

Fashion Illustration in China – into a New Era

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ABSTRACT

The understanding of fashion history would be incomplete and inaccurate without examining the developments of fashion illustration, which existed in many forms in the past. While fashion illustration in the west has been examined by a number of scholars (Colin, 1994; Blum, 1976; Borrelli, 2000; Drake, 1987; Heller & Fernandes, 1995; Mackrell, 1997; Robinson, 2000; Simon, 1995), there has been little substantial research on the fashion illustration in the East, particularly in China, one of the oldest and greatest civilizations in the world.

In this study, various forms of fashion drawings of the past have been reviewed and analyzed so as to provide general trends and characteristics of the developments of fashion illustrations in China. Furthermore, contemporary fashion illustrations have been scrutinized. This cannot be achieved without the previous research on Chinese historic costumes, the close associations and the many study visits to the various fashion institutions in China, as well as observations of fashion works, pictorial collections of representation works, and personal communication with fashion professionals and respective academics of the related discipline.

The characteristics of fashion illustrations in different periods were found closely related not only to the state of the technology and social and economic conditions, but also to the pragmatic philosophical thinking of the time. However, with the opening to the west, the liberation of people's mind and improved level of freedom of expression in China, a new direction of fashion expression has resulted in a transformation from the tradition of lifelike figure drawings to the contemporary form of abstractive stylized drawings, which seeks to communicate not only an artistic representation, but a sense of style. Such phenomenon of transformation also exists in the West. (Danielson, 1989: 38)

Since it is nature's will to create the female body in its natural truism form, rather than an alienated one, the future of fashion illustration should stride a delicate balance between capturing the essence of fashion ideas, the flow and rhythm of the pose on one hand and the details and accuracy of the garment on the other to its best advantage, as opposed to the 'art for art's sake' school of thought (Barnes, 1994: 27).

Keywords: Fashion design, fashion drawing and illustration, historic costume and culture.

Introduction

Apart from those housed in national museums, it may be true to say that not many of the clothes in the past have survived. On the other hand, these attires continue to live on in those paintings and drawings that are now valued in themselves as works of art. Drawings or paintings that provide communication in fashion had in fact existed in many forms in the past. To name a few, they can be found on wall carvings, wall paintings or frescoes, wall hangings or tapestry, religious paintings, portraits, fashion plates, and etc. Not only that these works of art can show what a dress look like, indicate what materials it is made of, but also suggest on what occasion it would be worn and by what sort of person.

Today's fashion illustrations come in many styles. With this hypothesis, a study into the present role of fashion illustration in China is initiated. Our constant association in China have provided us the opportunity to study the forms of expressions of fashion illustration from various sites, which include museums, galleries, fashion and clothing institutions, as well as the opportunity to explore how practitioners perceive the role fashion illustration, both of the past and present.

It may be true to say that many textual descriptions have attempted to describe clothing in its purest meaning, but very often create unclear boundary ambiguously. Even Winterson criticizes that language not only betrays us, but also dissolves into formlessness when we would most like to be precise (1990: 90). So, when unclear boundaries disturb us, alternate means of representation, like an appropriate form of illustration, is necessary to symbolize the role.

This study begins with an overview study of the visual representations in China (particularly those with the closest portrayal of fashion), with the intention to acquire an "Asiatic" perspective of how fashion illustration is being prevailed in the East. Following that is to explore and examine how the east perceive the role, meaning and forms of expression of fashion illustration, and to investigate why the transformation in representations surfaced over the years, as well as any different or common attitude being developed in the current fashion world.

In the course of investigation, apart from secondary search, revisiting archives of books and publications, views from design professionals and educationists have also been collected, with the intention to understand how fashion illustration is perceived and applied. The illustrations being studied came from different periods and sources in China, with the most recent ones being the work of fashion students, while others include in-house designers, as well as professionals from the education sector.

An overview of the fashion-related illustrations in China

Fashion illustration, in the form of fashion plates, has always been a means of informative communication for centuries in the West. Fashion plate is a term originating with the development of illustrating ladies' magazines with prints. Such fashion plates, often regarded as the only source of information or chronicles adopted in the early era, were circulated from countries to countries to inform people of the prevailing attire. Coleman (1990: 49) reports that

such prints first appeared over 230 years ago in England with the first copy of the *Lady's Magazine*, issued in August 1770.

In the East, fashion drawings had also been existed in many forms in the past. The earliest ones, being those in the form of wall carvings, wall paintings, wall hangings and tapestry of the same context are now works of art. These historic pieces, not only able to give a very detailed description of the styles and silhouettes of the earlier years, but also provide a very precise perspective of the era. Such references have been evidenced in the precision of costumes that are constantly made for performing art and cinema.



Source: *Facial Makeup in Traditional Chinese Operas*. P. 40

The Discovery of Dunhuang Depository of Buddha Texts and The Studies of Dunhuang Caves, dating back between the 4th and the 11th centuries, provides valuable information for the studies of ancient history of China and the Central Asia. The caves possess important status in the cultural history of China and the world (*A Living Legend* 2000: 18-22). According to Morrison and Twyford: “the anthropological view of human development is critical to the evolution of art, design and technology”. (1994: 35)



Source: *Grotto Art in Dunhuang*. P. 9



Source: *Grotto Art in Dunhuang*. P. 90



Source: *Grotto Art in Dunhuang*. P. 23

By the late Qing Dynasty era or just before the turn of the 20th century, mass culture flourished in Shanghai, China. In order to meet different citizens' taste, in addition to novels, ballads and poems, pictorials were promoted. According to Tang Weikang's article on Stone Touching Room Pictorial, he stated that it was an American missionary John M. W. Farnham who established the first pictorial in the history of China in April 1875. Statistics also showed that there appeared 89 kinds of pictorials in the following thirty years, i.e. up to around 1911. Pictorials such as *New Picture Paper*, *Flying Shadow Pavilion*, *Current Affairs*, *World Pictorial*, *Stone Touching Room*, and etc. were in circulation. Nevertheless, the most popular was *Stone Touching Room Pictorial* (Tang, 2001: 152).



Source: *Eastern Air (Passenger Edition No. 110)*. P. 152

According to Lucy England (1996: 57) of Shoeni Art Gallery, the truthful style of European oil painting offered a new objective way for early Chinese artists to portray reality, a form of art that everyone could understand and each had equal opportunity to learn. By the 1920s, the new generation of artists further perfected their painting technique and promoted ‘art for reality and life’. During this period, artists had many opportunities to be exposed to western culture, and many of them in Shanghai often undertook to design and illustrate advertising pictures. This kind of picture, which had a lifespan of 30 years from the 1920s to 1940s, was called Calendar Spring Festival picture.



Source: *Old Calendar Picture*. P. 31



Source: *Old Calendar Picture*. P. 77

Calendar picture is considered a branch of the traditional Chinese Spring Festival painting originated in Shanghai, the most developed centre of modern and contemporary commerce. The commodities and services advertised on the calendar were mostly cigarettes as well as battery, general merchandise, insurance, medicine and wine. The main subject matter of calendar picture was about traditional beauty. According to the study made by Wang Shucun, a famous Spring

Festival painting specialist, the word “calendar picture” was first appeared in late Qing Dynasty of 1896. (Song 1997: 7)

Even during the ‘formative years’ of the PRC, England (1996: 57) revealed that although individual experimentation in oils stopped, politics still became inseparable from art, when artists turned to create works of Maoist Revolutionary Realism. During the 1950s, with the continuous belief that a large proportion of the population, which was to be influenced by the new ideology and the goals of socialist construction, propaganda art continued to stress on their ability to raise cultural awareness. Following Mao’s favourable remarks about the Soviet experience and its use of propaganda art as a guideline for both popularisation and raising standards, Soviet propaganda methods and their implementation were studied.



Source: *Chinese Propaganda Posters: from Revolution to Modernization*. P. 36.

During the period between 1951 and 1953, Zhou Yang (1907-1990), the most powerful official in the artistic hierarchy in the first three decades of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), advocated the basic introduction of Soviet-styled Socialist Realism. (Landsberger 1995: 36-37) The drawings in such big poster not only can reveal what a dress look like, indicate what it is made of, and suggest on what occasion it would be worn and by what sort of person, but must deliver this information. In similar context, Tam (1994) complimented that those propaganda art, in the form of “big posters”, was one of Chairman Mao’s contributions to Chinese culture. In 1958, even the Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung himself praised these big posters as the best form of messages dissemination. The “big posters” have no fixed format, length or style. They may contain slogans, graphics, lyrics of songs and so on. Indeed, the big poster has become a distinctive part of Chinese culture (Tam 1994: 27-29).



Source: *Chinese Propaganda Posters: from Revolution to Modernization*. P. 4.



Source: *Chinese Propaganda Posters: from Revolution to Modernization*. P. 58.

However, during the later part of the twentieth century, styles of fashion illustration in China, like other aspects of Chinese culture, began to face the biggest test of its history. Already in the late-Ch'ing era, the art tradition, which non-Chinese would regard as constituting "Chinese style", was not only weakened by foreign cultural invasion but in itself showed great fussiness and complexity as compared to the achievements of Chinese decorative art in other periods. This indicated that it had already entered a deadlock from the viewpoint of design. When there was little consensus about whether to discard or retrieve traditional culture, the cultural impact of the Western powers became a strong infiltration.

Without a full understanding of its principles, Western styles were imitated to excess, while traditional practice was consigned to the limbo of neglect. Such sentiment can certainly be equated to the comments made by the eminent American historian of Chinese art Michael Sullivan, who had established the following assessment of Chinese decorative art and design in his book *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century*: "The fine textiles, porcelain, jade and jewellery representative of palace art reached their peak of technical skill in the Ming and Qing dynasties. But by the twentieth century, only a bare shell survived in which excessive surface decoration had lost purity and vitality of design. The more noticeable the decoration, the more it lacked style..."

Fashion illustrations and representations in the later part of the twentieth century have been pivoted on diversity. The ranks of perfection are extended with infinite variation. There are the abstract stylistic style, the impressionist style, the 9-heads, the 12-heads proportions of fashion illustration, as well as the demure ones. To many of this new generation of illustrators, to depict fashion is like illustrating a castle in the sky. Fashion is seen as a relatively new cultural innovation, in that it denies respect for the natural forms of the human body or that the representation is something that can be communicated. In fact, the degree of abstractiveness of some of the illustrations is quite disturbingly expressed, and in no way remain near to the new artistic norm.



Source: *Xian Dai Shi Zhuang Hua Ji Fa*.
P. 82



Source: *Xian Dai Shi Zhuang Hua Ji Fa*.
P. 59



Source: *Xian Dai Shi Zhuang Hua Ji Fa*.
P. 52



Source: *Xian Dai Shi Zhuang Hua Ji Fa*.
P. 43

New Movements

In fashion, illustration is the most economical, compact method for storing and transmitting information. Since it can concentrate a tremendous amount of information about the design to be represented, it provides the readers with a message in which more information may be assimilated with repeated reading. When Western or foreign influence became strong, the traditional style of realism drawing has thus broken down into a misleading diversion, and sometimes perceived as being directly opposed to the need to be faithful to the traditional practice. The rejection of a principle or style form, which has been proved to be ideal before, cannot come about because of public opinion as to whether the artwork is appropriate, but rather the artist's determination to take art forward into his own hands. In other words, with such mad desire to make an entrance, these works that are created in order to win new esteem for fashion pictorial, is developed without the participation of the public.

Let us turn to the causes of this rejection from the traditional, which we should remember that the degree of abstractiveness of some of the illustrations, are quite disturbingly expressed. If we look back into the history of art and design history in the West, there was too a similar form of impact that had sprung from the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century in England. Gradually, in Europe and America, with design confronting the contradictory claims of uniqueness versus industrial output, beauty versus function, and tradition versus modernity, there have arisen a series of design reform movements aimed at addressing the disparity between traditional skill and modern technological development, as well as reacting to changes in art theory, philosophical thought, and social structure. However, the industrial revolution only occurred in China almost a century and a half later than in the West, and only a short time has been allowed in China to think about precisely the same problems. A certain immaturity in creative thinking has therefore been the inevitable result.

After the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1979, artists entered into a period of stylistic freedom. Their work kept a strong symbolic content. Their messages are existential, which allows the extension of individuality, and their techniques blend new aesthetics with Western style in representations. In Lucy England's article, she conveys the Chinese artist, Cao Li's belief: "Art knows no rational borders, it is a product of the human mind, an expression of the human spirit, a revelation of the vitality of nature". Particular in fashion, the new generation of fashion artists took to Surrealism, Dadaism and Pop Art of the West as their main influence. They swapped political content with Western metaphysics, and rejected the traditional aesthetics of their predecessors. The artists faced the rigidity of reality, seeking extremity and reform through their artistic representations. They were idealists who reacted to the Avant Garde of the West. Some of their distorted 'neo-realist' styles were developed to renounce the images of traditional aesthetics. The new generation of fashion artists' strong emphasis on the wonders of innovation had meant that fashion art and culture in China are experiencing fresh impact. Lucy England has this comment on the art scene: "Ambiguity fills these drawings that allow the viewer to read as much or as little as he or she likes into each piece" (1996: 57).

By now, it can be said that fashion art representation has developed in the following directions:

1. Copying the West:
Due to the diminishing of national self-respect and self-confidence, such reaction becomes inevitable. The delayed arrival of the industrial revolution brought complex politico-economic, social and cultural problems, but due to the need to compete for survival in international standing, the artists had no time, spirit or energy to explore, address and solve the issues affecting art and design. The only viable option is to follow Western trends, and quite often ‘blindly’.
2. Reproducing from tradition:
Neglected traditional style grew ever more unpopular with real life since hardly anyone continued to study it. The infiltration of new styles and forms to China further accelerated the decline in traditional skills. All that was left in art and design was to reproduce large numbers of traditional images and publications to satisfy Western curiosity about Chinese costume and culture, and to sooth the feeling of responsibility among Chinese for abandoning their ancestral culture.
3. A medley neither Chinese nor Western:
Since the degree of adoption of western style varies, this resulted in many works of art suffering from heartless combination and superficial formalism, which were not only unacceptable to many people but provided no suitable solutions for fashion image representation.

In contrast with the development of Western decorative art and design from complexity towards simplicity, such complexity is at variance with the demands of complex modern society for simplified design at every point. The transition of art nouveau to art deco style is one good example of art movement that transformed from complexity towards simplicity. And this kind of radical development is becoming more and more noticeable in China.

History also tells us that body proportions of fashion figures of different eras revealed that fashion illustrators in general have not attached to one single ideal over time. Consensus of several authors dealing with the subject of beauty, and those fashion icons contributed their views in the book “What is beauty?” (Shefer, 1997) believe that ideals of beauty change from time to time within a given culture and vary significantly from culture to culture at any one time.

Nevertheless, the question of what should be the direction in which contemporary fashion illustration style should be moving in general would appear. With so little written information about contemporary fashion illustrators (as compared to music and entertainment artists), it is obvious that established artists’ and experts’ own comments are best serve as a valuable resource. For instance, as early as those fashion plates materialized in Europe, Mackrell (1988: 302-3) praises the work of Raymond Gaudriault on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ French fashion plates for the exact representation (rather than stylised abstraction), to accurately furnish costume historians, art historians, fashion designers, artists and tailors with a fascinating record of some of the most interesting periods in the history of French dress.

In the study of fashion artist – Ivy Elmer, Horne (1985) recalls the artist’s belief: “In good quality drawing every mark was carefully laid, circles were to be circles and squares squares. The model dress needed to be exactly represented so that a home dressmaker could have drafted a paper

pattern from it. Each seam, all fullness and drapes, collar and cuff details were to be accurately shown.” (Horne 1985: 135-39) Ivy’s efforts in this regard provide us with a detailed record of her particular section of the fashion field from 1929-34. Similarly, in her personal communication with Richard Ely, Danielson (1986: 31) noted the fashion artist’s aspiration: “A more natural look, a more natural woman. ‘Real’ people as opposed to the ‘fashion model’ types...”

According to Barnes (1994: 27), the general decline in drawing skills today (if not the perseverance of abstraction) is not only due to changes in artistic influence on fashion. The abstractive style of representation also led to a reaction against academic training in favour of self-expression. The study and practice of fine art, and anatomy study, which is the basis to produce realism in figure illustration, ceased to be regarded as providing the right background for fashion illustrators. He continues to comment that social and cultural changes also permit a generation to express themselves through abstract rather than figurative means. Barnes further blames that the decline in drawing skills today is due to the shift in emphasis in art education: “Education nowadays provides an academic training that incorporated a range of studies, other than those of specialized context. In other words, emphasis has moved into other areas, believing strongly that a broader spectrum of learning can also produce objects of great beauty, and opposed to the ‘art for art’s sake’ school of thought”.

In today’s contemporary business-oriented environment, where most fashion illustrations are to be adopted in great demand, fashion drawings, in particularly those to be used in advertising and design development, not only must the illustration be able to show what a dress, for example, look like, indicates what it is made of, but must deliver this information in a spirited and convincing way. According to the *New Yorker*, Fred Greenhill the New York fashion artists, who has been able to contribute ads for Lord & Taylor for over a decade, can most skillfully accomplishes all these missions. His drawings are clear, strong, and elegant, with a generous line that is both loose and precise. (Fashion Artist 1982: 27)

Positive Interpretation

Many textual descriptions have attempted to flourish with examples of all the functions appropriated and dramatized by clothes, for instances, dress as an insulating frame or boundary and dress as a margin or connecting tissue; or dress as a material and materializing agency. Nevertheless, the closest portrayal that we artists would give consent to, would have to come from none other than that of the visual representation, commonly known as fashion illustration. In fact, similar delineation can also be cited in Hollander’s book (1978: 452) where she quotes: “It is the pictorial art that dress most resembles, and to which it is inescapably bound, in its changing vision.”

Undeniably, art has always been used, and thought of, as a means of interpreting the nature of world and life to human eyes and ears. Comparable to the description by Hollander on pictorial art, fashion illustration in a similar context, as we would argue, has too been used, and thought of, as a means of interpreting the styles of fashion in a realistic manner to the public. However,

many of the current artistic representations are apparently amongst the most puzzling in reading. Now, it is they that need interpretation.

In visual representation, one of the concerns is the difference of 'reading the artwork' or the difference in the perception. Quite often, the comprehension or interpretation of the fashion style could have been overly translated or misunderstood. According to Danielson (1986: 31) the negativism towards contemporary artists are that the visual characteristics cited were the increased emphasis on design with more flatness, boldness, looseness, and avant-garde effect, and also a lessening of realism and impressionist influence.

Furthermore, innovation does not mean creating something out of nothing; neither does simplification involve blindly stripping things away. The design work must be able to offer solutions to current problems and show awareness of the problems that lie ahead, while remaining in touch with the past. Every area of design, whether architecture, industrial products, cars furniture, textiles and clothing involves similar problems on the level of technology, art, society and tradition. These cannot be concretely addressed in just a few sentences, and it would be beyond any individual's power to attempt to do so.

Canter (1975:126) has the following to say when referring to those artists for providing instant figure alteration in which the figure ideal shifted: "The surgeon could not yet give the head a different dimension; to lengthen legs might have been possible, but it was too serious an undertaking for the sake of fashion which is intrinsically transitory." In the context of fashion illustration, what she is saying is that when fashion illustrators or are creating stylised drawings, there should be a degree of truism in the shift of figure ideal. I for one, would interpret that since it is God's will to create the body in its natural truism form, rather than an alienated one; we, artists or not, should try to pursue this "superior taste" to express the reality in fashion, attitude and social attitude of the future.

One can see why fashion illustrations lose considerable credibility when viewed in retrospect for historic costume information. Our earlier statement, as well as Canter's remark, is in fact not a hostile remark to today's contemporary artists, but a reminder to every artist of both past and present of the importance of such golden rule. Danielson (1989: 38) recalled a sad incident of the early 1930s:

In the fashion illustrations of the early 1930s, such as the typical 1932 interpretation by Benito in the January 15 issue of *Vogue*, additional exaggeration of the late 1920s figure is obvious. As with many movements in the fine arts, the most notable traits of a style are carried eventually to grotesque, finally sterile extremes. The already elongated figure became more extended. In the Benito drawing the figure measures approximately 10 head-lengths. It was not unusual to find head-length measurements of 20 or more. These figures now assumed an aura of unreality. The figure became an impersonal design pattern rather than a human representation.

In the above recollection by Danielson, we can learn that when exaggeration, rather than moderate stylised rendition, is attached, their absurdity cannot be denied. By looking back or revisiting the past, we will notice that most of the historic images are so descriptively representational that permit us to gain a good knowledge of the fashion art history of the time. Furthermore, such documentation provides the socio-psychological aspects of the time, thus able

to induce more realistic effects, less elongation of figures, to generate more convincing results of authentic representations.

At the beginning of the turn of the twentieth century, even though the Gibson Girl drawings by Charles Dana Gibson were not for the most part fashion drawings alone, the artist's authentic style of illustrations were popularly imitated. In this respect, Chase has this to say about the artist and his illustrations: "until the advent of the American Charles Dana Gibson in the nineties, fashion artists had all been men of "mediocre talent" (1954: 112). By revisiting the past, we are able to learn that this well-recognized and influential quality illustration helps to argue that authenticity – in the form of truism – may not be a bad approach in fashion representation; instead being abstractive, a reasonable proportioned-figure drawing is one that is worth pursuing.

Now that we have looked at comments made by respected artists, historians, art critics and so on, what significance does traditions have for us, and how should we go about examining it? As we perceive, these questions can be looked at from two different perspectives:

1. Traditions should not be perceived as something of the past or obsolete

Traditions, in particular in the context of the art and design, provides us with an infinity of aesthetic inspirations and pointers in philosophy of design, whether in the field of lineation, proportion, demarcation, layout, setting, coloration, texture, choice of subject matter or symbolic meaning. It represents the accumulated experience and solutions of our predecessors to problems bearing on visual beauty, function, technique, natural environment and society. When western artists can constantly turned to China and Japan for their traditional creative inspiration and for theoretical backing, as seen for instance in the design styling and concepts of the Art Nouveau movement, why can we be able to unearth new levels of inspiration from our cultural heritage.

2. No need for deliberated or exceptional setting

In addition to its conceptual influence on the level of intellectual ideas, traditional decorative art and design has a subtle transforming effect visually. Thus the artist or designer need not explain his reasons, for his inherited tradition together with his individual visual experience and qualities of his character will naturally combine to form a unique aesthetic.

Conclusion

Looking back over the long history of China, we can discover that the development of Chinese visual art has not taken place in a vacuum. It has constantly mingled with other styles from foreign cultures and adopted fresh techniques in order to maintain its vitality. In the Bronze Age, it absorbed the zoomorphic style of Siberian nomadic peoples; in the Western Han dynasty, apart from the opening of the Silk Road that laid the basis for interchange between Eastern and Western cultures overland, artefacts from sites along the Silk Road showed many designs influenced equally by Eastern and Western styles; with the introduction of Buddhism to China in the Eastern Han, Wei and Chin dynasties, decorative symbolism of Indian origin influenced Chinese religious art; in the Tang dynasty, Middle Eastern and Central Asian art became intermingled into Chinese decorative styles; blue and white porcelain figurative art forms was also introduced into China from the Middle East as late as the Yuan dynasty.

We are living in a period, in which visual art is undergoing key transformations. How we deal with our cultural heritage and traditions, and those of the Western cultures, is going to prove decisive for the future development of fashion representation. Perhaps we can take our strategy from *The Art of Strategy – Sun Tzu’s classic: The Art of War* (Wong 1997) or the Chinese authority on warfare that wrote: “the key to victory is to know both yourself and the other side.” In this context, “knowing the other side” would include understanding the problems experienced by Western art and design in the course of its development and the solutions adopted for dealing with them. This would provide valuable lessons while at the same time we catch up and explore the latest artistic problems in order to master current trends.

Even if fashion illustration is facing the biggest cultural impact in its history, but as long as we choose appropriately, will surely give the fashion illustration domain a richer content. We earnestly hopes that newcomers into the fashion design and fashion illustration profession will no longer regard the rich tradition of visual art, in particular of those great fashion illustrators in the past, as an historical burden but rather as an inexhaustible treasure-store to draw upon.

A real world perspective should be promoted. The illustrator’s attitude toward truism versus artistic license in the garment portrayal should find a right balance or equation. Having a clear understanding of the rendering process and with an understanding or at least an appreciation of the technique is equally important. If one can appreciate fashion illustration as a form of artistic expression that is used to communicate visually, then the visual work produced should be of professional quality. Such work should be able to delineate fashion concepts, communicate visually with others in the fashion industry. The skills adopted should be able to express and promote original designs.

Entering into this new century, it is necessary to establish an illustration style that makes an equation between artistically aesthetic and unambiguously descriptive. For the latter, in the realm of today’s fashion, commercialism has to be taken into serious consideration. Such an equation or balance will enchant on the one side the stylistic rendition, and satisfy on the other the obligation to assist in industrial product comprehension.

In order to adjust to today’s business-oriented environment in the application of fashion illustration, it is time that we set our philosophical ideals that allow the representations to meet today’s goals and needs. Focusing on today’s philosophical ideals and new visions within the limited space of an illustrated page, the style of work should be resolved to contain a generous amount of aesthetical truism, to reflect on the mysterious coexistence of aesthetics and realism before the presence of that most fast changing settings – the world of fashion and beauty.

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While most fashion houses have been quick to adopt illustration and incorporate it into their work, methods have differed from brand to brand. Gucci, for example, has hired young, funny creative Angelica Hicks to work with them on a range of T-shirts, as well as asking Coco Capriñ to create eye-catching murals as part of an advertising campaign. Other brands use illustration in more traditional ways. Claire Barrow imprints original imagery onto her clothing, imbuing each design with a distinct visual identity.Â During this era of fast fashion (when luxury designs can be replicated almost as soon as they step off catwalk), illustration ensures a one-of-a-kind trademark for the brand that canâ€™t be reproduced. Ugo Gattoni. Explore fashion drawings and illustrations from the V&A's collections. Dating from the 1900s to the 1980s, by some of the 20th century's most influential designers.Â As women were called into factories and offices, fashionable dress simplified and shortened. Florrie Westwood. Florrie Westwood (dates unknown) was a London designer active in the early part of the 20th century.Â This new approach focussed on fluidity provided a contrast with the stiff and S-Bend silhouettes of the previous decades. The tunic in the right hand design is made out of pleated material. 5) This illustration shows five designs for girls costume in pencil and colour wash.