could easily be mistaken for the actual work. Black points out that illustrators are more likely to present the audience with a carefully crafted object that won't allow for that kind of confusion or disappointment. (Black, 2012)

Designers, on the other hand, tend to use a dialogical engagement phase pragmatically in terms of the knowledge and the insights that can be drawn out of those encounters.

The projects described here lend this engagement phase hybrid status. It is a research and development phase, but it also has intrinsic value in itself. Being playful and thoughtful with this phase adds a valuable dimension to the projects and may also result in the generation of more unusual content than conventional research methods. In both Container's and Miller's projects described here the content is then used as the basis for the next phase: developing a visual outcome.

Producing an outcome and squarely taking responsibility for it also highlights the practitioner's authorial presence. This is more honest than claims of inclusivity and break down of institutional barriers. Whilst a practice such as Tiravanija's aims to construct frameworks for democratic engagement, the framework itself is authored by the artist under specific sociopolitical conditions and therefor cannot be construed as neutral.

Final Remarks

Although many would not think of the projects by Container and Miller discussed above as 'illustration' their contextualization in this way is important. This insistence might seem pedantic or unnecessary, but framing the work as illustration can achieve various aims. Firstly, it opens up new ideas of what the discipline can be. Despite superficially being quite far removed from traditional ideas of what illustration looks like, both Container's and Miller's projects were structured around the task of giving visual form to externally given content for a particular audience. If this is construed as the core principle of illustration practice, the result is a fertile ground for multiple possibilities in the discipline.

This contextualization can also help avoid some of the issues surrounding the debate of socially engaged practice in fine

art. Framing this work as illustration allows for a pragmatic sidestepping of those difficult debates around evaluation and purpose mentioned earlier and offers a different set of parameters that can be drawn up and put to use. Rather than being born out of a lineage of disruption, shock and opposition inherited from fine art avant-garde practices, illustrators can develop projects are based on the idea of visual communication. This generates a future trajectory that promises to be productive.

Fine art practices can be instructive in regards to the potential of an encounter – beyond the more sober 'field work' and 'research' conducted for many design projects that tend to borrow methods from anthropology and sociology. There is the possibility to be experimental and draw up imaginative frameworks for dialogue and exchange that have the potential to enrich illustrators' practice.

On the other hand illustrators can borrow from design's 'constructive mode of thinking' (Cross 1982). A concern for practicality, ingenuity, empathy and appropriateness constitute core values often referred to in design practice (Wood 1999, Cross 1982). Illustrators can pair this pragmatic approach with their propensity for imaginative visual flair. In recent years design has successfully expanded its remit by referring back to its core capabilities and applying these to new territories, giving birth to 'design thinking'. If illustrators focus on their practice in terms of core values, skills and objectives, rather than in purely pictorial terms, might it be possible develop something akin to 'illustration thinking'? (O'Reilly 2013)

Traditionally commercial illustrators often find themselves at the bottom of the 'food-chain': generally, by the time a project reaches them, the commissioner has little time, money and nerve for negotiation. Frequently illustrators are hired to fill a gap, usually under time pressure. This pressure might stimulate and heighten creativity in some scenarios, but it also puts the illustrator in a position of having little influence over the projects of which their work is a part. The alternative scenario – working on self-initiated projects and producing work for sale at pop up shops or events like Pick Me Up, does not suffer

drawbacks from hierarchical project structures, but it has its own set of shortcomings. While this model is certainly fruitful for some practitioners it doesn't offer much support or foster engagement. Illustrators carry the risk of investing time and money in their projects, with no guaranteed financial outcome or career gain. This type of work also has a tendency to be insular, as highlighted so vociferously by Zeegen (2012).

There is the possibility to build an expanded practice: by scrutinizing related fields in the creative industries and simultaneously by reflecting on, discussing and referring back to illustration's core values, skills and objectives. If these are construed as lending visual form to externally given content for the benefit of a particular audience, this opens up questions of how content is arrived at and how the resulting work is to be distributed. Both those questions open rich possibilities for the discipline to engage in the world 'beyond its own garden'.

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