

WHAT IS ILLUSTRATION?

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ILLUSTRATION?

Coming up with striking concepts for illustrations that hit their intended target is not easy. While some illustrators fulfil the brief with carefree ease, others think, draw, tear up paper, ponder, tear, and draw some more. Certainly, for all illustrators, devising ideas is an intellectual and intuitive process of trial and error, a creative exercise that must be accessible to an audience while staying true to one's sense of self.

The goal of the illustrator is to engage that audience on multiple levels of perception and understanding – to illuminate or comment, to entertain or teach, to invent or reflect. Illustration is more than making pictures, it is delivering short messages and telling long stories. Often an art director intervenes, while at other times the illustrator nails it immediately (and the good art director knows when to leave well alone). Through a combination of talent, aptitude and training, the illustrator can work towards becoming an effective communicator and an astute illuminator.







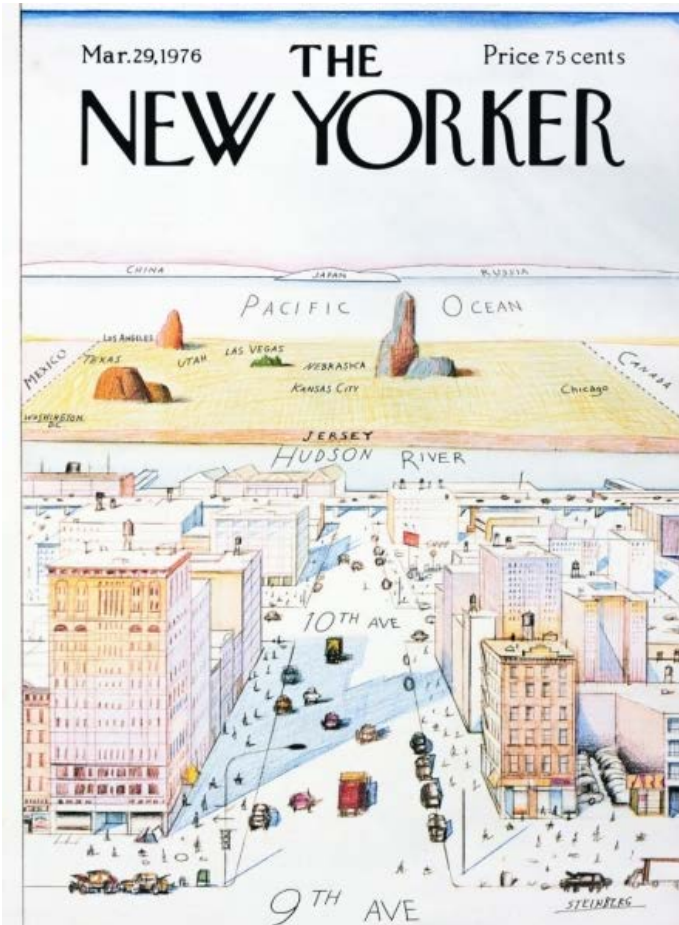
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THE NEW YORKER



NELSON



Saul Steinberg,
"View of the World From 9th Avenue," *The New Yorker* cover, March 29, 1976, colored pencil and ink



Tomer Hanuka,
"Perfect Storm," *The New Yorker* cover, February 10, 2014, digital



Ralph Steadman for Flying Dog Brewery, ink on paper.



Red Nose Studio, label for Blasted Church Riesling, sculptural illustration

- **WORKING DEFINITION:**

*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?

**text +
image**

~~textimage~~

**text +
image**

meaning

“ 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

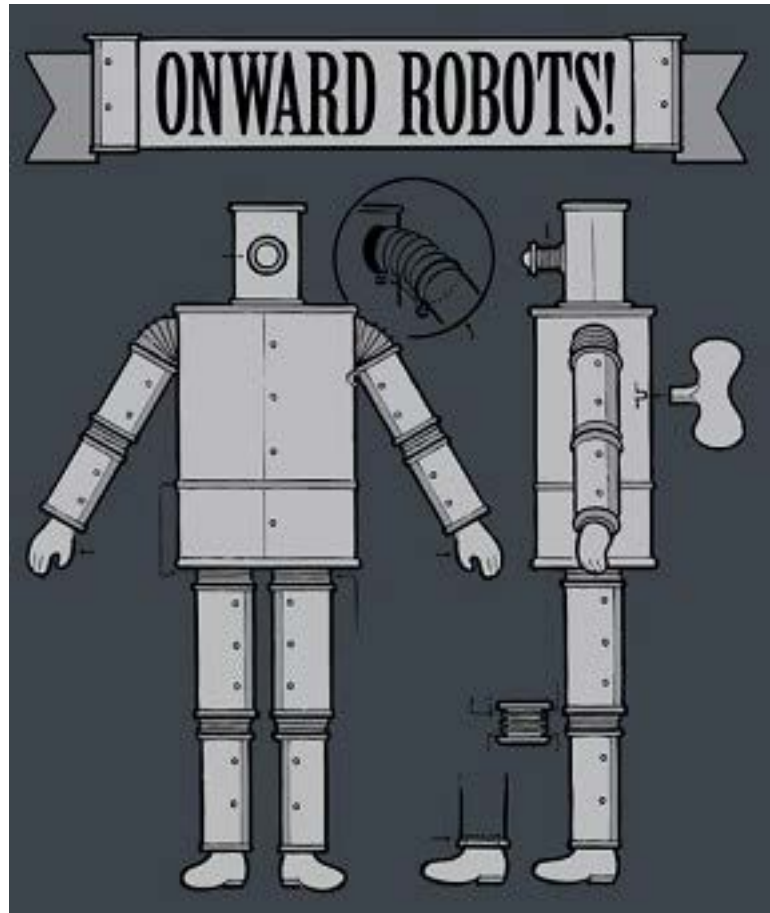
Illustrations are brought to life through their context



Ralph Steadman label for Flying Dog Brewery



Label for Blasted Church Riesling by Red Nose Studio



Chris Ware

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!

Illustrator = Visual Problem-Solver



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.

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.



Allison Bruce, "Stem Cell Hierarchy," cover for *Cancer Cell*, April 13, 2010

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!



Brainstorm Your Way Out of Boring!



Jacky Gilbertson, "Fell Asleep While Drawing"

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.