

# Children's Fairy Tales Between Illustrations and Conceptual Art Visions of Storytelling

**Associ. Prof. Dr. Eman Osama Mohamed Salem**

Associate Professor – Graphic Department Faculty of Fine Arts – Helwan University

[emanti76@gmail.com](mailto:emanti76@gmail.com)

- **introduction:**

Fairy tales are a form of entertainment for children, but that doesn't stop adults from enjoying it either. It begins by entering a fictional world and ends with a powerful message that aims to teach the reader difference between right and wrong using binary contrasts: (good hero vs. bad guy, and good vs. evil). To add to the story, pair the fun and beautiful illustrations with the text of the fairy tales. But how can contemporary art with its different directions and styles, which uses similar themes and concepts, translate fairy tales through visual storytelling, and achieving the same written effect on its audience!

The trend towards modernist visions of visual storytelling is not new for the countries of the developed world, but it is still in the field of very special experiments, we cannot put it in the form of a global generalization and is thus far from the Arab world in a way. Therefore, this research deals with observing the impact of the cultural power of literature and drawings of fairy tales, which form the child's conscience from the earliest age, and the possibility of consciously relying on this important aspect in shaping his/her conscience, and benefiting from it as a source of knowledge and control over the cultural and artistic inputs of our children who are eager to learn and experiment. Especially with the accumulated momentum of stories, literary illustrated works and illustrations for children's stories in the world, and the remarkable tendency of many contemporary artists to draw inspiration from children's stories, especially fictional ones, and to present their content in their conceptual artworks.

And by looking at the experiences of specialized art museums for children in the Western world, including some museums that are devoted only to storytelling - as will be presented - to stop us from understanding the reasons why children in the developed West are associated with art at an early age and raise their awareness of its forms and value, not only through existing illustrations. In the fairy tales the child reads before bed – though we never underestimate their importance and artistic value – but through other forms of art that are more modern and contemporary. His intelligent instinct, good direction, and participation in the wide world, makes him able to absorb the most complex artistic methods, and perhaps the artist was able to deliver his conceptual works to the consciousness of the recipient as long as he had a strong weapon, which is the tales and favorite stories, helped by the strong attachment of children now to the dominant forces of the era of media which is the most dazzling and attractive.

- **Keywords:**

Fairy Tales; Illustrations; Conceptual Art; Storytelling

- **Research problem:**

1- How to take advantage of visual storytelling methods in presenting and simplifying modern concepts and artistic trends for the child in childhood, through the diversity of visual formation methods, and their development from just a two-dimensional illustration in a book to other conceptual forms that have the ability to attract the child in the current era?

2- What is the artist's role in integrating his own artistic vision and his inspiration from children's fairy tales or fantasy, and how to take advantage of that artistic and cultural bridge to form the creative side and develop the child's imagination?

- **Research Methodology:**

The research is based on following the (critical-analytical) method.

- **Research limits:**

The temporal limits revolve around the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD until the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD. The spatial limits are Europe, America, and some of the distinctive experiences of Asian artists.

- **First: Children's literature and illustrated stories between the past and the elements of the modern era:**

Children's literature, especially graphic fiction, has a great potential to influence the development of learning, behavior and intelligence. Children's literature provides opportunities for reflection and awareness, gives them an appreciation of their own cultural heritage and the heritage of others, and helps them create and develop skills. Stories in general and fiction in particular have the potential to promote emotional and psychological development, as they contain moments of crisis, when characters take moral positions that children see as a model. As for the form of the illustrated story in the life of the child now, it has changed a lot, with the spread of the Internet, which greatly affected the interest of children and young people in reading. The ease of access to technology and the high dependence on it creates children who have difficulty imagining, and this is the role that stories played. The medium is important, because it increases the attractions of storytelling, and we need to maintain the centrality and role of fictional storytelling in our culture, as it is a major and important way to understand ourselves and the world.

While the change in children's literature due to cultural influences has been evident over the past several decades, current trends are often focused on digital and technological developments rather than the 2d arts. In addition to print and publishing capabilities, authors and illustrators strive to keep the attention of children accustomed to the fast-paced sensory input of digital materials, such as computer games and video shows, smart phones, and tablet applications, more than books and stories printed on paper. Thus, exposure to digitization, rapid access to information, unlimited openness to social networks, and easy knowledge through search engines, which has changed the ideas, themes and viewpoints represented in children's literature. There is an increased need for more interactive formats that invite children to turn

back to book and reading, and also include shifts in the intellectual perspective and concepts through which stories are told.

Changes in the production of contemporary children's books are not only related to digital influences, but are also related to the impact of the cultural and artistic movement in the late twentieth century, known as Post Modernism, which led to changes in all areas of arts, so scholars of children's literature highlighted the important characteristics of Illustrated Children stories which are Associated with Postmodernism. One of the most notable of those connections is when illustrations tell a story entirely different from words or show a different point of view that constitutes a parallel creativity of the literary text.

- **Second: The fairy tale as one of the branches of children's literature:**

The term "fairy tale" comes from a revised origin of the French word Faerie or Feeree, which come from the words Fay - Ry, meaning "land of the elves". The term was soon borrowed and used by the English, to describe a group of magical creatures supposedly hiding among the woods. Thus it became common to classify any stories of a peculiar nature as "fairy tales". But the stories themselves are much older than that name, as many early fairy tales put forth logical theories about the origin of life or seek explanations for the laws of nature, just as myths aim. From these ancient folk legends steeped in regional traditions, early folk tales began to take shape, then evolve into shorter allegories, rooted in successive cultural legacies, and greatly altered by oral transmission.

- **Third: Children's literature and storytelling as a means of communicating with art:**

It is essential to understand how children perceive and respond to art and literature, and to pay attention to the broad theoretical framework of visual arts education, with a focus on both the epistemological view of art and its connection to constructivist theories of learning. Therefore, theorists have suggested that reading and writing in arts involves young children's frequent visits to contemporary art galleries and museums, and the importance of their contact with forms, events, visual images, and real people during storytelling, in a manner equal to reading literature itself, which enhances their thinking about art through play and enjoyment. Therefore, it was a reason to develop these visual representations of lines and shapes in children's literary fiction into more diversity and richness in artistic structures, media and compositions, which support the development of their understanding, making and appreciation of art. If the stories are presented to the child in an attractive artistic framework, he will be associated with them quickly and its paintings will form in his conscience a tenderness, an aesthetic taste and an indirect awareness of art. To this end, appropriate types, forms and methods for teaching arts to children in early childhood must be developed. Although there are differences in the response to art among different ages, psychologists have found that familiarity with art and the use of the artistic medium and awareness of it in the cultural, historical and literary context, affects the development of the aesthetic taste in the child, whether in two-dimensional or three-dimensional forms or any other contemporary art forms, to encourage the child towards an appreciation of art, and to integrate stimuli and ideas in making their own artworks, and even their ability to understand and prefer them, and this is what we can achieve by blending the world of stories with art and presenting it smoothly to the child.

- **Fourth: About the classic illustrations in the storytelling of fairy tales:**

Storytelling is an essential component of human communication, and children especially need stories in order to develop their communication skills and ability to express themselves. The illustrations also attract visual stimulation, and capture the narrative structure for younger readers. Children respond to pictures differently from literature because the spatial part of the brain creates new pathways, and the analogy between drawing and literature is achieved through the relationship between writer and painter. Therefore, illustrations in books can have more meaning than the words themselves. Those images and drawings in stories are important for conveying the message inside the book. Illustrations emphasize the importance of this meaning, as images have an effective ability to visualize and imagine the events and heroes of stories.

Although the popularity of fairy tales increased in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these illustrations did not start with the Victorian era - in which interest in children's literature increased - many of the fairy tales we know today date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD, including the fairy tales of the German brothers Grimm - "Jacob Grimm" (1785 - 1863 AD) and "Wilhelm Grimm" (1786 - 1859 AD) - they were later followed by the Danish writer "Hans Christian Andersen" (1805 - 1875 AD). The essential links between children and fairy tales were not recognized until after the efforts of these chosen ones in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and today they are credited with a renewed interest in transferring fairy tales from their long oral forms of audio to written, where a boom was formed with them in the accompanying illustrations, and continued development and creativity among the storytelling and the visual art in an eternal and uninterrupted relationship. Each generation sought to seal the tradition with the freshness of language that reflected the interests of the target audience, and for the Victorians this meant highlighting the romantic aspects of the stories, as well as providing illustrations with the mastery of the great artists, what was called the "Golden Age" (1880: 1920 AD) for children's literature and illustrations.

- **Fifth: Fairy tales as one of the sources of inspiration for artists in modern art:**

With the end of the Golden Age, a new standard of realism began to creep into the interpretation of classic and new fairy tales, elements exacerbated by the tragedies of the two world wars and global upheaval in Europe and America. These new tales became imbued with a realistic dose of imaginative elements, as children were forced to deal with reality as much as fiction. Several authors began adding some ugly facts of contemporary life to the magical realms of fairies, such as abuse and social and family problems. Contemporary versions of fairy tales have been marked by greater intellectual diversity and experimentation as both international barriers have collapsed. The cross-fertilization of folk stories led to a greater representation of diverse cultures, particularly with the entry of Asian and African myths into European stories. Contemporaries put forward new topics and concepts, such as the meaning of existence, human beings, and others. The new visions came primarily for adults, and saw aspects of politicization gain more attention, such as feminism, social justice, and others, but another trend continued to strive to preserve the original purpose and meaning of ancestral stories. The research presents a number of artworks that express inspiration from fairy tales, such as: (Alice's Adventures in Wonderland) for Oskar Kokoschka, **Charles Blackman,**

Salvador Dalí. Other artwork inspired from (little Red Riding Hood) story, for the artist Warja Honegger-Lavater.

- **Sixth: Conceptual treatments in visual storytelling of fairy tales:**

An idea or concept is the most important aspect of a work of art. When the artist uses a conceptual form of art, meaning that all planning and decisions are made in advance and execution is self-evident, the idea becomes a machine that makes and moves the artwork. Conceptual art, which began in the 1970s, constitutes an important dimension of contemporary art, strongly crowding out traditional art forms. This type of art did not depend on the criteria of form and material only, but relied primarily on ideas, meanings and themes. Conceptual art can take many forms, including: performance art, body art, installation, video installation, and others. When we think of the performance and visual and conceptual treatments of fairy tales, our thoughts go to princes and princesses, castles and magic, and the most important part of the story is the happy ending. But the tales we do know are often remarkably complex, and some analysts have scrutinized their intellectual construction and conceptualization, and found them to be beautifully wrapped versions of horrific myths, sometimes with seemingly bleak or sad visions. Such as: Beauty and the Beast, Puss-in-Boots, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Pinocchio, The Frog Prince and Little Mermaid.

- **Seventh: Three-dimensional conceptual visions in the storytelling of fairy tales:**

Large-scale visual fairy tale treatments developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through developments in film, video, animation, and multimedia technologies, and improved technology also led to a wider dissemination of fairy tales, aided by an interest in text-to-image translation methods and techniques. As we have mentioned, conceptual art carries a number of artistic styles with three-dimensional techniques, such as installation in space, interactive works, and sculpture.

- **Eighth: The artist between his creative vision and imaginative narration of children's stories:**

1- The artist working in the field of storytelling for children performs a balanced process between the intellectual concept of the story and the aesthetic vision that belongs to his own methods and ideas, a process that requires a lot of thinking so that the work does not become mere formal illustrations only, and at the same time maintains the recipient's passion and curiosity to reveal the ambiguity and comprehension of the artwork.

2- Children's fairy tales have deep roots in the cultural heritage, and the artist must be careful in delving into it, because it represents a radical change that may not be remedied on the child later. But some artists made a clear separation between the original story and the artwork, and accordingly the storytelling turned into a new conceptual work that could be rejected or approved.

3- Art is a force that has a great impact on the child if it is mixed with imaginative storytelling. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the artist who is interested in these visions to inculcate the roots, methods and trends of art indirectly in the consciousness of children at an early stage.

4- The field of visual storytelling for children's literature was not able to present anything new, except with bold experiments such as the previous conceptual experiments.

5- The artist was never far from the developments of his time, and that is why technology for some of them represented the basis for building the artwork in varying proportions, even if it was just auxiliary factors to speed up the production of artwork only, such as 3D printing, paper prints, sound and light installation and others from a purely technical aspect.

• **Ninth: The Museum's role in integrating storytelling and plastic arts. Related experiences:**

The museum is one factor that contributes to a child's early appreciation of art. There is a research evidence showing that art can have a positive effect on young children (up to the age of eight) when art is associated with various activities in childhood. Art is no longer isolated as a creative endeavor, but is used as a means to help children learn and understand the world around it. Therefore, we find that among the first people interested in this aspect are art museums, and children's museums in particular, and the development of art-making programs that involve the public and parents with their children in the works in changing or permanent exhibitions. For example, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York / America has developed a wide range of programs to engage children of all ages. In the museum, workshops and discussions take place between visitors, children and their families, and artists. Later, similar models were adopted by many museums in America and Europe.

The goals of some museums have also increased to link art and literature, as several museums have been built that specialize in or include a storytelling methodology. America has a large share in this field with a number of quality museums. We can say that its beginning dates back to the Museum of Film History of the Walt Disney Corporation in the city of entertainment games (Disney Land) in America, France, Japan and China, and most recently in Algeria. It includes a special conceptual display of dolls, statues, paintings, and illustrated scripts for films and animations produced by The Walt Disney Corporation and its characters to preserve and promote it as a heritage. Even today, the children's stories presented by The Walt Disney Corporation are associated more with our minds than the art and film therapists in other production companies.

The research presents a number of museums specialized in children's storytelling in Europe and America, including: (Story Museum) in Oxford / England, and (Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling) in New York, USA,

• **Results:**

1- The field of illustrations is likely to be further developed in form and content, in line with the elements of the modern era and its practical requirements.

2- The psychology of the child and his cognitive and cultural construction have changed in the era of technology, and with it his requirements for enjoyment and learning have changed as well. This prompted specialist in the field of children's literature, drawings and performances, to search for ways to fill his visual and intellectual passion, including the tendency to use plastic art as a mediator.

- 3- Children's responses to contemporary art mixed with fairy tales are a good and quick indicator of the association of concepts and ideas that came with the stories in their minds in a familiar visual language through likable and influential fictional characters.
- 4- The importance of the trend towards integrating children's literature with the different trends of plastic art, constitutes an image of awareness of art at an early age, and has a direct impact on building the cognitive, emotional and social aspects of the child.
- 5- There are many visual and conceptual plastic treatments that can embody fairy tales in children's literature, but the response was greater through stereoscopic and interactive displays, which require a lot of understanding, experimentation and culture.
- 6- In the field of children's literature, the heritage of stories may be distorted under the weight of political and social changes like any cultural product.

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