

Kate Clement

BA Illustration

Lecturer: Delyth Lloyd-Evan's

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Proposed question: How did artists and illustrators recorded the first and second world war through their artwork, and what is the importance of this?

Three keywords: Reportage Remembrance Storytelling

Within this essay, I hope to gain a greater understanding of my three chosen keywords in order to propose my final question for my dissertation in the upcoming year. To do this, I will go through each word one by one, expanding on the topic and exploring the themes being them. Starting with reportage, which will focus on war art and centring on two artists, these being Howard Brodie and Edward Bawden discussing how they recorded the Second World War, with reportage as official war artists. This then leads me to my second keyword, remembrance. For this word, I plan on researching into the history of the word, significant symbols that surround it as well as a couple artists that use this theme within their work. In which, I then plan to move onto my third and final keyword, Storytelling. For which I plan on researching into the extensive history and importance of the subject, hoping to expand into the theory of storytelling, specifically in the genre of Illustration based storytelling. I will then explore and compare my themes.

Reportage

Reportage illustration also known as visual journalism has a long and rich history that dates as far back to “*the sung dynasty in japan (960-1280AD.)*” (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.3) However, it came into fronton during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A key component of this being in the form of so-called war artists, also known as special artist’s, who’s work could give the normal person an insight into the atmosphere of the battlefield without that person needing to go. Since their illustrations would be published and readily available to the public in news papers. (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.8)

“Reportage enabled people to encounter images of horror that would be hard to believe” (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.8)

Whilst theres a good amount of wartime reportage illustration spanning the past few centuries. For the sake of the subject matter and proposal. We are going to focus on the sketch artist Howard Brodie, centring on the powerful work he created during his time serving in U.S. Army during the Second World War. His work documented not only the horrors and stark reality of the brutality of the battlefield created, but candid snap shots of fellow soldiers in both moments of rest and moments of fear and vulnerability. Figure one is a prime example of this point,



Figure 1. Brodie, H. (1945) *Compassion* Available at:

<https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/war-through-an-artists-eyes/> (Accessed:

24th April 2024)

Figure 1. Brodie

“I remember the young soldier well, he screamed, he was out of control... and there was another soldier next to him who consoled him and embraced him. That was a moving moment for me, to see that compassion in combat.” (Brodie, Warfare History Network, 2023)

Even without the included quote, the emotion in the piece is clear and powerful. The twisted look of anguish depicted on the soldiers as he clutches to the sorrow man

who holds him gently in his embrace, tugs on the viewers heart strings. Drawing you in, watching as the heartbreaking scene plays out in front of you as if you were there, leaving very little to the imagination you can only feel and sympathise for the young soldier. Breaking away from the raw emotion of figure 1 and exploring figure 2, for a moment.



Figure 2. Brodie, H. (1945) Available at:

<https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/war-through-an-artists-eyes/> (Accessed:

24th April 2024)

Brodie draws the portrait of a soldier leans back, smoking a cigarette. Capturing his somber, drained expression with acute persuasion, focusing on the soldier's eyes, creating a narrative that easy to read the trauma painted across his face.

Much like Howard Brodie, English artist Edward Bawden also served as an official war artist during the Second World War. Centring on his documentation of Dunkirk in 1940. (Cantus, 2019) His work during his time was compiled of watercolour paintings. There's a certain darkness within them, which admittedly is to be expected during this period of time. Prior to this set of work, Bawden recalls how being passed around from regiment to regiment and other groups, may have helped him in the long run to refine his sketch style in preparation, as none of them wanted to deal with the artist.



Figure 3. Bawden, E. (1940) *The New world Available at*:

<https://inexpensiveprogress.com/tag/ww2/> (Accessed: 24th April 2024)

Figure 3 depicts the inside of a room, perhaps the inside of a store or a home, upon first glance, the room is torn apart, furniture spread across the room out of place. Although as you continue to look the red-faced soldiers that lay under the rubble, hiding beneath the furniture become more evident.



Figure 4, Bawden, E. (1940) *In An Air Raid Shelter, Dunkirk; Bombs Are Dropping*
Available at: <https://inexpensiveprogress.com/tag/ww2/> (Accessed: 24th April 2024)

The muted colours and deliberate placement of the highlights and shadows particularly within figure 4, certainly creates a haunting scene of men down in an air raid shelter as bombs are dropped above them.

Remembrance

Leading swiftly on into my second keyword, remembrance. Which i will be researching to gain a greater understanding if what the word means and the significant behind it, where the word comes from, as well as artists who use this within their work as well as how it connects to the two other keywords included within this essay.

The word remembrance is more often than not associated with Remembrance Day. Also known as Remembrance Sunday, it's a Memorial Day to remember the end of the First World War as well as honour and remember those who lost their lives. As Remembrance is defined as "The act of remembering and showing respect for someone who has died or a past event." (Cambridge).

This is very prevalent in my other two words Reportage and Storytelling, the act itself is often expected in each instance. Such as in the work of the previously mention Howard Brodie and Edward Bawden, the act of remembrance is weaved in without second thought. Though, Most significantly to the question at hand and the overarching theme of this project, remembrance not only connects to the First World War but the second as well.

The symbol of remembrance is a red poppy, the origin of this being that while the fields across the western front were trampled and muddy because of the battles that took place on them, the red poppy stood resilient growing in the hundreds and thousands coating the fields in a beautiful red. (Royal British Legion) as such the flowers are seen as a symbol of hope and remembrance. Anna Guérin and Monica Mitchell shared a similar idea and promoted that the poppy should be used, Monica Mitchell was inspired by the poem 'In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae. (Royal British Legion, 2021)

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow,
Between the crosses, row on row..."

(McCrae, 1915)

The poppy has stayed a consistent iconic symbol of remembrance since then. It's often depicted in the work of Jacqueline Hurley, who creates beautiful textured paintings of these poppies as an accent to a black and white piece memorial art. Which she produces to raise money for military charities. She began this journey after painting a piece in tribute to her friend that was a royal marine, who unfortunately lost his life whilst serving in Afghanistan. She is also motivated by her grandparents who served during the Second World War. Henceforth, she enjoys reminding those that view her art that "the freedom they are blessed with today wasn't free. Remembrance Day is Every Day."

Another example of Remembrance art comes in the form of the cenotaph in London. The statue was commissioned after the end of the First World War to commemorate the soldiers that had lost their lives during this time; however, it is not inscribed with any names, it is just dedicated to 'the glorious dead'. (Imperial War Museum) It was designed by Edward Landseer Lutyens in 1919 and was originally made out of a wood and plaster structure as it was supposed to be a temporary piece. Although, it was so popular they decided to make a permanent replacement.

In figure 5. You can see the original design.

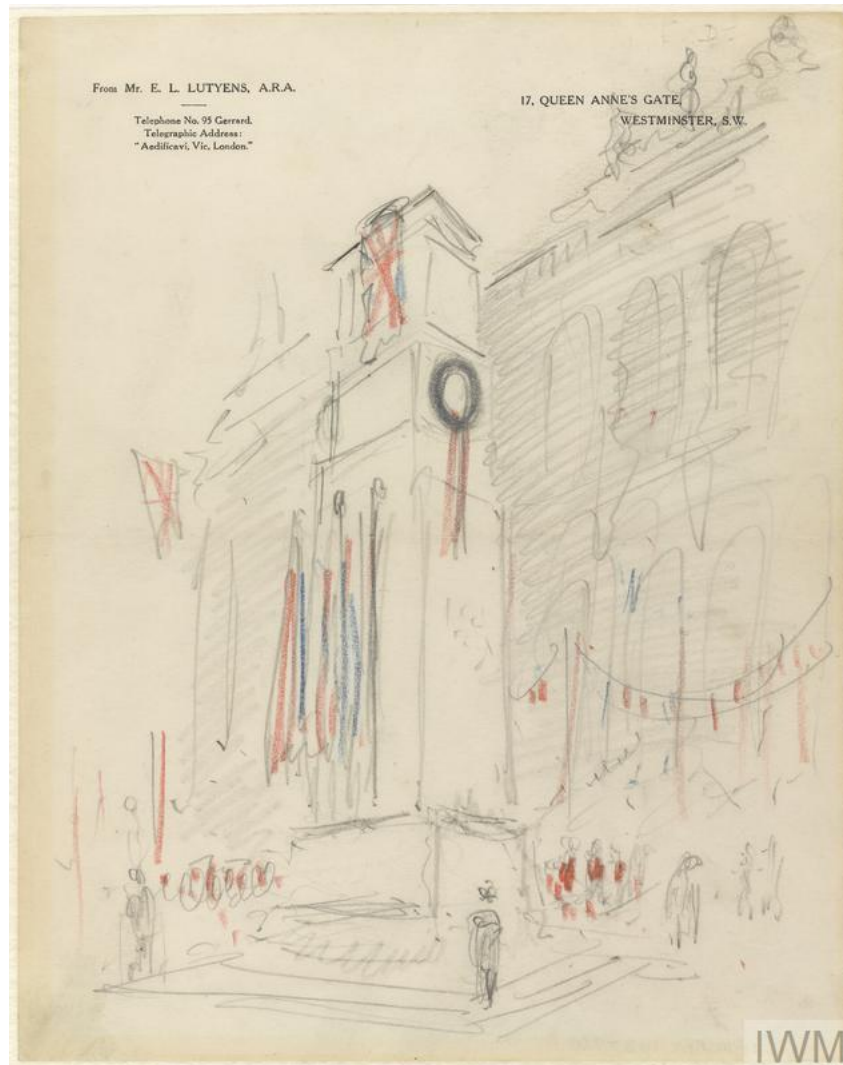


Figure 5. Lutyens, L. E. (1919) *The cenotaph Design* Available at:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-is-the-cenotaph> (Accessed: 24th April 2024)

Storytelling

Storytelling has existed as a form of communication between individuals since the dawn of man. One of the earliest examples of this fact being in the existence of cave paintings that have been found across the globe. Figure 6. below shows painting on the wall of the Chavcet-Pont d'Arc cave in France dating back around 30,000-33,000 years ago. (Mendoza, 2015) Depicting the images of a hoard of woolly rhinoceros.



Figure 6. Available at: <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/6350/panel-of-the-rhinos-chauvet-cave-replica/> (Accessed: 24th April 2024)

This also relates back to reportage, showing an early form for visual journalism and storytelling. As “They reflected a universal language by which all could understand and appreciate the stories told with a stick, in mud or in clay. (Mendoza, 2015)

Other pictorial forms of storytelling were also heavily used in other ancient societies, such as the hieroglyphics in ancient Egypt. Which they used as a language of symbols (Mendoza, 2015) other forms of storytelling comes in the form of dance as well as being written text, orally as spoken word, or in visual media such as plays, tv and movies and short films.

“History is about storytelling. And like any good narrative invested in recounting tales of forebearers, its aim is not only to create an image of the past but a war of understanding of what we see.” (Welsh, 1998)

Additionally, Storytelling and illustration can do go hand in hand. Picture books are a prime example of this, with a rich history of their own.

“During the ‘20 and the ‘30s Russia’s pioneering use of bold lithographic designs by Vladimir Lebedev and others in mass produced paperbacks for children clearly influenced European book illustration.” (Whalley & Chester, p.197)

Picture books directed towards young children as vessels to teach them lessons and morals, feeding them information in a format that is easy to ingest and break down. For instance,

“Puffin picture books were intended for children to use for their own education at home and were especially welcome in the war years when so many children had been evacuated to the country.” (Whalley & Chester, p.198)

The mind may also drift to mature versions of this. To the world of graphic novels, manga and comics. Although, these iterations of illustration often exist purely just as a form of storytelling, a visual depiction of a story created of pure fiction but that's not to say they don't also hold deeper meanings because more often than not they do.

“For some illustrators between what they create for children and or adults. The fundamental design and Narrative elements go into each, only the basic themes may be different.” (Heller & Chwast, 2008, p. 228)

These three words, Reportage, Remembrance and Storytelling lead me easily into my essay question. By, not only providing significant research into each subject, but also connecting and slotting in with each other's themes easily. For instance, reportage whilst being a form of visual journalism, could easily be counted as a form of remembrance, especially as you look back on the war artists drawing and the emotion and environment that has also been recorded. But, also as a form of story telling as discussed earlier in the storytelling section, whilst talking on the cave paintings.

These then connect with my project idea, which is the following:

I wish to create and illustrate a story of a soldier, relaying his own experiences of his time in the war and a “friend” he had who unfortunately didn't survive the Second World War, to a younger curious family member. The soldier, Joseph, in reality was in love with the now deceased soldier. Although, to play into the subtleties of this era, this is only ever hinted at and never explicitly said. He tells the story through his own memories, letters and photos he had recently received via post and drawing created by another member of his platoon, which were given to him after the death of his friend. The working title of this story is “Memories of Edward.”

The two keywords, remembrance and storytelling fit extremely well for this project especially. For the over arching theme, remembrance is very relevant considering the the main character is looking back at this time of war, and the storytelling is obviously because i have decided to create my own narrative. The odd keyword out in this sense Reportage, fits better into the dissertation. Although, that is not to say that it isn't relevant to the proposed project.

Taking all of this information that i have gathered and compiled whilst researching these three keywords and topics, i am only left to present the question for my upcoming independent inquiry: How did artists and illustrators recorded the first and second world war through their artwork, and what is the importance of this?

As well as propose my practice-based project in third year. Which is that I intend to create my own narrative based in the 1940s era, design characters, and illustrate a few final and key spreads of the narrative. Which I have already start in preparation, I have already created a handful of character designs, which I will provide examples off. I have also began preparing and doing research into the time period to make it as historical accurate as possible, this includes looking into fashion, uniforms, and specifically the d-day landings and the liberation of France as they are very prominent setting for the narrative.

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