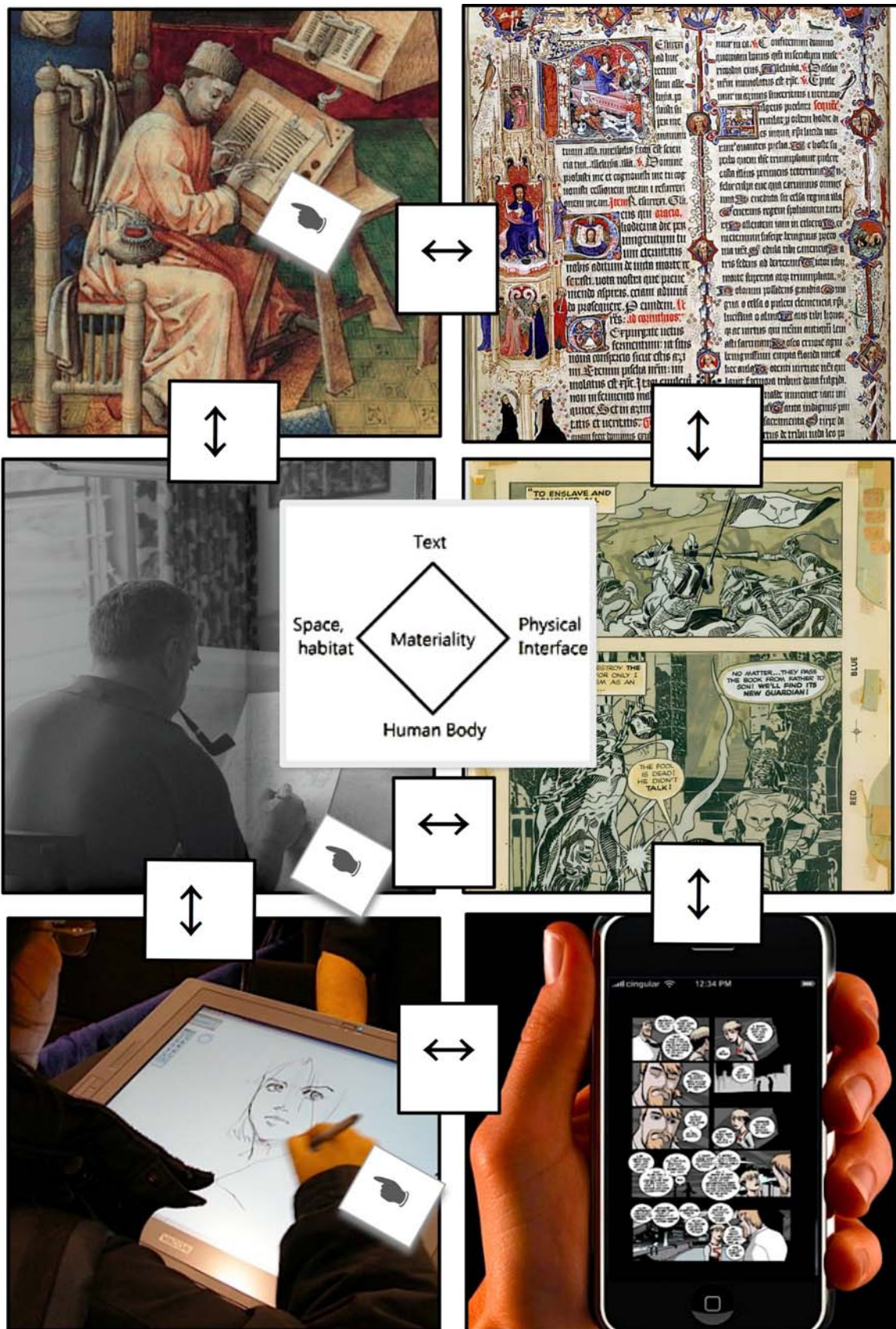


The Digital Scriptoria: Textuality and Materiality

Ernesto Priego



The electronic document has many characteristics in common with the Pre-Gutenberg manuscript (Hill 1999; Vandendorpe 2009). Four stand out:

1. the interpolation of visual imagery within text
2. the introduction of pictographic symbols
3. the possibility of modifying the layout of the page
4. the creation of overlaid, non-aligning and multidimensional texts.

These were known to the medieval scribe and to the twentieth-century comic book artist, just as they have become well-known features to most online users today.

The history of the book and the study of printing technologies are essential to our understanding of how digital textuality is embedded in a larger historical and cultural context. Here I seek to emphasise the kinship between comics and the medieval manuscript as multimedial documents. This diagram describes how textuality and materiality extend beyond the physicality of the artwork and the creative space; it also emphasises the role of the artist's hand, pen or tablet.

Left to Right, up down:

The scribe Jean Mielot (from 'Scribes and Illuminators', C. de Hamel, British Museum Press); A medieval illuminated manuscript; Jack Kirby in his studio (from 'Kirby: King of Comics', M. Evanier, Abrams, 2008); Mechanical Original page from "The Man from the World of D" Captain 3-D; pencil art by Jack Kirby; ink art by Mort Meskin, story by Joe Simon and Jarck Kirby, letterer unknown; 1953, Original Art Digitl Archive Project, Jack Kirby Museum and Research Center; Comic book artist working on Wacom tablet; photographer unknown; the Comixology Comics app for the iPhone and iPod Touch, 2009. Images shared under Academic Fair Use. An attempt has been made to obtain permission from all copyright holders of images.

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