

Issue 3
July 2023

Colouring in 'The Past'

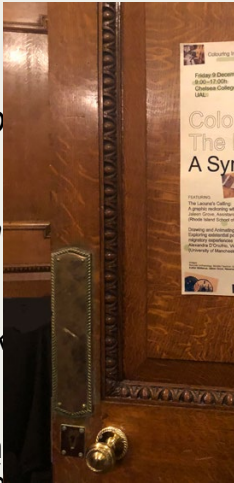
A research project by
Stephanie Black and
Luise Vormittag

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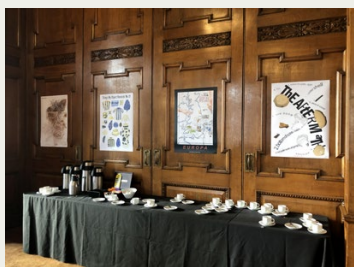
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Introduction

What are productive illustrative strategies to unearth, activate and reposition our relationship to the past? Stephanie Black and Luise Vormittag reflect on a wealth of ideas and approaches.

This issue of *Colouring In* is the result of an extraordinarily rich and engaging symposium that took place on 9 December 2022 at the University of the Arts London, hosted and funded by the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Arts Design School. The day was framed by two keynote presentations — by Assistant Professor of Illustration Jaleen Grove (RISD, USA) and visual anthropologist Alexandra D’Onofrio (University of Manchester). Additionally there was a plethora of panels, as well as asynchronous video panels and a poster exhibition by illustration students from both Camberwell College of Arts and Kingston School of Art.

We want to express our profound gratitude to all the people who gave presentations and proposed a nuanced set of ideas on illustration and the past. This PDF publication contains the written-up versions of the many engaging talks that were delivered on that day, and we hope you find their intertwining of

IMAGE TOP LEFT
Colouring In: The Past symposium at Chelsea College of Arts on 9 Dec 2022

IMAGE TOP RIGHT
Students Phoebe Gitsham (UAL) and Chris Allen (KSA) introduce the poster exhibition at the symposium

IMAGE MIDDLE
Four of the students' posters at the symposium

IMAGE BOTTOM LEFT
Anushka Tay presents her work at the symposium

IMAGE
Artists' impression
of Jaleen Grove
Timepiece (Raven),
2022, see p. 22

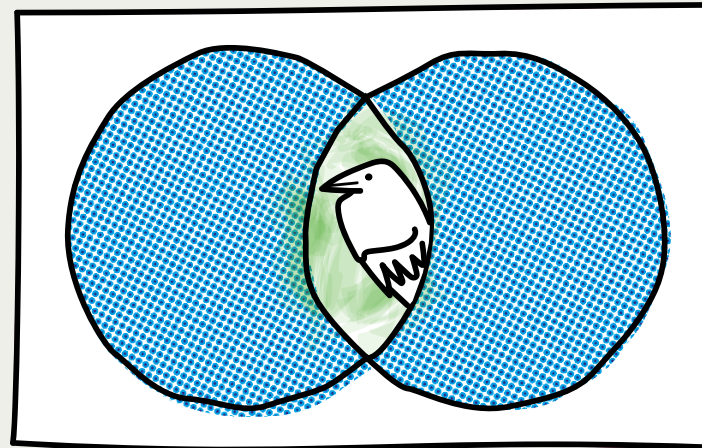
creative practice and thought as compelling as we do. We are also extremely thankful to our chairs — Mireille Fauchon, Rachel Gannon, Serena Katt, John Miers and Nanette Hoogslag who framed the presentations with their own ideas and perspectives. Additionally we want to extend our gratitude to all the people working behind the scenes to make this event possible: Valeria Rocca, Rory Wynn, Fae Sharples, as well as the Chelsea estates team and catering team were instrumental to the success of the event. The audience, brimming with questions and comments, contributed to a lively atmosphere. It was truly energising to be in the room with so many like-minded people, who are as interested as us in illustration and its potential to act as a critical intervention to global debates.

In this introduction we do not need to repeat the ideas that can be found in the numerous contributions in the following pages of this PDF, the respective authors make their points with a superabundance of eloquence and persuasiveness. What follows in this piece therefore are our reflections on some of the themes we noticed emerging through the accumulation of these numerous perspectives. We decided to cluster our discussions on illustration and the past around four ideas: Illustration as a conjuring act, the opportunities afforded by reappraising historical narratives from the vantage point of the present, illustrative methods for articulating non-linear temporal constellations, and lastly illustration's own histories of representation.

As usual, we are interested in what illustrations and illustrators do with these ideas, how they present and materialise them, but also how they overlap with or diverge from other methods in other fields.

The prize-winning historical novelist Hilary Mantel suggests that “to retrieve history we need rigour, integrity, unsparing devotion and an impulse to scepticism” (Mantel 2017). We are delighted to report that we found our contributing illustrators to possess all of these qualities — and more.

Illustration as a conjuring act



What are the possibilities for illustration practice to imaginatively (re)construct worlds and lives beyond

our immediate reach? In her humorous account on the tribulations of archival research, prominent British historian Carolyn Steedman offhandedly quips: “There is the great, brown, slow-moving strandless river of Everything, and then there is its tiny flotsam that has ended up in the record office you are at work in. Your craft is to conjure a social system from a nutmeg grater, and your competence in that was established long ago” (2001:18). A historian’s competence for conjuring the past is one thing, but what kind of competence can illustrators bring to the task of reconstructing forgotten or otherwise absent histories? What techniques can we use for conjuring?

Jaleen Grove proposes that in essence “an illustration is a theory of what something is or could be” (p.17) and suggests that therefore “conjuring is the imaginative act at the heart of illustration”. In her illustrative work-in-progress *Timepieces*, discussed in detail in her keynote address at the symposium (pp. 18–22), she uses the conjuring power of illustration to help us orient ourselves towards more hopeful futures. In her work the hand-rendered illustration stands in contrast to the indexical qualities of old photographs and graphic memorabilia, that remain tethered to troubling colonial histories.

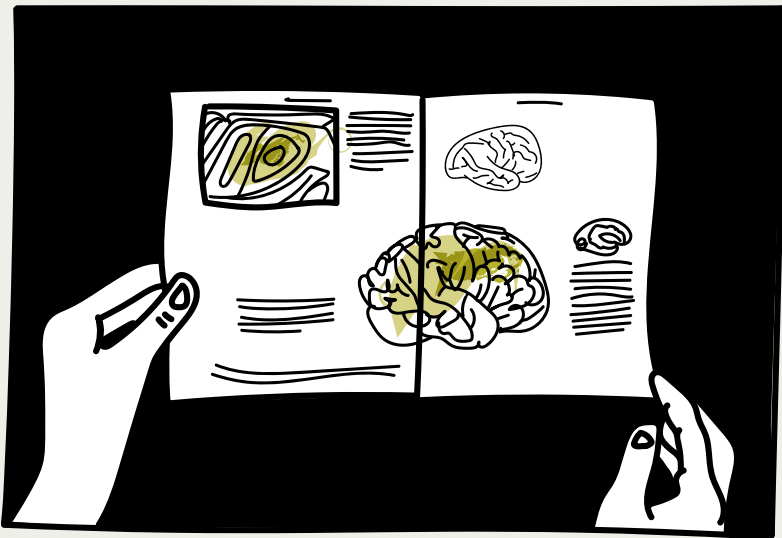
While Grove’s work is oriented towards conjuring better futures, how might we imaginatively conjure the past? Steedman’s quote above eloquently

reminds us why historians need to do this in the first place: What we have in our various archives and record offices, connects us to only a tiny fraction of past lives and experiences. How might we fill in the gaps without riding roughshod over the complexities of past people’s lives?

Rachel Emily Taylor, Catherine Anyango Grünwald and Sharon Kivland made that one of the key questions they addressed in their panel “Empathy and the Past”. They collectively interrogate the possibilities of empathy across intervals of time, where the imaginative reconstruction of another person’s experience becomes one of the key requirements for recovering historical lives (pp. 70–84). Cultural anthropologist Aleida Assmann reminds us that empathy is a relatively new term and focus of research. While modernity had introduced the figure of the “impartial spectator”, our era seems to have rediscovered the empathic subject (Assmann & Detmers 2016:3). “Empathy appears as a key term in a number of previously unconnected disciplines including sociobiology, psychology, and history, where scholars have only recently started using empathy as a medium for understanding” (ibid).

Empathy certainly also plays a central role in Mireille Fauchon’s illustrative practice. Her work in response to the archival records of Croydon suffragette Katie Gliddon (1883–1967) presents an empathetic and embodied affiliation with a historical subject (see

summary by Serena Katt pp. 49–52). Fauchon stages an imaginary conversation with Gliddon, where actions in the present work to conjure the experiences and motivations of the historic suffragette: the breaking of glass, the close attention given to female allyship, the reading aloud of Gliddon’s words close to the place where they were first written. Fauchon’s illustrative work captures and documents this process, while also allowing space for Fauchon’s own contemporary experiences of life in Croydon to form part of a trans-historical assemblage.



Empathy, however, also has its limits, may that be because we withhold empathy due to deliberate disregard or simply lack of interest (Assmann &

Detmers 2016:9)^[1]. Another obstacle for the possibility of empathising in a meaningful way with historical figures arises when there is simply too little to go on in the archives. Countless groups and individuals have historically not been deemed worthy of recording, and as a consequence we lack documents that give adequate testament to their lives and experiences. In these scenarios prominent academic Saidiya Hartman proposes the conjuring power of “critical fabulation” — a method that “elaborates, augments, transposes, and breaks open archival documents” (2019:xiv) — strategies that are also used in so-called “postmemorial” practices (discussed below). Illustrator Caitlin McLoughlin (not present at symposium) builds on Hartman’s methods in her artist’s book *The Yellow Wallpaper* (McLoughlin 2022). Working with a piece of autobiographically inspired, feminist fiction written in 1892, McLoughlin assembled images that shed light on the social context and constraints under which the author presumably worked. McLoughlin describes how she “imagined the process as climbing inside the story and pushing outwards” (McLoughlin 2022:221). She argues that illustration “can borrow the principles of fiction to explore ideas and imagine realities, and [...] this can be applied [...] to uncover or reveal previously untold stories or challenge existing narratives” (ibid:218).

In contrast, Rachel Emily Taylor arrives at a different proposal (pp. 70–74): In her article she discusses her practice-led illustration research

[1] It is also worth noting that empathy does not automatically result in concern for the other. To illustrate this philosopher Martha Nussbaum proposes the example of the torturer, who is acutely aware of the suffering they are inflicting “without the slightest compassion” (Nussbaum 2001:329)

IMAGE
Artists’ impression of
Caitlin McLoughlin
*The Yellow
Wallpaper*, year
unknown

in London's Foundling Museum, where she worked with contemporary children to conjure up imaginary historical foundlings. Looking back over the portraits the participating children produced under her guidance she reflects on the drawn pencil sketches, comparing them with the "finished" coloured in paintings. This prompts her to ask whether attempts at "colouring in" the past might sometimes be actually blotting out that what we are seeking to conjure. Perhaps, she suggests, illustrators should not colour in, but use our work to outline the empty spaces in the record, drawing attention to what is missing?^[2]

Kimberly Ellen Hall's work on discarded objects takes Taylor's position a step further. Her work can be seen as an outright refusal to illustratively conjure the past. During her residency at a recycling centre in Philadelphia she drew groupings of thrown-away objects belonging to specific people. We know nothing about those individuals, and however tempting it might seem to speculate about their previous owners, Hall steadfastly maintains her focus on the objects themselves (p.87–88). Conjuring stories about these objects and their imagined owners remains an open invitation to the audience viewing the work. Gary Spicer's practice also concentrates on the present, while gesturing towards devastating histories. His drawings at his great-grandparents' grave site do not attempt to reconstruct historical lives, but circle in on Spicer's own, affective response to the place (pp. 89–90).

These projects suggest that we should sometimes refrain from attempting to resurrect past lives, accept their transience, and focus instead on what has been bequeathed to us.

Presentism embraced

How do our contemporary concerns and experiences colour (in?) our accounts of the past? What are the possibilities and pitfalls of hindsight? Hilary Mantel proposes that "the writer of history is always a walking anachronism, a displaced person, using today's techniques to try to know things about yesterday that yesterday didn't know itself. He [sic] must try to work authentically, hearing the words of the past, but communicating in a language the present understands" (Mantel 2017). But how do we integrate "the authentic words of the past" with our present-day concerns? Historian Lynn Hunt warns us of the pitfalls of presentism, our tendency to interpret the past in terms of today's values and interests: "Presentism, at its worst, encourages a kind of moral complacency and self-congratulation. Interpreting the past in terms of present concerns usually leads us to find ourselves morally superior" (Hunt 2022).

While being mindful of this tendency of temporal superiority, considered acts of reappraisal can be important ethical interventions into institutional omissions and blindspots. What can we see, say

[2] See also comics scholar Kate Polak's take on the possibilities of graphically highlighting the distance and unavailability of historical people's life experiences that can never fully be known, rather than trying to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes (Polak 2017:181)

and show today, that we were, for any multitude of reasons, unable to in the past? Illustrator Sharpay Chenyuè Yuán's project *Pearl's Daughters* on Chinese female factory workers during the 1980s (pp. 60–69) is indeed shaped by her present-day concerns: she highlights the women's individuality and their emotional experiences, both of which are decidedly contemporary values. Graphically this idea of individuality and not always fitting in is reflected in the sometimes awkward gestures the women have to perform on the assembly line that force them to protrude beyond the confines of the frame they are placed in on the page.

Acts of reappraisal can also be performed through the reinterpretation of existing cultural artefacts and collections. Artist Fred Wilson's (not present at the symposium) seminal 1992 project *Mining the Museum* for example rearranged items belonging to Baltimore's *Maryland Historical Society* to dramatically challenge complacent historical narratives. In one potent juxtaposition he placed the museum's prized silverware alongside slave shackles he unearthed in their archives. Catherine Anyango Grünewald also works to adapt existing creations in her reinterpretation of historical texts, augmenting and challenging them through her illustrations. For example her illustrations for Sister Helen Prejean's *Dead Man Walking* (originally written in 1993) about the experiences of death row prisoners, present a timely corrective to the author's earlier blindspots by foregrounding black

histories and experiences of the US- American carceral system (pp. 75–81). Hindsight is here conceived as something that should be practised with care and consideration — not to flatter our own sense of superiority, but to revisit painful historical narratives that continue to impact our present.

Anyango Grünewald's work demonstrates how illustration can help us to foreground a traumatic past that continues to stain everyday experiences today. Her graphic narratives of racially motivated violence and systemic oppression frequently show characters being forced out of the panel, thereby casting the panel's frame as the corrupt and exclusionary border of historical acceptability. Occasionally her images break down all together under the weight of trauma. Anyango Grünewald thereby reminds us that illustration can also be used to learn about unspeakable histories, where images can articulate what lies beyond the realms of language.

This point was underscored by Iqbal Singh, regional communities partnerships manager at the National Archives. He explains that when working with archival material “the arts can capture something that a ‘straight’ reading will not allow” (see summary by Serena Katt pp. 49–52). The projects he described in his talk, contemporary post-colonial reexaminations of archival records, are a far cry from the self-congratulatory haughtiness Hunt warns us about. Iqbal maintains that engaging with the past should

go beyond simple commemoration. As a result some of this nuanced and in-depth engagement can prompt painful emotional experiences in the present, so much so that Singh has been offering the support of a psychotherapist on some of his community projects.

Far from being a way of distancing ourselves from the supposed moral debasements of the past, these examples demonstrate how attempts to unpick and rearticulate our complex histories serve us to better understand our fractured and jagged present. We remember and look back for the sake of the living after all, to help us make sense of where we are today.

Temporal constellations

“[Walter Benjamin] called on us to stop ‘telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary’ and instead grasp ‘the constellation’ which the present forms with the past, in order to forge the revolutionary future.” (Groom 2013)

Through earlier PDFs we have established that one of illustration’s strengths is being able to synthesise disparate perspectives, which echoes Benjamin’s concept of non-linear temporal constellations (Benjamin 1968). The practices introduced during the symposium exemplified ways of conceptualising time beyond the linear tripartite model of past-present-future. Time was conceptualised as fluid

(or “durational” to use Henri Bergson’s term) and non-linear, with the past informing, overlapping and erupting into the present. For example, past and present were intertwined and fed into the construction of future identity for participants in Alex D’Onofrio’s film *It was Tomorrow* (2018) (see pp. 37–48). In terms of the forms used to capture or elicit a temporal experience, the complexity of time was also reflected in the production methods used to convey subject matter concerned with the past, as seen in Gareth Brookes’ artist’s book (or concertina comic) *Times Tables* (see pp. 53–55). The book represents a durational sense of time, with none of the usual structural impediments to the flow of time between images. By combining water-soluble pencils with a good soaking and burnishing, Brookes’ images from the past stain the present and future, similar to the Freudian concept of the “return of the repressed” as referenced in Sharon Kivland’s contribution (pp. 81–84).

Esther McManus introduced the concept of asynchrony through the work of mediaeval scholar Carolyn Dinshaw, who is concerned with how we conceptualise time when studying the past and its texts. Asynchronous times are described as “different time frames or temporal systems colliding in a single moment of now” by Dinshaw (2012: 5), who explains that where the mediaeval texts she studies are concerned, there are many overlapping systems of time, e.g. “agrarian, genealogical, sacral or biblical, and historical”. This is recognised and

responded to by McManus in her comic *Between Friends*, where she maps constellations of times. Her engagement with historical feminist publishing, such as Sheba Feminist Press intersects with her own present, bringing Sheba's past and her present together on the page. The strategy of visually foregrounding her engagement with the archival materials makes McManus' intervention in the writing of history visible, whilst also keeping the different perspectives she encountered distinct in order to maintain the complexity and polyvocality of an archival source.

Dinshaw introduces Bruno Latour and his critique of the "modernist settlement", in particular its emphasis on progress through linear time, and the veneer of objectivity introduced by the disinterested professional observing facts external to their engagement with them.

As Kevin P. Donovan (Lecturer in the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh) explains, Latour seeks to shift our understanding of knowledge from "matters of fact" to "matters of concern" to bring our attention to the many roles and factors at play in the production of knowledge, thereby introducing "ethical and political considerations to domains where they were previously excluded" (Donovan 2014: 881). This concern also runs through McManus's book, as she brings recognition to histories not usually recognised by the value systems and history-writing practices of their historical context.

By contrast, McManus makes the production of knowledge visible by showing her role in the process of synthesising archival materials into a history of sorts. As a distancing device this reminds us (as viewers) of the constructedness of the page, enabling a different kind of synthesis compared to historical fiction. It asks that the viewer maintain a critical distance from the subject matter, as comics scholar *Kate Polak suggests*: "The gutter is a kind of reminder that this is a representation and you are involved in creating this representation in your mind as you read it. The gutter creates a space of possibility, where people are reminded that they are a part of the artwork too" which can have the effect of asking us to consider our own role in relation to it (Berlatsky 2018).

Our symposium participants demonstrated their immersion within their subject matter, echoing Latour's "matters of concern". This overlaps with Dinshaw's interest in the role of the amateur, in particular the root of the word (Latin, then French: one who loves) lying in their coming "from positions of affect and attachment, from desires to build another kind of world" (2012: 6). Here we do not claim that our symposium participants are amateurs working outside of the professional realm, but that what is intriguing about some of the practices described is that, like the amateur, they are "operating outside of regimes of detachment governed by uniform, measured temporality" (2012: 5). For example the monetised time of the professional is disrupted and repurposed by Catherine Anyango Grünwald in her

Last Seen images, where time spent on repetitive layering of graphite leads to ruptures in the paper surface. The concept of value being accorded to time spent working is repurposed in a powerful gesture of emotional labour, which ultimately leads to the breakdown of the image, instead of the economical value afforded by “productive” labour.

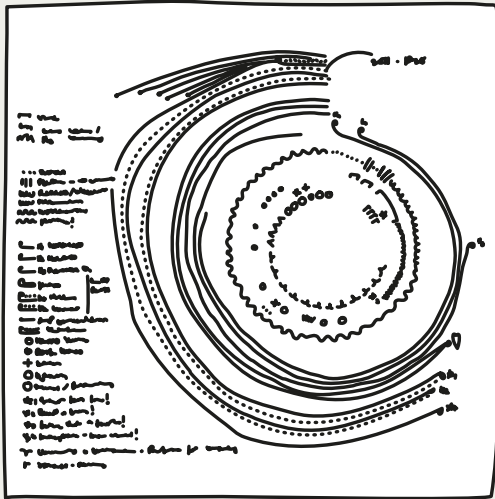
Deliberately apportioning attention and therefore value to under-told stories is a recurring theme throughout the symposium presentations, echoing Theodore Adorno’s comments on Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (Beiner 1984: 425–6) that we should turn our focus to the vanquished and to those events and actors that fall outside of the linear historical narrative of victory and defeat. But with personal investment in the subject matter comes an ethical dimension, in that the emotional work involved in engaging with difficult pasts may have repercussions for those engaging with it. This reminds us of Iqbal Singh’s mention of the involvement of psychotherapists on a current project. Acknowledging the affective potential of engaging with the past in such a way evokes Dinshaw’s amateur again, and gives projects like *Last Seen* their impetus in calling for change, reminding us of Benjamin’s revolutionary drive.

Illustration, in the form of research-led, long-form personalised projects of the kind we have celebrated with *Colouring In*, seems to have negotiated a balance of these aspects of the amateur with the

professional demands of economic concerns and career progression. The illustration professionals seen here make their role in pursuing and producing knowledge visible, thereby avoiding the mystification of the “expert” modern professional (Dinshaw 2012:21, referencing Latour). Interestingly, traditional models of professional time in illustration don’t quite accommodate this way of working. But these are all professional projects in different ways, whether its designer-maker self publishing, or illustrators acting as commissioned workshop facilitators, or swapping cultural capital for academic capital. Illustration is moving beyond limiting versions of what constitutes “professional” practice in this sense.

The challenge of representing the complex conceptions of time outlined above has been met in intriguing ways by the practitioners encountered in this issue. However, for most of our contributors, Benjamin’s constellations are not visualised as a web, as the term might suggest. Rather, we saw collections, layers, and time-based media. For example in Yue Mao and Ksenia Kopalova’s composite images the tessellation of memory and imagination through fragments of images enables them to visualise and make explicit the messiness and co-constructed nature of memory and history written on this basis. As with McManus’s book, in this instance illustration shows us the slipperiness of tackling history and memory, as well as visually demarcating the different perspectives that contribute to our understanding of the past by combining

photographic and drawn imagery. This structural solution allows the makers to acknowledge the gaps in knowledge, and the contributions made by different voices to our understanding of the past.



Current Visual Communication student at the University of Bergen Ena Johanna Rathgeb (not present at symposium) builds on parallels between the present and the past to inform her auto-ethnographic project based on her grandfather's diary and archival research. Visual representations of present-day refugees and the harmful narratives these create provide a contemporary need for her foray into the past. Her investigation of the visual means to convey notions of home, memory and migration show style to be responsive (driven by an

openness to the material) and take in pencil drawings for their vulnerability and hand-drawn infographics to map the complexity of the material. The role of drawing archival resources is described by comics scholar Hillary Chute in relation to intimacy, in a similarly family-led story. In Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* she describes how the redrawing of family documents allows Bechdel "the intimacy of touching her father through drawing him, while suggesting that the form of comics crucially retains the insolvable gaps of family history" (2010: 176).

Chute's point links the architecture of the work with Rachel Emily Taylor's concern for highlighting the gaps in our knowledge of the past, rather than filling them. As she states: "In its comics form we see the materialisation of epistemological problems. The book does not seek to preserve the past as it was, as its archival obsession might suggest, but rather to circulate ideas about the past with gaps fully intact" (Chute 2010:181).

These "gaps" are a productive part of illustrative projects concerned with "postmemory", where the second- or third-generation maker actively works with the ambiguity, uncertainty and emotional distance from a topic. The concept is outlined by academic Marianne Hirsch and reflects the wave of second and third generation projects such as Rathgeb's which examine complex stories of family history from periods such as the second world war. Hirsch explains that "Postmemory" describes the

IMAGE
Artists' impression
of Ena Johanna
Rathgeb's
*Visualization of my
grandfather's life
story* (sketchbook
excerpt), 2023

relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before — to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (Hirsch, no date). Projects are therefore rooted in visual artefacts such as family photos and documents, which necessarily raises questions about responsibility to these artefacts and their owners (as Grove explores with such honesty) and how to respond through visual exploratory methods.

Embracing the gaps and distance of postmemorial projects allows illustrators a more questioning approach. This is often reflected in outcomes that offer a nuanced appraisal of positions and accounts, which prompt us to question our position in the present. Further examples include Louise Bell’s PhD research (a postmemorial exploration of her Grandfather’s experiences of pre and post-war Plymouth), and Professor Hilde Kramer’s illuminating the Non-Representable research project. In her pioneering international and multidisciplinary project based in Norway, Kramer and colleagues explore such questions through a diverse range of research methods focusing on how illustration as object, artist’s book, performance and sound can engage with the past. By doing so, Kramer seeks to move away from clichés associated with picturing the Holocaust and find other pictorial strategies and forms to present what may be considered non-representable.

Illustration’s own past

Illustration’s own past arose as a topic in Jaleen Grove’s paper, who highlighted the role of historic illustration in shaping our views and, consequently, our present. The use of problematic historical (and contemporary, for that matter) imagery in the training of AI image-generating services is commented upon by writer and broadcaster Tracey Spicer (not present at the symposium), who asks us to question the biases inherent within a system based on existing content. For illustration, the problem of image-generation is also one of reduction; illustrative images based on past illustrations leaves little room for breaking out of existing tropes and styles. It is in danger of emptying the critical impulse that Dinshaw writes of out of scraped images, which is contrary to the practices surveyed here, where image-makers have taken pains to adopt a critical stance in relation to the past.

That images originally brimming with vigorous political critique can be dulled and flattened when they are recycled uncritically is a phenomenon with echoes of Fredric Jameson’s interpretation of “pastiche” (Jameson 1985). He explained that pastiche is a counterpart to parody that serves commercial ends at the expense of political ones. But the curious aspect of pastiche (for us) is its link with comedy, leading us to consider why humour is not used as a critical strategy in the practices mentioned here. In its late 20th/early 21st century manifestation as the combination of a “humorous”

IMAGE
Artists' impression of
Alison Bechdel's *Fun
Home*, 2006

caption (relating to gin, perhaps) accompanying “retro” imagery (such as an advertising image of a 1950s housewife), it lacked a critical edge. But we can see its more common and incisive use in genres such as graphic memoir, raising the question of whether the issue with humour is that it may appear disrespectful of subject matter that practitioners do not own as their experience. Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* has been dissected in this regard by Judith Kegan Gardiner (Professor Emerita in English, Gender and Women’s Studies), who explores the combination of tragedy and comedy in Bechdel’s autobiographical work. Gardiner argues that it is Bechdel’s combination of the gendered traditions of tragedy (male) and comedy (female) that allow Bechdel to reformulate literary genres. As Gardiner states, the result is that Bechdel transforms both modes by “making them more self-referential and more indeterminate at the same time that she shapes them to fit the lives of an expanding array of nonnormative people” (2011: 206). Therefore it seems that humour is a powerful tool when calibrated to the subject matter, but how this is judged requires sensitivity to one’s own position in relation to that content.

The criticality of the practices surveyed in this introductory article demonstrate a productive response to the situation presented by AI image generation at this point. We are fully aware of the potential of our thoughts on this to appear woefully anachronistic in hindsight, given the

rapidly developing technology underpinning the phenomenon and the unknown opportunities that future iterations will bring. With these caveats in place, at this moment it seems appropriate to consider how we might reappraise what illustration can do that avoids becoming stuck in an endless loop of producing visual fodder with little development of tropes, attitudes, forms or disciplinary challenges.

The examples discussed here demonstrate a great emphasis on processes of enquiry and production, fostering a deep engagement with subject matter and its broader contexts and how this is discussed through visual means. With a greater emphasis on these modes of enquiry we can establish more rigorous, reflexive and questioning practices, resulting in complicated and in-depth projects that contribute to our understanding of our pasts and ask us to interpret and understand our present, and consider what we want to aim for in the future.



Conclusion

Throughout this survey of themes emerging from the symposium presentations and related practices the careful balancing act performed by illustrators is evident. They have demonstrated how fraught conjuring and conjecture are when negotiating a visual response to the past and its materials. This has been executed with a clear sense of responsibility to the subject matter, and to shaping the future. Such considerations also arose in relation to the use of empathy as a strategy, as seen in the suggestion of *not* colouring in the past. These mark a move to casting presentism as a more caring position, seeking to highlight and address imbalances rooted in the past, in light of present inequalities. This has been achieved by highlighting omissions and blind spots, for example.

Illustrative practices surveyed have also worked to reveal the production of knowledge, pulling back the curtain to reveal the wizard behind. In doing so, they tug at Latour's modernist settlement, instead being located within a healthy seam of critical practices outside the modern, with a capacity for self-reflexivity that is brought into the construction of images and objects.

We saw illustration's own past interrogated, representing a critical appraisal of how to look backwards and also to look forwards to what the future of professional practice might be.

We propose that looking forwards allows us to greet new additions to the image-making toolkit as an opportunity to recognise what illustration can do, the processes and forms that can't be replicated by AI. As in previous decades, we are confident that illustration can reflect and reposition itself in light of existential challenges. On the basis of what we have collected in this PDF, we propose that illustrators can deploy a range of methods of enquiry and meaningful production processes that will enable them to steer a course for the discipline into new and exciting territory.

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