

Artistic Quality in a Scientific Illustration

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Scientific illustration is a visual representation of objects and concepts in order to record, represent and convey scientific knowledge. It has been seen in various fields of science from the early days of the modern science of the 16th century. In the present era, scientific illustrations are used in scholarly papers, medical books, picture books, textbooks and scientific magazines in order to support effective scientific communication and education.

A scientific illustration is different from an artistic work. The primary aim of scientific illustrations is to provide scientific knowledge and information without giving a misunderstanding. In contrast, there are many types of purposes of art, which include self-expression, creation, problem presentation, and seeking and expressing beauty. In addition, an artistic work is usually opened to interpretation and tends to appeal to sensitivity of audience.

On the other hand, a scientific illustration is capable of being appreciated as a work of art. For example, natural history illustrations are often displayed in art exhibitions. Many children imagine the outside the solar system while seeing scientific illustrations of the space. A beautiful and creative graphical abstract can attract researchers' attention. Thus, a scientific illustration has not only the effect of conveying knowledge, but also the effect as the art. Then, where does such "artistic quality" come from?

In this presentation, I will discuss artistic quality in a scientific illustration, focusing on the three points of views: the beauty inherent in objects drawn, the beauty and sense of values in scientific knowledge, and the individuality and creativity of illustrators.

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