Visualising Spaces: The Illustrated Map as a Mode of Communicating Fact, Fiction and Feeling


Text (A paper selected for VaroomLab Journal 4)
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Abstract

Communicating thoughts, facts and narratives through visual devices such as allegory or symbolism was fundamental to early map making and this remains the case with contemporary illustration. Drawing was employed then as a way of describing historic narratives (fact and folklore) through the convenience of a drawn symbol or character. The map creators were visionaries, depicting known discoveries and anticipating what existed beyond the agreed boundaries. As we now have photographic and virtual reality maps at our disposal, how can illustration develop the language of what a map is and can be? How can we break the rules of map design and yet still communicate the idea of a sense of place with the aim to inform, excite and/or educate the 'traveller'? As Illustrators we need to question the purpose of creating a 'map': what do we want to communicate and is representational image making the only way to present information of a location? Is creating a more personal interpretation a form of cartouche, reminiscent of elements within the Hereford Mappa Mundi and maps of Blaeu, and can this improve/hinder the communicative aspect of the map? Looking at a variety of historical and contemporary illustrated maps and artists (such as Grayson Perry), who track their journeys through drawing, both conventional journeys and emotional, I will aim to prove that the illustrated map is not mere decoration but is a visual language providing an allegorical response to tangible places and personal feelings.

Item Type: Article

Uncontrolled Keywords: illustrated maps, communication, contemporary illustration, map design

Subjects: N Fine Arts > N Visual arts (General) For photography, see TR
N Fine Arts > NC Drawing Design Illustration

Divisions: Academic Departments > Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts

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Visualizing Wildfires From Space. Today's image comes to us from NASA, and it shows aerosols around the world including those originating from volcanoes, desert dust, cloud cover, sea-salt – and of course, smoke. Here's the same image with labels, indicating black carbon on the west coast of the continent While terraforming is still a mixture of theory and science fiction at this point, we do know some of the major problems that have to be solved for attaining a habitable environment – and it will be interesting to see how plans around Mars develop as the prospect of colonization becomes more real. You need to live in a dome initially but over time you could terraform Mars to look like Earth and eventually walk around outside without anything on.