Fictional Illustration Language with Reference to M. C. Escher and Istvan Orosz Examples

Banu Bulduk Turkmen [a*], Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Graphics, Hacettepe University, Ankara 06800, Turkey

Abstract

Alternative approaches in illustration language have constantly been developing in terms of material and technical aspects. Illustration languages also differ in terms of semantics and form. Differences in formal expressions for increasing the effect of the subject on the audience lead to diversity in the illustrations. M. C. Escher's three-dimensional images to be perceived in a two-dimensional environment, together with mathematical and symmetry-oriented studies and the systematic formed by a numerical structure in its background, are associated with the notion of illustration in terms of fictional meaning. Istvan Orosz used the technique of anamorphosis and made it possible for people to see their perception abilities and visual perception sensitivities in different environments created by him. This study identifies new approaches and illustration languages based on the works of both artists, bringing an alternative proposition to illustration languages in terms of systematic sub-structure and fictional idea sketches.

Keywords: Perception, illusion, illustration, fictional illustration, illustration languages, visual perception.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Banu Bulduk Turkmen,** Faculty of Fine Arts, Hacettepe University, Ankara 06800, Turkey.
E-mail address: banubulduk@hacettepe.edu.tr/Tel.: +0-312-780-5296; fax: +0-312-297-6189

1. Introduction

Illustration is a concept that can be described as the concrete expression of the forming of abstract concepts. At the same time, it can also be defined as images that give ideas about the content and that carry information about the subject. The definition of 'it plays a key role in conveying a message' has parallels with this expression. Images '…fulfils various functions ranging from conveying the drama of an expression, summarizing and supporting an idea presented in an expression or simply creating a visual break in the broad field of the text' (Ambrose & Harris, 2013). It is also shown among functions of the images that they can operate as pictures and symbols and can only be used as indicators (Arnheim, 2009).

In the scope of this report, the concept of illustration deals with a method that goes beyond two-dimensional illustration designed for human consciousness. So much so that, illustrations can be described in the way that they direct human perception semantically. Along with the effects of external factors such as the place, perspective, light, etc., in the interpretation of the work, it can be said that ideas are effective for illustrations that are designed by building the relations between the objects semantically. The subject covered in this framework is the use of a method that activates the viewer's ability to interpret the connection between objects having multiple meanings that go beyond the physical boundaries of the objects. At this stage, the concept of fictional illustration is dwelled upon, the works of artists M. C. Escher and Istvan Orosz which are related to the subject are examined in this context and how they describe the unknown meanings of the objects is emphasised.

2. Fictional Illustration

With reference to the expression that illustration 'can go beyond the physical boundaries of a photographed object and can unveil the emotions in the way that photographs cannot do' (Ambrose & Harris, 2013), cognitive/denotation or connotation elements taking place in the illustrations develop in the process of formation. The way the message is conveyed shapes the expression. The illustrator, who wants the message to be conveyed in a fictional manner and indirectly, makes the drawings by using denotation or connotation elements. The real meaning is 'the first reflection of the objects in the real world in the minds of the viewers' (Ertan & Sansarci, 2016) and the meaning connoted to the viewers except the real meaning is defined as connotation. With reference to these definitions, the form in which the image is seen and its presentation form affects the interpretation process. The image we perceived and interpreted based on what we have learned triggers our cognitive perception process. In this context, there are two different methods of forming illustrations. In illustrations, expression based on consciousness and interpretation and expression that conveys the message directly are used. In the illustrative expressions that are illustrated for the purpose of demonstration, the clarity and comprehensibility of the image can be seen, whereas in the experiment of thought, illustrations that are formed and designed in order to examine the nature and results of an idea are used (Arnheim, 2009). This gives the viewer the experience of learning, testing, interpreting and comparing.

M. C. Escher, V. Vasarely and I. Orosz are among the artists who produce works in this direction. This paper focuses on the fictional pictorial language in illustrations, where geometric structures, optical illusions, perspective games and impossible architectural works and the works of the aforementioned artists, who direct the viewer to multi-directional thinking, are examined.

3. Review of M. C. Escher Illustrations

Born in Holland in 1898, painter and graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher is a world-renowned artist for metamorphosis, perspective games and impossible architectures. M. C. Escher's way of mathematical geometric thinking reveals itself by impossible object/architectural and optical illusive works. He mostly uses stone print (lithography), wood carving and wood engraving in his works. With

his own self-expression, Escher emphasises that he made his works, with the view to conveying a certain line of ideas. He bases his ideas on amazement and admiration for the laws of nature effectual in the world around us (Escher, 2005). If the works of Escher in Figure 1 are analysed, there are three vertically related gravitational forces in the work *Relativity*. On each of them, three ground planes in which humans live are cutting each other perpendicularly. Escher does not make it possible for people from different worlds to sit on the same floor. Because he has separate insights into what is horizontal and what is vertical. The idea that people living in separate worlds do not know about the existence of others is taken up in this study (Escher, 2005). In his work called *Ascending and Descending*, the main subject of the work is also known as endless staircases. According to Escher, there is a building that surrounds a rectangular inner courtyard, having a staircase instead of a roof. It is understood that the people living in this building are monks of an unknown sect. Perhaps climbing those stairs for several hours each day is a ceremonial task for monks' (Escher, 2005). On the stone print of *Ascending and Descending* (Figure 1, right) the monks are expressed as the loosest variation, as they walk forever in cycles and have many steps to return to the starting point (Hofstadter, 2001). Escher questions dual meaning in impossibly architectural constructions by making for the viewer an intellectual journey.
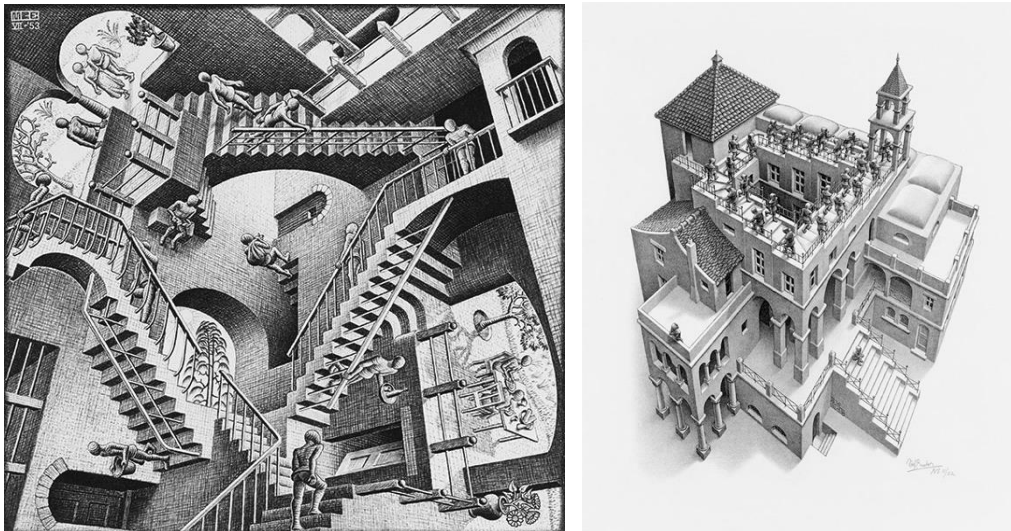

Figure 1. M. C. Escher, 'Relativity', 294 mm × 282 mm, 1953 Lithograph,
http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/back-in-holland/relativity/ (left), M. C. Escher, 'Ascending and Descending', 285 mm × 355 mm, 1960 Lithograph, http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/recognition-success/ascending-and-descending/ (right)

In the work 'Hand with Reflecting Globe' M. C. Escher is seen holding a reflective globe. In this reflection, Escher presents the environment he lives in detail to the viewer. Nearly all four walls fit into that sphere and have sufficient clues about the nature of the environment. Positioning itself in a centralised position is considered to characterise the ego of the artist (Escher, 2005). In the work called *Eye*, it is known that the artist draws his own eyes looking at a concave mirror in a magnified view. It is known that the pupil image reflects the viewer.
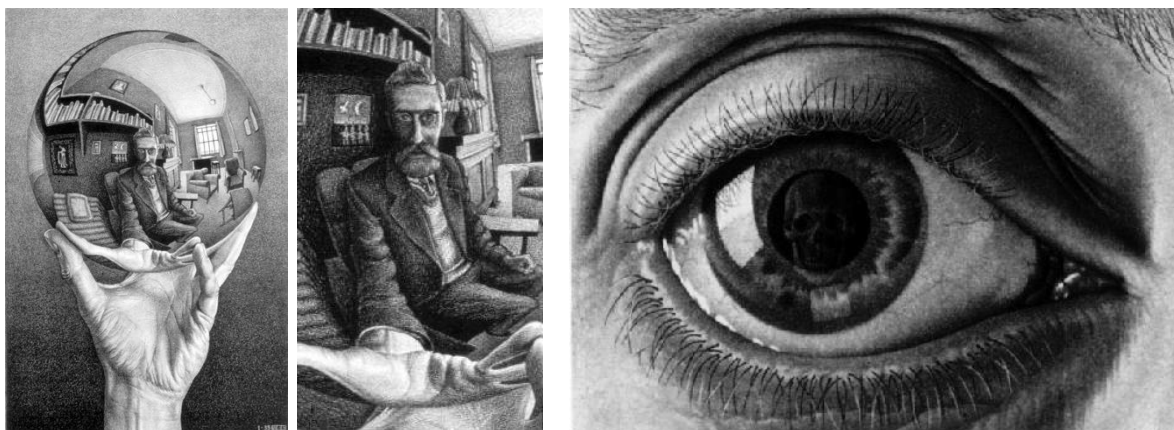
Figure 2. M. C. Escher, 'Hand with Reflecting Globe', 285 mm × 325 mm, 1934 Lithograph,
http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/italian-period/hand-with-reflecting-sphere/ (left), M. C. Escher, 'Eye', 150 mm × 200 mm, 1946 Mezzotint, http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/back-in-holland/eye/ (right)
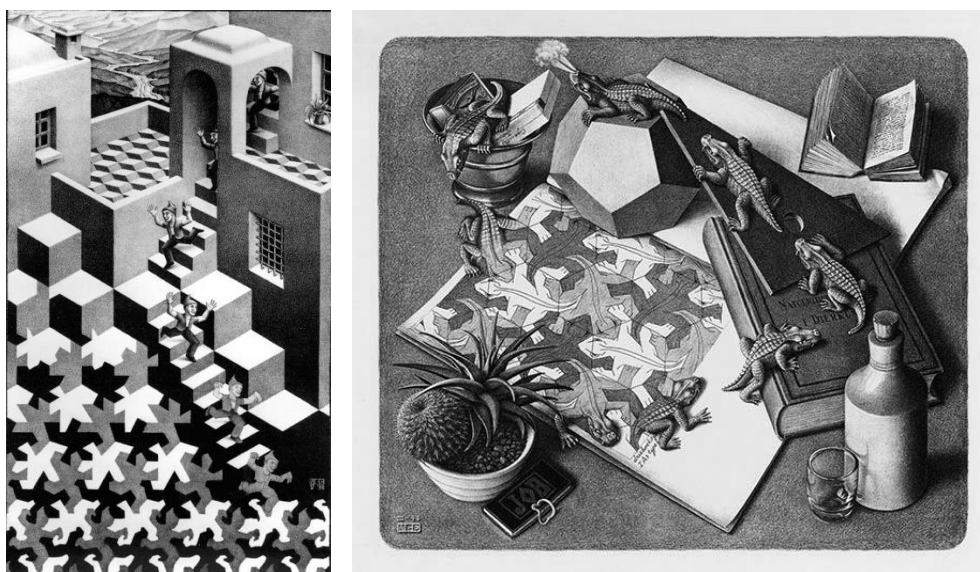
Figure 3. M. C. Escher, 'Cycle', 475 mm × 280 mm, 1938 Lithograph,
http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/switzerland-belgium/cycle/ (left), M. C. Escher, 'Reptiles', 335 mm × 385 mm, 1943 Lithograph, http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/back-in-holland/reptiles/ (right)

It can be seen that M. C. Escher deals with the idea that the pieces of an object are copies of the object itself, and this can be seen in many of his paintings (Hofstadter, 2001). When viewed in an abstract plane, it is noticed that the pieces are the same. In the stone print work which is called Cycle, from the upper right corner a cheerful male figure appears to jump out of his house. As he runs down the stairs, he loses his form and takes his place in a pattern of black, white and grey shapes. It becomes a part of the pattern. These pieces form a cube shape by simplifying upwards. The cubes combine with the house, creating a sense of depth. Three-dimensional reality and two-dimensional limitation are considered in this study (Escher, 2005).

In his work Reptiles, Escher deals with the life cycle of a small crocodile (Figure 3, right). Among many objects, a drawing book makes an appearance. The mosaic image created by the reptile figures which are drawn in three different shades can be seen on the book. The loop is completed by the

walking motion of the reptile from a two-dimensional surface to three-dimensional surface, the real world, then its progression on the objects and it's reaching the flat surface of the drawing book. The reptile is again a part of the mosaic.
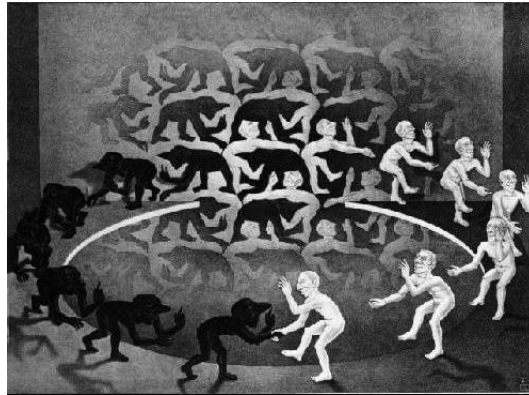

Figure 4. M. C. Escher, 'Encounter/ 340 mm × 465 mm, 1944 Lithograph,
http://www.mcescher.com/gallery/back-in-holland/encounter/

In his stone print work Encounter, M. C. Escher forms a texture of black-and-white figures from the back surface which is supposed to be a wall, and from this texture, figures begin to develop. By forming surface perception with the 2-D surface, the figures are provided to step on the ground. A rounded space is left in the middle of the ground, which allows the background to be easily perceived. Those black-and-white figures can be seen to walk on a ring. They meet at the nearest plane. By thinking that the white figure is optimistic and the black figure is pessimistic, the scene in which they handshake is reached (Escher, 2005).

4. Review of Istvan Orosz Illustrations

Born in 1951, Hungarian artist Istvan Orosz is known as an illustrator, graphic designer and animator – filmmaker. Orosz works on geometric dilemmas, perception games, double meaning images, anamorphic studies and optical themes, producing works that affect the viewers' view. He is also interested in theories of vision that affect spatial structures and visual perception forms of the viewer's hypothetical expectations.

In his work, except for the stereoscopic vision called anamorphosis, he also uses distortion technique in his illustrations. With the anamorphosis technique, which is associated with the perspective, uses the method of distorting the forms that are included in the viewpoint only in a certain way and integrates with the mentioned technique, which is defined as the realisation of the narrative by this method. Orosz describes this technique as 'exaggeration or acceleration of perspective'. 'It is a technique that can be understood from a certain angle/with the help of reflective surfaces when the image is distorted in a special way'. While developing this technique, Orosz expresses that he brought an independent meaning to this distorted image and while doing this he indicates that he has obtained two images that complement each other or are completely opposite to each other. The fictional illustration which is placed in the space is fictionalised on the incoherent detail on the two-dimensional surface. The comparison of the three-dimensional object placed in the fictional image with the viewer from an angularly determined spot makes the hidden detail visible. The detail in that illustration seems to be distorted, distorted and incomprehensible, except for the point of view/viewpoint. When the viewer looks at the illustration from the right spot, he sees the form that the artist depicts (Figures 1 and 2). This situation arouses surprise in the viewers, causes them to change the position and questions how the seemingly distorted picture becomes meaningful. Experiences and inquiries experienced by the viewers during their observations also find value in the course of this study. In the works he performed with anamorphic technique, he creates two

meaningful compositions and gives the audience a perception game. As seen in Figure 5, the illustration which seems apparently meaningless is designed together with the form of a cylindrical reflecting mirror placed on it and the perspective of the viewer is calculated and the viewable angle of the image is determined. At the same time, the explanation of the column head and foot form with anamorphosis technique is described. Orosz's fictional illustration of Edgar Allan Poe with anamorphosis technique also makes the Poe figure visible at the right angle of the reflective cylindrical form (Figure 6). The viewer cannot analyse the designed image outside of the calculated viewpoint but can perceive the illustration located on the ground when looking at the correct spot. Thus, the viewer becomes a part of the work by trying to find the correct perspective around the cylindrical mirror, which is the second meaning in the work. This is how Orosz's wants his viewers to spend more time with the work. The viewer tries to find the correct perspective in front of the cylinder mirror, searching for a second meaning in the work.
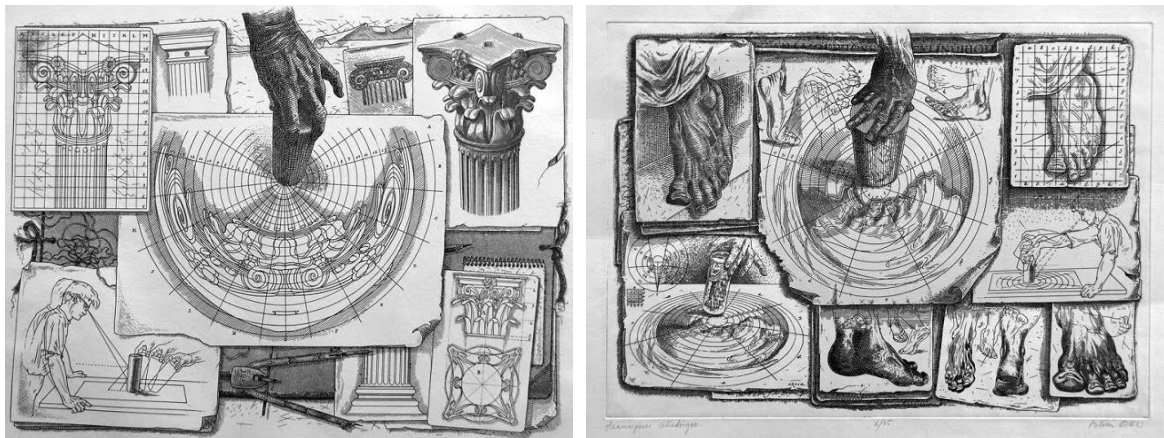

Figure 5. Images from Istvan Orosz's work describing the *anamorphosis* technique,
http://utisz.blogspot.com.tr/p/anamorphoses.html

Figure 6. Istvan Oroszs working image of Edgar Allan Poe with anamorphosis technique,
http://utisz.blogspot.com.tr/p/anamorphoses.html

Figure7. Views from Istvan Orosz's work 1, ("Ship of Fools", 1999 - 2010),
http://web.axelero.hu/utisz/page.htm

Orosz, who has turned the viewer into a mental journey in his illustrations, has developed an engaging and admirable language in his work by creating a whole from the piece. So much so that, the parts that make up the whole also symbolise a meaning. Expressions that are interwoven and integrated with fiction are transformed into a different object throughout the work. The viewer first sees the whole, then begins to solve the illustration by expanding on it (Figures 7 and 8).

In his works on hidden faces and anamorphoses*,* Orosz forces the human eye in some way, and he positions the figures that are formed by a lot of figures/objects in an illustration considering a general composition. As seen in the series of hidden faces, he obtains the skull of the portrait out of a horse figure placed appropriately and the mouth from a human figure lying on the ground (Figure 7). In the work of Durer and Dali, when looked at carefully it is seen that the nose, mouth, jaws and eye forms are obtained from different interlacing figures (Figure 8). It can be said that those details allow the viewers to spend more time with Orosz's works. Orosz, who usually uses copper etching techniques in his works, produces mainly monochrome works.

Figure 8. Istvan Orosz'un 'Durer in the Forest', 1987,
http://web.axelero.hu/utisz/page.htm

5. Conclusion

Nowadays, different expressive languages are developed in illustrations; artists' authenticity is increasing as the techniques used are diversified. Each artist's approach to narratives and narrative language develops in the way of addressing the subject, and the form of expression is formed by the method and technique of formation. For this reason, the way in which each artist handles the same theme is different. This research study also examines the works of two artists who define a different and original method and deepen the concept of illustration with interesting inventions. Examples of M. C. Escher's original works which are designed and calculated as mathematics and geometry sub-structured, metamorphosis-based formal sequence, in which the parts and holistic meanings of objects with more than one meaning differ from each other and the patterns, etc., which are obtained by dividing the planes with different or equal figures regularly are examined. Istvan Orosz is also included in this context as a co-artist in his fictional description method. Like Escher, Orosz set the viewers out on an intellectual journey by loading more than one meaning to his work, developed and used the anamorphosis method and touched the viewer's perception ability by means of seeing, selecting, finding and combining in the angle of flow of consciousness. There is a view that in the illustrations, there are still innovative forms of expression in environments where technology cannot be used and that the viewer, who starts to analyse his work through connotation with reference to literal meaning, starts acting a part in the work in this context. The fictional illustration language, which allows spending more time for making sense of the work, gives the viewer the experience of technical and knowledge-based understanding (grasping, deducing and interpreting).

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