



PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE CREATIVE METHOD OF ARTHUR RACKHAM

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance across different industries in Russia. The focus is on understanding how specific sectors align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of ESG metrics with qualitative assessments from industry reports and case studies. Data were collected from a range of Russian companies across various sectors, with particular attention to those heavily impacted by the pandemic.

Results: The findings reveal significant variability in ESG performance across industries. Sectors such as energy and manufacturing showed substantial progress in environmental sustainability, while the social and governance dimensions varied more significantly. The study identifies best practices and challenges faced by different industries in meeting SDGs, highlighting the influence of industry-specific factors on ESG outcomes.

Conclusions: The research underscores the importance of industry-specific strategies in enhancing ESG performance. It suggests that tailored approaches are crucial for different sectors to effectively contribute to sustainable development, particularly during crises. The study also emphasizes the need for continuous monitoring and adaptation of ESG practices to maintain alignment with global sustainability goals.

Keywords: English book illustration. English book art. Fairy tale illustration. Graphic arts. Art Nouveau. Silhouette. Perceptual drawing. Fairy tale. Beauty. Arthur Rackham.

ABORDAGEM FENOMENOLÓGICA PARA O ESTUDO DO MÉTODO CRIATIVO DE ARTHUR RACKHAM

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo tem como objetivo realizar uma análise comparativa do desempenho em termos Ambientais, Sociais e de Governança (ESG) entre diferentes indústrias na Rússia. O foco está em entender como setores específicos se alinham aos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) durante períodos de crise, como a pandemia de COVID-19.

Métodos: A pesquisa utiliza uma abordagem de métodos mistos, combinando análise quantitativa de métricas ESG com avaliações qualitativas de relatórios setoriais e estudos de caso. Os dados foram coletados de várias empresas russas de diferentes setores, com atenção especial para aquelas fortemente impactadas pela pandemia.

Resultados: Os resultados revelam uma variabilidade significativa no desempenho ESG





entre as indústrias. Setores como energia e manufatura mostraram progressos substanciais em sustentabilidade ambiental, enquanto as dimensões social e de governança variaram mais significativamente. O estudo identifica melhores práticas e desafios enfrentados por diferentes indústrias no cumprimento dos ODS, destacando a influência de fatores específicos da indústria nos resultados ESG.

Conclusões: A pesquisa destaca a importância de estratégias específicas para cada setor na melhoria do desempenho ESG. Sugere que abordagens personalizadas são cruciais para que diferentes setores contribuam efetivamente para o desenvolvimento sustentável, especialmente durante crises. O estudo também enfatiza a necessidade de monitoramento contínuo e adaptação das práticas ESG para manter o alinhamento com os objetivos globais de sustentabilidade.

Palavras-chave: Ilustração de livro inglês. Arte de livro inglês. Ilustração de conto de fadas. Artes gráficas. Art Nouveau. Silhueta. Desenho perceptual. Conto de fadas. Beleza. Arthur Rackham.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the work of Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) in book graphics, which provides ample opportunities to follow the stylistic development of figurative language in England at the end of the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries. Back then, Art Nouveau flourished, which helped the master reveal his potential. Rackham's fantastic illustrations were popular throughout 46 years of his creative life (1893-1939). This period coincided with the Golden Age of American illustration (1880-1920) (Briggs, 1995; Hamilton, 2010; Hudson, 1960; Kowalski, 2020). Rackham's original drawings were full of drama and had a significant impact on the audience of the time (Dalby, 1991; Doyle et al., 2018; Hudson, 1960; Kowalski, 2020; Meyer, 1983; Nodelman, 1984; Rackham, 1979). They offered an innovative, original, and interesting view of life, giving new interpretations to classic texts (Hudson, 1960, p. 140). Thus, we need to pay special attention to the artist.

By examining the creative works by Rackham which cover such literary genres as children's books, fairy tales, folklore, plays, and librettos, it is possible to comprehend the background for the development of English art between the late 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries.

Considering Rackham's work, we can better understand the development of a unique neo-Gothic style within the Nordic style. This style combines the original artistic strategies of Art Nouveau, traditional Victorian art, oriental graphics, and medieval manuscripts.





2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars consider the diversity of figurative language and the expressiveness of artistic means, as well as the role of Rackham's heritage in the formation and evolution of the Art Nouveau style in the English book illustration of the late 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries (Dalby, 1991; De Freitas & Larkin, 1975; Gettings, 1976; Hamilton, 2010; Hudson, 1960; Meyer, 1983). Over the last 10 years, a great number of scientific works on Rackham's style have been published (Bonfitto, 2020; Doyle et al., 2018; Kalugina, 2014; Kowalski, 2020; Kruse, 2020; Stevens, 2022). Unfortunately, none of the authors adequately explains the artist's worldview that influenced the formation of his creative method.

For a long period, the English book graphics have not attracted the attention of Russian scholars. Only from 2005 to 2020, publications about some works by Rackham began to appear in Russian periodicals. Dedicated to this extraordinary artist, such studies prove that today his art is more relevant than ever (O.A. Alekseeva, A.O. Belskaya, D.L. Lebedev).

However, Russian art criticism has not developed a systematic idea of Rackham's creative method and artistic heritage as an illustrator of English books. The English book illustration and the national art and the artist's interaction with the artistic space around him have not been sufficiently studied, which could promote a more objective understanding of the ideological complexities of the synthesis of arts contained in Rackham's creative method.

The study aims to identify Rackham's creative method in the context of forming and developing the style of Art Nouveau in the English book graphics between the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

3 METHODS

To achieve the goal, we used a qualitative method. This is an indispensable way to collect, process, and analyze information about specific individuals and their personal meanings (Nechaeva, 2012).

The study can be classified as biographical research since it follows a person's entire life and their internal dynamics, embeddedness in society, subjective control, and acquired experience. This biographical research meets M. Kohli's regulatory requirements, in particular: 1) the article presents Rackham's views on life in general;





2) the article considers the relationship between Rackham's individual life and the development of graphic art; 3) the article interprets Rackham's activity in the context of everyday life.

In addition, the analysis of the artist's creative method involved the use of art criticism and historical and cultural techniques. We used the methods of iconographic, typological, comparative-typological, semiotic, comparative-stylistic, and comparative-historical methods, as well as systemic-historical, complex, and interdisciplinary approaches. The main principle of our analysis is historicism.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During Rackham's creative life, printing technology advanced significantly with the introduction of zincography. This new printing process eliminated the need for engraving, and the artist began to work directly with the machine. No need for accented drawing allowed the master to fully unleash his creativity and opened up new opportunities for wider use of color. Rackham was able to create the first color frontispiece in 1896. His early illustrations did not reveal rich imagination and ardent manifestation of fantasy that emerged in later works.

By the beginning of the 20th century, several books had been published that dwelled on Rackham's inimitable personal style that first manifested itself around 1905 and subsequently made the artist famous. Rackham captured a magical and mysterious world with a unique flowing line, reminiscent of the wriggling tendril of a tree root. This original organic form possessing a distinctive feature and even objective side gives rise to the following associations: penetration into something related; enveloping and constraining interweaving; holding and interacting unity.

The artist's creative style was influenced by a new method of printing in color, for which he had to master watercolor paints. Rackham used an advanced Gothic style in his works. Borrowing the architectural structure for the compositions of his illustrations from medieval manuscripts, he added the free-flowing lines typical of Japanese engravings to his neo-Gothic images. They contributed to the manifestation of fantasy, namely turning to the Gothic era with its graphic vision, inscribing the image into a closed frame and expressing the illustrator's imagination in the best possible way. His wife Edith Starkey also had a direct impact on the artist, teaching him a watercolor technique and developing his artistic talent.

The perception of Rackham's illustrations refers the reader to reality presented





in a graphic form, combines subjective and objective aspects, and lies at the intersection of three-dimensionality, light, and proportionality. The artist filled his creations with his own understanding of reality and phenomena in their true material form. Due to his perception, images revealed themselves, and the master saw himself in another world and comprehended other forms of knowledge by interpreting and explaining the creation of fictional images, where objects are presented substantially, provided that the latter is given from a certain side of sensory existence perceived with the help of perceptual experience. Therefore, his drawings have a certain effect on the recipient. However, this phenomenological modality of images presupposes a connection with some special sources. This is the only way to create an aesthetically pleasing work (Statkevich, 2009).

The artist also used an image-modeling technique, including a universal toolkit of artistic means of image-making in art: common aesthetic qualities and properties within the complex of expressive means of the English folk culture, such as hyperbolization, fabulousness, and variability. Typical requirements in form-making are as follows: organization of forms, plastic integrity of the image, static character, and spatio-temporal syncretism.

Rackham beat the challenge of the new time and began to use neutral symbols understandable to both adults and children. The artist decided to illustrate fairy tales because he regarded them as the easiest way to convey the Christian truth about the world and the laws of life: love, virtue, lyrics, fidelity, friendship, marital ties, and service. Losing these qualities, his illustrations are filled with melancholy (Perlik, 2020). The fairy-tale world attracted him with its opportunity to understand the universe and his place in it, good and evil, and taught him to cope with difficulties. Using the context of a fairy tale world, the illustrator, in search of escapism, was given a limitless opportunity to realize unconscious and subconscious archetypes. He gained fame for his grotesque characters executed in a pen technique that he adopted from Aubrey Beardsley. In the case of the latter, they were expressed in a satirical form but Rackham gave his playful fantastic creatures a bewitching charm (Silver, 1999; Stevens, 2022).

Unlike the tradition of continental Europe, the English book graphics evolved slowly and followed a different path. Most artists based their works on past achievements. A growing interest in fairy tale images, which began in the Victorian era, covers the art of illustration from the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries (until the 1930s). This trend was associated with the general fascination with mysticism and





parallel worlds and remained the main theme in English art before World War I. It embraces many literary pieces and works by graphic artists and painters.

Rackham's stylistic manner inclined towards narrative color illustrations typical of the English book graphics of the time. They were based on a detailed linear drawing with elastic, clearly defined, flowing, and sinuous contour lines. While smoothly intertwining with each other, they form the contours of the drawing and give it an additional dimension. Playing with pressure, the artist created contrasts of thickness and richness of the black color. Rackham carefully considered the costumes of his characters and the setting of the story in accordance with the historical time and country the author lived in.

Over time, Rackham's style further evolved; the master adopted a more realistic manner. Trees became smoother, less withered and twisted. In the illustrations of the subsequent period, Rackham gradually moved away from linearity and graphics. The illustrations became more picturesque, bright, and saturated.

In book art, there was no other English artist who understood typographic rules and book page proportions, equally dividing the space between text and image through a dynamic or static composition, to the same degree as Rackham. He skillfully used color to achieve the desired effect. For example, to build up tension in the scene, he used dark colors and paid special attention to perspective. This increased the emotional impact so that a giant became scarier for a child, and a bird's eye view created a feeling of loneliness. The creepy effect is intensified through switching between a close-up and a landscape view. With curved lines superimposed on one another, Rackham emphasized the action, amusing one's imagination with a simple line and making the entire image more expressive.

If we consider Rackham a mere illustrator of children's books, we belittle the meaning of his work. He represents a whole world of children's books and marks a special chapter in the history of children's book graphics of the Art Nouveau era in England. The master became a valuable part of the world culture, one of the few artists deeply adored by children of all ages and from different countries.

With a deep understanding of the source text and special sensitivity, Rackham selected the most important fragments of the plot for his visual interpretations. This attitude brought him fame as an artist and predetermined the direction of his creative activity, almost entirely devoted to book illustrations.

The conceptualization of fine arts combined with Rackham's creative method required a comprehensive definition of this process. Due to a retrospective study of the





theory and practice of this phenomenon, it is possible to formulate a designation based on the comprehension and integration of concepts in the context of coordination of dual artistic means entering a fantasy as a special integrative system of illustration. All this shows a united vision of the reborn world in the artist's illustrations. Thus, fantasy constitutes the sought-after principle used to recreate reality in the master's art. Following a broad interpretation of the method as the principle of transforming something, we can assume that the essence of his creative method is the principle of imagination. In other words, it is based on the replication of pictorial and fairy-tale space through the art of illustration.

By studying Rackham's art of illustration for both adult and children's books in the context of Art Nouveau, we can see the development of his style and worldview. He refused to follow the Victorian tradition, the Western and Eastern graphics, his contemporaries, and medieval manuscripts. After a complex modification, he synthesized the neo-Gothic English book art and the Art Nouveau style.

Rackham illustrated books written by others. His images were the product of a synthetic vision system in such a way that they existed almost independently of the words surrounding them. The words were simply sentences to be visually executed by the illustrator. "To evaluate his illustrations, he must be considered a co-author", wrote Susan Meyer (1983, p. 157) who studied the artist's work.

Rackham's images were as unforgettable as the prose he illustrated and as distinguishable as the voice of the author accompanied by the artist. Due to his extraordinary poetic imagination, Rackham's popularity grew noticeably. His world is ethereal and mysterious, filled with gnomes, fairies, goblins, and elves, creating a fairy-tale atmosphere full of wonders and adventures. His images seem otherworldly, conveying a mesmerizing visual story page by page.

Our study of Rackham's creative heritage, endowed with such a bright and unique talent, leaves room for further research, in particular using the intermodal method to study Rackham's works in the context of the development of book illustration during the Art Nouveau era both at the level of holistic structure and at the level of a specific work of art with the help of art historical analysis based on visual material.

Rackham's creative method is based on unique techniques of aesthetic images, i.e., a synthesis of expressive neo-Gothic means designed in the style of the Art Nouveau era. His views were undoubtedly influenced by the development of English book graphics in the second half of the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries. His unique drawing technique was affected by the general development of book graphics





and printing trends of the Victorian era.

Rackham's creative method is characterized by the original system of aesthetic depiction. It merges expressive means of the diachronic interaction of artistic structures, namely Art Nouveau and Neo-Gothic. The latter dates back to medieval art based on the principles of stylization.

Rackham's approach to working with children's literature of various genres is based on special compositional techniques developed by the artist. He used them to illustrate children's books and proceeded from the synthesis of expressive means and the multi-functional idea of changing views on the nature of art. Typical illustrations in such books are concerned with aspects of reception, fascination with a fantastic fictional world, and the use of funny and entertaining images.

While adapting to the new technological capabilities of color printing, Rackham developed his creative method. It is based on the synthesis of Victorian graphic art, the reinterpretation of images from medieval manuscripts, and oriental engravings. Based on these ideas, the artist turned his drawings within the neo-Gothic movement into a unique way of artistic writing of the English fine arts. Studying his specific manner of representation and figurative language helps better understand the system and describes the essence of children's illustrations. In his works, Rackham showed methods of constructing visual space, imposing a psychological impact on the viewer by creating a unique form of existence, and exercising emotional control over the viewer's worldview at the subconscious level.

In his creative method, Rackham used image-modeling components, including a universal toolkit of artistic means of image-making in art: common aesthetic qualities and properties within the complex of expressive means of the English folk culture. There is also a form-making component that ensures the alignment of various artistic forms.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The defining factors in the development of Rackham's creative method were both biographical circumstances, reflecting the historical events the artist witnessed himself, and intersections with individual creative routes, artistic strategies of creative unions, and artistic concepts of England at the time. Various periods in Rackham's creative life formed several distinctive features that became common to the illustrator's practice and together determined his artistic individuality.





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