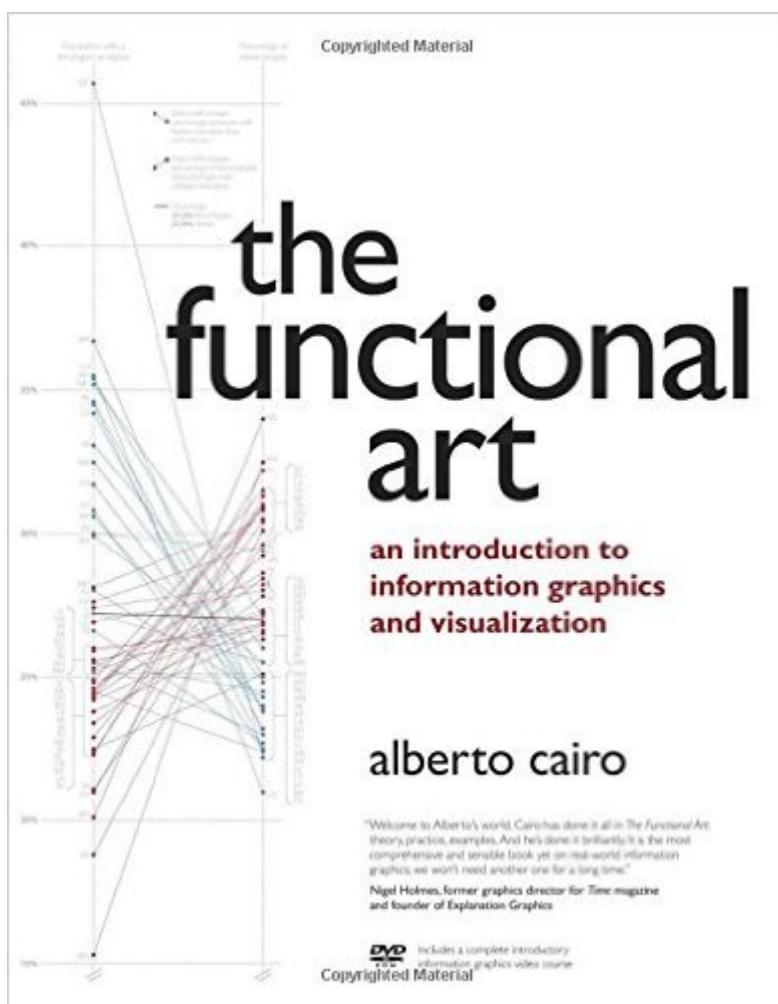


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# The Functional Art: An Introduction To Information Graphics And Visualization (Voices That Matter)



## Synopsis

Unlike any time before in our lives, we have access to vast amounts of free information. With the right tools, we can start to make sense of all this data to see patterns and trends that would otherwise be invisible to us. By transforming numbers into graphical shapes, we allow readers to understand the stories those numbers hide. In this practical introduction to understanding and using information graphics, you'll learn how to use data visualizations as tools to see beyond lists of numbers and variables and achieve new insights into the complex world around us. Regardless of the kind of data you're working with—business, science, politics, sports, or even your own personal finances—this book will show you how to use statistical charts, maps, and explanation diagrams to spot the stories in the data and learn new things from it.

You'll also get to peek into the creative process of some of the world's most talented designers and visual journalists, including Condé Nast Traveler's John Grimwade, National Geographic Magazine's Fernando Baptista, The New York Times' Steve Duenes, The Washington Post's Hannah Fairfield, Hans Rosling of the Gapminder Foundation, Stanford's Geoff McGhee, and European superstars Moritz Stefaner, Jan Willem Tulp, Stefanie Posavec, and Gregor Aisch. The book also includes a DVD-ROM containing over 90 minutes of video lessons that expand on core concepts explained within the book and includes even more inspirational information graphics from the world's leading designers. The first book to offer a broad, hands-on introduction to information graphics and visualization, *The Functional Art* reveals: **Why** data visualization should be thought of as "functional art" rather than fine art **How** to use color, type, and other graphic tools to make your information graphics more effective, not just better looking **The** science of how our brains perceive and remember information **Best** practices for creating interactive information graphics **A** comprehensive look at the creative process behind successful information graphics **A** **An** extensive gallery of inspirational work from the world's top designers and visual artists **On the DVD-ROM:** In this introductory video course on information graphics, Alberto Cairo goes into greater detail with even more visual examples of how to create effective information graphics that function as practical tools for aiding perception. You'll learn how to: incorporate basic design principles in your visualizations, create simple interfaces for interactive graphics, and choose the appropriate type of graphic forms for your data. Cairo also deconstructs successful information graphics from The New York Times and National Geographic magazine with sketches and images not shown in the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Welcome to Alberto Cairo’s world. Cairo has done it all in *The Functional Art*: theory, practice, examples. And he’s done it brilliantly. It is the most comprehensive and sensible book yet on real-world information graphics; we won’t need another one for a long time.” — Nigel Holmes, former graphics director for Time magazine and founder of Explanation Graphics “If graphic designer Nigel Holmes and data visualizer Edward Tufte had a child, his name would be Alberto Cairo. In *The Functional Art*, accomplished graphics journalist Cairo injects the chaotic world of infographics with a mature, thoughtful, and scientifically grounded perspective that it sorely needs. With extraordinary grace and clarity, Cairo seamlessly unites infographic form and function in a design philosophy that should endure for generations.” — Stephen Few, author of *Show Me the Numbers* “This book is long overdue. Whether you’re just getting started visualizing information or have been doing it all your life, whether you’re looking for a basic understanding of visualization or a detailed how-to reference, this is the book you’re looking for. Alberto Cairo, a professional journalist, information designer, and artist, shows how to visualize anything in a simple, straightforward, and intelligent way.” — Karl Gude, former infographics director at Newsweek and Graphics Editor in Residence at the School of Journalism, Michigan State University “*The Functional Art* is brilliant, didactic, and entertaining. I own dozens of books on visual information, but Cairo’s is already on the shortlist of five that I recommend along

with those by Edward Tufte, Nigel Holmes, and Richard Saul Wurman. To anybody who wishes to have a career in information graphics. Cairo is one of those rare professionals who has been able to combine real-world experience with the academia. "Read It. There is really nothing else to say. If you care about how visualization is used to communicate to people, this is the book for you. If you're a journalist, you need to read it. If you're an academic doing visualization research, you really, really need to read it. This is the stuff we've been missing in visualization for the last 25 years." -Robert Kosara, EagerEyes "If you're interested to find the right balance between aesthetics and function in the context of data visualization, you cannot avoid Alberto Cairo's *The Functional Art*, probably the best data visualization book published in 2012." -Jorge Camões, [www.excelcharts.com](http://www.excelcharts.com)

I really wanted to like this book. The author appears to be deeply thoughtful, observant, well-read and experienced. The book is attractively designed with many color examples of infographics and other visual displays. But the ideas are incomplete. For instance, the author goes to great pains in chapter 3 to construct a "visualization wheel" - an analytical framework for categorizing your infographic. More functional or decorative? More literal or abstract? Etc. I was getting excited! But the author just kind of leaves it at that. It's rarely referenced again in the book and turns out not to be a very useful planning tool at all. So why did we spend an entire chapter on this? Similarly, chapters 5-7 go deep into understanding how vision works: eye saccades, the blind spot, guessing what the picture is without full information, etc. Interesting stuff, but again, it doesn't lead to any great insights. Nothing that couldn't have been expressed without the optometry lesson. Still, there are some useful ideas in here. Gestalt principles are important. The quick review of Bill Cleveland's research on more accurate graphing techniques. When to use detailed versus abstract imagery. All good ideas. But there just weren't enough of them. And too many chapters that went deep into some topic but didn't bring back any good insights. So, 3 stars for some good ideas. But this book should have been a lot better.

It's a great text and really essential reading if you're in data visualization, however execution is lacking. The fine print is too small on many visuals. For a book on visualizations, this needed to be coffee-table-book sized.

A great read for anyone working in media, advertising or business. It gives a good overview of how

to present data to answer the underlying questions, and give the reader the tools to dig deeper. No need to spend \$999 on Barbra minto when this gives you as good tools for developing a powerful presentation. The interviews in the last part gives a wider perspective across leading newsrooms and into the digital realm. DVD makes for a lecture in your home. Alberto is engaging, and it serves a good second take on the material.

I liked the way the content is presented. Alberto reviews multiple aspects related to visualizations, from perception to design. The only thing I didn't like was that the profiles section was a little long. Also, I would have expected a "where to go from here" section at the end. Anyways, I think I would recommend this book to anybody interested in learning more about visualizations and infographics.

In *The Functional Art*, Alberto Cairo has written a real standout in the new wave of books about data visualization. His book weaves visualization theory and techniques with real applications and critiques about existing visualization projects. One of the reasons why I think Cairo's book succeeds is that he has background as both a journalist--specifically, data journalism--and as an academic (at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the University of Miami). In the first part of the book, Cairo explains what I take away as three main tenets of good data visualization practice: first, good graphic techniques and strategies (minimal use of pie charts, reducing non-data ink, etc.); second, how to create eye-pleasing graphics (how to choose color, fonts, layout, etc.); and, most importantly, how to use data visualization to tell a story. I think this is where *The Functional Art* really stands out as a great reference--Cairo shows you how to use data visualization not as a way to just show your data or to create a tool for people to explore your data, but as a way to be a storyteller with data. The second part of the book is more about the eye-brain connection--how we as humans perceive different shapes, colors, etc. Cairo isn't a cognitive scientist, but he's done a great job pulling from the literature and summarizing the issues and, importantly, how to use that knowledge to create better graphics. These two first parts of the book will be helpful for anyone who has ever created visualizations before or who are just starting out. The graphics used in the book are all excellent and should inspire you to try to similarly create great visualizations. Finally, in the last part of the book, Cairo profiles 10 prominent data visualization experts and creators. For me, this section wasn't as exciting as the first two parts, but there are definitely nuggets of wisdom from some of the interviews and is something that you really can't find in a single source anywhere else. Also, just a final note about the DVDs that are included with the book. The DVDs are basically a summary of each of the chapters, but the last two are especially interesting. In lecture 10 (Gay

Rights), Cairo discusses a graphic produced by The Guardian magazine and why this particular use of a circle graphic works. Since there is a continuous debate about circles in the data visualization field--see also Chapter 2 in the book--this is a nice video on why circles can work in certain circumstances. In lecture 11 (Obesity and education), Cairo shows how he creates some basic graphics in Adobe Illustrator, which is great if you're not too familiar with that software (though I would never have the patience to make a map in Ai!).

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