Education and Illustration: Methods, Models and Paradigms

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Editorial

By Dr Mireille Fauchon and Rachel Gannon

We meet on zoom to discuss how to proceed with writing this introduction. This way of being together when working is now the convenient form. When we embarked on writing Illustration Research Methods (IRM) (Bloomsbury, 2021) in 2016, we either worked together or apart but seldom both at the same time. Today we sit at opposite ends of the same city in our respective homes, naturally we begin to reflect on the strangeness of that time which hindsight has managed to so powerfully obscure.

Four years of collaboration is an intense commitment. It seems trite to say, however much *has* changed since that first meeting at the cafe at The Whitechapel Cafe, when we decided we would write a book together about the processes at play within illustration practice. There is a 'feeling' when you know a project is going to be good and that feeling prevailed even though we encountered more change than we had ever previously known across the fullest spectrum of our lives. We have known death, birth, shifts in careers, the maturing of our friendship and the strength of our professional partnership as all familiar terrains transformed in the most extreme ways around us. In all respects IRM is a collaborative endeavour. As those who have heard or read us declare before will know, much of the theorising in IRM was informed by our peers and students.

Together

Collectivity, collaboration and co-creation is nothing new to illustrators. We know how to think, learn and create together. We embarked on writing the book intuitively using trusted approaches, we compiled endless lists, read, called out to our community, sought advice and listened as people so generously shared with us the minutiae of their practices, articulating the deeply tacit twists and turns in the conception and actualising of ideas. As interpreting animals, illustrators are skillful researchers. We frequently read, debate and discuss together and yet writing still remains a largely insular affair.

We approached writing no differently to any other collaborative project, musing over meaning, questioning one another, crafting language together. Collaboration requires great trust and vulnerability, it is an offering of what you know and an acceptance of your limitations. We are different people, two minds and bodies informed by different experiences, biographies and knowledge. IRM was an exercise in coalescing not just our own encounters and observations but also an acknowledgement of the influence of our community of practice in developing illustration as a creative communication discipline.

Sustainable Futures

Books take time to come into being. By the time of publication we had sat with the ideas for some time, attempting to articulate the methods, mechanisms and behaviors we recognised and in doing so theorising how they could be applied and to what aim beyond what was familiar to us in this moment. These propositions now live, breathe and develop. The Illustration Research network so generously offered this opportunity through inviting us to organise and curate the The 11th Illustration Research conference. Leaping from the ideas presented in our text we wanted to use the IR platform, the most established in our field, to draw together educators and students alike to prove the most pressing questions for IR; *what now, what next?* The chimera-like quality of illustration practice and high demand for places on undergraduate and postgraduate illustration courses raises important questions regarding how we educate the future generation of illustrators. What knowledge, competencies and skills are needed for practices to thrive and be sustainable? Where, how and for what can illustration be applied? And fundamentally how can this be known to those who are able to employ, collaborate with and commission outside of knowing academic communities? Students are grossly indebted, precarity and insecurity surround us all. As educators there are moral and ethical obligations; close inspection, criticality, reflexivity and action research are urgent.

Set against the backdrop of the terrifying pandemic and with Black Lives Matter campaigning rising to the fore, the theme of the conference took on a critical poignancy which could not be untangled from the urgencies of global politics. We are further along now, but sadly, there is still much disarray at planetary, global, national levels. Illustration students are canny political beings, sensitive and responsive to one another and the environments they inhabit. Increasingly the concerns pervading their work are those of identity, inclusivity, care and justice. The event was hosted by Kingston School of Art at Kingston University in February 2021 and became a live and performative platform capturing a snapshot of a moment in the development of illustration practice.

Critical friends

It was an instinctive and easy decision made early on to formalise student presence within the conference with a dedicated forum. No critical conversation about the future, let alone illustration pedagogy could, or should be, conducted without them. Ideas reign supreme in that liminal space before post conceived boundaries curtail dreaming for fear of personal and professional sustainability. Much work discussed in IRM was made by those very early in their careers.

On receiving abstracts to the CFP it became apparent the quality of proposals submitted by students were on par with professional academics, they deserved equal platforming.
In order to reflect and acknowledge the student body the organising committee formally employed two student researchers, Rosy-May Schofield and Stella Chapman who played a pivotal role in the conception, organisation and delivery of the event. We sought their advice to ensure the student involved was not tokenistic. Determined to ensure the student involvement was not tokenistic we sought and deferred to their advice.

Connectedness

In the early meetings with the production team at Kingston University we had just come through the first eased Summer of the pandemic. We were tentatively starting to re-engage with one another and hoped for a hybrid affair which incorporated some collective physical presence. It's incredible to think now that we thought there was some chance we might be able to be together. At that point we were still in the throes of the pandemic, without the benefit of hindsight we had no knowledge of what was to come. How much longer would we have to wait for a return to a familiar situation? But things do not return unchanged. The event was set to be a historic first set within a multitude of firsts. The first wholly online event of its scale hosted at Kingston School of Arts, the first exclusively online Illustration Research symposium.

As we have now become so familiar with online meetings, conferences and talks, it is impossible to recall the trepidation we felt in organizing and hosting such an event. The technology was new to us and yet we were clear that our priority was to ensure an engaging and enjoyable event which could sustain a high level of discussion. Being amongst the very few dedicated academic illustration research events, the IR conferences are known for their conviviality, welcoming and bringing together an extended community of practice.

We employed a designer and web developer Olly Bromham, then a recent alumni of KSA, to design and develop a website that would be the conference - housing access to the talks, an exhibition and poster presentations. Microsoft Teams was used to host the presentations with a combination of meetings and Live events. Audience participation was supported through the chat function during and after presentations and audio and/or visual audience participation during q&a sessions. Over 70 international academics, professional practitioners and recent graduates presented to an audience of

800+ delegates registered to attend the event, making this (we believe) the largest Illustration research gathering globally. This was due to the accessibility of the event, being online meant we could reduce barriers to attendance such as cost and accessibility; ticket prices were significantly lower than previous conferences and audiences could attend from the comfort of their own homes and workplaces.

The conference ran over two days, the keynote address on day one was Dr Catrin Morgan, Assistant Professor in Illustration at Parsons School of Design. The second was delivered by four recent graduates from the Royal College of Arts MA Visual Communication programme, Yuzhen Cai, Caitlin Kiely, Yimin Qiao, Eleanor Wemyss and chaired by Senior Tutor, Peter Nencini. This was a deliberate effort to create a non- hierarchical space which valued the expertise and experiences of those at all levels of their thinking and careers.

It was vital to us that the shift to online delivery would still not compromise the sense of collectivity that IR has always been able to foster. Having by that point explored other academic conferences as well as other creative events we deliberately reduced presentation times to allow more time for discussion. This is where the most lively and engaging content unfolds and we wanted to ensure that we didn't lose this in the shift to online. Unexpectedly the chat function produced a supportive, critical and para-narration of the event through the instantaneous response during the live presentations, something never afforded during in person sessions.

Listening back to the recorded panels, also a relatively recent novelty, allowed us to recognise and contemplate the difference forms of discourse enabled by the remote form.The tone of the conversation, the use of emotional and descriptive language to critically debate the ideas presented was striking and, we believe distinctive and to be recognised as belonging to our disciplinary culture.

We have often wondered whether the force and quality of those panel discussions, the message threads alive with commentary, conversations to be continued, as indeed some are in this issue, is due in some part, to our apartness.

Editorial Responsibility

When invited to edit this issue of the Journal of Illustration we understood we had been provided with a platform through which to publish. This is a powerful and privileged position, which we acknowledge with the greatest respect. We were clear that we needed to represent the ideas and voices that had supported us and informed the writing of IRM as well as our collective practices as educators and researchers.

We have thought carefully about the means through which to represent knowledge of illustration and have written of the suitability and meta potentials of illustration to ponder its own being. In IRM we acknowledged writing as an illustrative device and have considered this in the editing of this issue. In Dr Catrin Morgan's article and keynote address she discusses how platforms like Instagram and TicTok have become places where valuable knowledge can be shared about contemporary debates and issues but they cannot be considered as academic writing as the knowledge is not traceable in a way that meets academic standards. As editors of this issue we too are bound by the style guides presented by the journal and the conventions as to how academic writing (and therefore knowledge) should be presented. As Morgan points out, this serves to amplify some voices and science others.

In this issue we have attempted to address this problem by providing a space for different forms of knowledge, whilst acknowledging the restrictions inherent in academic publishing. Articles range from conventional essays to visual mappings of research, from scripted stories to critically reflective testimonies. They speak to how knowledge is constructed, displayed and connected; Cai, Keily, Qiao and Wemyss' co-authored article is designed to reference Padlet, the collaborative internet platform that they used to communicate and share ideas during the process of researching. Other articles are illustrative and diagramatic in form, such as Vincent Larkin's timeline that charts the lineages of management science and creative practice. Jhinuk Sarkar has authored her article by speaking it into a dictaphone, (an approach she makes explicit in her introduction), imbuing the writing with a particularly warm and inclusive tone. Whilst this is different from conventional academic writing, which has the tendency to be intentionally detached, aiming to convey an air of objectiveness, it is stylistically appropriate for its subject matter and communicates with rigour and integrity.

Being engaged in pedagogy critically compels us to be constantly creative and we advocate for creativity within the form of academic writing and see it as both relevant and appropriate to a subject and field such as illustration.

One simply can not change a component within the system or network without there being rippling effects. The introduction of new voices, forms of writing, and the subjects addressed in places leans away from the familiar content of an academic journal. We welcome these agitating interventions, these disturbances are productive and exciting. Things do and must change. We have felt no resistance to this but know change is challenging, uncomfortable even. Such systemic change requires us to question, turn over and inspect the very processes that make up the system.

In order for an article to be accepted to an academic journal it must 'pass' the critical eye of peer reviewers, those established in the field of knowledge and community of practice. This quality control measure aims to ensure that only rigorous, relevant and significant articles are published. Journal's use this process to maintain their academic credibility and therefore 'usefulness' for

researchers reading and referencing the articles. Peer reviewing as a task is time consuming and unpaid, it is therefore fulfilled by those contracted to undertake this work as part of their job, this is almost exclusively academic staff. It is considered a prestigious role within academia as it infers that you are an expert in your field. The structure of this system serves to conserve and perpetuate accepted forms of knowledge production and dissemination within a particular disciplinary field. If illustration research is to advance creatively it must be recognised that knowledge is held and represented in diverse forms. Paradigms shift occur when familiar discourses are no longer able to adequately interrogate the discipline. At this point we look to thinkers in other fields and disciplines who share the same concerns as us, and in doing so develop new concepts through which to understand and theorise illustration practices. As a creative communication discipline Illustration is multifarious in the way it performs; speaking across the commercial, applied, public and private domains. Illustration can operate with diverse intent because it strives to communicate and engage with others. It can represent diverse perspectives and render the most complex forms of knowledge accessible. Works of illustration are not static, they perform as cultural practices. They tell of the worlds they represent and of the position from which they have been produced. The conceptual tools required to critically examine illustration must be as sophisticated as the performance of the works. When the knowledge described in illustration research and practice speaks with the languages from other disciplines, sectors and fields our peers too will be equally diverse.

In writing of theoretical formations we turn to Meika Bal for guidance:

> 'I prefer to use concepts in the interdisciplinary field of the humanities. I am not against methods … I think methods are developed within disciplines and they can be very useful and productive. They can also become stultified and serve as blinders; they can make researchers passive, kill their creativity. That is, if you don't look to the side'. (Bal in Lutters, 2018, p.94)

As Bal advocates, we need to look sideways; reviewers and authors alike should be selected for the specific and distinct knowledge and experiences they hold. Systems would need to be altered so they may sit outside of the discipline or 'academia' altogether and our disciplinary understanding will be all the richer for it.

Constellations

Articles in this issue address the ways that illustration practice operates within academia; how it is learnt, taught, practised and researched. There is an inevitable focus on Higher Education and the Academy as this is often the author's immediate surroundings, but there are articles that address informal modes of learning, transferable pedagogic methods and primary educational settings. The authors describe themselves as educators, students, academics, researchers and practising illustrators

and visual artists; many drawing upon their experiences of both teaching and learning and describing moments where the two intersect. Some are affiliated with institutions (i.e employed as an academic or researcher) others describe themselves as practitioners or facilitators. The perspective here is global, spanning India, South Korea, the US, Sweden and the UK.

When describing how to build teaching communities, in her book Teaching to Transgress (1994), bell hooks says that 'to engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences' (p.130). We have found it productive to make connections between things, people and ideas that occupy different locations, mapping out commonality and shared concerns. The authors and articles selected for this journal are in conversation with each other.

Inclusive Education

Eilis Searson, Siddhi Gupta, Jen Franklin and Dr Rachel Emily Taylor's articles all speak about inclusive pedagogic practices and ask questions like who is illustration education for? What inclusive methodologies do we use to educate them? Who is included and who is excluded, both historically and in the contemporary moment? Eilis Searson's article 'Class Matters in Class Matters*',* takes the form of a script for a two-hander play about a working-class woman who builds a symbiotic relationship with their Open University tutor. It is an 'imagined sequel' to the 1978 film Educating Rita which Searson uses as a method to analyse her personal journey from working-class background to higher education studying Illustration. The conversation between these two characters exposes their co-dependencies as they attempt to understand their distinct positions within the practice of education and its potential to be an enriching and joyful experience. She writes in her own 'northern' (UK) dialect, providing a glossary of terms for the uninitiated, which makes us think about how much the 'voice of the author' is disregarded and signs of their cultural upbringing are lost when we conform to a singular form of academic writing.

Educating marginalised or underrepresented groups is the subject of Siddhi Gupta article, a case study of a project called the 'Kaakarm Curriculum'. Indian art education specifically is the landscape that Gupta is traversing, documenting her research through a series of pedagogic interventions and conversations with educators who work in low income private schools in Delhi, India. It proposes utilising teaching *through* illustration, recognising the disciplines inherent principles of interpretation, collaboration and sense-making as vital pedagogic tools. Illustration here is not only the subject of the research but is also used to document the project and communicate its intention, again challenging preconceived ideas of knowledge communication.

Jen Franklin and Rachel Emily Taylor write of 'Method Illustration', an experimental research practice they have introduced to their undergraduate curriculum inspired by Konstantin Stanislavski's performative preparation process of the same name. Students are asked to explore the content of their research project through direct experience; examples include working as a cattle rancher, a wig maker and a mushroom grower. This process provides students with the opportunity to become experts in their field, introducing non-hierarchical approaches to studio teaching. It presents research as the stuff of daily life, rather than an exclusive practice requiring training or experience.

In his article 'Joseph Beuys and Live Scribing: A Speculative Timeline' Vincent Larkin uses the timeline as a diagrammatic and dialogic device, allowing images and text to communicate. This is a study that makes links between UK graphic consultancy firm Scriberia and artist and educator Joseph Beuys with the intention of 'repositioning or appropriating elements from the wider cultural landscape to expand and interrogate the concept of illustration'. Both Scriberia and Beuys are both concerned with 'live scribing' or the 'social sculpture', a term coined by Beuys, as a method to educate, elucidate or build connections. This study is, as Larkin describs, 'seeking a thesis rather than proving one', offering up intriguing connections and equivalences that take us from proto-management theory to new-age counterculture of the 1970's.

Diverse Knowledges

> 'Elsa Barkley Brown reflecting on her own experience of teaching African American history in the US academy … draws upon Bettina Aptheker's concept of 'pivoting the centre' … allowing there to be many centres of experience creating a patchwork of realities rather than hierarchies and norms' (Pollock, 2010).

Documenting diverse knowledges and the visual representation of experiences are themes explored throughout many of the articles in this journal. Two authors in particular have explicitly made a case for using illustration to represent and disseminate the stories of those who have been disowned, erased or ignored by dominant cultures. Yeni Kim positions illustration as a participatory practice and investigates its effectiveness when utilised to preserve the intangible cultural heritage of the endangered South Korea communities of female free divers 'Jeju Haenyeo' and the distinctive language 'Jejueo'. UNESCO describes intangible cultural heritage as 'fragile' and emphasises how important it is in 'maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalisation' and urges us to find new ways of preserving and communicating the form of culture that is unfixed and immaterial. Understanding the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue and encourages us to respect other ways of life (UNESCO n.d.). Kim makes a compelling argument for the role images, and more specifically illustration, can play in tackling this global issue.

Hayfaa Chalabi is also interested in the role illustration can play in challenging or recontextualizing overlooked narratives or dominant stereotypes in her essay 'Refugees Welcome? Illustrative Storytelling to Challenge Apathy Towards Refugees'. Chalabi draws upon her own experiences and uses the figure of the refugee, whose image has been defined by mass media as faceless and subsumed by suffering, to exemplify the challenges of representing and visually telling other people's story. The essay is illustrated with images from her graphic novel *Refugees Welcome*, where two parallel narratives demonstrate different modes of storytelling; the first one of self-narrativization, the second taking a more journalistic approach. She states this project was an 'act of resistance', and enabled her to represent her own refugee narrative whilst also empowering others to do the same. In both of these practice based studies the authors usefully situate illustration as an emancipatory tool when used by and with others, capable of challenging representational norms.

Bodily Experiences

Articles by Dr Catrin Morgan and Jhinuk Sarkar discuss our presence as educators and illustrators and attend to our positioning physically, politically and socially. The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it new remote working practices for educators across all sectors and settings. Acknowledgement of our presence as physical beings particularly came to the fore at a point when we couldn't be in each other's presence. The paradox here was that whilst technology arguably made communication easier, giving immediate access to each other across vast distances, it made us more aware of ourselves and our bodies and their physical absence.

In Dr Catrin Morgan's article, 'Bodies in Spaces: Illustration at the University', she presents a series of ideas about illustration as a discipline in higher education based on her experiences teaching both in the US and UK. Drawing upon the writing of bell hooks and Sara Ahmed, Morgan brings attention to the physical presence our bodies have and the space they take up in University buildings as a way of discussing representation, belonging and failure. Jo Sordini's article also addresses failure, defining a set of queer methodologies for illustration by asking 'What does it mean to create images in a queer way?'. Morgan and Sordini both reference Jack Habalstam's book The Queer Art of Failure:

> 'Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world.' (2011: 2-3)

They do this to make a case for failure, forgetfulness, stupidity and misinterpretation as alternative approaches to image production because they disrupt and challenge dominant disciplinary structures and established forms of academic knowledge. Both authors describe how embracing failure can open up exciting possibilities by creating alternative or anti-disciplinary spaces and definitions, or by acknowledging the complexity we encounter when we attempt to represent something visually.

Illustration as a discipline has tended to focus heavily on the visual, which has led to research and pedagogic practices being reliant on ocular stimuli and visual analysis. Jhinuk Sarkar's article 'Why the smell of metal could shed a tear and other sensorial narratives....' asks what purposes our other bodily senses, smell, touch, hearing and taste, might serve, both in education and to communicate ideas through our illustration practices. At the beginning of Sarkar's article she tells the story of her parents emigration from Kolkata to the UK and her early life as a second-generation Indian woman growing up in Leicester. This familial history positions and contextualizes Sarkar and helps the reader understand why specific sensorial experiences evoke particular memories for her. We are encouraged to perform sensory explorations for ourselves, through a series of task Sarkar sets. Sarkar draws upon her experiences working with disabled artists, and advocates for Illustrative 'reporting tools' to include all of our senses framing this within the overarching theme of inclusivity.

Doing Illustration Research

> 'I think that close reading is an act that ignores the distinction between intellectual, sensitive and sensitive responding […] understanding is intellectual plus fantasy, imagination plus dreams and the senses.' (Bal in Lutters, 2018, p.78)

Our final set of articles looks specifically at research methodologies, critically describing the doing of illustration research each taking particular positions. Katie Jones-Barlow offers up 'Close Reading' as a methodological approach to visual historicising that has the capacity to shed light on overlooked or concealed histories. She underpins her discussion with queer feminist theories and analyses the work of two contemporary illustration practitioners who have visualised relationships between the past and the present. Caitlin McLoughlin's study also discusses the ways that illustration can be used to critically analyse historical texts;; both authors recognise illustrations' potential to challenge dominant narratives. McLoughlin presents a practice-based project she undertook during her undergraduate studies, an illustrated reader of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1892 feminist story The Yellow Wallpaper where she demonstrates how she used illustration to critically unpick the themes of this text whist seeking explanation and imagining possibilities. The experimental article 'Being Showing Doing' presents a conversation between four recent graduates of the MA Visual Communication course at the Royal College of Art: Yuzhen Cai, Caitlin Kiely, Yimin Qiao and Eleanor Wemyss. Formatted to reference the web platform used by its authors to collaboratively write the article, it provides insight into four distinct practices, each generously describing their individual research methodologies and reflecting on their interconnectedness. Gaining critical insight into the practices of current and recent graduates is vital. These voices will shape the future of illustration research and what will be understood of illustration practice. We look to them for guidance on where to go from here.

The way in which you arrive at the papers collated in this issue cannot be controlled by us. Despite this we have considered how they have been organised, how they speak with one another and who they may speak to. Should this editorial ever meet your gaze, we urge you to look beyond the paper that you may have specifically sought about and cast an eye over the collection, for these writers are truly visionary and innovative. The forms of writing we present here deviate from the formal academic conventions but they are none the less rigorous. They are inventive, imaginative and entirely appropriate as representations of illustration research. This publication articulates what we recognise as first amongst many firsts.

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Biographies

Dr Mireille Fauchon

Mireille Fauchon is an educator and researcher specialising in illustration, experimental communication and interdisciplinary design practices. Mireille's practice explores the use of illustration as a tool to explore socio-cultural narratives both past and present. Particular themes of interest include anecdotal storytelling and the informal preservation of history within sites of experience, particularly narratives deemed insignificant or inaccessible. Her PhD, awarded in 2020, presented an illustrative enquiry of the prison writings of the Croydon Suffragette Katie Gliddon, and their relation to current affairs. Mireille is currently lecturer in Interdisciplinary Image Practices on the B.A Illustration and Visual Media, University of the Arts London (LCC). Her book *Illustration Research Methods* (2001) co-authored with Rachel Gannon is published by Bloomsbury Academic.

Rachel Gannon

Rachel Gannon is an illustrator, educator, researcher and currently Associate Professor and Head of Department for Illustration Animation at Kingston University. Her interest in illustration disciplinary research methodologies and their potential for inter- and trans- disciplinary application, culminated in the text Illustration Research Methods (Bloomsbury Academic 2021) co-authored with Dr Mireille

Fauchon. Gannon's practice as an educator and researcher is informed by a successful 18-year professional illustration career and her articles and practice-based works have been published in the leading research and professional publications in this subject area: Journal of Illustration, Association of Illustrators Journal and Varoom Magazine.