September 30, 2014

* Illustration and Natural Science
  + 2 things:
    - 1. Adopting a period eye.
      * Step back in time, and look at the work through the context of the time.
      * Try to imagine seeing this as if you were in the time it would have originally been seen.
    - 2. “Forensic analysis”.
      * Look at what’s going on; critical visual detail. What’s actually happening in these images? Actually “see” what’s in front of you. What is “actually” there.
  + Swedish botanist, Carl Linneaus
    - A very important botanist for the history of science, and illustration. He developed taxonomies of botony. (Classifications of plants; how they are related to another.)
    - It’s a particular kind of observational illustration drawing. Very scientific. That mode of looking became incredibly important.
  + British Illustrator, 100 years later: Beatrix Potter
    - She’s a really famous children’s book writer and illustrator.
    - She was also a scientist, first and foremost; a scientist and botanist, but she was never allowed to be a biologist because she was a woman.
  + Superman comic of the 1950s.
  + Map of bird migrations. John Helmsely.
  + Potter’s books were so successful in part because they were so accurate.
  + A Persian miniature of a garden scene
  + 1860s optics scientific illustration
  + Japanese horticultural diary
  + Illustrations of migratory birds; highly stylized.
  + Chinese plants.
* Working on images:
  + Looking at this as a piece of evidence, what can we tell about the society who made this? Extrapolate as much as you can about their culture.
  + Jeremiah Bullfrog Beatrix Potter image:
    - A reproduction of a watercolour illustration on white paper. It depicts a scene of a pond, with lilypads and reeds, with a frog/toad/bullfrog leaping over it. Round.
    - The frog is dressed in a jacket carrying a basket and wearing small leather shoes. He holds a stick of grass.
    - Romantic view of animal life
    - Humanizing of animal figures
    - Fascination with worlds outside of human culture
    - Great attention to detail of the plants; fascination with the natural world
    - Silly: This comes from a race of sentient frog creatures and must depict a deity-like figure, or legendary hero, for the care put into it representation. Possibly represents a protector of travellers, or protector of ponds, which would be the primary habitat for frog people.
  + Linneaus drawing:
    - A flat piece of paper, rectangular. With writing across the top, twenty small illustrations arranged in a grid of 4x5, each one labelled with a letter. On the right side of the page a list of names are listed. At the top, written in latin, it introduces the images as a list of sexual organs of plants.
    - The drawings are ink, possibly engravings, and they show in exacting detail pistils and stamens and fruit/seeds of various plants.
    - Their knowledge is highly structured; attempts at ordering the world are being made, as each type of plant organ is divided into different classes.
    - Whoever created this work would have regarded science and education highly.

PRESENTATION: Group B: Natural Science

* A broad field: encompasses any illustration relating to the sciences. Astrology to biology. Chronicles changes to scientific thought.
* These illustrations are key to recording things unobservable to the naked eye (microorganisms, extinct creatures, hidden anatomy)
* Flora and Fauna area of natural history illustration will be the focus.
  + Animals are important for expression. They are interesting accessible subjects. Some artworks are fully realist, others are stylized, metaphorical, or simple.
  + IMG: Korea-Minhwa - Magpie and Tiger
    - Artists were common people going place to place. The paintings showed figures from folk mythology and scenes from everyday life.
    - The tiger and magpie is very common in Korean art.
  + IMG: Minhwa - Chicken on rice paper and canvas.
    - Still popular today. Exaggerated painting style and bright colours were indicative of the working class.
  + IMG: Minhwa - Dragon
    - Influenced by Chinese zodiac
  + Chinese animal zodiac is popular in several East Asian countries. The circle of animals is still popular today. Animals ascribe people’s personality. Illustration and folk painting were synonymous with their symbolic meaning. The public class used this art to pray for peace in their lives.
* IMG: Du-ryang, Kim - Scratching Dog
  + His animal drawings were popular because they looked alive and individual. His skills were used for spiritual work as well. His work is 3-dimensional. His work is a mix of eastern and western influences.
  + The dog has meaning, and it was drawn often in the period. Brings luck.
* IMG: Sang byeok, Byeon - Myojakdo
  + Painted cat’s behaviours and appearance with detail. One cat chases a bird up a tree, the other watches. His work is very naturalistic.
* IMG: Iwasaki Tsunemasa, Honzo zufu, vol 13, Red Bananas
  + Japanese plant illustrations were used by botanists to increase scientific knowledge of the world. Botanical illustration.
  + IMG: Autumn Chrysanthemums.
    - Illustrated in a book. Included comprehensive realistic sketches of nature. It is photo realistic and beautiful.
  + They also illustrated insects. This realistic illustration was a new way to depict the natural world in Japan.
  + IMG: Java sparrow and magnolia
  + This image is a great example of a flower and bird painting in the 19th century in Japan.
* Natural science illustration can be made in a number of ways. It can be used to display knowledge that we can’t actually see, and can change as our knowledge grows. It can be use to increase interest and sway opinions. Ex: Dinosaur illustration.
  + Illustrators have to guess what dinosaurs looked like based on the evidence.
  + The illustration can help to create interest about scientific discovery.
  + Evidence informs the illustrations, but the illustrations inform our understanding.
  + Oviraptor is very bird-like in its behaviour, but feathers were still not appropriate to include, despite evidence.
  + Sometimes the changes to canon can be very political and difficult to show; it took decades for Dinosaurs to be depicted with feathers because it was so different from public perception, despite evidence to the contrary.
* Contemporary natural history illustration:
  + May be seen as morbid of violent, but is informed by his upbringing in a rural area surrounded by hunters. Nychos, 2012
  + The Easter Rabbit, Nychos, 2014
* English bestiary, 1633-1717
  + Animals often considered imaginary and allegorical
* We + Muscles, Ben Giles, 2011-2014
  + Aesthetic takes precedence over scientific use. Shows possibilities rather than parameters of natural science illustration.
* Vladimir Stankovic, 1960-2012
  + Imaginary species depicted as old natural science illustrations
  + Children’s book appeal, but reminiscent of early natural scientist observations.
* The Giant Golden Book of Biology, Charley Harper
* Natural science illustration stems from a need to categorize.

Funny: That lion taxidermy made by someone who had never seen a live tiger before.

DISCUSSION:

* + - A reproduction of a watercolour illustration on white paper. It depicts a scene of a pond, with lily-pads and reeds, with a frog/toad/bullfrog leaping over it. Round.
    - The frog is dressed in a jacket carrying a basket and wearing small leather shoes. He holds a stick of grass.
    - Who what where when…? Why?
    - They are both images of nature.
    - The both look like romantic images of nature; though one is scientific (the sparrow/magnolia) and one is fantastical (the bullfrog).
    - Different definitions of nature.
  + Both depict animals in relationship to environment
  + One is being personified in a human way; one is naturalistic
  + Simplicity/accuracy is important in Eastern art, very flat, yet still 3-dimensional; in the western image, it is more fanciful, busier
  + One is static; one is full of movement
  + One values peace and calm, the other values action, story
  + One is meant for kids, one is meant for education/beauty purposes
  + One is more painterly, the other emphasizes contour/negative space
  + One is vignetted, one emphasizes negative space
  + Both at the level of the animal; one in a tree, one down at the surface of a pond
  + One has bolder colours one has a simpler palette.
  + One has a background, placed in context, one is a single subject, devoid of context
  + One depicts natural behaviour, one depicts personified story
  + Allegory is very clear for Japanese print; metaphysical cultural symbolism
  + Frog: Working class due to the dress
  + ⁃ Romantic view of animal life
    - Humanizing of animal figures
    - Fascination with worlds outside of human culture
    - Great attention to detail of the plants; fascination with the natural world
    - Silly: This comes from a race of sentient frog creatures and must depict a deity-like figure, or legendary hero, for the care put into it representation. Possibly represents a protector of travellers, or protector of ponds, which would be the primary habitat for frog people.
  + The bird is making eye contact; invades your privacy. It engages with you; is unrelenting. There is something ominous about that bird.
  + One shows fascination with worlds that are inaccessible or unknown to human experience
* Common themes: Nature, “the moment”, (Does nature mean the same thing to everybody in different times and places?), Allegory (symbolism), (how is the meaning deciphered?), metaphor,
* “Parsing an image”
* Structural components: composition, colour, media, POV (perspective; and why?), picture plane, style, rendering, quality of line, (What’s being said? How is it being said? To whom? From what context?)

Comic conventions:

* Subject… narrative… speech bubbles,
* Colour, image, text
* Image, text, colour
* Colour/value
* Part of a story, a moment in a narrative, left-to-right?
* Dialogue in bubbles with tails pointing to the mouth of the one speaking
* The text is a script; it doesn’t describe the action in the scene. Often it’s first person. It informs the narrative; it doesn’t explain it.
* Position of text; bubbles don’t block important elements. Explanative text is yellow; dialogue is white. The bubbles are placed in such an order as to easily be read in the proper sequence.
* Image needs to be clear; it might be seen in small scale, so it needs to read well.