
How to Create a Portfolio & Get Hired

A Guide for Designers & Illustrators

Second Edition

Fig Taylor

How to Create a Portfolio & Get Hired

2nd edition

How to Create a Portfolio & Get Hired

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A Guide for Graphic Designers and Illustrators

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Laurence King Publishing

Author's Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Liz Resnick for recommending me to write this book, and my commissioning editor, Jo Lightfoot, for having the patience of a saint while I did. I'd also like to thank everyone who gave so generously of their time and experience, enabling me to make a far better job of it than I would have done on my own. In no particular order they are: Bill Finewood, Zoe Antoniou, Jemma Robinson, Alan Male, Andrew Selby, Kim Burdett, Bob Cook, Jane Souyave, Jonathan Gibbs, Nancy Slonims, Phil Gray, Mark Wigan, Steve Wilkin, Will Hill, Al Wasco, Alice Carter, Alisa Aronson, Barbara Yale-Read, Brockett Horne, Deborah Shmerler, Diane Tarter, Edwin Utermohlen, Judith Aronson, Kenenth Fitzgerald, Kimberley Vickrey, Robert Sedlack, Rosario Martinez-Cañaz, Rukmini Ravikumar, Sue Vessella, Tom Garrett, Tyler Galloway, Louisa St Pierre, Ben Cox, Dave Day, Mark Reddy, Neil Dawson, Steve Rutterford, Andy Altman, Andy Ewan, Anne Brassier, Austin Cowdall, Christopher Pullman, Doug Powell, Ian Bilbey, Donough O'Malley, Josh Silverman, Judy Wellfare, Lance Hidy, Danielle Plaskett, Derek Brazell, Martin Lambie-Nairn, Maryanne Grebenstein, Michael Koid, Joshua Keay, Kai Clements, Rian Hughes, Rob Howsam, Robert Linsky, Susan Williamson, Stephanie Zelman, Saeko Ozaki, Stuart Briers, Karen Boller, Alison Lawn, Anamaria Stanley, Colin McHenry, Hazel Brown, Jennifer Pastore, John Oakey, Kristina DiMatteo, Martin Colyer, Paul Harpin, Jim Thompson, Frances McKay, Boo Cook, Kevin Hopgood, Rodd Hunt, Russell Cobb, Steven Preston, Birgitte Lund, Jacqueline Brown, Graham Humphreys, Alex Tomlinson, Anders Suneson, Gert Gerrits, Barry James, Chris Shamwana, Eleanor Crow, Joe Whitlock Blundell, Jonathan Christie, Joy Monkhouse, Lucy Bennett, Mike Jolley, Penny Holroyde, Val Brathwaite, Richard Ogle, Steve Scott, Martin Vintner-Jackson, Neil Lewis, Yuko Shimizu, Jay Taylor, Jeff Fisher, Ulla Puggaard, Andrew Pavitt, Martin Haake, Olaf Hajek, Tina Mansuan, Tomer Hanuka and Siobhan Harrison. If I've left anybody out by mistake, please forgive me!



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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978 1 85669 672 2

Senior editor: Zoe Antoniou
Copy editor: Tessa Clark
Picture researcher: Jemma Robinson

Design by Studio Ten and a Half

Printed in China

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Introduction

Designer or illustrator, your chosen industry isn't known as the 'creative jungle' for nothing. And it grows ever denser and more confusing to negotiate as fresh opportunities for visual communicators present themselves. Whoever imagined, even a handful of years ago, that it would be possible to find permanent, well-paid employment designing graphics for mobile phones or avatars for use in cyberspace? Or that collectives of designers and illustrators, and multidisciplinary creative organizations, would become viable, cost-effective alternatives to conventional sources of design and art for some clients? This book is intended to help you make your way through the jungle by understanding the needs of those you're most likely to work for and with – learning what to put inside your new portfolio and, equally importantly, what to leave out, in order to obtain a sought-after position or commission. It's about acknowledging, identifying and focusing on creative employers' often very varied requirements, and meeting them with confidence and professionalism. And it's about accessing and creating job opportunities through a variety of accessible resources.

This is not a book that's overly preoccupied with style. Granted, when addressing the issue of presentation it's impossible to avoid the subject entirely; it is, after all, a designer's or illustrator's job to be stylish, to buck trends and create new ones – and, since your expertise in visual communication is what you are selling, the way your work looks and how you showcase your skills will play a crucial part in determining whether you or another ambitious young newcomer lands the job you are pitching for. So various types of portfolio are represented here along with pointers for putting a presentation together, whether it be physical or virtual. There is also information about promotional material, from websites to printed postcards and other, more unusual leave-behinds. However, I am assuming you know your own mind when it comes to aesthetics. The world is full of coffee-table tomes that wax lyrical about the stylishness of contemporary design and illustration; this is, first and foremost, a book that's concerned with content.

It is also a book about transition: the groundwork you need to lay in order to establish yourself in your chosen career. While most bachelor degree programmes tend to incorporate some information about professional practice, this is noticeably more comprehensive at some art colleges than at others. Attendance at formal, dedicated classes is not always mandatory, and advice may come primarily from visiting lecturers. But even the most valuable information can be ignored unless an individual is genuinely ready to hear it. When you're a student

and bursting with great ideas, bringing these to fruition is much more fun than worrying about what you're going to do when you leave college.

Whether you want to be a graphic designer or an illustrator, or perhaps, as is becoming increasingly common in this boundary-blurring digital age, a multi-skilled practitioner, it's a fact that the two disciplines are inextricably linked. It is part of a graphic designer's remit to commission illustrators, if only occasionally; while the illustrator, reliant on those commissions, takes direction from the designer to arrive at the most effective solution for the client footing the bill. At its best, the relationship between designer and illustrator is a partnership, albeit a fleeting one: the coming together of two creative minds trained to solve problems by visual means for commercial purposes – ideally with flair and originality. Like most partnerships, however, it will flounder without clear communication and mutual trust. It's my aim, therefore, to promote understanding and productive relationships between future practitioners – that's why this book addresses aspiring professionals in both camps.

I have had experience of both disciplines: an admittedly short stint as a graphic designer, followed by more than 20 years as an illustrators' agent, working initially with commissioners in design, editorial, publishing, advertising and the gift industry. I also have a concurrent career as portfolio consultant at the Association of Illustrators in London. My work has given me a balanced overview of what employers and commissioners require of graphic designers and illustrators, and insight into the many ways that the marketplace is changing.

This is therefore a book for anyone who is serious about a career in design or illustration, or in the growing number of fields where the two converge. By sharing my experience and that of the many designers and illustrators who have so generously contributed to this book, it's my avowed intention to help you succeed in your chosen sector of the creative industry.

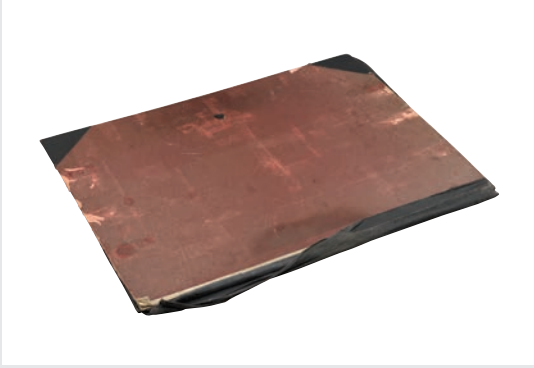
In these pages, you will find not only guidance on how to put together a stunning portfolio that works for you, but also an overview of the range of fields that are open to designers and illustrators today. In addition, quotes from key players in the varying industries are provided throughout, offering soundbites of good advice as well as revealing the range of different opinions you may come across. Along with the wide selection of examples of work, this book is designed to help you along each step of the way.

Some words about language

I'd like to draw your attention to a contentious little adjective that is used in this introduction: 'commercial'. I recall only too well the negative connotations this word had when I was a graphic design student eager to distance myself from my father's professional world, which was advertising. And I meet enough design and illustration students today to realize that little has changed in the interim. So, since I will use the 'C' word during the course of this book, I feel obliged to clear up any misinterpretations from the start.

What I don't mean when I use this potent little epithet is: bland or lacking in artistic merit; creative prostitution, aka selling your soul to the corporate devil; or crass, cynical jumping on to whatever bandwagon happens to be the creative industry's current trend. Nor am I necessarily referring to graphic design or illustrations produced for advertising purposes. Although I'll readily admit that work that falls into all or any of these categories may well be described as commercial, what I mean when I use the term is simply that the work is relevant to the needs of the marketplace at any given time; in other words, if there's a demand for what you're doing within your area of expertise your design or illustration will be deemed (by me at any rate), to be commercial.

Something else I should say on the subject of language is that, since much of the guidance contained in this book applies to both designers and illustrators, I will also use the word 'practitioner' where relevant. The rest of the time references will be subject-specific where appropriate.



What is a Portfolio?



Put simply, a portfolio is a physical or virtual showcase of work. Depending on the stage a designer or illustrator has reached in their development or career, their portfolio may take one or more different forms. There is, however, one constant: because academics and employers have different concerns, the chances are the size, content and format of a practitioner's portfolio will change the most when they make the transition from student to professional. In this chapter you will find the basics on what constitutes the best approach for your portfolio according to your chosen market, to make it an effective tool for your needs.

Opposite (from top, left to right): Three classic examples of how *not* to present work to employers or commissioners; a Pampa Spiral book with polypropylene or polyester sleeves from Prat Paris strikes a more professional note; a Mapac zip-up, ring-bound portfolio with leaves (shown open and closed) is a reliable and smart choice; samples of work, digital and otherwise, can also be accessed online through a PC or Mac, whether transported via a laptop (Acer) or at home and in the studio (Apple Mac Pro).

Opposite: (top) Concept sketches for Loughborough University student Austin Driscoll's Interactive Light Poster; (below) recent University of Northampton graduate Darren Custance's online portfolio.

The Student Portfolio

Initially, regardless of where you choose to study, most art colleges look for similar qualities in the students they enrol. At foundation/undergraduate entry level, interviewing panels want to see a diversity of work including sketchbooks, life-drawing studies and self-initiated endeavours, along with high school projects. Even at this early stage, prospective students who specify an interest in design may be expected to show a flair for the juxtaposition of type and image, while, so far as would-be illustrators are concerned, panels will be on the lookout for strong drawing skills and a keen eye for colour. Experimentation across a wide variety of disciplines, such as painting, photography or printmaking, in both traditional and digital media, is actively encouraged – as is an open mind and a willingness to explore various creative paths. Be aware, though, that there's a distinct difference between showing the range of your work and blindly including everything bar the kitchen sink in your folder on the off chance that somebody, somewhere, might like something. Your ability to discriminate between your best pieces and your less-than-finer efforts will also be under scrutiny, and will continue to be once you graduate, so it's worth starting as you mean to go on.

In terms of how many pieces you should include, it is impossible to be prescriptive; however, using your judgement and making sure you show a wide diversity of work are the best guidelines.

At this stage a portfolio is little more than a receptacle in which to transport work. Given that you'll probably be showing originals, and that some of these will be large, an A1 (24 × 33.9 inch) portfolio, with or without plastic leaves, tends to be the norm. In addition to bearing the hallmark of your creative personality the contents should, where applicable, be mounted up and/or displayed according to individual college guidelines. Some institutions are more prescriptive than others in this respect but meticulously presented samples, put together with obvious pride and in some sort of logical order, always make a favourable impression.

Students wishing to pursue a bachelor degree in graphic design or illustration are expected to demonstrate a distinct leaning towards their chosen subject, but not in so rigid a manner that they come across as 'unteachable' or unwilling to take risks. Whichever discipline you opt to concentrate on, there will be a strong emphasis on the ability to conceptualize and solve problems through image-making – hence the value placed on sketchbooks and developmental roughs. Likewise, projects you've initiated and seen through in your own time will be seen as evidence of commitment and self-motivation.

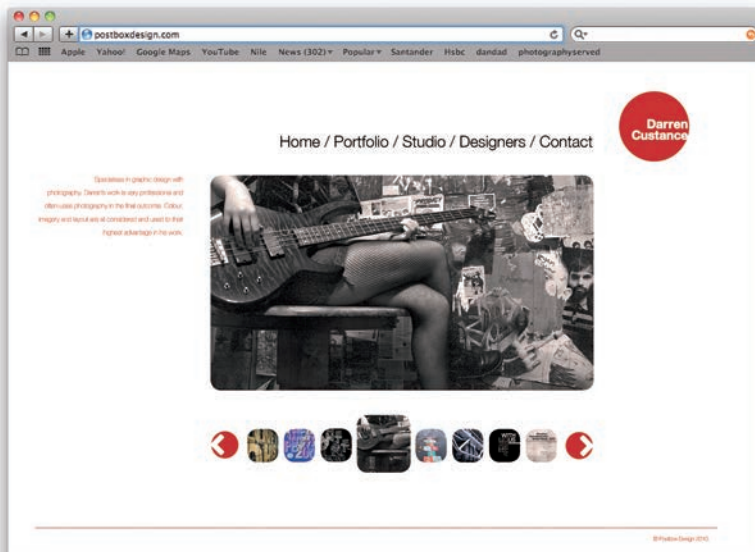
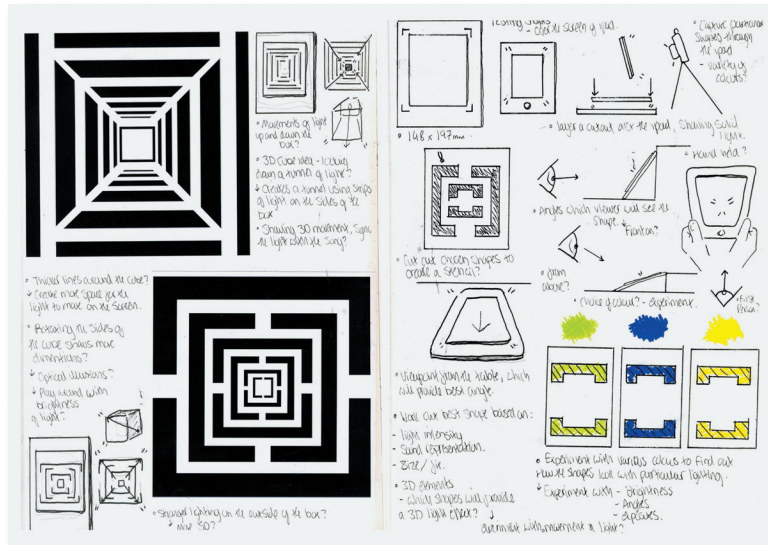
As a creative practitioner presentations will form a regular part of your working life so, although this is not strictly part of your portfolio, how you write and express yourself verbally can influence your chances of being accepted on a study programme, particularly if the college you choose is a popular one – a factor that is as likely to be influenced by geographical location as by a record of academic excellence. There's every likelihood, too, that you'll be expected to be familiar with leading contemporary practitioners within your field of interest. Aside from anything else it pays to be aware of the competition; and, from an interviewer's perspective, it will prove you're passionate about your chosen discipline and that your decision to study it is an informed one – again, something that will count in your favour if your institution of choice is overwhelmed with applicants.

Those who elect to study for a master's degree have to submit a rather different portfolio – in some ways more akin to the kind they might present to a potential employer or commissioner. The contents are expected to reflect a confidence and sophistication borne of a thorough familiarity with the student's chosen media. However, less is decidedly more at this level, so critical editing skills will once again come into play. The portfolios tend to be significantly smaller in format than the ones produced for initial enrolment in a college and, although the inclusion of sketchbooks and working roughs is equally important, a smaller selection – say 10 or 12 strong, finished pieces – will win out over a larger one that incorporates work you're less sure of. Try to choose the samples that best reflect your unique approach to visual problem-solving or image-making.

Maturity is the key word here; in fact, in the United States (but not in the United Kingdom) it's customary for master's programmes to dictate that students have spent a minimum of a year in the commercial workplace prior to application. Verbal communication skills are of paramount importance. You'll need to be up-to-date with what's under critical debate among industry movers and shakers – and, work experience notwithstanding, your portfolio will have to make clear your ability to undertake sustained, practice-based research. You should also have a clear picture of what you hope to achieve, identifying specific areas of interest you believe would benefit from further development and exploration.

'I would expect to see a set of observational drawings from life; sketchbooks showing the generation and development of ideas as an illustrator; a set of resolved illustrations based on specific texts (with supporting material such as sketchbooks or working sheets). Also some illustration translated into a printed context.'

Jonathan Gibbs, course leader, BA Illustration, Edinburgh College of Art, UK



'If a portfolio is totally disorganized and in a real state, I'd worry about the ability of that person to organize themselves and complete a job on time.'

Jonathan Christie, Art Director, Conran Octopus

Below: Digital portfolios can be interactive and allow you to showcase your work on a variety of devices, such as the easily portable iPad. Shown here is work from Tonia Ibrahim's portfolio.

Bottom: Several examples of the box portfolio format, which is particularly effective for prints that need extra attention. These are produced by US company Archival Methods.

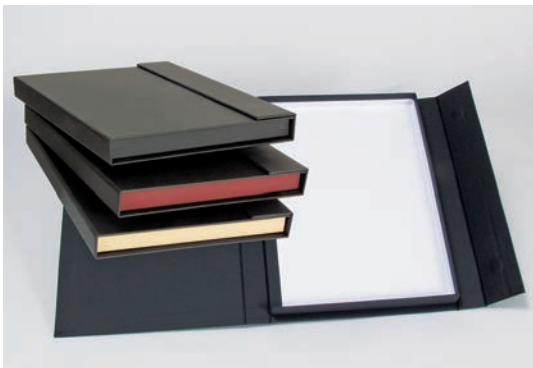
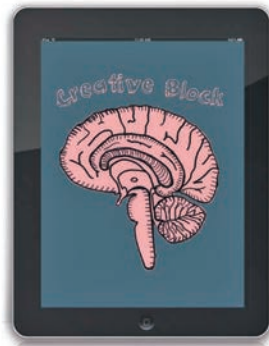
B / Create a 'How to...' Application

C / Apple

M / Multimedia

O / Fully functioning application to be used on an iPad

Creative block is a common problem. This application helps creatives expand their ideas in a fun and functional way. The illustrative element is friendly to the eye and fun for the user. Featuring photography, typefaces, tutorials, colour swatches, world design, trigger images and design materials



Overleaf: Darren Custance's online portfolio is bold and simple in keeping with his design aesthetic and ethos. Page 14 features stills from an animation promoting an ePublishing website, while the facing page shows the development and application of a rock band's identity in print and moving image.

The Professional Portfolio

Even if you graduated with flying colours there's inevitably further work to be done on your portfolio if it's to meet with professional requirements. To reiterate, art college lecturers and potential employers have very different agendas when it comes to weighing up the contents of a portfolio. In order to develop your skills and imagination, the college environment will have granted you the freedom to experiment, and your struggles and failures will have played an essential part in discovering where your strengths lie. Those whose job it was to nurture them were concerned primarily with the process of growth, whereas potential employers will be mainly concerned with the finished result. They don't need to see documentary evidence of the mistakes you learnt from. You are, after all, out to inspire confidence not doubt and a patchy portfolio will do the latter. The commercial world is after quality, consistency, focus and enthusiasm – in other words, employability.

Whether you favour a print or digital approach, when it comes to assembling a professional body of work there is no prescribed industry standard, though some colleges offer guidance regarding size, format, number of samples, inclusion of roughs, mounting procedures and so forth. Others merely make recommendations, while many more prefer to leave such decisions to the personal taste of the graduate-to-be. Do bear in mind that large print portfolios are highly impractical, and there is no necessity to show very large pieces at actual size. Presenting on a laptop is an efficient way of transporting large electronic files of work and gives you personal control of your presentation. You can show your work in a small informal meeting or connect the laptop to a projection system and present it in a larger setting. You may prefer to use an interactive tablet device, which, while having a small screen, allows images to be swiftly resized for those wishing to view samples in more detail. A well-organized digital file will enable you to adjust images for multiple formats almost as easily as leafing through the pages of a print portfolio.

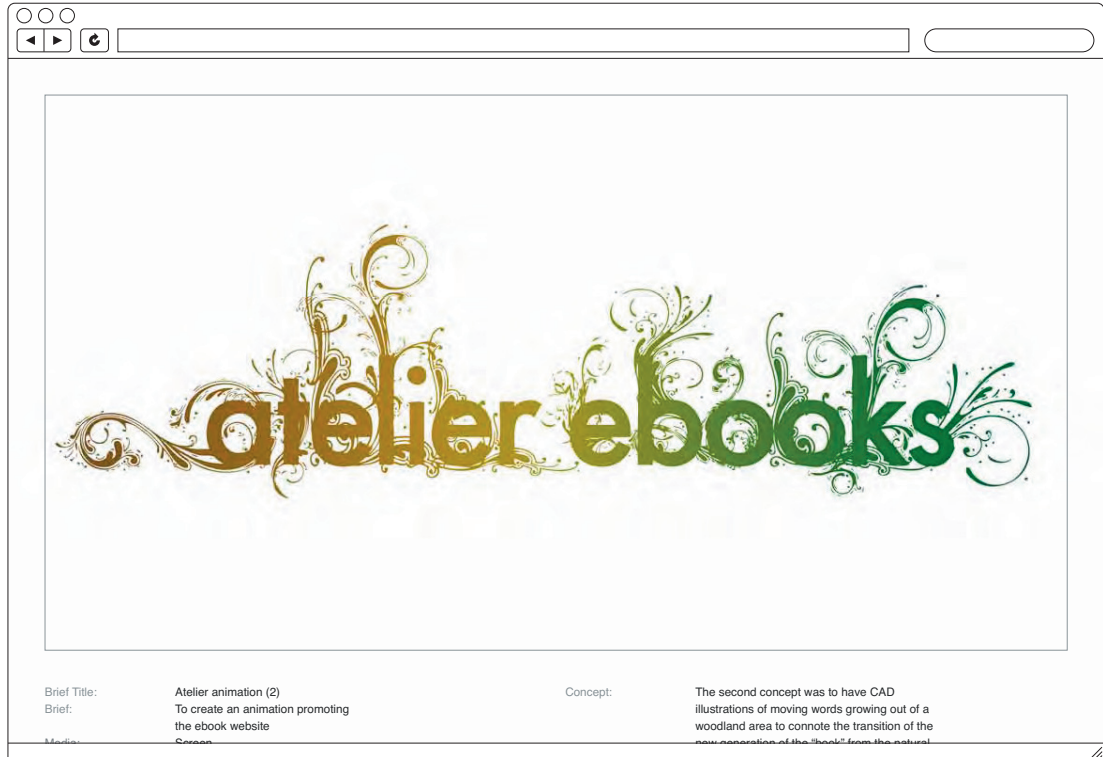
The physical aspects of presentation aside, striking a balance between industry requirements and personal expression is vital. College projects can sometimes cramp a nascent practitioner's creative flow in an effort to replicate the rigid budgetary and time constraints of real-life jobs. Conversely, lengthy, deeply personal projects that bear little resemblance to anything a designer or illustrator would be asked to produce in the real world can result in a repetitive or highly uncommercial portfolio. Employers are often willing to make concessions for lack of experience or published work, but a selection of wholly inappropriate samples will baffle, bore and irritate them, and invariably jeopardize your

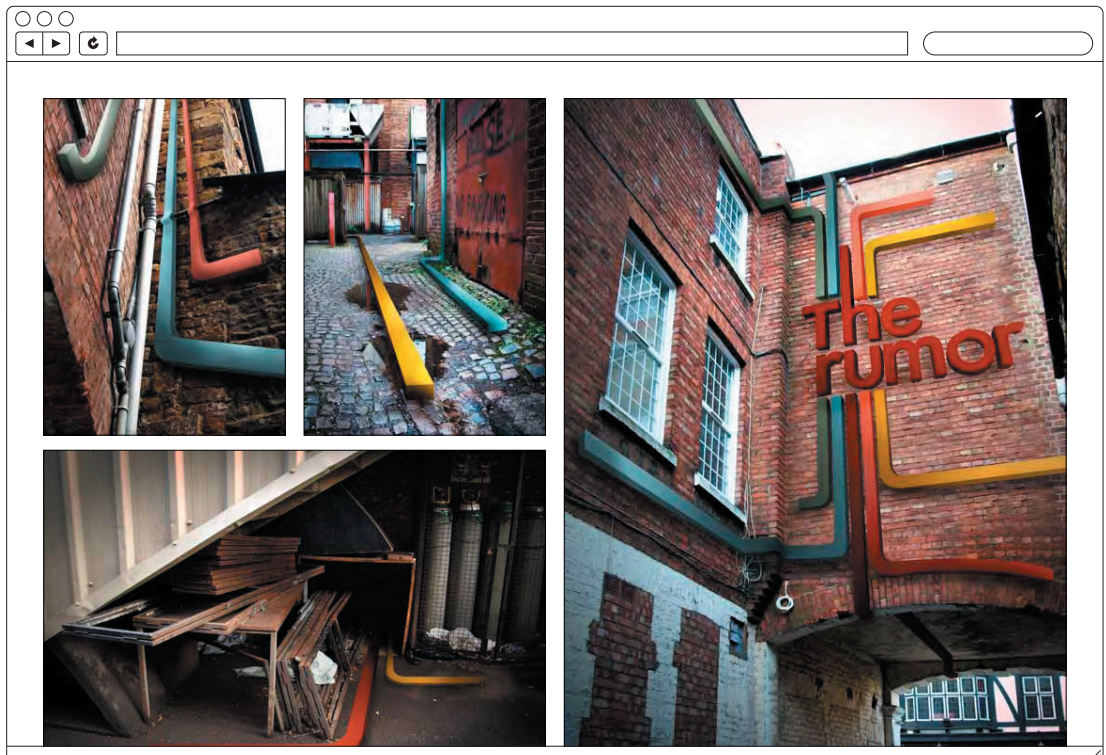
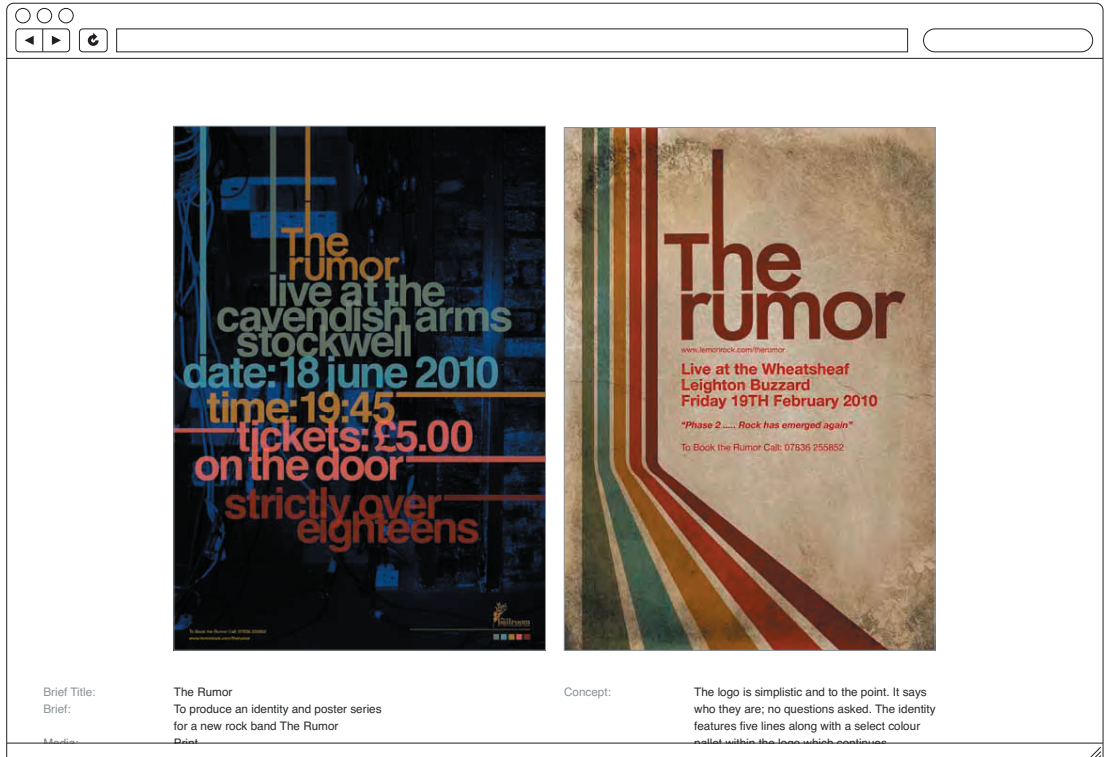
chances of getting where you want to be.

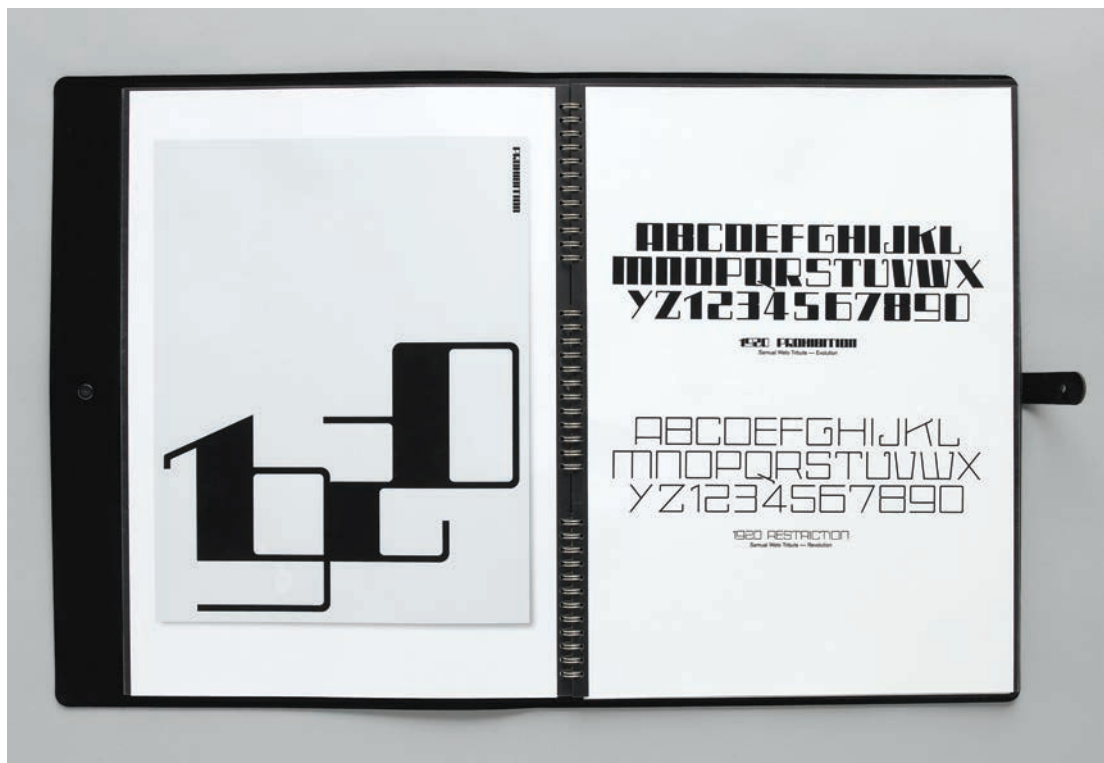
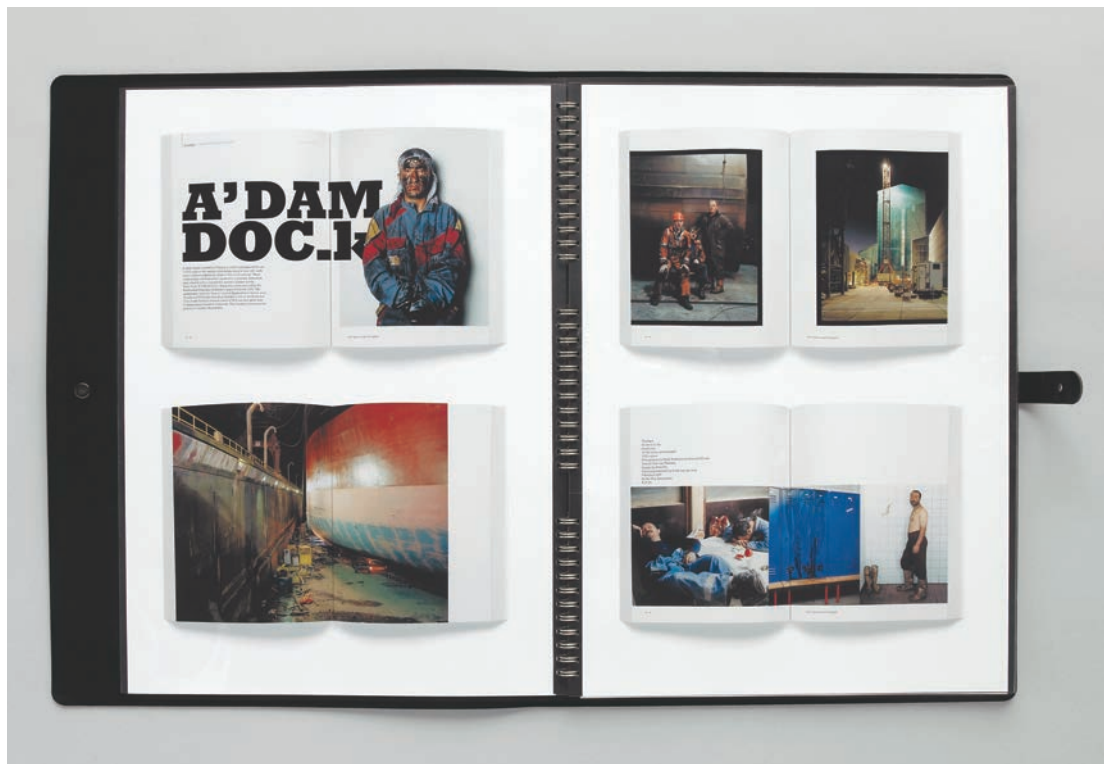
In order to succeed in a highly competitive market, your portfolio must adequately reflect the needs of your chosen target(s). Unless your degree was highly specialized (for example, in medical illustration), it's likely that, whether you are a designer or an illustrator, you graduated with a little bit of everything in your folder. It will be necessary to decide which of the areas you touched on during the course of your studies interest you the most. You will then need to weed out anything that is no longer relevant and replace it with some fresh work that is.

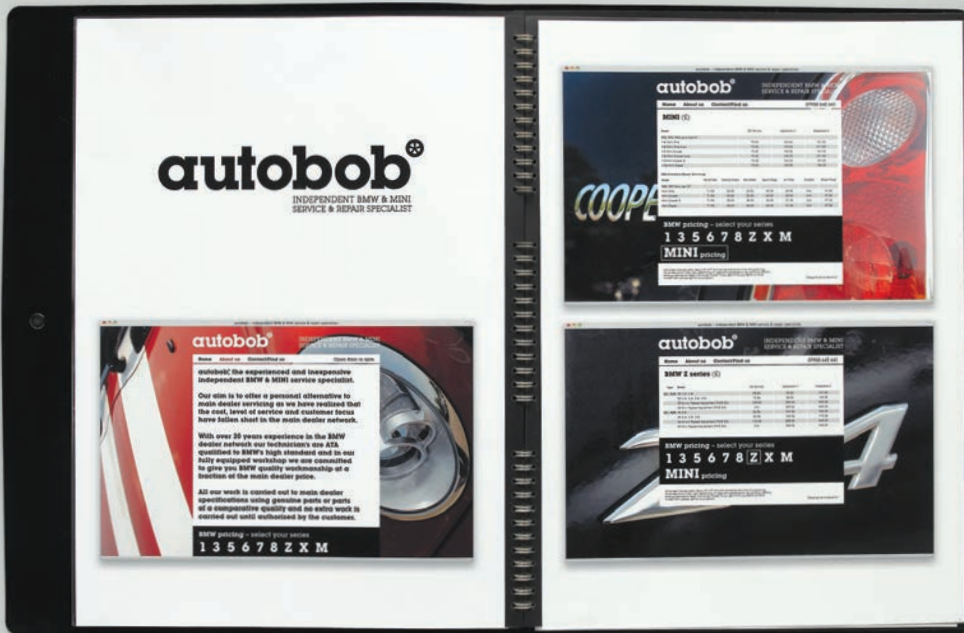
Several factors could influence the precise contents of your portfolio. If, for instance, you're a designer and are intent on a rural or small town existence, the design companies serving the locale will probably be thin on the ground and therefore more general in nature – ergo, your portfolio must demonstrate adaptability by showing you can apply your skills in a wide variety of contexts. On the other hand, if you are planning to live in a city there'll be far more creative outfits and, consequently, more chance that some of them will be specialist in nature. And speaking of specialization, if you have one in mind – you'd like to be a packaging designer, for example, or a children's book illustrator – you'll need more than a couple of relevant samples to make this perfectly clear.

When it comes to teaching students to promote themselves effectively after they graduate, some art colleges are more up-to-date than others. For instance, given society's increasing reliance on digital technology it is surprising that not all bachelor-degree courses necessarily incorporate building a professional website in their professional studies programmes. As the world grows smaller and employers ever busier, a website is a must. It allows those in other geographical locations and time zones instant access to your work and, for some practitioners, is in effect their portfolio. Even if you choose to go an alternative or more traditional route, your website should be considered an extension of your portfolio and working practice. These methods include your CV, which should be approached as you would any other creative conundrum. You won't convince a much-admired art director of your unparalleled typographic genius with a badly spaced, unspellchecked résumé hastily printed out on photocopy paper. It must be grammatically perfect, typographically matchless and printed out on good-quality stock.









Previous page: Samples from the portfolio of London-based graphic designer Matt West whose solo enterprise is called Two Seventy. As clearly evident from his portfolio, freelancer Matt works across a wide variety of disciplines, including branding, editorial, web and font design.

The Graphic Design Portfolio

A student on the verge of graduation once told me she was torn between a career in advertising and one in magazine design. Unfortunately, she had precisely one advertisement and one magazine spread in her portfolio – so, realistically, she didn't have a hope of landing a job in either. As touched on earlier, if you have ambitions to work in a specific market or discipline, your portfolio needs to reflect this, particularly if your heart is set on full-time employment. A magazine publisher will expect to see a portfolio that shows a sufficient number of spreads; an advertising agency, one crammed with punchy advertising ideas. If your design education was more generalized than specialized you need to research your chosen area thoroughly, then be brutally honest with yourself and decide whether you are genuinely suited to it. (This applies to temperament as well as skills – for instance, if a fast turnover and crazy deadlines aren't for you, you might want to consider a career in book-jacket design rather than one in the frenetic environment of a daily newspaper.) The next step is to put together a dedicated body of work that clearly demonstrates your ambition, and aptitude, to your employer of choice.

'More often than not, a "house style" is a weakness. While personal flavour is fine we are not a "style studio", and have to be able to create a multitude of different technical and stylistic solutions for our clients. Diversity is important.'

Judy Wellfare, Creative Director, Plus et Plus

Even if you are seeking more general and varied work, there are ways to tailor your presentation to a potential employer's needs. Whether you are responding to a job advertisement, or approaching a design outfit on a speculative basis, it is necessary to know something about the ethos of the company and the kind of work they do – otherwise you'll find it difficult to come up with reasons why they should hire you. Finding common ground is an essential part of selling yourself effectively. Do you share the company's unique approach to problem solving or their passion for typography? Are you desperate to work for the kind of clients that hire them? Are you, perhaps, a whizz with the software that is integral to an area of design with which they'd like to be more involved?

Those written and verbal communication skills that got you into art college are equally close to the hearts of potential employers. You need to be able to talk your employer of choice through the conception, development and resolution of each project in your portfolio, identifying how you share their vision, and your relevant skills, along the way; and you will need to be able to do so succinctly.

'In publishing, design for purpose is so important in the sense of applying your style to the various genres – for example, thriller or chick lit – that way of thinking is more important to me than a style.'

Richard Ogle, Art Director, Random House

Attention to detail will impress every bit as much as your redoubtable typographic skills, understanding of composition and ability to conceptualize. Employers will expect you to be suitably qualified technologically, too. (In other words, don't apply for a job as a web designer if you don't know your way around Dreamweaver – unless it is specified that training will be given on the job.) Lastly, versatility, even within a specialist field, is generally viewed as a virtue. Although some employers are impressed by designers who have their own strong, distinguishable 'house style', many consider this a limitation. Clients, on the whole, favour work that is tailored to their needs, so a designer needs to be adaptable, able to translate briefs from a variety of clients in ways suited to their individual needs. For this reason, when applying for a full-time design job it's advisable to include in your portfolio work that shows how far you can take an idea (for example, by applying a logo in many different contexts beyond the usual letterhead and business card). Similarly, be sure to include samples in a variety of media where appropriate. The same advice holds true if you are embarking on a freelance design career: if your portfolio shows that you can design for print, digital and/or interactive media, you'll get more work and a wider variety of it.

Overleaf: Multi-skilled illustrator Andy Smith favours the box portfolio format. For presentation purposes he has one focusing on his typographical work (left) and another on pure illustration (right).

The Illustration Portfolio

Outside the gift industry, computer games developers and the occasional museum, full-time illustration posts are decidedly thin on the ground. Plus, there is no guarantee that even companies that fall into these categories are able to employ in-house illustrators. Most illustrators are therefore freelancers, and for this reason it makes sense for them to appeal to the broadest possible client base.

'I do not have in-house staff to illustrate. It allows me much wider scope to commission the broadest range of illustration rather than be limited to the style of an in-house illustrator/designer. I view illustration as a discipline on its own.'

Alison Lawn, Art Director, New Scientist

How you achieve this will largely depend on your geographical location. If you live in a rural district or a locale where there are many more jobs than there are illustrators to do them, having a wide variety of styles in your portfolio will enable you to service more clients. If, however, you live in an area where illustrators vastly outnumber commissions – in a city such as London or New York – you will be infinitely better served by having one (or two, certainly no more than three), distinctive styles in your portfolio and applying these to a wide variety of subjects. Likewise, you can apply different ways of thinking; there is, for instance, no reason why the same illustrative style can't be applied to narrative, decorative, informative and conceptual subject matter.

As a young, London-based illustrators' agent this was something I learnt fast. I was fortunate enough to represent the Australian illustrator Jeff Fisher when he first arrived in the United Kingdom. Australia, vast as it is, has an appreciably smaller illustration industry than Britain. It was clear to me from Jeff's early published work that a highly original style was beginning to evolve, though this applied mainly to commissions where he'd been allowed a free hand. He had also done his fair share of varied bread-and-butter commissions which, had he been London-based from the start, would never have been given to someone with his distinctive illustrative personality. Not realizing that the inclusion of such original work might confuse my clients I immediately set out to dazzle the ones I felt had the most imagination – only to get the response, 'But we

wouldn't know what style we were going to get!' It might have seemed obvious to suggest to them that they simply point to the style they liked, but they were spoilt for choice so why should they take the risk of ending up with a different one?

The more well served the market, the pickier clients can afford to be. Showing too many styles to a fussy client introduces the career-cramping element of doubt; it makes the illustrator look capricious and unreliable instead of steady and dependable. Unless you are sidestepping into the textile or gift industries, where constant stylistic reinvention is a necessity, it's better to commit yourself to what you know you do best than try to be all things to all clients. Meanwhile, those multi-talented individuals who suffer from creative restlessness and find it genuinely impossible to commit to a signature style, may need to put together more than one portfolio, each geared towards a different type of commissioner, in order to market themselves efficiently.

'All I really look for is an individual voice, a strong sense of design (composition I suppose), and something intangible that makes me think I could never produce that image myself. Logistics of delivery and deadlines can always be solved, but a great image is never just a matter of problem solving.'

Jonathan Christie, Art Director, Conran Octopus



The Cross-disciplinary Portfolio

At the risk of stating the obvious, being a cross-disciplinary practitioner is not the same as having 25 illustrative styles or designing for print and virtual media. It's embracing more than one discipline – the graphic designer/photographer who exhibits in galleries and runs their own clothing label on the side or the illustrator who art directs and/or animates. If you fall into this category you'll find that commissioners and employers are as likely to be confused by you as they are to welcome you with open arms. So, once again, pre-presentation research is a must and will probably dictate the bias, or order, of the work you show at an interview.

'[A cross-disciplinary approach] shows flexibility. Airside work across all media so we like designers who can too.'

Anne Brassier, PR and New Business, Airside

Some employers are more visionary or broad-minded than others. There are design consultancies, for instance, that will happily engage a full-timer on the basis that he or she has a couple more strings to their bow. Conversely, others will take a more rigid approach when hiring staff, preferring to engage the services of freelance specialists when necessary. Similarly, some book-cover designers love nothing more than a type-savvy illustrator; whereas an editorial art director with a team of in-house layout designers might find a design-heavy element in what they've been led to believe is an illustrator's portfolio irrelevant or off-putting. Curiously, when I questioned one editorial art director about this matter he expressed a marked preference for specialist practitioners when hiring full-time design staff, but great enthusiasm for cross-disciplinary portfolios when commissioning illustrators.

Up until relatively recently multi-skilled designers probably stood the best chance of utilizing all their talents as freelancers, but the industry is changing and new ways of working are beginning to appear. Those who work across a variety of disciplines are starting to collaborate with people of like mind, pooling their resources to form collectives and hybrid creative consultancies. Artists previously thought of as cultish have emerged from the underground and into the mainstream. Graphic novelists, graffiti artists, creators of hip vinyl toys, computer games developers, embellishers of designer skateboards and designers whose graphics have become synonymous with club culture have tremendous appeal to clients keen to connect

with the youth demographic. Indeed, the most adventurous of them are starting to bypass conventional agencies, preferring to approach artists and collectives directly in the hope of getting something fresher. Illustration agencies, too, are starting to represent cross-disciplinary practitioners and collaborators in response to clients who want to use their artists in less traditional ways.

'It depends on many factors: how the work is presented, the sophistication of the designer (are they able to rationalize the decision for presenting a cross-disciplinary body of work? Are they able to tie the various areas together in a cohesive whole?). I think most young designers can improve their marketability by having a broad set of skills – assuming it is not watered down.'

Doug Powell, Creative Director, Schwartz Powell Design

It is therefore not surprising that, where presentation is concerned, there are as yet no hard and fast rules for the multi-skilled. However, given the increasing complexity of the marketplace and the rapidity with which it is changing, you will almost certainly need to be flexible. Creating more than one portfolio may be the simplest option – or dividing the one you have into different sections dedicated to the various facets of your creative personality. A lot will depend on how open-minded your target is likely to be, and the nature of the work you are hoping to get from them. If in doubt it's always good to ask.

Summary

What is a Portfolio?

1.

A portfolio showcases work and takes on different forms depending on the stage a designer or illustrator has reached in their development or career.

2.

An entry-level student portfolio shows the interviewing panel at the applicant's chosen art college the diversity of their work, and should reflect an ability to create concepts and solve problems through image-making. A portfolio submitted for a master's degree is more sophisticated, and is similar to one that might be used in a presentation to a potential employer or client.

3.

A professional portfolio must strike a balance between personal expression and the needs of the creative industry. A website should be seen as an extension of your portfolio.

4.

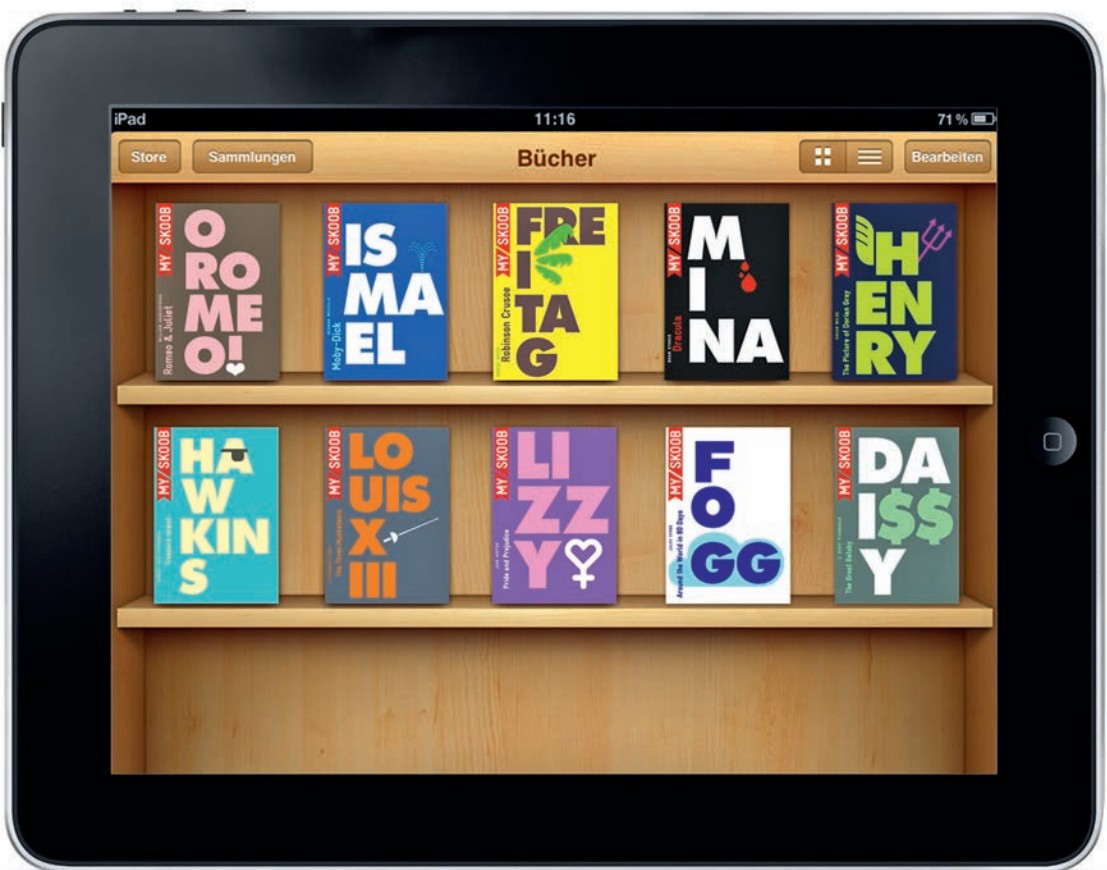
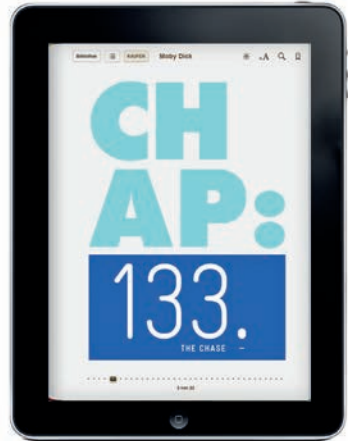
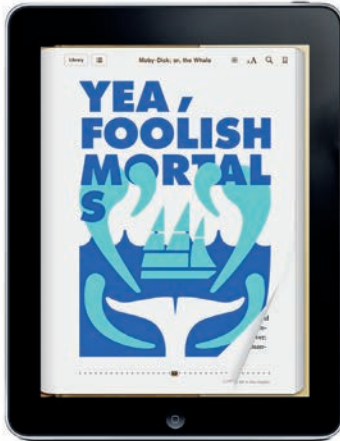
A graphic design portfolio needs to be tailored to a potential employer's requirements, and should clearly demonstrate the designer's abilities and aptitude.

5.

An illustration portfolio has to appeal to a broad client base, as most illustrators are freelance. Although showing a wide variety of styles makes sense where there is relatively little competition, illustrators in more competitive environments should develop a strong, recognizable style and apply it to a diverse range of subject matter.

6.

A cross-disciplinary portfolio appeals to more visionary and broad-minded clients, and those who want to connect with the youth demographic. Multi-skilled practitioners need to be flexible when it comes to deciding what samples to show, and it may be necessary to create more than one portfolio.



Making Sense of the Marketplace

2

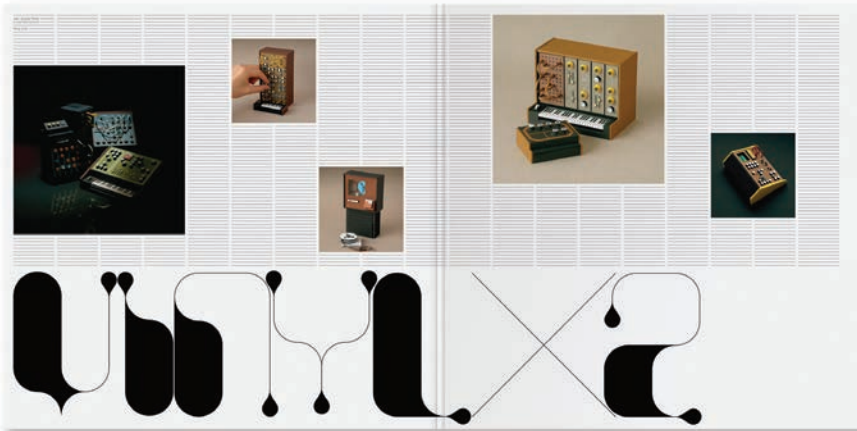
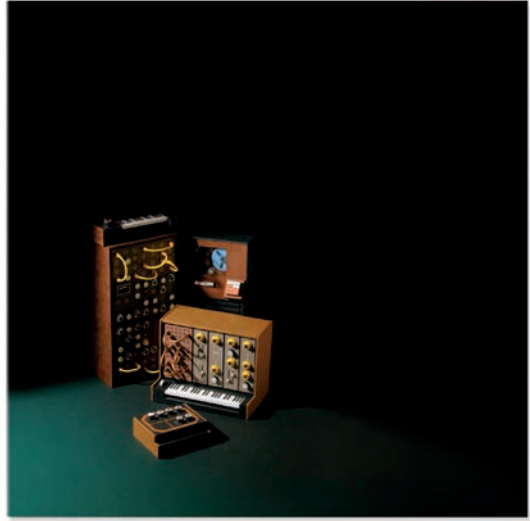
Familiarizing yourself with the various sectors in the creative marketplace is the first step to deciding who to approach for work. You need to know about the key areas in the industry, the positions that are available in each one, how the commissioning process works in different sectors and, before you start to create your portfolio, the design or illustration skills required by potential employers or clients. All this tends to be something practitioners learn over time – sometimes to their personal cost or too late in the day. This chapter aims to help you embark on the most suitable path from the outset.

Opposite: eBooks for download onto PC, tablet, mobile phone or eReader offer exciting opportunities for those wishing to explore the ever-expanding area of interactive design. MySkoob is an ePublisher offering classic literature in an enhanced digital format via an innovative blend of bold, graphic type, illustration and photography. The result is the brainchild of award winning German design agency, Strichpunkt, who are responsible for MySkoob's branding across a variety of media. The books are also available in equally dynamic print form, quaintly described as offline eBooks.

‘Were I hiring an entry-level designer, it would certainly be to their advantage to have had some experience in a professional design environment – but not mandatory.’

Doug Powell, Creative Director, Schwartz Powell Design

Below: As well as the packaging of comestibles, music also forms part of the packaging designer's remit, either as an individual object or part of a bigger branding project. This design, as well as the logotype, was created by Non-Format for the Lo Recordings 2007 release, *Jean-Jacques Perrey and Luke Vibert Present Moog Acid*. The striking font complements the miniature models and photography by Dan McPharlin.



Design Groups

Design groups differ in many ways. They can range from tiny two-person partnerships that hire freelance help as and when necessary, through to large organizations with full-time employees and offices around the world. They can also vary in terms of the kinds of service they offer and, accordingly, the practitioners they employ – for instance, some favour a strictly typographic approach while others are avowedly pro-illustration. Some companies are broad-based and/or multidisciplinary, while others concentrate their creative energies on certain types of client, such as the entertainment or fashion industry, the corporate/financial sector, or disciplines such as typographical or web design. Areas of specialization frequently overlap and include: branding and corporate identity; marketing communications; company reports; packaging and product design; publishing; exhibition design; and design for the web and other digital media. Although many companies concentrate on the last, design for print still predominates. Stationery, brochures, catalogues, handbooks, menus, price lists, prospectuses, customer magazines, direct mail, point-of-sale material, and so forth, all fall within this category, as does the packaging of food and drink, beauty products, CDs, DVDs and other luxuries and necessities.

The digital realm – the medium that has led to ever more diversity where design is concerned – is your salvation. It is difficult to find a design group without a website, so get online, and check out client lists and staff profiles as well as the kind of skills potential employers want to see in a portfolio.

Branding

Companies that specialize in branding offer their clients development and growth strategies borne from intensive market research in addition to design services – while the design services they offer frequently extend beyond the graphic. The organizations that most commonly refer to branding consultants include those in the food and beverage market; the fashion, retail, sports and entertainment industries; the mass media; and the voluntary sector. A branding project could range from providing a simple logo for a fledgling business to formulating and implementing a company's entire ethos. Depending on the type of client, the nature of the job, and the media involved a branding consultancy might bring in freelancers from areas other than graphic design or illustration, such as product and industrial designers, film-makers, interior designers or architects. Adaptability and the ability to be a team player are therefore a must for practitioners considering a branding career, as are

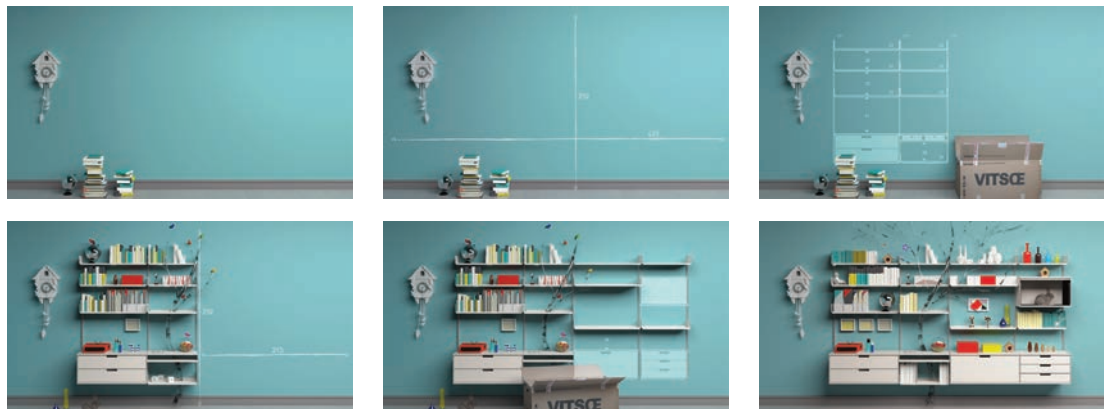
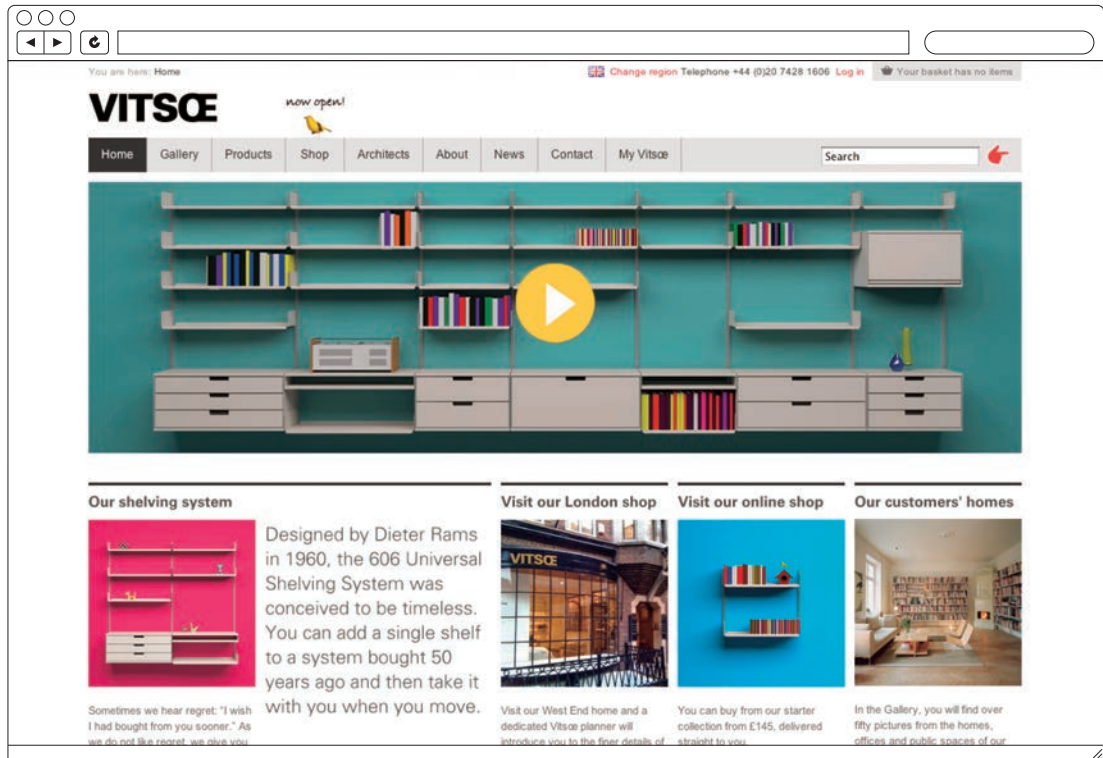
enthusiasm for research and a passion for popular visual culture. It's also worth mentioning that some large corporations, most notably those involved in retail, entertainment and fashion, have their own in-house design departments and/or branding teams.

‘An all-rounder and team player is the one who will find it easiest to survive and thrive... This designer is one who is not hampered by 2-D or 3-D, is as at home online as in print or in the built form. Do enough research on brands you admire and, working backwards, find out who worked on them creatively. Call them up and ask them for work experience. You will almost never see an advertisement for a “brand designer”. It’s not a job; it’s a business-support sector.’

Susan Williamson, Retail Consultant, The Chambers

'We are a small company and we have to have people that can multitask, and people that are not beyond tea-making, as well as having the confidence to sit in meetings and voice their ideas. We do nurture though; they get lots of constructive feedback.'

Anne Brassier, PR and New Business, Airside



Opposite: When European shelving company Vitsoe's text-heavy website began to feel dated, Airside designed one to attract a new, global generation of customers. The clean, uncluttered result admirably reflects Vitsoe's ethos of 'less but better' and features a new catalogue of photographs and videos (top). The frames (bottom) are taken from a two-minute animation telling the story of Vitsoe's 606 storage system.

Below: Airside's own website features a shop, allowing their multidisciplinary team an outlet for more personal creative projects. Anne Brassier's unique knitted critters (she claims to have found them behind her tool shed), the Stitches, are collector's items. Some, once 'adopted', even go on to start their own blogs!

Design for digital media

The Internet is a rapidly expanding and constantly evolving area, and a digitally-oriented design company is likely to employ designers to maintain its own online presence, as well as to create websites, microsites, banners, icons, flash animations or apps for its clients. Similarly, all manner of businesses employ staff to design and manage their websites – so practising as a website designer may not always involve working in a strictly creative environment. Although some digital design companies offer a degree of training on the job, most entry-level designers are expected to have a working knowledge of various software applications (most commonly Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, Dreamweaver and/or Flash), and codes (specifically HTML, DHTML, XHTML and CSS). Code is particularly important. As the boundary between designer and developer becomes increasingly blurred with technological advancement, it helps if you speak the same language. Web designers who want a freelance career should bear in mind that full-timers tend to have more simply defined roles and fewer responsibilities, as dedicated back-up staff are usually employed to deal with the everyday maintenance and administration that keep a site up and running. Time spent liaising with clients, uploading new content, and updating and amending existing information can seriously reduce the amount of time available for designing.

Multidisciplinary design

Broad-based organizations are generally appreciative of designers who can work across several disciplines. This applies especially to smaller ones where budgets are tight, resources are pooled and everyone is expected to pull their weight. Ditto those with little in the way of competition; a design group based in a rural area is likely to service an appreciably wider variety of clients than a niche consultancy in a thriving big city – and will require its designers to have a broader repertoire in order to accommodate the needs of diverse clients. A graphic designer's illustrative or photographic skills might be used if their work is suitable for a project. However, larger companies used to working with high-profile clients, or organizations with significantly higher budgets, may prefer their designers to concentrate solely on design. All groups work differently and there's no way of knowing what their requirements are unless these are specified in a job advertisement – or unless you ask. So ask.

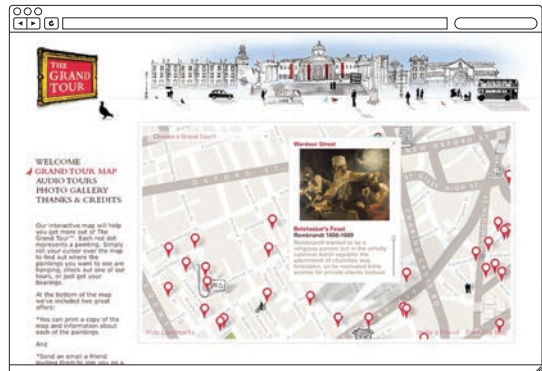


'TV and print are only two facets of what we produce now. We are operating on all interactive and digital platforms. All teams participate not only on all known aspects of traditional advertising but also inventing apps, creating installations, websites, events, virals, etc. BBH now has a digital department called 'Addictive Pixel'

Mark Reddy, Head of Art, BBH London

'Most designers coming out of college know a little basic coding. Our main skill here is the story telling for brands which can be told over multiple platforms. We always make sure the look and feel of the design is nailed first before it's coded.'

Stephen Rutterford, Owner, The Brooklyn Brothers, New York



Opposite: While print is still in demand, digital technology has added fresh dimensions to graphic design. The Grand Tour was a public art project in which framed reproductions of National Gallery artworks were hung in London streets (top). Interactive communications agency, Digit, were hired to create a series of multi-information feeds designed for mobile phones, MP3 players and the web. In addition to photographs, the website (bottom) included downloadable maps of the artworks' locations, and themed tours that could be downloaded as podcasts or printouts.

Below: Brooklyn's Studio NewWork produce a biannual, large-format arts publication, showcasing the work of a wide range of visual artists and creative thinkers in all spheres. It also serves to highlight NewWork's innovative approach to design, featuring bold, custom-designed typefaces and removable layouts that also function as posters.



Below: Non-Format is the creative direction and design team of Kjell Ekhorn and Jon Forss, whose wide-ranging work encompasses branding and packaging to publishing and advertising. Their illustrative skills are here expressed in their advertisement for *The Economist* magazine, whose subject of focus was 'balance'.

Opposite: D&AD is a British educational charity, which exists to promote excellence in design and advertising, culminating in an annual Awards show. UK illustration collective, Le Gun, were commissioned to produce life-size illustrations by Studio8 Design, who also themed and designed the promotional material for the event, which took place at London's Royal Festival Hall in 2008.

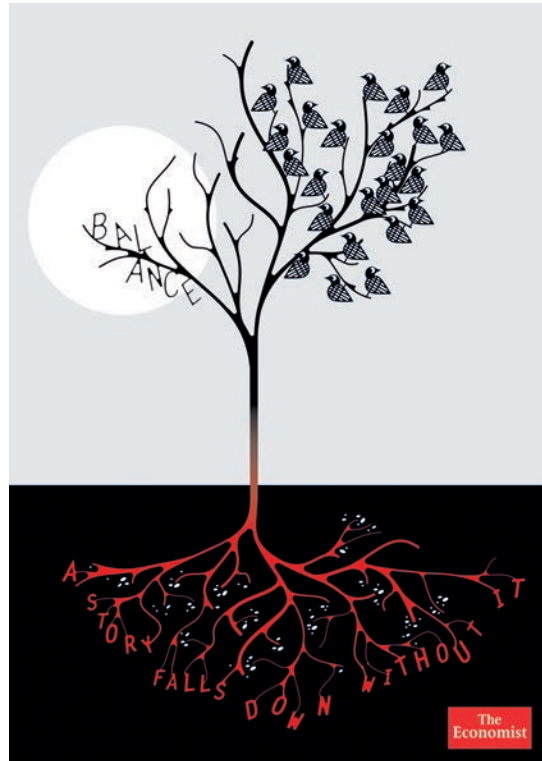
Design internships

For designers, a design internship can pave the way to a full-time job and some design groups only hire juniors who have done a placement with the company. However, it is worth noting that a permanent job is not necessarily given, nor are all graduate internships paid beyond travel expenses, particularly in the current economic climate. The majority of student placements are also largely unpaid as they are generally viewed as a continuation of the education process. Familiarize yourself with what various groups do and approach one that interests you with a view to arranging a work placement. If you're lucky, you may land one of the few paid internships that are very occasionally advertised. Overall, advertisements for inexperienced junior designers are few and far between, but they do sometimes appear in industry magazines, national and regional newspapers, creative recruitment websites, and design groups' individual websites, many of which state an interest in seeing work by new designers. Make a point of visiting as many sites as possible and get used to making speculative overtures.

Illustration commissions

It is not recommended for illustrators to approach a design company before they have published work – usually commissioned in the editorial sector, as discussed later in this chapter – to show in their portfolio. The bigger the budget, the more parties involved in the development of a job, and the less creatively inclined the client who is paying for the work, the more likely it is that an organization will need to see published, relevant work. So, once you have carved a niche for yourself in business and financial journals, for instance, try contacting design groups that service the same type of publication. Your work will be familiar to the decision-makers in these areas and will therefore appeal to clients who are targeting this kind of audience. Similarly, if you have provided decorative solutions for food and drink magazines you'll be in with a chance with any company that specializes in packaging for this sector.

To look for leads to the kinds of art different design companies are looking for, comb design magazines and blogs for updates on what they are up to.



'I've had a few awkward encounters in the past with people who refuse to change their "art". I've had some who just don't get the concept however many times you explain it... The artists who are the most successful are talented but, more importantly, professional.'

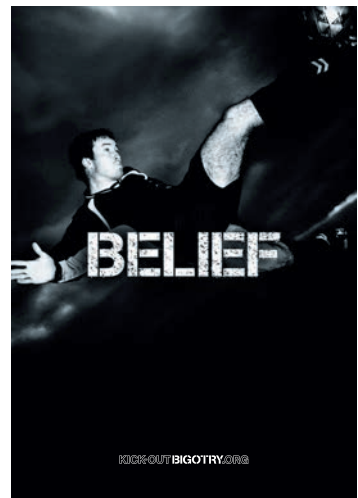
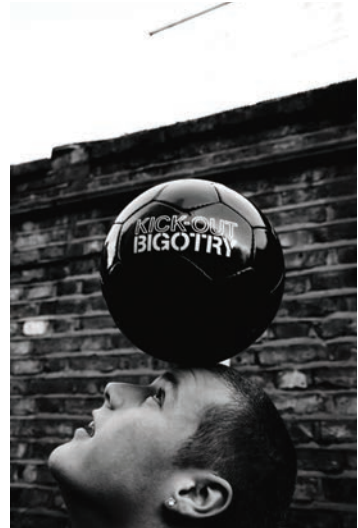
Steve Rutterford, Art Director, Brooklyn Brothers

'I pick a simple project to engage an intern, who, in turn, becomes a junior designer, and then as they prove themselves along the way, assign them more responsibilities.'

Josh Silverman, President/Founder/Minister of Perspective, Schwadesign, Inc.



Below: Designer Ed Watt devised the visual identity and advertising for 'Kick-Out Bigotry', Scottish football's united campaign against religious discrimination. Aimed at fans, officials, clubs and authorities, this campaign, on behalf of charity Football For All, appeared in various formats around major stadium locations. Shown here (from top, left to right) are the typeface, football, beer mats and one of a series of escalator panels placed throughout the Glasgow underground system.



Advertising Agencies

Advertising is not a metier for the faint-hearted. Designer or illustrator, you need to have your wits about you and be prepared to work extremely hard – late nights, all-nighters, even weekends on occasion, if that's what it takes – though, in most cases, you will be handsomely remunerated. There is a lot of money in this sector. Advertising space doesn't come cheap and neither does advertising creativity, especially where blue chip accounts are concerned.

A commercial can take several forms: print advertisements can appear on poster sites, as direct mail or in the press, while moving image ads can be aired on TV, in movie theatres, or released virally on the internet. In common with design companies, many ad agencies are involved with digital media, using apps, games, websites and the like to communicate with their clients' target audiences. Since there are a wide variety of platforms, tools and technologies used to support interactive programming, an awareness of the potential of using these is an absolute necessity. A campaign – generally a minimum of three consecutive advertisements – can be local, national or global, and might use a single medium or a combination of media to get its point across. Given that each of these requires a slightly different approach, some agencies – such as those who concentrate on direct mail – elect to specialize in certain mediums. Others take a more broad-based approach, though they may target specific sectors, such as pharmaceuticals or the motor industry. Research will be necessary to identify which agencies are most likely to be interested in your work and which of them will grant you an interview.

'I search online or ask a friend about illustrators, but I'm constantly looking and keep a mental note of things I like. When a relevant job comes up I remember that illustrator/photographer and take it from there.'

Dave Day, Art Director, Fallon

Routes into advertising design

Getting into advertising as a designer, even if you did a specialized degree and/or come ready-partnered with your own copywriter, is no cakewalk. You'll need to be determined, resilient and gregarious, as networking is about the only way

to get a foot in the door. There are some resources to help you: professional organizations and educational charities such as Design and Art Direction (D&AD) and Young Creative Network (YCN) in the United Kingdom, and the Art Directors Club, the One Club and AIGA (the professional association of design) in the United States, are committed to nurturing and showcasing emerging talent, and provide opportunities to connect with industry professionals. Glance at any agency website, however, and you'll see no mention of jobs for entry-level designers; you're also unlikely to see any advertisements in newspapers or on recruitment sites for junior designers, barring ones that specify a year or two's professional experience.

The general route into advertising at a junior level is via work placements. These can last anything from a fortnight to three or four months and, unlike those in other sectors, tend to be offered to graduates rather than students. The longer you stay the better, as there is more time to demonstrate your talent in addition to your teamworking and time-management skills, which are essential to the job. An ambitious design intern with clear potential might be offered a full-time position following a placement, but many designers embark on a series of internships, after which they should have built up a CV that will interest headhunters, and made sufficient contacts to be privy to the advertising industry grapevine. Needless to say, the more well-respected the agencies you secure placements with, the more employable you will ultimately become (and the less likely it is that you'll be exploited while you are working your way up). Blue chip clients paying high fees demand the best, so the more prestigious the agency, the more picky it is when it is hiring a newcomer.

In theory, a larger agency has some leeway for nurturing, while a smaller one can provide more one-on-one time with senior creatives. Some operate placement schemes that students can apply for during their final year of college. These are largely promoted through professional organizations such as the ones mentioned above, or on the agencies' own websites. However, many more internships come about informally following a speculative pitch. Given that your chosen career involves dreaming up innovative ways to sell products, selling yourself shouldn't present too much of a problem. (If it does, you'd best quit now while you're still ahead.) You can make your pitch as a solo practitioner, but you usually need to have a copywriting partner; however, since aspiring copywriters also make overtures to agencies, and the custom is to work in a creative duo, the agency can partner you up when you get there.

The creative director is the person to target with promotional

Below: Direct mail is a form of advertising sometimes handled by design and/or branding consultancies. Shown here is part of a direct mail package designed by Nic Shuttleworth for creative marketing agency Iris Associates for Voice, a telemarketing service for whom Iris came up with the name, brand identity and business strategy.

material. Some of them loathe the gimmicks while others are more kindly disposed, but the general consensus is that if you decide to go the gimmicky route, you must do something amazing. It's a fine line to tread. The young hopeful who submitted a portfolio that contained raw fish and the message 'Do you have a place for us?' obviously hadn't anticipated its contents decomposing. It took some time for the agency staff to locate the as yet unviewed portfolio as the source of the smell, which lingered for months. On the other hand, one aspiring young team wrote to the head of the same creative department in the guise of a lady who claimed to have enjoyed a brief dalliance with him some 22 years previously. 'She' revealed that, as a consequence, she'd borne nonidentical twin boys who now wanted to work in advertising – and, having brought them up alone and seen them through art college, she fondly hoped he'd do the decent thing by them. Happily, the team's audacity paid off. They ended up working for the agency for some years and, when they finally left for pastures new, their 'mother' wrote to thank the creative director for looking after his boys.

Once you've engaged a potential employer's attention, it goes without saying your portfolio should predominantly contain advertisements, preferably in a format that's direct and easy to digest in a short time. If television commercials are your thing, storyboards, or 'scamps', are preferable to lengthy show reels. Interruptions happen frequently in a high-pressure environment and you can't take the risk of losing your interviewer's attention.



'You can't come into this business and be precious because your work dies all the time.'

Neil Dawson, Global Creative Director, Philips, DDB

Routes into advertising illustration

Illustrators can target individual art directors but the best route is usually via an art buyer. Buyers are formidable individuals with tough hides, colourful vocabularies and memories like Rolodexes. A big agency might employ three or four of them, some of whom may be more interested in illustration than others, so try to find out who you should contact before making an approach. A buyer's role is essentially to keep track of the resources creatives need: illustrators, photographers, stylists, model agencies and so forth. They also negotiate fees and tend, for the most part, to be on the side of the artist. A good one will be well acquainted with the agency's creative teams and the accounts they are working on, and will therefore know who is looking out for what. What's more, they'll have no compunction about physically hauling a creative out of their office to look at a portfolio there and then.

There is always the possibility that an advertising agency might approach you, depending, of course, on the extent to which your illustrations have been published: the more work you have in annuals, on websites and in print the more likely it is to be noticed. Should this happen, do your research into the agency before your presentation, and try to include published samples you feel are relevant to its clients.

'Seeing new fresh work can inspire me to create a campaign based around their work.'

Steve Rutterford, Art Director, Brooklyn Brothers

If your work is so far unpublished, my advice is to wait until you are reasonably established before contacting an agency, especially if it's a big one. Although many creatives enjoy discovering and working with fresh illustration talent, the decision as to whether a particular artist is right for a job doesn't ultimately rest with them. A junior creative has to convince his superiors, who in turn have to convince the account handler, whose job it is to sell the illustrator's work to the client who hired the agency. A company can spend millions on a campaign, so it wants to be very sure that an illustrator can do the job. If it agrees to using one who can't, it will have to pay him/her a substantial rejection fee; and the agency will have to find a replacement illustrator to do the job properly, in five seconds flat – yesterday. Examples of work in a portfolio that are relevant can help!

Not all illustrators are suited to working in advertising, and having a fashionable style is only one part of the equation. Because of the number of people involved, and the various vetting stages before a job can finally go ahead, deadlines can shrink from weeks to days, tempers become short and demands seem highly unreasonable. In addition, advertising briefs can be tight and prescriptive, leaving little room for self-expression. But some adrenaline junkies do their best work under pressure, and the financial rewards can be great. The more media used to convey the advertiser's message, the wider the geographical area the campaign covers and the longer it runs, the fatter the final fee will be. Some illustrators find it helpful to regard advertising commissions as a means to subsidize lower-paid jobs that allow more creative freedom.

Opportunities for cross-disciplinary practitioners

Although creative directors are keen to commission freelance cross-disciplinary practitioners, traditional agencies are not generally interested in offering them full-time work. Creatives in advertising are primarily employed as art directors, and for their thinking skills, and agencies are wary of jacks-of-all-trades – any additional skills a designer or illustrator can offer are definitely viewed as optional extras. Exceptions to this rule are very small agencies or start-ups, where multiple roles are born of necessity. Less traditional creative consultancies, and collectives that pride themselves on being multidisciplinary, are also likely to offer more scope to practitioners who wish to bring a variety of skills to the table.

Below: Advertising has many outlets. This outdoor poster campaign (top) by designer/illustrator Erica Jacobson was produced for Nordic directory enquiries service, Eniro. Integrated agency Exposure's 'Friends of British Summertime' campaign (bottom) ran across various media, including radio, press and the web to boost brand awareness of cider manufacturer, Bulmers.

Opposite: Spanish illustrator Adrià Fruité created all the characters and artwork used to promote theatre company Dagoll Dagom's 2007–8 production of *Boscós Endins* (Into The Woods). His work featured in a dedicated website as well as advertising posters and other printed promotional material (right); and he also created a mural inside the theatre (bottom left).



BULMERS

SQUEEZING THE BEST OUT OF THE BRITISH SUMMERTIME

Look out for our Friends of British Summertime promotional teams at 'Summer in the Park' this weekend, for your complimentary taster of Bulmers at the event bars.*

We'll also be taking photographs of people enjoying the British Summer – why not see if you have been snapped by checking out www.bulmers.co.uk

*terms and conditions apply. See promo staff on site for details.

DRINKAWARE.CO.UK

FRIENDS OF BRITISH SUMMERTIME

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FRIENDS OF BRITISH SUMMERTIME

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SQUEEZING THE BEST OUT OF THE BRITISH SUMMERTIME

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BULMERS



The Editorial Sector

Editorial is a wide-ranging area that takes in everything from daily newspapers to weekly magazines and newspaper supplements, and monthly and quarterly 'glossy' publications; it also includes trade and professional publications, freebies and consumer magazines. In addition to traditional print format, these may be made accessible online or produced for digital download on tablet, mobile phone or eReader.

Openings for designers

Some magazine publishers have the kind of structure that enables them to hire designers (both print- and web-based) fresh out of college and take the requisite time to nurture and mentor them. Others stipulate that applicants for junior design positions must already have some industry experience. This can vary from a fortnight – easy enough to arrange as a college placement – to a year, which obviously presents more of a challenge.

Internships can often lead to full-time employment; indeed, some magazines prefer to fill junior design positions this way and never advertise them. However, since you'll be hard-pressed to find an internship that lasts more than a few months, try to arrange as much editorial work experience as you can (do note, however, that college internships are generally unpaid and, such is the stiff competition in this area, some graduates are prepared to hustle for an unpaid internship simply for the experience). In the mean time, Your college might offer you work on live editorial briefs, but you could also volunteer your design skills to a local school or charity. Paid or unpaid, if it's in print and shows what you can do, it will count in your portfolio. Learn, too, to capitalize on any connections you make in the editorial sector. Keep in touch with anyone who expresses an interest in your work. If a magazine is short-staffed due to sickness, injury or maternity leave the art editor might be desperate enough to ask the promising, if inexperienced, young designer they saw last month to help out for a day or two. (This is exactly how I came by my first professional engagement, after initially being told to come back in a year by the design company in question. I was the last graduate they'd seen, and therefore the first they remembered when the art director's assistant took off on a spur-of-the-moment three-week holiday.)

It's important to give serious thought, sooner rather than later, to the type of magazine for which your design abilities are best suited. Working on a publication with a less-is-more aesthetic requires a different sort of eye – to say nothing of a different set of technical skills – to working on one crammed

Below: The editorial arena extends far beyond well-known consumer titles. *Gulf Life* (produced by Ink Publishing) is the in-flight magazine for Middle Eastern airline, Gulf Air, and falls into the category of the customer (also called custom) magazine. Certain publishing houses specialize in titles aimed at the customers, employees and clients of large companies and organizations.

Opposite: The *Radio Times* is the UK's premium listings magazine for all major terrestrial, cable and satellite television channels, as well as all radio stations. The *Doctor Who* spread (bottom) typifies the magazine's strong visual style and in-depth articles. The four covers (top), illustrated by Kris Kasch, were commissioned to celebrate the BBC documentary *The Seven Ages of Rock*. They were designed as four collectables, that when put together, make one complete image.



with images and bite-size features. Snobbery abounds in the editorial arena; the choices you make at the start of your career can have a significant impact on its future path, and designers can find themselves typecast. It's worth bearing in mind that the magazine you choose to read may not necessarily be the kind of publication you will enjoy designing.

'The nature of our business with tight deadlines and a lot of products means that most designers have to learn pretty quickly, but there are senior staff on hand to help throughout the learning process to ensure deadlines are met... If a graduate shows creative flair and technical ability the lack of experience could be overlooked.'

John Oakey, Art Director, TimeOut Group

Both magazine and newspaper design require the ability to work to grids and style sheets, a good eye and a thorough working knowledge of QuarkXPress, InDesign and Photoshop. However, newspaper design offers less scope for creativity as turnover is fast, deadlines short and the environment more pressurized, particularly for daily newspapers. Many magazines, when interviewing designers, will require them to design a sample spread in order to gauge how well they understand the design aesthetic of the publication.

'It's always worth running new developments in your work past art editors. A couple of illustrators I have seen have done this, and I have often liked their new direction more and have commissioned them on the back of that.'

Hazel Brown, Deputy Art Editor, *Radio Times*

Overleaf: the increasing use of tablets, eReaders and other handheld devices has increased the demand for eMagazines and apps. UK industry bible, Design Week, originally began life in print in the early 1990s. Now entirely web-based, it is currently free to access, along with its extensive archive.



Sands of time

A bus-smash in Dubai, an alien fly and Michelle Ryan in a catsuit – it's all go in the Doctor's 200th story!

Doctor Who
Saturday 6-5pm BBC1, BBC HD

IT'S SAFE to say that of all the unfortunate things that could happen to a film crew in the desert, getting caught in a sandstorm – rendering a whole day's footage practically unusable – would be one of the worst. It's 12 February 2009, and the BBC crew filming this year's *Doctor Who* Easter special, *Planet of the Ood*, is experiencing the worst sandstorms to hit Dubai since last September. But that's the least of their recent problems...

It all began with a red London bus. "That bus was the starting point for the story," says Russell T. Davies, *Who*'s supreme and, with Gareth Roberts, co-writer of this episode. "A bunch of everyday commuters stranded on an alien world. I wanted big pictures, vivid images, something that would burn into kids' minds. In 60 years' time, they'll still remember 'the one with the bus' and a red double-decker seems so British, which is always one of *Doctor Who*'s strengths."

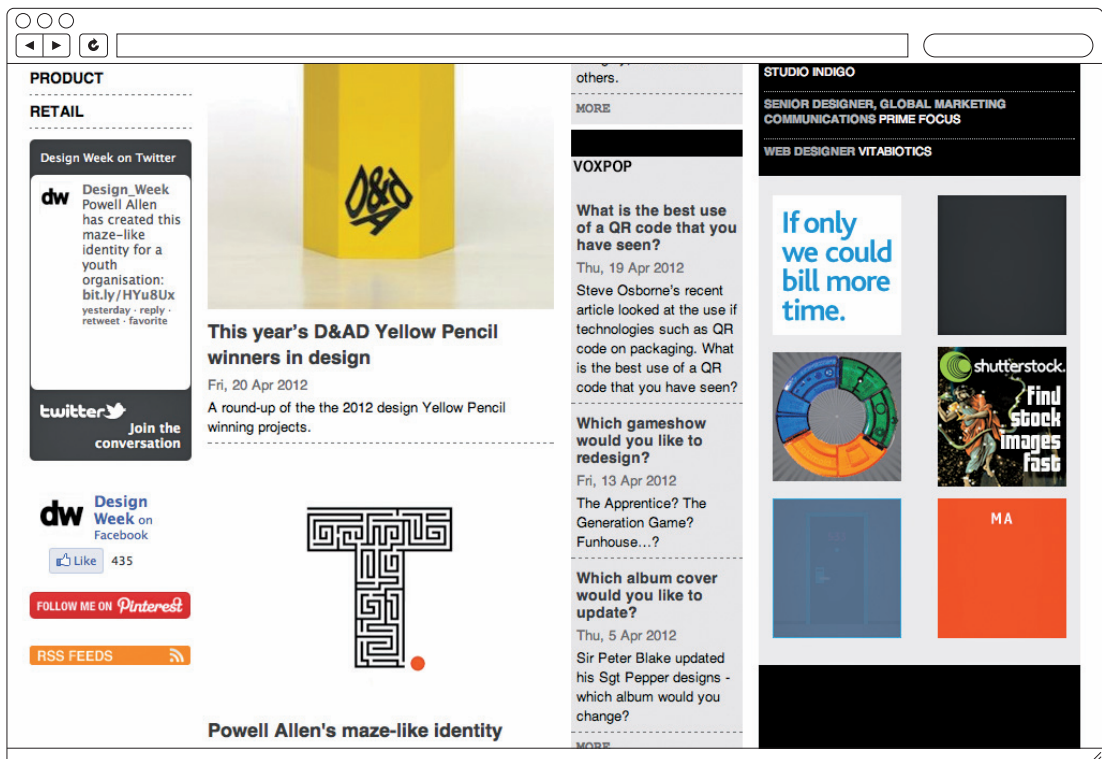
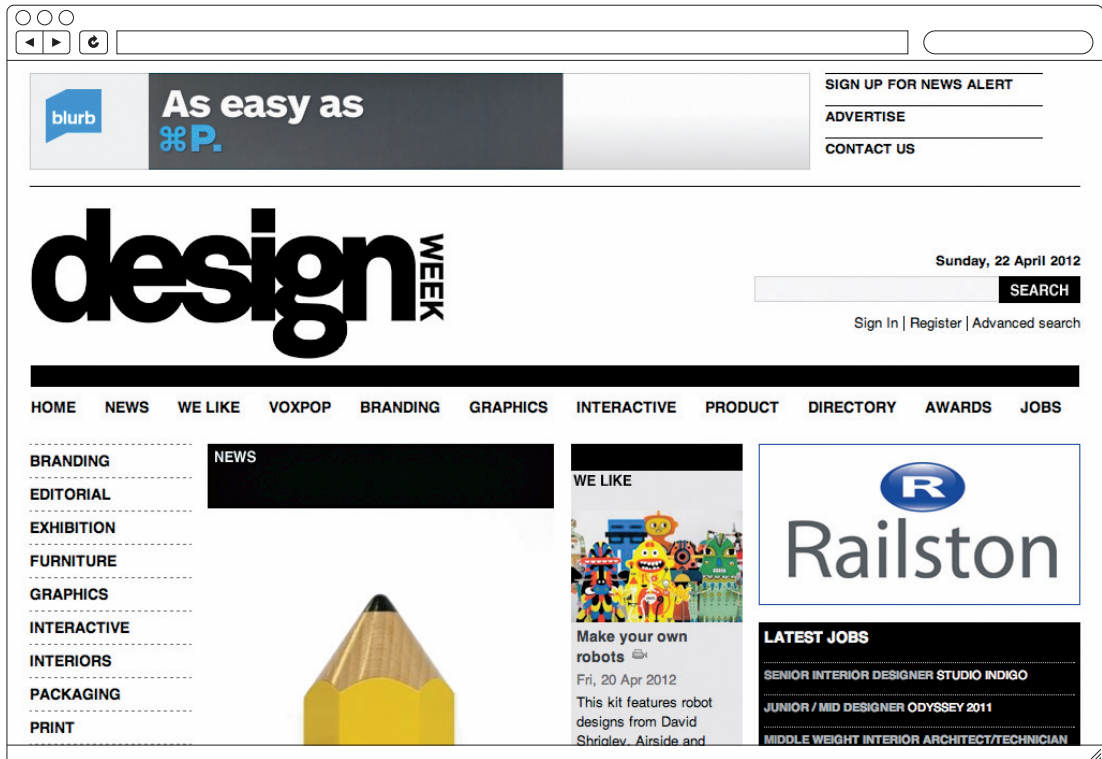
"It's a hairy adventure," says David Tennant, sheltering from the sandstorm under a violently snapping gannet. "It's quite 'out there'. A London bus in the middle of the desert kind of sets the tone. It's not a plot that any other show could do. It's very specifically a *Doctor Who* story. I can't think of any other show that could combine all these elements and still make sense!"

The production team's first hurdle was to get the bus into the desert. "We'd always looked at going abroad," explains producer Tracie Simpson. "A beach in Wales, especially in February, would have just looked like... well, a beach in Wales. But Dubai looks beautiful. There was talk of airlifting the bus in, but it's too heavy, so we decided to ship it instead. It takes five weeks to get a bus from Cardiff to Dubai, so it set off in >

"I can't think of any other show that could combine all these elements and still make sense"

DAVID TENNANT

ALL ABOARD! THE 100th BUS
The *Professor* (Paul Kasey) joins the Doctor (David Tennant) and Lady Christina (Michelle Ryan)



for Transform Coaching

Fri, 20 Apr 2012

The branding for this youth organisation represents 'the journey of transformation'

The Team and Cisco develop virtual mirrors for John Lewis

Fri, 20 Apr 2012

The Team and Cisco have developed two virtual fashion mirrors for retailer John Lewis' flagship store on Oxford Street.

[MORE](#)

London Film Museum to open Covent Garden outpost

Fri, 20 Apr 2012

Brand Nu and KPF have worked on designs for a new exhibition space.

LATEST OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT'S ON

My Feelings Like You

Fri, 20 Apr 2012

Gary Taxali's Pop-influenced work - playful, pretty and poignant.

MOST POPULAR **MOST COMMENTED** **MOST EMAILED**

HEINZ LAUNCHES VINTAGE LABELS FOR DIAMOND JUBILEE

THIS YEAR'S D&AD YELLOW PENCIL WINNERS IN DESIGN

WHAT IS THE BEST USE OF A QR CODE THAT YOU HAVE SEEN?

PETER AND PAUL DESIGNS CREATIVE ENGLAND IDENTITY

THE REFRESHED DESIGN WEEK WEBSITE

Outdoor retailers Blacks and Millets look to rebrand

Mon, 2 Apr 2012

Blacks Leisure Group is understood to be looking to rebrand its Blacks and Millets brands.

University of Gloucestershire seeks graphics consultancy

Thu, 15 Mar 2012

The University of Gloucestershire is seeking to appoint a graphic design consultancy.

[MORE](#)

2012 James Dyson Award open for entries

Fri, 3 Feb 2012

The James Dyson Award challenges young designers and engineers to develop problem-solving inventions.

The anatomy of a Honda Civic

Thu, 19 Apr 2012

Artist Ryoji Ikeda has created an AV installation using the raw CAD data used to design the Honda Civic car.

The London Original Print Fair

Wed, 18 Apr 2012

Work from Peter Blake, David Hockney, Tracey Emin and others will go on show.

[MORE](#)

EDITOR'S VIEW

Below: 'Snob Magazine' is aimed at successful Russian-speaking professionals around the world, and features stories on a range of topics designed to appeal to the intelligent reader. Illustration is prevalent in the publication, from the covers by staff designer Alexandra Kuznetsova (top centre) and illustrator/musician Key Wilde (top right), to spreads (bottom) by New York-based British illustrator Peter Arkle. Art direction is by Ilya Baranov.

Opposite: *Utne Reader* (top) is a bi-monthly digest publication bringing together the best of the alternative and independent press to a clued-up, forward thinking readership. Shown here is a spread from *Blue Notes*, illustrated by Nate Johannes and art directed by Stephanie Glaros (Nov/Dec 2008). The Australian bi-monthly magazine *frankie* (bottom) also predominantly uses illustration, as shown here by artist Sara Hingle.



Blue Notes

The life-giving link between mood and musical expression
by Moira Farr, from the Walrus ✦ illustrations by Nate Johannes

¶*You never met Garnet Rogers.* For all I know, he's a very nice man. Like his late brother, Stan, he sure can sing. But 10 years ago, Garnet nearly killed me at the Canadian Tulip Festival in Ottawa, and I've wondered ever since whether certain musicians shouldn't issue statements at the beginning of their concerts. "Warning: This performance contains vocals, lyrics, keys, and chords that may induce debilitating sorrow in some listeners. Listener discretion is advised."

I don't remember the actual song, only the abject melancholy that flooded through me upon hearing Rogers' spare guitar and soulful baritone wail over the crowd of happy, paint-faced children, batik peddlers, and *poutine* eaters wandering amid the waving tulips. No one else seemed particularly bothered by the dissonance between song and scene, but all I wanted to do was escape down to the riverbank and weep.

It wasn't the first, nor last, time a piece of randomly encountered music would ambush me and amplify my sadness, almost unbearably. Once, it was the mournful saw of violins accompanying a video at the Canadian Museum of Civilization about early logging. Or it could be a Rufus Wainwright song sneaking up on me from the car radio. I soon became hypervigilant at recognizing that first down spiral of mood and adept at the quick lunge for the off button. Music, once a comfort and a source of pleasure, had become a minefield.

Sensitivity to sad music was just one troublesome symptom of what was eventually diagnosed as clinical depression. It was only after many months of taking citalopram, an antidepressant known as a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, that I realized the sad-music thing

wasn't happening to me anymore. When I was puttering in the kitchen one morning with the radio on, the sound of a violin stopped me. It was "Field of Stars," by the late Oliver Schroer, a song recorded during his seven-week walk along Europe's ancient pilgrim trail, the Camino de Santiago. His wailing fiddle, echoing through an old stone chapel, made me sit down and cry—but they were the cathartic, opening kind of tears.

Soon I stopped fearing music, maudlin TV commercials, and Animal Planet programs about cruelty to chimpanzees. I was still able to feel sadness, but I was not so overwhelmed by the emotion. And I became curious; exactly what was going on in my brain to make me so vulnerable to music in the first place—and why was a pill able to change all that?

Antidepressants, we know, affect the activity of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, and hormones such as oxytocin, all of which are involved in the experience of pleasure. These are the hormones that become seriously impaired when a person is depressed. But what is the specific link—if any—between mood and musical expression? Searching for answers, I turned first to the neuroscience of music, a thriving field of research that has

spawned two current best sellers—Oliver Sacks' *Musophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, a collection of strange tales about the human relationship to music, and Daniel Levitin's *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*, which details recent neurological findings. Among them: what's happening in the brain when music uplifts us; why bits of music can lodge in the brain (the dreaded "earworm" or "tune cootie"); and theories of how and why music—in all its pitches, tempos, keys, and rhythms—has played an integral role in the evolution of the human species.

Levitin is a psychology professor who runs the Laboratory for Music Perception, Cognition, and Expertise at McGill University. Before becoming a psychologist, he was a session musician, sound engineer, and record producer for the likes of Santana and Blue Öyster Cult. When I call him on the phone, he sits down at the piano in his Montreal home and plays a riff of trilling high notes, followed by a slow series of notes lower down the scale. It makes the obvious point that what we think of as sad music tends to be quieter, lower, and slower, with longer duration in tones

Beyond Words

Part of the magic of music for me is that it can evoke emotions that you can't even have otherwise, emotion there isn't even a word for. I remember when I was a little bitty kid hearing the Platters singing "Harbor Lights." I was from Lubbock; I didn't know what a harbor was. But the melody, the sound of the voices, gave me a feeling of pleasant longing that had nothing to do with anything that had yet happened to me. I wasn't old enough to have had sad love affairs.

—musician Jimmie Dale Gilmore to writer Nicholas Dawidoff, from *In the Country of Country: People and Places in American Music* (Pantheon, 1997)

50 **utne** NOV-DEC '08NOV-DEC '08 **utne** 51

who was shot

who was she?

ava gardner
CIGARETTE IN ONE HAND, GLASS OF
SCOTCH IN THE OTHER.

Worlds in Motion

Classic film: *pin* Ava Gardner was hardly the type of actress to court respectability — on screen or off. Raised dirt poor on a North Carolina tobacco farm, she was discovered in 1941 after her brother-in-law displayed her photos in his New York shop. Aki's first screen test was a dud, but MGM took the bait anyway with studio boss Louis B. Mayer famously declaring, "She can't act. She can't talk. She's terrific."

Regarded at first as little more than a pretty piece of flesh (with an uncouth Southern accent to boot), Ava struggled as a bit player through over 20 film roles – one of an endless line of disposable starlets Hollywood used to decorate its crowd scenes and backlots. During this time she fulfilled her studio contract by posing for hundreds of cheesecake pin-up shots that focused on her body and legs rather than her face. It wasn't until her femme fatale turn in 1944's *The Killers* that she became known as a bona fide sex symbol and a star.

From here on, the publicity photos concentrated on the face that would have her branded in the '90s as "The World's Most Beautiful Animal" and, typically self-deprecating, Ava taught herself to surrender on demand: "I shot enough sultry looks around the MGM photo gallery to melt the North Pole." **Ava knew her face and her body were her currency**—this was, after all, the woman who famously declared,

"Deep down, it was my sister's life." She frequently took in lines from the *Book of Job*—as a classical scholar, she came to love the Old Testament of her father's singular one-man kill and die for in *Paradise and the Flying Dutchman*.

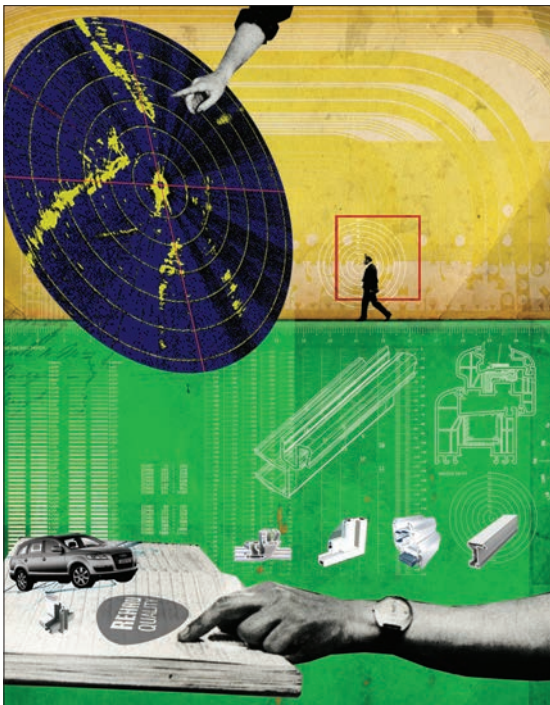
By the time she's star on the rise, she has already been married twice. In Mickey Rogers in 1961 and Jennifer Aron Shaw in 1965. But it was her tempestuous 1951 wedding to blue-eyed crooner Frank Sinatra that really kept the tabloid writers happy. Cast in the script as woman for supposedly tornhearted Catholic Sinatra away from his first wife Nancy, Ace was condemned by the Church, vilified by the Legion of Decency and labelled "Bitch-Jewels-Garment" by national writers. The union was passionate, but volatile. "We were always great in bed," Ace later admitted. "The trouble usually started on the way to the bedroom. I was always the one to get into the car, and I would always scream and act out of control at airports. Ace and Sinatra would wait in the

Three years earlier, Axa had travelled to Spain to film *The Iberian Peninsula*, the story of a Spanish man getting made into a movie star and taught – by his mothers – who remain, unimpressed by the workings of fame and Hollywood. It is a tale of conformity, of a man who acquiesces revolutionarily at the time by ceasing to plot the plot around the heroine's sex drive, and one that contrasted to mirror Gardner's own life. While shooting the film, Axa discovered a great passion for Spain and, supposedly, an even greater one for its population of vile young bullfighters. The country became her home after her third and final divorce, although she never shook the tabloid hoodies – for the press man back in the States, wherever Axa went and whatever she did, she was still pining for Sinatra, or prying with some great inner smolder.

[illegible]

'I would suggest requesting a portfolio review and/or dropping off a portfolio. I would not recommend only targeting the creative director of a magazine as they are often too busy to look at junior designer books. I think that it is better to target the second in command as well.'

Jennifer Pastore, Associate Photo Editor, *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*



CASE STUDY: REHAU

Scanning for innovation

Global plastics company Rehau looks to a small team of 'innovation scouts' in procurement to harvest the most promising ideas from its key suppliers

by Geraint John

Unless you work in the construction, automotive or furniture industries, the chances are you won't have heard of Rehau. As a family-owned manufacturer of plastic products such as window frames, water pipes and car bumpers, it isn't the kind of firm that excites much interest from the general business press. But as an example of how procurement can extend its role into the field of innovation and drive company competitiveness, it has an interesting story to tell – one that throws up some useful lessons for CPOs and their teams in other sectors.

Founded in 1948 in the German town of Rehau, from where it takes its name, the firm now has operations in over 40 locations around the world, employing almost 15,000 staff and earning annual revenues in excess of €2 billion. Over time, Rehau has moved away from simply making plastic products of its own to assembling water, heating and other systems that incorporate parts from other manufacturers. This is vital for the company's long-term survival, because some of its products, particularly in the construction industry, which accounts for half its total business, have been commoditised as a result of strong competition from China and elsewhere.

As might be expected of a German manufacturer, Rehau's strategy is not to be the lowest cost producer, explains Rainer Schulz, the company's chief operating officer, but to show 'innovation, process and service leadership'. That means not only being highly efficient in purchasing, production and logistics terms, he says, but also having 'clever products than our competitors'.

With around 50 in-house researchers, Rehau is used to inventing what Schulz describes as 'new recipes' for polymers such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polypropylene and polyethylene – its key raw materials – and then working with chemical companies, big and small, to manufacture them. But to satisfy the needs of its customers today, it must be effective at tapping the innovative ideas of these and other key suppliers and translating them into marketable products, some of which will be developed jointly.

Nowhere is the pressure to innovate stronger than in the automotive industry, from which Rehau derives another 30 per cent of its revenues. As a first-tier supplier to the likes of Daimler, BMW, Volkswagen, Toyota and General Motors, the company not only has to meet stringent cost, quality

and delivery targets, but also demonstrate that it is at the forefront of technological change.

However, notes Schulz, in the past the image of Rehau as an innovator was not one that many of its customers recognised. A customer survey four years ago found that 'it was not seen as an innovative company, it was seen as a big oil tanker, driven one way and very hard to change', he says. As a result, Rehau decided to rebrand itself with a new tagline, 'unlimited polymer solutions', and to introduce an internal change programme designed to get employees in its key functions, including procurement, better focused on innovation.

Enter the innovation scout

To aid internal co-ordination and boost interaction with its supply base, in 2004 Rehau introduced a new role in its 140-strong procurement network – that of 'innovation scout'. It is one of six core roles in the function (see figure 1), which is organised around the material group (or category) management structure implemented by Schulz three years earlier when he joined the company from BMW. Rainer Schulz as head of materials management and logistics. (As COO, Schulz retains overall responsibility for purchasing, as

Opposite: The Internet allows art directors to have their pick of international talent. Conceptual illustrator, Michelle Thompson, is not just reliant on clients from her native Britain for work. Pictured here are commissions for Canada's *The Globe and Mail* newspaper (top) and customer magazine, *CPO Agenda* (bottom), published by Redactive Media.

Below: Spreads from tri-lingual in-flight magazines, *b.spirit!* (top), and *b.there!* (bottom), produced for Brussels Airlines by Ink Publishing. Aimed at long- and short-haul passengers respectively, the publications are designed with a contemporary feel and make extensive use of striking imagery.

Illustration commissions

The editorial sector tends to be the one that provides most illustrators with their first commissions. The relationship between art editors and fledgling illustrators is a symbiotic one, with hitherto unpublished artists getting much-needed exposure in exchange for relatively modest fees – editorial clients rarely have access to the kind of funds wielded by design companies and advertising agencies. Turnover is fast, which means the illustrators get into print quickly. Editorial clients, meanwhile, get their pick of emerging talent, thus keeping their publications looking fresh and cutting-edge; a win-win situation.

Crucially, the editorial commissioning process is very direct. You show your work to the art editor, who is paid to make the publication look good and has the budget to do just that. If illustrations are a regular feature and the commissioner takes a shine to your work, you're in with a pretty good chance – subject to a nod from the editor. Given that, overall, magazines and newspapers cover every subject under the sun, the more areas you choose to make your own in the editorial arena, the more scope you will have to earn serious money later on. And, between them, editorial clients use just about every illustrative style there is.

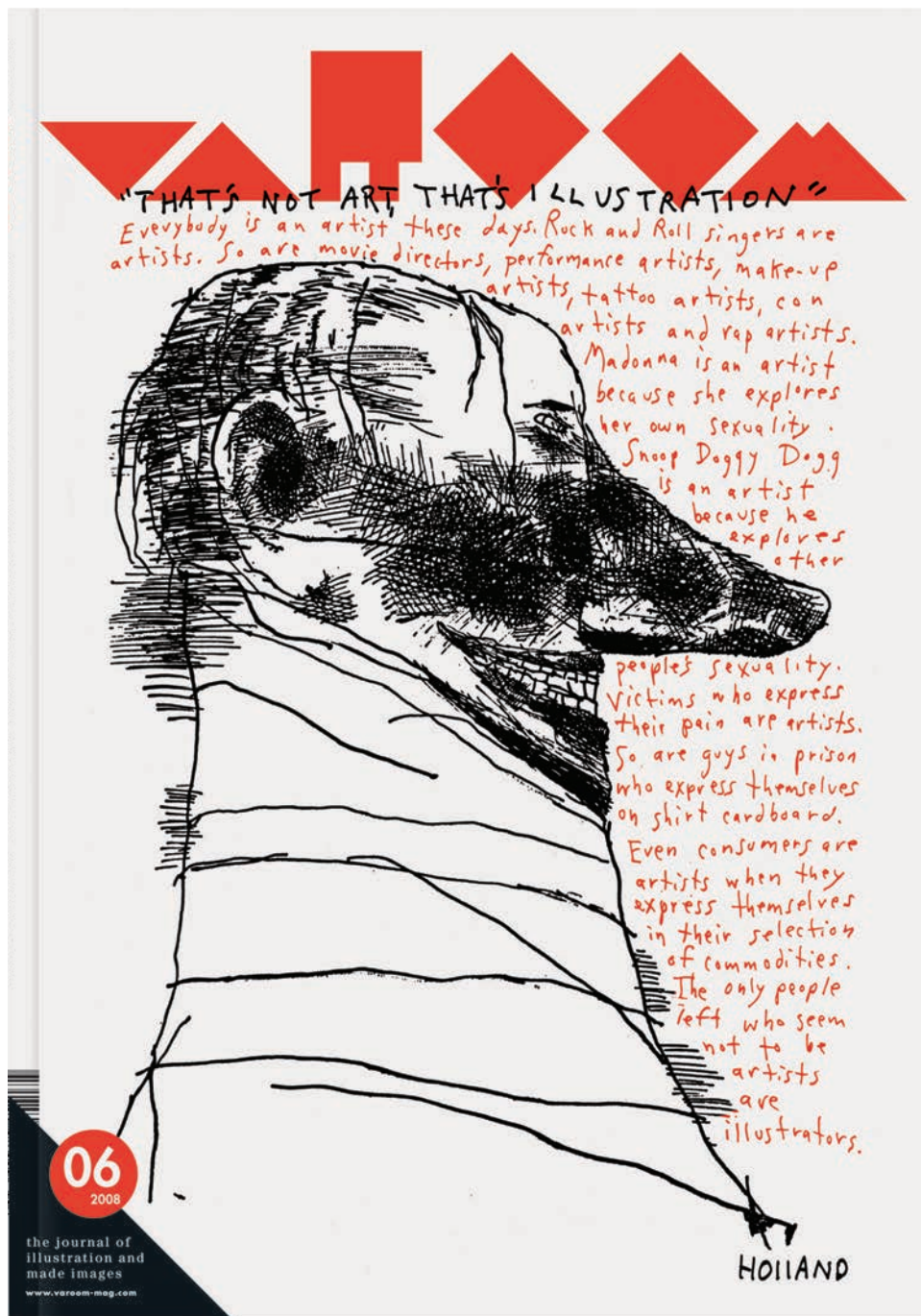
Although art editors have sometimes tended to view an in-house designer with illustrative skills with suspicion, at the time of writing there is a lot of interest in hand-lettering so, if your illustration work has a typographic component this may be a plus when it comes to obtaining commissions. However, because most magazines employ in-house designers and work to existing grids, there is little chance you will be used in a full-on design capacity. On the other hand, there are instances where both freelance and full-time designers are asked to provide illustrations for the magazines that employ them – though, in the case of full-timers, they are often expected to produce these in their own time. Trade magazines or ones with a limited readership (and, by extension, budget) are more likely than other publications to get illustrations done in-house by a cross-disciplinary practitioner.



'As I commission illustration on a regular basis I am looking for original ideas and illustration which would compliment or work alongside other more established illustrators. I receive samples from an international base of illustrators, in particular America and Europe, and occasionally Australia and Japan.'

Alison Lawn, Art Editor, *New Scientist*

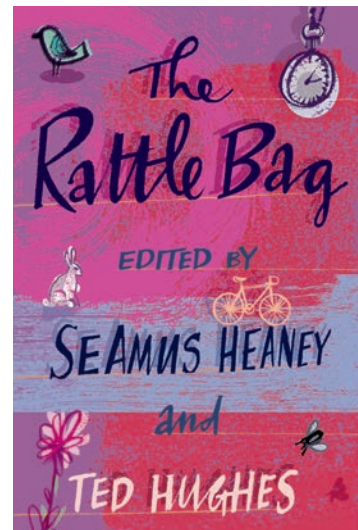
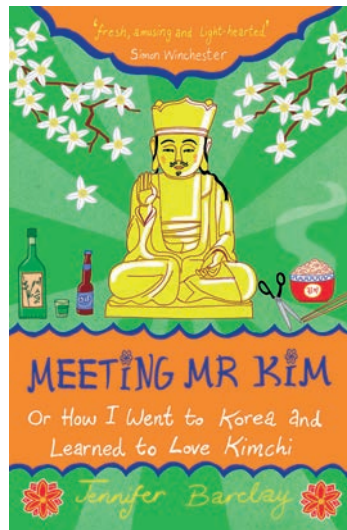
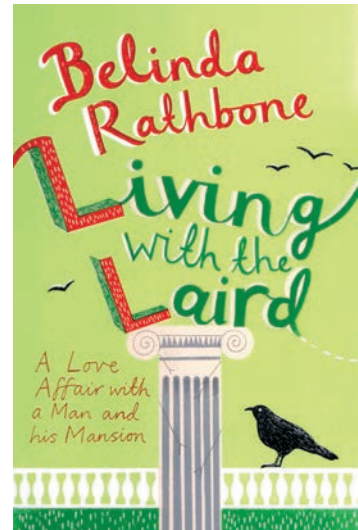
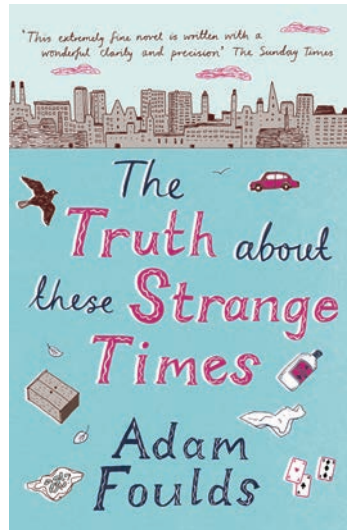
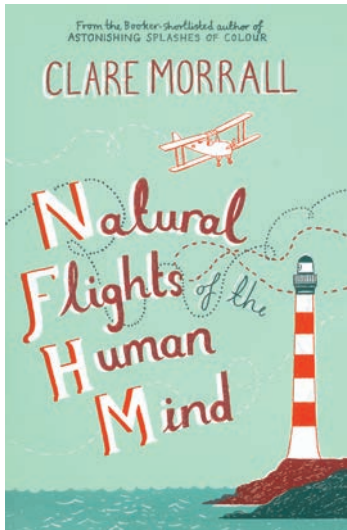
Below: The first nine issues of *Varoom* magazine, published by the Association of Illustrators, were designed by Norwegian/British partnership Non-Format to appeal to a visually-literate readership of practitioners, commissioners and educators. Published three times a year this issue, featuring an illustration by Brad Holland, is from 2008.



Below: *The Illustrated Ape* is an eclectic and idiosyncratic publication devoted to original fiction, poetry, pictures and pop. Each issue is themed and guest art-directed. Contributors are not paid, as proceeds go towards funding the next edition; consequently they are given a lot of creative freedom.



Below: Illustrators specializing in quirky hand-rendered text are currently in vogue with publishers, both for literary and some mass-market fiction. Shown here are (top) three covers by Harriet Russell for Hodder Headline, Orion Publishing and HarperCollins; and (bottom) two covers by Andy Robert Davies for Summersdale Publishers, and Nigel Owen's cover for Faber & Faber.



Book Publishing

Book publishing is a broad church that encompasses hardback and paperback fiction and non-fiction for all age groups. The majority of publishers routinely produce books in print and digital form for download onto PC, tablet, mobile phone or eReader. Though increasingly, as the latter become more sophisticated, more are becoming involved in the development of interactive projects, though not necessarily their production. It provides work for a diverse range of practitioners, including those with multiple skills. In the United Kingdom, some freelance book designers choose to utilize their image-making skills where appropriate, while illustrators with a strong affinity for type are currently popular with book-jacket commissioners.

‘At (entry) level we expect a certain amount of educating to be needed. Budgets and deadlines being what they are, the designer needs to be up to speed as soon as possible, but there is time to develop their understanding of the industry and the language of design.’

Richard Ogle, Art Director, Random House

Starting as a book designer

Book publishers are generally happy to employ recent design graduates and some degree of nurturing is usually possible – downsized art departments notwithstanding – as the pace of book publishing is usually slightly less frenetic than that of the editorial sector. As with magazine and newspaper publishing, however, an internship or published work related to books will stand you in good stead.

Junior design positions are advertised in the creative press, on websites that specialize in creative recruitment (and, in many cases, on the publisher's own website), and in local and national newspapers (generally on days specifically devoted to creative and media jobs). Some publishers will see designers who approach them speculatively, though they may only do so if there is an actual vacancy.

A genuine interest in books – and reading – is obviously a prerequisite and, as with magazine design, you will need to think carefully about the areas to which your interests and design skills are best suited. If, for instance, you would prefer

to work with photographers rather than illustrators, children's picture books are probably not the milieu for you; and if you'd rather spend quality time with Andy McNab than Thomas Pynchon, it would be sensible to steer clear of literary book covers. However, if you're planning to make your mark as a mass-market book-cover designer, remember that you're unlikely to work in just one genre and that a historical bodice-ripper can't be packaged in the same way as a psychological thriller. It is not unheard of for book designers to change their area of specialization: one of my first agency clients began by designing book jackets for adult fiction and now enjoys an immensely successful career as an art director in children's books. It pays to be adaptable, especially if you're planning to ultimately go freelance.

Many freelance book designers start off working for mainstream publishing houses, where they learn about the industry and make contacts as they progress to more senior design positions. Large publishing houses often commission freelancers and if you have networked successfully you won't have to start wooing their art directors from scratch. It's not always plain sailing, though; the chances of having a design rejected are higher than they would be if you were working in-house, as the commissioner may ask several freelancers to pitch for the same project. However, if you are a cross-disciplinary practitioner and/or have developed a recognizable style, being your own boss will provide more opportunities for you to use your skills than working as an in-house designer. Plus, you have the option of promoting these skills in creative sectors other than book publishing.

‘I have occasionally produced an illustration, done a bit of photography (very basic) and created some hand-lettering when necessary, usually when the budget dictates. I think it is very helpful and attractive to be able to offer to the client all aspects of what is required to produce a finished cover.’

Lucy Bennett, freelance book-cover designer

Opposite: A true cross-disciplinary practitioner, picture-book illustrator Adolie Day also designs children's textiles, greetings cards and giftware, and sells prints of her work online. Featured are (from top, left to right) *La Mirelle* stationery; the cover of her 2008 children's book, *Le Chasseur de Papillons* (The Butterfly Hunter, published by Toucan Editions); a spread from the same title; and one from her popular series of L'ilichou books (published by Amaterra/Nouvel Angle).

Children's books

The children's book market covers everything from early learning for babies and toddlers to lavish, full-colour picture books, and novels and anthologies for older readers that usually feature black-and-white line illustrations throughout.

One trend that is emerging worldwide is for more heavily illustrated texts specifically aimed at boys in the eight-plus age group, in the hope of encouraging them to read as voraciously as their female counterparts. Illustrations also frequently feature on book jackets for young adults.

Designing a picture book (or, for that matter, the interior of any book involving the juxtaposition of type and image) involves the ability to think sequentially and an understanding of visual pace in order to engage and maintain a child's attention. It also requires an innate understanding of the illustrative styles and types of layout most likely to appeal to younger age groups. Versatility, strong typographical skills, flair and imagination are all prerequisites, along with a thorough working knowledge of QuarkXPress, InDesign, Photoshop and, possibly, Illustrator.

No matter what trends prevail elsewhere in publishing, children's books can be relied upon to provide work for illustrators whose style is suitable for a younger demographic. Whatever the age group that is being targeted, an illustrator's portfolio needs to show that they have sound underlying drawing skills and are capable of developing and sustaining strong, appealing and, above all, distinctive characters that children in the relevant age group will relate to. This is a lot easier said than done; I have seen many a picture-book proposal where the young protagonist ages or drops a few years virtually every time a page is turned or where the alien/monster continually – and unintentionally – changes size or shape. You will need a keen appreciation of what is happening elsewhere in the market and, at risk of stating the obvious, it helps in the long term if you can draw children and babies – though there are illustrators who have built their careers on an ability to portray animals engagingly. It is worth noting that some markets differ from others. European picture books tend to be geared towards a much younger age group (the under-sevens), than those produced by United States publishers (the under-twelves), which allow for more sophisticated imagery.

Publishers' lives are made infinitely easier by author-illustrators who provide both the text and the art for picture books. Because author-illustrators are responsible for both words and images, they tend to have a strong idea of how their books should look – which also makes the designer's job

a little easier. Although there is always work for illustrators who aren't interested in writing, good picture-book illustrators far outnumber good authors, and publishers are always on the lookout for fresh stories with universal appeal. If you have a fabulous idea for a story but feel your writing is too weak to make it fly, a canny publisher can provide the encouragement and guidance to help you realize your idea.

Educational publishing

The design skills needed to work in this sector are similar to those needed in picture-book designers, though not all educational books are aimed at children. For those that are, clear, easy legibility is paramount, as is an understanding of visual imagery likely to appeal to younger age groups. Flash skills, in addition to the usual software, are also required as many educational publishers specialize in interactive work.

Aspiring children's book illustrators often get their first breaks in educational publishing, where competition is less steep. Subject matter is extremely varied and includes fiction and poetry in addition to non-fiction. However, educational books rarely pay as well as children's book publishers, or offer the same kind of recognition; they also tend to have shorter deadlines and tighter, more prescriptive briefs. With illustrators skilled enough to make the grade elsewhere routinely taking off for greener pastures, educational publishers tend to be a little less fussy than their mainstream counterparts; for instance, depending on the project, they place less emphasis on distinctiveness of character than publishers who solely commission picture books.

Although this market can serve as a springboard for illustrators hoping to make their mark in picture books, it is by no means geared only towards children. Many educational books, including dictionaries, reference and textbooks are aimed at adults, such as professionals or students in further and higher education, or people with learning disabilities. They can therefore accommodate a considerably wider variety of full-colour and black-and-white styles than children's books.

'I hire unpublished illustrators once in a while, but they need a great portfolio... The advantages are that you get something really fresh, that's not on anything else out there, and you can also mould them a bit. They tend to be really enthusiastic as well. The problem is that they often don't have their real-world skills yet, so you have to be fairly patient.'

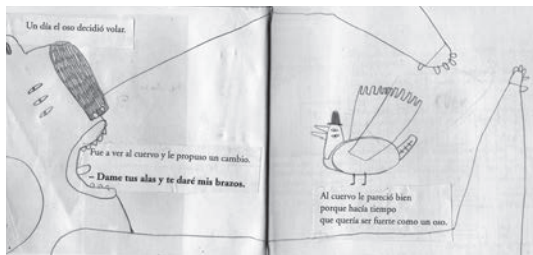
Steve Scott, Art Director, Scholastic



Below: Publishers are always on the lookout for strong black-and-white linework to appeal to the 8–11-year-old age group. This David Roberts illustration is for *The Lepidoptector*, one of Mick Jackson's 'Ten Sorry Tales' published by Faber & Faber in 2005.

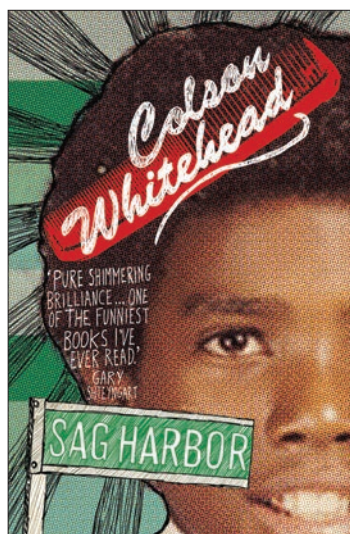
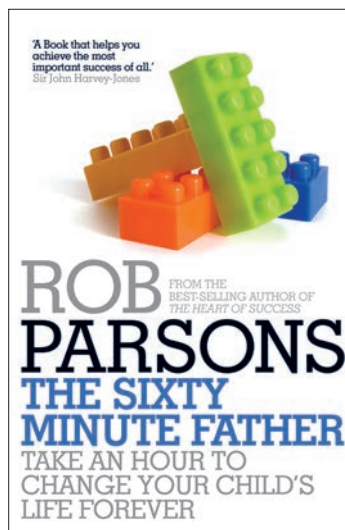
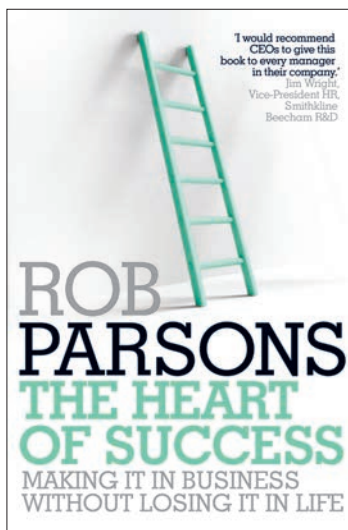
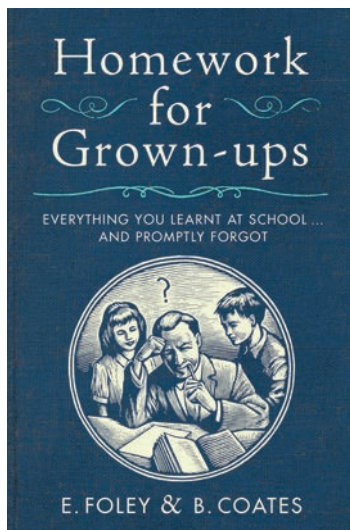


Below: Work by the Portuguese illustrator André da Loba reveals his bright, playful 3-D style which makes him ideal for picture-book work. Featured are (from top) the cover; finished spreads; and dummy rough spreads for the picture book *El Oso y el Cuervo* (The Bear and the Crow), published by OQO Editora.



Below: Examples of illustrations for fiction and non-fiction title covers include (top row) design by Liam Relp with illustration by Christopher Wormell (published by Square Peg); two designs in the same series by David Wardle (published by Hodder & Stoughton); (bottom row) illustration/design by Liam Relp (published by Harvill Secker); design by Henry Steadman (Headline Publishing), and cover by Meg Paradise of Mucca Design (Rizzoli).

Opposite: Unlike many in-house designers, cross-disciplinary freelancer Henry Steadman often enjoys the creative freedom to produce unusual, striking cover designs (for Orion Publishing).



‘An illustrator who can combine great image-making with well-crafted typography and hand-lettering can be useful.’

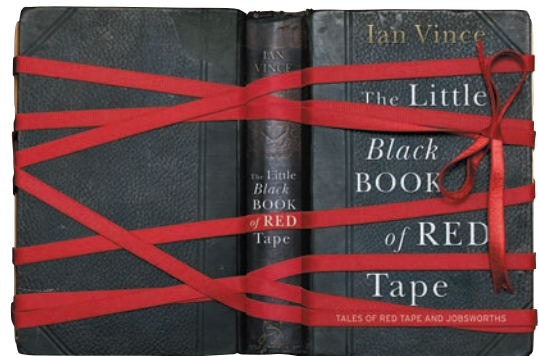
Eleanor Crow, Art Director, The Folio Society

Adult fiction

Software skills needed for book-cover design are primarily QuarkXPress (though some publishers are starting to move away from this nowadays), InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. Compared to designing an entire type and image-heavy book, book-jacket design is relatively straightforward, being somewhat more of a condensed process – though turnover is also appreciably faster. Versatility, strong typographical skills, the ability to use different kinds of visual imagery and a keen awareness of how different genres are packaged are all integral to the role of jacket designer. Many book-cover designers work in-house though once they have built up a good portfolio and some industry contacts, some do opt to go freelance, particularly if they are multi-skilled or have a preference for packaging certain types of literature.

Regrettably, apart from vanity publishing, the educational market or exclusive book clubs such as the United Kingdom's Folio Society, adult fiction provides little scope for illustrators. Artists with an interest in adult-themed narrative work are largely restricted to creating images for book covers. Mass-market genres, such as historical romances, sci-fi, fantasy, horror, chick lit or thrillers, are more likely to sell than literary fiction, so most publishers therefore produce rather less of this and do so in significantly smaller numbers. A mass-market novel by a popular author, for example, might enjoy a print run of 400,000 copies, whereas the one for a first novel by a young unknown might be only 4,000. Correspondingly, mass-market book covers tend to pay better than literary ones, though they tend to feature less imaginative illustrations.

Mass-market covers can be formulaic, and often look similar for years on end (the publisher is aiming to shift hundreds of thousands of books and if a tried and tested formula works...), whereas the packaging of literary fiction is more likely to reflect prevailing design and illustration trends. If your work is more stylized than highly realistic, and narrative is your thing, this is the area for you, but the comparatively small output means there is a lot of competition. Since freelance designers tend to have smaller budgets than those employed by publishers, many take advantage of photo libraries and royalty-free stock to keep production costs to a minimum. Illustrators are best advised to contact literary-fiction designers working in-house.



Adult non-fiction

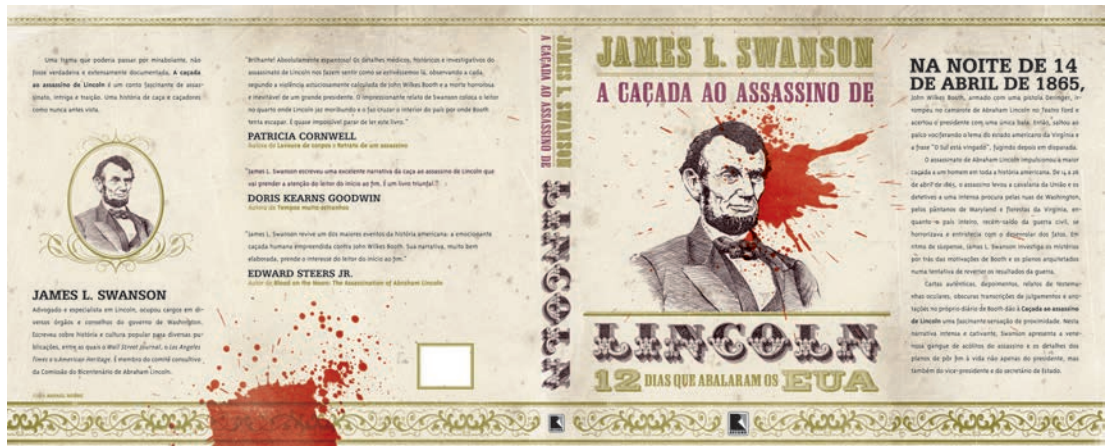
Despite the target audience, the skills needed to work in this sector are very similar to those needed for picture-book design (see page 48). Depending on the type of publication, the length of time spent in production might vary. A book that ties in with a television series, for instance, may have a tighter schedule.

Although adult non-fiction, particularly when it is lifestyle related, is frequently heavily illustrated, photography is often the preferred medium. This can be because of prevailing trends, subject matter, or simply the publisher. For example, publishers who specialize in cheap and cheerful editions can minimize production costs by reusing photographs to which they already own the rights, whereas more upmarket ones are likely to commission new work. A book written by a celebrity chef, interior designer or fitness guru is more likely to feature photographs than illustrations, especially if the author is photogenic. Nonetheless, given the wide-ranging subject matter – from football to car maintenance to transcendental meditation – there are opportunities for illustrators, particularly for those with highly specialized illustration skills, such as botanical, medical and natural history artists, and those who specialize in maps, diagrams, room or garden plans and ‘step-by-step’ illustrations.

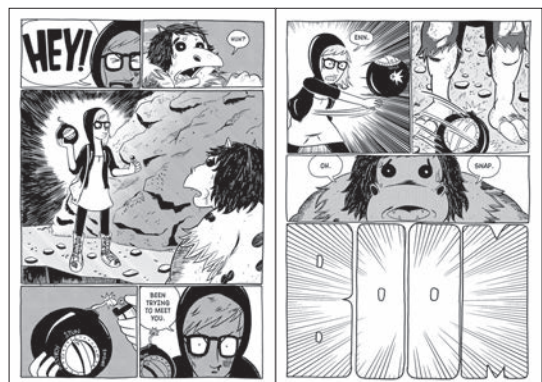
Below: Even in an era where a myriad of fonts are downloadable at the click of a mouse, there is still a demand for classic calligraphy in publishing. Here, lettering is by illustrator/calligrapher Peter Horridge and design by Eleanor Ridsdale (for Laurence King Publishing).



Below: The cover for this contemporary edition of the *Bible* (top) was illustrated by Steve Wilson (for Hodder & Stoughton), proof that a fresh visual approach can breathe life into the oldest of subject matter; (bottom) Rafael Nobre is a Brazilian-based freelancer who combined his design and illustration skills to striking effect for this book-cover commission (for Editora Record).



Steven Preston, comic author, artist and publisher



Opposite: Many independent comic-book artists have parallel careers as commercial illustrators. Chloe Noonan's creator, Marc Ellerby, services a number of music industry clients. A firm supporter of the small press, Marc has worked on several solo projects in addition to work for Oni Press and Image Comics.

Overleaf: Nobrow is an independent, European publisher dedicated to keeping the art of print alive. Specializing in high quality comics, books and graphic novels, they work on an invitation-only basis with a wide variety of contemporary graphic artists and illustrators – from talented newcomers to well-established veterans.

Comics and Graphic Novels

There are two paths into the comics and graphic novels world, and whether you take the independent or the commercial route, the kind of living you are able to make will largely depend on where you are based and/or where you promote your work. Some countries, most notably France, Japan and the United States, have larger markets than others, and these can differ according to the prevailing culture. Meanwhile, in Japan and in European countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom, even mainstream comics aren't considered the exclusive province of young children and adolescent boys; genres are varied and publications are geared towards both genders and a wide variety of age groups. Apart from the independent comics scene, this is not generally the case in America or Britain. Indeed, despite wholeheartedly embracing the manga style, in the United Kingdom comics are viewed primarily as a medium for the subteen market.

Depending on the type of work you produce, and your dedication to the genre, you may have to look to foreign markets, or even additional ones – such as storyboarding for film and television, character development for computer games and animation, or the less specialized areas of editorial and publishing – to supplement your income.

Independent comics, being largely self-authored and self-published, do not provide opportunities for graphic designers. If they do become successful enough for a commercial publisher to show interest, an in-house designer or freelancer will be responsible for the design. Commercial comic publishers, however, employ graphic designers in the same capacity that regular editorial publishers do. Designers or illustrators with an interest in designing letterforms are also commissioned by comic-book publishers.

The independent route

Independent comics are mostly self-authored with complete artistic control maintained by the creator, who also owns the rights to the work subject to any terms subsequently offered by a publisher, assuming he or she is fortunate enough to find one. Publishers – even if they are specialists with an interest in quirky graphic novels – are in it for the money, and won't consider publishing anything that doesn't already have a significant readership. It is, therefore, up to the self-publisher to reach as wide an audience as possible before approaching a commercial publisher.

This can be done in a variety of ways: through dedicated comic shops, independent and art bookshops, or even funky

clothes shops and music stores – businesses like these usually agree to take publications on a sale or return basis. Independent distribution networks can supply shops outside your geographical area and/or will market your work online – though there is nothing to stop you selling, or even publishing, it online yourself, and many do. Some distributors function as limited-edition publishers, and produce very small home-made print runs, while small-press book fairs and indie comic conventions, such as the long-running, well-attended annual event held in Angoulême in southern France, or the Small Press Expo in Maryland in the United States, attract collectors and provide opportunities to network with fellow creators, distributors and writers looking for artists to collaborate with.

Illustrators who succeed in finding a commercial publisher are often rewarded by seeing their earlier, self-published efforts produced as anthologies, thereby reaching a very much larger readership. Though some go on to penetrate the mainstream, with film adaptations and related collectable merchandise, the independent comics arena is not generally lucrative, and even the most successful creators have to work outside it if they are hoping to make a full-time living as artists.

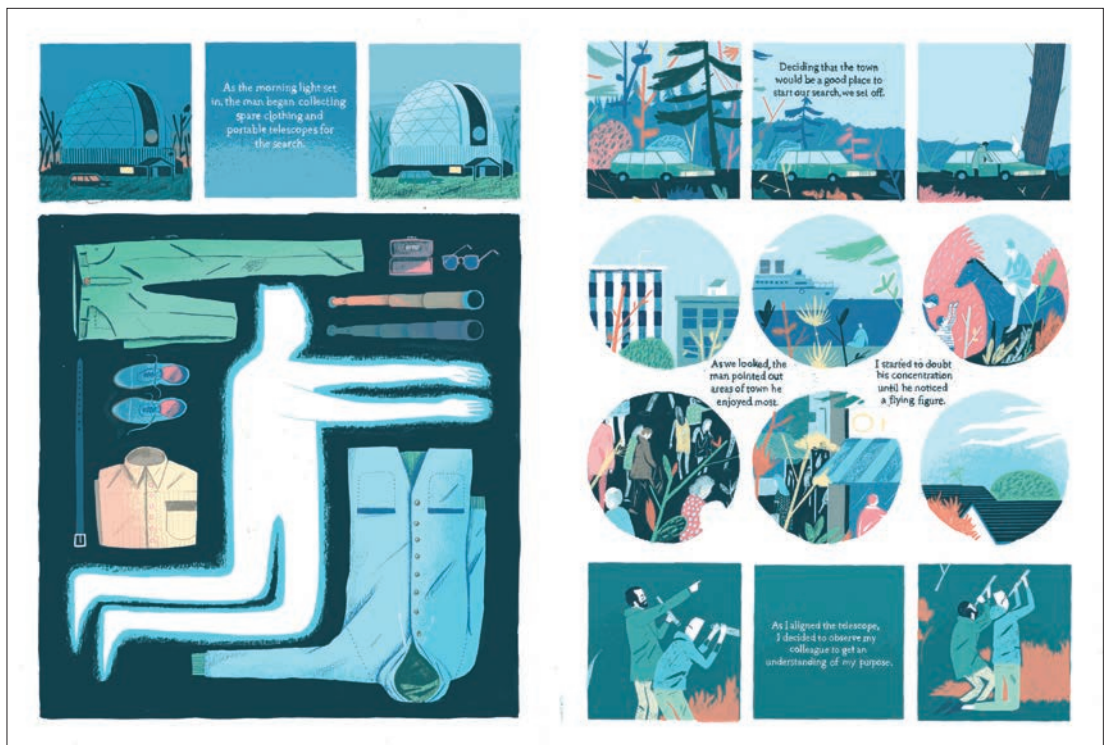
The commercial route

Commercial comics are another story. The illustrator (hired on a freelance basis and usually working from home) generally has little personal creative input and works as part of a team, collaborating with writers, lettering artists, etc., on stories about characters to which the publisher and/or originator owns the rights. Many are tie-ins to sci-fi, fantasy or action films and television shows; the superhero genre is particularly popular in France and the United States. Styles are widely varied, with publishers constantly on the lookout for new ways to breathe life into old favourites. Industry behemoths Marvel and DC loom large worldwide and have the pick of the very best artists, so competition is stiff – not least in the United Kingdom where there are significantly fewer publishers of comics and graphic novels than elsewhere. Whatever your style, your figure and character work must be strong and consistent; likewise your sequential drawing skills. It is particularly important that you are able to draw the characters that feature in the comics you are hoping to work for.

Large commercial comic conventions, such as those held in Bristol and Birmingham in England offer anyone who is keen to break into the market a chance to meet publishers informally and attend talks by leading comic artists who are working in

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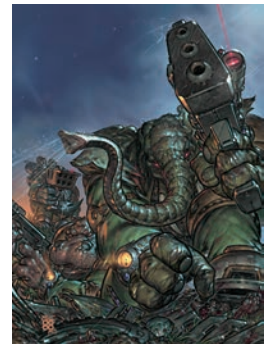
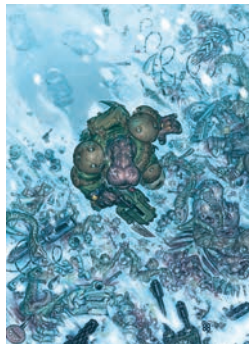
‘Considering the amount of raw comics talent in Britain, there are still relatively few outlets, and gaining success can be a long daunting slog. Hop across the channel to France or Spain though, and you’ll find countries who wholeheartedly embrace the world of comics and the markets are seriously thriving.’

Boo Cook, comic artist

a wide variety of genres. Some conventions also offer the facility for artists to get feedback on their portfolios from guest professionals, and I have known several illustrators who have picked up comparatively well-paid commissions by going to these events. Although the conventions tend to attract a different kind of clientele to the indie and small-press ones, there is nothing to stop self-publishers hiring a stand to introduce their work to a wider readership – but be prepared to make a loss.

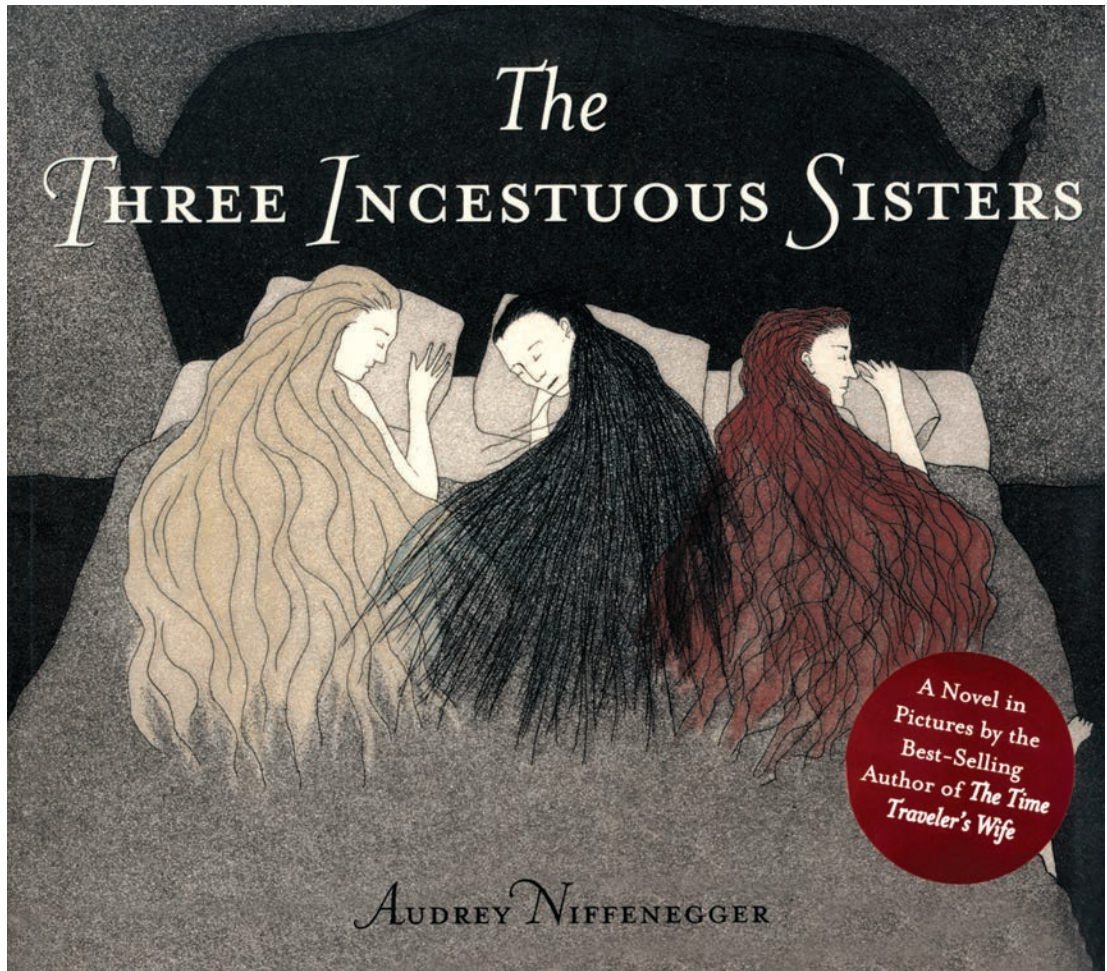
In addition to industry trade fairs there are online resources that give details of publishers in different parts of the world. Be aware, however, that submission guidelines vary; some may solicit only finished projects while others may simply want to see relevant samples of your style. It is always advisable to contact the companies to determine their requirements.

Because it's hard to make a reliable living as an illustrator of comics or graphic novels, even in the commercial sector, remember that other types of publication favour a sequential approach to storytelling. Many educational publishers use comic-book styles to appeal to adolescents with significantly lower reading ages, or to make books that might otherwise be considered a bit dull more interesting to older children, particularly boys. Manga-style Shakespeare or classic literature retold as graphic novels are becoming increasingly commonplace. There is even a manga-style Bible. Magazines, including junior titles, frequently run comic strips, so if you have the will and inspiration this could also be a way of raising your profile.



Opposite: Some of commercial comic-book artist Boo Cook's work for monthly comic, *Elephantmen* (top) and its mini-series *War Toys* (bottom). Successful comics are often later anthologized in trade paperback form, which can result in additional related commissions.

Below: Until the publication of her novel, *The Time Traveler's Wife*, Audrey Niffenegger was primarily known as a painter and printmaker. *The Three Incestuous Sisters* (for The Random House Group Ltd), was originally self-published in a limited edition of 10 handmade books, and took 14 years to complete.



Television and Film

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, certain design groups and branding consultancies specialize in serving the needs of the entertainment industry. Needless to say, because this is something of a niche market, there is competition to work in television and film.

‘Size of company is an important factor but I also believe a young designer can find a healthy, nurturing experience in a wide range of work settings.’

Doug Powell, Creative Director, Schwartz Powell Design

Opportunities for designers

Branding work undertaken on behalf of a television network could involve the creation of a channel identity or the rebranding of a tired one. Trailers, title sequences, idents and brand campaigns that promote specific programmes or channels can all fall within the broadcast designer's remit, and it's not unheard of for some designers to take on directorial roles. In contrast, television companies employ relatively few graphic designers and, since the majority of programmes are bought in complete with title sequences from the production companies that made them, in-house designers are likely to be employed to produce graphics for local productions, such as the news (the BBC has a dedicated news-graphics department), or trailers.

Designers with a particular interest in motion graphics are best off targeting broadcast-design specialists or production companies. However, the latter could offer less in the way of creative freedom and satisfaction, as the graphic designer's role is primarily technical and mostly involves putting directors' ideas into practice rather than implementing their own. Consequently, at entry level, production houses place much more emphasis on software skills than do design companies, who are principally concerned with ideas and creative problem solving.

Design for the film industry can also involve motion graphics, generally in making trailers or editing existing ones. There is also plenty of affiliated print and web-based work, such as posters, flyers, and press and web advertisements promoting theatrical and home entertainment releases; websites dedicated to the promotion of individual films; and, lastly, design for DVD packaging and point-of-sale.

My advice for accessing job opportunities in both television and film is: research (there are various publications and online directories that list production companies and provide links to their websites); internships; competitions; networking; watching out for advertisements; and keeping up to date with developments in your chosen sector. It goes without saying that your portfolio – or show reel – should adequately reflect your areas of interest and the relevant disciplines in which you are able to work.

‘Generally we look for a specific range of skills and then encourage experimentation and growth in different software and techniques. Being small, and by choice, we are always multitasking. It makes for a more interesting process. Everyone in our team turns their hands at different methods and techniques while specializing in a core set of skills.’

Judy Wellfare, Creative Director, Plus et Plus

Below: Bahn TV is the customer-orientated German TV channel of the German National Railway company Deutsche Bahn AG (now solely available online). Idents, like this one created by Berlin-based broadcast designer Sascha Verwiebe, are part of the broadcast designer's remit – along with trailers, title sequences and brand campaigns.



Below: Since its inclusion on Ladyhawke's debut album, Australian artist Sarah Lamach's artwork have become synonymous with the musician's visual identity. The stills are from the promo for single *My Delirium* in which the artist's signature style was animated. The film was directed by partnership Frater, from Partizan Lab for Modular Recordings.



Opportunities for illustrators

Illustration is rarely commissioned for broadcast channel identities – since logos and idents can be used for some years, the network concerned would either have to purchase the copyright to the artwork, or keep renewing its licence to use it, which some find irksome. Illustration in film promotion is largely a matter of fashion; at the time of writing very little is used outside promoting small, independent art-house releases or the occasional retro pastiche. Most illustration work tends to be specialized and production companies regularly employ freelance storyboard and concept artists. Like design groups, these companies can vary tremendously when it comes to the sectors they target and their individual areas of expertise. Thus, in addition to film and television programmes, a storyboard artist working for a diverse range of production companies could potentially be involved in the development of commercials; music promos; corporate, educational or training videos; or audio-visuals for live events.

Storyboards

Essentially there are two kinds of storyboard. The first sets the visual tone for a film, promo, title sequence or advertisement. In the case of films, it's the production company's job to raise financial backing for a project prior to coordinating it, and these highly finished, full-colour, pre-production visuals play a vital part in this process. (It's not unusual for a budding film-maker to approach a storyboard artist before they approach a production company.) A montage of images relating to key sequences also enables a director to talk a client through a project during the early stages of its conception. Depending on sector and geographical location, this pre-production storyboard is alternatively known as a client board or a mood board and is, as its name suggests, more concerned with ambience than technical details.

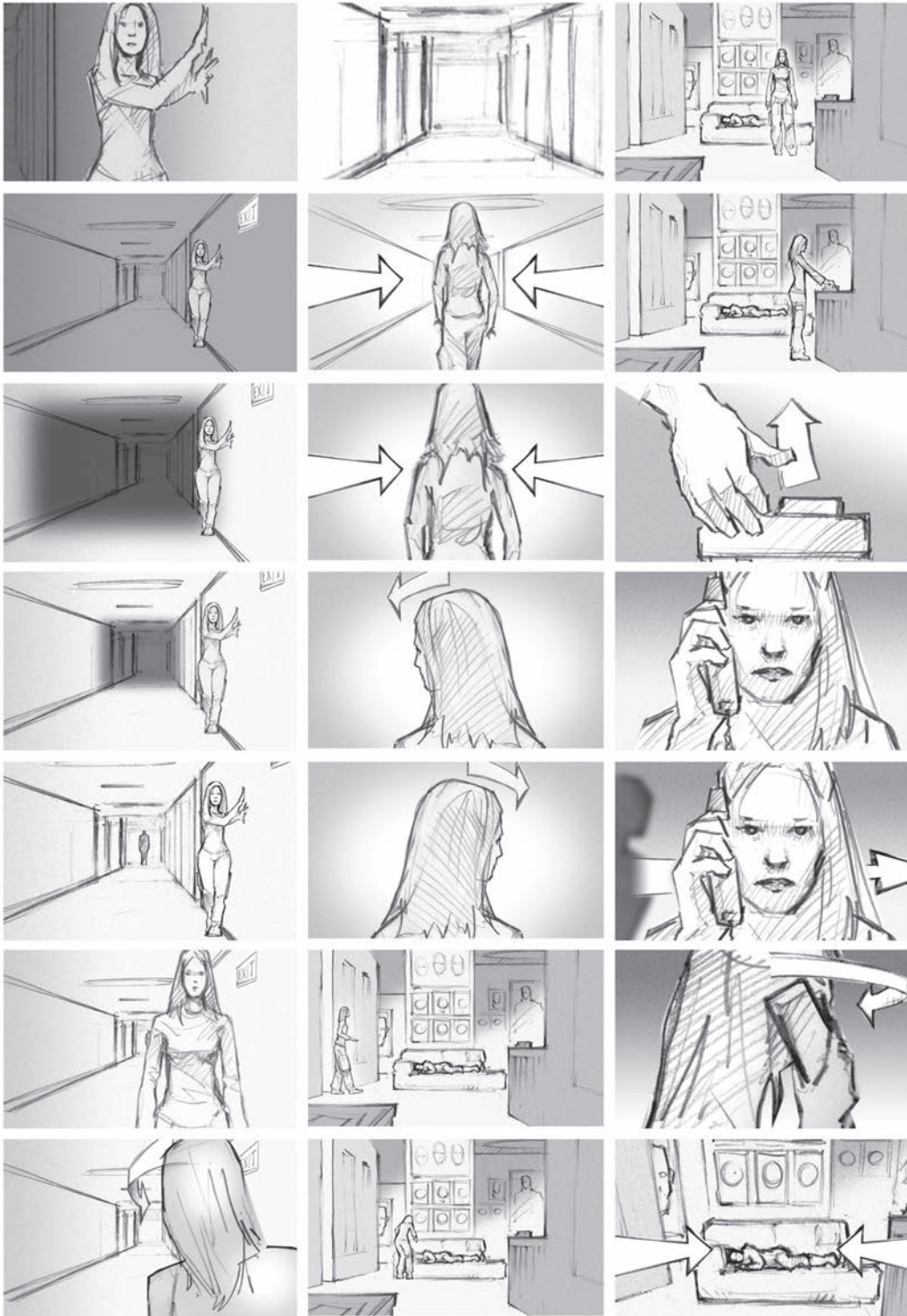
The second type – sometimes called a shooting board – fulfils an altogether different purpose. Entirely concerned with technical and directorial details, it provides a frame-by-frame breakdown of the action, right down to close-ups and camera angles, and is strictly adhered to by the crew during production. Consequently, it's generally rendered in black and white in a basic, pared-down style that can easily be photocopied. Since projects are rarely shot in sequence, the storyboard shows at a glance which scenes can be shot together in order to keep production costs down.

Some sectors suit certain personality types – and abilities – better than others. Producing a storyboard for an advertising agency may pay top dollar but you'll be expected to turn it around within a couple of days and will be allowed very little in the way of personal creative input. Conversely, producing one for a feature film can take three or four months and won't pay nearly as well; however, it's less stressful and there is an element of creativity.

Different types of client will want to see different kinds of subject matter in your portfolio. An advertising agency, for instance, will need to be convinced you can handle the mundane and everyday ('busy mum opens packet of breakfast cereal'), whereas a production company that specializes in big-budget CGI wizardry will think more along the lines of 'superhero torches vampire hordes using only the power of his mind'. As well as sound sequential drawing skills and the ability to swiftly commit the creative ideas of others to paper, you need to be able to think cinematically – so it helps to have a working knowledge of what a camera can do.

Concept art

Film production companies sometimes headhunt established illustrators who've made their name in fantasy or sci-fi with a view to their working as concept artists. Any major fantasy production employs at least one of these, and they are responsible for the overall look of a film. As with mood-setting storyboarding, this is primarily a pre-production visualization job. The concept artist works with the director and with the production designer, who heads up the art department – the people who build the sets, and design the vehicles, creatures, costumes, etc., with whom the artist liaises regularly to ensure the visuals are in synch with their vision. Anyone who is specifically seeking visualization work in film should research which productions are currently looking for crew, and contact the designer via the relevant production company. An excellent place to start is www.mandy.com, which carries advertisements for productions that are recruiting worldwide. Established illustrators who wish to be involved in general storyboarding can advertise their services for free on a number of dedicated websites.



Opposite: A shooting board is concerned with technical and directorial details and typically produced in a pared-down black-and-white style. This one, created by designer, illustrator and storyboard artist, Graham Humphreys, is for the Eitan Arruss film *Reverb* released in 2007.

Below: A detailed, atmospheric concept piece for low-budget 2008 horror film, *Flick*. Director David Howard first contacted illustrator Alex Tomlinson after seeing some of his editorial work. The job included a final poster design (bottom left), plus a period-style comic spread used in the filming of the title sequence (bottom right).



Computer Games Development

This popular, ever-expanding sector operates slightly differently from most of the others outlined in this book. Firstly, it's one of the few areas that can provide illustrators with permanent in-house or short-contract work as well as with freelance commissions. (From the developer's point of view, employing in-house artists means it is possible to exert some measure of control over highly confidential projects.) Secondly, with the industry in a growth phase and many developers operating across the globe, there are opportunities to travel.

Although graphic designers are used to package and promote games at the post-production/publishing stage, there are many more openings for artists and animators. However, depending on the company set-up and the project in hand, it can be helpful to have an illustrator or animator with additional design experience, and some developers recruit staff with combined skills – for example, an artist with experience in print or web design, as interface design, relating to the splash screens and menus, etc., takes place at the pre-production stage. Company size and ethos vary tremendously and there are no set roles; the kind of work offered and the number of artists involved is contingent on the project being developed. With roles so often overlapping, teamworking skills are essential and, as with other areas of creative employment, the ability to communicate ideas verbally as well as visually is vital to developing a strong end-product.

Illustration skills

Broadly speaking, two types of illustrator operate within games development: concept artists, who work in 2-D at the early pre-production stage; and 3-D modellers and highly specialized texture artists, who bring their concepts to life digitally. Although some artists choose to concentrate on just one area, such as characters, vehicles or environments, at entry level a variety of styles and a degree of flexibility towards subject matter is advisable. As with the majority of commissioning sectors, having a recognizable, individual style can be a strength. However, given that the look of a game may be realistic, stylized or cartoonish, the downside of having only one style is that it may not be the one a developer wants. Similarly, if you start off with a view to concentrating on one particular subject area it could take longer to gain a foothold in the industry. Look on specialization as a long- rather than short-term goal.

Despite the popularity of programs such as Paint Shop Pro and Painter, Adobe currently dominates this sector and Photoshop skills are as compulsory as excellent drawing.

Developers aren't necessarily prescriptive about how concepts are created, but if your artwork is to be involved in other aspects of development it eventually has to be compatible with whatever system is in place. If possible, get used to working with screen resolutions and the particular file formats used in digital modelling, as well as working at higher resolutions for print. In relation to games and animation, digital modelling is not to be confused with the high poly modelling used in film and television. Alias Maya, LightWave or 3ds Max are the preferred norm.

With many developers forming specific links with art establishments that offer courses in games design, curricula are being developed with an eye to providing a highly skilled workforce; therefore, graduates are in demand. Job opportunities can frequently be accessed via developers' own websites as well as through magazines and websites focused on the games industry (many of which also provide excellent careers advice), specialist recruitment agencies and online communities. There are resources for concept artists to promote their work online, sometimes for free, but some hosting sites request a year's professional experience before you do so. Once again, job placements and freelance work count towards establishing you as a professional.

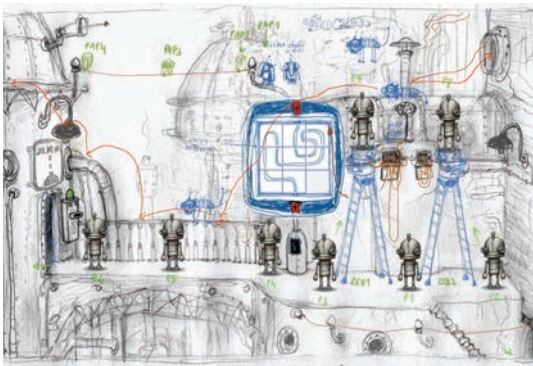
Below: This Invention Suspension game was produced by Aardman Digital to promote the 'Wallace and Gromit present A World of Cracking Ideas' exhibition at the Science Museum, London. The game

functioned as a viral marketing piece designed to drive traffic to the Cracking Ideas website, as well as entertain the gamers.



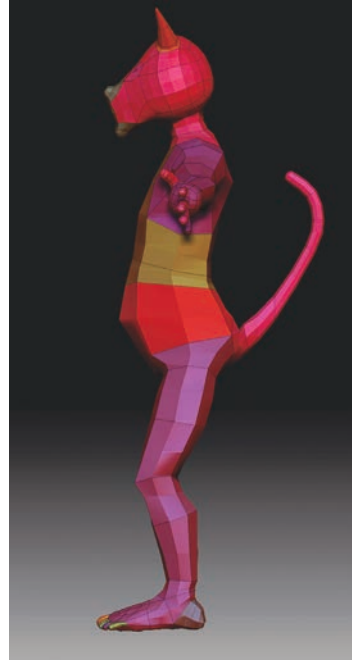
‘The best advice to a fledgling illustrator is to be as broad as you can. A lot of people just want to be character designers but this can be quite limiting. Companies do ask for people who can illustrate environments, objects and such; as illustrators progress and prove their skill they may develop a reputation for excelling in a certain area.’

Jim Thompson, course co-ordinator, BA & MA Games Design,
University of Central Lancashire, UK



Opposite: Still from and developmental work for environment and characters featured in web game, *Machinarium*, in which the protagonist is a small robot. Amanita Design, independent games developer, was founded by Czech game designer and visual artist Jakub Dvorsky who has a quirky, distinctive aesthetic.

Below: Examples of character development using 3-D modelling from a student project. Initial sketches (bottom right) are used to define features, which are then transcribed for the computer using Zbrush software (top).





Opposite: Card designs by Andrew Pavitt (top), who originally began publishing and distributing his own cards. Discovering, however, that he preferred designing to administrative aspects of the business, his work is published by Art Angels; Rachel Harper (bottom) is one of a stable of designers working for licensing company Inspire By Design, which functions on a speculative basis, much like a textile studio.

Greetings Cards

Publishers of greetings cards vary from large-scale international operations to tiny one-man bands, and fall into two categories: those who produce cards for wholesalers and those who specialize in DTR (direct to retail). While standards in the wholesale area have risen significantly over the past few years, the cards are generally bland and multi-purpose. It is therefore preferable to target the DTR sector as the pay is better, and the work is less generic.

In-house design positions

Greetings cards form a substantial yet discrete part of the gift industry and can provide full-time employment for junior and experienced graphic designers. Jobs can be found in industry-related publications and on recruitment and job-search websites in addition to publishers' own websites, while some companies offer student internships, which are generally unpaid. Depending on the size of the company, roles can vary and some publishers state a preference for applicants with multiple or illustrative skills. Not all publishers work with illustrators; some concentrate more on photography or fine art, and a design job with one of these could involve picture research. Publishers with a reputation for illustrated cards might generate all or some of the work in-house, while others might expect a designer to commission freelance illustrators. Regardless of the kind of publisher, a strong interest in trends within the greetings card sector and a familiarity with Illustrator, Photoshop, QuarkXPress and InDesign are given. Excellent typographic and layout skills are also key. Some card companies employ specialists in cardboard engineering, so some skills or an interest in this could stand you in good stead if you're likely to be working on pop-up/novelty cards.

Illustrating greetings cards

The greetings cards sector is one of the few commissioning areas where having multiple illustrative styles is regarded as a plus. However, the gift industry is largely speculative and illustrators of greetings cards are rarely paid for developmental work. Furthermore, unless an artist has a proven track record with a particular publisher, there is no guarantee that a projected series of cards will go ahead. If an illustrator is new to the publisher, or is working on a range that deviates significantly from the company's previous output, the publisher needs to be confident that the cards will sell before spending money on putting it into production.

The gift industry works several seasons ahead – Valentine and Easter ranges are launched in the summer of the previous year – and some card publishers give their contemporary, decorative illustrators fashion forecasts to work from. However, the visual identities of individual companies can vary tremendously, and decorative work is not the only type favoured by publishers. Other popular illustrated genres include cute/whimsical, quirky/humorous, traditional, fine art, juvenile, and handmade or hand-finished cards.

Finding the right publisher

Publishers promote their greetings cards in a variety of ways, including exhibiting them at annual national or regional trade fairs, which are held throughout the year. The fairs are attended by buyers ranging from the owners of small, independent gift shops and galleries to those representing department stores and large chains, and agents, wholesalers and overseas distributors. Any practitioner considering a career in greetings cards should find out about the industry by going to as many trade fairs as possible. This applies whether you are a designer in search of a full-time job, an illustrator looking for commissions, or want to set up a publishing enterprise of your own. Trade fairs provide the opportunity to check out hundreds of companies under one roof and see many more examples of the ranges they offer than you would by visiting individual shops. Be aware, however, that most publishers are there to sell rather than buy, and few will have the time or inclination to peruse portfolios. It's preferable to ask whether you can send them samples of your work when the fair is over.

So far as illustrators are concerned, the ideal is to work for a card publisher that employs a designer to commission artwork, as someone with a trained eye is likely to make sensible design decisions. Quality control is a good indicator of a company's ethos. Before approaching any publisher you should ensure two criteria are met: firstly, their merchandise is of a consistently high standard; and secondly, you can see your work fitting in with their aesthetic. Being on the same wavelength as your publisher means your work is less likely to be rejected, by them or the retailers that do business with them. Lastly, never be tempted to answer advertisements in non-industry publications placed by 'exciting new card companies looking for exciting new illustrators'. They are invariably cowboys or clueless start-ups – and any involvement with them is sure to end in tears.

Below: Siobhan Harrison trained and worked in textiles before retraining in illustration, after which she worked in-house in the greetings card industry. She now works in the area of children's books and editorial illustration as well as cards. Her adaptability has made her popular with a wide clientele as she is able to work across a variety of greetings card genres, including cute and character-based (left) and decorative (right).

Creating a portfolio

When developing a portfolio of samples to show prospective publishers it's worth bearing in mind that, whereas many people prefer attractive 'inside left blank for own message' cards that reflect their taste, personality or sense of humour, others prefer one that states the obvious, sometimes at length or in rhyme. I have worked in retail, and was once informed by a customer in search of a card proclaiming 'Happy Birthday to My Wife' that this (as opposed to writing his own personal message to said wife in a non-spouse-specific birthday card) was 'the protocol'. I later noticed that illustrators whose publishers had given them carte blanche to produce ranges of blank cards had done so only after spending years in the message-card sector, proving that they were commercial.

I therefore recommend developing a selection of small 'taster' ranges that show how you might approach common themes: one range covering weddings, engagements and Valentines perhaps; another, birthday cards for different ages or family members; and another addressing pregnancy, new babies and christenings, and so on. This will also give you an opportunity to show off your stylistic versatility.

Setting up as a publisher

Whether you are a designer or an illustrator, if you are considering becoming a card publisher yourself you will need to give serious thought to how good your business skills are and how you might finance the enterprise. You will spend comparatively little time designing or illustrating; instead, you'll be involved with the production and marketing of your range: sourcing materials; dealing with printers; processing, packaging up and sending out orders; engendering new business by whatever means possible; sending out invoices and statements; and chasing up outstanding payments – all the while juggling your cash flow. The learning curve can be steep, and research is of the utmost importance.

Go to gift fairs, and talk to agents, retailers and other card publishers about your commercial viability before you even think about putting your ideas into print. Better still, first learn the ropes by designing or illustrating for other publishers. I have seen inexperienced publishers make wretched business decisions simply through lack of experience – from printing up ranges that were too limited (most gift shops like to have more than three or four designs on display) or in unpopular formats (square), to producing cards that lacked commercial



appeal or putting so much money into production that the eventual retail price was prohibitively expensive.

Lastly, when it comes to selling your cards start by exhibiting them at one of the smaller, regional gift fairs. These are more affordable and less corporate than the major international events.

Summary

Making Sense of the Marketplace

1.

Learning about the key areas in the creative industry is essential to deciding which sectors interest you most and who to approach for work.

2.

Internships with design groups, advertising agencies and magazines often pave the way to full-time jobs for designers; most illustrators are freelance, and generally get their first commissions from the editorial sector.

3.

Design groups differ in size and the services they provide for clients. They may be broad-based and/or multidisciplinary, or concentrate on specific sectors such as fashion or finance. Specializations vary widely, and include branding, packaging and web design.

4.

Advertising agencies pay the highest fees but you must be prepared to work hard – and to tight deadlines. Some specialize in specific media, such as print, television and film, online campaigns or direct mail.

5.

The editorial sector is wide ranging and includes magazines, newspapers, and trade and professional publications. Design and illustration styles vary according to readership, so it is important for practitioners to decide on the type of publication that best suits their abilities.

6.

Book publishing covers hardback and paperback fiction and non-fiction for children and adults. Many designers who later become freelance start off working in a publishing house, while children's picture books provide commissions for illustrators whose styles are suitable for this market.

7.

Comics and graphic novels are of interest to illustrators rather than designers. There are two routes into this sector: self-authoring independent comics and working for a commercial publisher on a freelance basis.

8.

Television and film are part of the entertainment industry, and as this is a niche market there is competition to work in these sectors. Software skills are important for designers who want to work in production houses. Freelance illustrators are regularly employed as storyboard and concept artists.

9.

Computer games development offers more opportunities for artists and animators than for designers – and is one of the few sectors that can provide illustrators with in-house or short-contract work. Artists should be familiar with screen resolutions and the file formats used in digital modelling.

10.

Greetings cards are part of the gift industry and can provide permanent employment for designers; roles can vary and some publishers prefer applicants with multiple skills. This creative area is one of the few where having a variety of illustrative styles is an advantage.

Long Island Graphic Design Agency,
Lyon, France
I learnt to work in a small team and
I learnt to work with colleagues. Book cover
design with colleagues work.

I try to be creative and to see things
differently to make my projects
interesting to me and to others.

gent cheese on warm
with cherries
Jam

**ALIX
JEAMBRUN**

Curriculum Vitae

12 Peoples Place
Warwick road
OX16 0FJ, Banbury, UK
07544666516
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Research and Cold-calling

3

Before you make overtures to organizations and individuals in the sectors of the creative industry that most interest you it is necessary to find out as much as possible about them. Understanding the precise nature of the work a specific company does, how you might best be of use to them, and the means by which they prefer to be approached will serve you infinitely better than contacting a broad range of vaguely possible employers. Target only those for whom your work is truly appropriate, and make sure whatever you send them as a visual appetizer honestly represents you as a practitioner and typifies the contents of your portfolio. Sometimes this may involve making individual promotional packages instead of, or in addition to, more general material you have already prepared. It may even necessitate producing a brand-new piece of work geared to a target's specific needs.

Opposite: Alix Jeambrun's beautifully rendered CV is both memorable and appropriate to her target market. It is representative of the type of work she aspires to – illustration and craft design.

Why Research Is Important

The more you know about a potential employer before an interview, the more likely you are to make an impression. Regrettably, there is a certain breed of commissioner who takes active pleasure in causing the nervous first-time job seeker maximum discomfort so the better prepared you are, the more confident you will be. There are stories abound of art directors ripping up work or taking pleasure in dismissing you in the most soul-destroying manner – some industries, such as advertising, are renowned to be tougher than others. Or it is simply that there are some unpleasant characters out there, who take wicked advantage of their positions of power and influence, and you're likely to cross paths with a couple of them during your professional lifetime. Try to look upon these tiresome interludes as character building. The trick is to be able to recognize legitimate criticism, which usually goes something like this:

'I'd need to see specific examples of X/Y/Z before I can be sure you're absolutely right for us.'

'Your characters lack the distinctiveness and originality needed for the children's book market.'

'Your X is very strong but your Y needs further development.'

'There are too many illustrative styles here; I find it confusing.'

'Your work is probably better suited to the X sector than ours.'

'We don't really commission much X. Have you thought of approaching so-and-so instead?'

While opinions can be subjective, if the same criticism keeps recurring this is usually a reliable indicator that there is a genuine problem. The more aware you are of what an employer or commissioner is looking for, and the more confident you are in your ability to fulfil their criteria, the easier it is to appreciate and act on any valid criticism.

'It is always worth doing your homework and being honest with yourself about your style and who you target.'

Hazel Brown, Deputy Art Editor, *Radio Times*

The less focused you are when you target your work, the more likely you are to flounder on a tide of disparate feedback, none of it overly helpful. As a graphic design graduate desperate for her first full-time appointment, I once travelled miles to see

a company I'd picked at random out of the only design directory available at the time. On my arrival, it became instantly apparent that it was rather more dedicated to industrial design – an area I had no talent for or, indeed, training in – than I had realized. My interviewer, no doubt as befuddled as I was as to what had brought me to the company, but feeling obliged to offer something in the way of professional advice, opined: 'I think you should remount everything in your folder on grey.' In retrospect, given that my work looked just fine mounted on black, this was surely as good an example of two-sided time wasting as any.

'Research the companies you like the work of. Not just the obvious ones. Find out who works in them and who gives out the jobs; his/her name (correct spelling) and a bit about them – their background; college, university. Send them a thoughtful, considered and personal professional letter/email, well laid out and signed. No "Dear anybody..." stock letters.'

Andy Ewan, Founding Partner, Ewan Searle Studio

Overleaf: Some pages from the online portfolio of New York-based Taiwanese cross-disciplinary practitioner, Tien-Min Liao (L) plus a self-promotional poster featuring a montage of her work, (R).

Targeting Your Research

As mentioned in chapter one, some art colleges offer more advice about professional practice than others – and, of course, there are also students who doggedly choose to inhabit their own little worlds until they graduate. Quite often I meet new practitioners who not only seem wholly unaware of the competition that abounds in every sphere, but also nurture ambitions that have little grounding in commercial reality. If you only work in black and white, you'll have fewer options than someone who works in colour; if you can't draw children, or characters per se, you'll have a limited career in children's books; and even if you're the world's foremost expert on Tolkien or the *Star Trek* franchise, this does not automatically mean your work is of the standard required to illustrate mass-market book covers.

Many similarly stark truths abound. Whether you are a designer or an illustrator, it's no use building castles in the air. An abundance of online and printed source material makes it relatively painless and straightforward to find suitable potential employers in the design world, while the ubiquitous and conspicuous nature of illustration makes it easy enough to research possible clients.

Jobs in the design world

As many junior designers are offered permanent employment by companies they did internships with as students, it's advisable to investigate the possibility of doing a placement while you're still in college. Focus is key; if you have a leaning towards a specialist area – branding in the retail sector, for example, or website design – investigate the possibility of doing an internship with a company that reflects your interest, though be aware that most student internships are unpaid. And, if you haven't yet thought that far ahead, start familiarizing yourself with the work of as many creative employers as possible. Even if you don't want to specialize you'll find tremendous variations in company ethos, clientele and approach to design in general. If, for instance, you're interested in working with illustrators or utilising your own illustrative skills as a designer, you need to know that some design groups commission next to no illustration at all and make sure you steer clear of them.

If you have reached the stage of researching potential employers to target, scanning job advertisements, even if you aren't qualified to apply for the positions being advertised, is invaluable. A company's size and geographical location, whether it is general or specialist in nature, the sectors it services, and how likely it is to hire people with multiple skills can be determined from an advertisement just as well as from a company website

or a profile in the creative press – though you're more likely to see examples of work and find contact names by assiduously scouring the latter. You may, in the rare instances you do stumble across an advertisement for a junior designer, find there are certain skills you need to hone or acquire in order to embark on your chosen path. If you're reading this while still a student, forewarned is forearmed: use whatever facilities are available to you while they're subsidized or free as further training can be expensive.

'I'm partly influenced by the design of a promo piece but more interested in contacting people who have shown samples of something of a similar nature to what we produce.'

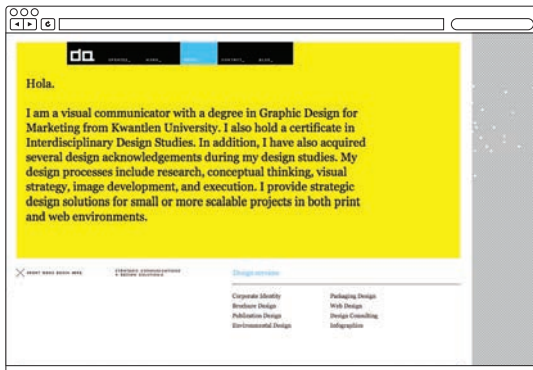
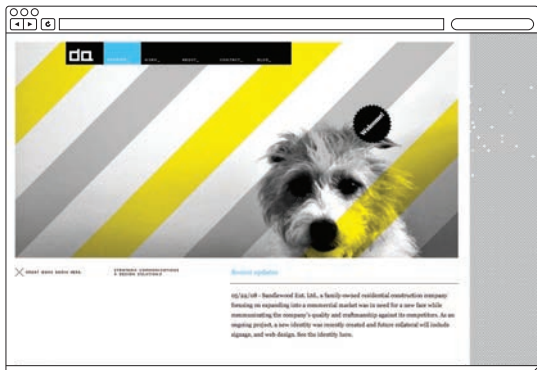
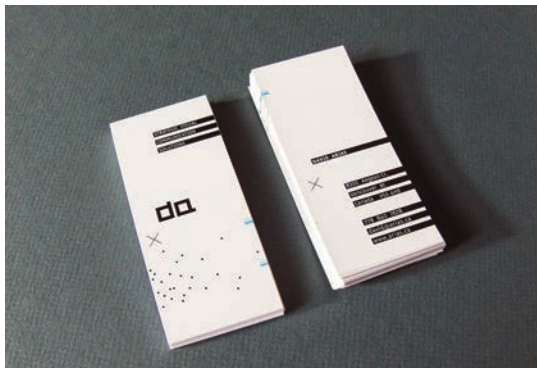
Joy Monkhouse, freelance publishing designer, Scholastic





'You get a lot of stuff you know you won't commission in a million years. Printed material has to be pretty special for you to want to keep it. It only has value if it's lovely.'

Mark Reddy, Head of Art, Bartle Bogle Hegarty



Opposite: Canadian freelance designer David Arias has created a 246-page book to function as his portfolio when visiting clients and design studios. Note how all additional forms of self-promotion echo the design of the book, creating a strong personal brand identity.

Below: Self-promotional material can give you an opportunity to exercise your creativity beyond the constraints of a commercial brief. These cards formed part of a collectable series, issued by Russell Cobb every 3–4 months over a 5-year period. In total, he produced 38 designs, which also enabled him to send complete mini-portfolios for clients to keep when requested.

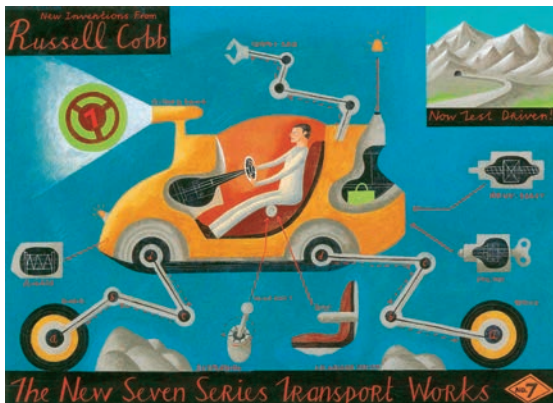
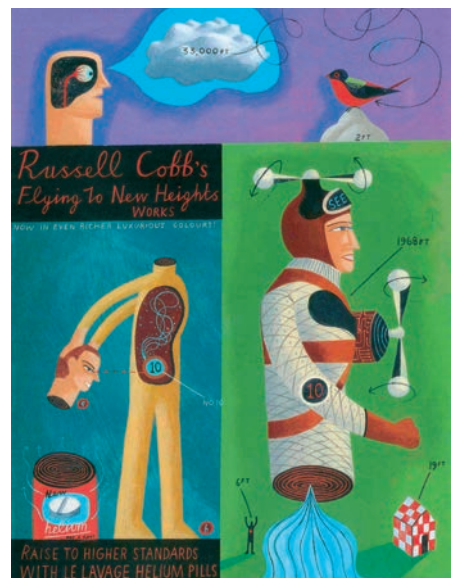
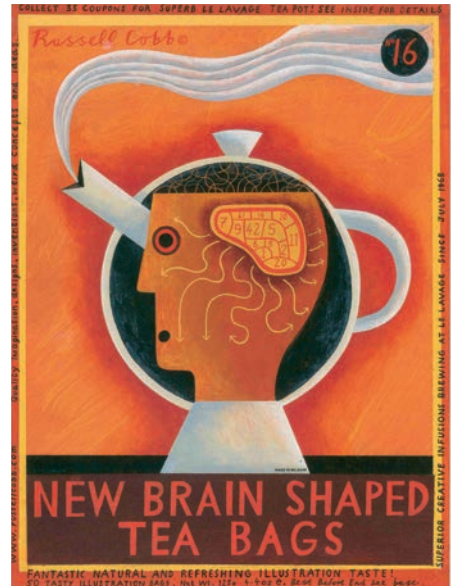


Illustration commissioners

As mentioned in chapter two, the majority of freelance illustrators tend to get their first commissions from editorial clients. So, your first mission must be to familiarize yourself with as wide a variety of magazines and newspapers as possible (not just the ones you've heard of or happen to read yourself; we're talking livelihood not lifestyle here), taking note of the type of illustration they use if and where applicable. Ask yourself whether the kind of work they favour bears any similarity to yours; this could be a stylistic resemblance or have more to do with subject matter or a certain way of thinking. If you detect one or more similarities, congratulations; you've found yourself a potential commissioner.

'I work in children's books, and get submissions of nudes, extreme violence and adult editorial work all the time. I'd say about 10–15 per cent is something I might be able to use some day.'

Steve Scott, Art Director, Scholastic

However, this applies only to illustrated editorial content. When it comes to the advertisements, any illustrations therein will have been commissioned not by the magazine but by an advertising agency on behalf of whichever advertiser paid to appear in the publication. If a magazine doesn't favour illustrations or commissions work that bears no resemblance to yours, move on. Publications that eschew illustrations usually do so for a reason – which is unlikely to be a dearth of illustrators. Some magazine editors simply do not care for illustrations or feel they are inappropriate for their publication.

'This happens with all illustrators, not just newcomers. I receive samples of work that is totally inappropriate for my company very frequently.'

Jonathan Christie, Art Director, Conran Octopus

A magazine's contents page gives the name of the person responsible for commissioning – generally the art editor or art director. Newspapers tend to be slightly less forthcoming in this respect, though you will usually find the publisher's address and telephone number listed somewhere in the publication. A quick telephone call should provide you with the contact name you need. Meanwhile, your own common sense will tell you whether there are any subject-specific samples in your portfolio. If there aren't, generate some fresh work as you'll need it to convince the commissioner you're a suitable illustrator for the publication.

Be prepared to find an audience in areas you haven't previously considered and embrace new content should the necessity arise. You may, for example, be interested in narrative work but find relatively few publications that feature illustrated short stories. A medical or psychiatric journal, or a magazine geared towards social workers, may run illustrated case histories and, from an illustrator's point of view, these can be treated as narratives. When searching for new clients, an open mind will always stand you in good stead.

'I have a reasonably good knowledge of design – type, layout, etc. – but I'm mostly doing illustration. But it helps a lot. I write my children's books and do the layout and general packaging. I think the graphics background makes me a better illustrator and it can help when talking with designer clients.'

Ian Bilbey, freelance illustrator

Below: UK publication, *Creative Review* (shown here with an illustrated cover by Billie Jean), is just one of many highly informative industry magazines showcasing creative talent. Most art school libraries subscribe to these on a regular basis as do some public libraries.

Research Resources

There's no excuse for not being industry-savvy these days – though, granted, there's such an abundance of easily accessible reference material it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start. There is a comprehensive listings section at the end of this book but here, in the meantime, is a brief rundown of some of the resources you can draw on.

'I find that when you apply for the wrong job no good will come of it, you're just wasting time. Applying for bad jobs is like going out on dates with people you don't like. There's little point in the long run, and it'll just distract you from your true goals.'

Josh Keay, freelance designer

Professional journals

Numerous weekly, monthly and bimonthly titles devoted to the creative industry are available in print or online. Within them you will find profiles of companies and individual practitioners as well as job advertisements. You will also find articles on industry trends plus updates on clients, company mergers and takeovers, and the promotions and relocations of various movers and shakers. Even magazines aimed at hobbyists and aspiring practitioners can be worth a look as they frequently offer all kinds of pointers from industry professionals.

Annuals and sourcebooks

Glossy, large-format annuals and sourcebooks celebrating design, advertising, illustration, photography and multimedia abound. Some accompany competitions, with featured entries nominated by elected panels of industry professionals. (Always check the judges, as some are less well known – and therefore less often approached by aspiring newcomers – than those who regularly feature in the creative press.) Others are simply directories that showcase the work of practitioners, organizations that represent practitioners, or both; these can offer insights into the kinds of client, projects and practitioners with which potential commissioners are involved. Illustrators seeking representation can get a realistic overview of how agencies differ. Both types of publication tend to have free distribution among commissioners and employers, and are either archived online or have affiliated websites.



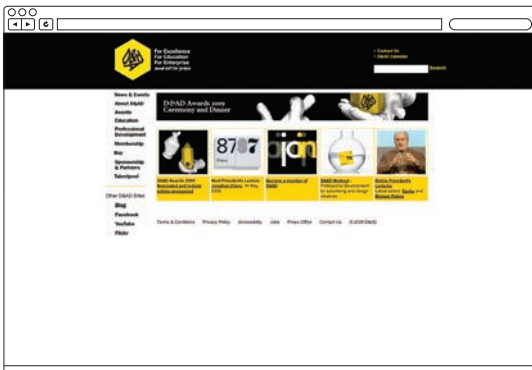
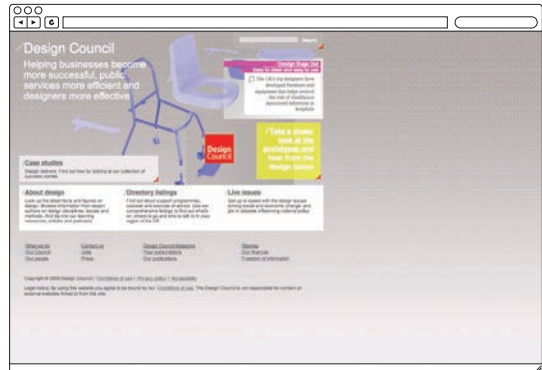
'Graphic design positions are placed in our own titles, *Design Week* and *Creative Review*.'

Colin McHenry, Group Art Director, Centaur Media

'(We advertise) on our website; through selected schools and the AIGA website.'

Christopher Pullman, Vice President, Design (Public Television) USA

Below (from top, left to right): Various industry bodies and membership organizations exist to nurture, promote and reward creative talent and all are accessible online. Featured are AIGA, the professional association for design; The Design Council; Design and Art Direction (D&AD); and The Society of Illustrators.



Yearbooks, mailing lists and industry directories

There are several yearbooks and associated online resources devoted to specific markets such as publishing, advertising, computer games and the film and television industry. It's also possible to purchase reasonably priced databases and mailing lists of creative organizations of all kinds from marketing resource specialists. These tend to be sector specific, and are updated frequently and include contact details. However, a more general overview can be acquired courtesy of various creative industry directories. These can often be found in specialist libraries, though many of their listings can be accessed free online.

Libraries

For those strapped for cash, yearbooks, directories and industry magazines can sometimes be found in the reference section of public libraries, especially if there's an art college in the vicinity; or try art college libraries – remember, though, that different campuses may not necessarily carry the same publications. Enterprising illustrators in search of more unusual editorial titles may benefit from stalking the aisles of university libraries, as the magazines they archive reflect the subjects taught.

Industry-related websites, portals and blogs

If you want to know who an advertising agency's clients are, see if a design group specializes in brand identity or exhibition graphics, or find out if a publisher favours illustrations on its book jackets, the company website should be your first port of call. Not only will you get an overall idea of the organization's output, you could well find job advertisements, calls for speculative submissions or information related to internships.

Industry bodies and organizations with a professional membership also have websites and use them to promote publications, job opportunities and various events, such as competitions, seminars, conferences and exhibitions. Some offer subscribers the facility to promote their work online, while those that host discussion forums provide members with the means to network and share their professional experience.

Of course, anyone with a basic grasp of the Internet and access to a web-hosting site can call themselves an industry spokesperson. However, quality control does exist. Selective,

multi-authored or invitation-only design and illustration blogs are great places to start when checking out the competition – and you should find some decent links, too. Individual blogs can also be used for research purposes, since practitioners frequently post information on who is currently hiring them.

Lastly, there is a plethora of widely differing communities and online directories that deal with creative jobs of all kinds. Some are set up for love and moderated by practitioners. Others are set up for money by specialized recruitment agencies, industry magazines, national newspapers or portfolio-hosting companies. Most of these are free to employers and commissioners, with practitioners paying to upload online CVs or portfolios. Some provide discussion forums as well as career tips or links to industry-related blogs and articles in the creative press. The directories, in particular, can be invaluable as they offer the facility to search for creative employers according to discipline and geographical location.

'All our juniors come via work placements, people who either keep in touch or make themselves indispensable while they're here. We do see designers who approach us speculatively. If we like a PDF or website, we'll call someone in. We never advertise.'

Rob Howsam, Creative Director, Purpose Design

Cold-calling

Despite the increasing popularity of emails and Internet resources I'm a great believer in the value of face-to-face meetings and entreat you – particularly in the case of speculative applications and regardless of your discipline – to make securing one your objective wherever geographically practicable. While the organizations and individuals you target will usually keep any well-designed, imaginative promotional material you have sent them on file, impressing them with further examples of your brilliance while their interest is piqued will ensure your work stays uppermost in their mind for longer. This means getting on the phone and following up any overtures you make to a possible employer, no matter how shy or uncomfortable you feel.

In the face of extreme competition, sending out a handful of mailers then sitting back and waiting for dream-job offers to come rolling in is neither an effective nor a realistic option. For illustrators in particular, being proactive is crucial as many commissioners have a rapid turnover of illustrations and their needs can therefore vary on an ongoing basis. A good start is to Google the names of art editors/directors who have judged illustration competitions.

‘Those who phone have 95 per cent done their homework. Those who email are 75 per cent relevant. Post is worst; at least 60 per cent is inappropriate.’

Martin Colyer, Art Director, Reader's Digest

Whether you are a graphic designer or an illustrator, one of the most frustrating aspects of cold-calling is to be told that a company or individual has no need of your services as they already have a pool of stalwarts they've been drawing on for years. In many areas of creative employment, the digital revolution has significantly depleted the size of the average art department. With fewer designers carrying what used to be the workload of many, time is at a premium and, for commissioners, risk-taking is consequently less appealing; it's easy to appreciate why falling back on practitioners they already know appeals to them. Yet, given the nature of their profession, they need to be on top of prevailing trends, so your striving to become a known quantity could, if you are successful, ultimately benefit them. It's easy to overlook this fact at the beginning of your career when confidence can waiver because of the risk of appearing pushy. Polite persistence – as necessary an attribute as a winning portfolio – is the answer here.

There's also a good chance that your interpersonal skills will play a significant part in winning an employer's or commissioner's confidence. Examples of your work alone won't enable him or her to determine how swift, reliable or adaptable you might be, or how well the two of you would work together.

A creative director of my acquaintance called in a recent design graduate on the basis of some particularly engaging samples – only to meet with an aggressive individual so firmly convinced of their own greatness that, professional inexperience notwithstanding, they felt a junior position to be beneath them. While such chutzpah and fierce self-belief might have gone down well elsewhere, in the context of a smallish, close-knit design team that shared the same workspace, it was perceived as a lack of humility that could generate ill-feeling. I have had illustrators turn up for meetings anything up to 40 minutes late, on completely the wrong day, or in various altered states of consciousness. I've also encountered arrogance, near-monosyllabic nonchalance and a complete inability to take constructive criticism with anything approaching good grace – not ideal if you're hoping to work with or for the person giving you professional feedback. While talent is paramount, when it comes to attitude and personal chemistry a working relationship is no different from any other kind.

‘We would avoid someone who was emulating what they considered “Airside style”. We want designers with their own thoughts and styles so that they bring something to the pot.’

Anne Brassier, PR and New Business, Airside

Speculative Applications

Given that full-time employment is commonplace for graphic designers, many graduates assume they'll be responding to specific job advertisements and attending formal interviews rather than going the speculative route more commonly associated with a freelance career in illustration. However, junior vacancies aren't necessarily advertised and even those that are often specify a minimum of 1–2 years experience. Some designers come by their first job as a result of doing an internship, or even a succession of internships, but many do so simply by being in the right place at the right time – and, for this to happen, you need to make connections in the industry. So, unless you're one of the privileged few who are offered a full-time position during or following a college placement, there's every likelihood you'll be making speculative applications.

'My pet peeve is young designers who cold-call me on the phone and ask only, "Are you hiring?" I will almost always take the time to review the portfolio of a young designer who approaches me in a respectful, candid, thorough manner. But I will never – no matter how hungry I am for new talent – answer "Are you hiring?" with "Yes".'

Doug Powell, Creative Director, Schwartz Powell Design

Whether you are a designer or an illustrator, securing so much as a ten-minute meeting with a time-poor art director/ editor besieged on all sides by graduates frantic to pay off their student loans is a hard enough task even when you have done your homework. And, if the person concerned heads up a hip, flavour-of-the-month organization that everybody else also wants to work for, it's likely to be even harder. The common response to this age-old predicament is to fire off unfocused begging letters to every potential employer or commissioner within a 100-mile radius in the hope of making a random strike. While understandable, this is not recommended. The postage costs involved can be prohibitive and if you're essentially targeting large numbers of the wrong people the frustration factor is likely to be high.

Emails may save money, but it is easy for the intended recipients to mislay or overlook unsolicited ones, or swear blind they never received them in the first place. The emails often get

no further than the company spam filter, while even those that do get through may irk; no one likes a digital file that takes forever to download. Besides, art directors/editors are capricious and sensitive when it comes to the samples they receive. Some swear by digital media, others have an avowed preference for print. Many happily paper the walls of their workplace with promotional paraphernalia, while others consider a bare, minimalist environment integral to the creative process and work that doesn't immediately appeal to them goes straight into the bin. About the only thing they agree on is that they don't like having their time wasted. The less relevant the samples an art director/editor receives, the more likely they are to jettison them and the less likely you are to receive any constructive feedback. Sending misleading examples could result in an interview – but one that elicits negative feedback. Either way, not great for morale when you are trying to launch your career.

'I receive many speculative calls and emails, and posted samples in all shapes and sizes. Many of these I think are inappropriate for the magazine. I also receive calls from illustrators who have researched little about the magazine and are often unaware of the postal address. I do expect people to do the groundwork and be aware of the magazine's illustration styles and content.'

Alison Lawn, Art Director, *New Scientist*

Below: Categories in the prestigious V&A Illustration Awards include Best Illustrated Book, Book Cover, Editorial Illustration and Student Illustrator of the Year. The work is subsequently featured in the museum's annual exhibition, while all entries can be viewed online. Seen here are two pieces by 2011 winner, Michael Redmond, from the Royal College of Art; *Before The Dive* (left) and *Fruits* (right).

Student Exhibitions and Competitions

Many creative employers attend student degree exhibitions, such as 'New Designers' and the D&AD's 'New Blood' in the United Kingdom, and events organized by the Art Directors Club in the United States and by the Australian Graphic Design Association. With this in mind, remember that on this kind of occasion potential employers or clients will be researching you, rather than you them. Try not to stray too far from your stand on opening night, and make sure you provide a visitors' book and plenty of promotional material for interested parties to take away. Finally, entering student design competitions can help to raise your profile substantially, so enter them if and when you have the opportunity. Remember: the more professional contacts you make, the greater your chances of finding work in the long run.

'We don't advertise for junior designers. We keep all CVs of interest that are sent to us or ask designers we know already. We also attend graduation shows and "New Designers".'

Anne Brassier, PR and New Business, Airside



Summary

Research and Cold-calling

1.

Finding out about the organizations and individuals in your chosen sector of the creative industry will enable you to target only those for whom your work is appropriate.

2.

Sources of information include professional journals, sourcebooks, annuals, and mailing lists and industry directories. There are also resources such as websites, portals and blogs, and online communities and directories that specialize in creative jobs in a variety of disciplines.

3.

Securing a face-to-face meeting with a potential employer or commissioner should be one of your main objectives. Once you have sent them any kind of promotional material it is essential to telephone them and ask whether you can show them your portfolio.

4.

Interpersonal skills can be significant during a presentation: a potential employer or commissioner needs to determine whether they could have a good working relationship with you, and how reliable or adaptable you are.

5.

Be focused when you make speculative applications. Art editors/directors don't like having their time wasted, so make sure any samples you send to an organization are relevant to its requirements.

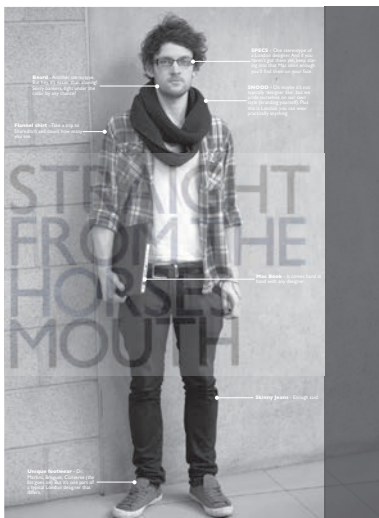
6.

Competitions and student degree exhibitions can help to raise your profile so far as creative employers are concerned; and in the case of the latter, they will be researching you, rather than you them.

Art Director: Matt Sullivan
Designer: Matt Sullivan
Editor: Matt Sullivan
Writer: Matt Sullivan

London College of Communication
F&A Graphic Design for Communication

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH



Creating a Good Portfolio

4

At the risk of stating the obvious, a good portfolio – whether it be print or digital – is one that lands the type of job or commission you're looking for. Your portfolio is the means by which potential employers or commissioners will familiarize themselves with your work. It should, therefore, adequately showcase your skills without boring your target to death or, conversely, giving them short shrift.

Opposite: Graphic designer Matt Bolton amply demonstrates how to make a powerful visual impression at the start (top) and finish (bottom) of a print portfolio.

Basic Approaches

I was once consulted by an established botanical illustrator. The work was of a consistently high standard, covered a wide variety of botanical subject matter, in a variety of media, from both a decorative and informational standpoint. However, I was forced to look through no less than five portfolios in order to determine this – which took up a hefty chunk of our allocated 60 minutes. I lost the will to live halfway through a succession of unbound, black-and-white, scarcely distinguishable garden plans – which I counted, since by this time it was my only means of staying awake; there were almost 40. No commissioner needs that much convincing somebody can draw a water feature. The illustrator in question could have been saved the ignominy of fetching up in this book as a cautionary tale by some judicious pruning – for instance, three plans, maybe one in colour, featuring three discernibly different types of garden design. Point made more than adequately in less than a minute; and on to the next section of the portfolio.

‘I once heard that one’s own work should be good enough to be housed in a paper bag. I have to agree with that. A nice presentation is helpful – as long as the work doesn’t suffer for the presentation.’

Kristina DiMatteo, Art Director, *Print*

You’re not a student any more; there’s no need to show every project you’ve ever worked on in order to impress or show your dedication. For maximum effectiveness your portfolio should simply demonstrate how you are at your best as a practitioner, and how well you understand the needs of the commissioner who is looking at your work. Moreover, it should do so quickly since most introductory presentations don’t last anything like an hour; truth be told, you will be lucky if you get 15 minutes. (And as for 15 uninterrupted minutes...) This is especially pertinent to illustrators making speculative approaches to commissioners rather than to designers attending formal interviews for full-time positions. And, while it is imperative that you are able to talk potential employers through the contents of your folder articulately and in depth, your core strengths should also be apparent in your absence. With time at a premium, portfolio drop-offs are the norm for many organizations, as they allow employers to view work in their own time with the added option of showing it to colleagues who might not be available

for a presentation. Illustration agencies often also favour this approach as they tend to be small organizations and are frequently targeted by artists whose work is unsuitable.

‘I always think simplicity is the best option. I think it is the work which should shine, not necessarily the style of presentation.’

Alison Lawn, Art Director, *New Scientist*

Should you be asked to drop off a print portfolio for a couple of hours – or even a couple of days – don’t panic any more than you would if you were asked to email a client some jpegs or a PDF of your work. No reputable company would dream of ripping off your work or publishing your images without your consent; not least because the odds against you finding out and suing them are slim. Likewise, don’t despair at the brevity of your presentation should you be fortunate enough to be granted a face-to-face meeting. Anyone who’s been in the creative industries long enough to attain a senior position can not only zip through a portfolio in minutes, they can also fully take in the contents. ‘Visual communication’ is what they do for a living. Plus, it doesn’t take all that long to answer the question: ‘Is this person good enough to work for me?’

‘If a student or designer has work in the portfolio, it should be their work and they should be able to talk about whatever role they played in it. If it was designed by a senior designer and they helped with the final, that’s OK, just be honest about your role.’

Robert Linsky, Senior Vice President of Design, Art Plus Technology

Learn to be Objective

Being able to take stock of your creative strengths and weaknesses is every bit as important as understanding the needs of your chosen target. Commissioners, employers and even practitioners have different opinions when it comes to what to include in a portfolio – but it's generally agreed you should start with your strongest piece and end on a similarly high note. Since it's a fact of creative life that few practitioners are – or remain – 100 per cent happy with what they produce, I recommend aiming for around 87 per cent satisfaction with whatever you choose to start with – and, for that matter, with everything that follows. While I believe this to be both realistic and achievable, I also understand it can be easier said than done, especially for anyone who is just starting out.

‘A professional portfolio should contain final printed samples of their best work, and should show pieces appropriate for the job they are seeking. If anyone includes pieces that are not great, I am unlikely to use them. I would rather see a book with only a few really good pieces, than one with a lot of inconsistent pieces.’

Steve Scott, Art Director, Scholastic

Although students generally receive regular, constructive criticism while developing their skills, the feedback from tutors and peers can sometimes be wildly conflicting and, on occasion, biased, so it's hardly surprising that some of designers and illustrators emerge from art college confused and unsure of themselves. However, since industry professionals are likely to have similarly diverse reactions to the work they see, your portfolio is destined to be a mess if you don't learn to value your own judgement. I've had many new graduates confess mid-consultation, 'So-and-so told me this was my strongest piece of work but I never really liked it.' In most instances, the decision to include a sample you're not sure about can be born of panic, as in: 'But what if it's the piece that might get me the job?' But, frankly, what if it is? If, deep down, you suspect the work is bad, or the thought of having to repeat the exercise is profoundly unappealing, would you really want the job it got you? Since it's as impossible to sell work you've no confidence in as it is to be all things to everyone you meet professionally, you will always be best served by being true to yourself.

Bad work will stick in the viewer's mind, whether it's irrelevant, derivative, repetitive, overly self-indulgent, out of date (it's not unheard of for people to show pieces that are 15 or 20 years old; one illustrator showed me a drawing he'd done at the age of six, as testament to his lifelong genius) or simply not up to the same standard as the rest of your work. Showcasing the last, in particular, will suggest you can't tell your good, sound pieces from those that are not so good – which can make it difficult for a commissioner to put their faith in you. Think of it from their point of view: why risk using someone whose work is plainly inconsistent when there are plenty of other practitioners they can choose from?

‘Seeing work of varying standards in the same portfolio would put me off commissioning someone.’

Anamaria Stanley, Art Director, TimeOut
