

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

DRAWING

ILLUSTRATIONS

Today we might associate illustrated books primarily with children's literature, but pictures have long played a role in all sorts of reading matter. The illustration of written texts has provided artists with both inspiration and gainful employment for centuries. To draw an illustration is to draw out meaning, to interpret, embellish, and breathe life into the written word. Illustrations change our understanding of the books we read—from fairy tales to scientific treatises to novels to the Bible. This exhibition, primarily composed of works in the Getty collection, explores illustration as a branch of draftsmanship during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, highlighting the flourishing of the book arts in France during the Enlightenment and revealing the role of literary inspiration for European artists of the Romantic era.



Non-flash photography and video for personal use are welcome in the exhibition.



ILLUSTRATING BOOKS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

The drawings displayed in this room were all produced during the eighteenth century in or near Paris. The great majority were commissioned by commercial publishers, who provided these designs to printmakers in their employ as guides for engravings. The more precise and linear the style of the original design, the more easily it could be transferred onto and then incised into the printing plate. Copper plates and the skilled craftsmen required to engrave, ink, and print them added considerable expense. Producing an illustrated book therefore required a financial outlay much larger than most artists could afford. For this reason, artists seldom chose the texts they illustrated, working instead as employees of commercial publishers. Notable exceptions include Jean Baptiste Oudry and Jean Honoré Fragonard, whose close reading inspired extensive illustration campaigns of a seemingly more personal nature.

ILLUSTRATION IN THE ROMANTIC AGE

The drawings displayed in this gallery were produced during the nineteenth century in cities throughout Western Europe. With few exceptions, they were not commissioned by publishers or patrons, and, though some were destined for publication, many were made as independent works of art. Nineteenth-century artists who illustrated scenes from literature often did so not as employees paid to translate word faithfully into image but as readers moved and inspired by great writers such as Shakespeare, Goethe, or Byron. Many turned to watercolor—more intimate and spontaneous in its associations than oil paint—as the ideal medium for these deeply personal illustrations.

For those artists who did wish to publish their illustrations, the evolution of print technologies in this period made the dissemination of images substantially cheaper. The advent of lithography, for instance, a technique that did not require the intervention of a trained engraver and that could produce many impressions from a single plate, helped spread Théodore Géricault's and Eugène Delacroix's literary illustrations across Europe in the 1820s. The development of more efficient techniques of wood engraving brought, for example, the biblical illustrations of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld and Gustave Doré into households around the world by the 1860s.

MOREAU LE JEUNE

Jean Michel Moreau, called “le jeune” (the younger), was among the most prolific illustrators in eighteenth-century France. His ability to reinvent himself according to artistic and political fashion sustained him through a long and varied career, spanning the tumultuous half-century from 1760 to about 1810. The son of a wigmaker and the younger brother of another artist (called Moreau “l’ainé,” or the elder), he trained as a painter but switched to drawing full-time in 1759 and quickly found work designing prints after old master paintings. In 1765 he married into a family of book publishers, and his career as an illustrator took off.

Moreau le jeune contributed designs to new editions of literary classics by Ovid, Molière, and Racine as well as to books by his contemporaries Voltaire and Rousseau. A member of the Royal Academy, appointed draftsman and engraver to the king, he might easily have been targeted by the French Revolution at the end of the century, but a deft pivot in both style and subject matter—evident in his illustrations to the *Aeneid* displayed here—allowed him to blend in with the Neoclassical revolutionaries of the younger generation.

FRAGONARD'S *ORLANDO FURIOSO*

When he was in his early fifties and nearing the end of his career as a painter, Jean Honoré Fragonard turned to illustration with astonishing vigor, churning out some two hundred drawings for Ludovico Ariosto's wild, sprawling epic, *Orlando Furioso* (The Frenzy of Roland). Written in the sixteenth century but set in the Middle Ages, the poem features a cast of Christian and Saracen knights, sorcerers, and magical beasts. By the 1780s Ariosto's verse had already inspired artists for centuries, but it still offered Fragonard a fresh and limitless scope for his imagination.

Today more than 175 drawings belonging to this project have been identified. Their dynamism and grace earn them a privileged place in Fragonard's oeuvre and in the history of illustration, even though their exact purpose remains uncertain. Of Ariosto's forty-six cantos, Fragonard illustrated just sixteen, but each in great depth. Turbulent and atmospheric, the drawings are all billowing black chalk and gauzy washes—supremely ill-suited for adaptation in the crisp, linear style of contemporary engravers. Yet the artist's extraordinary thoroughness and attention to textual detail—and even the neat chalk borders that frame each composition—suggest that he intended to have these designs engraved and printed.

LOUDRY'S *FABLES*

Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables*—a collection of moralizing poems about animals and humans—has inspired generations of artists since its initial publication in the late seventeenth century. More than three hundred years later, these verses are still recited from memory by French schoolchildren. Jean Baptiste Oudry's 276 designs, however, created from 1729 to 1734, remain the most celebrated illustrations to this text. Oudry was an *animalier*: an artist who specialized in portraying animals. He served as official painter to the royal hunt and drew inspiration from La Fontaine's rich array of animal subjects.

Executed with a brush on deep blue paper, Oudry's drawings have a painterly appeal. Whether he intended them purely for collectors or as designs for prints is unclear, but he retained all 276 for more than a decade before selling them to Jean Louis Regnard de Montenault. It was Regnard de Montenault who decided to produce an edition of the *Fables* illustrated with Oudry's images. He hired another artist, Charles Nicolas Cochin, to make line drawings on the basis of Oudry's brush drawings so that their designs could be more easily engraved by a team of professional printmakers. Oudry died in 1755 and so never saw the finished product, released in four volumes by 1760.

A BIBLE IN PICTURES

The publication of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's *Bibel in Bildern* (Bible in Pictures) in 1860 marked the culmination of a project that stretched back nearly half a century. As a young man, Schnorr was associated with the Brotherhood of Saint Luke, a German artists collective active in Rome in the 1810s and 1820s. Known as the Nazarenes—for their long hair and eccentric, pseudo-biblical attire—these artists had hoped their work would spark a religious reawakening across Europe. One tactic they envisioned was an edition of the Bible “legible” entirely in pictures. Although that collective ambition was never fulfilled, Schnorr continued to pursue the scheme, steadily producing drawings for it in the decades that followed.

Finally, in 1851, he prevailed on the publisher Georg Wigand to finance his book, which would pair wood engravings after Schnorr's 240 finished designs with Martin Luther's classic German translation of the Bible. It was released in installments between 1852 and 1860 and became for a time the world's most ubiquitous visual representation of the Scriptures. Pious amateurs cherished its illustrations; children learned its stories; missionaries carried it to every corner of the globe, spreading the Gospel in regions where no translation into the local tongue was yet available.

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