

Fine Art vs Illustration

Nia Jade Hopkins

Table of Contents

The broken family bond of Fine art and Illustration 3

Fine Art..... 4

Illustration 6

Who Does This? 10

Bibliography 15

List of figures 16

Three Key words:

Fine art

Illustration

Who does this?

The broken family bond of Fine art and Illustration

There is a stigma surrounding illustration from the perspective of fine art. Fine art artists believe that illustrative work is not creative and that fine art should be the definition for true art, holding a purist view on the matter. In this paper we delve into this topic and discover why this is their view as well as the validity of their beliefs. This paper will look at both illustration and fine art and examine where their paths cross. For my proposal I will create a narrative driven artist book where an artist falls into their own painting. The character in this project must explore the land their painting exists in and must escape it before the paint dries. It is here I intend to explore both fine art and illustrative styles and ideas using techniques from their respective movements. I will do this to showcase how both forms of art are no different from each other when looking at them from a broader perspective. To do this I will research how to use these techniques and how illustration and fine art create narrative and how to use metaphor to imply ideas and themes. I will also research into world building in order to create a believable world of paint, that draws interest to viewers.

Crisp line art can work against that, lock you in to a sort of coloring book mentality. So I work with bigger shapes, more loosely, a little more painterly. That way I can adjust more easily as I go when the client wants something changed. I always work from broad/vague to specific.

(CDR & Kole, 2017)

Fine Art

Illustration and fine art both share a history in that both share an ancestor as shown in the sixth edition of *History of Graphic Design*. Here it is stated that art can be dated back to cave painting as humanoids would use artwork as a primitive form of written communication. They write about a three million year old cave painting near Lake Turkana in Kenya that shows a stone being sharpened into a tool. This displays that images were used to communicate ideas and or instructions. (Meggs & Purvis, 2016)

In the introduction of *Illustration: a visual history* Steven Heller and Seymore Chwast write about how illustration is seen as worthless in the eyes of fine artists. Both authors disagree with this notion, writing about how illustration and fine art share an origin in cave painting in the same manner that Meggs wrote. They go on to claim that fine art in itself is not as holy as it claims to be, implying that the religious paintings and iconography of the past can be considered illustration as they project the idea or thought of someone other than the artist. Berger writes how paintings are subjective and how art has changed from being a symbol of status amongst the elites to being reproducible and more affordable allowing anyone to own artwork (Berger. 1972). Eden Gallery defines fine art as works of art such as Painting, Architecture, Sculpture, Music, Poetry, Performing Arts and Photography. Fine art is also called high art and illustration is categorised along with other forms of medium as low arts. Eden says the difference lies in its use as fine or high art is made for its aesthetic alone and is enjoyed by the elites and rich of society while lower arts are more commercial. (Monopoly et al., 2021)

The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses the language for what purpose. This touches upon questions of copyright for reproduction, the ownership of our presses and publishers, the total policy of public art galleries and museums. As usually presented, there are narrow professional matters.

-(Berger. (1972)

This however, means that more people are now able to own artwork, opening the market to a wider audience and this generating a higher interest in artists to create more work that can appeal to this growing audience.

Not all fine arts are without narrative, while illustration takes a more direct method of telling a story fine art relies on metaphor, such is the case for Leonardo De Vinci. He uses food to represent aspects of religion in the last supper, as an example of this is Judas who is painted having knocked over a salt cellar. At the time of painting the superstitious believed that spilling salt was a bad omen as there was a shortage. As it is Judas who has spilt the salt we are told not to trust him as in religious texts he betrayed Jesus (Das, 2017).



(Fig1)

Narrative art is a part of illustration as depicted above it is also found in fine art. Tate agrees that narrative can be seen in historical fine artworks depicting religious beliefs, historical events and giving literacy a visual. Victorian narrative paintings show the day-to-day life of people. These became popular from the seventeenth century onwards. (Tate 1998)

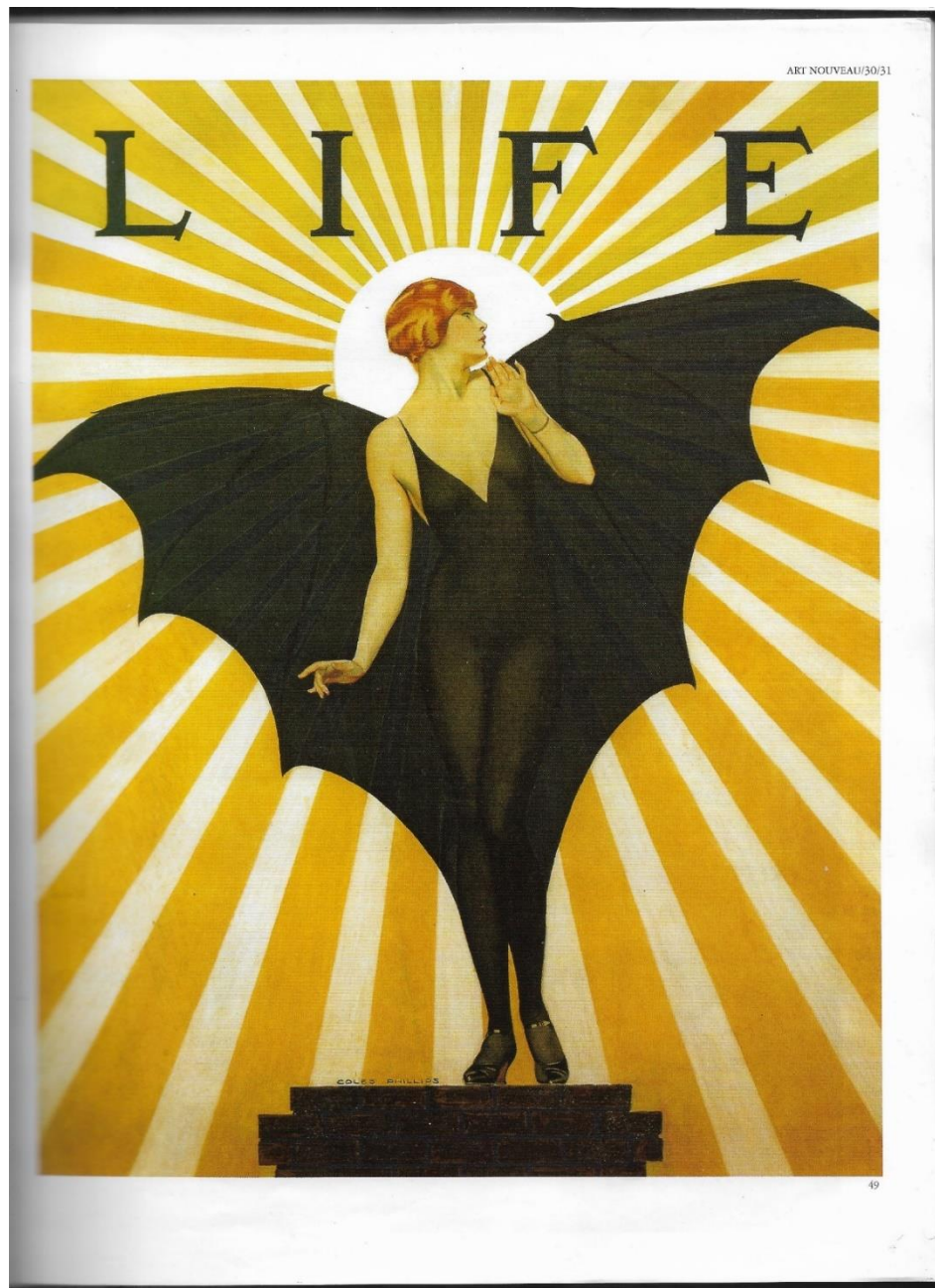
Illustration also uses metaphor; this can be seen prominently in Fantasy Illustrations. It is here illustrators use animals and the female form to tell the stories of mythology and fantasy, using metaphor in a way that cross paths with surrealism. Both can be very dreamlike and explore the ideas of parallel worlds they juxtapose realism with the impossible to create the absurd this is called Magic Realism. Surrealism as an art movement was never meant to inspire such illustrators in the way that it did. It was founded by André Breton in his publication *The Surrealist Manifesto* as a response to the political nature of Dada and Expressionism. It was an explorative way of visualising the inner workings of the mind as it slept as well as a protest to fine art as it broke all the known rules. (Heller & Chwast, 2008)

Surrealism, abstract expressionism and Cubism have provided illustrators with immeasurable influence regarding the nature of imagery, exemplified by the expressive application of colour and form that marries elements of realism with abstraction. There is also distortion and juxtaposition of positional elements to create illusory and dreamlike interpretations presenting in enigmatic a thought-provoking commentaries, identity's and promotions.
(Male, 2021)

Illustration

Getting ahead in illustration takes commitment, personality and talent it is unlikely that an illustrator lacking in any one of these areas will pick up commissions and[sic], toughest of all still be working in five year's time. Developing a personal visual language, getting to grips of materials and understanding the in and outs of the industry is only part of the story, to succeed [sic].you need some insider - info and you're holding it in your hands. (Zeegen, 2005)

Unlike traditional fine art, illustration moves with the trends. It draws on prior knowledge of work to create new unique pieces that can be marketed. Each era of illustration is different due to this. An example of which was Art Nouveau which took inspiration from Byzantine art and Pre-Raphaelite art (Heller & Chwast, 2008).



(Fig2)

In fine art each piece of work is meant to be unique and can have meaning should the artist desire.

While illustration is commercial art that is intended to be reproduced and sold multiple times, each work has meaning that is dependent on the client of the illustrator. An article on the Eden Gallery website also comments on how the writer believes that illustration is a part of fine art as both share the same origins and use the same materials again mentioning the cave paintings.

They also speak of artists who have done both fine art and commercial art specifically naming Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein (Benharrouche, 2022 Eden Gallery).

Andy Warhol faced the judgmental gaze of the fine art world as his work became more commercialised. He was one of the first artists to break the standard of traditional art alongside Roy Lichtenstein (whom he had no prior knowledge of existing until publishing himself) by creating more visually illustrative art piece and exhibiting it in the same spaces of fine art. He made the viewer question the value of art and ask why he decided to paint things such as soup cans (Danto, 2009).



(Fig3)

Illustration is un-pure and tainted, at least that's what it seems to be in the eyes of a fine artist.

The painter who illustrates is suspect. The illustrator who tries to find a gallery is tainted. The Fine Arts world does not want illustrators in its club. And when art critics want to punish a painter in a review, they called paintings "illustrations" all painters know the word "illustration" is the kiss of death.

(Heller & Arisman, 2000)

Illustration today exists in all media and is printed on almost anything. In other words, there are more opportunities for illustrators than there are fine artists currently and thanks to the internet it can reach a much wider audience. As the ways of viewing illustrations evolved so did illustrators.

(Dugald Stermer, Matt Soar, Bruce Wands as cited in Heller & Arisman, 2000)

During a visit to a record shop recently what could be discovered are multiple records using more traditional artwork as cover art alongside more two dimensional illustrated pieces. Whilst they can all be called illustrations as the intended use of this artwork is commercial its clear to see the elements of fine art used in these records, both fine art and illustration it seems are at use here. A popular movement in fine art that is used in cover art is surrealism.



(Fig4)

Zeegan writes about how illustration can be used as cover art for bands such as the Beatles. He goes into how the illustrations of the covers evolved just as the environment of famous bands had, such as taking inspiration from the psychedelic drugs that were consumed in the eighties. (Zeegan, L. (2005)

Who Does This?

Keith Haring felt as though art should be easily assessable. This is why he chose to graffiti public spaces. He decided to take his work into train stations after seeing an advertisement that had been painted over in black, seeing the space he fought and lost the urge to draw on it in chalk.



(Fig5)

Haring always saw himself as a fine artist. MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) and other American galleries disagreed as his visual style was more illustrative. Haring was upset by this because he held the same belief at the beginning of his art career as he did his later art career, that art should be for everyone (Rhodes, A. and Lee, J. 2022). Since his passing the copyright to Haring's work now belongs to *The Keith Haring Foundation*.

The Foundation is committed to continuing Keith Haring's desire to make his work accessible to a wide audience and to perpetuate the dissemination of his images in academic and popular culture through books and catalogs, editorial reproductions, products, and promotions. Revenues generated through licensing support the Foundation's grant making activities (Licensing: Keith Haring (1997)).

They have worked with Comme Des Garcons, Levi's, Tommy Hilfiger, Vilac, and Adidas to bring Haring's work into the current commercial world. (Licensing: Keith Haring (1997))

Like Haring Takashi Murakami's art borders fine art and illustration. Murakami's work is not narrative in the same sense yet comments on topics such as war and drug use using narrative techniques.

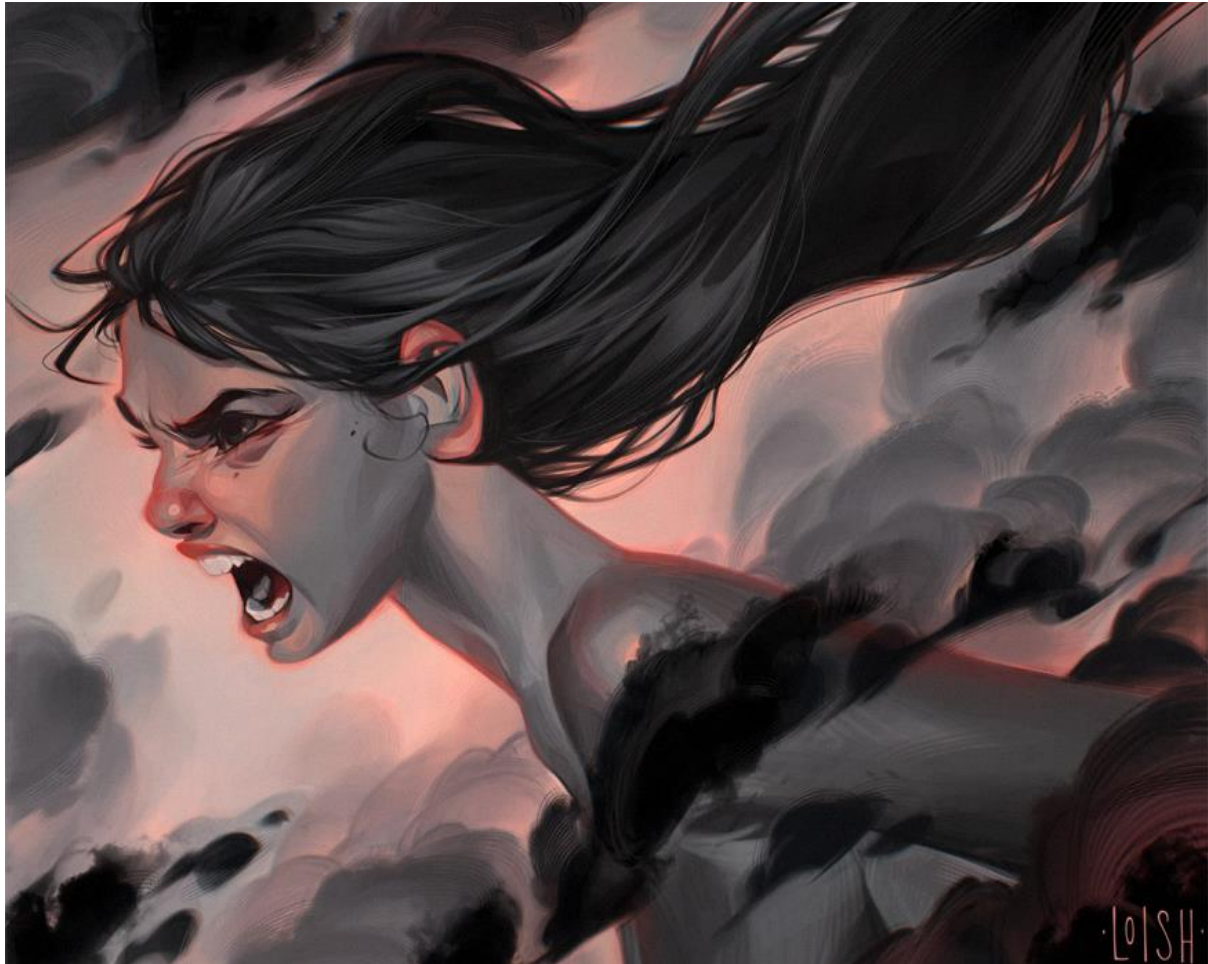
He does this by combining patterns he has created and popular characters within Japanese media, most notable of which is Doraemon (©Shogakukan-Shueisha Productions). Murakami's work is also used in fashion and television much like Haring's work. (The Broad, 2023) An example of which is the flower motif that Murakami is known for, it has popularity in fashion and external media having been featured by brands such as *Vans*, *Gucci* and *MOMA* where the flower can be seen on shoes bags and as plush toys respectively. Murakami also collaborated with famous singer *Billie Eilish* in her *Crown* music video where the flowers populate a city which Eilish is destroying, showcasing how his artwork transcends media and has taken the same role as pieces of illustration that while still being recognised as a piece of fine art. (Goldberg J et al., 2020 video)



(Fig6)

But what of the illustrators whose work takes an approach that closely resembles fine art? Lois Van Baarle AKA 'Loish' uses painting techniques with digital tools. She worked in the animation industry as a story board artist in addition to a character designer. You can see the digital painting techniques in the texture of the art and her minimal use of lines.

She worked on commissions for clients projects. She also creates stand alone personal work that she then sells prints of (Baarle, 2018). If not for the fact these were prints one could say they were fine art in nature as they come from a personal place for Loish and is in fact a creation of her own decisions.



(Fig7)

In an interview with *CDR* Nicholas Kole is asked about his work process. He answers by talking about the programs he used to draw such as Photoshop and Procreate, he then states that he prefers to work line-less, he finds working with line art to be restrictive.

His work uses no linework and his shading is soft, he uses gradients and sharper shadows when necessary. When asked in the same interview what he has learned from other artists he stated that it is important to look at others work and that doing so can generate new ideas.

Zeegan also states it is a good idea to read the brief and any relevant information first before placing pen on paper, that it is a good idea to take a note pad and a copy of the brief with you wherever you may go because inspiration can come from anywhere at any time.

Kole works in a manner where he uses shape and colour to create characters. He does this as he finds linework constricting and by painting his works he can easily make adjustments for his clients should they request it.

Fine art and illustration are indeed at war, one of little sense. We have discovered in this paper that there is a fine line between illustration and fine art that both walk, yet it is a line that neither cross with much joy. From Haring's refusal into the fine art world by large galleries to how readily they accepted the works of Murakami it looks as though the so-called rules are mere guidelines. So, is it possible to fully incorporate both mediums into practice? In the past movements have always been met with animosity from older fine artists. So will this experiment be met with opposition in the same manner or will it be accepted as a new way for fine artists and illustrators to become one once again?

Bibliography

Baarle, L.V. (2018) The art of lois van baarle, Loishnet. lois van baarle. Available at: <https://loish.net/> (Accessed: April 10, 2023)

Benharrouche, Y. and Eden Gallery (2022) "Fine Art vs Illustration," Eden Gallery News. Eden Gallery, 9 February. Available at: <https://www.eden-gallery.com/news/fine-art-vs-illustration#:~:text=Art%20is%20how%20an%20artist,them%20from%20the%20artist's%20perspective.> (Accessed: March 6, 2023)

Benharrouche, Y. (2022) Fine art vs illustration: What's the difference?, Eden Gallery. Eden Gallery. Available at: <https://www.eden-gallery.com/news/fine-art-vs-illustration> (Accessed: March 12, 2023)

CDR and Kole, N. (2017) "Artist interview: Nicholas Kole." Available at: <https://characterdesignreferences.com/blog-interviews-4/nicholas-kole> (Accessed: April 11, 2023)

Danto, A.C. (2009) Andy Warhol, <https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/>. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press. Available at: <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/stable/j.ctt1npq62.7?seq=3> (Accessed: March 18, 2023)

Das, P. (2017) Of meat and wine – the metaphor of food in da vinci's The last supper., Introduction to the Renaissance. wordpress.com. Available at: <https://intro819.wordpress.com/2017/11/12/of-meat-and-wine-the-metaphor-of-food-in-vincis-the-last-supper/> (Accessed: April 12, 2023)

Goldberg, J., Reyes, J. and Malley, C. (2020) The Hysteria of This Flower Explained | Behind The HYPE: Murakami's Flowers, YouTube. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPkAQCdXcLc> (Accessed: April 13, 2023)

Heller, S. and Arisman, M. (2000) The education of an illustrator. New York: Allworth Press.

Heller, S. and Chwast, S. (2008) Illustration: A visual history. New York, New York: Abrams.

Licensing: Keith Haring (1997) Licensing | Keith Haring. Keith Haring foundation. Available at: https://www.haring.com/kh_foundation/licensing (Accessed: April 3, 2023)

Male, A. (2021) *Illustration: A theoretical and Contextual Perspective*. London etc., uk: Bloomssbury

Meggs, & Purvis, A. W. (2016). *Meggs' history of graphic design* (6th ed.). Wiley

Monopoly, A., Kracov, D. and Shemi, C. (2021) *Fine art: What is fine art definition?*, Eden Gallery.

Eden Gallery. Available at: <https://www.eden-gallery.com/news/fine-art-definition> (Accessed: April 12, 2023)

Rhodes, A. and Lee, J. (2022) *Keith Haring - Street Art Boy* (BBC), Youtube. Culture Vulture UK.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCBaCv3KjkM> (Accessed: April 3, 2023)

Tate (1998) *Narrative*, Tate. Available at: [https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/narrative#:~:text=A%20narrative%20is%20simply%20a,with%20the%20stories%20in%20question.)

[terms/n/narrative#:~:text=A%20narrative%20is%20simply%20a,with%20the%20stories%20in%20question.](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/narrative#:~:text=A%20narrative%20is%20simply%20a,with%20the%20stories%20in%20question.) (Accessed: April 13, 2023)

The Borad (2023) *Takashi Murakami, Takashi Murakami - Bio | The Broad*. The Bord. Available at:

[https://www.thebroad.org/art/takashi-](https://www.thebroad.org/art/takashi-murakami#:~:text=Artist%20Bio,by%20American%20critics%20and%20artists.)

[murakami#:~:text=Artist%20Bio,by%20American%20critics%20and%20artists.](https://www.thebroad.org/art/takashi-murakami#:~:text=Artist%20Bio,by%20American%20critics%20and%20artists.) (Accessed: April 7, 2023)

Zeegen, L. (2005) *The fundamentals of illustration: How to generate ideas, interpret briefs and promote oneself, practicality, philosophy and professionalism are explored in both the digital and analogue world of illustration*. Lausanne, Switzerland: AVA.

List of figures

(Fig 1) Vinci, L.da (1999) cropped screenshot of *Last Supper* after the restoration completed ,

Britanica.com. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Available at:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leonardo-da-Vinci/Last-Supper> (Accessed: April 12, 2023).

(Fig2) Coles Phillips Cover Illustration *Life Magazine*,c. 1927 as found in Heller, S. and Chwast, S.

(2008) *Illustration: A visual history*. New York, New York: Abrams

(fig3) Warhol, A. (2015) Campbell's Soup Cans , BBC culture. BBC. Available at:
<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20150427-soup-cans-that-changed-fashion> (Accessed: April 2, 2023).

(Fig 4) Photo of All About Eve album cover – Scarlet And Other Stories (2023)

(Fig 5) Untitled, 1982 | Chalk on paper | Photographer: Ivan Dalla Tana as found on The Keith Haring Foundation accessed: 08/4/2023 https://www.haring.com/!/selected_writing/haring-art-in-transit

(Fig 6) Murakami, T. (2014) Flower Ball: multicolour, My art broker. Available at:
<https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-takashi-murakami/series-flower-ball/artwork-flower-ball-multicolour-signed-print> (Accessed: April 13, 2023)

(fig7) Baarle , L.V. (2023) scream, Loish.net. Lois Van Baarle . Available at:
<https://loish.net/project/scream/> (Accessed: April 10, 2023)