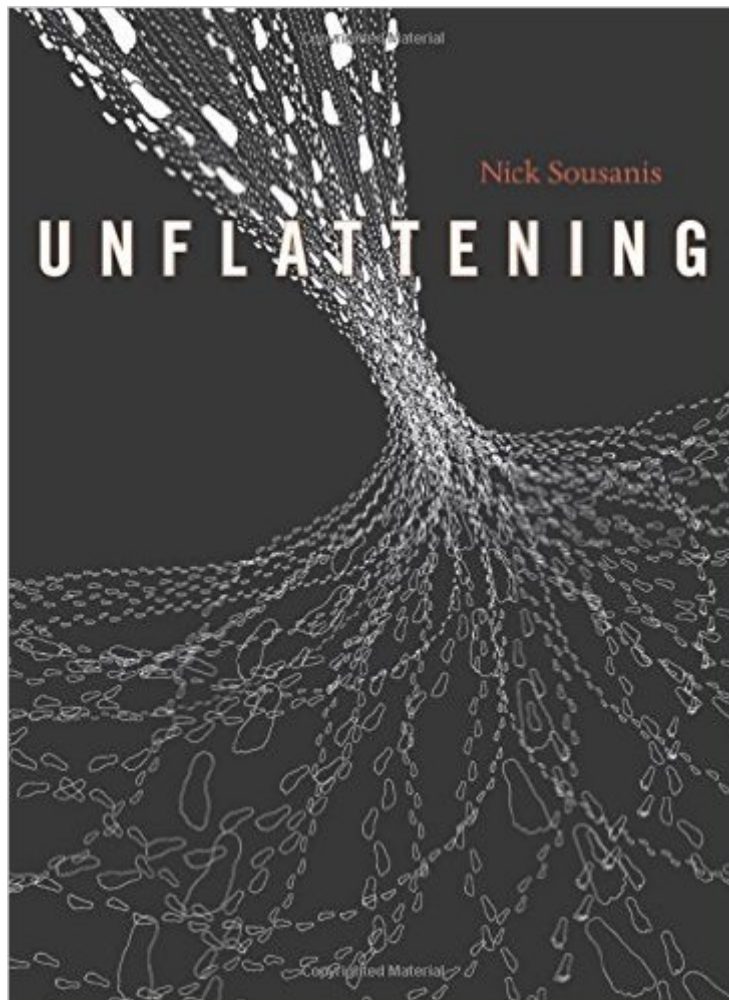


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# Unflattening



## Synopsis

The primacy of words over images has deep roots in Western culture. But what if the two are inextricably linked, equal partners in meaning-making? Written and drawn entirely as comics, *Unflattering* is an experiment in visual thinking. Nick Sousanis defies conventional forms of scholarly discourse to offer readers both a stunning work of graphic art and a serious inquiry into the ways humans construct knowledge. *Unflattering* is an insurrection against the fixed viewpoint. Weaving together diverse ways of seeing drawn from science, philosophy, art, literature, and mythology, it uses the collage-like capacity of comics to show that perception is always an active process of incorporating and reevaluating different vantage points. While its vibrant, constantly morphing images occasionally serve as illustrations of text, they more often connect in nonlinear fashion to other visual references throughout the book. They become allusions, allegories, and motifs, pitting realism against abstraction and making us aware that more meets the eye than is presented on the page. In its graphic innovations and restless shape-shifting, *Unflattering* is meant to counteract the type of narrow, rigid thinking that Sousanis calls "flatness." Just as the two-dimensional inhabitants of Edwin A. Abbott's novella *Flatland* could not fathom the concept of "upwards," Sousanis says, we are often unable to see past the boundaries of our current frame of mind. Fusing words and images to produce new forms of knowledge, *Unflattering* teaches us how to access modes of understanding beyond what we normally apprehend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one of the few academic theses to be accepted as a graphic which makes it worthy of serious consideration not only for the work itself but the challenge that it offers for a rather prosaic and conservative process for recognizing scholarship. The drawings are dense and one wonders whether the publisher understands book art (not art books) in its choice of how to publish the material or whether there will be an edition produced more in line with book art publishing. 5 stars for the author tempered by the choice of how to publish this work.

Unflattering is a dissertation, in graphic novel form, about the relationship between text and images. Words fail me in describing it, but here are a few: beautiful; awe-inspiring; original; creative; thought-provoking; fascinating; profound; genius.... it has to be the most stimulating book I've encountered in a long time. He simultaneously demonstrates the principles and ideas he explores, playfully and brilliantly combining and interweaving linear text with stunning artwork. I've recommended it to many friends, and look forward to a hardcover edition I can keep for the long-haul.

Unflattering is a breakthrough work, taking the art of comics and elevating it to new heights. Sousanis integrates a range of different fields, from history and philosophy, to physics and social psychology, to address new and important ways of thinking about thinking. At the center of it all is an advocacy for drawing as a form of cognition vital to honing our twenty-first century literacies. This is a masterwork. If I could afford it, I would give a copy to everyone I know. (And I've already dispensed several.) Buy this book. You will find yourself reading it again and again.

Unflattering is a very different kind of non-fiction where the author has used the art of comics to bring his theories to life. It makes for a very interesting take on the subject and it gives the reader new and important ways of thinking. It not only original in its presentation, but also in its content and I can imagine that many find it to be amazing which is also why I'd recommend this book. Personally I do find that it was a bit slow and I would have loved to see some humor and something extra put into it to make it even more enjoyable.

4.5 stars, but 5 for the effort. The ideas are not altogether new or unfamiliar; if you know McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, or have read Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, you're used to this kind of reframing the world. But it's a lovely work, nevertheless, and many of the pages do demand fresh reading approaches.

Thought provoking, although a quicker read than I expected. If you're familiar with Scott McCloud's work, some image sequences will be familiar, but Sousanis brings together philosophy, reading theory, and graphic novel/comic book theory (for lack of a better term) in an interesting way. The field is still feeling its way around the words that best describe a medium which goes beyond and includes them, and this is a compelling contribution.

If you have even an ounce of intellectual curiosity combined with yet another ounce of artistic appreciation, this is an absolute must buy, must read. While I do agree the production quality could be upped, you are getting an unbelievable opus of intellectual and artistic zeal that should not be ignored.

A few days ago I got an delivery. I opened the package to find a beautiful book, with that fresh paper smell, clean lines, a beautiful black/white contrast on the cover, and an intriguing title. It came with a simple note: "For your quest to unflatten and free the world." I eventually found out who sent it, but I almost wish I hadn't. The mystery was delicious. I cracked the book and was immediately engaged. This is a sort of comic/graphic novel/philosophical treatise, and it's wonderful. Physical books are no longer a necessity, but this is one you want to own in print. It's art. It's about perspective and breaking free of the conveyor belt. It draws from one of my all-time favorites, "Flatland". Pick up a copy if you're up for an immersive artistic/linguistic experience

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