THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ILLUSTRATION

THIRD EDITION

LAWRENCE ZEEGEN

BLOOMSBURY

The Fundamentals of Illustration
Lawrence Zeegen

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The Fundamentals of Illustration

Lawrence Zeegen

3rd edition

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Introduction

Illustration is a dirty word, or at least was at the start of the twenty-first century. Truly accepted by neither the art establishment nor the design industry, illustration has battled on regardless. Frequently derided as whimsical by artists and as arty by designers, illustration has found itself existing in a no-man's land between the two. Within creative education the discipline has fared no better; rarely given more than just an empty studio, the student illustrator has learnt to bend the rules and break across borders to gain access to facilities and equipment to facilitate their work. Life as an illustrator is not for the faint-hearted, and it takes massive determination to face the demands and rigours of a career choice that can feel vastly under-supported. But, against these odds, the discipline has mounted an impressive return to form – but how, and why? According to the National Museum of Illustration in Rhode Island, USA, 'illustrators combine personal expression with pictorial representation in order to convey ideas' – a useful description certainly, but one that falls short of fully capturing the essence of what the subject is or has been about. Describing the 'golden era', when magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* scoured the studios for great illustrators, the design writer and art director Steven Heller stated that 'illustration was the people's art'. This sentiment was echoed by the National Museum of Illustration, which observed that 'illustration serves as a reservoir of our social and cultural history', even going on to state, 'illustration is therefore a significant and enduring art form'.

It is illustrated images that capture the imagination, that remain with the viewer and that inextricably tie moments in one's personal history with the present. From the moment that small children are introduced to illustrated books through to their admiring music album art in their teens and early twenties, illustrations play a part in defining important moments and periods in time. On a grander scale, it is fair to say that illustration has recorded man's achievements, interpreting them in a way not possible before the birth of photography. 'Look at the paintings of Pompeii', stresses Milton Glaser – cofounder of Pushpin Studios in New York, in *The Education of the Illustrator* – 'the Aboriginal wall paintings of Australia, the great frescoes of Italy, and you understand a moment of time, and the belief systems of the population'. Contemporary illustration may work in less majestic surroundings, but its roots within the magazine racks, bookshelves and music collections of our homes stand as testament to the importance we place on the art and craft of the discipline. Finding the exact point in time that contemporary illustration was kick-started is not an easy task. The very term 'contemporary' implies modern, current, up to date, fashionable and present-day, so peering too far back into a dim and distant past may draw into the frame images that today's audience would struggle to recognize or remember. If a line is drawn in the sand marking the halfway point in the last century, for example, classic illustrated posters for the Second World War campaign by Tom Eckersley, or his amazing posters for Guinness, have to be ignored, having been created in the 1940s. The same treatment must then be applied to much of the work of Abram Games, although his iconic posters for the London Underground would slip into the list, having been produced in the early 1950s. Norman Rockwell's work for the *Saturday Evening Post* in the United States would have to be refused entry, as would Ben Shahn's Second World War posters. Saul Steinberg's work for the *New Yorker* magazine would make the grade – Steinberg having emigrated to New York in 1951 from Bucharest via Milan – as would Edward Bawden's London Underground posters and Ronald Searle's illustrations for *Punch* magazine in the UK. For many that grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, however, the first truly contemporary illustrators came from a new generation of image-makers, graphic artists and illustrators.

The 1960s witnessed an unprecedented rise in consumerism as the post-war 'baby boomers' approached life with an optimism and enthusiasm not seen before. Teenagers came of age: youth movements sprang up and with them the need for a graphic visual language to identify with. Psychedelia, Op Art and Pop Art all put the visual arts firmly on the map. Here was the start of a fresh, forward-thinking new era, and illustrated images helped in defining the look of the decade. It was likely the Beatles that gave popular culture during the sixties many of its most memorable illustrative images—from the Klaus Voormann sleeve for *Revolver* in 1965, to the animated classic of *Yellow Submarine* created from Heinz Edelmann's original drawings and on to the must-have book, *The Beatles Illustrated Lyrics* by Alan Aldridge published in 1969. It was, however, the artist and illustrator Peter Blake, in 1967, who combined a photographic and illustrative approach for the creation of the sleeve for *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* that ensured the Beatles' status as forward-thinking creative directors as well as musicians. Iconic illustrated images that mark the 1960s out as being a truly inspirational decade include Martin Sharp's covers for *Oz*, a satirical underground magazine with its roots in Sydney, before he emigrated to London in 1966, and his poster for Bob Dylan the following year. Another Dylan poster, created on the other side of the Atlantic by Milton Glaser in New York in 1996, captures his hair as a pattern of psychedelic swirls. Robert Crumb's 'Fritz the Cat' cartoons, Michael English's poster for Jimi Hendrix, Victor Moscoso's covers for Zap Comix and Rick Griffin's sleeves for the Grateful Dead all lent a graphic edge to the decade and are remembered by those that grew up then, reinforcing the gap between the pre-war and post-war generations.

As the 1960s faded away and the 1970s emerged as the decade that taste forgot, a new graphic sensibility began to take shape. Influenced by the drugs that had engulfed the hippy years of the late 1960s, work took on the visual aesthetics of fantasy and science fiction in illustrations by Roger Dean and Peter Jones. With the Hipgnosis sleeve for Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, the surreal photomontage of Tadanori Yokoo's sleeve for the Miles Davis album *Agharta* and Ian Beck's cover for Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, the early to mid-1970s were a minefield of graphic languages. It was the hard-edged sound of the street, and punk later in the decade, which influenced some notable changes to the visual landscape. With a new urban, gritty energetic sound came a raw, tougher approach to design with the 'cut and paste' graphic work for bands such as the Sex Pistols and The Clash. As punk and new wave adopted harder illustrative styles, designers like Barney Bubbles and his work for Elvis Costello, Ian Dury and The Damned, and Russell Mills with his projects for Penetration and Roger Eno, demonstrated a disregard for all that had come before. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, illustration's popularity rose and fell in equal measure. Memorable images by Ian Pollock for the National Theatre's production of *King Lear* vie alongside Pierre Le-Tan's masterly crafted covers for the *New Yorker*, whilst Brad Holland's atmospheric painted illustrations for numerous magazines compete with work for Glynn Boyd Harte, Chloe Cheese, Dan Fern, Seymour Chwast, Paul Hogarth, Peter Till, George Hardie, Bush Holyhead, Graham Rawle and Brian Grimwood. Perhaps best known for their work spanning these decades are Gerald Scarfe for Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and Ralph Steadman's images for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson. The 1980s were a prolific time and despite cooling down in the 1990s as the last days of an analogue discipline gave way to a rebirth, rejuvenated by the possibilities of the digital, illustration continued to capture the moment.

So, what of life as an illustrator in the twenty-first century? Why the huge interest in following a career that can take years to break into, only to fizzle out in an instant? Why endure the possible rejection of a negative portfolio review or the aggravation of chasing an accounts department hell-bent on ignoring requests for payment months after an invoice was first overdue? It has, of course, more to do with the desire to communicate, to create images and see that work in print, on screen and out in the world. The rush of opening a magazine to see your own work, witnessing people reading a book on the tube or subway that you created the cover illustration for, passing a billboard ad campaign with your creative work on or seeing your illustrations come to life in an app or on a webpage is truly undeniable.

Getting ahead in illustration takes commitment, personality and talent. It is unlikely that an illustrator lacking in any one of these areas will pick up commissions and, toughest of all, still be working in five years' time. Developing a personal visual language, a visual signature, getting to grips with materials both analogue and digital, as well as understanding the ins and outs of the complexities of the creative industries is only part of the story. To succeed, you'll need some insider info – and you're holding it in your hands.

Chapter 1—The illustrator as artist

When it comes to boundaries and borderlines, illustration has always sat somewhere between art and design. Never truly considered to be an adjunct of art, and shouting above the noise to be recognized as a stand-alone design discipline, illustration has rather awkwardly straddled the worlds of both artists and designers. Here, we look at some of the routes into illustration and some of the ups and downs that life as an illustrator holds.

Illustration as a discipline

As we saw on pages 8–9, illustration has enjoyed a long and varied history, spanning many applications, from book covers to title sequences. But its tendency to cross disciplines has also been its misfortune. Outside of education, there appears to have been a tendency for artists to ignore the importance of the role that illustration plays in their discipline. The crossover from art to illustration is occasionally deemed appropriate, but the reverse is rarely accepted. In the design world, designers plunder freely from the fields of illustration, yet rarely take any responsibility for sowing new seeds, and little time or space is given to nurturing growth and emerging talent. Back in creative education, the discipline has fared little better despite the number of institutions offering full-time courses in illustration having risen significantly during the past decade. Most institutions offer little by way of stand-alone facilities, with many Illustration courses not occupying their own physical spaces but existing within and alongside graphic design courses. It is still the case that in many countries across Europe, illustration has failed to be recognized as a stand-alone discipline and therefore courses tend not to exist at all. Professionally, illustrations for press and advertising have been created by designers and artists, and with no real recognition for the practice, the development of courses has remained as an offshoot of graphic design, if at all.

Of course it is true that crossover and discussion can be nurtured across the two disciplines of graphic design and illustration. But this is only possible if both are given equal status. With a high demand for facilities and studio space for courses requiring specialist equipment such as looms in textiles, printmaking in fine art, kilns in ceramics, wood, metal and plastics workshops in 3D design and black-and-white and digital darkrooms in photography, it is clear – although unjustified – why illustration often remains at the end of the list.

New directions

Despite all this, however, with the growth of online blogs and websites and the proliferation of social media, and also thanks in part to the increasing popularity of associated areas of interest such as gaming, graffiti art and graphic novels, illustration has finally started to become a better recognized and more fully understood and respected discipline. New territories and opportunities for self-promotion mean that the value, popularity and profitability of this evolving and expanding applied art form is gradually allowing it to assert itself as a subject in its own right.

‘Outside of education, there appears to have been a tendency for artists to ignore the importance of the role that illustration plays in their discipline.’

1.1
French Man.
Sarah Tanat-Jones / www.sarahtanatjones.com.
This illustration, hand-rendered in paint on paper, created in response to a commission by the Guardian Review, demonstrates how traditional skills in drawing and painting remain in demand despite the proliferation of digital platforms.

1.1

The new wave of illustrators

Much of the recent resurgence of interest in illustration owes its success to a power shift that happened in the early 2000s. Interestingly, a revolution was taking place away from the confines of professional illustration and the often stifling demands of commercial work. The uprising was subtle and not started on the battlegrounds familiar to the old guard of illustrators. A new wave was honing its skills away from regular illustration outlets, producing work that refused to pander to the art directors of glossy monthly magazines or the Sunday supplements. The new wave of illustrators with a new approach, with something to say and the ways and means of saying it, started to command control. No longer indulging the needs of dull business-to-business corporate clients, a savvier, more fashion-conscious, streetwise illustrator had started to create images for an audience made up of its own peers. Independent magazines and record labels, the established 'style' press, as well as small fashion companies started to employ the services of this new breed.

Key moments

The following two moments are now recognized as key in the rebirth of illustration. In the UK, *The Face* magazine, then recognized internationally as 'the style bible', employed an illustrator as art director and the look and feel of the magazine changed almost overnight. Funky, quirky and urban images by new illustrators started to appear and the ratio of illustration to photography was healthier than ever before. In the United States, Levi's were quick to capture the new mood and commissioned illustrators to create ad campaigns and illustrate their urban clothing ranges, breaking the mould and allowing illustration to depict fashion in a way that had been the proviso of the photographer. Keen to capture the zeitgeist and stay ahead of the pack, this new and increasing client list took to 'new' illustration with open arms. But what had really changed within illustration?

1.2

1.2
'Access', for Wire Design. Hand-rendered stencil with digital redrawing, retouching and collage.
Miles Donovan.
The ability to combine analogue and digital techniques gave illustrators new confidence and endless new territory to explore during the rebirth of contemporary illustration at the start of the century.

1.3
'Deconstructing Kylie', for Kylie La La La. Hand-rendered drawing and stencil with digital redrawing and retouching.
Miles Donovan.
The appointment of an illustrator as art director at *The Face* magazine in the UK marked an important shift for illustrators and for the wider understanding and deeper appreciation of the discipline.


THE FACE
ED FASHION
astie Boys
anic Street Preachers
hristopher Walken
KYLIE
WHO'S THAT GIRL?
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

1.3

Catalysts for change

The revolution had occurred for a number of reasons; the first was the average age of the new image-maker. Younger but already with an established grip on taming the technology, this new breed felt empowered rather than hindered – digital natives rather than digital immigrants. Not being tied down by the baggage of time, nor attempting to pacify the old guard or fit into an existing order, allowed the renegades of 'new' illustration the freedom to experiment. Another reason for change stemmed from what really excited these fresh illustrators: the scope now offered by the mix of digital and analogue techniques. Introduced to a vast range of techniques and media during their first foundation course at art school and able to refine their skills throughout the nomadic existence that typified degree-level teaching of illustration, an enthusiasm had grown for what they considered their 'new' technology: traditional techniques and methods. The eclectic nature of their image-making skills was to be matched only by the eclectic nature of the subjects and themes covered and explored by these new illustrators. The themes explored by this new wave were not new – many of them are already well-investigated and documented within editorial and fine art photography – but for illustration it was a much-needed shot in the arm.

1.4
Digital vector drawing and 'These Arms', for Oxfam. © *Mr Bingo*.
Much of the subject matter being tackled by this new breed of illustrator offered opportunities to create work of a humorous and playful nature, as well as hard-hitting campaigns of a graphic nature.

'Not being tied down by the baggage of time, nor attempting to pacify the old guard or fit into an existing order, allowed the renegades of "new" illustration the freedom to experiment.'


CHILDREN ARE BORN
WITH THESE ARMS
NOT THESE ARMS

Art school ethos

From that first life-drawing class in the studio to the induction session in the printmaking workshop or the introductory class in the darkroom, it is clear that art school offers a wealth of new creative opportunities to the young artist or designer. Often students will have studied a one-year basic course in art and design before embarking upon a more specialized three-year programme in their chosen field. For those illustration courses recruiting students straight from high school it remains vital to introduce a variety of new ways of working and making images, and as importantly, new ways of thinking creatively too.

Mixing interests

An initial first year of study in illustration should be designed to enable the student to experience numerous experimental approaches to image-making. Students should explore visual note-taking, drawing from life and from imagination, as well as exploring aspects of painting, printmaking and photography and all other forms of image-making – it is important that students are open to making pictures is all formats as a way of learning and introducing them to 'visual thinking'.

During this time, students ideally should be introduced to other practices such as architecture, fashion and graphic design, for example. And students, in this first year of study, should be encouraged to debate issues that include communication theories, politics and issues of race and gender. Students of illustration need to be open-minded and informed as they need to approach image-making aware of cultural, political, economic and environmental issues and debates. Illustrators are cultural commentators and therefore keeping abreast of what's happening in the world is critical.

1.5 and 1.6
'Collaboration' for *WRAP* magazine and 'Desk' for Pikaland, by Karolin Schnoor.
'Collaboration by Karolin Schnoor, commissioned by WRAP *magazine.*
'Desk' illustration by Karolin Schnoor for the Pikaland calendar.
Schnoor's flat-colour digitally created images depict the importance of creative collaboration and the tools and skills employed in making illustrated images.

1.5

1.6

A demanding life

Illustration is not for the faint-hearted. It can take a tough cookie to meet the demands and rigours of getting somewhere and progressing within a discipline that feels vastly under-supported. Without stand-alone facilities in design education, the lone illustrator must utilize the media that other disciplines would first lay claim to, breaking into places that would normally be considered the domain of other specialists. Gaining access to the drawing studio normally housed in the fine art department, the digital darkrooms occupied by the photography course, the print workshops open for students of printmaking, the wood and metal workshops utilized by students of sculpture, architecture and furniture design and the computing facilities overrun by graphic design and interaction design students is never going to be easy. But it happens – illustration students are a rare breed that open doors and get things moving.

The drive to create images

A life without a defined career path is not for all: creating and then maintaining a presence as an illustrator within the design industry takes commitment and can at times be frustrating. Constantly marketing and promoting one's portfolio of work, and being at the mercy of those with the power to commission can be challenging, but at the heart of those that wish to work in illustration is the desire to create images and communicate a message. Working with new materials, solving visual problems, researching subjects and experimenting with ideas, all drive most illustrators. Seen by many as a lifestyle choice rather than merely a career choice, the commitment to the discipline must be all-encompassing if a student illustrator is to break into the commercial world. Never likely to be a regular nine-to-five existence with health care, dental cover and paid holidays, illustration demands total commitment. Working across the board, breaking across boundaries, experimenting and mastering media, none truly belonging as their own, the illustrator still finds ways of making his or her mark.

1.7
Miner.
Magoz.
Miner, a self-promotional image, depicts a lone illustrator mining an apple as a metaphor for the creative endeavour required to make a living in the creative industries.

1.7

Case study: Sara Mulvanny

Sara Mulvanny chooses to balance time in and out of her studio between commissions and self-initiated projects, recognizing the need to feed her commercial creativity with the experimentation that comes from the artistic freedom her non-commercial work allows. 'I love the excitement of receiving a new brief, but it's nice to have time to work on non-commercial projects; it gives me the chance to be more creative and try new ways of working that I wouldn't normally get the opportunity to do', explains Mulvanny.

Artistic exploration

Spending time exploring new ideas and new techniques away from industry deadlines enables Mulvanny to work towards end results of her own choosing; 'I often start non-commercial projects with a day away from the studio', adds Mulvanny. 'It's nice to draw from life outside, I can then return to the studio to develop this body of work or perhaps keep it as a source of inspiration for a future project.' The final illustrated cover for *Bizarre London*, one of a series of books that includes *Bizarre England* and *Bizarre Scotland*, includes images of buildings that originate from her drawing excursions out of her studio.

1.8

1.8 and 1.9
Illustrated book covers for *Blood, Bones and Butter* and *Bizarre London*.
Sara Mulvanny / Agency Rush.
Mulvanny's images often combine drawings with hand-rendered letterforms – informed by creative explorations during time away from commissioned projects for commercial clients.


BIZARRE
LONDON
DISCOVER THE CAPITAL'S
SECRETS & SURPRISES
BY DAVID LONG

1.9

Try it yourself…

The illustrator as artist

Allowing yourself to experiment with ideas that are generated by you, rather than a given brief, is essential for your own personal development and the development of your commercial work too.

Materials

Experiment with new materials or include collage in your work. If you tend to use wet media such as ink or watercolour, then opt for charcoal or pastels. You should vary the scale that you work to; if you tend to work small, work on a large scale, and vice versa.

The brief: Initiating ideas

Create a piece of work based on a memory. This will mean that your subject and content are very personal and can only be directed by you. Try scanning in old documents or fabric within your image. Focus on one memory from your own life and develop ideas through to a finished piece.

Questions in summary

1. Which other disciplines might an illustrator borrow from or lend to?
2. How has illustration developed as a subject since its earliest beginnings?
3. Why has illustration found it hard to distinguish itself as a subject in its own right?

Chapter 2—The medium is the message

Illustrators communicate solely through their work; their subject matter and the strength of their ideas are vital aspects of the job. Less obvious, but as crucial, is the choice of medium.

When formulating a visual signature, or an individual stylistic approach, being in command of the right materials can be just as important as getting the concept right.

The power of the pencil

A common belief amongst graphic designers is that because the power of typography is entrusted to them alone, they hold all of the cards in the game of commercial design for print and screen. A little known, or perhaps just rarely commented-upon fact that matches or even surpasses the claim to type by the designer, is that the illustrator commands the power of the pencil. The pencil, and with it the activity of drawing in its broadest sense, is what defines the practice of illustration today.

Drawing and 'image-making'

It may be hard to believe, but drawing can be a controversial subject. From the start of the journey from school pupil to art student and on to fully paid-up member of the illustration community, the practice of drawing can cause heated debate amongst practitioners. Art school teaching of drawing may seem radically different to students from the way in which they had been 'taught' previously. The use of new terminology also reflects a new stance and approach to this complex subject that may feel alien at first. The new vocabulary introduces phrases such as 'interpretative mark marking', 'intuitive and observational drawing of the figure', and 'exploring negative space'. For the first time, students may be encouraged to delve deeper in their approach to drawing than simply reproducing exactly what they see in front of them. The essence of this approach to 'image-making' is to encourage experimentation, rather than just training students in observational skills. This approach has typified the teaching of the subject since the 1950s and '60s.

2.1
On the Rocks.
Jennifer Dionisio.
This pencil drawing on paper by Jennifer Dionisio, who cites her influences as film noir and pulp mystery, shows just how unforgiving the medium is – there is very little room for error and an illustration rests on the artist's skills and ability.

2.2
Le Chocolat des Français.
Édith Carron.
Carron, a French illustrator based in Berlin, in this range of packaging for Le Chocolat des Français allows her skill for creating simple, yet quirky, colourful hand-drawn scenes to shine.

2.1

2.2

Ways of drawing

The teaching of drawing will vary from art school to art school and may be influenced by fashions and movements in art and design. Although it might appear that artists and illustrators both approach the discipline from similar positions, the reality is somewhat different. Opinions are divided on the purpose of practice. Generally, however, artists work to a self-set agenda, whilst illustrators start from a client-written brief. The artist may create work as part of the journey to the final solution, whilst the illustrator will produce work that ultimately sits within another context: that of the printed magazine or book jacket, reproduced from the original. Drawing can be used for recording, representing and portraying. It can be observational or interpretative, can reflect a mood or a moment, or be utilized purely to convey information. Drawing is a hugely broad discipline and in the context of illustration, in the hands of some illustrators, it can be pushed to its very limits.

‘Drawing is a hugely broad discipline and in the context of illustration, in the hands of some illustrators, it can be pushed to its very limits.’

2.3
London Town for Nike Air Max LeBron James Special Edition. *Billie-Jean.*
Drawing directly onto a Nike Air Max shoe, London-based Billie Jean captures London’s ‘Spirit of the Blitz’ in this special one-off commission as a unique gift for US basketball player LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers to commemorate his visit to Nike Town in London.

L TOWN
OYEZ
1666
Billie Jean
LONDON
WATERLOO
Billie Jean
Ye Olde Cheshire

2.3


LOOK! WITH THIS SKY+ WE CAN ACTUALLY PAUSE THE TV. WE COULDN'T DO THAT WITH NORMAL TELLY.
GREAT! I'M POPPING OUT TO THE WOODS.

2.4

Material world

The job of the illustrator is relatively simple; the key to successful illustrating is in the essence of the message and the art of communication. It is, however, the medium or materials employed to convey that message that can assist in the correct reading and understanding. A strong idea visually translated using the most appropriate media, with excellent execution, will always lead to the most successful illustrative solutions.

Choosing materials

With the apparent freedom of choice in medium comes a responsibility and understanding for their historical or cultural nature, and the context in which they are to be applied. There is little to be gained from illustrating mobile phone technology, for example, using an etching process. Working in a very linear way only in a vector application for an article about street market vendors would not demonstrate an affinity for the subject; the themes and messages would be distorted, and the medium might act as a barrier to the understanding of the message.

Equally, acknowledging historical and subject-specific references to materials ensures messages cannot be confused; why work in the flat, bold, primary-coloured comic style reminiscent of Roy Lichtenstein's Pop Art for an illustration about the global stock markets? The perfect marriage of materials and message may sound like a cliché but makes real sense; after all, the mantra that 'form follows function' still holds a resonance today.

At the heart of all illustration, drawing plays a vital role. Without the ability to draw and visualize well, the illustrator lacks the most important component in his or her toolbox. Illustrators have at their fingertips, literally in this digital age, tools that enable the creation of complex, layered, multifaceted images that can be created using a multitude of techniques. The humble pencil, whilst remaining a key tool in the real-world toolbox, has been to some extent usurped by the stylus and tablet – the dominance of the lead pencil challenged by the digital stylus. However, without the power to control the pencil or stylus, the illustrator may be as powerless as the designer that has failed to control typography.

AUTHOR TIP:
FINDING YOUR OWN WAY OF WORKING

- **Methods of working can take many years to fine-tune and make unique to an individual illustrator.**
- **There is always a temptation to take creative short cuts – it's better to invest the time and effort in creating a way of working that no one else is doing, though.**
- **Finding materials and processes that 'click' is part of the journey that all illustrators must take in order to create truly unique images.**
- **Increasingly, illustrators are employing a range of methods and techniques that cross the divide between analogue and digital worlds.**

2.4
'Bear and Hunter'. Digital drawings.
Adrian Johnson.
Even when based on pencil drawings or original layouts created in sketchbooks, work that uses digital elements – be that anything from vector lines or scanned textures – is still classified as being done entirely on-screen.

2.5

Celebrating process

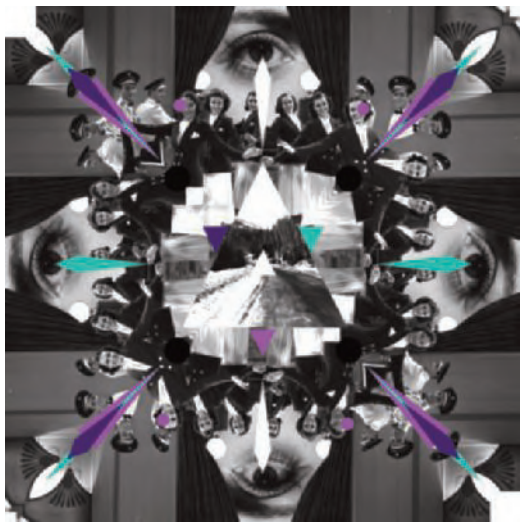
The process of creating images is a complex and personal journey for every individual illustrator. Often, seemingly simple images can belie both the craft of the image-maker and the journey that the illustrator may have taken over previous years in order to reach a point where creating work becomes second nature. Graduates of illustration courses often expect an instant flow of commissions, but it can take numerous months and occasionally years of honing and fine-tuning work before an image-maker can start to feel truly confident as a professional illustrator.

Much of the struggle towards professionalism can be about the materials and processes that the illustrator starts to excel in working with; understanding how to use particular media can take time and practice, but is vital in mastering the ability to illustrate effectively and therefore professionally.

Many illustrators have a favourite range of materials that they will choose to work with. For many, the blend and scope of their chosen materials, tools and techniques is what helps to define the work that they produce. Experimenting with techniques and ways of working can be more important than exploring the scope of drawing and image-making itself. There are illustrators that work using the most simple methods imaginable – using a pencil, pen or paintbrush mark – whilst there are others that build up complex layers utilizing techniques in photographic editing or vector applications and scanned montages of 'found' imagery, often priding themselves on their ability to hide the processes from the viewer. It is the celebration of the process and the techniques employed, as they journey towards creating their own visual language or signature, that interest and drive this particular breed of illustrators.

2.5
High Five Still Lyfe.
Rand Renfrow.
The seemingly simple execution of this image, by Texas-based illustrator Rand Renfrow, belies the complexity of the Memphis-inspired pattern-making and line-work – a visual signature evident in much of Renfrow's work.

2.6
New Science.
Revenge is Sweet.
One of series of images for *New Scientist* magazine by Lee Owens and Angelique Piliere of Revenge is Sweet that utilizes their unique combination of photographic collage and symmetry as its basis.



2.6

The use of odd media

Using paint straight out of the tube is frowned upon by the serious artist who feels it is important to mix the desired colour oneself rather than relying on the manufacturer to create the very hue needed. This may sound pompous or exaggerated, but the importance of the right materials for the artist should never be underestimated.

For some, the allure of the art store and its contents is never enough and the route to creating truly original art is in reappropriating existing or 'found' objects. Some illustrators create images from collaged elements, mixing and layering in both analogue and digital formats to create new variants.

Collage is not a new art form; it originally came to prominence with the birth of photography, but has been given a new lease on life by digital technology. The ability to bring together both scanned analogue materials with digitally created and manipulated images has led to a real resurgence in collage as a process for contemporary illustrators – no longer is there a reliance on old-school media such as glue or paste to bring collaged elements together, with software able to 'stick' and 'unstick' images in seconds making permutations seemingly endless.

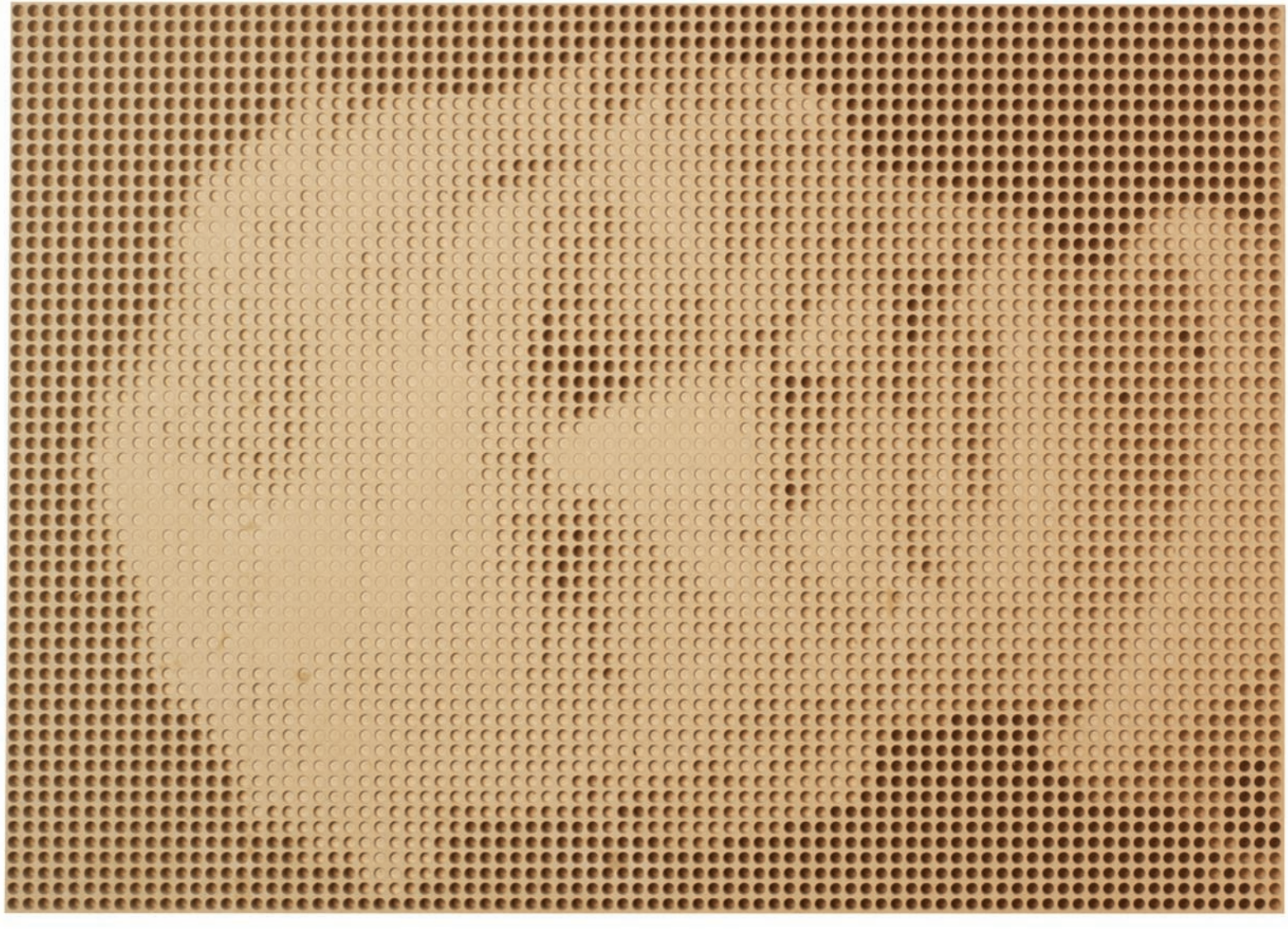
Making pictures from more challenging materials has interested illustrators wanting to ensure that their work is considered original. Using cut and torn coloured paper in the style of Henri Matisse, or creating 'Box Art' in the manner of Joseph Cornell has attracted some illustrators away from traditional techniques, whilst others strive to use objects and items previously unused as art materials.

Illustrations created from coloured push pins set into a squared grid, or from cut and painted sheets of tin, or entirely collaged from tiny slivers of banknotes have all appeared in publications. The range of experimentation and sophistication employed across these untried and untested applications sets illustrators apart from others in the design profession; if a material has artistic potential, there is an illustrator ready to master it.

2.7

2.7
Shine like a Star.
Pinky.
Building layers of colour utilizing a similar method to the way in which a screenprint is created, but using hand-cut coloured papers allows detail to show through in a unique and varied way.

2.8
Samuel Beckett.
Will Tomlinson.
Creating an image using light and shade by drilling holes of differing depths according to a preset pattern gives a new vision to the photographic portrait of Samuel Beckett. Although this image appears to have used digital processes at the end of its creation, in measuring the holes, this wasn't the case. A photo of Beckett was digitally scanned at the beginning and reduced to just a few monochrome tones in Adobe Photoshop.



2.8

Using photography

'Carry a camera with you at all times' has long been the advice to budding photographers by hardened commercial pros, specialists and photography tutors. Now, recording life with a camera has become the norm for practitioners of all art and design disciplines as well as photographers. The smartphone, with integrated camera, has ensured that this is the norm for creative practitioners as well as, of course, for the public. See, shoot, save, edit and upload has fast become a ubiquitous process that is inexpensive and immediate and no longer simply the proviso of the photography professional.

Illustrators have used photography as a reference tool for many years. For those who create drawings on location, the camera has provided an excellent memory-jogger. Many will aim to record as much information as possible on-site and then return to the studio to complete the work from the photographic reference. The final artwork may show no real evidence of the photo, but behind the scenes it has nevertheless played a part. A recent development for illustrators has been in the popularity of the use of vector applications to 'trace' photographs, rather than relying on pure drawing skills. Quite simply, a photographic image, often reduced to either line or high-contrast black and white in Adobe Photoshop, is placed on to a fresh layer in an application such as Adobe Illustrator. Using drawing tools, normally with a range of different widths and finishes, a drawing is created by tracing over the photo in the original layer onto a new one. Some vector applications now also offer an 'auto-trace' feature that can take some of the work out of the tracing. Is this cheating?

A more obvious use of photography within illustration has been in the use of collage and photomontage. Prior to possible digital solutions this would have meant the reproduction and printing of a photographic image that might then be trimmed or cut out and glued into place within another image. Often collage artists utilize a range of 'found' materials that may also include collected ephemera, as well as photographic images. Artists that work in photomontage may choose to set up models and situations, as a true photographer might, in order to create the desired effect. Elements are then often cut and pasted into new positions within other images. Digital manipulation ensures the entire process is smoother, enabling the artist to download photographic images for use in work from online image banks. Today's illustrators have a vast range of materials, analogue and digital, at their fingertips – who is to say what can and can't be utilized in the search for one's own visual signature?

2.9
Clowns – DIY, for FAD. Constructed photographic montage.
Chrissie Macdonald.
Photography has long been a perfect medium for the illustrator—used by many as a reference tool, capturing images that are re-created back in the studio or used directly in the image-making process.

AUTHOR TIP:
WORKING WITH PHOTOGRAPHERS

—Seek the advice and skills of a friendly, professional photographer or studio if possible – they know all the tricks of the trade and may even lend you the right kit.
—Use the best digital camera you can afford or borrow and ensure that it is on the highest quality setting.
—Use a tripod – these are inexpensive and will ensure that camera shake does not ruin your shots.
—Make sure that you either use natural light, if available, or tungsten bulbs in your lighting. Be aware of any shadows.
—Test your shots before you take too many. Take the first few photos to your Mac or PC and check that they are of a high enough resolution and that the lighting is correct.

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2.9

Mixing media

Without the confines of a discipline-specific medium, the illustrator has been free to explore and experiment with a range of media, creating images from whatever and wherever seems most appropriate. With drawing at the centre of the illustrator's armoury, the handmade mark is never far from view, but unsurprisingly it is the vast range of potential image- and mark-making devices that appears in the work of, and typifies the eclectic nature of, today's image-makers. Like professional magpies, illustrators plunder an array of media, mixing and matching working methods depending on the requirements of the project. It is not uncommon to witness a raw visual mix of the digital, the analogue, the traditional and the photographic, as well as hand-drawn and painted marks within the images of contemporary illustrators. The digital continues to empower the illustrator in a way that was unthinkable even just a couple of decades ago.

2.10
New Friends.
Edward Cheverton.
Bristol-based Edward Cheverton works with 2D and 3D materials to make sculptural figures – mixing found and made forms with hand-painted and hand-drawn elements, he creates charming characters for illustrations and exhibitions.

2.11
Free Wheeling.
Mark Lazenby.
Working as both illustrator and as art director for *The World of Interiors* magazine, Lazenby creates collages in the tradition of Kurt Schwitters and Joseph Cornell, handcrafting collaged images from found printed ephemera and torn and cut papers.

2.10

2.11

Using the computer

The computer has been transformative for the discipline of illustration; no one tool or process has had as much influence on the working methods employed by the illustrator since the birth of print. If it is the pencil that wields the power, then it is the computer that harnesses that power and enables the illustrator to transform the pencil mark into a seemingly never-ending array of new marks. The rebirth and revival of interest in the craft of illustration can be attributed directly to the role that the computer has played.

The computer has opened illustration up to a full range of digital possibilities and placed it on a level with other disciplines. The technical power now found within the reach of all illustrators has ensured that new and radical ways and means of creating, disseminating and storing images have become common practice during the past decade. Illustrators, with the aid of digital processes, are returning to the roots of the practice. Illustration first grew from a branch of graphic design that was commercial art, and now increased involvement with projects and commissions during the early concept and design stages has begun to echo that early approach as illustrators increasingly work across the board.

Creating artwork that was 'camera ready' became the only technical requirement for illustrators in the years leading to the digital revolution at the end of the last century; as many were working less in design studios and more and more from their own studios and homes, it was easy for illustrators to be left out of the loop when it came to making design decisions about projects. With the emergence of digital technology, this changed, and the input that illustrators now have, allowing opportunities for discussion and debate about reproduction issues, print processes and paper stocks, as well as entirely digital outlets for illustration such as the web and television, is far more prevalent. Contributing to these changes in practice were both the power and knowledge digital illustrators now have access to and the ease of communication afforded by email and mobile phone technology. From their own freelance workspace illustrators started to work alongside designers, with communication lines open at all times.

No longer constrained by bulky desktop computers permanently housed within the studio and hooked up to the internet via cables, the increased power of modern-day laptops and broadband speeds and the prevalence of Wi-Fi hotspots has allowed illustrators the freedom to travel easily and work anywhere – setting up a mobile digital studio within moments at home, in shared rented spaces, in coffee shops and in motion on trains and planes. This freedom has opened up new ways of recording and reflecting the world around them, expressing ideas, and providing visual communication that harnesses fresh approaches to image-making with a vast array of possibilities now open through the complete digitalization of the creative industries.

'…it is the computer that harnesses that power and enables the illustrator to transform the pencil mark into a seemingly never-ending array of new marks.'

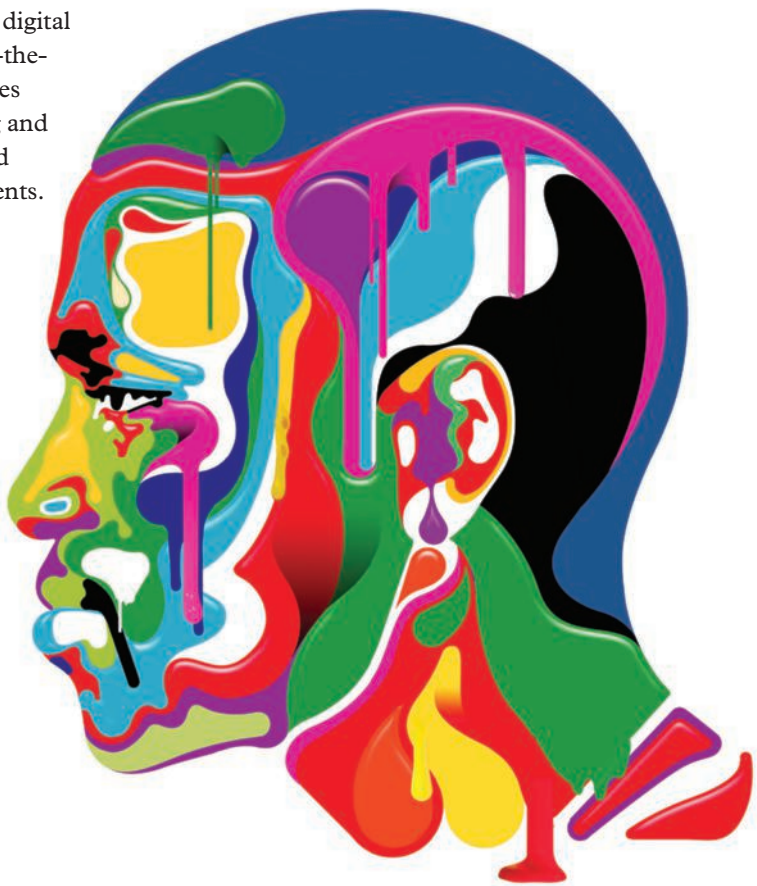
Digital timeline

1971	IBM launches the floppy disk
1972	Computer games begin to appear, with 'Pong' for the Atari
1975	Bill Gates starts Microsoft
1976	Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak start Apple Computer
1978	First computer-generated film title appears, in *Superman*
1984	Universal studios opens Computer Generation (CG) department; the first Apple Macintosh computer is sold
1985	Windows appears for the first time
1987	Adobe launch Illustrator
1989	Adobe launch Photoshop
1994	The WWW revolution gets fully underway as the number of hosts hits two million; Pixar produces *Toy Story*; MP3 is developed and accepted as the standard compression platform for storing music digitally
1997	DVD technology announced and within a few years can be played and recorded on personal computers
2000	San Francisco Museum of Modern Art launches 'Playstation 2 010101 – Art in Technological Times' exhibition
2001	Apple launch a range of G4 Powerbooks
2003	Adobe launch Creative Suite, a professional integrated software package comprising Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign
2004	Social networking site Facebook is launched
2005	E-commerce website Etsy is launched, allowing users to buy and sell handmade or vintage items, as well as art and craft supplies
2006	*Time* magazine name their 2006 person of the year as 'You', following the meteoric rise of the blog and other user-generated content
2007	Apple launch the first iPhone
2008	Twitter's engineering team make architectural changes to the site in order to cope with growing demand; Apple opens its app store, offering software applications for iPhone
2010	Steve Jobs launches Apple iPad and Instagram launched
2012	Over two billion people using the internet, twice the number online in 2007
2016	Over 3.6 billion people (49.5% of the world population) using the internet
2017	Instagram users worldwide reaches 700 million and YouTube receives 400 hours of content uploaded every minute with one billion hours of content watched every day

The future of digital illustration

The digital age has opened so many new doors for illustration, yet interestingly whilst digital image-making has been fully embraced, there has also been a resurgence of interest in craft and traditional techniques and working methods. For a generation of digital natives, having grown up with a laptop or tablet in the playroom, classroom and bedroom, their 'new technology' is the more analogue worlds of letterpress and screen-printing and of photographic darkrooms and etching presses. As Generation Z, and ahead of them Millennials, search for authenticity in the everyday, from their choice of barista-brewed coffee to hand-pulled craft beer or perfectly created artisan burger, it is no accident of fate that a new generation of illustrators looks towards the handmade and real – more and more new illustrators seek to combine 'real' and authentic skills with the digital. Will this trend continue unabated? Following a period of substantial invention during the early days of the digital revolution, there has been a slowdown of new-to-the-market hardware or software products for creatives to embrace, and therefore the return to exploring and learning more traditional techniques has occurred without a sense of missing out on new developments.

For those working in the digital realm, opportunities will likely increase for illustrators – as platforms demanding more and more content proliferate and expand, from traditional print media with the resurgence in magazine publishing to on-screen via web and mobile, there are a greater number of avenues to explore. Illustrators are increasingly the first port of call for agencies seeking to create visual communication for advertising on mobile devices and illustrators are now stepping into territory once the domain of the animator as they start to make time-based work. Will the static illustration remain the norm as screens replace print? The demise of the printed newspaper in favour of a download to mobile or tablet is evident on any commuter train of a morning, and with print being slowly eroded by digital, surely making moving illustrated images will be de rigueur for the next generation?



2.12
Carlos.
Steven Wilson.
Wilson creates, from his studio in Brighton, pure pop images – resplendent with bright primary colours and graphic nuances that include highlights and paint 'drips'. He works entirely digitally for clients across most commercial sectors that include fashion and music, cars and airlines, and technology and television.

2.13
Spring Trees for L'Attrape Réve and Connected Organs for Nokia Phones.
Genevieve Gauckler.
Gauckler creates childlike characters that feature in artworks destined for print and screen. Her images are so simple, yet so surreal, and whilst digitally illustrated, are warm and engaging.

'…the rise of online social media and new technology that allows integration of illustration, photography and film, has created more opportunities for creatives.'

Case study: Tim Vyner

Tim Vyner is a reportage artist, illustrator and educator known for his work recording many global sporting events over the last decade, including FIFA World Cups, European Championships, and Olympic Games. His work is held in many collections and is published in magazines and books in the UK, where he is based, and internationally.

The commission

Sports business partners funded Vyner to travel to China to record and document the atmosphere and experience of the Beijing Olympic Games. He was asked to capture an extraordinary moment in the city's history when the whole world would be watching.

Initial response

Vyner used a sketchbook to record figures, events and specific moments, and a camera to record architectural details. This allowed him to capture the atmosphere of Beijing at a specific moment in time.

2.14

Access

Approval was required for access to specific areas of the Olympic Park, so Vyner was only able to explore and record the areas that his ticket gave him access to.

Final artwork

A series of reportage drawings and large-scale watercolour paintings were produced for exhibition and publication.

Completion

Tim's work was eventually published and exhibited. More than eighty of his images were exhibited at the Bankside Gallery in London, UK. The exhibition deadline was a useful end point to work towards. Exhibiting work is often where the illustrator feels most exposed, and knowing he had to fill a gallery, which would be attended by many Olympic athletes, organizers and representatives, spurred Vyner on to a conclusion.

2.14
Beijing street scenes.
Tim Vyner.
Tim Vyner was commissioned to record the atmosphere and experience of the Beijing Olympic Games.

Try it yourself…

The medium is the message

Illustrators will often develop a way of working that suits them and then remain wedded to this as their personal visual language. It is, however, through experimentation with new methods and materials that new ideas and ways of thinking can emerge – don't underestimate the power of pushing creativity in new ways.

Materials

You will need some glue or tape, scissors, paper as a base for the drawings, sugar paper, newspaper, found tickets, old gift wrap, foil, wrappers – anything that can be cut up for the purposes of creating a drawing.

The brief: Mixing media

Drawing is essential for illustration, but this does not mean that drawing always has to be undertaken in the conventional sense. Try 'drawing' with paper, found objects and ephemera. Place one or two items on a table and 'draw' them using only cut-out pieces from the materials you have gathered. Don't use any pencil, pen, paint or hand-directed media – this is about looking at the objects in front of you and re-forming them in a different media. You could also try 'drawing' with modelling clay.

Questions in summary

1. How do we define drawing? How do these definitions differ from ‘drawing’ in its traditional sense and ‘drawing’ in an image-making sense?
2. How can the illustrator incorporate more unusual materials in their work?
3. How have digital materials changed illustration and how are they likely to change for the future?

Chapter 3—From outcomes to outlets

It is one thing to master the art of illustration from the comfort of the art school studio or the warmth of the back bedroom, but working to commission, faced with a real brief, a real client and a real deadline, is an entirely different process. Different sectors of the design, advertising and publishing worlds each have their own complexities and demands.

3.1

The overview

The illustrator's business landscape of design, advertising and publishing has undergone enormous change during the past few decades. The role that graphic communication plays in our everyday lives has never been more intense, complex and demanding for the viewer.

In this increasingly digital age, visual communication must compete fiercely for our attention, and we stand in the firing line. From the websites, blogs and apps we digest on our desktops, laptops, tablets and mobiles to the TV programmes broadcast 24/7 365 days of the year, we consume visual communication at an alarming rate.

We are targeted by promos, advertorials and infomercials. We are spammed at, tweeted to, and our data profiled to ensure we receive the messages we will most likely respond to. Visual communication is online, on-screen, downloadable and ever-present. Never before have we been so bombarded from every quarter, so image-saturated, manically marketed to and media-manipulated. And we only have ourselves to blame for this situation as the media feeds an insatiable thirst from a knowledge-hungry public: we ceaselessly demand the latest, the newest and the best, devouring information at a truly astonishing rate with no let-up from the avalanche that we have created.

To even compete in this cut-throat communication war, those companies that seek to differentiate their products and publications have started to understand that creating a brand awareness which offers a unique vision or visual can, in turn, offer some small measure of individualism in this crowded marketplace. Illustration has thus found favour once again, not just because interesting, sassy work is in evidence, but because it is the key to creating images that reflect more than just photographic evidence. Illustration has the power to capture a personality, a point of view. It can encapsulate a mood or a moment, and can tell a story to give a product history, depth and meaning.

The design studio

However powerful illustration as a form of communication is, without its relationship with graphic design, it would struggle to exist. Graphic design communicates, persuades, informs and educates. It covers a vast array of commercial applications, and in trying to visualize the scope and breadth of the discipline it is wise to remember that all communication design has emerged from its practice. The street sign, the book or newspaper, the website, the instructions on the medicine bottle, the pack that contains your favourite brand of breakfast cereal or the software that you use have all been touched by the hand of the graphic designer. The design studio sits at the heart of commercial graphics and these companies, or departments of bigger organizations, work across the various diverse sectors of the industry. The scope of work for design companies and studios can be endless and it is here that the working relationship with graphic design starts for the illustrator.

Understanding how the industry operates and how the numerous sectors function is fundamental to ensuring that the relationship with graphic design can be most fruitfully exploited.

3.1
'Foreign Service'.
Ian Dodds.
Day after day, we are bombarded with images and information that vie for our attention. In an increasingly visual world, it is illustration that holds the key to giving a small measure of individualism to the marketplace.

Editorial illustration

Editorial illustration is fundamental to most illustrators and is the bread-and-butter work for most professionals.

Using illustration makes real sense for the editor of a newspaper supplement or magazine. Where photography is used to present an image as fact, illustration can be applied to features to indicate a personal viewpoint or an idea. It is the contrast that illustration offers to photography that works so well in editorial projects and it is rare to find illustration used outside of this in a publishing context.

Due to massive increases in the number and circulation of digital and print newspapers and magazines, and the knock-on increase in feature or opinion-driven articles, there is a plethora of commissions available every month. Add to the stock available in most newsagents and bookstores the huge number of in-house magazines produced for insurance companies, banks, airlines, retail outlets and others, and the number of potential commissions grows accordingly. Illustrators working successfully in this huge sector can keep themselves very busy.

In editorial illustration, budgets can be tight and it is important for the professional to maintain a steady flow of work and to ensure invoices are issued on a regular basis. Despite the relatively low fees, most illustrators still enjoy the creative freedom of working for newspapers and magazines; being left to be inventive and original are the rewards here. The freedom to develop new working methods within a project, showcase skills and test new ideas without excessive art direction from an art director or editor can be invaluable. For those illustrators given a regular 'slot' in a weekly or monthly magazine, the challenge of developing fresh ideas for the same subject on a regular basis can be enjoyably stimulating.

Art direction

Understanding how illustrators are commissioned is key to successful working relationships, but despite that, few art and design courses truly replicate the procedure. Whilst there are relatively few courses in illustration compared to those teaching straight graphic design, there are even fewer that teach how to art direct. Most courses offer it, if at all, as part of their graphic design programme, without recognizing the breadth of the discipline. This is also true for advertising art direction, and therefore many art directors have to learn on the job; some manage brilliantly, others not so well.

The approach to commissioning illustration for a newspaper or magazine art department is often dictated by the deadline, which is sometimes just a few days from the initial point of contact and/or briefing. There is scant time for meeting illustrators in the flesh when commissioning and the typical briefing is often far short of ideal.

Art directors or art editors normally call an illustrator directly, as many are unwilling to work with illustration agencies. Agents exist to represent the interests of the illustrator and will often attempt to increase a fee; however, in editorial work there is very little, if any, room for manoeuvre. Art directors rarely want this inconvenience, as there is little time for negotiation with a deadline approaching. Deadlines in editorial work are unforgiving; few other areas of the discipline work as rapidly.

'Due to massive increases in the number and circulation of digital and print newspapers and magazines, and the knock-on increase in feature or opinion-driven articles, there is a plethora of commissions available every month.'

The brief

Much can happen between the initial brief and finished artwork. A good art director will, at the point of offering the work, have a brief or some copy to hand and be able to talk through the project. A brief may take different formats, but should include the following in addition to the text to be illustrated:

the size the image will run in publication,

the fee, and

the deadline.

Less key, but still important, is knowing on which side of the page the illustration will fall. Whether it sits on the left or right page of the spread can influence how an image is constructed; a figure, for example, can be either positioned entering or exiting the publication.

3.2
Raumkommando.
Janne Iivonen.
Editorial illustration for
Süddeutsche Zeitung magazine.

In reality, the art director may have to wait for copy from the editor, cutting down the time the illustrator has to work on ideas and final artwork. A brief for an editorial commission is likely to be little more than an early version of the copy that can be subject to change and the illustrator may need to actively request the other details of the project. Requesting all information, including the fee and the deadline, must be undertaken before embarking on the project; if in doubt, ask the relevant questions.

Once underway, a commission usually involves two stages: creating a rough version, referred to as a sketch or visual, and then the final artwork. Illustrators have different approaches to how they start a job, but all agree that reading, digesting and understanding the brief is crucial. Before embarking on the illustration, the first step is to understand the publication. It is important to read previous copies to gauge the profile, look at who it is aimed at and research the title. Many illustrators will want to discuss with the art director why they have been chosen for the job, and ask if there was a particular piece of work or publicity that prompted the call. It is not unusual for a piece of previously printed publicity to be still working on their behalf five years later – are they still working in this particular way?

Some art directors can have very distinct ideas of how they expect the copy to be visualized, while others allow for an open interpretation by the illustrator. Keeping the art director informed will help ensure that there are no difficulties later in the project. Even if work cannot begin straight away, read the brief immediately upon receipt. This can help to throw up ideas, visual representations and overall elements that may appear in the illustration. Having the subject of the brief in the mind will be conducive to contemplating solutions, and will highlight any potential problems early in the process.

Research

Much of the enjoyment and challenge of working as an illustrator lies in understanding the subject of the text, as well as solving its visual interpretation.

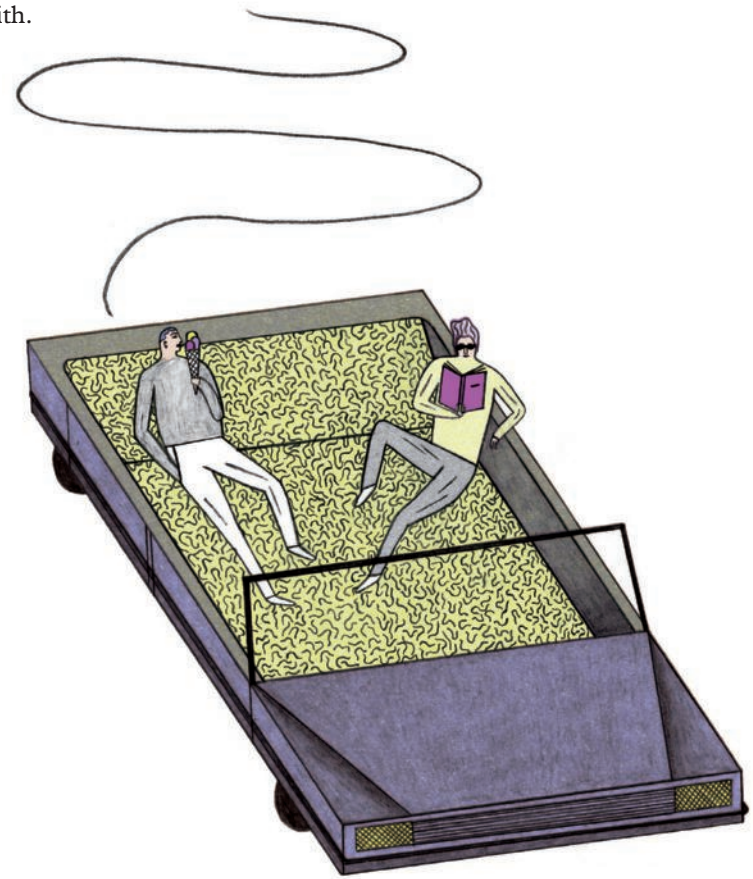
Illustrators find that within a relatively short period of time, they have to become an expert in the subject they are illustrating. The article may be about human relationships, neurosurgery, green politics, inner-city housing issues, car airbag systems or legal changes for solicitors; the possibilities are endless and flexibility in visualizing a range of subjects will be the key to working for a variety of publications.

Further research of subjects to gain a greater knowledge and understanding is part of the process. An article intended for publication may assume specialist knowledge from its intended audience – a specialist knowledge that the illustrator may have to rapidly get up to speed with.

Process

For illustrators working on editorial jobs, the first stage of creating visuals must come quickly. Ideas need to be visualized through sketching, mapping, doodling and drawing. Initial thoughts and ideas must be recorded as notes or lists as a useful starting point.

Art directors understand that not all illustrators work alike; they recognize that just because one likes to produce very finished and polished visuals, there are others who scribble their intentions haphazardly, offering just a vague indication of how they intend to proceed. However roughs or visuals are produced, it is beneficial to all involved in the commission if much of the detail is resolved at this early stage. Failing to communicate the intentions of how the illustration will be executed, both conceptually and artistically, can lead to great problems further into the project.



3.3
Psychologie Heute – Automation.
Riikka Laakso.
One of a series of editorial illustrations exploring the notion of humans trusting technology more than their own capabilities.

A typical editorial illustration timeline

A great idea only works if it communicates well, and the visuals stage is the first real test of a concept and its validity. A good art director will view the visual through the eyes of the publication's readership to ensure that the image and concept will work. Building time into a project to allow for a rejection at the concept/visual stage is paramount; not all projects go according to the wishes of the illustrator.

It is important to create more than one idea at the initial stage; showing a favourite solution first can allow others to be held in reserve, or the art director might want to see all options and make a choice from these. Creating just one concept always runs the risk of the project falling apart.

However it's arrived at, the point of executing the final artwork is another crucial aspect of any editorial job. Ensuring that the art director understands the method intended is important, particularly if the work uses a number of different media. If a commission has arisen from a photographic technique, for example, a similar technique must be employed in the final artwork as opposed to a more drawn or painterly approach – unless specifically requested. Not many art directors will be aware of every method that an illustrator employs; again, this is a positive reason for clear lines of communication at the outset of the project. Positive surprises are the only surprises that an art director takes kindly to on the day of the deadline.

Day	Magazine	Newspaper
1	Initial request from art director – checking availability of illustrator to undertake commission.	am: Initial request from art director. pm: Commission confirmed and full briefing given.
2	Commission confirmed and full briefing given via phone or email.	am: Research and initial ideas generation. pm: Further ideas generation and visualization.
3	Research and initial ideas generation.	am: Working up visuals. pm: Presentation of visuals to art director via email and follow-up phone call.
4	Research and initial ideas generation.	Presentation of visuals to editor by art director and verbal feedback to illustrator.
5	Further ideas generation and visualization.	Presentation of second visuals and follow-up feedback.
6	Working up visuals.	Creation and presentation of final artwork.
7	Presentation of visuals to art director via email and follow-up phone call.	
8	Presentation of visuals to editor by art director and verbal and/or written feedback to illustrator.	
9	Presentation of second visuals and follow-up feedback.	
10	Creation and presentation of final artwork.	

Q: Editorial work for magazines and newspapers is the lifeblood for many illustrators, allowing unique opportunities for showcasing new approaches and working methods. What do you enjoy most about the process of creating images in response to editorial briefs?

GG: The randomness of subjects offers a lot of creative diversity in terms of iconography and manipulation. Over time I think this helps define personal territory and visual themes emerge; I started to use buildings and environment as expressive elements to communicate. The restrictions of time and sometimes newsprint reproduction can also influence visual choices, such as embracing half-tone greys when black was the original aim. Deadlines helped me look for simple and economic forms to communicate and find ways of representing the world.

Q: What do you find are the most recurring pressures/challenges?

GG: Time can really focus your mind and it's that challenge that remains a spur to see what can be achieved. It's double-edged though; if there isn't more than a couple of hours I can't really do something I'm happy with. I think reflection is an essential part of my practice. Of course understanding and researching the content is key, but 'internalizing' the imagery usually takes time.

Q: What do you think are the benefits for newspapers and magazines in using commissioned illustration over photography for editorial stories?

GG: The flexibility and range of interpretation of the constructed image has massive advantages over the veracity of the photograph, but creative illustration outcomes are really dependent on a good understanding between commissioner and illustrator and the way they both work. It can be a gamble compared to photography, but the outcome shouldn't be predictable!

Q: Where do you see the most adventurous commissions being made and undertaken?

GG: Editorial has lost a lot of its established print spaces with migration to the web for news and issue-based content, but those spaces were a product of the technological age of print and obviously communication forms evolve.

The challenge is how to raise revenue/fees from web-based forms and build a continuity of visual practitioners learning on the job as my generation did through printed forms. The possibilities of using time/sequence/audio for illustration are amazing and the world hasn't got any easier to understand. I think there is a great opportunity right now for innovative visual communication, but the originator needs an income!

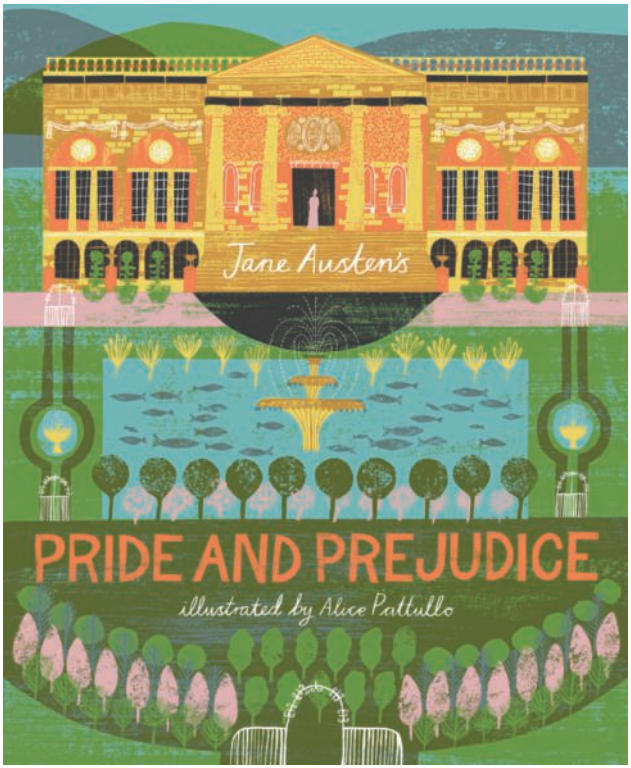
Q: What advice do you have for younger illustrators graduating from college that might wish to make a career for themselves as an editorial illustrator?

GG: A good course in the subject should open up a whole range of possibilities, so find the right course for you. Successful practitioners now work across a range of forms and combine disciplines. Editorial still offers communication problems that can forge original new voices but much of the most exciting work will be across platforms from authored graphic narrative print to applied, objects, immersive environments and time. With all that choice, it is possible that the discipline of editorial will remain the training ground of good visual communication. But as the subject media expands, so do the parameters of what illustration is and can be, and there are things that should be determined by audience, not publishers or editors.

3.4
Fear of Flying and Registered Mask.
Geoff Grandfield.
Grandfield's approach to image-making takes influences from film noir, stylish and cinematic; he captures moments in time with bold expressive images.

Book publishing

Arguably, the book was the first true medium for illustrators, and the relationship between written language and the illustrated image is a special one. This began with the illuminated religious manuscripts created between the seventh and ninth centuries, and continued with the birth of print in 1455. Until the invention of the camera and photography in 1839, illustration was the only form that printed images could take. Since photographic representation became the norm, the popularity of the illustrated image has been in decline. Within publishing now, the sectors most responsive to the work of illustrators are those of children's books, fiction titles and sometimes technical reference books, although increasingly these have turned towards using photography.



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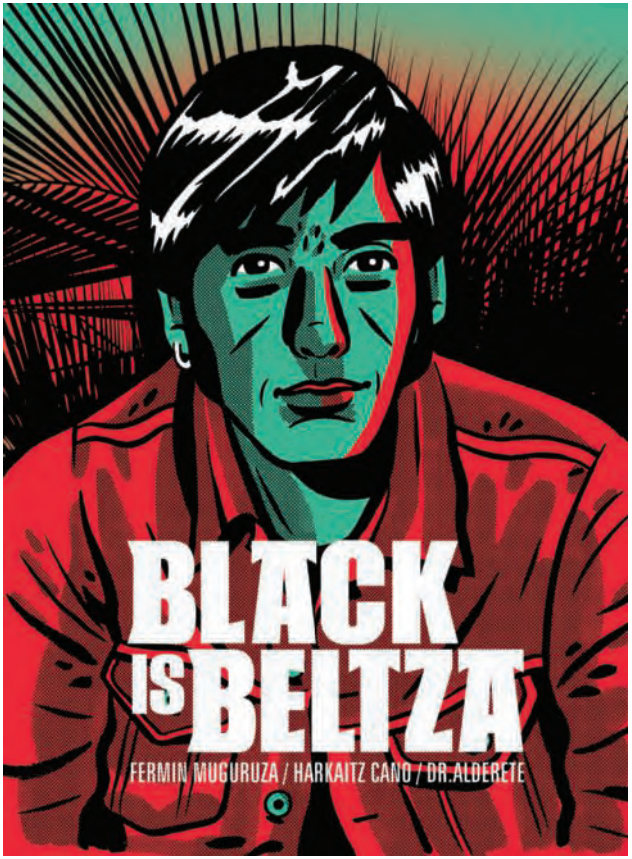


3.6

Children's books

There is, for many illustrators, something quite unique about creating illustrations for books. Now, illustrators are generally commissioned to either create entire children's books, often writing as well as illustrating the stories, or to produce front cover or jacket illustrations. Both areas can offer extremely rewarding commissions, artistically if not financially, as often there is a reasonable amount of time in which to produce the work. If working on a cover for a fiction title, there is often enough time to read the manuscript fully and produce first-stage visuals before embarking upon the final artwork.

The visuals expected for illustrated book titles differ from newspaper and magazine commissions; artists are required to create very finished early versions of what will become the final artwork. The visuals will detail the position of every element within an image and will also include very detailed finished drawings of each of the book's central characters.

For the writer/illustrator working on both text and image for a children's title, there is a much longer lead-in time. The first stage of the process, following the initial briefing, leads to the creation of a number of dummy spreads that are presented at trade book fairs to gauge the appeal and the reaction to the concept, style and approach of the book. Feedback given now can be just the first of many stages in a long line that may influence the direction that the book begins to take.

3.5
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen.
Alice Pattullo.
Pattullo has worked for book publishing companies creating new illustrations for classic as well as contemporary fiction.

3.6
Black is Beltza.
Jorge Alderete.
Mexico-based illustrator Alderete creates images that blend comic-art aesthetics with a minimal colour palette to maximum effect.

Artistic and editorial control

A book requires far more financial investment from a publishing company than any output from an editorial publisher, particularly now, with the rise of digital publishing. In order to recoup the initial expenses and move into creating a profit, books are expected to sell for a far longer period of time than the day or the month that a newspaper or magazine is on the shelf for. Ensuring that the product suits the intended audience, continues to sell after the publication date and remains relevant and fresh are all aspects that publishers take very seriously. With greater financial and commercial risk, it is understandable that greater artistic and editorial control rests with the publisher.

Art direction during the development of a book can come from many quarters. The art director or designer will view every illustration during a project and so too will the book's editor and editorial team, as essentially the initial commission can have come from either department. Equally important within the process are the thoughts and comments of the marketing department, since marketing plays a huge role in determining the success of a book. Books can sell or be left on the shelf depending on public reaction to the cover, and increasingly little is left to chance in this area. Feedback will reflect the saleability of the book's design. Requests from marketing and sales departments may include changes to colours, increases in type sizes and the inclusion of particular images.

One further aspect of what may seem an elongated process of commission can come into play even after every other department has approved both the illustration and the design of a book. Well-known authors can demand approval rights for any jacket designs for their works and, despite being a rare occurrence, can send any jacket back to the drawing board. Understanding the context of the book both artistically and commercially, the visual translation of the text as well as the overall creation of a design that appeals to an audience, are fundamental aspects of successful book illustration.

Q: Illustrations created for books play a huge role in bringing a text to life. How do you start the process of creating your images and, when you also create the text, which comes first?

SF: After reading the text, I ask myself what aspect or issue I wish to explore with the visual comment and try to portray that. When I work on children's stories often the idea starts from a visual image. As Quentin Blake said before, this is one great thing about being the author as well as the illustrator: you can write a story about things you like drawing.

Q: Which illustrated children's books were important to you as a child and why?

SF: I loved the atmosphere of a book. I was mainly attracted to the world that was depicted and contained within, and how I could enter it. I feel very privileged now to have the chance to create such worlds for the imagination. I also enjoyed the colours and was fascinated by details, for example in looking for the reoccurring detail of the worm (in Italian 'Zigozago') in Richard Scarry's books. I also had a book with photographic illustrations and its unusual look was intriguing and special.

Q: The illustrated book in its simplest form is a sequential set of images that correspond to a narrative – how do you decide which parts of the story need illustrating?

SF: I am not very interested in depicting exactly the same things that are described in the text. If the text is good it's better to let the words describe and suggest the image directly to the reader's imagination, and to offer instead a picture that shows a less obvious detail, or that gives an unexpected visual slant to the text.

Q: The development of ideas and visuals is part of the working process for an illustrator; how many stages does your own work take and at what point do you show the publishers the work?

SF: It is important for me to have a clear idea of the book before speaking to a publisher. I am open to and welcome sensitive editorial input and I am aware that things will change after my initial presentation, but it is good to start with some certainties. Some books take longer at the initial stage but then progress smoothly, and others, which at first seem smooth, might eventually take longer. It is a very organic process and it is important to have the ability to be open to the comments from editors whilst remaining clear about what the original vision and inspiration for the book was.

Q: Can you give a brief outline of your intentions when making illustrations for this sector of the industry?

SF: I try to make a book as I like it and would have liked it as a child. I think books come out better this way than if one tries to guess what children would generally like in their books. There is enough of a child in ourselves to know what we liked when we were younger (and still like!), and enough of an adult in a child for them to know when someone is patronizing them.

3.7
Jacket and page design for children's fiction *Pinocchio*. *Sara Fanelli.*
A genuine twist on a children's classic gave Sara Fanelli plenty of scope to create a brand-new aesthetic for this popular story. For the cover, Sara created a slipcase that produces an animation as the book is pulled out. As the book comes out, Pinocchio's nose grows!

3.8
Hattie Stewart.
Known for 'doodlebombing' over fashion photos for clients across fashion and music, Stewart has also created images for clothing – unique and one-off pieces as well as for production.

Fashion illustration

For some, the term 'illustration' is synonymous with the work of fashion illustrators, despite it losing much ground to photography since its height of popularity in the 1930s. Fashion illustration has moved gradually away from documenting the work of fashion designers for magazines, although sketched images have remained the starting point for many fashion designers as they visualize on paper the structure and fabrics for the garments that they are designing. For the illustrator not trained as a fashion designer who wants to work in this field, it is wise to undertake the discipline with a clear understanding of who to approach for commissions, as opportunities may be less visibly flagged than in other areas of the discipline.

Opportunities

Occasionally art directors cut against the tide of photographic imagery to offer illustrators the opportunity to create fresher, more personal interpretations of the season's trends and ranges. This type of fashion story commission usually comes from the fashion monthlies. It's mainly the more upmarket magazines as well as men's titles that tend to opt for this approach. The more avant-garde and independent the title, the more they are expected to be directional in their approach; in fact, it is this type of fashion illustration that is considered to lead the entire discipline stylistically.

Outside of the fashion and 'style' press, the recent rise in the recognition of fashion illustration can be attributed to a number of independent clothing labels, as well as bigger brands with an understanding of marketing to youth audiences.

Cult clothing labels such as A Bathing Ape in Japan, Silas in the UK and Huntergatherer in the United States all began to use illustration in original and fresh ways that led some larger corporate companies to follow suit. Nike, Adidas, Levi's and Diesel have all developed ranges of clothing with print graphics inspired or created by contemporary illustrators, or they've led marketing and advertising campaigns using the work of contemporary illustrators.

In a route similar to that of successful fashion photographers, many illustrators have started by creating low-fee, directional images for magazines, viewing them as a testing ground for their work. The transition to creating advertising and publicity for fashion labels with greater budgets and fees proves that their work has appeal and longevity. Longevity in fashion, however, may not last much longer than a couple of seasons.

'Nike, Adidas, Levi's and Diesel have all developed ranges of clothing with print graphics inspired or created by contemporary illustrators…'

Illustration and textile designs

Freelance textile designers endure a particularly subservient role in the fashion industry. Their designs are often sold for relatively small fees with no retention of copyright. For the illustrator that moves into producing textile designs, the payment and ownership terms can come as a genuine surprise. It is, perhaps, the enjoyment of working for another type of client in another medium that inspires most to work in this area, rather than any commercial gain. For those illustrators whose work is successful and has a high recognition factor, an invitation to create textile designs may help to ensure better rates and even the retention of copyright ownership.

Successful illustrators working across a range of textile applications have recently witnessed great interest in their work, some being commissioned to produce entire collections for fashion companies and labels. As illustration in this sector gathers greater recognition, so the scope of projects increases. With public interest in property, architecture and interiors escalating in recent years, it has come as no surprise that some fashion companies have turned their attention to a bigger canvas than the body. Many have seamlessly launched their own home interiors ranges and illustrators have capitalized by creating textile designs for duvet covers, curtains, wallpapers and towels. As fashion design has moved across the divide from clothing and into the home, so too has the flexibility and creativity of today's fashion illustrators.

Q: Illustration and fashion are inextricably linked and in recent years the relationship between the two has blossomed further. What do you consider to be the most important aspect of working in this field?

CE: I most appreciate when there exists a synergy with the client in the creation and production process, when the client and I can trust each other. In this sense, I particularly like the collaboration with the Brazilian fashion brand Anunciação. Maria Elvira, the designer, gives me total freedom in the creation process and I know that what will come out of my illustrations will be amazing.

Q: Your work exists in a space between commercial illustration and fashion/textiles – how have you made this work for yourself and your work?

CE: I never really thought I could make a living out of illustration, so I never really planned my way, I rather took the opportunities that were handed to me. But I certainly love textile and fashion.

Q: Who/what are your key influences? And where do you draw from to inspire you – nature, art, literature?

CE: Inspiration, for me, comes in many forms: people you meet, music, books, other people's work and it doesn't have to be related with my work. There are people and things that simply move you and get you wanting to create new things. Regarding the influences . . . I guess that like most people today I'm continuously looking for information on the web to get ideas; however, folk art remains a very strong influence in my work.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self?

CE: Don't worry, you'll be on time.

Q: Who would you most like to work with and what would the dream project be?

CE: I would like to work with people that feel passionate about their projects and their work. People that put all the love and care in what they do. In terms of the dream project: there are many, for instance I would love to create a scarf for Hermes, Loewe or any of the brands that give such a special treat to silk scarves. I would love to design textiles for Valentino, or Manish Arora, designers that treat their artefacts in such a special way, that put all their soul into the details of their collection. Oh and yes, I would love to design a whole set of dishes!

3.9
Pavo Bengala.
Caterina Estrada.
Designed as an all-over print for a silk scarf for an independent fashion label and also reproduced on a classic wooden jigsaw, this complex image depicts two highly stylized peacocks; Estrada's distinctive decorative work makes beautiful textiles prints.

Advertising illustration

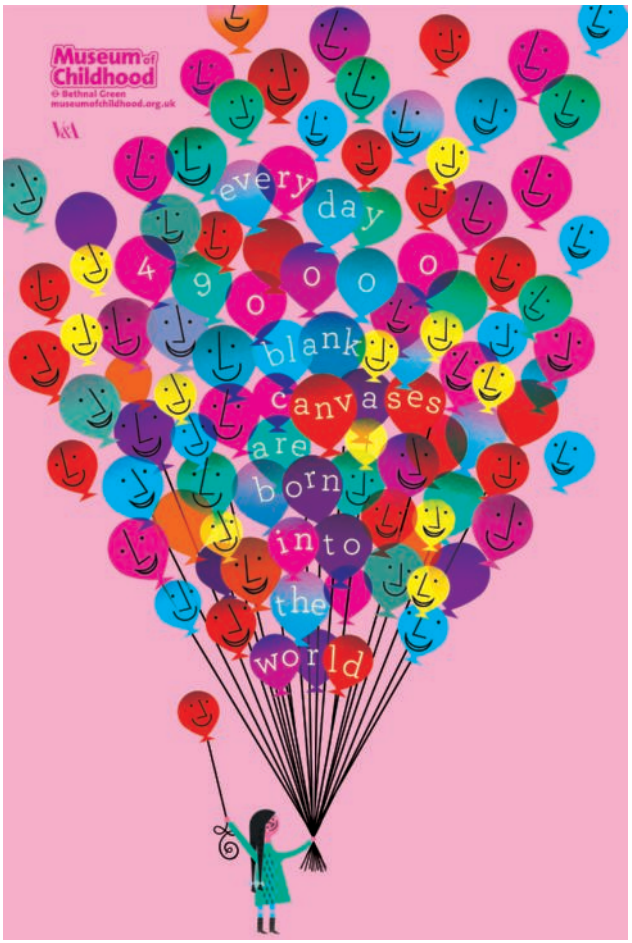
Advertising is a tough sector to break into and is not for the faint-hearted; it can be a brutal environment for the freelance illustrator. In return for punishing schedules, unrealistic deadlines, lack of creative decision-making and often simply being told what to do and sometimes how to do it, there is, however, the promise of the advertising fee. It is generally recognized that an increase in fees equates to the increased pressure felt when undertaking most advertising commissions.

Agency structures

All advertising agencies are structurally similar. Within the art department an art director will work hand in hand with a copywriter under the head of art or the creative director, normally responsible for a number of similar two-person creative teams/ partnerships. Art directors create the visual properties whilst the copywriter creates the written word or spoken script, for any advertising campaign.

Working alongside the art department of an advertising agency is the art-buying department. This manages the freelance sources of artwork: the photographers, model-makers, directors, animators and illustrators. The art buyer keeps abreast of developments, trends, fashions and movements in each of the key disciplines by attending exhibition openings, scouring the art and design press and constantly calling in portfolios of work from individual practitioners and agencies representing the best in contemporary work.

The account handler ensures the relationship between the advertising agency and the client runs smoothly; their main role is to liaise and coordinate each project for the agency and client. They are also responsible for making presentations of creative work to the client, sometimes without a member of the creative team and certainly always without the illustrator present. Sitting outside of the creative loop can lead to frustration for the freelance illustrator; client responses, changes and alterations to visuals or artwork are all relayed via the account handler. Be warned, this is a line of communication longer than the illustrator may find beneficial.



3.10
Museum of Childhood. Poster advertising.
Lesley Barnes.
Commissioned to create posters to promote the Museum of Childhood in London, Barnes took balloons and bricks as graphic starting points for these impactful illustrated solutions.

Museum of Childhood
Bethnal Green
museumofchildhood.org.uk
V&A
the
GREATEST
ART
GALLERY
in
the
world
is
a
child's
IMAGINATION

3.10

Coverage

A strong advertising campaign will aim to immerse itself and the product into the public's subconscious. It will seek to present an idea and an image for that product that becomes instantly recognizable, creating brand awareness and a product personality. Advertising utilizes a range of media in its pursuit of brand/product recognition: from posters on billboards, bus sides and shelters, referred to as 'outdoor media', to TV and cinema commercials known as 'on-air media'. The scope is endless and to the illustrator working on an advertising campaign, the effect of such coverage can be enormous.

In recent years, campaigns have become less regional and more international. With increased outlets for advertising, there is greater public recognition of campaigns and the associated product. Running hand in hand with this are the associations made with the illustration style and the visual identity of the campaign. This can be hugely beneficial if the product is deemed 'cool' or has entered the public zeitgeist as it encourages other companies to commission the same illustrator, hoping for associations to be made.

More frequent, though, is the downside; the work remains connected to a product long after any advertising campaign has ceased to run. This stylistic link can prove detrimental to bringing in new advertising commissions, the visual associations with previous products being too strong to risk attempting to create new ones. This can mean that even the hardest-working illustrators are only likely to be commissioned for very visible campaigns every other year at the most.

Steep learning curves

Advertising offers many unique challenges; most too must be resolved within an incredibly short time span. An advertising art director may view a portfolio of illustration work but see the potential, for example, in using the artist for a TV commercial. This may be despite the illustrator having little or no direct previous involvement in animation.

She or he may be called upon to work on ideas, themes and storyboards for an animated commercial and if the initial stage is successful, the illustrator may then be required to embark on a collaboration throughout the project with an animation house. Most illustrators enjoy rising to this type of challenge in the pursuit of creative work.

3.11
'Think About It' by Kia Motors. Press, web and TV advertising. *Pete Fowler for Mustoes Design Agency.* A project of this complexity needs time and extremely well-coordinated organization.

3.12
Kenzo Christmas.
Kat Leuzinger.
To run alongside Leuzinger's packaging design for Kenzo's Flower By Kenzo scent, she created a promotional Christmas tree and a poster campaign.

Advertising fees

Once a portfolio of work has been reviewed and its creator seen as potentially the right candidate for the project, a period of negotiation will commence. Very rarely does the agency reveal the fee that they wish to pay for the work at the outset. A normal discussion about the payment for the job will start with the agency detailing the client, the product, the number of images required, the media that the work is expected to run across, the period of time that the work will be used for and the deadline for delivery. Any one or combination of these factors can affect the outcome of the discussions.

Quoting for work

Creating a quotation for a job will often require meticulous planning with attention to the smallest detail. It can be a time-consuming task – one good reason why many illustrators work through an agent – and the lengthy task of creating a quote will not always result in the job being commissioned.

Test images and pitching

Increasingly, not only does the illustrator have to win the job on merit – he or she can now be asked to provide a test image. A test should not be confused with a first-stage visual; it is an opportunity for the agency to request an image, with no usage attached, to gauge how the illustrator might tackle the job if given it. The fee for a test image is invariably low despite sometimes taking as long to create as a final illustration. Similar to the test image is the pitch, which can be either paid or unpaid. Most pitching for work is undertaken by advertising agencies and design companies, but the knock-on effect ensures that illustrators are being commissioned to create images for these pitches. Low fees without any guarantee of a real project equate to a risk being carried by the illustrator as well as the design or advertising group.

Focus groups

Even after submission of the test image, it can still take an agency and client some time to come to a final decision. Many clients, unwilling to trust their instincts, decide to test the work using a focus group, where the general public is used for market research. Illustration fares particularly badly in these tests, as the general public is generally unaware of how the discipline works or how to rationalize its response to it.

Q: You've worked in all areas/sectors of illustration – what are the particular challenges in working for clients in advertising?

JJ: It's to be as creative as can be within the limitation of the briefs and its mission, which is to communicate a specific message that isn't yours, but it is the client's. It's interesting of course, as it offers a challenge that you normally wouldn't face for a self-initiated brief. It can push you harder to think a bit more.

Q: Are you someone that prefers to be leading with concepts or are you able to work up the ideas of art directors and clients?

JJ: It's two different jobs in my opinion. Working for a client with a brief and ideas set by an art director means they hire you as an illustrator, to execute their ideas. It's interesting too, but it's different from a job where you come up with the ideas. One is about your hand, the other one is about your mind. I think there are good creative benefits from balancing between commercial and personal projects.

Q: You have a very distinctive aesthetic – is this helpful when working across advertising or can it, in any way, be restrictive at all?

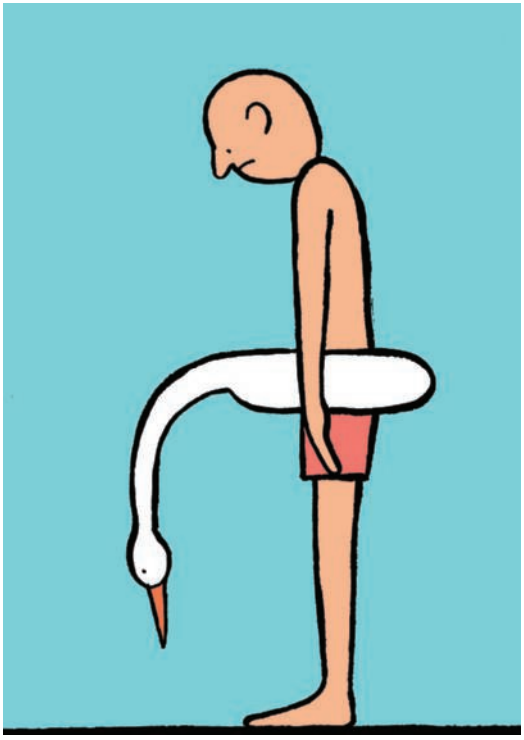
JJ: It very much depends on the client. I often work with great clients who just tell me to 'do my thing' but then counterbalance this freedom with pretty tight feedback.

Q: Your dream advertising project – who is it for? Where is it seen? How do you create it?

JJ: Wow, there are so many . . . I would LOVE to do a billboard campaign for the *New York Times* or another prestigious newspaper. In fact, I love to do any billboard campaigns. I love the idea of creating something that brings a bit of creativity to the everyday urban environment.

Q: You've been very vocal at points about the role of the illustrator in commenting upon society – do advertising commissions ever allow/enable you to have a voice or an opinion?

JJ: No, and that's not their job. Advertising commissions are a paid job, for a client, with a specific mission to deliver. I am more vocal in what I do outside of commissions, in my online presence for instance.



3.13
Ramen and Bouee. *Jean Jullien.*
It is the combination of Jullien's stunningly simple line-work and beautiful colour palette that sets his work apart from that of so many other illustrators striving for a similarly pared-back look and feel, and it is his ability to make believable and charming characters that makes his advertising work so immediate.

Music industry illustration

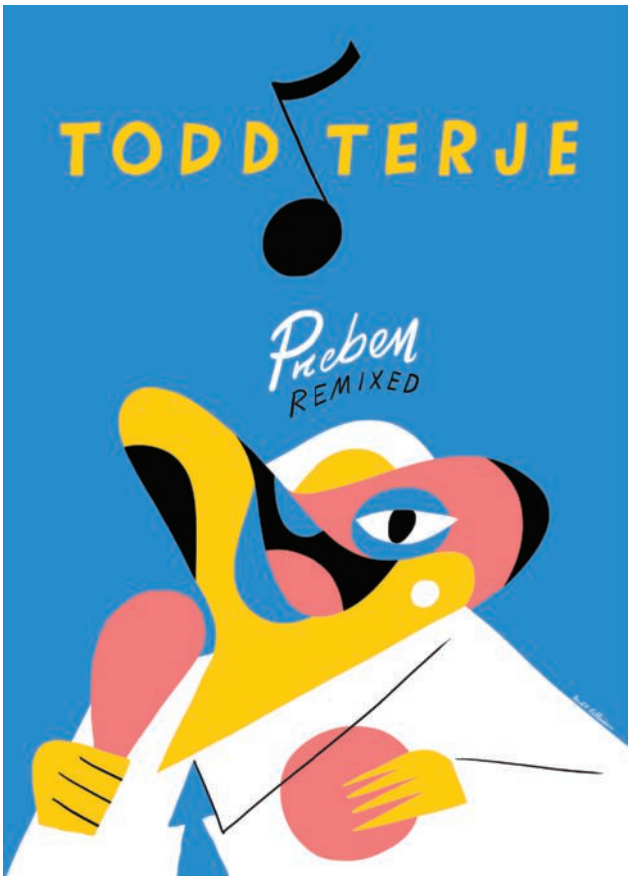
For many, illustration is seen as the discipline that brings a text to life, but another key aspect lies in illustration's ability to give music a visual form. Music graphics have played a definitive role in shaping the way that we relate to the music that we hear, creating an identity and personality for the product in a visual form. Long gone are the days when record companies could simply create an album sleeve by using a photograph of the artist alone on the cover. Far more unique and sophisticated solutions aid sales through sleeve design that projects a graphic image of the artist.

Record label set-ups

The music business is a global industry that employs tens of thousands of people and represents artists and acts that generate many millions of dollars per annum. The huge scale of the operation means that finding inroads into working as a freelance illustrator can be less than straightforward. Large record labels normally run their own art departments, creating CD sleeves and promos for their acts in-house, buying in photography and illustration on a project-by-project basis. Some of the large labels, however, prefer to outsource all of their design, working with one major design company or a selection of smaller agencies, commissioning them for the entire design and production of each project.

Gaining access to information and contact details for both record label art departments and independent design companies, although not initially as simple as in other sectors of the design and advertising industries, will prove fruitful. A little more 'homework', coupled with an awareness of current and emerging trends in both music and design practice within the discipline, is necessary. Frequent visits to record stores and regular checking of the small-print credits in the sleeve notes will elicit the correct contact information, or at least work as a starting point. Increasingly, individual acts now have their own website where further contact information can be obtained.

It is rare for an illustrator to work for a particular band throughout their entire lifespan, but it can happen. Creating images for merchandise, backdrops and set design, as well as animations for the band's promo videos are all areas that can open up for those whose work defines the graphic look of a recording artist.



3.14
Todd Terje.
Ben Kaltenborn.
Kaltenborn's poster for Norwegian DJ Todd Terje draws upon influences from as far and wide as Matisse's flat abstract colour shapes and animations for children from the 1970s.

3.15
Jesse—Music for Emotions.
Toni Halonen.
Toni Halonen's sleeve image for Finnish artist Jesse integrates image and text with a limited colour palette to great effect.

Q: Working for the music industry brings another dimension to the job of the illustrator who is normally associated with bringing text to life. In this sector it is about bringing a visual form to music and it can also be associated with fashions and trends. How do you respond to a given project?

KS: Well, it really depends on the project. Sometimes the client is open and sometimes they come with a clearly thought-out idea. Both are fine with me. Of course, I prefer illustrating the music I like, but sometimes it can be really refreshing to do something completely different.

Q: Record sleeve design has been a vital aspect of marketing music; when CDs emerged to replace vinyl, the canvas reduced dramatically. Do you enjoy the restrictions of the medium?

KS: I still prefer vinyl format and fortunately I've been working with record companies who usually publish in vinyl too. Now, the clumsy CD jewel case may be a classic, but I usually prefer the cardboard ones. It really is a challenge to make the small CD format appealing. But I wonder what we are going to do with MP3s?

3.16

Q: The audience's perception of a musician or recording artist is often drawn from the graphics created for their recordings – do you have the artist's visual identity in mind whilst you create their cover art?

KS: Sure. But I prefer covers that take the listener to a different level. I think the covers can be a bit challenging too – I always try to illustrate the moods and feelings from the music. Of course, it's just my personal view, but I hope it opens the music up to other people too.

Q: Your work has a surreal, other-worldly feel about it – do you think that it has helped you get work in this area of design?

KS: Well, it's really difficult to say. Sometimes the music makes me draw different things. It's really about the music and how it matches with the illustration. Hopefully one day I can do a project where the image is first.

Q: Can you give a brief outline of your intentions when making illustrations for this sector of the industry?

KS: Well, first, hopefully I like the music I'm going to illustrate. If I do, I usually get stuck into it for some time. And then I get deeper and try to understand it. After that it's easy and inspiring to make my work. But if I don't like the stuff – then it's like any other work project, good or bad, but I don't take it too personally.

3.16 and 3.17
Country Falls CD cover design.
Husky Rescue, Catskills Records.
Kustaa Saksi
Surreal landscapes and imagery represent the *Country Falls* album artwork for Husky Rescue.

Studio collaboration

Whilst many aspects of the communication design industry are contained within specialized compartments and departments, as we have seen with advertising, magazine, newspaper and book publishing, there are a vast number of design companies that exist to offer broader services.

Small independent graphic design studios and companies far outnumber the specialist advertising agencies or publishing companies, and are a rich source of work for the illustrator. Commissions can be forthcoming for any type of project; illustrators are called in to create images for business-to-business projects such as annual reports or to work on logo designs, produce cover illustrations for financial reports, artwork for theatre posters – the list is endless. As in other aspects of the industry, knowing the specialist nature of each company is vital before approaching them with requests for meetings or portfolio reviews. Following the international design press and researching company websites is the best way of gleaning up-to-date information about projects undertaken by these independent companies.

Working relationships

The working relationship for both the illustrator and the design company is an important one and much of the success in any collaboration relies on a level of trust between both parties. For the designer commissioning the illustrator, he or she must feel confident that the work is delivered within the deadline and is of a standard that matches previous work in the artist's portfolio. The illustrator must trust that the designer will use his or her work in a respectful and professional way, not running type over an image or cropping off the sides of the artwork without prior consultation.

Working relationships can take time to build, but the key to ensuring a project runs smoothly lies in open lines of communication; regular conversations on the phone or via email to update the designer on how the illustration is taking shape can be very useful.

It is wise, when working for a new client, to build into the schedule an extra stage to show the artwork in progress. This stage sits between the viewing of the visuals and the artwork, and can be used to ensure that all elements within the image are present and correct. Some illustrators produce a black-and-white line version of their intended artwork to help the designer visualize how the final illustration will look.

Contracts and purchase orders

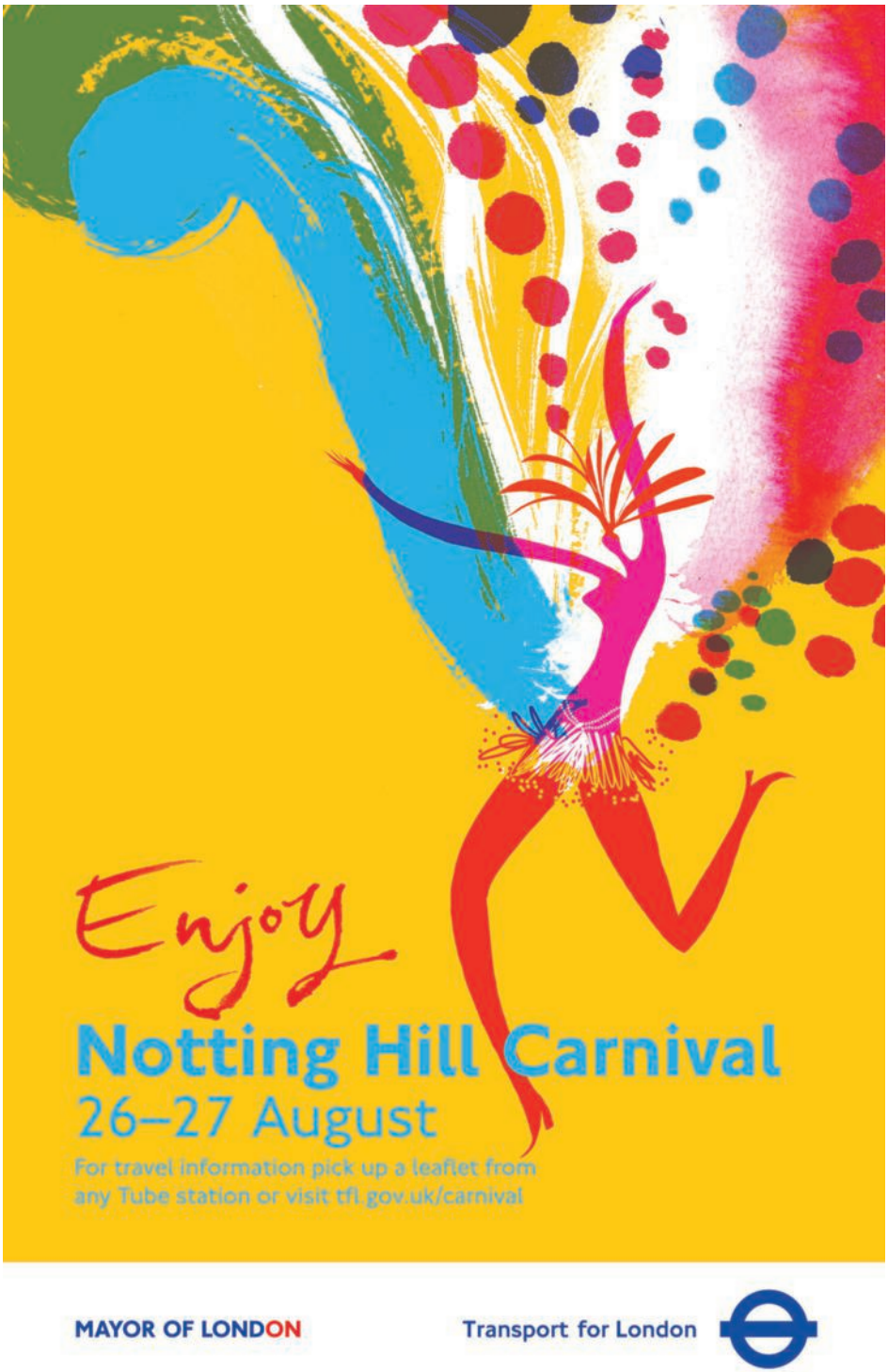
To ensure that both parties fully understand the process of the commission, it can be useful for a contract or purchase order to be issued by the design company to the illustrator. Incorporated into the contract must be a description of the job itself, the fee, the deadline for submission of the work, as well as payment terms and conditions.

Unfortunately, not every company adheres to the principle of the contract or purchase order, and practice across the industry varies. It is rare, for example, for a magazine in the UK to issue a purchase order, but standard practice for a similar company in the United States. The purchase order, or PO, exists to protect both the client and illustrator. A signed PO ensures that the artist can invoice for the fee agreed at the start of the job and that is documented on the paperwork. This method avoids the need to rely on word of mouth or vague recollection of the details of any discussion, and is useful for commissions that may run into weeks or even months. Good practice means that an accounts department will not have to seek authorization to make a payment after the invoice has arrived if a contract or PO number is quoted on the invoice.

The contract and the PO are really ways of standardizing written agreements. If the company does not have templates for these available, ask for the agreement in writing, as a formality.

3.18
Zick Zack.
Hoax Amsterdam.
Hoax Amsterdam create promotional posters for Zick Zack, a sound system known for blending the underground music sounds of their native Amsterdam with the vibes of London.

3.19
Enjoy Notting Hill Carnival.
Lara Harwood.
UK-based Harwood mixes her love of printmaking with the digital to create this image of joy and passion to promote the annual Notting Hill Carnival and Transport for London's travel information for the event.



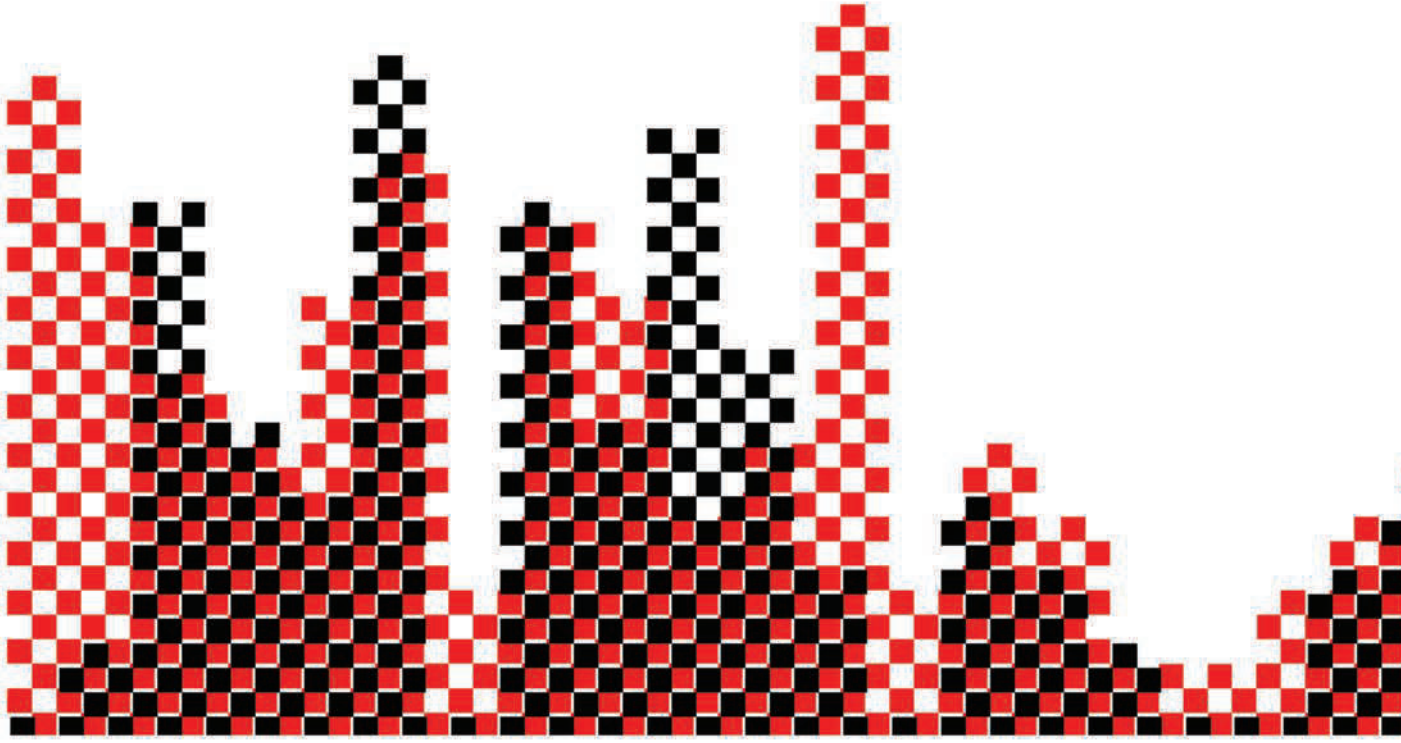
3.20
Andaz.
Brian Cairns.
An entire building wrap created by Cairns promotes the Andaz hotel concept, a subdivision of Hyatt, aimed at the stylish and hip traveller interested in local cultural events and meeting other travellers.

Q: Working with design companies differs from working in other sectors of the market – there is more crossover and collaboration between designer and illustrator/image-maker. How do you feel that this has benefitted your work?

AB: When working for an ad agency the traditional hierarchies are well understood by everybody involved. Normally I have the most contact with the art director during the job. The agency then deals with the client; there isn't much direct communication. When working with design companies there tends to be much more contact with everybody involved. It feels like there is much more collaboration. Projects tend to develop at a slower pace with design companies. There are more stages involved and a greater lead-in time to production. I feel that clients get more out of me when I'm more involved in the project, rather than just being a stylist.

Q: At what stage in a project do you ideally like to be involved and how many stages do you normally envisage a project taking?

AB: Ideally, I'd like to be involved right at the start. In practice it tends to be quite a long way in. Sometimes you are asked to pitch for a job. I don't think anybody enjoys pitching for work; I try to avoid it if possible. Sometimes people pay for pitches, which helps the motivation and it feels more 'real'. That helps you to get thinking about a project. Usually the pitch work doesn't take that long. If there is a small shortlist of possible designers, it shouldn't be too hard to pick the right person for the job. After the pitch has been won it starts getting busy. Initial designs from the pitch have to be resolved and ideas have to be developed. If there are questions about style, these have to be addressed too. After this initial stage there are usually another couple of rounds of revisions before final designs are presented. There are inevitable tweaks to be made on the final designs. This is usually the point where very tight deadlines get stretched a bit!



Q: Pricing work for projects with design companies is not nearly as simple as in editorial or even advertising work – how do you find a happy medium?

AB: Most projects tend to be priced as a single design fee, rather than a daily rate. People in design always ask me what my daily rate is. I don't have one. The fee depends on the size of the project, the usage and the client. Advertising tends to be more generous, but then the pressures and deadlines are always much greater with advertising.

Q: What freedom does working with design companies on projects allow and how does your own interpretation of the brief lead the working process that you adopt?

AB: I am normally approached to work on a project as a result of people seeing my previous work – so usually there is an understanding that they want my particular approach. I try to think of new ways of doing things for each project. Sometimes this doesn't work, then people ask me to do something that I've already done before. Every job involves compromise on both parts. The client has a strong idea of what they want and understands the audience they are talking to. At the end of the project I'm always happy if I've managed to produce a piece of work that feels like it's been the result of a good collaboration between me and the client.

Q: Can you give a brief outline of your intentions when making work for this sector of the industry?

AB: I don't really tend to approach work for design companies in a different way to any other client. The main thing for me is to have a good dialogue with the client.

3.21
Mural for Bloomberg. Design studio collaboration. *Anthony Burrill for Scarlet Projects.* Burrill was commissioned to create a mural for Bloomberg, at the financial institution's headquarters in London. Vinyl graphics were applied directly to the walls, although the design was resolved on-screen prior to installation.

Self-initiated illustration

Every illustrator enjoys the prospect of working outside of what constitutes a 'standard' commission. For some it can be frustrating to find that after a couple of years of regular work, commissions start to become repetitive or even mundane. Keeping things alive and fresh can take the illustrator into new areas of interest and can help push one or two boundaries at the edges of the discipline.

A progressive approach to illustration can be achieved by continuing to work independently in sketchbooks, creating new artwork and generally spending time researching and exploring new ways of visualizing and new forms of expression.

Finding time to work on self-initiated projects can be problematic when an illustrator is busy with art directors and designers requesting commissions, but it is crucial in keeping one step ahead of the game. It may be as simple as taking a morning out of the studio each week to visit exhibitions and galleries, or an afternoon drawing on location. It may be a local life-drawing class or a print workshop. Either way it can help feed the imagination, give some perspective to the activity of illustration and assist in finding new directions to work in and towards.

Self-initiated work can often lead to commercial spinoff projects. An illustrator's desire to work in new and different areas of interest or pure financial necessity are both strong drivers for self-initiated work. Organizing an independent exhibition of new work is a useful way of keeping clients informed about developments in a body of work and can be financially positive if sales are accomplished. Creating limited-edition screen-prints or digital prints can mean that prices per unit can be kept reasonably low, but profits can accumulate when an image is sold numerous times.

Illustrators with an eye for both fashion and business find that investing time and capital into designing and producing a small range of T-shirts can be another form of income. Small, independent fashion retail outlets will often take a range of T-shirts on a sale-or-return basis and this experience can be helpful when approaching fashion companies and labels for freelance commissions.

A growth area in recent years has been in the production of 'toys'. Originally starting as promotional devices for independent record and fashion labels, a sizable interest has grown in limited-edition toy characters. Created for and aimed at an adult audience who have grown up with toy figures based on characters from movies, animations, comics and video games, the new genre concentrates on hipper, more streetwise and stylistically cool figures. Often starting life as 2D sketches within illustrators' sketchbooks or in commissioned artwork, these toys have gone from purely promotional items to desirable, collectable objects.

'Keeping things alive and fresh can take the illustrator into new areas of interest and can help push one or two boundaries at the edges of the discipline.'

3.22
Bread and Cheese and Mugs.
Paul Leith.
Whether initiating his own children's books – Bread and Cheese is a spread from one self-initiated book project – or creating his own range of mugs, Leith has moved from a career almost entirely working to commission to a career where he initiates his own projects for a variety of clients.

Q: Personal work can be the driving influence for commercial projects; how do you maintain the correct balance?

HH: My personal work and commercial work are often close together. I get asked for commissions because of what I do with my free work and I can only do commercial jobs if they relate to my free work. Usually clients are after something kind of dark, funny and different when they commission me. This means I don't have to worry about a balance most of the time. The commercial work usually feels like the same thing as my free work.

Q: Does your working method alter depending on the type of project – personal or commercial – that you are working on?

HH: No, I do what I do and I think that's one of the main reasons people ask me. It is definitely one of my demands when taking on a commercial job. I need to have the freedom to do things my way. Of course I listen to a client's needs and I try to give them what they want, but it should all stay within the range of the kind of thing I do.

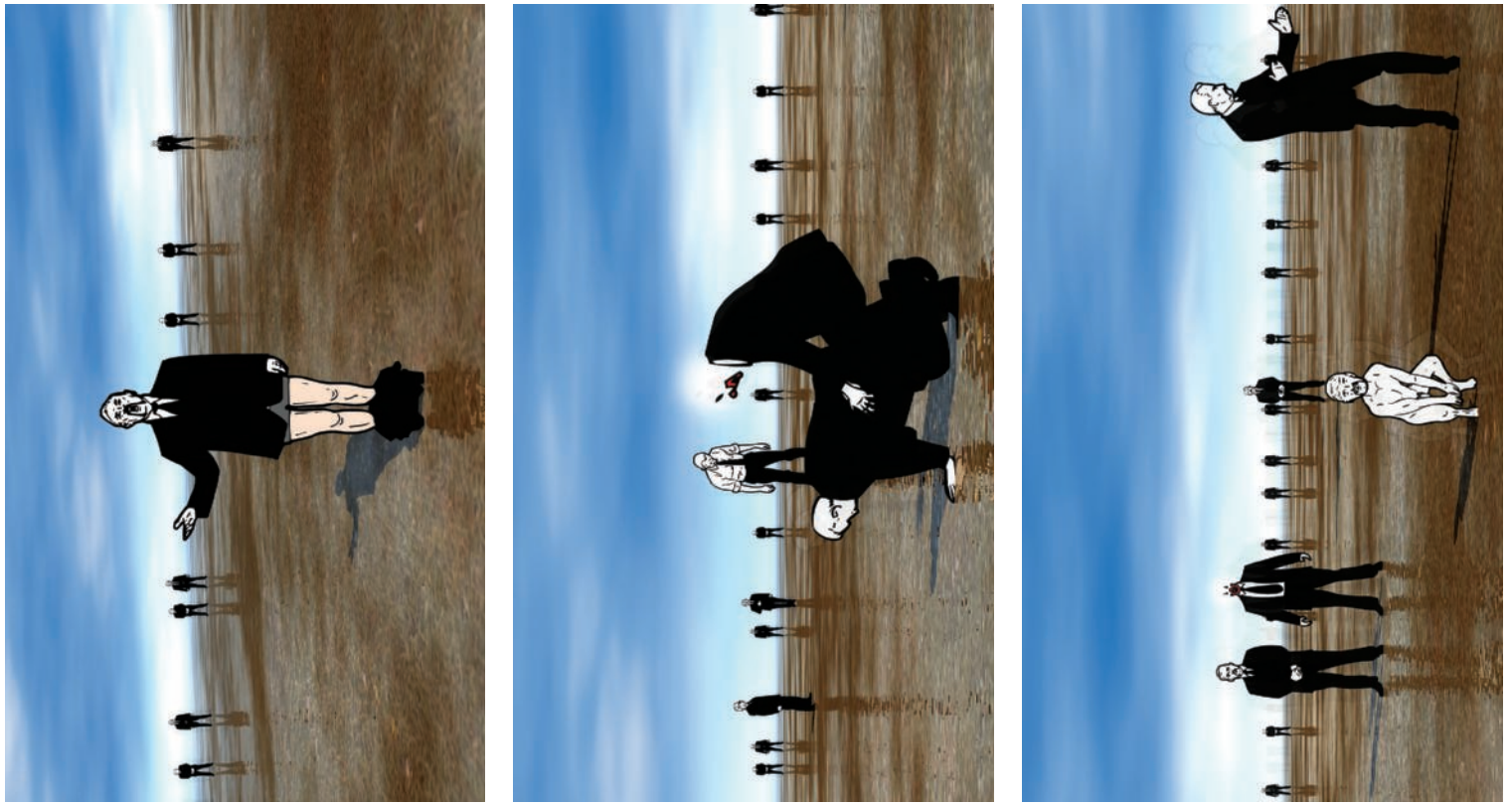
Q: What themes and ideas do you explore in your own work that translate to commercial projects?

HH: I try to communicate uncertain feelings with my work. Although my work is usually black and white, the ideas behind the work are grey. If I make an animation with a smoking character, it shouldn't be clear if I'm against smoking or pro smoking. There should be a little of both in it. I try to leave room for the viewer to find their own personal interpretation. In the end, its meaning is decided by the viewer. Commercial work usually needs clear communication, but I always try to insert some of my greyness in it. At first the message might be clear, but on a closer look you might see something less clear.

Q: Can you give a brief outline of your intentions when making illustrations for this sector of the industry?

HH: Making money is my prime intention; if I could make enough money with my own work I probably wouldn't do commercial stuff. On the other hand, it's nice to do something else every once in a while. Working on your own stuff all the time can make you blind. Commercial jobs can create a healthy distance between me and my work, and give me a better perspective on what I do – but then again, if it didn't make me money, I wouldn't do it.

3.23
HAFF Leader, Holland Animation Film Festival. Film festival promo.
Han Hoogerbrugge.
Han Hoogerbrugge, based in Holland, creates self-initiated, challenging and often controversial animations that he releases online through his own website. Putting himself at the centre of his work, Hoogerbrugge uses digital photographic self-portraits as a trace-guide for his Flash-animated drawings.



3.23

Case study: Olivier Kugler

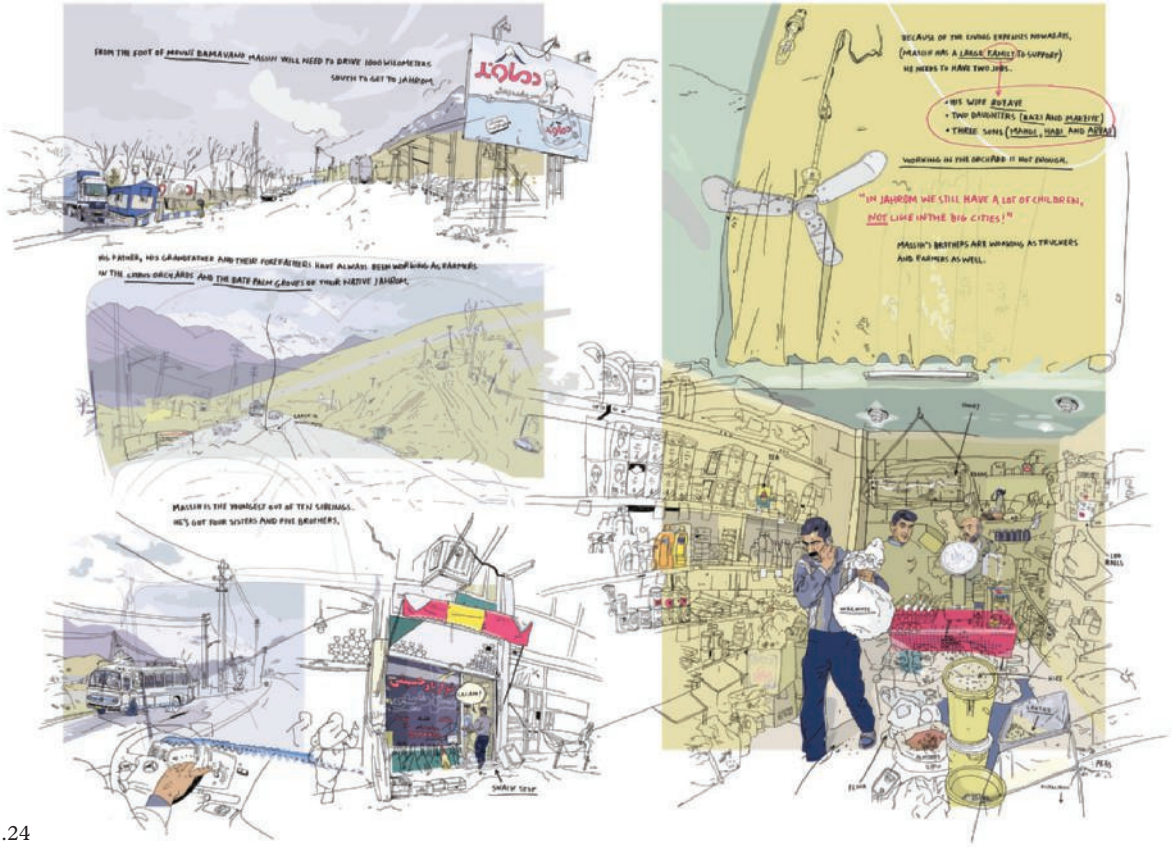
Olivier Kugler was born in 1970 in Stuttgart, Germany. Influenced by the French/Belgian Bande Desinées and Otto Dix, he now works as an illustrator for clients all over the world, including *XXI*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Reader's Digest*, the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and *New York Magazine*.

The commission

This work was commissioned by Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, the editor of the French publication *XXI*. Kugler was asked to complete a thirty-page reportage/documentary graphic novel about a person he met in Iran. The deadline for this brief was very flexible.

Initial response

Kugler approached the editor of *XXI* magazine himself and told him that he was going to be travelling to Iran. As a result, he was asked to produce a graphic novel, based on his experiences there. The exact nature of the work and the storyline it would follow were left up to Kugler. After much consideration, Kugler decided to join an Iranian truck driver on a long journey through Iran. He was keen to describe daily life in Iran, as seen from the perspective of the trucker rather than from a tourist's point of view.



3.24

The work unfolds

Kugler undertook a four-day trip with truck driver Massih, during which he made rough sketches, wrote down observational notes and took reference photos. When he arrived back in his London studio, he looked through all of the photos and began to make rough thumbnails of the page layouts.

Approval

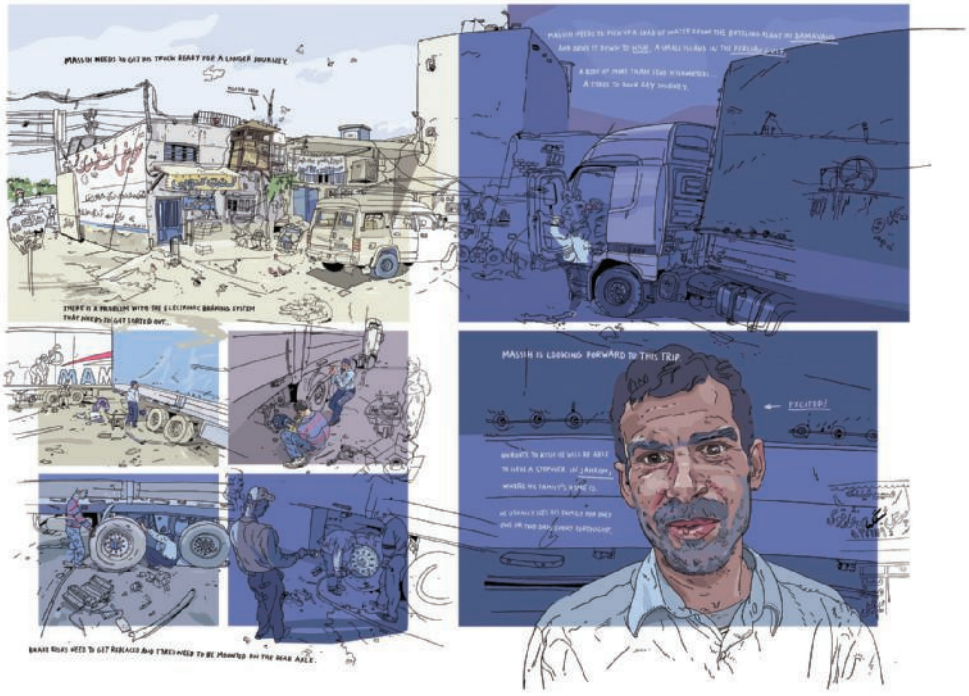
Although Kugler was not required to seek approval, he did show the editor the work on a regular basis.

Final artwork

The final artwork was created in pencil on A2 (C) paper using the photographs as a reference. When the drawings were complete they were digitally coloured.

Completion

When the work was complete it was reproduced as a thirty-page reportage journal in the magazine *XXI* (autumn edition 2010).



3.24
'A tea in Iran'.
Olivier Kugler.
Kugler's work follows the day-to-day life of Iranian truck driver Massih.

From outcomes to outlets

In an increasingly visual world, images are constantly vying for our attention. This exercise will allow you to consider how illustrators respond to text and how illustrations are used across many different industries.

The brief: Responding to content

Part 1

Find an article from a newspaper or magazine that has been illustrated. Photocopy the article and cut out the original illustration. Respond to the text with a series of thumbnails/rough sketches. Once you have explored a number of solutions, decide which one you feel is most appropriate to the text. Work on this idea so that you have a developed visual rough. Remember to be aware of the dimensions that the image must fit.

Part 2

Select a favourite CD and listen to the tracks. Respond to the music by drawing a series of thumbnails/rough sketches. This initial response may be based on emotion, lyrics, tempo – it is how you respond that is important. Check the dimensions of the CD cover and work on your best idea so that you have a developed rough.

Part 3

Think of a book you have recently read. Respond to the text with a series of thumbnails/rough sketches that you feel evoke the mood of the book. Think about the title and the author; these may be included, but you may wish to just create an image – either is fine. Check the dimensions of the book and develop the best idea into a final rough.

These may be completed over a number of different days and you may wish to repeat the exercise. Once you have the three final roughs select one to develop into a final illustration.

Questions in summary

1. Which outlet would you most like to create an illustration for?
2. What qualities are required for each type of final outcome?
3. Which key people would you need to collaborate with for each final outcome?
4. Which areas do your favourite illustrators tend to produce work for?

Chapter 4—Communicating ideas

The essence of an illustration is in the thinking – the ideas and concepts that form the backbone of what an image is trying to communicate. Bringing life and a visual form to a text or message is the role of the illustrator – the best in the business combine smart analytical thinking with finely tuned practical skills to create images that have something to say, and the ways and means to say it. Here, we'll take a look at some of the ways to start generating ideas and putting them into process.

4.1

Why ideas?

There is nothing quite so disconcerting as the starkness of a blank sheet of paper or the glare from an empty screen, particularly in between receiving a commission for a commercial illustration and making your first mark. In these circumstances, the only satisfactory cure is an idea. Realizing your idea by putting pencil to paper or finger to mouse is the first step of the journey towards executing an illustration. Understanding how ideas take shape, and how to assist the process when they don't flow as readily as one would like, is crucial if working in illustration is to be a fruitful experience rather than a chore.

Why illustration?

A common misconception amongst student illustrators is that once a 'style' or method of working has been arrived at, there is little more to learn about the craft of illustration. Of course, technique and skills are absolutely invaluable, as is having an approach that could be considered unique. Yet just as important is the ability to create images that are underpinned by strong creative thinking and that have problem-solving ideas at the heart of the solution. Illustration at its worst is merely a page-filler that might look good, but fails to give or add any knowledge of the subject that it illustrates. At its best, illustration encourages the viewer to think, to draw more from the text than first meets the eye and to comprehend a greater and more in-depth understanding of the subject. Great illustrations are like great stories and narratives – they require the viewer to become actively involved in order to fully comprehend the message. The concept may appear hidden at first, but communicates successfully when the viewer disseminates the image. Great illustration marries excellence in craft, skill and creative thinking.

4.1
Girl in a Wormhole.
Benjamin Phillips
Phillips draws directly with graphite pencils on paper – his images reflect surreal circumstances created from his imagination rather than from observation.

4.2
Extreme Ironing and Hot Flushes. *Harriet Russell.* Images with quirky subject matter tend to be Russell's calling card; her characters are captivating yet surprisingly simple in their creation – less is more when it comes to line-work.

A creative career

Just as trends in fashion or music ebb and flow, so too do styles in illustration. An illustrator recognized for a particular way of working may have a fantastically busy year professionally, only to find that as the commissions start to dry up, their style has fallen out of fashion. Keeping abreast of changes stylistically can help the illustrator stay one step ahead of the competition. However, creating images that resonate with creative ideas helps to produce a body of work that is timeless and doesn't rely on the whims of fashion in design and illustration.

Planning a career in illustration is anything but an exact science and there are no guarantees of longevity. However, many of the illustrators that have survived the test of time, working across a number of decades as opposed to just a number of years, have produced images that require more than just a passing glance from the viewer. Combining strong ideas with excellent execution can ensure an audience continues to appreciate the work of an illustrator, long after fashions and trends have moved on.

'Creating images that resonate with creative ideas helps to produce a body of work that is timeless and doesn't rely on the whims of fashion in design and illustration.'

AUTHOR TIP: INVESTIGATING IDEAS

- Use a sketchbook to record ideas and thoughts in an intuitive and automatic fashion – don't worry about how the ideas look at this stage.
- Carry a sketchbook and pen or pencil at all times – inspiration can occur in the unlikeliest of places, so it pays to be prepared.
- Jot down your thoughts using written as well as visual language, whichever best suits your way of thinking.
- Put down enough information to remind you of ideas months, or even years ahead.
- Date and time your entries – this will help you to remember the context of what you were thinking at the time.
- Make a note of locations, reference materials and book titles as well as writing down important quotes that might help.

The briefing

Mastering the ability to think creatively should not be shrouded in mystery. With some useful tips, most creative people can lay the foundations to ensure that they are best prepared to be creative in their thinking and start to generate interesting ideas. For the illustrator, the most important aspect of creative thinking starts with the briefing of a new project.

Information gathering

The initial briefing is the point at which basic information about the project must be gathered. Knowledge and understanding of the project is crucial. Being equipped with all of the relevant information required may appear obvious, but many fail to fully comprehend the importance of getting the facts correct at the start.

Knowing where the finished illustration is to appear, at what size, and whether it is to run in colour or black and white should be basic aspects of the brief – if in doubt, ask. Being fully aware of the deadline for visuals and how much time is then available to complete the final artwork is crucial. If the work is for a new client, understanding the audience and researching previous copies of the publication can help build a picture of how your work may fit in and the range of illustration styles that the publication has used before.

The briefing meeting

Where possible, it is advisable to meet face-to-face with a client to receive a project brief, although this is often not realistic. Most briefings take place on the phone or Skype for a face-to-face call, via email or through agents. Unless the project is of a substantial size, a meeting of real people in real time is unlikely. For those rare face-to-face meetings it is vital to ensure that every aspect of a project is covered in detail. It is in these very early beginnings of a project that initial ideas can start to take shape.

The possible meeting and associated conversation should act as a catalyst for the exploration of ideas. To ensure it is successful, be aware of the need to listen. Listening to the client talk about the project will help shape the direction of your visual solutions. Don't be afraid to ask questions, but then do make sure that you listen to the answers. No question that you ask will be inappropriate – you can never have too much information.

If you find that the client talks about the project in language that you don't comprehend, or in jargon that doesn't make sense, make sure that you ask them to rephrase what they are saying. Write down key points, but don't let your attention to writing stop you from listening. Clarify points later if you need to, but at this stage just get the broad brushstroke of the project.

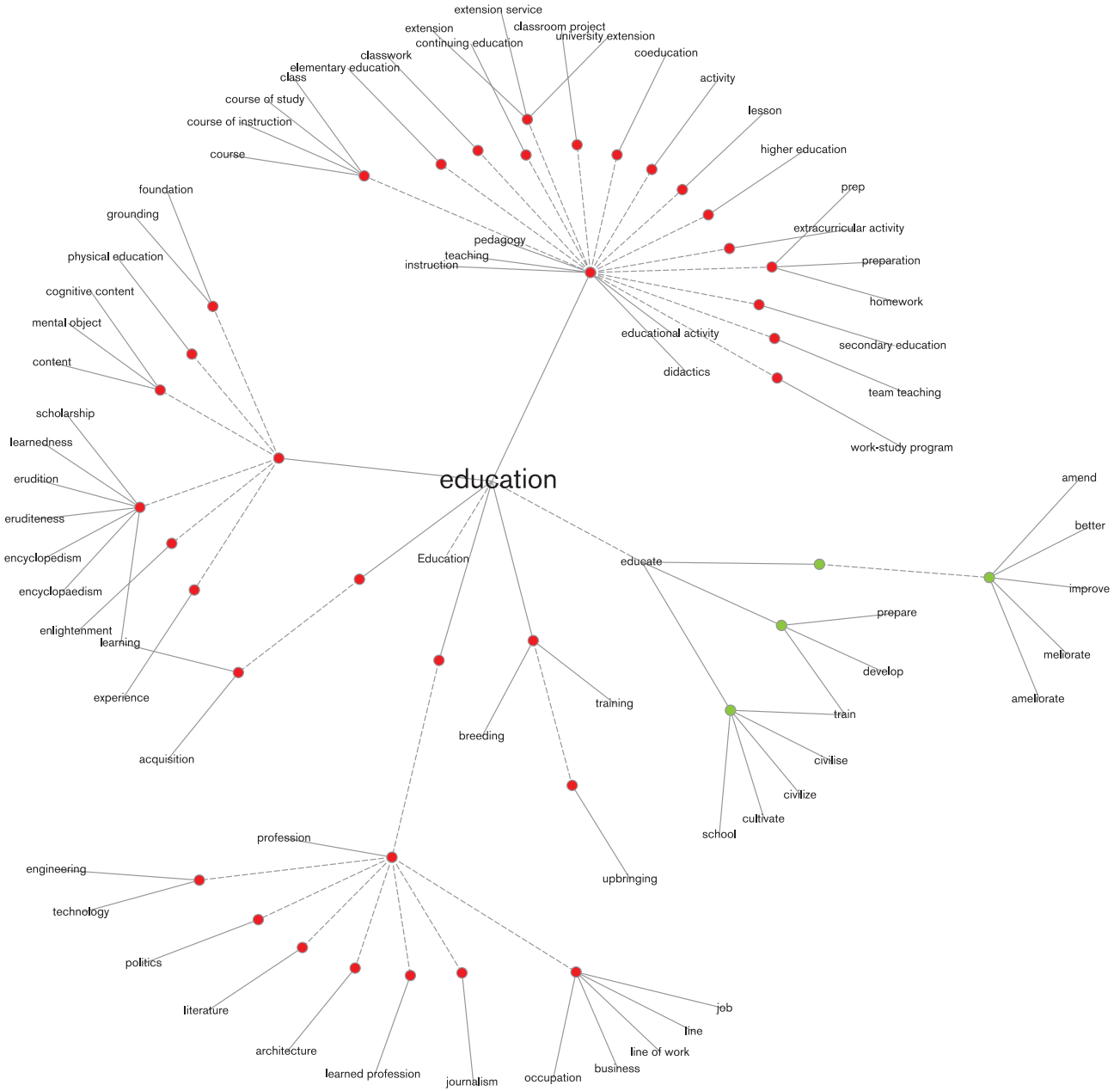
AUTHOR TIP:
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

- **Find out all details of the practical context: the size, position, the accompanying text and images and whether it will be in full colour or black and white.**
- **Never start an illustration without knowing who will be looking at the outcome. Understanding your audience is key.**
- **Read previous issues of the publication you are illustrating for and note your response as you do so.**
- **If the image has been commissioned for a book jacket, having an insight into the author's previous books and how they have been illustrated can be useful.**
- **If working for the music industry, review the label's other issues, listen to the music being represented by your commission, and research the musician's likes and dislikes.**

When you leave the meeting or put down the phone, start by putting as much of the information you've been given on to paper as soon as possible. Write down every detail, every thought, idea and concept – however random, basic or crazy they may seem at the time. These notes will prove invaluable later as they will have been created from the fresh thoughts and instinctive responses you had to the project in the first instance.

Being armed with the facts can make a big difference – it makes sense to start generating ideas fortified with as much information as possible.

4.3
Hard at Work . . .
Jeff Ostberg.
Knowing when your best ideas will come is the subject of this image; sometimes it is better to shut your eyes, put your head down and let your mind wander . . .



4.4
Visual thesaurus.
There are a number of ways to generate ideas and identify associated words. This diagram shows cycles of words that relate to each other and is visually more stimulating than writing a list.

Investigating subject matter

The illustrator frequently begins a project having been emailed text or copy from their client. This is particularly true for newspaper, magazine or book publishing commissions. A newspaper may have a regular IT feature or health page that requires illustrating, or a magazine may commission illustrators to produce images to accompany the text of their regular columnists.

Whatever the type of commission, it is wise to investigate the subject matter of the text in as much depth as possible. Researching on the internet, and in bookshops and libraries, should harvest more information than the text for the magazine or newspaper article can possibly cover. Having more information about the subject can throw new light onto possible avenues of thought.

It is useful to build a bigger picture, but don't forget the original text. Get as much information as you can – obviously, the most important thing at the start of a project is to understand the subject that you are illustrating. Be careful, though: remember that you are being commissioned to create an illustration that complements the text being published.

Getting started

When an illustrator is busy with numerous commissions, the greatest temptation is to place any new incoming projects to the bottom of the pile and ignore them until the impending deadline looms so close that it becomes impossible to put off the project any longer. For many freelance illustrators there is an in-built aversion to completing a job before the specified deadline. This is not due to laziness, but the fear of being without work. Being freelance means that there are times when one is busy and other times when one is without work, or 'in between projects', as actors like to describe unemployment. Having a backlog of work maintains the sense of full employment. This process of leaving projects until the very last minute is not conducive to creative thinking, though.

It is wise to get to grips with a project as soon as possible. Often the best ideas will come when least expected – in the shower, on the bus, whilst cooking – but this can only happen if the project has been investigated, or at least the text has been digested, early on. Reading the text through thoroughly a few times in a quiet space, with a cup of coffee and a notepad and pen handy, is the ideal way to start the creative process. Having the text to hand on a smartphone or tablet along with a notepad and pen, so that it can be called upon and referred to whenever there is a free moment, makes real sense. Remember that a good idea can take shape anywhere.

AUTHOR TIP:
RESEARCH AND IDEAS SHEETS

—Collect words – use a written list to itemize everything that you can think of that is connected to the project. Use a highlighter pen to mark those words that seem potent and that may add something to your thinking.
—Cut up your lists and place the chosen words onto a fresh sheet of paper; tape them down and start to draw lines between words where you see possible links. Look for themes – both in thinking and in visual terms. New words and visuals will start to form – create them, write them down and add these to your diagram. Go down unexplored routes and see what happens – be spontaneous.

Starting the process early on and filling the brain with as much related information about the subject matter as possible will kick-start the process of ideas generation. Try to be relaxed and have the confidence to recognize that good creative ideas can take time to form. Training the mind not to panic in the face of slow developments is a key aspect of the creative process. In essence, don't arrive at the blank sheet of paper or screen in an unprepared state – read the brief, understand your audience and arrive armed with your notes.

Making notes

Everyone has a different approach to making notes. Some like to scribble single words and phrases, others prefer to write their thoughts out in long hand, while others create a combination of sketches and handwritten thoughts and explanations. Find the method that best suits your own purposes: use a sketchbook, or a notebook, sheets of copier paper, write onto the printed brief itself, key into your phone, tablet or laptop—whichever method feels right.

Start by reading the brief or the text all the way through, as well as the notes that you made at the briefing meeting if it occurred, without trying to make notes. Of course, if ideas or thoughts spring to mind during this first read-through, get them briefly down on paper, but use it primarily simply as an opportunity to gain an understanding of the story or article. It is very unlikely that you'll know nothing about the content of the text; the art director commissioning the illustration will have mentioned something of the content on the phone or in an email when asking if you would like to take on the commission.

Make sure that your interpretation of the text is clear – it may differ from the original thoughts you had about the project before you had a chance to read it. This is quite normal, so it is always best to delay making any decisions about your illustration, however small, until you have read the text thoroughly.

During a second or third reading, start to make notes. Don't worry about the shape that they take – these notes are not for an external audience, but will be useful reminders and pointers when you look back at them. Make sure that you understand your own notes – you may not return to them for a few days and they need to be easily referenced and used. Use a highlighter pen to underline key areas of text – there will often be useful sections that summarize the overall points that the writer is making. Some illustrators find it useful to staple blank sheets of paper in between the sheets of text to jot notes and ideas on to.

The note-taking stage is purely to establish initial thoughts and the beginnings of connections and ideas. Don't panic if, during the first session, you find that nothing concrete has emerged. You will have fed through much information contained within the text and your mind will use this over the course of the following hours or, ideally, days.

AUTHOR TIP: MOODBOARDS

—Some illustrators like to start a project by creating a moodboard from sketches and collected ephemera. This approach is determined by the kind of project that has been commissioned. If a set of images is being produced, moodboards can reflect the overall visual style of the work.

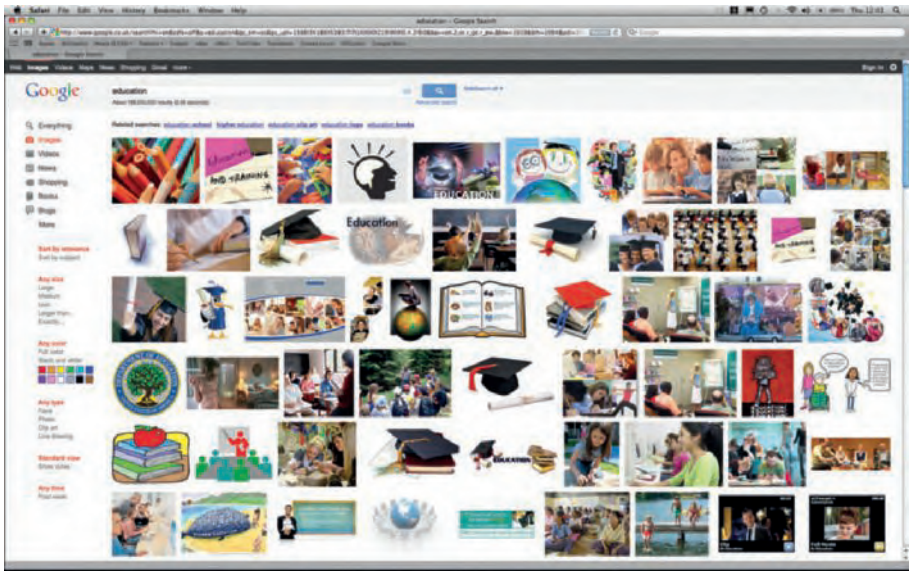
—Moodboards may represent colours, shapes, tones and textures, but can also be used to group visual objects and to set the scene of the artwork. They can be useful reference points for the illustrator and act as excellent visual guides for clients too.

—Start a real-world or digital moodboard by collecting and visualizing potential aspects and bring them together on screen or paper. Using apps such as Pinterest can aid the process, but getting out and gathering inspiration from real life can be a real bonus.

First visual representation

The notes you have created are probably just single words or phrases, and perhaps a few key sentences. You may have also produced some very simple visuals. These visuals are unlikely to be anything more than scribbles, a visual form of note-taking, characterized by the simplicity of the line – a figure represented by a stick man, a building by a childlike drawing of a house, for example. Recognize these drawings as the first stages towards visualizing written language – they may not hold the key to producing the final illustration, but they are the stepping stones or building blocks towards later illustrations. Get into the habit of working this way – some find it easier than taking written notes – but just as in writing, ensure that you get enough detail down to remember exactly what the point of the drawings was.

‘Recognize these drawings as the first stages towards visualizing written language.’



4.5
Google image searches. For many, a Google image search can be the first step in visual research.

Gathering inspiration

Inspiration for projects and for the ideas that drive projects will not come from just researching the subject in hand. An illustrator must constantly be on the lookout for inspiration and reference materials and resources. Most illustrators create their own archives of images and objects, organizing their collections into folders, drawers and boxes. These collections can be incredible sources of inspiration.

The action of constantly looking and recording is very much part of the illustrator's lifestyle. Inspiration is everywhere—a cliché perhaps, but so very true. Finding time to dive into a second-hand bookshop or car boot sale, photographing a moment or mood, capturing a sentence uttered by a stranger overheard in a supermarket – these can all be inspirational and deserve their own space in an illustrator's archives.

It may be a simple combination of colours used in a piece of packaging, the way a figure is captured in a photograph or the texture of a used tram ticket from a childhood vacation that inspires – there is a sixth sense that illustrators develop when collecting and collating reference materials.

Setting up an archive of reference materials is an enjoyable process and although it can be time-consuming, it is a thoroughly worthwhile and useful aspect of the creative process. Being aware of your influences, and of the visual aesthetics that you respond well to, will lead successfully to gaining inspiration and ideas from the everyday.

Clearly online research and inspiration is key – Google Image Search can provide a multitude of images within moments, but resist the temptation to stay glued to the screen. Nothing beats looking at a real object and observing something first-hand. And your work can look and feel rather flat and devoid of spirit and emotion if everything has been drawn from digital photographs rather than through looking and seeing.

4.6
Romania sketchbook.
Sarah Tanat-Jones.
Here, drawings were made, printed ephemera gathered and notes written to document a trip across Romania on public transport.


SNTFC CFR Călători SA
CUI RO 11054545
Nº 0770065
Bilet Preț întreg - Tren Regio - R
UN LEU
0-10 KM
11-20 KM
21-30 KM
31-40 KM
41-50 KM
51-60 KM

The sketchbook

A sketchbook is the illustrator's best friend. A sketchbook is not just for sketching and drawing in, though; it should be a constant companion and the one item that the illustrator turns to to record and document notes, found images and all manner of inspirational material. Get into the habit of carrying it with you at all times; buy one that fits in your pocket or in a bag that you always use. Don't make the mistake of replacing your sketchbook with a diary or a time-planner – they are different things. You should not have to schedule time to be creative—it should just occur, and when it does, you need to be prepared.

Use your sketchbook to record everything; don't worry about keeping it specifically for either personal or professional work – put everything in and you'll find that the two areas mix and merge. Draw, doodle, write and take notes whenever and wherever possible. Clip out findings from newspapers and magazines and tape them in, staple in ticket stubs and any kind of ephemera that you've found or collected. Stick in photographs, rescued pieces of photocopied images, stencils, stickers, flyers, cards . . . the list is endless.

The project folder

A folder created for each project is another method of storing all related materials, ideas and inspirations as well as the formal paperwork relating to a project such as the brief, the contract and reference material supplied by the client. It is useful to create both a digital and analogue project folder. Creating a new folder, saved on to your hard disk, for all correspondence, copies of emails, and digital reference material is as important as a real-world version. Like an expanded and more focused version of the sketchbook, the project file can encompass everything that relates to, or that could relate to, the project in hand.

A useful project folder is one that houses every aspect of the project – from relevant pages torn from sketchbooks to a series of photographic reference images, and photocopies from second-hand books to print-outs from Google searches. It is this material that will assist in inspiring ideas – spread out all of your reference materials, notes and written and visual research in front of you whilst you work. The blank sheet of paper or screen will feel less daunting when surrounded by the visual material that has fed into your thinking.

4.7
'Mechanical hedgehog'. Pencil drawings in an old novel.
Matt Jones.
Collect everything in sketchbooks: drawings, notes, doodles, photographs, stencils, stickers, clippings . . .

The creative environment

Working in a positive environment can do wonders for the generation of creative ideas. Finding a calm, quiet space to retreat to works for most people. Turning phones off and quitting an email application will all help to ensure that your time is not interrupted by a constant flow of communication from the outside world.

Organizing a workspace, clearing the digital desktop and cleaning the real-world desktop all help in metaphorically freeing up some fresh space in which to think. Empty the studio bin, open a window and let in some fresh air – make your environment fresh and it will help you reap the rewards.

Some people not only clean and clear, they also rejig their workspaces at the start of a new project. They reposition their screen, tidy the spaghetti chaos of their computer cables and reorganize their bookcases. Archiving previous projects or filing papers away into their relevant folders can be a real plus too, mentally helping to bring a conclusion to finished work before the fresh start of a brand-new project.

Whilst many like to make a hot drink to relax with as they start the thinking process, plenty of others find creative realization can come from actually leaving the studio environment and having a drink in a local coffee shop or café. There is something unique about sitting with a new project on the table with a pen in one hand and a frothy cappuccino in the other. Being away from normal distractions and focusing the mind on the job in hand can be hugely beneficial.

The more time that you spend working as an illustrator, the more you can begin to recognize and then concentrate on the particular ways that best suit your approach to creative thinking. Learn to capitalize on the scenarios and locations that work most effectively for you. If your best ideas come during the afternoon, learn from this and use your mornings to work at other aspects of illustration, such as filing, emailing, invoicing and marketing.

Know the point when it is best that you walk away from the process of creating ideas; learn to accept when your creative juices are not flowing. Hitting a brick wall or a black hole – call a creative block what you like – is not fun, but it does happen to all of us, and on a regular basis too. Banging your head against that wall will not help – getting out for a walk in the fresh air, wandering around an exhibition or catching a movie may be all you need to clear the mind and prepare yourself for another attempt. Knowing when to stop is as vital as knowing how to start.

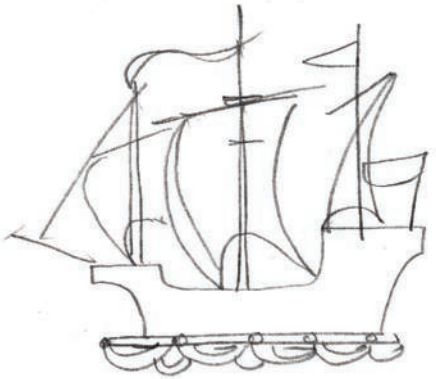
AUTHOR TIP: CONNECTIONS

—Allow yourself to explore connections – it may be that seemingly unconnected words or visuals, once brought together, bring a new meaning or start a chain of other connections. Just the juxtaposition of two or three elements can lead an idea in a new direction – don't be afraid to experiment.

—Many illustrators use metaphors successfully in their work. A metaphor can be a word or image that isn't to be read or viewed literally, but makes a comparison. Using symbolism or figures of speech that do not represent real things can be described as a metaphor.

—Words and wordplay can provide starting points as well as solutions for the illustrator looking to create visuals with grounding in language. An old-fashioned thesaurus will work just as well as an online version.

—Spider diagrams can be particularly useful when working with a complex set of problems or with information less easy to visually define. Start by making notes about the range of subjects or headings that you wish to investigate and then add further notes and research about each as you work through them.



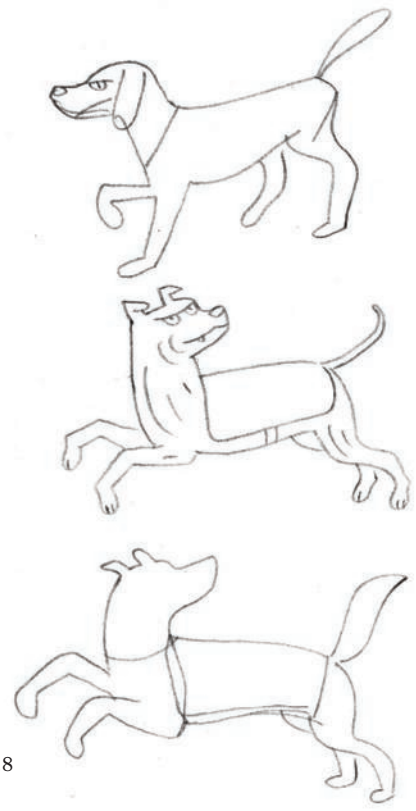
4.8
Initial sketches for 'My East End'.
Jason Ford.
Early rough sketches identify a stylistic approach and aspects of the subject matter. These drawings are quick studies and a method for generating ideas through visual exploration. Nothing is decided or rejected at this stage – everything still counts.

Brainstorming

Once in possession of a fully formed project brief, notes and interpretations from the briefing meeting, a sketchbook with early inspirations and thoughts, research into the subject area as well as a project file and a fully functioning creative environment to work in, it's time to start formulating some ideas!

Brainstorming can mean different things to different people. Simply expressed, it is the action of bringing together all of the research, notes, scribbles and thoughts and creating a series of bigger and more clearly defined ideas and paths to follow. Illustrators, unlike designers, will often have to brainstorm alone. Illustration can be a lonely pursuit; as a solo activity, there is only one person responsible for the final outcome. Of course, working with an art director or designer on a project can help, and discussing ideas should be very much part of the process, but ultimately there is only one person creating the initial ideas – you, the illustrator.

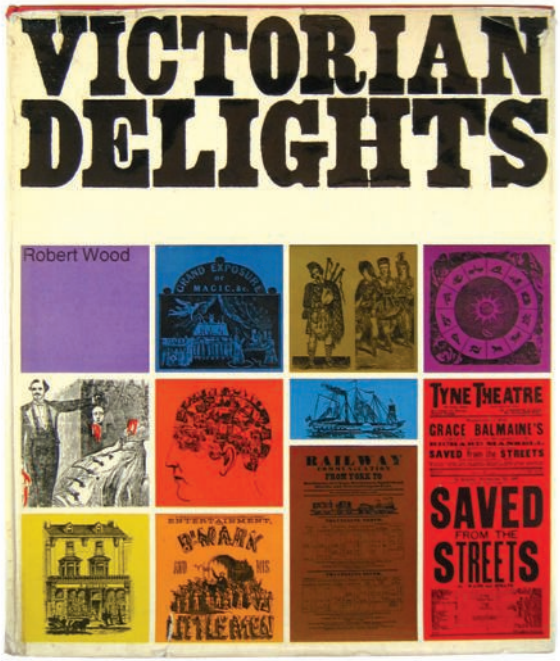
An onslaught of ideas and thoughts is the best way to describe how brainstorming should work. Get every idea and thought out and onto paper or screen. Keep your ideas flowing – good ideas, bad ideas, exciting, dull – let them all out. Just like a storm of heavy rain and gusting wind, your brain should be working overtime to produce as much as it can. Examine possibilities, explore links, twist meanings and subvert thoughts – anything goes. To make brainstorming work, you need to have the germs of ideas, and lots of them.



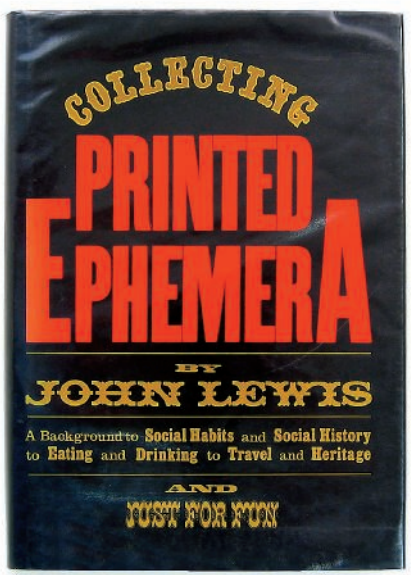
4.8

AUTHOR TIP:
HISTORICAL RESEARCH

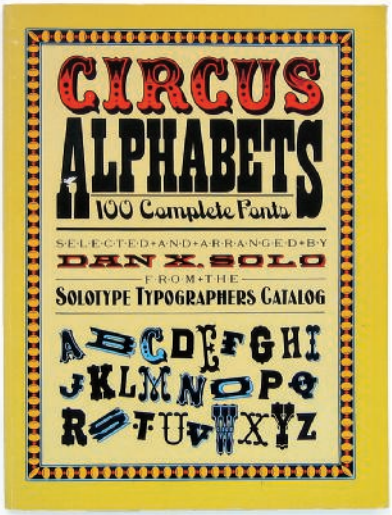
—Historical accuracy may not be a factor in most illustrations, but whenever a project calls for detailed visual information about a subject, it is wise to undertake some in-depth research.
—Using expert information from reliable sources will ensure that mistakes are not made.

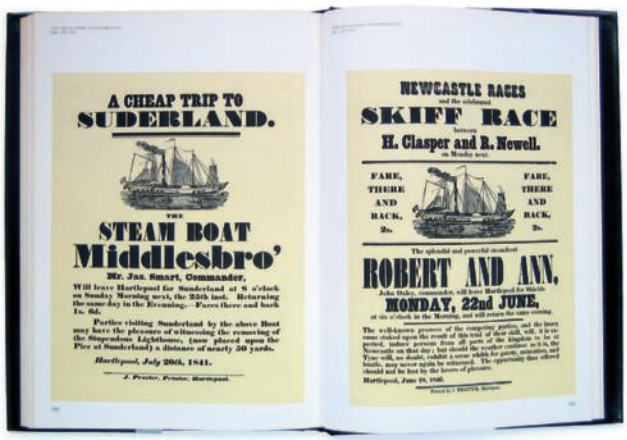


4.9
Inspiration for 'My East End'. These are some of the books used as reference by Jason Ford while working on illustrations to accompany a short story set in Victorian London.

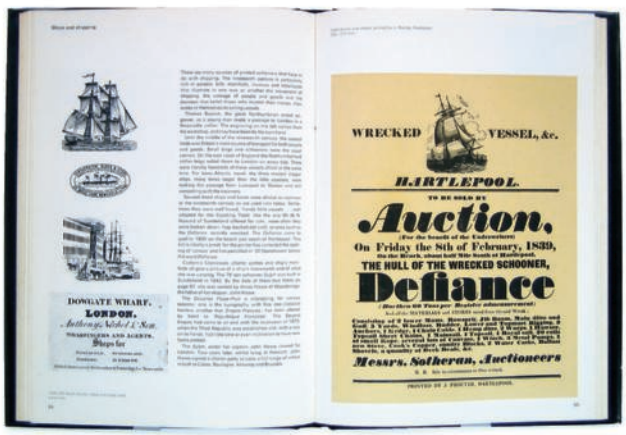



WHEATLEY HILL.
GRAND GALA
AND
WRESTLING
ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 8th, 1874,
£1 10s. for Wrestling
£1 10s. FOR WRESTLING
£1 10s. CRICKET MATCH
PROGRAMME OF SPORTS
OLD AUNT SALLY AND OTHER AMUSEMENTS
A BRASS BAND
BRADBURY
HOPPING
SATURDAY, JULY 20th, 1874,
SPORTS
PLOUGH INN,
FUN ON THE MILL.
DONKEY RACE
A FOOT RACE BY WOMEN,
LEG-MUTTON
A FOOT RACE
A FOOT RACE BY BOYS
A PIG, VALUE £2,
A FOOT RACE BY WOMEN


CIRCUS
ALPHABETS
100 Complete Fonts
SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY
DAN X. SOLO
FROM THE
SOLOTYPE TYPOGRAPHERS CATALOG
ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ


A CHEAP TRIP TO
SUDERLAND.
THE
STEAM BOAT
Middlesbro'
Mr. Jas. Smart, Commander,
Will leave Hartlepool for Sunderland at 8 o'clock on Sunday Morning next, the 25th inst. Returning the same day in the Evening.—Fares there and back 1s. 6d.
Parties visiting Sunderland by the above Boat may have the pleasure of witnessing the removing of the Stupendous Lighthouse, (now placed upon the Pier at Sunderland) a distance of nearly 50 yards.
Hartlepool, July 20th, 1841.
J. Procter, Printer, Hartlepool.
NEWCASTLE RACES
SKIFF RACE
between
H. Clasper and R. Newell,
FARE, THERE AND BACK, 2s.
FARE, THERE AND BACK, 2s.
ROBERT AND ANN,
MONDAY, 22nd JUNE,
Hartlepool, June 18, 1846.


JUST RETURNED FROM AUSTRALIA
ROMAN HIPPODROME
3 RING CIRCUS
TWO ELEVATED STAGES,
5 CONTINUOUS MENAGERIE
IMPERIAL JAPANESE TROUPE
SELLS BROTHERS
HASSAN BEN ALI'S
MOORISH CARAVAN
ARABIAN NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENT
AND SPECTACULAR
PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA
ORIENTALLY SPLENDID, AND WARMLY ROMANTIC SPECTACULAR PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA.
THE ONLY BERBER, AND BEDOUIN TRIBAL CARAVAN OF MOORISH BARBARIANS AND WARRIORS.

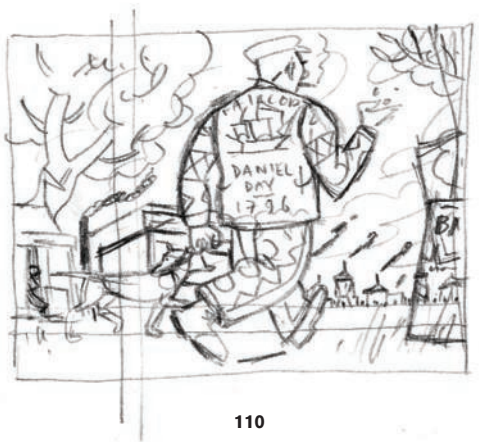

DOWGATE WHARF,
LONDON.
WRECKED VESSEL, &c.
HARTLEPOOL.
Auction,
On Friday the 8th of February, 1839,
THE HULL OF THE WRECKED SCHOONER,
Defiance
Messrs. Sotheran, Auctioneers

The investigation of ideas

There are numerous ways that ideas can take shape after the initial brainstorming exercise. Recognizing how to use the raw materials of creative thinking is the next stage in the process. Evaluating and editing your ideas can be just as difficult as the conception. Recognizing a strong idea and working it through to a conclusion or following a thread of creative thinking to the next logical stage are all aspects of the process that improve with practice.

Embracing both a sense of realism – the image must communicate a message, after all – and maintaining a high level of creativity can help translate the results of brainstorming into fully formed concepts. Being realistic means that the wildest, most bizarre and unreadable ideas are kept away from production. Reminding yourself that the work must communicate is about being realistic. On the other hand, being creative means that the work stays fresh, takes risks and feels edgy – you are an artist, after all. The right measure of realism and creativity is the goal.

Investigating your ideas and moving them into more concrete forms relies on a variety of means. Looking for connections, bringing words and images together or juxtaposing a number of elements can lead ideas in new directions. Viewing your concepts from an opposing angle can help, too – a new perspective on the problem can be a fresh start. The use of colour can affect the mood of the image, whilst using metaphors can shift the emphasis of an idea or concept.



4.10
Initial compositions for 'My East End'.
Jason Ford.
The next stage in developing the illustration is to work with the independently created elements and visuals from the sketch stage to build up a range of test compositions. It helps to give your compositions a space to occupy – a simple rectangular line around the image shows the edge of the page or the image. Cropping into particular details can provide a more dynamic focus – practise this with two L-shaped pieces of card to frame different aspects of your work.

Risk-taking in illustration

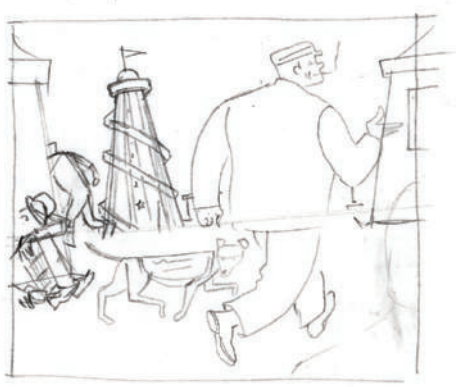
The term 'risk' implies danger. Let's face it, though – to the outside world the very idea that illustrators face risks and dangers on a daily basis is a little preposterous. Where risk-taking does come into effect in illustration is at the point where safe ideas and routes into a project are jettisoned in favour of a less tried and tested route.

Opening new doors into the unknown and facing creative problems head-on without the safety net of familiarity is about being brave. Flying in the face of conformity and tackling problems within projects with new thinking and, at times, new ways of making images can be the essence of what moves an illustrator's work forward – staving off the staleness of repetition.

Taking risks is a necessary aspect of creative thinking as well as image-making itself. The future of an illustrator's career and the future of the discipline rest on constantly moving forward and exploring new avenues of thinking.

A stale illustrator will produce stale images. Often the greatest enemy of fresh, original thinking is not the client, but the illustrator themselves. Having fallen into a formulaic 'style' of work, their approach to ideas generation and thinking relies too heavily on clichés without pushing into cleverer and more challenging areas. It is wise to recognize the symptoms and work hard to ensure – through constant exposure to new materials, reference and research – that making illustrations remains a challenge.

Only through stepping into uncharted territories can new discoveries be made that will ultimately take one's work forward. On occasion, taking risks can lead to frustrations as not every attempt will come to fruition. Learning to recognize the pitfalls as well as the rewards is the first stage in facing the challenge, however.



Ideas into visuals and roughs

It is one thing to get through the stages of ideas-generation intact and find a level of thinking and visual representation that you feel happy is solving the project brief. It is another stage of work to ensure that your client, and often their client, is as keen on your approach and has as much faith in the work as you do.

It is extremely rare to be given complete freedom with a project, or be allowed to rush straight into creating finished artwork without supplying visuals that describe your thinking and the route that you'll be taking to construct that final artwork.

A visual or 'rough', as it is sometimes called, should ideally be a sketch that demonstrates loosely the elements that will appear in the work, although nothing will be completed in any great detail at this stage. Unfortunately, the ideal is now becoming threatened as commissioners have started to expect visuals with more and more detail explored. This may because clients can and will demand changes because they believe that the work can be more easily modified by the illustrator on a computer. Expectations of more polished and finished visuals have been led by the growth in digital hardware and software – the equipment has created a culture where perfection is now a given and very little consideration is given to the range of processes and stages undertaken in creating images.

4.11
Adding colour to initial sketches for 'My East End'.
Jason Ford.
Initial sketches were worked up in Photoshop and coloured for two versions. Note how the use of light and shade on the clouds gives the image a greater depth and sense of perspective.

AUTHOR TIP: LONGEVITY

—Developing a long-standing career in illustration can't be reduced down to just one or two factors. Like many things, it can be a mixture of talent, luck and circumstances – right place, right time. You can, however, increase the chances of a successful and lengthy career.

—Working hard at creating images that have a personality, have something to say and can communicate to a given audience, can be a big part of the game plan. With strong creative thinking supporting illustrations that work visually, the future can be so much brighter and last so much longer . . .

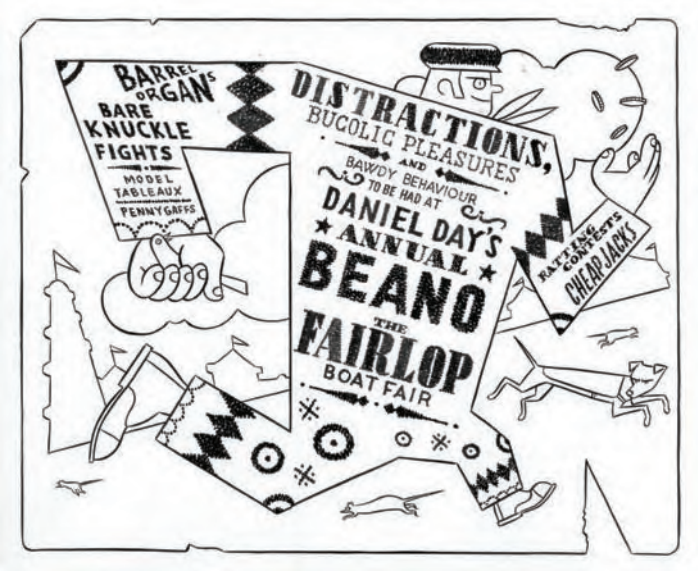
‘A visual or “rough”, as it is sometimes called, should ideally be a sketch that demonstrates loosely the elements that will appear in the work.’

4.11

Explaining the visual

More often than not, once a set of ideas has been fine-tuned into a definitive route forward, the visual will be emailed to the client for consideration. Obviously with bigger projects, a face-to-face meeting may well be set up, but 95 per cent of all visuals will arrive without the benefit of a verbal explanation as accompaniment. Sending a visual via email without any text explaining the route that you have taken with the brief can easily result in a negative response to your work. This will not always happen, but why take that risk? Courtesy, if nothing else, determines that it is a good idea to explain what your client is looking at.

Write a simple and concise explanation of the work, summarizing your thinking, and detail what will change in the process of moving from visual to final artwork. Make reference to colours and textures that may change and note where elements will require further work – perhaps more detailed drawing will be required in some areas, for example. Keep the commissioner in the loop by explaining your thinking and ideas a little. Highlight the key elements in the brief that you felt required exploring and expanding upon. Remember your client – the designer, art director or art buyer – is likely to have to present your visual to someone else too. It may go to an editor or a more senior creative director and it may have to be shown to a client that is not as visually aware as the designer that you are working with. If you are working on an advertising campaign, for example, your work may be presented to a team from the company that the advertising agency is working for. They could be the marketing department from a shoe or a washing detergent manufacturers – not necessarily the ideal audience to comprehend a rough visual working of an idea!



4.12
Client approval for 'My East End'.
Jason Ford.
Even at what appears to be a late stage in this project, the client requested changes, wanting the image to have a more modern, upbeat and comical feel. Further black-and-white sketches were produced and shown to the client before commencing the final artwork. The final piece certainly has a more engaging feel, but still reflects the research and investigation conducted earlier.

AUTHOR TIP:
EXPLORING HOW IMAGES WORK

—Images help an audience perceive an idea, and the role of illustration is to bring visual meaning to a given text. Images can be simple, complex, emotional, diagrammatic or documentary. Most importantly, they should aim to present a point of view and they should make the viewer think. Images in the context of illustration should be unique – causing the viewer to see something in a way that they normally would not. They should also be emotional, bringing a sense of humanity to the viewer, as well as being appropriate and understandable.

—Visual communication relies on a mix of signs and symbols – how we 'read' images and how we decode their meanings occurs in a subconscious manner. The 'voice' inherent within an image is translated by an audience that have learnt how to understand and comprehend visual images through associations built up over the years.

—For an illustrator to bring these elements together into one image is no small achievement – all inextricably linked to a creative idea too, of course.

If you do get the opportunity to present your work in person, even at the visuals stage – leap at it. Getting some valuable experience of explaining your work is crucial. Offer to meet with clients if and when you can. Sitting down and talking face-to-face at both a briefing meeting and at the visuals stage can really iron out any slight misinterpretations from either side of the fence.

When speaking about your ideas and visual approach, be confident, speak clearly and use the visual to illustrate your explanations. If you get nervous in meeting situations, make some notes before you arrive – work out what you wish to say and don't be afraid to follow your notes.

Be prepared to talk through your work and to take on board relevant considerations and comments from those looking at your work. Try to react positively to advice and criticism about the work so far. Don't take any criticism of your thinking personally; further work may well be needed to help the illustration solve the brief in a way that the client is happy with. Take notes and be civil, but if you believe that you have valid points, make sure that you voice them: you will be respected for doing so. An illustrator should bring a different viewpoint and perspective to a project – stand up for yourself and have a strong belief in your contribution.

4.12

Interview: Otto

Otto is a German illustrator, based in the UK, predominately known for his bold, graphic imagery derived from his background as a printmaker. He aims to create work where the idea is paramount and he believes that illustration has a unique capacity to 'visualize complex concepts'.

Q: The role of the illustrator is in communicating ideas in a visual way – could you describe your approach to creative thinking and ideas and how you then present to your commercial clients?

Otto: I go through the brief, trying to identify the essence of the message; sometimes that means having to read between the lines. I make quick visual notes of anything that might make for an interesting illustration. From the start, I am looking for bold, simple images that have a sense of mystery or surrealism. Bearing in mind that the first idea is not always the best, I make a number of sketches, on paper and on screen. If I have several possibilities which I can't decide between, I present the client with two or three roughs. When I am sure of a single idea, I try to persuade the client to use that one. My roughs are quick vector graphics, which I am careful to get as close to the finished thing as possible. But quite often they still need a lot of work doing to become digitally screen-printed artwork.

Q: Your work is very graphic and often quite immediate and to the point – would you consider yourself to be a very direct person or does this only come to the surface in your work?

Otto: I am influenced by poster art, where the graphic has to get attention and the message has to be instantly understood. So, an unambiguous reading is important to me. I wouldn't consider myself as particularly direct, not for a German anyway. But maybe because of a certain direct approach to image-making, my work has become popular for 'serious' subjects like politics and economics, where the client hopes for a visual elucidation of a complex message. But that's not necessarily what I set out to do. In my personal work I often use playful, atmospheric, or decorative imagery.

Q: How would you describe the perfect idea? And the perfect synergy of idea and visual aesthetic?

Otto: A perfect illustration matches the brief exactly, while raising the message from the literal to the mysterious and magical. I am fond of Jean Luc Godard's guideline, that complex messages should be accompanied by simple images. So, I'm after a simple solution that reveals complexity of an issue.

Personally, I don't think too much of the audience when I make an illustration. I think the art director choses my illustration rather than someone else's because my work suits the particular audience. In terms of quality I apply my own criterion, which is: Is this illustration good enough for me to put it on my own wall?

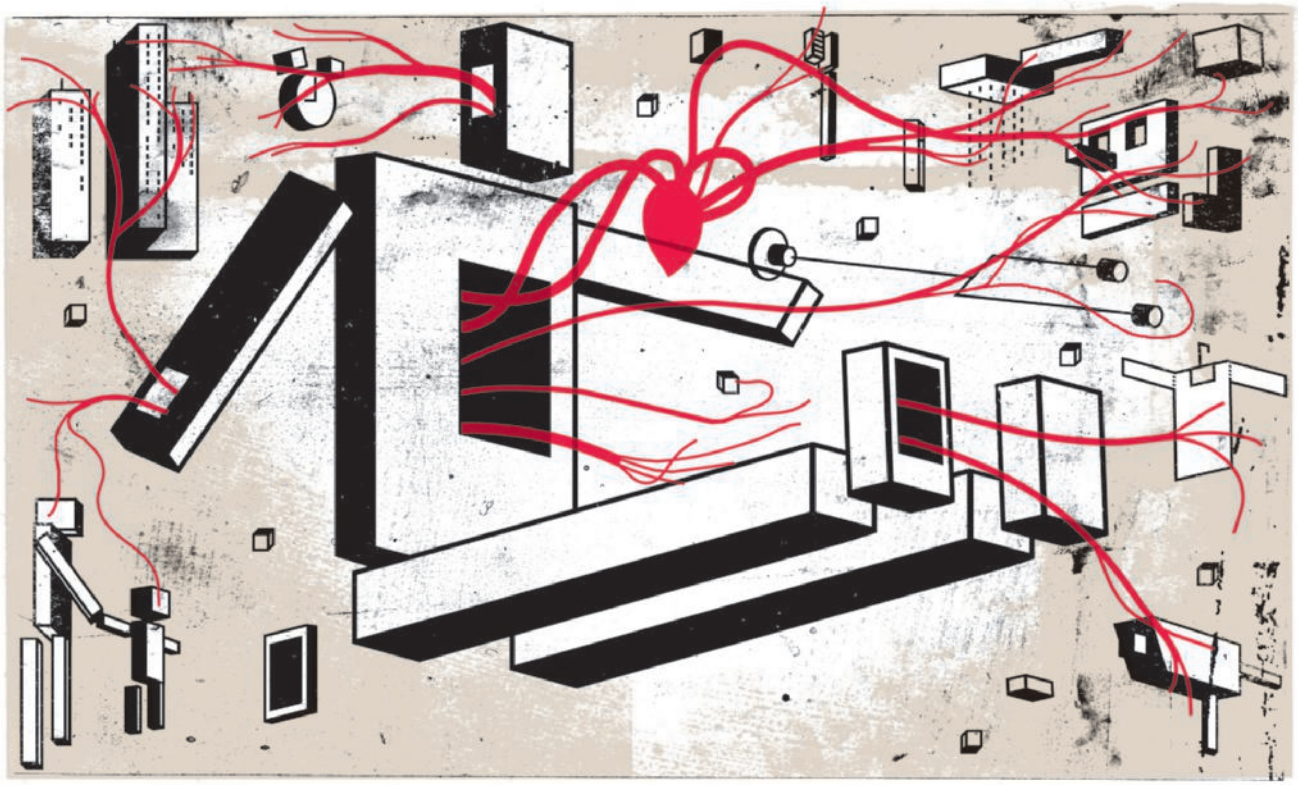
4.13
Future Gadget.
Otto.
In this illustration for *Libération* newspaper, Otto has created a mechanized human body that communicates via digital networks and the internet of things to illustrate how we humans may be monitored in the future.

Q: Do you find coming up with ideas the easy part of the process or do you find that more challenging than the process of bringing them to life?

Otto: It depends. Some subjects are full of visual associations—then it's just a case of bringing one out and making the most of it. When the brief is very dry, it can be a challenge to come up with an interesting idea. Then I have to dig deep into my box of tricks. Making artwork is usually the fun part, where I can indulge in digital screen-printing, change colours, add textures, add layers, etc.

Q: Where do you have your best ideas and how do you tend to record them if they come to you when away from your studio/workplace?

Otto: I generate ideas wherever necessary, usually in the office. As long as I can immerse myself in thoughts, any surroundings will do.



Communicating ideas

When communicating ideas it is essential to research a number of potential solutions to the brief. This project will help you to explore your own methods of generating ideas, allowing your mind to think freely.

Materials

You don't need masses of materials for the initial response to a brief. A drawing implement and some paper is all that is required. Some illustrators prefer to use layout paper for this initial idea phase, some prefer to use a sketchbook and some just use any scraps of paper that happen to be around. Over time you will develop your own way of working.

The brief: Illustrating a letter

Develop a series of small 'thumbnail' responses to illustrate the first letter of your first name. Start by writing the letter on the paper you will be working on; this will act as a constant reminder of what the brief is.

You should aim to work quickly and draw, write, notate everything that you can think of that begins with the same letter. You might also begin to explore things beyond the letter itself. For example, the letter *p* might make you think of peas and this might in turn make you think of vegetables – and so the initial idea begins to loosen and your imagination can run wild!

Your aim should be to fill as many small squares as possible. Let your imagination run free and don't worry about visual accuracy. These responses allow you to put every idea down on paper. Your initial response is important: you never know, the ideas may be revisited in the future. Aim to spend no more than ninety minutes on this. By restricting your time, you have to focus on the brief and your mind will not have time to wander.

Questions in summary

1. How can ideas be generated and recorded?
2. What basic information about a project should be gathered before work can begin?
3. How might an illustrator start to explore in more detail the initial ideas for a project?
4. Where might an illustrator look for inspiration?
5. Why is it important to be able to explain your work to a client?
6. How can an illustrator help to ensure that their work is unique, appropriate and long-lasting?

Chapter 5—Making it happen

Unlike many other creative disciplines, there is not a clearly visible, tried and tested path into working as a freelance illustrator. Forging a career can take equal amounts of patience, skill and luck. Understanding how to market one's work, maintain client interest and build a professional reputation can be a painstaking experience.

5.1

Marketing the product and the art of self-promotion

It is quite possible that some of the very best illustration currently being created will never see the light of day. It will never leave the screen or the portfolio of the person creating it, as they are unable or unwilling to engage in promoting their work. Being able to market, promote and generally inform the illustration commissioners of your work is as vital to working in the field as the ability to create an image in the first place. Without a marketing campaign, even a very simple one in print or online, an illustrator can fall at the first hurdle.

As covered in the previous chapters, there are many different aspects and areas to the world of design, advertising and communication. Each offers opportunities for illustrators to win commissions and create work; the secret is in understanding how to make that first point of contact and then maintain the interest in your work throughout your career.

When mid-sized and large corporate companies want to extend their market share and increase sales, they promote themselves. They will hire a PR company or an advertising agency, use broadcast media, create print and publishing campaigns and experiment with outdoor and indoor media. For the lone illustrator, the budget for promotion may be dramatically smaller, but the intentions are very similar.

The right audience

The key to positive promotion is to ensure that all communication is aimed squarely at the intended audience. Therefore, forming an up-to-date list of potential clients is as important as creating positive and worthwhile self-promotional material. The type of list can vary from illustrator to illustrator; some would class a little black book of phone numbers and contact addresses as a definitive and exhaustive resource. Others, however, would claim that a database software application that merges contact details, can be utilized to email specific groups, as well as to print selected entries on to labels for mail-shot purposes, is far more useful.

The design, publishing and advertising worlds are different from other types of industry in that it is rare for people to stay in the same job for much more than a year or two, compared to five years elsewhere. Finding out who is working with whom and at which company can take time. Even after completing a list of art directors working on magazines in New York, for instance, many will have moved jobs, gone elsewhere or moved up the ladder.

Successful illustrators who choose to represent themselves may spend an entire day a week updating mailing lists and databases, initiating meetings and sending out cards and samples, just to stay ahead of the pack. This process can be mundane and difficult to maintain when busy with work, but it is crucial to ensure a constant flow of commissions.

5.1
'Tipi di Torino'.
Giulia Garbin.
An image created for an exhibition and produced in a small edition as a lino-cut. Exhibitions and limited-edition prints are just one potential source of revenue for illustrators.

Contact databases

It is possible to beat the drudgery of compiling lists of names, titles, addresses, phone, fax, email and Web details by using the increasing number of information and contact companies that exist. They will supply ready-to-use databases of creative industry employee details via downloadable digital file or sent by email.

Although these services are not vastly expensive, for the lone illustrator starting out in the business the costs can be prohibitive. One approach can be to purchase one list at a time rather than hoping to hit all areas of the industry in the same marketing exercise. Often these companies produce separate lists for each of the design, book, newspaper and magazine publishing and advertising industries, and these can be purchased separately. It is worth remembering that each database will have a 'best before' date of six months; most suppliers update their records every three months. A glance at the classified ads in the back pages of most prominent design and advertising magazines will detail any companies supplying contact information.

Cold-calling – making telephone calls to potential clients on the off chance that they may have work or want to view a portfolio – is rarely successful and can be frowned upon; busy people don't want to be disturbed by unsolicited calls. There was a time when magazine art directors and design company creative directors would put aside an afternoon each week to view portfolios and meet with freelance illustrators and photographers. Unfortunately, this magical slot appears to have disappeared in recent years, partly due to increased workloads, but also because other forms of self-promotion have become popular. Clients, after the initial contact has been made, are happy to converse on the phone, via email or social media and to view images on-screen from attachments or websites, so for many the face-to-face meeting has become a thing of the past.

Targeting

Promotional material arriving on the desk of the right person is just one aspect of the self-promotion process. Ensuring that the most appropriate companies and organizations are targeted in the first place takes research and investigation. Understanding where, within the industry, your work will best fit is also important. There is little point in costly marketing to design companies specializing in corporate annual reports if you are a children's book illustrator, for example.

Research

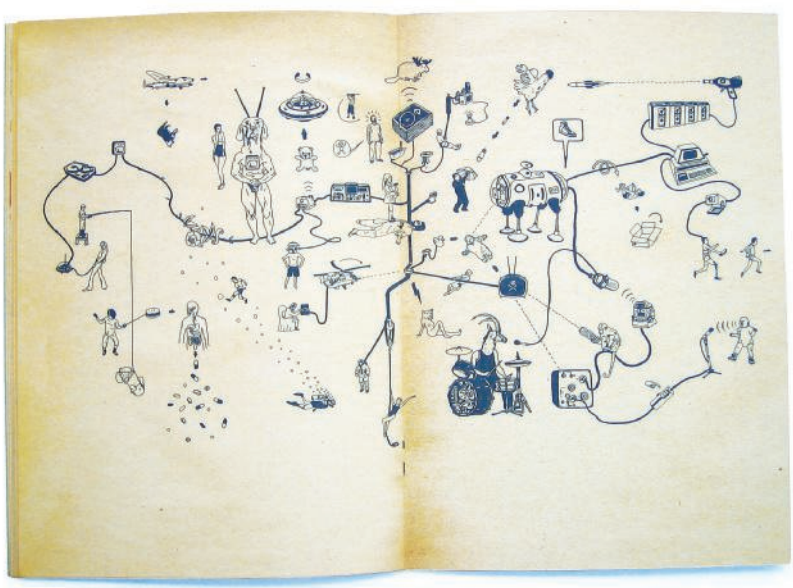
Regular, straightforward research into potential clients can be done on a weekly or monthly basis without huge inconvenience or expense. Keeping abreast of industry news and changes can be enjoyable, as well as productive. Sign up to the right design blogs for up-to-date information, visit a good library to peruse the wide range of monthly design and advertising press for information about specific commissions, as well as current projects being undertaken. This is the perfect way of gaining a broad knowledge of current industry trends. Follow clients on Twitter and Instagram – see and read what they are doing through their tweets and updates and visit their websites for more in-depth coverage.

5.2
'Pool', self-promotional piece.
Lizzy Stewart.
Promotional material arriving on the desk of the right person at the right time is just part of the marketing process!

5.3
'Mermaid', self-promotional postcard.
Jack Taylor.
Self-promotional work such as this can help to get illustrators known and recognized.

5.3

5.2



5.4
'Perverted Science', self-promotional book. *Andrew Rae.*
Producing a self-promotional book is a large financial commitment, but in this example, the book also served as an exhibition catalogue for work Rae created for a group exhibition.

Mail-shots

Making the first contact with a potential client is important and creating the right impression is vital; the professional approach is to create a mail-shot that is simply posted to the recipient. Knowing what to send and how to package it is paramount to your mail-shot's success.

Postcards

Traditionally, illustrators have always produced postcards as samples of their work. They are relatively inexpensive to produce, cheap to send, and art directors and designers often have filing systems to accommodate them for future reference. Postcards are normally A6 (4.13in x 5.83in) in size, but a double-sized A5 (5.83in x 8.27in) card can look more professional. There are a vast number of print companies that have tapped into the market for producing postcards, many working exclusively for freelance photographers, models, actors and illustrators. Their rates can be reasonable as they 'gang up' the artwork, printing entire sheets of cards and not beginning production and print until they have collected enough artwork to fill the sheet.

Results can vary; some print companies will only supply a digital colour proof that will not give any information about the quality of the colour match between the artwork and the final print. You tend to get what you pay for. Postcards have the power to reach art directors and stay within reach long after a tweet has been viewed, digested and deleted – a great image will be pinned to a pin board and seen over and over again.

A successful way of creating well-printed cards on a good stock is to set up a group of illustrators and photographers – enough for an entire sheet – and approach independent printers with the job. Remember, it will increase the workload for the person charged with coordinating artwork, handling payments, preparing the digital files for the printer and ensuring that the deadline for delivery from each of the individual artists is met.

Many illustration groups or collectives operate their own print programme to enable a steady and regular update of their printed publicity in exactly this manner.

Printed promos

Postcards can leave some illustrators cold, believing that as creative individuals they should produce promotional materials in line with this – something more personal and memorable. It is true that other formats may interest and intrigue the viewer, but the life expectancy of the piece should be questioned. If it is too large to file with postcards or to stick on a wall or notice board, or if it is expected to take up valuable desk space, it is likely to be kept just hours rather than months. Every morning of every working day designers and art directors open their post, which mostly contains promotional materials from freelance creatives, and they make snap decisions about what to keep and what to bin. If promotional material is to be effective, it must grab the viewer's attention and present the facts and contact information in a clear, but interesting manner.

E-marketing

Many illustrators now prefer to send mail-shots electronically. These work in much the same way as their printed counterparts but can be quicker, cheaper and easier to circulate. Marketing with a PDF sent via email has numerous advantages – sent in seconds with no postage or print costs, but it can be ignored, forgotten or 'trashed'. You'll need to make your marketing memorable and have it stand out from the crowd somehow. And don't forget to add contact details – name, email and mobile number are the basics, but consider adding web address and social media information too; the more ways someone has to connect with you and your work, the greater the chance of them coming back to you. Be sensible, though; only sign up for social media applications that you have the capacity to keep relevant and updated.

Portfolios

Without a portfolio of work, the best publicity drive will be a wasted opportunity. The portfolio is the single most important asset that an illustrator needs to invest time, energy, attention to detail and finances in. Without a great portfolio working to your advantage, the next commission will be a long wait. A portfolio may appear to be simply a selection of work in a binder of some description, but that assumption could cost an illustrator a dream project. To say that illustrators live and die by the strength of their portfolio is not an exaggeration. Whether tucked under your arm or tucked away on the Web, a great portfolio is essential.

Analogue portfolios

Even in this digital online age, real-world, real-time portfolios are still useful in the art of self-promotion.

Buying guide

The first rule is to invest money in something that works well and looks the part. Using a battered plastic folio is fine if you are a student ferrying work back and forth from your room to art school. If you wish to be taken seriously, however, and aim to compete with the bigger fish, then you need to give your work the best possible presentation.

All good graphic-art material suppliers stock a range of products that will fit any budget, but spending money here is a good investment. A zipped, leather, ring-bound or loose-leaf book with perfectly clear translucent sleeves is not cheap, but it will stand the test of time and it will perform in an admirable fashion on your behalf. A good comfortable handle is important, as is a place to put your contact details on the outside of the book. A ring-bound book with sleeves will grow with you and adding more work becomes a simple process. Bear in mind that leather improves with age and plastic doesn't, and that getting the right size for your work is crucial too; if in doubt, seek advice in the shop. Remember, the portfolio is as important to the freelance illustrator as the limo is to the chauffeur, so this is not the time to economize.

Layout and design

A great portfolio is only as good as the work within it. Buying a fantastically expensive Italian leather folio will be a wasted investment if the work inside is not up to scratch. Making the right decisions on what to include and what to leave out is a tough call for a newcomer, and expertise comes with practice and a little trial and error. Seek advice from clients; ask their opinions of your portfolio and adjust accordingly.

If in doubt about a particular piece of work, then you have already answered your own question. Only include work of which you are proud and can talk positively about in a meeting. Don't feel the need to include a project because your mother likes it; only those images that will work hard for you should be included. Put in work that demonstrates your strengths as an illustrator, that shows you can answer a brief and that you have a broad but individual style or way of working.

Consider putting in work that demonstrates the context in which it was used; don't trim out your image, but show the rest of the magazine page, for example. It will give the art director confidence if they can see that you have already been commissioned. Include work that gets you work. Some pieces in a portfolio start to shine; watch for those that get the most attention or praise. Think carefully about the order that you place images in. Start with a simple but bold and striking piece, perhaps one that people will recognize. Try to end on a similar feel, and group images as you progress through the portfolio. Organize according to themes, colour, context or approaches – whatever best suits the work. Lay out images first in a large, clear space – on your studio floor if it is clean – so that you can view all of them at once. Make decisions once you have tried a few variations, making lists on paper as you go, so as to remember successful combinations.

It is very easy to include too much work or too little, and creating the right balance comes with experience. A general rule is to include ten to fifteen sleeves, giving

you room to show twenty to thirty images. Any more than this and some will never be viewed properly, just diluting the experience. Any less than this may leave the viewer wondering if you really can produce the goods.

Consider carefully how you plan and 'design' the layout; for example, a large A3 or B (ledger) portfolio looks best when only one image is used per page. Don't crowd a page; leaving space around an image gives it a chance to 'breathe' and it can be absorbed more easily without the visual distraction of other images. Use the same colour backing sheet throughout the portfolio; consistency works best in this instance. Resist the temptation to window-mount images; it always looks over-laboured and unnecessary.

Labels can be added to each page, if helpful to the viewer, but ensure that they work well typographically. Keep the type simple and use an uncluttered font such as a sans serif face like Arial or Helvetica. Range the type to the left and allow for a margin of space around the edge. Place the caption in a standard position on each sleeve, keep the descriptions short and use the same format throughout the portfolio.

5.5
Loose-leaf presentation box portfolio. *Ian Wright.*
Choosing the best format for a portfolio is paramount. Displaying work in loose sleeves, as is done here, allows each presentation to be tailored to the client.

Maintenance and upkeep

Getting a portfolio up and running is only part of the solution; keeping it looking good and performing well is a regular task that needs constant attention. Clean portfolio sleeves with a wipe of lighter fuel on a cotton cloth, replace damaged ones and carefully reposition images that have come unstuck and shifted. All this takes very little time, but can be easily overlooked.

Updating on a regular basis, adding new work and taking out older pieces is necessary to maintain your portfolio's effectiveness. The portfolio may need an entire overhaul as the addition or replacement of just a few images can put the whole running order out of sync. A portfolio really should be this exact.

When preparing a portfolio to be sent out to a client, it is always wise to check that it's in good shape. Fine-tuning the selection to suit the viewer or the potential job that it has been called in for is the next logical step. It is better to have a few more examples of book jackets than CD sleeve designs if the portfolio is going into the art department of a publishing company, for example.

Good practice

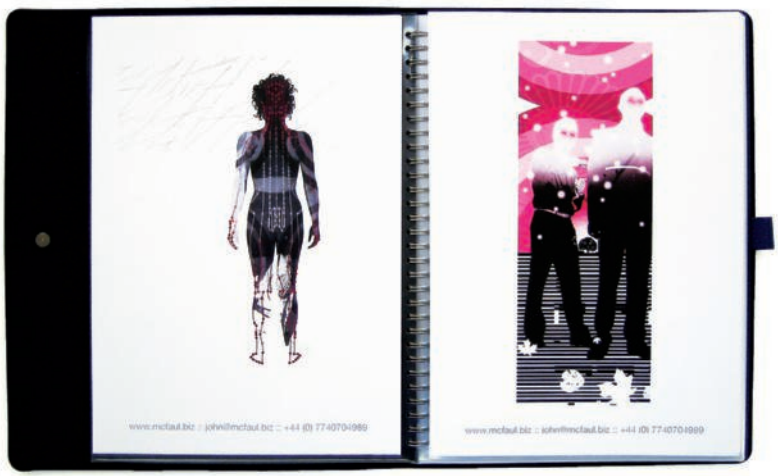
Put samples and publicity material in the rear pocket so that art directors and designers have access to a permanent record of your work after a viewing. Make sure that all your contact details are easily visible on the outside of your folio. This is crucial in order to have your book returned by any courier.

Do be a little experimental with your portfolio; add pieces of personal work to the last few sleeves of your portfolio. It is advisable to caption them so that the viewer understands that they are non-commissioned artworks. Showing examples of new ways of working will sit well against the rest of the portfolio of completed and finished projects, and it will demonstrate how your work is creatively developing. If you are present when your portfolio is viewed, be positive and be proud. You need to do your portfolio justice and vice versa.

AUTHOR TIP: PORTFOLIOS

—Keep track of exactly where your portfolio is. Label it on the outside with all your contact details.
—Stock portfolios with samples to keep for the client. They may only remember your work on the strength of these.
—A duplicate portfolio prevents loss of earnings when the original is held up elsewhere.
—Feature your experimental illustrations at the back of your portfolio, and caption them clearly. A good art director will want to see aspects of any shift in approach. It can also be a great talking point.

‘Getting a portfolio up and running is only part of the solution; keeping it looking good and performing well is a regular task that needs constant attention.’



5.6
Leather portfolio.
McFaul.
Using a leather, spiral-bound portfolio allows the running order of work to be changed easily.

Digital portfolios

Just as important as its physical counterpart, the digital portfolio requires planning, foresight, imagination and an appreciation of the viewer's perspective.

Slide shows

Slide shows are easy to build and use, and are readily available. Search the Web for freeware applications that run simple slide-show presentations, or purchase one that does the job, but is inexpensive. Dragging a small digital file onto an open application is as complex as the experience gets. Editing the running order, the time given for each image to appear on-screen and simple commands to adjust the transition or dissolve between each image is likely to be the full extent of any design considerations. This is enough for a professional-looking presentation. Slide shows can be downloaded from your website by a potential client or emailed directly to them.

A key aspect of these types of software applications is that they run independently; they do not require the host computer to have the software pre-installed. This ensures that any machine is capable of viewing the presentation without technical difficulties.

Presentation software

Both Microsoft and Apple also create software packages that can be designed to run with little or no involvement by the viewer. These are ideal for those who choose to create more structured presentations than slide-show software will accommodate. Type can be added, allowing for captions that identify the images, or for titling at the start and end of the show. Contact details can also be created and added, as well as copyright infringement notices.

Good presentation software allows for animation and film to be run directly from the application, allowing for a more accomplished overall look if moving image projects make up an aspect of the portfolio.

These formats also have a second use in the purpose of publicity. The main advantage over printed material is that the initial financial outlay is considerably less. Allowing for constant change and updating, these formats enable ease of creation for a specific audience or client and can potentially showcase many more images than a traditional leather-bound book.

AUTHOR TIP:
DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS

—Create any digital presentation in up-to-the minute software applications that can be read by both PC and Macintosh platforms.
—Test your presentation on various computers and screens to view as your client will see it – do this before you start making copies.
—Ask your regular clients if they respond to this type of presentation; digital agencies and animation and production houses will be quite used to viewing work in this format, but book publishers may not be.
—Make the experience of viewing your digital portfolio a user-friendly one. Potential clients will not hang around waiting for your presentation to start, nor will they continue if the navigation is complex or unusable.

Online presence

A website is a must, as are active social media profiles. Getting these things working in a useful and meaningful way takes vision and an understanding of the medium.

Before you even start to consider your own online presence, research plenty of other illustrators' profiles. Start by getting URLs from illustration organizations; the Association of Illustrators in London has links to its members' sites. Gather more links from details published in annuals and Google-search for direct access to sites. Learn from how others use the Web as a medium for housing a portfolio before creating your own.

When building a website, establish who is going to design it; if you are doing it yourself, make sure that you set yourself realistic goals and a time frame to produce the work in. Investigate employing a Web designer; they will have far more experience and bring expertise to the project – perhaps a recent graduate just entering the profession and looking to broaden his or her own portfolio. Friends that are designers may be interested in trading illustrations for website work, so be upfront and ask.

Content

Consider the content of your profiles before working on their look and feel. Think carefully about the job that you would like your sites to accomplish. If purely a portfolio site, it may just contain images and captions, but this could be a missed opportunity.

Other content to include might be a short welcome introduction and then a brief biography, including some information about your education, recent projects, upcoming exhibitions, and so on. Work out how to group your work into sections; all editorial commissions could be in one area, book covers and design company projects in another. Having an area that is used to showcase new and uncommissioned work can be instrumental in allowing others to see the direction that your new work is taking.

Easy access to your contact details is important, although it is safest to only publish email contact info – remember you are unable to control exactly who can view your site. Another useful area of content is a page containing links to other websites that you recommend. Links from your site to others may mean that they also provide links back to your site, thus increasing the amount of potential traffic. It is advisable to make contact before creating a link; this will ensure that a link back is considered, too.

Some illustrators find that the extra-curricular work of creating limited-edition digital or screen-prints, or even a small range of T-shirts, can be successfully marketed on a website and start to form the basis for a small online shop. It is unlikely that business demands will ever overflow into a major commitment, but there may be enough interest to warrant time and finances being directed towards a shop as part of the overall presence being created.

Design, navigation and layout

The best advice for those working on their first website is to keep things simple. Nothing is more disconcerting or off-putting than a badly designed website that is difficult to navigate. Map out a simple diagram of the basic structure before work on the site begins. Identify each of the separate areas as a box and link each box with lines to show how the viewer will navigate the site. It may well take numerous attempts to complete the diagram, but the exercise will ensure that questions regarding content and structure are raised, if not truly answered, at this stage.

The overall design of the site needs addressing soon after the structure diagram has been resolved. Knowing how the site will look and feel early on will be an advantage; resolving design considerations is easiest early on in a project. The design should complement the illustration work it houses and not distract the viewer from the work. Keep text to a minimum, as most people don't enjoy scrolling through pages and pages of copy on-screen. Create captions to identify the work's key points and ensure all images sit comfortably on-screen without any need for scrolling.

Navigation should be easy to use without being too childishly obvious. Ensure that all areas of the site can be reached without the need for the viewer to use the 'back' button of the Web browser. Think about the route that viewers will take when accessing all aspects of your site and make sure that no area takes more than a few clicks of the mouse to get to. People want to access information quickly with the minimum of fuss. Although most users will have fast connections to the internet, some will not, and this needs to be taken into account when considering content. Make sure that pages download quickly by keeping the file sizes for images small, and don't add unnecessary animated details.

Think about whether having a downloadable portfolio, perhaps set up as a PDF file, would benefit your clients. Your client, most often an art director, creative director or graphic designer, will likely have to show your work to his or her client and possibly to an editor too, so providing a means for them to be able to do this can be a helpful bonus – not everyone will want to show your entire website to their client. Creating a downloadable PDF can be straightforward and, of course, allows you to point potential clients to your website when physically sending a portfolio is not feasible. The PDF is also a tool that you can email to clients when they request work to view at short notice.

Maintenance, upkeep and promotion

Just as a real-world portfolio needs constant attention, so does an online version. Keeping your profiles up to date with new work and forthcoming exhibitions and events is crucial and should not be too time-consuming. Checking that sites view well on a range of different machines, screens and different browsers is part of the development process, but should be done periodically once the site is up and running as well.

An online profile that is not promoted effectively is about as useful as having no profile at all. Promotion can be as simple as ensuring that keywords are embedded in the front page; this is where search engines look for information about a site and identify what it contains. Using a range of keywords will help broaden the appeal to search engines, but be realistic; the word 'illustrator' reveals over three million results in Google, whereas 'editorial illustrator, New York,' limits the search to 100,000.

Promoting your website with a postcard may seem like a backwards step technologically, but can really increase awareness and traffic. Emailing a link to your site and including some low-res images will increase awareness too. Without an audience, a website will just sit on the hard shoulder of the information superhighway without any place to go.

AUTHOR TIP: WEBSITES

—If you are not a keen Web designer, why take the time and energy to learn new software skills that you'll probably not need to use again? Look to trade your skills for those of a good Web designer – offer some specially commissioned illustrations or even one-off artworks as an incentive.

—Sit down and plan your site carefully, looking at many other illustrators' sites first – find what you think works well and avoid mistakes that others have made before you.

—Consider your audience – a basic CV and/or bio will contain enough professional and personal information for most clients. Avoid the temptation to tell your entire life history – keep the relevant facts: education, exhibitions, client list, and so on.

—Caption your work samples. Give information about each piece of work – client, brief description of the project, title and the medium used. This will ensure that the viewer reads your images as commissioned illustrations rather than just abstract images out of context.

Both analogue and digital portfolios are the lifeblood of the working illustrator; without them working hard on your behalf, it can be impossible to win even the first commission.

Social media

Whether you wish to create interest and a buzz around your work, or plan to update clients to your current projects or generally just wish to be visible, social media has become a key aspect of marketing for the professional illustrator. The ubiquitous nature of smartphones means, of course, that we are all connected 24/7, so being proactive on social media is nowadays simply a given.

Should you choose to set up a Facebook account, separate from your own personal account, that presents your professional illustration portfolio to the world, or select Twitter to announce and present your work or find Instagram with its entirely image-focused approach the right place and space – do consider how you plan to keep your social media updated and relevant. Increasingly illustrators are turning to Instagram, originally created as an app to add filters to photographs but now more recognized as the premier platform for sharing images. Illustrators are now showcasing their work to potential clients, their peers and growing student audiences. Having been purchased by Facebook in 2012, Instagram has quickly become the app of choice for illustrators for the sharing of sketches and work in progress as well as personal projects and client-led illustration projects. Instagram can be the ideal platform for those looking to promote their illustration work – building up a strong body of followers can happen quite quickly for those that update their profiles and share images on a regular basis and use hashtags in their posts to increase views from like-minded people and places also on Instagram. Those illustrators that are truly harnessing the power of Instagram to promote their work reap the benefits swiftly – having access to a truly global audience can be extremely fruitful.

It is wise to select one or two social media applications, rather than take a scatter-gun approach – it is far better to dedicate time and energy in a few places very well than find yourself spread too thinly. Keeping social media accounts active, whether Twitter or Instagram, is more than a mini-project; it takes genuine commitment to update with new posts and new images and to generate the kind of interest that attracts and keeps followers. You'll need to balance your posts, their timings and their frequency so you maintain interest and don't over-saturate and bombard your followers. Start by following other illustrators and their clients to see what you think works – of course it goes without saying that your posts should be professional in tone, should be written clearly and concisely and should reflect your approach to your subject. Capitalize on your approach to creating images and use social media to reflect your approach to illustration positively – don't be afraid to show that you are a creative person and have a range of interests that are explored in your work.

Avenues for self-promotion

The self-promoting illustrator should plan to make an impact that leads to a request to view a portfolio of work (with or without the illustrator present), a decision to click on a website for more illustration samples, or even a decision to directly commission work. Publicity is never created with the intention of securing a job for life or to set out an in-depth professional history or profile, so simplicity is the key. It is never wise to send a long resume or CV: it should be the quality of the work that dictates the approach. Many art school graduates are pleased to announce where they studied and what degree they got, and are frustrated when they realize that it is purely the quality of the portfolio of work that interests the viewer.

Creating an annual desktop or wall-mounted calendar, for example, can work as an effective promotional device; they are useful objects as well as a daily reminder of the illustrator's work. Remember, though, that every print company, photographic agency, stock-image library and facilities house will have the same idea and probably bigger budgets, so that on the first Monday of January every art director in town will spend most of the morning opening large, well-sealed envelopes with calendars inside.

Pop-up or stand-up promo pieces that are intended to attract attention as desktop novelties invariably don't stand the test of time. Objects that require construction will probably remain unbuilt. Creating a device that works well, that inspires, surprises or raises a smile will, however, produce results. Clients like to be impressed and flattered and will appreciate the time and energy involved in creating a promotional item that communicates effectively. Illustrators that create posters, boxes of images, concertina handmade books and any number of elaborate promo objects inevitably receive requests to visit with a portfolio of work. The secret is in creating a promotional object that is well targeted, well designed and well worth receiving.

5.7
Contact, Contact Publishing. To guarantee entry into an annual, opt for the pay-and-display option – normally published within the first quarter of a new calendar year and mailed directly to all top industry companies on your behalf.

The annuals

Annuals offer another distinct area of investigation in the search for self-promotional nirvana. There are two different types of annual that illustrators can aspire to have their work included in and all do the job, albeit in slightly different ways.

The first, and definitely the most aspirational of the two, is the annual of work that has been selected and judged by distinguished industry peers. These annuals are compiled and published by organizations like the Society of Illustrators (SOI) in New York and the Association of Illustrators (AOI) in London, and are normally launched at an exhibition of work from the book. The SOI in New York was founded in 1901 and has published over fifty-eight annuals, simply entitled *Illustrators*, whilst the AOI in London, formed in 1973, published thirty-six editions of its annual, *Images*, before moving its attention to producing a catalogue to accompany the World Illustration Awards.

There is stiff competition in every category for entry industry annuals each year. For many, the call for entries has become something of an annual ritual, despite never knowing what may catch the judges' eyes to make it into the final selection, and there is never a shortage of those hoping to make it into the book and accompanying exhibition.

The second category of annual also works as a full-colour index of illustrators' work and contact details, but there is a fee for entry. These are normally determined by a page rate, and it is this fact that identifies the annual as being more representative of the entire industry rather than the best of the work being produced. These annuals show work to suit all tastes, but not all of it will be very good.

Annuals can be expensive to enter, only appear once a year and can give the impression of a creative cattle market, but they do have one major benefit that outweighs any negative perceptions. Annuals are distributed free of charge to those in the industry who commission illustration; they are sent to advertising agencies, book publishers and design companies, and are always kept and referred to. Targeting and reaching an audience this broad in one hit with a professional piece of promotion is never easy, and for this reason alone inclusion in an annual is a must.

Another reason to consider the annual is their run-ons. A run-on is exactly what it sounds like; exact copies of individual pages of the book printed as extra, one-sided sheets. As a useful incentive for inclusion, the publishers of the annuals build supplying five hundred to one thousand run-ons of the artist's page into the overall cost. This means that the individual illustrator then has a ready-made piece of publicity for marketing purposes.

Illustration agency representation

If the whole idea of maintaining a strong marketing and publicity campaign, keeping mailing lists up to date, and coordinating the delivery as well as the upkeep of your portfolios seems unmanageable, then it may be wise to consider approaching an illustration agency for representation. Agencies are a useful link to the professional world for those illustrators that are either too busy to spend time undertaking the business side of the discipline, find that they are just not very good at it or do not enjoy meeting new clients on a regular basis. Having an external 'face' is an exceptionally useful tool for many illustrators, so that for this, and other contributing factors, artists are prepared to pay a percentage of their fee for the service.

The positive aspects

Debates about the relative pros and cons of agency representation continue to surface, but for those happily housed within an agency portfolio, most of the issues are positive. Being able to hand over the financial negotiations of a project to someone often far more adept and practiced can be a real relief for some. Having an agent involved in quoting a fee for a potential or real project can increase the final fee; many illustrators have issues understanding the marketplace and exactly what their work is worth. It is not uncommon for an agency to command and receive fees over and above the illustrator's own perception of what the fee should be. This can mean that agency representation can pay for itself; an agent who can charge 25 per cent higher fees than a solo artist is, indirectly, creating their own percentage from a project.

Good agents relate to their client base; they know their market and fully understand the business of illustration. The best agents have spent time building relationships with art directors, art buyers and designers and are usually on friendly terms with them. Clients trust good agents, and will seek advice about the most appropriate artist for a particular project. The agent can be the first person called when a commission is forthcoming. Some agents have been in the business for many years and have established themselves as experts in the field – this is not easy to replicate as a solo artist.

Most agencies share the burden and cost of publicity with their artists, a rule of thumb being that an agency pays the same percentage towards the costs as the percentage that they take in fees. Some will pay for one major agency publicity publication each year in addition, but each company has its own take on what they offer. Many artists, when the relationship works well, find that most work starts to come through the agency and so feel less of a need for their own self-promotional material. This, in itself, can be a huge release.

Agencies deliver portfolios and quotes on potential projects. Both tasks can be time-consuming and will not generate income unless developing into real commissions. Illustrators running their own business affairs can waste much time chasing projects that don't become fully fledged commercial jobs. The artist often overlooks this aspect of agency representation, but it is this job that is the foundation of an agency's success and reputation.

ADVANTAGES OF AGENCY REPRESENTATION

—Agents are unafraid to demand the best possible fees. They don't get embarrassed – the higher the fee, the bigger their percentage.

—Although agents can command between 20 and 30 per cent of the final fee as their own, they are likely to gain a higher fee than a lone illustrator could.

—Some advertising agents will only deal with an artist through their agent – no agent can mean no work for some companies.

—Agents have experience of managing careers – they can advise you what direction to consider taking your work in. They see many more portfolios than you ever can.

—Many illustrators hate having to attend meetings – they don't enjoy the process and agents willingly take on this burden of responsibility.

Agency representation also means the artist avoids the task of chasing up purchase orders and paperwork related to a project. Producing detailed invoices with information about the parameters of the usage of a particular artwork can be no fun either. Constantly phoning accounts departments after thirty days to enquire why an invoice remains unpaid is a weary and soul-destroying task and an efficient agent takes care of all of this.

DISADVANTAGES OF AGENCY REPRESENTATION

- —Some clients refuse to work through agencies – they want direct contact with the illustrator they wish to work with, believing that the best work is produced with a shorter chain of communication.
- —There are clients that begrudge paying the higher fees that an agent may command – they see agents as mercenaries!
- —The financial pressure to maintain high-profile marketing can be too great, as well as being creatively limiting for some illustrators. Many prefer to set their own personal direction for marketing and publicity.
- —Some agents demand that all work goes through the agency – meaning that a percentage of the fees from regular work from contracts and clients built up over time is liable to be paid to the agent.
- —Not all illustrators trust agents – having a businessman tackle issues of creativity whilst acting as a middleman can seem inappropriate to some.

The negative aspects

Not all aspects of agency representation appeal to every artist. Illustration agencies are businesses, and in order to stay in business they must represent artists that are in fashion and will win commissions. Agencies are less likely to take creative risks when considering new artists and this can have the effect of stifling the industry by ignoring emerging talent.

Agents will expect artists interested in joining them to already have a substantial back catalogue and a regular supply of new work. Even with this, they may demand that an artist works solely through the agency and hand over all client details at the start of the arrangement. Another real drawback can be that not all clients are prepared to work with agents – some have a reputation for being hard-nosed and demanding unreasonable fees – and will only work directly with artists.

Issues of communication are another drawback, as many prefer to keep the lines of communication as short as possible. An agent may be seen as another link in a chain that can so easily lead to game of Chinese Whispers.

Whatever the ups and downs of agents and the roles that they play, it is wise to get first-hand knowledge and experience. If looking for an agent, aim to meet with as many as possible, and send in samples to agencies that best suit your own approach and methods of work. Seek advice from illustrators that are represented; look at the range and depth of the illustrators already with agencies that interest you. Be prepared and be knowledgeable. If you are talented, it is likely that more than one agency will be interested in representing you. Don't go with the first offer; consider them all and then decide.

5.8

Presentation techniques

Whether with an agent or working solo, you will have to spend time making many presentations to clients on a regular basis, starting from the point of that very first meeting.

Presentation techniques are no mystery, but can prove problematic for some artists. Despite an art school training that can require constant justification of a piece of work, often in group situations, many illustrators do not communicate clearly in meetings with their own clients.

It is important to be confident about your work when presenting your portfolio, although there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance; show self-belief and be positive about what you do and how you work. A friendly manner is much more appealing than a cool, stand-offish nature, as many clients choose whom to work with based on personality as much as portfolio work.

Speak slowly and clearly, and aim to inform during a review of your portfolio or when you present visuals or final artwork to a client. It is wise to remember a few short background stories behind one or two pieces of work. Clients may view your work and meet with you in a busy studio if a meeting room is unavailable. Don't let this faze you. You may be interrupted by others in the studio asking questions or phones ringing. Try to take it all in your stride and be professional; sulking or storming out will get you nowhere.

Demonstrate enthusiasm for your client's business as well as your own, and research the company that you are meeting with; look at recent projects, ask questions and make comments that show you are knowledgeable about their work and current issues too. At the same time, be aware of the need to listen, as when nervous it is easy to talk too much. If you find yourself in this situation, try to slow down and take stock.

Don't be afraid to take notes, as it is useful to have something on paper to refer to after the meeting. With the possibility of so much information being relayed in a relatively short space of time, it is very easy to forget key aspects. Take a notepad and pen and start the meeting with them to hand.

Do ensure that you look professional: the design and advertising worlds are fairly relaxed and informal environments, but it is important to look and feel appropriately dressed. Personal hygiene should be not an issue for discussion; being clean and tidy must be a given. Rarely will meetings require a business suit; a presentation of final artwork to the end client of a project is a case in point, but being smart but casual will be expected and the norm. Just like the extra duplicate portfolio that sits in the studio, having a change of clothes ready in case of an urgent meeting can be a blessing. You won't want to attend meetings covered in paint!

Overall, it is important to be yourself, but a confident, approachable and motivated version. Switch it on when you enter a meeting, if need be; it can and will make a difference.

5.8
Building Books.
Phil Wrigglesworth.
Wriggleworth's visuals are fairly close representations of what the final artwork will look like. This image of a book made of books was shown to the client as a rough sketch with the characters in place but not in great detail; the artwork then pulled the detail together.

Mike Perry is a New York–based illustrator, printmaker, curator and writer.

Q: You've been at the forefront of contemporary illustration for quite some time now – what would you put this down to?

MP: Believing in the creative journey. Working hard and sharing my work out in the world.

Q: It would seem that you have put as much time, energy and effort into promoting your work as you do in creating it—was this a conscious decision earlier in your career, and how do you think this paid off?

MP: I find it hard for people to know what I do when I don't share my work with them. I try to share my ideas and discoveries with the world. Early on I felt very comfortable sharing my work. Having a website and posting was super important. Maybe back then it felt like a way of communicating with the greater world. I remember doing my first piece for an international publication. It was so exciting. I was some kid from Kansas and was communicating with someone in Singapore. It felt powerful. Maybe we all take this a little for granted now. However, today I still get a buzz from knowing that in some small town in Japan, Argentina or Australia some kid has something or has seen an image that I have made.

Q: Your output includes commercial commissioned projects, books that you've edited and authored, limited-edition prints and products – how do you maintain the best balance of commercial and non-commercial projects, and why is this important to you?

MP: At the end of the day it is just about me making. What the output is often doesn't matter or isn't important. And I love learning about new materials and techniques; jumping from material, process, ideas keeps me thinking about what is around me. As for the balance of commercial and personal projects—this is a massive question and most illustrators are on this never-ending search to find the right balance.

Q: Your work has truly international reach – is this important to you, and why do you think it has had such appeal?

MP: Whilst I grew up in a small place did not really fantasize about the world beyond, as soon as I discovered it was out there I wanted to have a relationship with it. I knew there had to be more out there, so when I took my first baby steps into the wider world I knew I was ready to go all the way!

Q: What next for Mike Perry? And how do you get there once that decision is made?

MP: I have a lot of ideas; some are crazy, some are simple. My recent favourite epiphany has been to realize some things just take a while, so I am now trying to look at my work as a body of work with each piece being a small step in helping me understand the universe around me with the goal of helping me understanding my place in that universe a little better.

5.9
Layers of Colour.
Mike Perry.
Perry's approach to promotion often sees putting himself into his images, as in this experimental 3D colour piece.

5.8

Making it happen

Self-promotion and presentation are skills that are developed over time and continually updated. This exercise will help you to consider who you are and how best to promote yourself.

Materials

Photographs of yourself, paper, illustration materials (pens, paints, etc), camera. Long sheet of paper folded into a concertina.

The brief: Self-promotion concertina

Who are you? Start by creating a number of thumbnails/rough sketches of things that relate to you. These could be your favourite foods, colours, sounds, seasons, drinks, flower, shoes, mood – the list is endless. Once you have developed lots of small images, make a concertina booklet to use as your promotional vehicle. This can be as small as you wish but should not exceed A5 or legal size when folded. You may wish to create a different image on every page or one long, linear image – but it must be about you.

Questions in summary

1. How can an illustrator promote their own work?
2. What are the advantages of self-promotion?
3. How do your favourite illustrators promote their work?
4. How would you like people to find out about your work?

Chapter 6—Production

Illustrators were once considered the technophobes of the creative industries; immersing themselves in artistic creation, shut away from the realities and formalities of production and technology issues. However, increasingly illustrators have begun to gain a broad foundation of knowledge enabling a greater awareness of technology that has brought freedom, flexibility and the understanding required to meet the technical challenges of life in the profession.

Essential kit

As previously discussed, illustrators work in a variety and combination of different media, and most start to find the materials that they feel an affinity with during the latter part of their art and design education. A growing understanding of how materials behave is part of that journey, but one aspect often missing in the education programmes of many design institutions is an in-depth teaching of production issues. In order to discuss these demands, it is important to start with the basic components and materials that illustrators use daily in the studio.

Basics

Find the materials that work for you. Try a range of products and brands, but be clear which ones give you the results that you are happy with. There is no top brand of acrylic paint, no definitive make of pencil; there are only the materials that you work best with. Whether working with spray paint and finding that a particular nozzle works in the most satisfying way, or discovering that a certain squeegee drags the ink in a more effective manner, it is about choice.

Trial and error are crucial to discovering the right tools and materials. Learn to follow your instinct and don't be afraid to ask the opinions of others. Be prepared to give some materials the benefit of the doubt as not many can be mastered in minutes and most need time to adjust your working methods to them. When you find a specific brush or shade of paint that works, it can be a heart-warming moment. The same feeling presents itself when an aspect of a software application is mastered, and you perform a task that moves a piece of work forward in a new direction.

It is rare to find a shop that sells all the right products under one roof and it can take visits to various shops to find the particular type, brand or range that you require. There is something about the atmosphere of a good art supply shop that evokes feelings of excitement and awe, like a child in a sweet shop. Shopping online is time-saving and convenient, but can be a sterile experience in comparison. Wandering the aisles of Blick on Bond Street in New York, the London Graphic Centre in Covent Garden or Tokyu Hands in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo is an experience that can't be replicated on-screen.

There are some items of kit that have simply been essential must-haves for the illustrator since the discipline's birth. There are others that have become essential in recent years with the advent and introduction of digital working methods.

Analogue essentials

Even for the digital artist, paper is normally the starting point. Paper comes in a multitude of formats, weights and finishes and the choice of stock is dependent on the usage. There is little point in attempting to use watercolour paints in a bleed-proof marker pad; common sense is the overruling factor most of the time.

All artists understand, or rapidly find out, the difference between a hard and soft lead pencil, how to fix a charcoal drawing on location or the benefits of a putty rubber over an office eraser; the trick is in adapting the materials to suit the user.

Digital essentials

It is now impossible to consider an illustrator successfully working without access to digital tools, an idea unthinkable even at the end of the twentieth century. Whether an artist creates all work on-screen or scans in original drawings to be reworked or coloured in the computer, or they simply attach final artworks into emails to deliver to the client, almost every aspect of the process can be digitized.

When considering the purchase of digital equipment it pays, yet again, to seek advice. Most people tend to buy what they need as and when they require it, updating and upgrading as they go. Most students will have used equipment made available during their studies and will find, on graduating, that they have to purchase some kit for the first time.

Speaking to other illustrators and getting recommendations pays dividends. There is very little point in buying a top-spec, high-end computer that is capable of rendering 3D graphics in seconds, at a huge cost, if you work in watercolour and only intend to use the machine to send artwork via email and conduct Web-based research.

The computer

Basic digital requirements will always include a computer and the biggest decisions will start with making the choice between buying a PC or Apple Mac and choosing between desktop or laptop. Personal preference will dictate which route is taken, but considering a portable machine is worthwhile. Being able to work at the studio and in the home, as well as working and making presentations on the move, is a major bonus. Laptop computers can be locked away overnight to avoid theft and can be plugged into large desktop monitors when a larger working area is needed. They may have less raw power than a desktop model, but for most illustrators they are more than adequate.

The scanner

A scanner – to input hand-drawn images and found printed reference into the computer – is essential, although a small A4 or letter version is all that is normally needed. Invest in an A3 scanner if you have larger components or you work in traditional methods and only send high-resolution artwork in digital formats – your artwork is likely to extend beyond A4 in size.

The drawing tablet

For those who aim to draw directly into a software application, a drawing tablet is essential kit. They can take a little time to fully master, but many experienced digital illustrators swear by them as they allow for far greater manipulation than a standard mouse. With a stylus you are 'drawing' or 'painting' with an instrument that replicates a pencil, pen or paintbrush at the 'click of a switch'.

The printer

Outputting images on a digital printer is important when keeping a portfolio up to date, but far less important as a tool for checking colours. The process that a budget digital printer goes through in creating colours for print is very different from the four-colour printing process used in the industrial offset lithography used by publishers. Choose wisely; some inexpensive printers can cost a fortune in ink and fast become an expensive investment.

The camera

A good digital camera is a must, both as a useful tool for inputting images and for shooting reference material. Being able to capture the figure in various poses to then bring into an application for drawing or retouching makes figure work much less time-consuming and less dependent on traditional skills. A recent upsurge in vector-drawn and traced figures in illustrations has been directly brought about by the relative simplicity of this process. For low-resolution images then a smartphone camera can be adequate; for higher-resolution work you'll need to invest in a higher-end digital camera.

Backing up

Backing up, storing and archiving work is a boring but necessary aspect of digital work. It can take some freelancers a major computer crash and loss of files before they are ready to begin a routine of regular backups. Although wise to copy work files on to an external hard drive, these are not indestructible and must not be regarded as completely error-free places to archive work. Storing work via a cloud service, basically an internet server, can be a safer and more reliable place but relies on an internet connection to upload and download, of course.

Studio set-up

Solo or group?

There is an important decision that every illustrator must make; it can be dictated by working methods, by financial considerations or by personal choice and it is about the location of the studio. For some the studio will be, at its simplest, the kitchen table or the back bedroom, while for others it may be a rented desk space within a design company, or a shared loft-style studio in a cool part of town. Finding the place that best suits your needs is fundamental to creating an environment conducive to creative working. Setting up a studio can be challenging and exciting, but planning ahead is crucial.

Freelance illustration is a predominantly solo discipline; much of the work is undertaken in a space away from the client and delivered at the end of the process. Until email became the normal mode of delivery, illustrators tended to migrate towards the cities where most commissions were likely to be forthcoming. If they chose not to and lived and worked in another part of the country, they adjusted their working methods to allow for delivery times. Although email has made delivery instant and the mobile phone has ensured that communication can be a constant, many illustrators still prefer to work in urban areas. This may be related to the need or desire to meet face-to-face with the art director or designer on a project, or it may go back to issues of self-promotion and the ease in getting to and from presentations laden with a portfolio.

Deciding on a solo or group studio is determined by choice. Many illustrators demand the solace and silence of a space that is uninterrupted by fellow artists, whilst others find it impossible to concentrate without the buzz and noise of a shared space. It is wise not to rush into the excitement of creating a group studio without having had some experience of working in one. Equally, spending time and money converting a spare bedroom into a studio, if completely unused to working alone, can be a commitment and undertaking that proves to be unnecessary.

There are benefits and drawbacks to both types of studio set-up and both need some careful consideration. Working alongside others can provide an environment that is inspiring, interesting and supportive. It can also be off-putting and disturbing as well as frustrating. For those that choose to work alone, the benefits of the solo studio may be in the freedom and personal space that the situation allows. Drawbacks, however, include having no face-to-face, one-to-one conversations or feedback about an idea or work in progress from a sympathetic ear. Hours may pass without direct communication with another individual, although for many, this situation may be a positive asset.

For those who choose to join or set up a group studio, having costs of shared equipment and facilities can be financially beneficial and can lead to greater access to technology that may be out of reach for the solo trader. Buying one very good digital camera, installing a mini-kitchen or investing in a table tennis table are far simpler spread across a group.

Communication tools

Whether going it alone or joining a group, there are some essentials that require immediate attention. Having a mobile phone is a must; a shared studio phone is only really important if you want to present your studio more as a business in itself rather than simply a place to work. Use your mobile phone for emails on the move and use the diary function to keep on top of projects and remain organized at all times.

A fast internet link is not to be overlooked – sending artwork via email, especially large files, can take valuable time. Occasionally company firewalls bounce emails back if they don't recognize the sender or the file size is too large. Managing these issues without a wide bandwidth can take crucial time when delivering work. Look at file-transfer services such as WeTransfer or Dropbox – these enable fast and reliable of sending of files, up to a certain size for free, or larger files for an annual fee. They are reliable and readily used by clients so make sense for hassle-free digital file transfer.

The workspace

Workspaces vary but an illustrator's studio is rarely a dull place. Digital technology appeared to turn creative design studios into sterile office environments with huge casings of grey and cream plastic, housing humming computer kit and monitors. The illustrator's studio, in contrast, appears to have retained much of the fun and frivolity of the art school. It is a fact that design groups have to entertain their clients, who may be deeply concerned to enter a less-than-professional environment, whereas illustrators create spaces they feel comfortable working in. Without the pressure of visiting clients, the studio becomes an extension of creative expression for the illustrator. It is not uncommon to see wild collections of stuffed animals, toys and model kits, thrift-store ceramics, comic art posters, rubber stamp kits and the like adorning the walls and shelves of the studio.

Illustrators can be messy; paints, inks, scraps of tracing paper, masking tape, glues, coloured crayons and sticky-backed paper are likely to be strewn across many surfaces. It is in amongst this variety of old-school materials that the computer and related peripherals sit.

Safety issues

Setting up a workspace that performs properly, that allows for creativity, experimentation and the everyday work tasks of creating illustrations needs to be done with a number of factors in mind. A dedicated space for thinking, researching and the tasks of invoicing and payment chasing, as well as portfolio organization, must be part of the equation. Health and safety considerations such as correct height of monitor and keyboard position to ensure unharmful posture are as important as ensuring safe working practices are adopted for the handling of potentially hazardous materials, such as spray paints and adhesives. Positioning a monitor away from direct light and making sure that electrical cables are not trailing across a floor are all requirements of a safe working space.

Resources and references

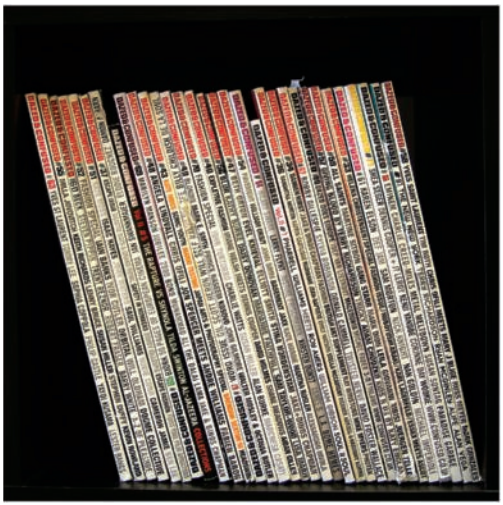
Illustrators need inspiration and reference material. The notion that artists pick ideas and themes out of thin air and then create visuals without referring to real or photographed imagery is one held by some clients, but the reality is somewhat different.

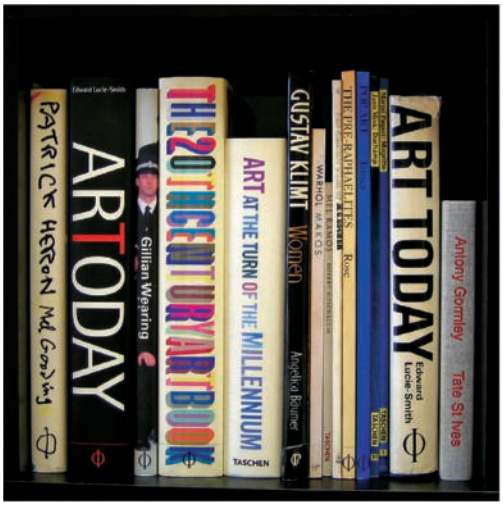
Every illustrator builds his or her own reference library, whether trawling second-hand bookstores for out-of-print examples of 1970s car manuals or out shooting and collecting photographic references of street signage, an illustrator constantly adds to the library of images and ephemera. Old DIY magazines, instructional leaflets, stamp collections, record sleeves, matchbox labels – they are all collected and referenced.

Housing collections and libraries is never easy, as illustrators tend to require organized space to store and display objects and files; a particular colour combination or layout may be called upon at any time for inspiration. Some illustrators use storage boxes, some create large archive files for printed ephemera to be contained in, but whichever type of device or system is utilized, it plays a vital part in the process of creating illustrations.

With hard drives increasing in capacity on an annual basis, storing digital photographic reference is becoming easier and many are turning to this method of organizing their research. Many illustrators, however, would argue that there is no substitute for the real object. Feeling the quality of the paper, breathing in the scent of that print and handling a real object are part of the process of inspiration.

Referencing a particular image has never been quicker or simpler – huge royalty-free files of photographic reference and imagery are available online. The same is true for clip art and Victorian engravings and most are available from bookstores, computer warehouses, traditional art and design suppliers, as well as the internet. Searching for visual reference online takes seconds with Google Image Search, one of the most important research tools to emerge for the illustrator in the last decade.



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BIZARRO POSTCARDS
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MEXICANA
ROCK COVERS
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SHELLS & CORALS
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3D GRAPHICS & ANIMATION
PHOTOSHOP 4 FOR MACINTOSH
PHOTOSHOP in easy steps
FLASH MX MOST WANTED
PHOTOSHOP MOST WANTED 2
Web Design
After Effects in Production
CMP Books
Into 3D with form•Z
HTML 4 UNLEASHED

Production tips

There are enough potential production tips to warrant filling an entire book, and shelves groan under the weight of titles offering readers purported shortcuts to learning and then mastering software. There are also numerous magazines on monthly sale offering software tricks and tips to readers, but many of the most frequent lessons and some of the best advice are often not highlighted or tailored specifically for illustrators. There is very little substitute for learning on the job, and valuable experience gained throughout initial projects can be put to greater use as commissions appear more regularly.

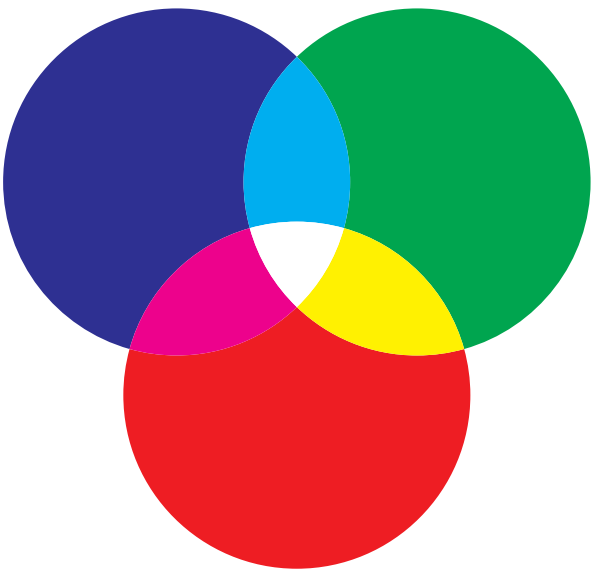
Working in the field of illustration requires some specialist knowledge and for the beginner it can seem like a minefield. The best advice is to learn some technical terms and the terminology used in print and production, and understand what they all mean. If you are not sure what 'bleed' (when an image is printed to the edge of the paper) is, for example, don't be afraid to ask. It is common to meet designers and art directors that use production terms and phrases so regularly that they can forget that newcomers may not yet fully grasp the language. Never leave a briefing, however, without a full understanding of the technical expectations; mistakes can be time-consuming and costly, so ensure that communication is clear or fully explained and if it is not, ask.

Colour management

Start as you mean to go on and ensure that files are set up correctly before you commence a project; it is far better to do this before getting in too deep. A common mistake is to ignore the file formats required for the production of the artwork at the design stage. Setting up files for print in CMYK breaks colours into percentages that can be achieved from the four-colour set of cyan (C), magenta (M), yellow (Y) and black (K), and this is how most colour jobs are printed.

Special colours

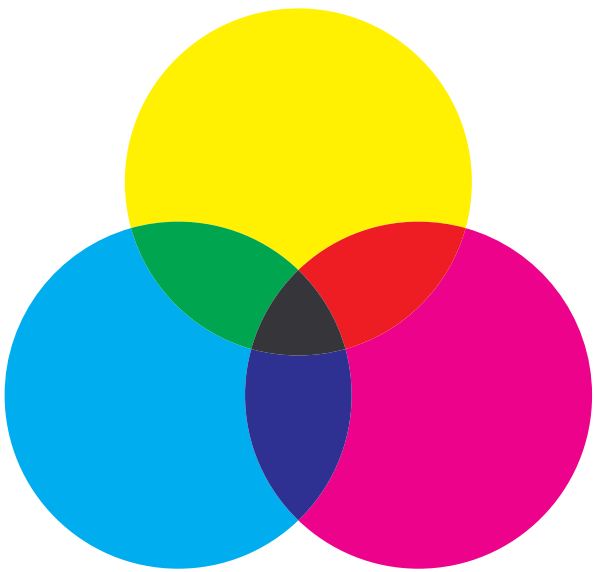
On some occasions fifth and sixth colours are added to the print process. These are known as 'specials' and have to be specified correctly from Pantone reference charts. Special colours are used when it is impossible to create a colour from the four-colour set, such as metallics or fluorescents, or when it is vital to match an existing colour that needs to appear in its purest form. Specified special colours are mixed by hand and applied on a separate plate from the four plates made for CMYK. Specials are only likely to be used for specialist projects; it is not possible to specify silver ink for an illustration to accompany a magazine article, for example. It may be appropriate, though, to discuss the possibility for an image of a magazine cover, but this discussion should take place with the art director at the briefing stage and not just presented as a secondary thought with the final artwork. Adding special colours always adds to the print and production costs.



6.1
Additive primaries. When light is emitted (such as from a screen), colour is created by the three primaries, red, green and blue. When these three colours mix, they create white light.

Screen-based work

For work that will not be printed, but shown on-screen only (websites, TV or animation, for example), digital files will need to be set up in the RGB format. Here, all colours are created from properties and combinations of red (R), green (G) and blue (B). Red, green and blue are the primary colours of light and are referred to as primary colours or as the additive primaries. Although the RGB format works for screen-based illustration projects, it is wise not to trust the representation of colours on your monitor unless it has been well calibrated. Once calibrated, a good monitor will reproduce colours for screen accurately but will always present an approximation of any project that will be going to print. It is therefore important to check the percentage breakdown of each colour used against a Pantone print swatch guide or against printed examples from previous projects.



6.2
Subtractive primaries. When light is reflected (such as from a printed surface), colour is created by the three primaries, cyan, magenta and yellow. When these three colours mix, they create black.

File formats

File formats are important to get right; ensure that you only give the client flattened images without access to the individual layers that make up the project. This gives the illustrator some protection against misuse by a client and it is best not to provide temptation. Ensuring changes or alterations required are made by the illustrator alone is the goal and files that allow clients freedom to scale and print, but not open and alter are the safest option. The illustrator retains copyright on every image they create, unless otherwise stated, and not allowing others to alter or change an image offers some protection against illustrations appearing in print that devalue the work of the illustrator.

The final file format is dependent on the type of project – some clients prefer artwork to arrive as a TIFF (Tagged Image File Format), others request JPEGs (Joint Photographic Experts Group), or EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) files; the only true course of action is to check before embarking on the project. Ensure that the resolution is correct too; creating a piece of work in 72 dpi when it is expected in 300 dpi is a common, but easily avoidable, mistake. Most production issues can be resolved through tight communication; lapses in communication can often result in unexpected, unwanted and unbelievable results.

Accountancy

Keeping track of costs and expenses is a vital aspect of running a successful illustration business and studio. Software applications and smartphone apps have made this process so much simpler for today's illustrators – being able to track spending on an app that links to receipts for purchases makes keeping on top of finances relatively straightforward. Monitoring income and outgoings, when life as an illustrator can be quite precarious, is vital, as is working on projections and business plans for various expenses that will include studio rental and the costs of upgrading hardware and software.

Enlist the services of an accountant; take advice and recommendations from other illustrators. Use someone who has some understanding of the profession and the possible implications for your tax issues. A good accountant will recommend particular courses of action, explaining pitfalls before they arise and pointing out methods of eliminating unnecessary tax burdens. They may command a hefty fee for their services, but that expense should easily be paid for out of the savings that they can make for you.

An accountant will advise you of exactly what details your invoices should cover – obvious details include your name and address. Less obvious details, but as important, is that the invoice carries an invoice number – a legal requirement. An accountant can also advise you of terms and conditions that you may wish to apply to your clients, although further expertise can also be sought from a solicitor.

Legal tips

An often overlooked aspect of the day-to-day running and long-term organization of a career in illustration is the legalities and liabilities surrounding tax issues. Despite illustration rarely falling into a list of careers that have difficulties in keeping on the right side of the law, it is wise to know and fully understand all potential implications associated with the legalities.

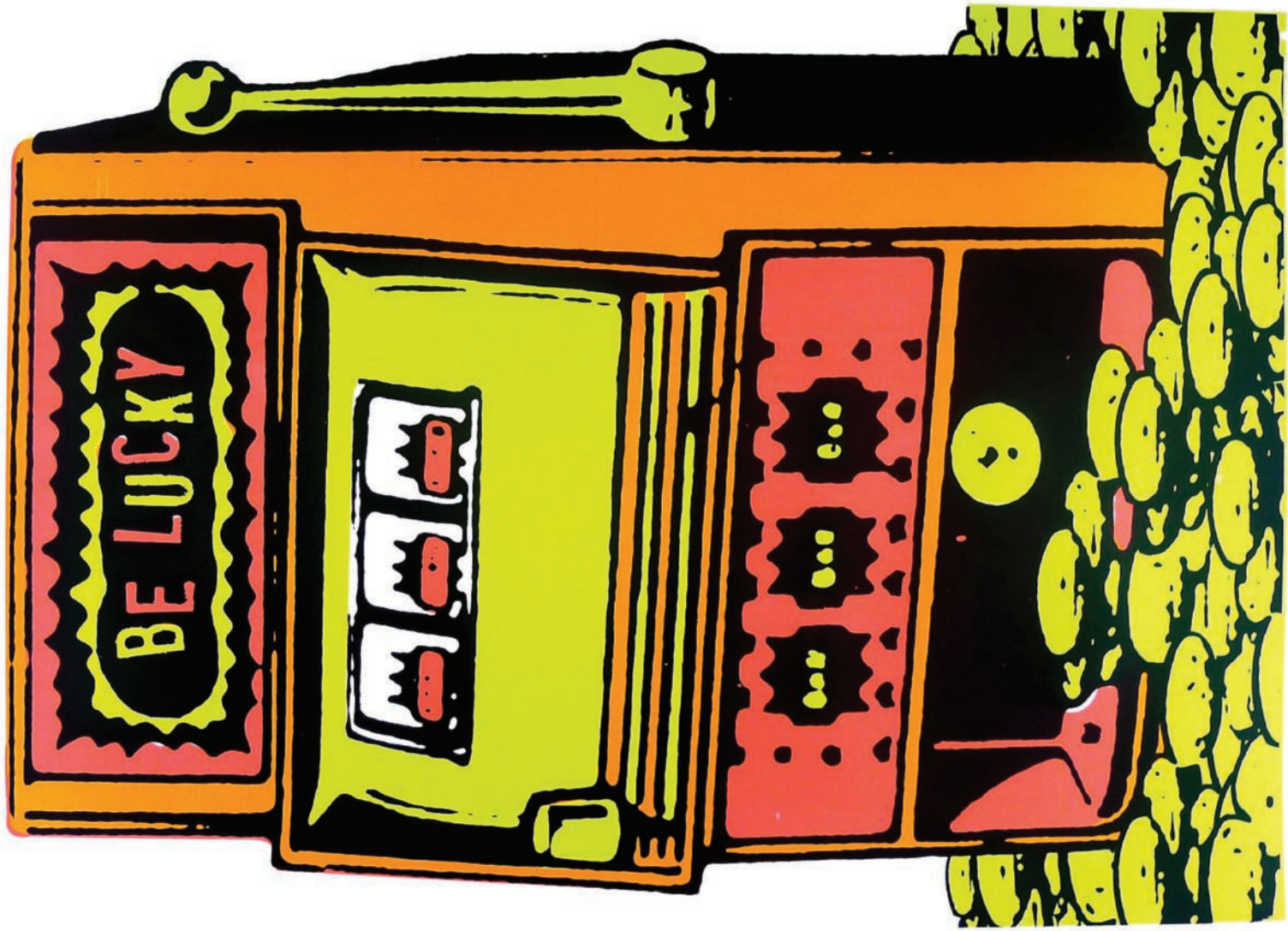
If you plan to work in illustration, then it is vital to ensure that your local tax office knows that you are trading for business. There is an unwritten rule that states that creative people have problems with numbers, figures and maths – get yourself organized early and ensure that you set your business up correctly from the start.

Firstly, find your local tax office and turn to them for advice about exactly how you should set up your business – make sure that everything is taken into account. Normally you'll not be expected to pay any tax until your annual turnover reaches a certain level – this can be hit quite soon if you get busy, so be prepared.

Access to a good solicitor will come in handy should you need information and advice regarding copyright issues – ensuring that you retain copyright over your images is a fundamental right. Working out exactly what to charge for usage or for full copyright of an image can be tricky; an agent can come in handy here or at least advice from a solicitor with links to a professional industry body such as the Association of Illustrators or the Society of Illustrators.

Ignorance is no defence. Make sure that you fully understand just how to set your business up legally. Being aware of what to do and not do is vital – be prepared.

6.3
Be Lucky.
Ben Rider.
Luck shouldn't enter it – be prepared for all aspects of business set-up and tax affairs. It is never a good idea to start trading without being armed with the facts!



6.3

Case study: Sarah Tanat-Jones

Sarah Tanat-Jones is a London-based professional freelance illustrator. She is represented by Handsome Frank and has had her work featured in the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* and has been commissioned by Asos and Universal Music.

The commission

Tanat-Jones was emailed by the art director at the *Guardian* and commissioned to create two illustrations for the New Review guide to summer reading. A range of celebrities, writers and thinkers had recommended their favourite books, and Tanat-Jones was asked to feature a few details from their recommendations in her images. The illustrations also needed to be bright and colourful – suitable for summertime. The dimensions were given, and the deadline was for the next day. This was a quick turnaround job!

Initial response

Tanat-Jones had worked for the *Guardian* a few times before and knew that bright, easy-to-read images worked best, especially in unusual dimensions – the main image was to be long and thin. A quick read-through of the article provided details to place in the illustration, such as holidays in Italy, wine, football, economics, guitar-playing and home interiors. Rainfall and fields of wheat were also mentioned, so Tanat-Jones worked these details into the illustration in subtle ways. After a quick sketch, showing a trio of readers separated by a slanted colour composition, Tanat-Jones felt the main idea would work, so – considering the quick turnaround – emailed the art director a couple of hours later with her sketch.

6.4

Approval

The art director was happy with the idea and pleased with the direction shown in the rough sketch. He gave the go-ahead and Tanat-Jones worked the idea into its final form. At the last minute, the dimensions changed to become even thinner, so the illustration had to be altered to fit the new size.

Final artwork

Tanat-Jones likes to work quite quickly in a simple pen-and-ink method, scanning and colouring the image digitally. She added texture and worked with the colours until she was happy with the results. She worked until the number of events going on in the illustration were evenly spread, creating a sense of balance within the image.

Completion

The work was printed in the newspaper, brightening an interesting review with a vivid and playful image.

6.4
Editorial illustration for the *The Guardian's The New Review* guide to summer reading. *Sarah Tanat-Jones.* If an illustrator can complete a commission in time and within budget, they are more likely to be approached again in the future.

Production

Resources and references are essential to every illustrator. With the evolution of the internet and easily accessible printed material, resources have never been easier to access. Although material is widely available, it is important to develop your own resources through your sketchbooks. This exercise will help you to develop this skill of reference and resource-gathering.

Materials

Sketchbook, drawing materials, tape, smartphone or camera.

The brief: Visiting your local area

Visit a local museum and take your sketchbook with you. Many illustrators use their personal sketchbooks as scrapbooks and as a portable reference. When you visit the museum, have a look around at the objects. Spend time drawing aspects of these preserved artefacts. It may be that you are inspired by the patterns on fabric or the faces on old painted pottery. Whatever inspires you, draw it! Taking photos is a good way to record things quickly, but this is no substitute for the act of drawing. When we draw in our sketchbooks, we will always remember the time, the place, the smells – it is so much more than the pressing of a button.

You may need to visit more than once to allow time to capture all the artefacts that caught your attention. Always have a sketchbook handy as you never know when you may see something that catches your eye and that may be in your next illustration!

You could also visit car boot sales or flea markets to see what interesting items you can find that may inspire you.

Questions in summary

1. What sort of production issues might an illustrator face?
2. Where can illustrators go to find inspiration and factual information?
3. How should a workspace be set up so that it is safe and comfortable?
4. What precautions can an illustrator take to protect against legal and financial difficulties?

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Ian Noble
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Phaidon Press Limited

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Mark Williams
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www.theaoi.com

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www.graphicartistsguild.org

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Glossary

Advertising

A creative and commercial field in which artists, designers and illustrators may be asked to produce work that will help clients to see a service or product to an intended audience.

Agent

An individual or organization formally authorized to represent an artist or illustrator. An agent will promote, secure and conduct business negotiations on behalf of the artist in return for a fee or commission.

Animation

An illusion of movement, created by sequences of images or illustrations. Techniques employed might include 2D, 3D, claymation, stop-motion and digitally filmed.

Annuals

Yearly catalogues of illustrators and their work. Annuals are distributed to art directors, art buyers and designers for promotional purposes. Some popular illustration annuals are listed on page 166.

Art director

The person who oversees the visual appearance and production of a publishing, film or advertising campaign. The art director will usually work with illustrators, designers, copywriters and editors to ensure the smooth running and aesthetic quality of a project.

Art school

A school, college or higher education establishment that offers educational courses in the visual arts, such as photography, sculpture, drawing, painting, illustration, fashion and digital media.

Brainstorm

A problem-solving process whereby large numbers of ideas and thoughts are generated, recorded and sketched. Various techniques, such as image/word associations, similes, spider diagrams and mind maps, can all be used to help keep ideas and thoughts coming.

Brief

Preparatory instructions given to an illustrator, designer or artist embarking on a new project. The brief should detail the objective of the commission, as well as the technical information.

Character

An illustration that portrays human features. Characters in an illustration can be developed to help the audience to engage with the artwork.

Client

An individual or organization paying for the services or work of another individual or organization. In illustration, the client may be a major advertising company or an individual graphic designer.

Collaboration

The bringing together of skills from a variety of professionals. Collaborations between artists can lead to exciting new ideas and boundary-breaking work.

Diagram

A drawing or illustration, used to represent how something works. It may show the parts of a whole and how these parts interact. Diagrams might take the form of pie charts, cutaways, maps, graphs and plans.

Digital

In illustration, the use of computers and electronic equipment to create an artwork. Illustrators can now create work using a number of digital tools, such as hand-held devices, cameras, tablets and scanners.

Flyers

Small, hand-held marketing materials that are designed to promote events and products. Flyers can be a great way for illustrators to gain exposure.

Graffiti

Painting, carving, scrawling or drawing on walls and objects in public areas. Often with a political or social message, graffiti has been used as an act of protest for many hundreds of years.

Graphic design

The use of text and image to create a visual message. Encompassing typography, layout and image, graphic design work can be used in packaging, advertising, magazines, books, newspapers, animation, signage, Web design and branding.

Inspiration

Anything that can trigger a thought or idea, which can form the basis of an artistic concept. Inspiration can be found anywhere, from visiting an antiques fair to travelling abroad.

Interpretation

The process of translating and explaining something. Interpretation is subjective and will form the basis of most illustration work.

Juxtaposition

The arrangement of elements, side by side, in order to highlight differences and similarities. Juxtaposition can be a highly effective tool in illustration and design, creating all sorts of meanings and associations.

Logo

A brand or visual mark used for identification. Illustrators are often involved in creating logos and brands as their work offers a chance for a unique visual identity.

Mark-making

The process of creating outlines and visual representations using a tool. Mark-making is at the heart of all illustration.

Observational drawing

Drawing from real life. Observational drawing requires the illustrator to translate what is seen by the eye into a two-dimensional representation, using line, tone and form.

Photography

The capture of light in order to reproduce a visual scene. Photography is regularly used and referenced by illustrators in both creating and promoting their work.

Photomontage

A composite image comprising photography, illustration and other found artwork.

Raster

An image made of pixels. Rasters have a fixed resolution so cannot be enlarged beyond their original size.

Reportage

A type of visual communication whereby real events are monitored and documented so as to report on and record real-life events.

Sketchbook

A type of visual journal in which the illustrator or artist can record ideas, thoughts, doodles, inspiration, found materials and notes. The sketchbook is one of the illustrator's most vital pieces of kit.

Storyboard

The act of planning out a sequence or series of visual representations. Storyboarding is used in animation and film-making in particular.

Style

The individual feel or look of an illustrator or artist's work, which distinguishes it from others'. Every illustrator will have their own style and it is this that will help to make work appeal to clients. But remember, styles change and are always subject to trends and fashion!

Technical illustration

Accurate visual representation of a 3D object. Technical illustrations should be as true to life as possible and should be drawn to scale.

Vector

An image that contains scalable objects defined by a mathematical formula. Vectors are resolution independent so can be enlarged without loss of quality.

Index

Page references in *italics* denote illustrations.

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