WHAT IS ILLUSTRATION?

So, what is illustration?
Illustration is NOT just images . . . Illustration is storytelling.
Illustration is NOT a media or a style, illustration is communication.
We are saying something to our world.

*John Hendrix*
*ICON7 President's Address 2012*

Lets examine what we THINK is by first looking through a few images that we *know* to be illustrations with the purpose of finding the commonalities and differences.
Saul Steinberg,
"View of the World From 9th Avenue," *The New Yorker* cover, March 29, 1976, colored pencil and ink

Tomer Hanuka,
Ralph Steadman for Flying Dog Brewery, ink on paper.
Red Nose Studio, label for Blasted Church Riesling, sculptural illustration
Illustration is not defined by the method it is made by, but instead it is defined by the purpose it is made for, and ultimately by the context of its use.
WHAT IS ILLUSTRATION?

“Illustration takes disparate elements, text and image, and does not make a jumbled Frankenstein, but a new thing — a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. What I love about illustration is this stark humility — it is willing to subvert itself to deliver its content.”

-- Illustrator John Hendrix from This is Culture, ICON 7 keynote speech
So the act of being commissioned or made to solve a specific problem or illustrate a specific concept, in fact is what makes illustration, illustration!

Norman Rockwell, *Saturday Evening Post cover, October 8, 1938, oil on canvas*
Illustrations are brought to life through their context

Ralph Steadman label for Flying Dog Brewery
Label for Blasted Church Riesling by Red Nose Studio
Yes, arrival at the final art does matter, but our primary aim in this course is to develop an understanding of the process used by illustration professionals.

By the end of the course, you will all become illustration creation machines!
Great news! You, the hardworking illustrator, have just received a call from a dream client!
WHERE TO BEGIN?

Nick Dewar for The Atlantic

• You've discussed the idea with the art director (AD) and expressed interest in the project.
• You've agreed on a timeline and compensation.
• Great! The next step is usually for the AD to send you a brief, which is a written overview of the project that outlines exactly the scope of the job. If we think about illustration as problem solving, then the brief should outline the problem.
• The solution to the assignment will be in your personal visual reaction to something.
• Usually that something is text, such as a story, an article, or an ad.
You the illustrator are responsible to identify the problem to solve. After all, if you aren't sure what the problem is, you can't solve it.

What problem is John Hendrix solving through this visual reaction?
The next step is to thoroughly understand the subject matter. Having a gut reaction to a topic might make you think you understand it. You don't.

To create an interesting, intelligent, and unique solution we must carefully examine the subject matter through research before putting pencil to paper.
Research Is Idea Factory Fuel!
How do We Research?

Masamune Shirow, "Major Motoko Kusanagi," *Ghost in the Shell*

Libraries, museums, books, films, first-hand accounts, journalism and of course the Internet all should be part of your researching skill set.
Brainstorm Your Way Out of Boring!

The most important part of an illustration is not the execution; it's the concept behind it. After all, if it's not a good idea, why bother?

1. Look at the brief carefully and pick it apart.
2. Research.
3. Then, Brainstorm in your sketchbook.

Jacky Gilbertson, "Fell Asleep While Drawing"
WORD WEBS - One way to Brainstorm!

You’ve read the brief. You've done some research.

Now, begin by writing down any key words or any ideas that come to mind immediately upon reading the brief.

This Brainstorm is for a series of posters commissioned by the Consul General of Japan for an annual cultural festival taking place in New York's Central Park.

Key words: Japan, Central Park, New York.

Next allow yourself to free associate on those three key words. Write down any words or ideas that come to your mind based on the brief.

There aren't wrong answers.

It is important not to censor your ideas—just let them flow. Often the ones that seem random end up inspiring the most creative solutions!
From Brainstorm to Thumbnails!