

ILLUSTRATION

Illustrating Stories

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This is a class about illustration for students at any level, and is open to beginners as well as advanced students.

Illustration communicates stories through visual art. These stories can be full narratives or slices of life. They can be documentary or fantasy. Illustration is either paired with a written narrative, or suggests a narrative that could be put, in part at least, into words. It is meant to communicate with a defined audience or with a wide audience. Illustration is more aligned with popular culture than the traditional visual fine arts.

This class will be taught using New Yorker covers. These covers are examples of illustration at a level of excellence that is also accessible, thought-provoking, and enduring. These covers will be examined and discussed for content (how subject matter is expressed) and for formal qualities (composition, color, style). Wit and humor, as well as restraint and sophistication, will also be discussed as demonstrated through these examples of cover art. Inclusivity and exclusivity will be discussed, as will explicit and implicit social issues.

Work will be done in drawing and in painting media. Some work may also be done in digital media and in mixed media. Work will be done on traditional illustration supports such as watercolor paper, illustration board, bristol board and hardboard panels.

Because this class is being conducted remotely, students won't be sharing the same studio. Creating will be a more solitary experience. This has both good features and bad features. It is good because this duplicates the condition of the life of the artist as someone who works in solitude. It is bad because the ongoing lively creative atmosphere of the studio is absent. You will need to prepare a working space for this class. This space should be comfortable to work at. If you can arrange a permanent location to work in, that is ideal. You can work at a table, or on a drawing board leaned against a table, or on an easel. Check your own comfort as you work. Does your hand, shoulder or arm feel strain? If so, rearrange things. Is the light good? Ideally, light should come from the left side if you are right-handed, and from the right side if you are left-handed. If you are working with a medium that uses solvents, is there enough ventilation? Is it a space in which you are alone, or are other people present? If other people are present, or can walk in and out of your workspace, are you comfortable with this?

You should be happy in your workspace.

Sketchbook

Keep a sketchbook. Get familiar with the practice of drawing as you are thinking, rather than thinking things up and executing them later. In other words, don't wait until you have a good idea before you begin to drawing.

Draw to solve problems, to develop ideas, to study textures or technical issues in an illustration you plan to do, to sketch out figures, costumes, explore different viewpoints, etc.

Also, set a project/practice to draw in the sketchbook for a half-hour or forty-five minutes every day. Set a timer. Date each drawing.

Choose a sketchbook that you like. It can be large or small, have a hard cover or a soft cover. It should have enough pages so that you can do a drawing each day in this sketchbook. Date the pages. Draw every day. If you miss a day, date a page and leave it blank. Decide, after a week or so, on a theme or practice. Choose between such themes as these: anatomy studies, perspective studies, drawing from life, copying from the masters, especially sculpture. Copying is the fastest way to learn the most. If you do a series of copies, think about copying from work that is over a hundred years old. Avoid contemporary art you are already attached to. For example, avoid anime. Also, you may want to do figure drawings from life or from a figure-drawing site such as *croquis café*.

Assignments

Assignment 1- understanding style I

1 Do a drawing from an uninteresting subject, such as a chair. In this drawing you will be using an actual chair as your reference.

2 Using your drawing as a reference for the subject, and a New Yorker cover as a style reference, re-create your drawing in the style and technique of the cover artist.

3 Do a more ambitious drawing from life—either an interior of your living space, or a view out the window. Do not idealize things in this drawing. Draw even the uninteresting things. Try to make the drawing comprehensive.

4 Using your drawing as a reference, and a New Yorker cover as a style reference, re-create your drawing in the style and technique of the artist.

Assignment 2- understanding style II

Returning to the New Yorker covers, re-create (translate) one New Yorker cover (in whole or in part) by replacing its style with the style of another.

Assignment 3- illustrating a story

Create a series of book illustrations in an original style. These illustrations should be consistent in style, but show both close-up and distance views. Illustrations should include:

Two full-page illustrations

One double-page spread

Two spot illustrations

Primary photographic references should be created by the illustrator. Secondary references can be gathered from other sources.

This may also include a cover illustration. Cover illustration should be consistent in style, but somewhat more ambitious in execution.

The subject of this book should be a pre-existing text. It can be a classic work such as a fairy tale like Little Red Riding Hood or The Snow Queen, or a contemporary work. It could be a text you wrote yourself. It would be interesting to illustrate a text written by a classmate.

Use the sketchbook to think through ideas in these projects.

There will also be some minor projects and exercises to be done in the sketchbook.

Assignment 4- working with an art director

This assignment will be described later.

Weekly reports

Students will send weekly reports before the Saturday of each week. Reports include a written narrative of under 300 words, and an image of a completed work or work in progress, no larger than 400 KB. If I need to see a larger image or a detail, I will ask.