
Design/Arts/Culture

Vol 3, No 2 (2023)

Image and Memory

MYTHS OR MEMORIES

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doi: [10.12681/dac.31503](https://doi.org/10.12681/dac.31503)

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To cite this article:

Manou, P. (2023). MYTHS OR MEMORIES. *Design/Arts/Culture*, 3(2), pp. 89–95. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dac.31503>



PORTFOLIO

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A VIVID INTERPRETATION THROUGH
ILLUSTRATION

Design | Arts | Culture Vol. 3
ISSN: 2732-6926

Image and Memory N° 2
January 2023

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Prodromos Manou was born in Piraeus, Greece. Studied graphic design at T.E.I. Athens. He received a postgraduate degree on Marketing and Smart Packaging from the UNiWA. Since March 2019, he has been a PhD candidate.

He works as a graphic designer, specialising in printed designs and electronic applications of visual communication. His work varies from designing book covers, records covers and posters, starting off with a major music record label, the PolyGram Records. His work consists of collaborations with large hotels. In the last 20 years he designed the interior of two museums (The Folklore Museum of Maroussi and the Special Operations Museum in Goudi). He attended engraving and iconography seminars with teachers such as V. Haro, G. Gourzi, A. Komianou, V. Tsalamata and hagiography lessons with G. Kordis. He loves to carve wooden mahogany walking sticks, enriching his large collection.

Since 2019 he has been illustrating books for Arteon publications. In February 2022, he participated in a painting exhibition at the Greek-French Association with the theme "Touching Holiness". Since 2001 he has been teaching Graphic Design & Multimedia at the Department of Graphic Design and Visual Communication in UNIWA, he is in charge for graduate theses and is part of the Design Research Lab of the University of Western Attica.

MYTHS OR MEMORIES

A VIVID INTERPRETATION THROUGH ILLUSTRATION

Abstract

In the old times, not so old and distant as we think now, the elders also known as 'the moonstruck' would gather after a long day at work around a fire, a hearth, and as they removed the weariness of the whole day, they would invite the younger members of the family and would share their memories.

Keywords

Greek illustrated
book

memory

legends

stories

elves

fantasy

moonstruck

Stories of their past, stories they heard of or seen with their own eyes, stories they witnessed and stories they only listened to. Stories so old, from memories faded, forgotten, narratives of incidents changed, that connect with events leading to legends, and folk tales. Tales born from tradition and memory.

A very old memory, with a plot easy to understand and usually local - a place near the place of those storytellers. Those entertainers of the not so far away world, would produce images in the minds of their audience, colours and forms as they were responsible for keeping that legend and memory alive. The result of that storytelling around the fire was thousands of images.

Then the images would turn to words from that young audience that would grow older and become those elder near the fireplace. It was their time to disseminate the images in the heads of the next generation, and keep those memories alive.

Strong memories with no roots, no beginning, but a circular movement of narration. From one generation to the other, those mythical stories may have developed from historical events and maybe events that had happened to someone, brave enough to share them later. Then, he would alter them, change them or even add extravagance or imagination to draw curiosity and admiration. Concerning the source of a myth and legend stories, it is a grey area. What we know is that old memories would grow and transform – every time the fable is told - to something elusive that only caused awe. The purpose of the book I illustrated is to remind us of such places, places lived in the minds of storytellers, in the minds of those ‘image generators’.

The intentional use of traditional techniques and colours of these illustrations proves the need to connect our new world with the invisible world of tradition and myth. The ill-favoured stiff forms of creatures, in most cases with a scowling disturbing face of a man-animal allegation, is the depiction of that folk story once more. A depiction, this time on paper, using egg-tempera and a more medieval aesthetic that is to affiliate those dark ages when myths and scary stories thrived. Those fictitious beings are also infused with the digital overdeveloped world of the cinema and electronic games. Those images are not unknown to us, they are different but this generation has a main sphere of forms and images already created, already as an extrinsic memory. Daring forms that stand out and are familiar with that strange knowledge of knowing what a creature looks like.

These paintings were firstly created with charcoal and then using pigments, so the mythical places and beings came to life. The visual artwork was emphasized later with digital means, something that proves the need of the human eye to see the realism and extravagance - an obvious need for this specific book. A strange familiar knowledge of those creatures is the result of this modern world that has already prolonged their place – from tradition and folk stories to our new needs and ways of entertainment. Those creatures are our unexceptional- and yet so unusual – protagonists in this modern world. The creatures can connect with the memories of the past and the imagination of the present but the medium of illustration is the first most direct way of transformation. It is the way that the human mind works fully, because it uses its own power to create the details of a verbal world.

These illustrations, a direct translation of the word of mouth, deriving from memory, history and human fantasy, are necessary in this world and own a task to provoke the viewers’ precious imagination and put the mind to ‘work’. A mind active with impulses from technology and digital art, open to be reminded of the source of tradition.

The illustrated characters are as follows:

Vrahnas is an evil spirit who comes in our nightmares, whose ultimate purpose is to strangle us when we are asleep. His power is in his nightcap, so whoever manages to pull it from him, Vrahnas becomes his slave (Figure 1).

Giants are both male and female, very tall and strong creatures who can even pull out whole mountains and who build their castles with huge boulders (Figure 2).

The three-eyed giant is the Cyclops of ancient times. He usually cooks and eats human flesh, often stranded sailors (Figure 3).

Goblins are humans that have been born on the twelve days after Christmas and an ill fate has fallen upon them. In order to protect a child from becoming a goblin, he is fastened from his wrist to his mother’s with a rope of garlic (Figure 4).

Goblin with stick is lame, hunchbacked and trembling. The winged witch goblin is an old, mean, ugly witch and her eyes are of different color. Both of them intend only harm to humans, using magic potions (Figures 5-6). The last goblins (Figures 7-10):

Peridromos is an unstoppable eater, never sharing his food.

Mandrakoukos is hiding behind the fences and at night he goes out, teasing on passing women. His nose is like soft dough.

Malaperdas is polluting the food while still being cooked and finally Paganos, also called the First, The Big One, is the Head of the Goblins.



Figure 1. 'Vrahnas'
Egg tempera painting
and digital processing
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Figure 2. 'Greek Giant' – Egg tempera painting
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Figure 3. Three-eyed pirate' – Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou



Figure 4. 'Goblins'
Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou

Figure 5.
'Goblin with stick'
Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou



Figure 6.
'Witch with wings'
Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou



Figure 7. 'Goblins'
(up, left) Peridromos, (up, right) Mandrakoukos,
(down, left) Malaperdas, (down, right) Paganos'
Egg tempera painting
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