Illustration 1

Key Steps in Illustration
Times suggested here are only a guideline: you may want to spend a lot more. Research and writing time, time for reflecting and logging your learning are included.

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### Part four

**Style**

- Projects
  - Tools and materials
  - Audiences
  - Areas of illustration
  - Visual distortion
  - Character development

**Assignment four**

- Magazine illustration

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### Part five

**Words and pictures**

- Projects
  - Authorial practice
  - Editorial illustration
  - Text and image
  - Working for children

**Assignment five**

- Seven days

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### Appendix

- Guidelines for submission for formal assessment

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Part one
Getting started
“Illustrators – among the best of them is a unique ability to interpret the world.”

Milton Glaser
Introduction

Your OCA Student Handbook should be able to answer most questions about the basics of this course and all other OCA courses so keep this to hand.

Course aims

By the end of this course you should be able to:

• Demonstrate a process of ideas generation, development and communication
• Understand the properties of a range of media, and appropriately select and employ materials and techniques to create artwork
• Work within pre-determined parameters in response to given illustration briefs
• Provide evidence of critical reflection and understanding of the work of other artists and illustrators
• Reflect perceptively upon your own learning experience.

Your tutor

Your tutor is your main point of contact with OCA. Before you start work make sure that you’re clear about your tuition arrangements. The OCA tuition system is explained in some detail in your Student Handbook.

If you haven’t already done so, please write a paragraph or two about your experience to date. Add background information about anything that you think may be relevant for your tutor to know about you – for example, your own practice, your reasons for exploring this subject, what you expect to achieve from taking the course. Email or post this profile to your tutor as soon as possible. This will help them understand how best to support you during the course.

Arrange with your tutor how you’ll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This could be by email, telephone or post. You may agree, for instance, that you’ll scan or photograph sketchbook images and upload them to the OCA website or a free website such as Flickr or Picassa in between tutorials, if you need your tutor to comment on something in particular, or if you have a problem that you need help with.

Send or show your tutor a cross-section of the work that you’ve done for each assignment in addition to the finished pieces. This should be preliminary work for the final assignment piece as well as a sample of the work you’ve done for the various exercises. For example, you could scan or photograph the relevant pages of your learning log and email them to your tutor and then post the final assignment pieces Or you could post your learning log as an
online blog on the OCA website so that your tutor can see how your work is developing between assignments. It’s particularly important that your tutor sees regular evidence of your development if you’re planning to have your work on this course formally assessed.

Make sure that you label any work that you send to your tutor with your name, student number and the assignment number. Your tutor will get back to you as soon as possible after receiving it but this may take a little time. Continue with the course while you’re waiting.  

*Make pencil notes on the back of all your work as it develops. This will enable your tutor immediately to see what thoughts and issues you’ve had with each piece of work.*

**Formal assessment**

Read the section on assessment in your *Student Handbook* at an early stage in the course. *Your Assessment and how to get qualified* study guide gives more detailed information about assessment and accreditation. For assessment you’ll need to submit a cross-section of the work you’ve done on the course. You’ll also need to submit your learning log, sketchbooks and tutor reports.

**Your learning log**

Keeping a learning log is an integral part of this and every other OCA course. If you’re new to OCA courses, read your *Keeping sketchbooks and learning logs* study guide for further information.

**Planning ahead**

This Level 1 course represents 400 hours of learning time. You should allow around 20% of this time for reflection and learning log development. The course is divided into five parts. Within each part are several exercises, research points and reflection questions to prompt you to use your learning log.

The times given are only approximate. The time you spend on each exercise will depend on how quickly you work, the time available to you, how easy or hard you find each exercise and how quickly you want to complete the course. Don’t worry if you take more or less time than suggested provided that you’re not getting too bogged down in a particular part of the course and that your tutor is happy with the work that you’re producing. If it helps, draft a rough study plan and revisit this at the end of each part.
Using technology

For the purposes of this course, ideally you will have access to Photoshop or other similar software that will allow you to create and manipulate images. You should also have the ability to use your technology. Since technology moves so fast, and as there are plenty of tutorials available elsewhere, this course doesn’t go into the detail of each software package. It does however, assume that you have access to and familiarity with basic techniques such as scanning and image manipulation and that you will practice and develop your skills with your specific software during the course.

However, you can do this course without using such software.
Illustration methods and styles throughout the centuries have shifted along with changes in art and technology. At the turn of the twentieth century illustration was primarily a visual storytelling medium. The increasing availability of photography in the middle of the century meant that illustration became freed from the need to represent and led to a redefinition of what created imagery and illustration could do, how it could function, how it could interpret and contribute conceptually. Wit, satire, expressionism and surrealism are all aspects of illustration which are now taken for granted, created for a viewing audience credited with high levels of visual literacy and the ability to decode and read imagery beyond its face value.

The explosion of digital opportunities, with many households now owning or having access to sophisticated computer facilities, has again contributed to a redefinition of illustration. There are more opportunities for image-makers to explore the symbiotic links between image and text. The availability of cheap print and print on demand has led to opportunities for authorship and self-publishing and a redefinition of what a 'gallery' of artwork can include.

There are so many strands to illustration at the moment, the word illustration doesn’t really describe what is emerging.

Paul Bowman, illustrator, editorial board member, Varoom magazine.
Global communication has opened up international markets so that illustrators are no longer tied to working in cities with a high density of design and advertising houses and publishers.

The possibilities for selling artwork and artefacts which include a strong visual content via websites and internet shops and galleries allow practitioners to define themselves more broadly, and the package of illustrators’ skills now firmly includes entrepreneurial and business aptitude. Some see this as empowering – illustration as ‘art on the street’. Others are more critical, fearing a lack of quality control, increased opportunities for plagiarism and a focus on style over content. As ever it is the ability to think and understand which makes good illustration.

*The continued relevance of illustration lies in the intelligence brought to bear in picture-making and the ability to embrace continuing change.*

Darrel Rees, founder of Heart Illustration Agency

It’s important for illustrators to be aware of the historical context for their practice. History provides role models, and solid evidence of practice informed and moulded by culture and society, which can help us in our own learning and development.

In a fashion-based industry like illustration it pays to be aware of what has gone before. As in clothes-based fashion, elements of earlier practice are continually re-deployed to meet the contemporary situation. This is called ‘post-modernism’ and is an authentic dimension of some areas of practice.
Exercise: The history of illustration

In this exercise you will explore how illustration has evolved over the past 50 years.

Start by choosing one from this list of illustrators:

- Edward Bawden
- Kathleen Hale
- Eric Ravilious
- Edward Ardizzone
- John Minton
- E H Shephard

Then using books and the internet, find out about these artist’s work and the cultural context in which they created their most significant works.

Now find a contemporary illustrator whose work you like. Explore and identify the differences in style, context, production and imagery between the two illustrators.

Write notes in your learning log about the work of each of the two artists:

- Did the work of the illustrator that you chose from the list seem old-fashioned? If so what was it that made it seem so?
- What was it about the work of the contemporary artist that attracted you to their work?
- How did each artist produce their illustrations – what tools and materials did they use?

Now draw an illustration in the style of each artist, selecting similar subject matter and using similar media.
Illustration makes an important contribution in many contexts. It can educate, elucidate, inform, decorate and stimulate. Most imagery, perhaps with the exception of informational illustration, includes some decorative element. Even if this is not its main value it often contributes in some way to the lightening of a body of text, or rendering a bland object or piece of design in a more visually appealing way. Illustration is about combining personal expression with pictorial representation in order to convey ideas. Any thing and all things can be the subject of illustration and for this reason illustration can be the most challenging and interesting area of art and design.

Learning to be an illustrator involves developing an individual package of skills. These skills include knowing how to draw things, how to put pictures together, how to use materials, colour and texture. These are defined as technical and aesthetic skills. The acquisition and use of skills is common to all areas of art and design. What makes illustration different from image making generally is how these skills are used. There is often no immediate distinction between the pictures that are art and those seen as illustration. It is the function performed which makes the difference.

An illustrator is commissioned by a third party to sell products, to pass on information, to add a new perspective to a text, to decorate. Whatever the function, illustration always contains meanings and messages for its audience. The illustrator is commissioned via a brief.
Illustration is used to say things: sometimes complicated things for political pages of a newspaper and sometimes frivolous or fun things for festivals such as "Christmas is a jolly time"; sometimes illustration can convey a sense of place.

Whatever the message or idea that is to be communicated there will be a style and type of image which is most appropriate to convey it. For this reason there is no one stylistic approach that typifies illustration. In many ways it is a fashion-based industry both reflecting broad cultural trends and contributing to a definition of them.

What gives the illustrator the flexibility to operate successfully within this industry is versatility, and a combination of good technical, aesthetic and conceptual skills.

As well as strong technical skills illustrators also need to be able to communicate well. They need to discuss with their client, generate and explain their ideas and then use all their skills to answer the brief.

An illustrator’s work is viewed by others: the audience. It is crucial that the specific audience expected to view the illustration is identified and understood by the illustrator as they work towards their solution.

Project The key is communication

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Exercise: Getting the gist

Choose an editorial from a newspaper or magazine. Read it for information or pleasure as you would ordinarily. Read it again and this time highlight or underline key words which you think are important to conveying the meaning of the piece overall. You may find that you are choosing a single word per sentence or that your selection is dispersed throughout the text and denser in some areas than others.

Read the text again. You may well find that your understanding of the text changes as you re-read it. This time focus specifically on the words that you have already selected. With a different colour, jot down the words that summarise the meaning of the entire text. Depending upon the nature of the content, this may be one single sentence or a string of words. This process of distilling and condensing the text will help focus on the message that needs to be communicated.

The words that result from this process are your starting point. You can now say to yourself “I'm going to create an image about....”

Now have a go at an illustration for your text. Try a number of different ideas or variations. Keep the drawings together with the text so you can refer back to them.
Assignment one

Say hello

This first assignment is to introduce yourself to your tutor and give them the opportunity to get to know you and your work. This assignment is not submitted for formal assessment.

You are going to send a ‘greetings card’, telling your tutor about yourself, your interests and inspirations, the materials you feel happy working with and maybe what you would like to get from the course.

First of all you need to work out what you want to say. Keep notes to accompany the making of this illustration in your learning log. These notes could cover why you decided to portray what you did – what you included and even what you omitted.

The artwork can be in any form and size. You can use any drawing or painting materials, collage or produce it on a computer.

When you have finished photocopy or print it out at greetings card size to check that it works as a card.

It is not your tutor’s job to formally assess your work at any time, but to give you constructive feedback to help you develop your skills.

Put your name and student number on the back of the work and send it together with your sketchbook pages and learning log to your tutor. Alternatively, with their agreement, you can photograph your work, learning log notes and sketchbook pages and email them to your tutor.
Illustration

Part two Ideas
“Just as important is the ability to create images that are underpinned with strong creative thinking and that have problem-solving ideas at the heart of the solution.”

Lawrence Zeegan *The Fundamentals of Illustration*
Project The brief

**Brief** is the term used to describe a task in sufficient detail for the illustrator to do the work required.

All illustration work starts with a brief – even if you write it for yourself. The brief outlines, as clearly as possible, all the information you will need to complete a project successfully.

The first thing to do with a brief is read it through carefully and make sure that you understand it. If there is anything you are not sure about ask for clarification. Then you need to analyse it.

The brief should cover:

- What are you being asked to do
- Why the client wants the illustration – what they want it to achieve
- Who your target audience is
- Where it will be reproduced and at what size
- Whether there are any restrictions as to colours you can use
- Whether it will stand alone or be used with text: if you are to include any words or if you need to leave spaces anywhere for text
- When they want to see the initial ideas, the visuals and the finished artwork

Again if there is anything you are not sure about go back to the client for clarification. You might need additional information for research or to find out more about the subject.

*Only an intelligent analysis of the information generated by the briefing process can lead to an appropriate visual solution.*


A good commissioner should give the illustrator a chance to make substantial input to an image. In some industries, such as advertising, there is less creative freedom for the illustrator: the content is decided upon by a team of ‘creatives’ whose own role involves generating a concept and being in control of its application. In most other areas, the illustrator is responsible for creating visuals in response to a brief and can have more creative input.
Although illustrators work in individual styles and evolve their own methodology to create images there is a general pattern of activity in responding to a brief that has been identified as standard practice.

**Receiving the brief**

- Identifying key words
- Responding to words
- Generating ideas
- Research
- Drawing ideas up
- Choosing ideas
- Working within the given format and creating ‘thumbnails’

**Considering viewpoint, composition and content**

- Visuals

**Final artwork**

Visual research informs each stage of this process. This includes looking at the work of other artists, illustrators and practitioners as well as visual references from the world around you.
Exercise: Writing a brief

Identify a piece of work by an illustrator whose work you find some connection with. You might, for example, choose a particular illustration because you admire its conceptual or narrative dimension.

Now try to write the brief for the illustration you’ve chosen. Starting from the context in which the illustration is positioned, write the brief which would have led to the creation of the image. Direct the illustrator in terms of what content should be included. If the context has text, identify the connection between the image and the written content.

Advise the illustrator about the role the image will perform. Consider whether it is extending the meaning of the text, decorating, informing or educating and potential ways this can be achieved. What colours? What flavour?

Be clear about who you think the intended audience for the illustration is.

Briefly indicate which stylistic aspects you admire. Describe the effects that you would like to see in the image, which aspects of distortion, and what use of tools and materials is appropriate to the idea.
Project Generating ideas

Ideas generation is a skill vital to illustrators to complement overtly visual skills.

It is important to come up with a diverse range of ideas when presented with a brief. Many creative people often believe that they have an idea “in their head” which will satisfy a problem. Until other options have been explored however, there is no way of testing whether the first idea is the best idea. In using the first idea may be relying on cliché or subconsciously regurgitating ideas which have been employed or seen elsewhere. The first idea could be brilliant or jaded.

Every idea will benefit from being interrogated and challenged. Even clichéd ideas can gain from the influence of the broader content and permutations which surface during processes of idea generation.

The process of thinking around an idea can be described as lateral thinking or parallel thinking or in the jargon phrase: ‘thinking out of the box’.

Lateral thinking Invented as a term by Edward de Bono in 1967, lateral thinking relates to the solution of problems through creative and less direct approaches. It demands reasoning that is not immediately obvious and is about ideas that may not be obtained through traditional step-by-step logical processes.
Problem solving involves making visual decisions that contribute to providing an answer – the answer will entail communicating in some way to a viewer of the picture of the audience. When trying to solve visual problems there are many approaches to ideas generation.

**Brainstorming**: to empty your head of the many possible ideas that you have lurking there and to review them for usefulness.

**Spider diagrams**: are one way to think around an idea, or brainstorm, and it is a strategy successfully employed within many commercial, non-artistic situations to consider multiple approaches.
When drawing a spider diagram you write the theme or key word in the centre. Then draw lines from the theme – writing down any word which occurs to you, and expand outwards adding words. Continue in as many tangential directions as possible. It is important to have fun when brainstorming, to consider a myriad of options, to be creative and all-embracing.

This simple spider diagram is for a brief to create an image based on autumn, to be used to illustrate a page on a calendar.

Each of these words has visual associations and connections. This can be seen as a foundation to the process of ideas development. A natural process is to then search for visual equivalents to the words established. Through this process words can organically lead to visualisation, or giving ideas form. Words become transformed into the pictorial process.

Many words which surface through this exercise will be common to other people. Often the more obscure connections you make, the personal observations, and less direct words which surface in these exercises can give an interesting complexion to more common archetypal words.

When briefed as an illustrator you should develop a sense of what are key words and learn to distil complex information into a few select pertinent words upon which you can focus for effective brainstorming.
Exercise: Spider diagrams

Create a spider diagram for each of these words:

Seaside     Childhood     Angry     Festival

Try to remember your own experiences of these things even if you have only experienced them through TV, film or photos. Include a list of objects you associate with each word: list colours, use adjectives, textures, and subjects. If you get stuck use a dictionary or thesaurus to open up your word. If you do a Google images search you will find a vast collection of other people's visual interpretations of the words. Take a note of anything that surprised you, or anything that was an unexpected addition to the list.

Test your spider diagram with at least one other person – use a different colour for each person you interrogate and tick words that were common and include any additional words. If the ‘joint’ brainstorm leads you to generate further words, add these as a separate colour.

In your learning log make a note of:

• Which word was most difficult for you to work with
• The strategies that suited you best to come up with more words.
“You have two brains; a left and a right. Brain scientists now know that your left-brain is your verbal and rational brain; it thinks serially and reduces its thoughts to numbers, letters and words... Your right brain is your non-verbal and intuitive brain; it thinks in patterns, or pictures composed of ‘whole things’ and does not comprehend reductions, either numbers, letters or words.”

From The Fabric of Mind by scientist and neurosurgeon Richard Bergland.

Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain a book considered very important in understanding the process of drawing, was published by Betty Edwards in 1979. In it, she revealed that drawing can be a useful way to access and to record thought and ideas effectively. As well as developing the individuals' visual perception she believed that drawing helps to reach beyond what may be reached through investigation using more logical, rational processes such as writing down words. Drawing helps us generate ideas that can’t be generated in any other way – we simply wouldn’t be able to think of them.

Brainstorming is a helpful way of thinking around an idea and identifying connections and a valuable part of a process of ideas generation. However, to translate a word into a drawing can be like translating one language into another. This is an achievable process but needs logical effort. Sometimes, therefore, to begin drawing in response to a brief will be a more immediate way to unlock ideas. Certainly drawing in response to a brief can complement more logical word-based brainstorming processes.

Draw quickly at this early stage of the design process to unleash ideas, not to make images for other people to look at. Often the first drawings are for your eyes only so there’s no need to be precious about them on account of their aesthetic or technical merits. See this as creating visual shorthand.
Developing a visual memory is important for illustrators as is making your thoughts tangible as drawings. Cataloguing in this way can become a fun activity in which you may be able to engage other family members. Go through the process of cataloguing the contents of your shed, handbag, holiday or suitcase without looking at them to test your memory. You will find that you begin to develop more acute observational skills and greater fluidity when documenting through drawings.

Exercise: Turning words into pictures

Choose a word from the list and draw everything that comes to mind. Don’t be concerned about the accuracy of your drawing or the prettiness of it. Use your drawings as a form of visual shorthand.

Have a broad range of materials to hand and during your visual brainstorm add swatches of colour and texture associated with your word. If the word sums up a scene try to deconstruct it into its constituent parts. Imagine you are moving around the scene with a camera and recording each element to create a visual checklist a catalogue of images.

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<th>Exotic</th>
<th>Destruction</th>
<th>Kitchen</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Wild</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
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Be conscious of the details and qualities of each subject or object you draw to communicate its qualities and function. Notice how you are developing a sense of visual editing and distillation of information. Adjectives are most difficult to draw. Be aware of the mental processes you undertake to generate subjects to draw in response to these less concrete words.

Developing the ability to give tangible form of abstract concepts is important for illustration and is a skill that can be honed over time.

Note how your drawing evolves when repeating this exercise. Can you see a flavour in the way that you are begin to document through these little drawings?
Moodboards

Moodboards are used to document visual elements interconnected by a concept or theme. They are a good way of collecting visual information so that connections can be easily established and interpreted. This as a visual equivalent of and valuable adjunct to the brainstorming process.

Typically a moodboard is the accumulation of colours, textures, patterns and images brought together to make a direct and accessible statement. You can use either a physically sturdy board that can be propped up and referred to or moodboards can be made on sheets of paper sufficiently large to contain a range of visual exploration.

Exercise: Making a moodboard

Choose one of the words from the previous exercise and on a large sheet begin expanding on the themes and ideas that you identified.

Collect swatches of colour and texture to or create your own to establish a palette of colours and repertoire of marks. Google some of the words and from the Images link, either print off or draw from some of the images that emerge. Go through other books and magazines and take snippets of images, which have associations with your words and theme. Assemble these elements on your large sheet.

You are not creating a piece that is a designed artefact in its own right. You don’t have to include words but may want to selectively incorporate some words into your moodboards as an aide-memoire. If you organise your content according to visual connections you may find that links and some nice surprises emerge. This should lead to you being able to recognise or establish a hierarchy within your content. There is more on this concept in Part three.
Illustrators need to have a mine of visual resources that they can refer to when creating images. Sometimes this reference will be needed to inform historical or technical accuracy; to help understand the pose of a figure; to inspire and extend an idea; or to provide detail within an image which has been invented or developed from sketches. Some illustrators can draw from their own imagination convincingly but often only if they have spent a lot of time doing observed work from life and have developed an internal visual catalogue. Illustrators using photographic processes or creating collage-dominated images; can build a library of copyright free images to use in their own illustrations.

It’s not always easy to find content within the time frame provided for a commission. Most illustrators would find it difficult to find a dinosaur to draw if they had to include one in a picture. Gathering information from life can be rewarding but it is not always practical, and sometimes there is no obvious gain from drawing from direct observation. Photographic reference, therefore, is a useful resource for illustrators. The key to good practice when referring to photos is to use them – to be in control of them. It is important to not allow the photographic content to limit, dictate, or compromise an idea.

Internet searches will bring up most images but relying on this as your only source of information can be limiting. Although undoubtedly valuable as part of a research process it may be restricting to rely entirely upon the images posted on Google or Flickr and many of these images are copyright.

Other ways of finding information include:

Collecting old magazines
- National Geographic for animals and places
- Holiday brochures
- Old film magazines
- Specialist catalogues

Referring to books
- Illustrated books
- Reference books, school textbooks and encyclopaedias
- Film books and photo compendiums
- Children’s books
- Recipe books
- Gardening books

Taking your own photos
- This is a safe option especially if you plan to physically incorporate fragments of photographic imagery within your illustrations. You know that you own the copyright within your own imagery so are free to modify and integrate it at liberty.
Being a visual magpie
Be on the lookout for anything that you may be able to incorporate into your future artwork – visual ephemera such as old postcards.

Using your own sketchbooks
The things you observe and record in your sketchbooks may be woven into your artwork. Bear this in mind when you see interesting looking people, details and objects – they may feature in a future illustration. Documenting in any form, visual or through words will help you to sharpen your sense of visual perception.

Researching the work of other artists and illustrators
This can be a really useful form of reference. In the course of art history many narratives have been explored – landscapes, figures, objects a myriad of versions of the same subjects – a visual treasure chest. As the stylistic interpretation of the content takes away from being real in the way that photos are, it can often be easier to refer to it to inform work. It can be liberating to use drawn, painted or sculptural imagery rather than copying photographs.

Hoarding scraps
For textures and colour palettes, wallpaper sample books, scraps of fabric, scraps of wrapping paper, handmade papers, pages taken from glossy magazines can be a valuable source of reference.

Freezing frames
Films and TV programmes can be a rich visual resource. Often a film documents a historical era; costume, furniture, architecture, interiors can be convincingly re-created. The cast of actors and characters can be seen as a catalogue of physical types – characters to be borrowed and modified to populate your own imagery. Don’t forget though that many cartoon characters are copyright protected. Try doing freeze frames and drawing directly from screen.

Catalogue your images so that they can be easily accessed. Retain internet searches either as print-outs or sketches for possible inclusion in future works. Use your internet bookmark to quickly locate particularly useful sources of photographic and artist reference. Create folders to catalogue according to themes and subject matter that is recurrent.

Don’t forget your own sketchbook. Draw people, animals, trees, cars, buildings – in fact as much as you can. And keep your eyes open: look and observe.
Exercise: Using reference

Collect as much reference as you can find for the 1950s period. Catalogue the information you find according to these categories:

- People and costume
- Architecture and interiors
- Art – painting, drawing, sculpture
- Graphic design – posters, books, typography
- Advertising
- Transport
- Film and TV
- Surface pattern and decoration.

Be eclectic in your sources. Identify the visual qualities that are universal within the categories – shapes, textures, colours, style and other features.

In your learning log write a short review of the 1950s from a visual perspective.

Describe the characteristics that typify the decade and the ideas and visual trends that were prevalent at this time.

Are there reflections of the 1950s in any areas of contemporary art, design or culture? If so what – give examples? It may be useful to look both at what preceded and followed the 1950s to gain a sense of the broader context of this era.

Now make an illustration of someone sitting in a chair surrounded by typical artefacts to give a teenager an idea of the 1950s.
Project Mark making

Most of us have used a drawing medium such as a pencil since early childhood, feel comfortable holding it in our hand in a particular way and using it to make a particular type of mark to achieve a particular quality of line. Holding it differently, using assorted thicknesses – from 6H (hard) to 6B (soft) – on varied surfaces and with a range of pressures can lead to lots of interesting effects. Try experimenting and be open to new discoveries and analytical about the results achieved. Then explore how these discoveries can be applied to the development of your individual way of working.

Try using some of these with a pencil or other materials:

- **Stipple** Texture made by creating small marks that build up to create a texture or tone.
- **Crosshatch** A process of overlapping line in multiple directions with varying density to build up areas of tone.
- **Dry-brush** A broken surface texture achieved by dragging a partially loaded paintbrush over the paper.
As a basis for a tool box it is a good idea to include:

- **Pencils** A range from 6H to 6B, graphite pencil, coloured pencils (artists’ quality if possible as the better the quality the better the result).

- **Coloured pencils and crayons.**

- **Pastels**, oil and soft pastels, chalks, charcoal.

- **Pens** Ballpoints, fine-liners of different widths, felt tips, dip pens, calligraphy pens.

- **Inks** Black Indian ink, water based inks, coloured inks, and dyes such as Dr. Martin’s dyes.

- **Paints** Gouache, watercolours, acrylic, household paints, and oils.

- **Brushes** Artists’ quality, decorators’ brushes, calligraphy brushes.

- **Other useful tools** Sharpened sticks, quills, a toothbrush, a range of hard and soft rubbers, bleach, sponges, tape for stretching paper, a burnisher, glues.

- **A range of paper** As well as art shop watercolour and cartridge papers, look out for hand-made papers, tissue, coloured papers and boards and papers and textures for collage.
Try and find the range of drawing and painting materials which best suit your own strengths – some people find that they enjoy the accuracy and control that line affords, others prefer media that allow covering of large areas quickly. It is important to keep taking risks, to explore new options, to challenge the choice of materials for each application and drawing. You should continually be asking yourself: Why this medium? Why handled in this way?

Analyse the success of the images you make and the ease with which the images were produced. Creating images should contain an aspect of pleasure and although using unfamiliar media can feel alien and challenging, repeated practice in different media should bring greater facility and ease in application. At some point there will be an eureka moment when you as an image maker feel equipped to make an informed decision about which media to pursue in greater depth and which to put to one side perhaps until a later date.

**Paper surfaces**

Paper surfaces range in quality: some are smooth, others more textural. The front and back of a piece of paper may be different surfaces. The weight of paper should also be taken into consideration when you are choosing paper for an image.

- **Hot pressed paper** – is mostly smooth. This is good for controlled or detailed pencil and pen and ink work. Not good for pastel.

- **Cold pressed paper** – has more of a ‘tooth’, a surface texture, making it more suitable for pastel work.

The weight of the paper is normally described in grams (written as g/m or gms). The heavier the gms the thicker the paper is likely to be.

**Be inventive**

Draw with your sewing machine onto fabric, or scratch into a piece of wood, or collage together fragments of coloured paper to construct an image – all experimentation is valuable and you never know what you may discover and the value it may hold for future work.

Faye Durston.
Exercise: Exploring drawing and painting

Create a sketchbook with different kinds of coloured and textured papers. Use a variety of surfaces including rough textures such as sugar paper and heavy watercolour paper and smooth, shiny surfaces such as brown paper and cheap typing paper. Collect the sheets together in a binder or with a bulldog clip.

Collect a range of drawing implements. Include the cheap and throwaway such as children’s felt tip pens, food dyes, ballpoints, chalks, oil pastels, pots of sample decorating paints. Force yourself to put familiar materials to one side and to explore unchartered territories.

Choose something like: a cake with icing, cherries, hundreds and thousands or other topping; a shoe or trainer; or a piece of fruit with a bite taken out of it.

Draw your object on each of the sheets in your sketchbook using a different drawing material for each one. Practice using the same media in different ways and at different scales. Explore cross-hatching, stippling, splattering, smudging and dry brush work.

Investigate the properties of mixed media; see which marks work together or not, and how you can alter marks with a rubber, and by rubbing and smudging with your finger. Some of the wetter media can be modified by adding water or dilute bleach. Some of the fine line pens or felt tip pens may also be water soluble.

Label each of your pieces of work with the media used and the combinations explored.
Project Creative thinking and problem solving

In illustration and other forms of graphic communication we often talk about ‘problem solving’. Recognising this is key to understanding the difference between Fine Art practice and these applied art subjects. The illustration has a function to satisfy, a job to do. The illustrator engineers the solution. In illustration the problem to be solved is usually identified in the brief. For example:

**Brief 1**

To create an image of seasonal fruits for *Good Food* magazine.

The problem: To make a selection of appropriate fruits
- To make the fruits seem appetising
- To create an image which will work against text in that particular publication.

**Brief 2**

To create an illustration for the *Radio Times* for a TV programme about racial discrimination in the Police force.

The problem: To come up with an idea that suggests what discrimination is
- To ensure sensitive depiction of people of diverse ethnic origin
- To create an image which entices the audience to watch the TV programme.

Being aware of the ‘problems’ to be overcome in communicating ideas is the key to ‘intelligent creativity’ and is central to the practice of illustration. When faced with a brief, the list of challenges to be overcome, the problems to be solved, can become the checklist for the practitioner to work towards. Measuring whether this has been achieved is way of establishing whether the work succeeds in communicating or answering the brief.

When drawing an apple are you trying to say it’s very crisp, juicy, healthy and/or fresh? Which materials can best help to draw something in a way that makes it look juicy? How do I present the apple to make the viewer aware of its juiciness? Which marks are most juicy? Which colours, tones and textures?

The process of communication demands an individual perspective, a viewpoint and message to be communicated with a personal visual language. In illustration this needs to be undertaken with regard to the needs and requirements of the client.

Good illustration is a combination of ideas – understanding, knowledge and interpretation of a piece of text, object, and situation– respectful of the intention of the person who created it.
**Objective** Not influenced by personal feelings or opinions.

**Subjective** Based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes or opinions.

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**Exercise: An objective drawing**

Shoe        Umbrella        Pair of trousers        Pair of glasses        Hat

Take an item from the list above and explore it visually to become aware of its textures, physical qualities and function. What is the item for – what does it do?

Using a pencil or fine liner do an objective drawing of your object on an A4 sheet. You are trying to achieve a drawing that has a high degree of visual accuracy and is technically controlled. Be analytical and use drawing to clearly convey this visual information.

You are trying to record what you see in this drawing so be aware of the relative scale of different elements of your object and position of component parts. Use marks that describe the texture of the object and vary line quality to suggest its contours. You may find that if you place your item on a white surface you can observe it more easily. Colour is reflected by white and you will be less distracted by background contrasts.
Exercise: A subjective drawing

Take another object and write a list of a series of words to describe it. In this drawing you are not describing its function or purpose but its particular qualities. Is it shiny, hard, soft, fluffy, delicious or antique? These adjectives are subjective – there is no wrong or right – whichever words you select will be appropriate because they reflect your interpretation and understanding of the object.

Choose one word from your list as the basis of your idea. You don’t need to look at your object; at this stage you are exploring your idea visually. Make a moodboard and include collage and found materials. Cut images from magazines based on their visual properties. Be exhaustive.

Photocopy, trace or scan and print your line drawing. Choose a paper with a texture or surface which best relates to the idea you had about your object.

Use colours, textures and materials identified during your exploration with your moodboard to translate the line drawing into an image which communicates the adjective which you associated with your object.

Use them to colour, or fill your line drawing. You are still attempting to describe the object but focussing and exaggerating the quality that you have selected to communicate.
Traditionally, most illustration was commissioned in black and white due to the limitations of the printing processes. Illustration was commissioned predominantly in newspapers and for books. Digital technology and the advent of cheaper production processes temporarily squeezed black and white illustration out of the visual market as cheap colour printing became possible. Black and white imagery became passé, associated with being old-fashioned and a poor person’s solution to a problem. In recent years however, there has been resurgence in the commissioning of black and white work, partly due to the more overtly hand-rendered imagery.

Understanding and using a black and white palette can help to focus on the true structure and nucleus of a picture. If an image is successful in black and white or a tonal range from black to white, it can be easily translated into colour. The inverse is also true—a solidly designed colour image should convert into black and white and there are easy ways of doing this digitally.

Many illustrators produce tonal visuals for themselves to establish points of visual importance within the image and clarify where light sources are positioned. This is also useful to check the hierarchy within the piece.
Exercise: Using black and white

Produce a line visual around one of these words:

Sea  Extraordinary  Building  Journey

Through brainstorming you may decide to draw from an object or selection of objects or work in a more narrative way around a scene or idea. Ensure that the line visual you produce through visual exploration and development is very clear, employing a line which is solid and definite – fine-liners over a pencil visual should give a clean edge.

Photocopy or scan your image so that it fits into A3. Using the invert function on the copier or computer produce an additional copy where the line has been converted to white and the white of the paper has become black.

Using the lines in your image as a guide, cut shapes from the black copy to collage into the white copy. Your ‘filling-in’ should be considered – are you going to suggest that there is light entering from one direction or use white in a decorative way to create a visual pattern? Work with the biggest areas first and maybe Blu-Tack your pieces down until you are confident about their final placing.

To refine your image re-introduce white shapes to the black areas where needed, by cutting from another sheet. There should be no lines left when this exercise has been completed. You are working with areas of black and white and the lines are the edges that you will cut around.

Keep standing back from your image to assess its readability – you are aiming for visual legibility and need to avoid creating a disjointed piece. As well as physically standing back, visual distance can be achieved by looking at an image in a mirror, by scanning and looking at it on screen or by printing out a scale different from the original.

When you have finished compare your tonal image to your line drawing. How has the use of black and white altered it? Where does the focus now lie within the image? Make notes in your learning log.

An image, which is simplified in this way, is often described as a ‘graphic’ image. Are there any examples of other illustrators’ work which you could describe as graphic?
Project Choosing content

Being an illustrator can sometimes feel a bit like being a movie director. You have to choose the actors, build a set, choose props, and decide which direction the light comes from. You create an atmosphere, and generate a sense of drama. Your image becomes the vehicle for the idea, information or story that has been provided. If you are working in a more diagrammatic way it is equivalent to organising the elements for a display, being aware of the sequence in which the visual information or content will be referred to, and the patterns created in their interconnection.
Exercise: Choosing content

Read the following extract and then answer the questions on the next page:

The room was void and unquickened; it was like a room in a shop window but larger and emptier; and the middle-aged man who sat at the desk had never thought to impress himself upon what he entered every day. Comfort there was none nor discomfort; only did the occupant deign to qualify the pure neutrality of his surroundings, it would surely be austerity that would emerge. The spring sunshine turned bleak and functional as it passed the plate glass of the tall-uncurtained windows.

The windows were large; the big desk lay islanded in a creeping parallelogram of light; across this and before the eyes of the man sitting motionless passed slantwise and slowly a massive shaft of shadow.

Perhaps twenty times it passed to and fro, as if outside some great joy wheel oscillating idly in a derelict amusement park. And the man rose, clasped hands behind him and walked to a window – high up in New Scotland Yard. He looked out and war-time London lay beneath... on his brow was a fixed contraction; this he had carried from desk to window, and now there was neither hardening nor relaxation as he looked out... during 15 years he had controlled the file of police papers which dealt with the abduction and subsequent history of feeble minded girls. Here lay his anger as he looked out over London... year by year the anger had burst deeper until it was now the innermost principle of the man.

Michael Innes Adapted from The Daffodil Affair
Make notes on these questions

• If this were to be made into a film what would the main character be like?
• What clothes would the character be wearing?
• What furniture is in the main area in which the action takes place?

Collect visual reference for the items on your list

Find a reference book or website for this era.
Use the internet and do an image search. Be selective – don’t go for the first image you encounter. Try to remember your own vision of the story and reflect this in your choices. Stick these images onto a large sheet of paper or in a visual notebook.

The next process is about textural and colouristic visual brainstorming and idea generation

Chose a word, which you feel captures the mood you would like to convey.
Collect and create textures and colours you associate with this word to make a moodboard. Start with a broad vision to describe the overall colour or tone of the image, not specific elements of it. Be minimal and selective and gradually add textures and colours that complement this general impression.

Create a simple portrait (figure, or head and shoulders) of the character, using the reference you have gathered.

Use sketchbooks to help you to select and edit from your reference materials and to explore where to position your figure within the frame or format of the picture. Make the shape based on any book you have to hand.

Use the colours, textures and qualities you assembled for your moodboard to render the portrait. You may literally collage these textures into a drawing, or convey the tonal qualities of the moodboard through the way that you use materials and mark making.

Notice the extent to which you have evolved the reference and used it to inform your illustration. If at any point you felt that you had insufficient visual information what steps did you take to address this? Make notes of this evolution in your learning log.
In the same way that you can interpret an object in an objective or subjective way, you can respond to a text in a way that is either literal or metaphorical.

**Literal** *Free from exaggeration or embellishment.*

**Metaphorical** *Expressing one thing in terms normally denoting another.*

**Metaphors** are used linguistically in speech and writing. It is natural, therefore, that they should be available within our use of visual language. Some examples of metaphor from Shakespeare: “All the world’s a stage”, “A sea of troubles”.

Historically there has been a professional competition between illustrators and photographers to provide imagery in all its uses, within a range of contexts, including advertising, editorially and book jackets.

Before the opportunities for image manipulation made available by computer software the distinction rested clearly on the difference between objectivity and subjectivity. The photographer provided a more direct documentary depiction, a more ‘honest’ and perhaps literal pictorial interpretation. The illustrator has generally been seen as more flexible having the ability to depict reality or a modified version of it, or to present an alternative, which can use symbols, metaphors and diagrammatic approaches to creating images. Although digital practice now challenges the concept of visual honesty traditionally associated with photography, the distinctions between objective and subjective interpretation are still key to the range of pictorial approaches in illustrative practice.

The illustrator has a voice – in describing a scene directly, conveying information or validating meaning. The tone of the illustrator’s voice is evidenced through the visual language employed. This voice encompasses aesthetic and technical dimensions covering how materials are used, how content is depicted, and how colour and texture are employed. Its other element is the cognitive dimension – the thinking underpinning the image.

Unless an illustrator is creating work which is a re-creation of a situation and photo-realistic there will be additional ideas included in the finished work.

The nature of ideas within illustration can be categorised as either those generated through pictorial representation i.e. ‘objective’ and those which are ‘conceptual’ and generated through a process of responding to information and ideas in a more abstract or non-direct way. This may include pictorial conventions such as diagrams, images that include composite elements collaged together, images which are abstract and without representational aspects, and images which use symbols and metaphors to convey an idea.
Visual metaphor

A visual metaphor is an image that is imaginative but not literally applicable. When applied to illustration it is common to describe this form of imagery as 'conceptual'. This uses ideas and symbols of communication; illusion; symbolism; and expressionism to create the complexity of meanings.

For example...

The charity Children in Need uses the image of Pudsey Bear – a bear who is bandaged as a symbol for a charity which seeks to provide for children who are disadvantaged in some way. We as an audience are able to decode the image, to recognise that the charity is not for injured toys. The use of the bear as a symbol in this instance allows depiction of a universal child without reference to colour, gender, age or social type. This campaign therefore, is accessible, and responded to, by a wide audience without cultural exception. It suggests injury and care without being graphic or overly specific. It is in our culture a universally accessible symbol.

Symbols are culturally specific and will be interpreted according to the context in which they are situated. Because their meanings are not absolute or finite it is important to check that the potential audience will interpret them appropriately.

Conce[trual illustration does not rely on the appearance of being true or the semblance of actuality. It questions the concepts of definition and representation and will continue to evolve and grow with the demands and attitudes of society.

Alan Male

Nick Purser
Exercise: **Visual metaphors**

Collect as many examples of visual metaphor as you can find. Often metaphors are used within political and issue-based works to give complex or subtle ideas greater clarity. For this reason you are likely to trace them more easily within editorial contexts: newspapers and articles in magazines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaching retirement</th>
<th>Dreams of romance</th>
<th>Broken relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Censorship of the press</td>
<td>High achievement</td>
<td>Economic catastrophe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose one from the phrases above and create a drawn visual list of objects and subjects which could be used to symbolise them. You may find that it is in the way that the symbol can be modified that you can convey your idea most effectively. Don't be overly concerned with the aesthetic quality or technical accuracy in the drawing. See this as an extension of your visual shorthand. If you find it useful, make a spider diagram around the phrase to generate other words, which will bring other visual connotations.

Show your drawings to someone else to check their understanding of the meanings in your drawings and gauge how far your drawings communicate what you intended.

Paul Blow
Assignment two

Point of sale display

This assignment will consolidate the skills and knowledge you have gained from the projects and exercises so far. At this stage of your development it is important that you focus on research and gathering and evolving your ideas.

The brief

To create images which will be used within a campaign for a supermarket, to package and promote a range of seasonal foods.

The supermarket is respected for the quality of food they supply. They want to promote this notion of quality in their design and packaging.

The finished images will be a ‘point of sale’ display sited in a store near to the fruit and vegetables. The final reproduction size will be 12 x 12 inches. Your artwork can be same size or in scale.

What to do

Create an illustration of fruit or vegetables. One illustration for each of the ranges:

- **Summer**
- **Autumn**

Your images should be objective and based upon direct observation. For each range you may choose an individual piece, dissected or partly sliced sections, or create a group of several pieces.

Then create separate images for Summer and Autumn that reflect both the produce you previously selected and aspects of the season itself. There are no limitations in terms of content – you can include other objects; a place; patterns; people or a combination of these.

Illustrating food is a challenging area of work. Focus on the food in your image. Remember to create a visual distance between you and the food. Put yourself in the place of the customer and ask, “Does this look edible? Would I like to eat it?” Be especially conscious of the way you use colour to describe tone, shadow and surface marks – poor colour choices can result in food looking mouldy, battered, and ultimately unappetising.

Put your name and student number on the back of the work and send it together with your sketchbook pages and learning log to your tutor.
Illustrators often describe a process which is similar to method acting when communicating a mood or idea. Children’s illustrator Quentin Blake describes adopting the pose or emotion of the character he is drawing when physically creating the drawing. For this reason it is useful to have a mirror close to hand when creating characters and noting which expressions or features demonstrate or convey the action.
Illustration

Part three
Working it out

Andy Martin
When looking at a picture we experience a complex set of visual experiences. The story, the symbols, the details; all the elements of the picture interfere with seeing the design structure. These distractive elements must be pushed aside in order to observe the structure underneath. This can be achieved by analysis.

Harry Sternberg *Composition – The Anatomy of Picture Making*
Project Composition and viewpoint

When illustrators generate ideas they usually begin by gathering the visual content which will form the basis of images. Then this content is organised, and arranged and handled to communicate the idea. This is a complex process, bringing together skills of composition, pictorial development and understanding of pictorial approaches.

Position and scale

When we arrange the content of an image we are creating an illusion of visual space – of the relative position of one aspect of the content to another. We are also establishing relationships between each component of the image and the space they occupy in the frame.

It helps to reduce the content into its simplest shapes – to eliminate detail, to flatten solids and to exaggerate tones. It is then easier to examine the success of a composition and to clarify the hierarchy – to determine the most dominant elements and to ensure that each component is used as intended within the communication of the idea.

Scale The relative size of one element to another.

Position The relationship of components to each other and the frame.

Contrast How much tone, texture, colour each element has relative to the other.

Shape The two dimensional form an element takes.

Space The visual distance between elements.
Some easy to remember compositional pointers:

- Horizontals and verticals give a sense of balance, of order, of calm and of strength. Think of a building – if the sides and roof are horizontal and vertical it stands proud and won’t fall down.

- Diagonals suggest movement and speed; think of a plane taking off. Diagonals which turn into zigzags or more random configurations have dizziness to them. This can suggest visual chaos, disorder and breakdown.

- Objects or subjects without a horizon line ‘float’. A horizon will anchor them and suggest space – it will give clues to the viewer about where they are in relation to the object. A horizon suggests distance and helps to create foreground and background.

Repeating an element within your illustration, whether a shape, a colour or an actual object, leads the eye in a certain direction. The viewer will try to connect the similar elements and will go on a journey which follows them across the picture plane.

Always be aware of the relationship of your images to the side of the frame. You can use objects which leave and then re-enter the frame to create a sense of visual movement, and use this dynamic visual device to make the viewer travel around your image.

Objects which only just touch the frame can be visually awkward, although this may be the effect you are looking for. You need to be aware of the space between the objects and the frame and be in control of its use as a visual device.
Exercise: **Illustrating visual space**

Using internet searches or your own visual references select an image of: each of these

| A tree | A child running or walking | A building |

Photocopy them in black and white at different scales and sizes so that you have several versions of each image. Cut them into individual items with which to work.

Working with a square format, arrange some of the cut-outs to create a representational image. You may use the distortion of scale of one element compared to another to create an image which is interesting visually. It is not important that the image is ‘real’ as a photograph would be. Move the fragments so they are not always vertical or horizontal to the frame.

You may need to add a drawn line to suggest a horizon to separate the ground from the sky and to create an illusion of space or distance. Experiment with the position of the horizon relative to the visual fragments.

Scan and print or photocopy these designs or do a quick trace of each design so that you can compare the visual impact of one with another. Then in your learning log make notes in answer to these questions:

- How does your sense of the image and its meaning change when the figure is smaller than the other elements?
- If the elements are at differing angles to each other and at an angle to the frame, what dynamic is suggested?
- If all the elements are completely horizontal and vertical in relation to the frame what dynamic is suggested? What is your opinion about this image and what sensation does it communicate?
- Which is your favourite composition? Explain why you feel it is most successful.
Project Hierarchy in the image

When composing an image it is important to be aware of the hierarchy in its content. This means identifying the most important aspect of the subject matter – the element, or configuration of content that is the key component in conveying the idea and communicating the meaning. It is important for an illustrator to analyse the content of an image in this way so that a ‘pecking order’ is established for each element in the illustration. By using the idea of a rank when developing and organising the content of an image, and later, when using colour and tone to render it stylistically to become a piece of artwork, you can ensure that you don’t pull focus away from the most important dimensions of your illustration. Understanding the principal of hierarchy is vital to maintaining control over the image and ultimately ensuring it realises its function in communicating the idea.
**Hot colours** are colours with yellow or red as their base. A warm grey will have some yellow or red in it. Notice how the hotter areas in an image are the most visually dominant. The cooler areas sit further back in the visual hierarchy.

**Exercise: Reading an image**

Look carefully at this image.

Then in your learning log list the content of the picture – breaking the image into its constituent parts and answer the following questions:

- What the image is about. What is it saying?
- Work out the narrative and identify the story.
- Describe the palette and tonal range which has been used. Note if the colours are hot or cold, whether the elements are detailed or textural, and where these approaches are used.
- Is there any connection between hot colour and the importance of the element in telling the story?

Begin to identify the hierarchy within the image. Which are the most important elements in terms of carrying the narrative or conveying the ideas and how have these been treated?
As a natural extension of hierarchy, learning to create focus is an important skill for an illustrator. This is commonly referred to as the ‘space within an image’.

There are established mechanisms at the disposal of all image creators in creating this illusion of space. Understanding them and using the conventions may happen in an intuitive way. Being aware of some of the basic factors which influence focus within an image can help its development.

As a generalisation hot colours demand visual focus. A small amount of hot red in an image with a predominantly cooler colour palette will demand the greatest visual attention. A simple way to test this is to look at the horizon in a landscape or a distant point – or indeed how this has been photographed or painted by artists. Generally the receding visual elements are bluer and cooler.

Your viewer’s eye will focus more closely on areas where there are areas of tonal contrast – difference in lights and darks, contrast in texture and contrast in shape. The inverse is also true; the less important elements need to use less contrast and a cooler palette.

Make sure that areas of greatest visual interest are reserved for communicating the most important aspects within the illustration.

In this image the stark black and white contrast of the shirts and bowler hat, combined with the intricate line work on the faces, forces attention to the characters. The red brush handles also point upwards so that the external characters are brought into focus. There is a visual journey across the image from the bottom right corner to the top left. The pink and red shapes are visual stepping stones. Why is the room of which we can only see a triangular corner visually important? Could that perhaps be a clue to the content of the book?
Format explains the shape or application of an image. You may hear the phrases ‘square format’ or ‘landscape format’.

Exercise: Image development

Cut two ‘L’ shapes of card or stiff paper. You are going to use them to explore formats, to zoom in and out of compositions.

Take an image which has a range of content – a family photo, and interior from a magazine or another artist’s work – and enlarge it to A4 and make ten copies. Scenes with action with a background and foreground can be most useful for this kind of exercise.

Use the ‘L’s to create edited versions of each image. Retain the content but try presenting it in different ways in different formats. Repeat this using all of your photocopies. Do some images seem to have more drama because of the way you have cropped them? Has the focus changed – have you made the original subject of the image seem more or less important?

Choose a word for each image that relates in some way to the content. It may contradict the image and show an alternative interpretation or may extend the narrative by describing the content in a slightly different way.

Using one of the images as a basis for an illustration, draw up your artwork to make a poster. Add colours and textures to emphasise your message.

Use the word you selected as the title and reproduce it in a typeface you feel suggests or reflects the meaning of the word itself. Position the text alongside the image.
Project Abstract illustration

Abstract illustration relies upon marks, colour, structure and texture to convey meaning. Abstract illustration may include elements which are recognisable as a specific object or person, but they are not connected in any way to depict or reveal a particular scene or reality. It can resemble textile design or surface pattern in which symbols and icons are assembled – for instance some wrapping papers, wallpapers and fabric.

In many ways abstract illustration is the most distilled way of communicating – it often functions as an underpinning dimension in a bigger hierarchy. It is also often used alongside other graphic and typographic elements – you may find abstract illustration as a background to lettering on a book jacket or poster.

Tackling a problem in an abstract way, especially at the initial stages of developing an idea, can form a foundation on which to build. It can help focus on the structural dimensions of communication stripped of most representational content: thinking about colour, texture, shape and structure for their inherent messages. This is, however, a culturally specific process. We are used to red being associated with danger but this is not shared by all countries. We also associate particular colours with festivals – check how many Christmas cards contain green and red. There is an industry of examining future trends engaged in identifying and establishing the colours and patterns for each season.

Abstract Stylistically abstruse and un-pictorial free from representation.

Pictorial realism or naturalism Precise and objective depiction as opposed to stylisation
If you are working with image manipulation software such as Photoshop you can scan any image you produce and explore multiple options in terms of composition and mood. By using crop tools and manual rotation tools, you can change the axis of your image and zoom in and out to consider alternative options for where the focus should lie. By using colour balance and tonal adjustments you can amend and refine decisions made about the colour palette.
Exercise: Abstract illustration

Listen to a piece of instrumental music by a musician such as:

George Gershwin        The Gypsy Kings        Beethoven        Miles Davis

As you listen to the music create marks which convey your interpretation of the essence or mood of the piece. Work quickly and intuitively to bring a degree of self-expression to the exercise. Be selective in your use of materials, colours, marks and textures.

Stand back from your worksheet and choose an adjective or word that you feel describes the tone of the piece. This is your interpretation and not a definition of it. Go through your drawings and choose a square area that you feel communicates the meaning of your chosen word and has visually interesting qualities.

Using a square format and working at any size, reproduce your selected area. Starting with your chosen adjective, introduce colours, textures and shapes. Choose any media you like for this exercise and experiment by mixing them. Try not to over complicate the image.

Be conscious of the mood you are trying to convey – keep listening to the music as you work to help you focus more clearly. You can add forms or create the shape of an element with some representational value. Any additional shapes should enhance or extend the design and fit together visually within the structure you have created.

Constantly reappraise your image to ensure the composition suits what you are trying to say. You may find that you are editing and removing elements from the original and replacing them with others.

Do you think your image would work as an illustration for a cover of a CD for the music you listened to?

Alifa Ematullah
A diagrammatic approach is specifically concerned with conveying information through the considered placing of freestanding elements which are ‘read’ in a systematic way – commonly maps and informational charts.

It needs specific understanding of how visual elements fit together – the order in which they will be ‘read’ by the viewer. A diagrammatic approach can be used for illustrations in many contexts including editorial, publishing and the decorative arts.
Exercise: Giving instructions

Using the internet, magazines, reference books leaflets, brochures and flyers make a collection of examples and reference materials that can help you with an illustration to fit one of the categories below.

Making a cup of tea    Getting to my house    Playing a tune on an instrument

Start by working out the information you need to impart and the steps involved. What are the main points? How many stages are there? Working at a fairly large scale, work out the space needed for each step. You may decide to have one picture that encompasses the whole process or you might want to break it down into a strip with clearly demarcated steps. Try as many possibilities as you can.

Be mindful of the hierarchy of the elements in the composition and the dynamics needed to draw the viewer’s eye from one stage to the other. Try to use as few words as possible. Best of all use none.

Keep all your sketches and notes in your learning log.

Before you start the final artwork take a critical look at your roughs and compare one element to another and be especially aware of what is happening in the immediate background of the image.

Decide on the tools and materials you will use for your illustration. If you use colour be aware of how it adds focus and can help your communication process.

When you have finished show it to other people to check that it works both as an attractive illustration and in its main function – to give instructions. Record your findings in your learning log.

Heather Gatley
Project Visuals

A visual is the presentation of a finished design or solution for client approval before proceeding for finished artwork.

Not only is drawing valuable to unlock ideas, it is also vital in the process of describing those ideas to other people. Drawing gives ideas their form. The process of bringing ideas into a more concrete state which can be viewed by others is called visualisation. The drawings created are called visuals or roughs.

Visuals have functions

Roughs: an illustrator will produce these to continue to help in the formulation and expansion of ideas and to explore other pictorial properties such as composition. They are part of a process of development on both a conceptual and a visual level. As the illustrator is less constrained by the need to ‘get it right’ there is more space for creative freedom. It’s a process that should be full of energy.

Thumbnails: are small-scale visuals where you quickly document an idea. You may be considering viewpoints or content. Many illustrators use thumbnails as a form of visual shorthand. They can quickly draw up ideas in the format of the final image, and have a range of images to compare and appraise. Investing time at the thumbnail stage can provide the security later on of knowing that the best idea has been chosen. Often thumbnail drawings are done on the same sheet so that an overview of the diversity and range of ideas is achieved. Although these drawings are usually only for the illustrator’s eyes and won’t necessarily be shown to a client, it is important to build the thumbnail process into the research and development stage of any commission to test the robustness of an idea.
Exercise: Viewpoint

Make a small collection of objects around a theme – choose from:

Festival        The morning after        Summertime        Workshop

Using a digital camera move around your set of objects. Look at them from above and from underneath. Zoom in and out. Look for interesting combinations of shapes and textures, and document them using photographs. Be unusual with the positioning of the frame. Experiment with diagonals within the structure and deliberately position some elements close to the frame.

Do the same thing with drawing but work in a format that is different from your viewfinder, such as a square format, or long and thin, or an irregular rectangle. If it helps you can make a viewfinder using two ‘L’ shaped pieces of stiff card or paper in your chosen format. Repeat the exercise of exploring viewpoints but this time document your visual journey around the set in your sketchbook. Draw shapes to work with that are the same format as your viewfinder. You may find it helpful to draw around your viewfinder to create a set of thumbnail shapes.

Choose your favourite design. Remember that you are trying to communicate an idea about your chosen theme – your favoured design should be one which is most successful in this regard.

Using a pencil, draw this design on a larger scale. Either draw from the photographs that you took or from the still life directly. Draw your final design to a format and scale which is proportionate to your thumbnail. This line drawing should be descriptive and readable as a visual and not a final artwork in its own right.

In your learning log record your thoughts on the following questions:

- Which viewpoint best fitted the word your objects illustrated? Why was this?
- Which format best illustrated your words?
- Did changing viewpoints make you think differently about your choice of objects and arrangement of them?
Scaling

The format (shape) and proportion of your visuals should relate to your intended final artwork. The decisions you are making about scale of content, the positioning of elements in your image and eventually the balance of tone and colour are all dependent upon the format they are positioned within. Get used to drawing thumbnails to scale and use the guide to scale up and down easily.

When you are working on visuals you may work smaller or larger than the intended reproduction size. You can work within a scale relative to the final measurement of the artwork. It’s easy to draw and print out the box size of your final imagery at varying scales using a photocopier or printer if you are working on relatively small images, and even easier using a computer. Simple maths is needed for doubling the size but for irregular size increases the maths may be more awkward. There is a simple way to work out relative scale changes and this can afford you greater flexibility if you are working in a more fluid way on a composition and want to move the frame around a drawing but ensure that the proportions remain consistent.

- Draw out the size that you are finally working towards at the bottom left hand corner of a large piece of paper.
- Join up the corners of the shape from bottom left corner, diagonally to top right. Carry on through the corner across the whole page.
- Extend the base line from your own box across the bottom. Extend the left hand sideline upwards.

You have now created an axis.

Practice creating different scale shapes by moving up the axis, or across, making sure that you keep at right angles to it, with a straight edge. When you ‘hit’ the middle diagonal line you have at this point established the top right corner of your frame.
**Client visuals**

At some point in the creative process, often at a time specified by the client, the illustrator needs to reveal the image they have been working towards. It would be unwise for any illustrator to create a finished image without having first discussed their ideas with the client to allow for both comments and amendments if necessary.

The traditional visualisation process entails the illustrator going through independent research, enquiry, ideas generation and development resulting in the selection of an idea to draw up to scale as a line visual or client rough. In some areas of design and advertising the visuals are developed by a creative team and may be supplied to the illustrator to render in their individual style.

The line visual presented to a client has to communicate clearly without the illustrator being in the room. This visual shows the structure of the image before tone and colour is added. The positioning and choice of content, the scale and composition should be true to how the illustrator anticipates them being seen in the final image. This is important as the client will be making a decision to accept the visual on the understanding that the only thing that will change in any significant way is the rendering of it.
Often the client will make notes on the visual and indicate recommended changes. As they may have to have the visual approved externally with an editor or commissioner of the job, who may not be visually trained or articulate, the visuals need to be clear and easy to ‘read’. Another practical reason for the content of the approved visual to be as close as possible to the structure of the end artwork is because the designer involved, when placing the illustration, often has to gauge where the type will best sit in relation to the image. The successful marriage of image and text within a design is often key to powerful communication.

The advent of digital technology means that an illustrator may now be able to work quickly with colour on screen and be able to produce a visual which is much closer to the final illustration. Using line visuals still continues to be standard practice and for most illustrators remains the most efficient and time economic way of communicating ideas to a client before proceeding to the artwork stage.

To develop strength and confidence in visualising you need to become confident as a draughtsman. This skill comes from drawing in sketchbooks and in situations where you have to edit complex visual information into a distilled form. Being aware of the best ways of using line descriptively is a useful skill to cultivate.

This is a visual for an illustration for a text book about Festivals. The image had to work around the shape of the box which would contain the text.
Exercise Client visuals

This exercise is to help you to edit an image to its main structural form and to practice creating a clear visual.

From the work you have collected pick at least two finished illustrations. These illustrations should contain a range of content. They can be representational, diagrammatic or metaphorical.

Measure the image at the size it was reproduced. Draw a box at least two and half times larger and in proportion to each of the printed illustrations.

Using a form of line which feels comfortable and which you can confidently manage, create a visual for each illustration. You are not tracing from the original nor are you claiming this artwork as your own. Be aware of main shapes and directions; draw the elements of the image with sufficient detail for them to be readable.

Explore how many lines you need to use to describe the content. Try another version of the same image and see how much content you can remove so that the image is distilled to an extremely edited form but still makes sense.

This practice in editing and purposefully using selective line to describe an image will be applied in later images of your own generation. Give yourself space of a couple of days and then refer back to the original illustration and evaluate how honest your visual is to its source.

This exercise may have given you insight into the reverse process where the client edits the visual to get a final image. This is known as art direction. Find some images that made you more aware of the art direction behind them and annotate them to explain the thinking behind them in your learning log.
A mock-up is a version of an artwork to show how it will function and what it will look like when finished. It often includes type or indications of where the type will be placed. Often mock-ups look as finished and complete as the final product. These will generally be created by the designer you’re working with.

These prototypes are used to demonstrate to the client, to test an idea or for marketing purposes.

The mock-up can be an important aspect of the illustrator’s portfolio:

- It can convince a client that your work is appropriate for a particular commission
- It can help the client visualise the impact of your design
- It shows a client that you’re aware of the value of your imagery as illustration rather than purely as ‘pictures’.

Ideally you’ll have access to a computer, printer and a software package that allows you to assemble the elements of your mock-up digitally. If not, do your mock-ups on paper.

If you are working on a computer and making a mock-up with an illustration in an editorial context find a magazine or newspaper with a design you like. Then carefully measure the margins and guides and construct a page to the same design. You can add any text and headlines to fit. Or you can scan the article from the magazine or newspaper where you’d like your illustrations to be placed, then change the heading so it’s appropriate for your illustration and paste your illustration in. Don’t worry if the main body of text relates to a totally different subject. If you’re working on paper this can be done using cut and paste, where you collage copies of your image at the right scale to a type layout. Photocopying the layouts should bring the parts together into one cohesive whole.

For contexts other than editorial, the process of making mock-ups may not be as standard. In some instances you may find an existing design to base your mock-up on – a book jacket, piece of packaging, brochure, poster. If you intend to hand-draw type, it is easiest to do it on a separate sheet and then either scan it to use on a computer or photocopy it to the required scale onto a piece of acetate and position this onto your design.

**Grid** Most design is organised according to a grid structure. The number of columns of type provides a template within which the designer can organise the text, headings, photos and illustrations.
Exercise: Making a mock-up

For this exercise you are going to mock-up a book cover. From your book shelves or the library choose a book title that appeals to you. Read the blurb on the back of the book (or the whole book if you have time). Examine the design of the cover to identify what the brief would be for the illustration and establish the function you want your image to perform.

You may already have done an illustration you can use or you may be inspired to make a new one. If you are using one you have already done you may need to modify it in some way. You may need to play with the colours, edit or adjust the composition or alter the size or scale. Don’t make changes to the original.

Either copying the design of the cover and adding your illustration or designing the cover from scratch, make sure that you incorporate the title, author and publisher’s details. If possible choose a paper for the mock-up as near as possible to that which would be used for real.

In your learning log note how well your image worked and any technical problems you had to overcome to make a convincing mock-up.
Assignment three

A poster

The main focus in this part has been transforming your ideas into a form that best communicates them. The processes you adopt and develop will become a foundation to creating a successful illustration. Considering how images are constructed and formed is an ongoing process, it isn’t a skill that can be learned in one lesson. Your approach will evolve and develop through repeated practice and analysis of your own images and the work of other practitioners. You will begin to establish a methodology which feels right for you. There is no right or wrong way of doing this. You need to establish your own unique way of bringing together content for a brief and breathing life into it.

The brief

To design an illustration for a poster for a music event. An Early Music concert, a Jazz evening or for a pop group. You can choose.

The finished poster will be reproduced at A3 size, but you can work at the size, in proportion, that you feel most comfortable with. You will need to provide your working drawings – the thumbnails and visuals – with the finished piece.

The poster will include the title of the event, the date, time, place and any other information you think appropriate. You can either include this on your artwork or indicate where it will be positioned.

What to do

Start by brainstorming and create a moodboard. Produce a range of alternative thumbnails in which you consider viewpoints and various arrangements of the content you have selected.

Choose the two compositions you like best and create two line visuals. Don’t get bogged down by detail that doesn’t help you to describe the main structure and content of the image. If you are including type are you confident that you have chosen the right typeface? If you are not including it indicate where it will go. Check that when added it will neither get lost or obliterate or compromise your composition.

Take the composition you think works best and create a colour visual. Use your mood board to help you to establish a colour range to work within. Be selective.

Finally, produce your final artwork.

Put your name and student number on the back of all the work you are submitting and send it together with your sketchbook pages and learning log to your tutor.
Illustration

Part four

Style

Emma Robinson
Style is the quality in an artist’s work that comes from something within. It is a result of an artist seeing something in a special private way.

They then transmit that personal vision in their own idiosyncratic manner.

Bob Gill and John Lewis *Illustration: aspects and directions*

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I make you laugh ...
... you laugh with me

(There’s nothing in this world can make us feel so good as laughter can, as laughter does, as laughter should)

Petra Brown
The qualities of different drawing media and how they are used define the illustrator’s visual language – their style. For many this evolves through getting a feel for the properties of different materials and being selective based on success and preference.

For some illustrators the development of visual aspects of style, rather than concept, is challenging. The frustration of having an idea and some intention to create it in a particular way but not yet possessing the skills to achieve this, can really hamper you. Part of the learning journey of being an illustrator requires a sophisticated package of skills, and being committed to developing all of these skills. Ultimately you will have a greater feeling of ownership and versatility.

Your style is a genuine personal language, like a signature. If it is based on a robust foundation of understanding and knowledge it can give you the flexibility to respond to diverse challenges with confidence.

There is no ‘one way’ of working as the illustrator and client need to have a choice of styles to select the most appropriate image for the job.

Sometimes an illustrator is chosen because their work is predominantly focussed around a particular subject and the client recognises them for that. Sometimes it is the pictorial approach, metaphor, diagram, narrative, humour or the way that the illustrator uses exaggeration and distortion that will distinguish the illustrator.
Exercise: Identifying tools and materials

Find a range of illustrators who use a particular medium. You may focus on the traditional such as pencil, watercolour, paint, gouache, coloured pencils, oil or acrylic paint, coloured pencils, collage, prints or on the more obviously digital processes – including digital collage, photography, digital drawing and painting.

Catalogue the illustrators according to similarities in the way that they use tools and materials. How do they distort or exaggerate the representation of elements in their work? How do they communicate through use of metaphor or symbols?

Choose one image which you most appreciate visually. In your learning log write about the way that the illustrator works. It often helps to begin by describing a picture. Ask yourself questions as you write such as: How is the image composed? How are colour, tone, and texture used to evoke mood or convey an idea? Has the illustrator distorted the content within the imagery and how does this work for the purpose the image fulfils?

Go back to a visual you created for an earlier exercise and now render it using the same tools and materials as your chosen artist.

Now choose a very different artwork and repeat the process.
Arguably one of the main distinctions between fine art image-making and illustration is not a technical or conceptual one, but a difference in focus. Even when they're working independently of commissions, illustrators work with an awareness of an audience. Even though the illustrator may have a personal visual approach and style, the need to communicate to the particular audience will in some way influence the outcome of every project.

The artwork you create must work for and be appropriate for the target audience. Imagery associated with youth culture and applied to situations and artefacts relevant to this social grouping, for example, is likely to have a different visual flavour to that directed at older age groups. Within your own work you may find that the style you develop tends to pigeonhole you within certain categories. Be aware of the factors that distinguish your imagery. Building adaptability into your repertoire will give you greater scope and enable you to feel confident in handling a diversity of visual challenges and a range of content. Political satirist, Ralph Steadman, has also created children’s books without much modification of style. Quentin Blake, known for his world-famous children’s books and characters such as Mr Magnolia, has successfully created a series of murals for a hospital unit for older people and greeting cards across the age ranges.
Exercise: Museum posters

You have been asked to produce three illustrations be used as part of a series of A3 posters to publicise the museum to the following audiences:

Child aged 5–9        Teenager (13–16)        General adult audience

The museum wants to encourage diverse sections of the population to visit and to perceive it as a place of interest. Select one object for each of the audiences and create an image centred around that object in a way which you think best presents it to your market. Go to your local museum or anywhere that has a range of interesting artefacts to gather good visual references. Choose exhibits which are either appropriate for each of the audiences or which you think can be made interesting for the audience through your visual intervention.

Catalogue the exhibits in some way: photograph them, do printouts or make a series of drawings. Organise your images according to the audience groupings.

You are making three illustrations for three posters from the same institution. Will they be a ‘family’ or very different? If they are all different how will the audience know they come from the same place or doesn’t this matter?

 Decide on the visual approach you would like to adopt. Do you want to introduce a character and create a visual narrative? Do you want to make a decorative interpretation of the object? Do you want to place the object in the historic or geographic setting in which it was created? Do you want to depict the object to convey some aspect of it that you feel will be interesting to your audience? Will you choose an abstract, representational, or diagrammatic approach? Remember to consider viewpoints and explore the best position for your content within the format. You don’t have to be bound by direct representation of your object but it should be recognisable.

Explore options and make notes in your learning log.

Choose the media and colour range appropriate to your audience – but avoid generalisations and stereotypes.

Working to a scale that best suits you, produce colour visuals for all the posters – remember that for a poster you’re aiming for visual clarity and directness. Posters are often read from a distance so your image needs to be reasonably bold.

Prepare finished artwork for at least one of the posters.
Project Areas of illustration

Illustration is seen everywhere. It influences the way we are informed and educated, what we buy and how we are persuaded to do things. It gives us opinion and comment. It provides us with entertainment and tells us stories.  

Alan Male

The best definition of an illustrator is anyone who creates imagery for sale and the outlets for this sale are wherever there is a client. Many illustrations would not be out of place in an art gallery; it is their use which transforms them into ‘illustrations’ rather than ‘works of art’.

There are several broad areas where illustrators work professionally:

- **Editorial** – work commissioned for use within newspapers and magazines.

- **Publishing** – book jackets, books and other publications.

- **Children’s publishing** – story books, picture books, early readers, educational books and textbooks.

- **Design work** – brochures, posters, packaging, logos and informational illustration.

- **Fashion** – images applied to fashion or used to document fashion.
• **Advertising** – images used to promote or sell services or products.

• **Authorial practice** – when the illustrator initiates the project and generates the content without intervention from the client.

• **Decorative** – surface pattern work including greetings cards, wrapping paper, table napkins.

• **Site-based work** – murals, work for interiors.

• **Graphic literature** – an extension of both publishing and authorial practice.

 animations, web-based work and images within a screen-based environment – often performing a function identified by a designer, advertising agency or publisher.

• **Working in a team with other creatives** – architects, film makers, theatre directors etc.

These areas of practice are not mutually exclusive.
In the next three exercises you will produce three very different pieces of work. Each one is to be designed for a specific audience.

In each case you will need to research and collect reference material. You may also want to look at how other artists have solved similar problems. Whilst it is always a good idea to look at and be inspired by the work of others it is important that you appreciate that **at no time should you appropriate the work of other illustrators and claim it as your own. This is plagiarism and it is both unethical and illegal (copyright law). Any student found plagiarising work will be failed for that assignment.**

Think very carefully about the most appropriate style, methods and materials to use.

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**Exercise: A children's book cover**

You are asked to produce a cover illustration for a natural history book for children (age 7–11) entitled *Animals from Around the World*. The image is to be used as a full colour front jacket to encourage children to choose this book from the library shelf.

There is a long history of covers for children’s reference books and styles have changed over the years; however people have become used to ‘reading’ the imagery used and have expectations of what such a cover will look like. Think about a modern audience and how you can attract children to the contents.

Draw up at least three ideas as coloured client visuals. Include information on the final the size and format, and where the type will be positioned.

Note in your learning log the decisions you made through the design process.

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*Charlotte Voake*
Exercise: A menu card

For this exercise you are asked to provide an illustration for use on the menu of a sophisticated, quality fish restaurant – one in a chain sited in major European cities. The menu uses fresh ingredients and the ambience of the restaurant is modern, bright and contemporary in design. Any food depicted needs to be visually appetising.

Although the image will be used at a small size on the actual menu, if it is successful the restaurant would be interested in also using the image as a logo on their stationery and vans. As such the image will need to be reasonable simple and clear.

You will probably want to work on the artwork at a large scale but you need to provide an example reduced to 40mm x 40mm as it will initially be used.

Exercise: A tattoo

A friend has asked you to design a tattoo for them based on the word Mum. He would also like you to make it into a greeting card that he can send his mother. (What a good idea for Mother’s Day).

Research the history and conventions of tattoos and body art – as well as the modern ranges look at the designs from the past and other cultures.

Decide on how complex your design will be and whether you will be using colour.

Draw up your design on a large scale, mindful that it will be smaller both on a body and the card.

Write up your decision making process in your learning log.
The illustrator often exaggerates to draw attention to visual aspects which are considered important. Distortion can be a deliberate choice or the result of informed drawing or to create work for a particular market.

Over time and with practice the illustrator can create an entire visual world over which they have complete control. This becomes recognisable as their style. Developing consistency within this language is one of the abilities that need to be mastered by an illustrator.

“Style is what comes naturally when you’re trying to do something else like draw a nose or paint a hand. Everything else isn’t style. It’s mannerism, fashion, tricks of the trade.”

Brad Holland

Project Visual distortion

Splat the Cat

Rob Scotton
**Exercise: Visual distortion**

This exercise is designed to push you through a deliberate process of stylisation. Tackle it with an open mind and be prepared to adapt or adopt some of the approaches you discover.

Begin by drawing a cat or dog. Use reference from any source – life, photos or images from the internet. Draw the animal in a way that makes it ‘real’. Remember to describe some aspect of its appearance or personality.

Do a second drawing using no more than five lines. These lines can join up with each other and overlap or can be less connected; they can be straight or fluid.

Now make a collage from bits cut from a magazines and printouts. Let the texture of a tree be the fur for example. Have fun introducing surreal elements. Deliberately distort. How far can you bend reality?

Produce a drawn version (not a tracing) of your collage. When drawing, edit and select from the collage being aware of the properties you want to create a strong character. Review the distorted version and decide how you can refine the image.

This image can now be incorporated into a bigger image. Use your imagination and introduce at least one other element that introduces a narrative. Be creative but consistent in the development and rendering of this additional content.
Project Character development

When illustrating stories or working on particular projects, the ability to create or visualise a character is an important one.

Character development is about bringing to life a character that has been described elsewhere. Often this character will then be used to help tell a story through their expressions, poses and how they fit within a scene. To be successful at this the illustrator needs to be familiar with the character: understanding how they will react in different situations, express emotions and use their body. Achieving all this convincingly and with consistency is a challenge that takes a lot of observation and practice to master confidently.

Be aware of the traits that personalise your character and be consistent in their use. The world that you are creating needs to be convincing to your audience. You need to be aware of the way your world is perceived and ensure that it is broad enough to serve all the needs you have to realise. If you go for a button nose, long legs and dots for eyes will you be able to express all the moods of your character and be consistent within the world that you are populating?

The illustrator may have a repertoire of characters that are part of their visual trademark. Developing characters in isolation isn’t recommended, although character licensing is potentially lucrative and a viable dimension of commercial practice. To see the characters as an essential dimension of a complex and broad visual world is perhaps the most sensible approach.

At the extreme side of this distortion lie the caricature drawings that have been used extensively throughout history as a powerful tool of political satire.
Exercise: Character development

Collect as many examples as possible of different characters – newspapers and magazines are a particular good source. Catalogue these characters as types – babies, children, sportsmen, old women – create your own category headings.

Decide upon a character you would like to create. This might be one from a book or story, or based on an archetype such as a businessman or vicar’s wife.

Begin to brainstorm around your character – perhaps there are characters from the media or your own life you would like to focus on.

Draw your character from the front, from the side and from the back. It may help to draw lines from the neck, shoulder, waist and knees as an aid to scale and to ensure a sense of proportion. (This is known as 360° drawing.)

Draw your character over and over again. Get into role and adopt their mood, expression and personality. It often helps to work out what they are thinking or saying. Try moving the facial features around to extremes and using a few lines and dots to represent the face. Be conscious of the contribution clothing and costume makes in describing a character.

Then try another, different, character. Make sure you come up with someone completely different, not just the same person in different clothes.

Archetype This is an original model of a person, ideal example or prototype after which others are copied, patterned or emulated.

Stereotype A commonly held belief about specific social groups or types of individuals. Stereotypes are based on some idea of abstract familiarity.
Assignment four

Magazine illustration

This assignment should give you the opportunity to show off your developing style and use of tools and materials. If you decide to work digitally save the early stages of your image and print out key points of your experimentation.

Often illustrators working editorially for newspapers and magazines will be given a very loose brief such as this one. The conversation with the art director would normally reveal more about the complexion of the written article, as would your own knowledge of the context in which the illustration would be seen. For many illustrators working with such an open brief is the best way to operate. In this instance your interpretation of the theme is a flexible one.

The brief

A magazine wants an illustration on one of the following topics:

- Lost
- Disaster
- Discovery
- Guilty secret

They want an illustration based on a still life. You have the freedom to select the items for the still life and are given creative free rein. The rest of the content, the method you use to produce it and the colours you use are all for you to decide.

What to do

Working at a maximum A3 size, produce a well-observed, objective drawing of your set up. Consider the materials to use and do thumbnail alternative compositions to explore variations and formats. Allow yourself to distort your drawing to convey the essence of the word. Each decision you make – choice of subject, arrangement of subject, placing of subject in the frame, choice of media – should contribute to the overall description of the theme you have chosen.

Either trace, scan or photocopy this drawing and then do a tonal version of it. You may choose to totally eliminate the line from the drawing or to build tone around it.

At this stage you may wish to introduce a character or be more specific about a location to suggest a narrative. Alternatively you may continue to work with and modify your original still life.

Create a line visual that should communicate clearly the final artwork. Take this visual through to final artwork.

Put your name and student number on the back of all the work you are submitting and send it together with your sketchbook pages and learning log to your tutor.
Illustration

Part five

Words and pictures

Ralph Steadman
Visually interpreting another’s words is at the core of illustration. I am suggesting that learning how to illustrate your own words will strengthen your ability to visualise in a personal way the words of others. Rather than perceiving ourselves at the mercy of an ever-changing market place the illustrator as author regains the ability to self-initiate when no assignments are available.

Marshall Arisman
The availability of the internet and efficient and relatively cheap digital home computer set-ups have opened up opportunities for illustrators both to create work independently of an external client or commission and to market and sell this work widely.

The term 'authorial' suggests a written dimension. In the context of illustration, though, it means taking ownership and initiating content for the creation of artwork. Sometimes this may involve creating a text to illustrate – but not necessarily.

The key to success lies in possessing a high degree of drive and considerable business and marketing ability in addition to illustrative skills. It means understanding the market audience and developing and using the means to target that audience.

There are various potential avenues or outcomes for authorial practice:

- **Children's publishing** – writing a children's story and creating a dummy book to submit to a publisher for consideration.

- **Decorative illustration** – creating designs for use within the greetings and surface pattern industry. This could be in the form of greetings cards or wrapping paper designs. Other potential forms are limited edition artefacts, which feature imagery – screen-printed and hand-painted objects such as ceramics (plates, vases, etc.), bags and furniture.

- **Fanzines and artists' books** – an expanding area of the industry. Often sold at artists’ book fairs or on the internet through a personal or specialist website.
• **Editorial** – This is not widespread but there are some illustrators who have written the content, provided the illustrations and approached publishers directly with a piece suitable for publishing in a magazine, journal, newspaper etc. This type of work demands careful prior research and good journalistic skills. For example, the typographical illustrators Lucinda Rogers and Oliver Kugler have worked on location and provided visual diaries for major national newspapers.

![Oliver Kugler](image)

• **Artists’ prints and artworks** – Painters, printmakers and other image-makers have traditionally used galleries as a commercial outlet for their work. This avenue has always been available to illustrators whose work can sometimes be of interest as an artefact in its own right in addition to its printed value. The internet gallery is now ubiquitous; although the standard of artwork is variable on these sites, positioning yourself on an appropriate site could be profitable. Some illustrators have gallery/shop areas on their own websites and there are many print companies offering giclée prints which illustrators can sell as editions.

• **Fashion and accessories** – This is a growth area particularly relevant to youth culture – limited edition T-shirts, bags, skateboards, button badges, etc.

When making artwork for sale, research market values so that you can cost your articles appropriately. Production values are also important. The quality of paper you print on or surfaces you transfer your image onto need to be appropriate and this can have cost implications. Research into the commercial viability of authorial practice is essential before you embark on a project.
Exercise: Your own work

Most of the work you’ve created so far has been as a result of specific exercises with clear objectives defining the outcome. However, every drawing, every mark, every image you produce belongs to you and, as your property, has a potential value beyond the satisfying of a brief or exercise.

Go through the artwork you’ve created so far for this course. Review your sketchbooks, notebooks, working drawings and sketches as well as the more ‘resolved’ or finished pieces. Use post-it notes to identify the images which have elements that you enjoy. Try to distance yourself from each image’s original function, and its success as measured against your original intentions and goals, and make your selection purely on whether you enjoy the image aesthetically or conceptually. Photocopy or scan a selection from these images to make a ‘gallery’ of pictures, fragments of illustrations and drawings.

Choose from one of the areas of authorial practice and select an image from your gallery that would be appropriate for that area. Remember that you also need to identify an audience for your work within the area you’ve chosen.

If you can, implement the choices you’ve made and actually produce the artefact. There are many companies on the high street and on the internet offering services to help you transform your imagery into commercially viable or appealing objects. If you choose to implement your design be aware of the cost implications and investigate at least three alternative suppliers before committing yourself to a particular supplier.
All subjects and types of illustration are covered within this area. There exists a publication for every subject and every topic has been written about in some magazine, newspaper or zine (a small home-produced magazine). Not all of these publications use contemporary, cutting edge illustration but most use imagery in some form to complement the text. But what function does this imagery perform?

Socio-political imagery and illustration provides clarification, sometimes encouraging a focus on one aspect of the text, sometimes taking on a polemical role – through the use of satire, for example. This is an area where conceptual illustration can provide new insight and genuinely extend the text.

The various sections of most large format newspapers reflect the areas in which illustration is generally available – finance, health and beauty, travel, short fiction, politics and personal and social issues. A wide range of interesting illustration is used in these areas.

Editorial illustration often gives new illustrators their first opportunity to tackle a brief. It is an ephemeral area of practice and art editors are traditionally more likely to take risks than commissioners whose designs are selling expensive products or services or are intended to be more enduring. It still holds true that today’s newspapers are tomorrow’s fish and chip wrappers.

Rhys Bevan Jones
Exercise: Editorial Illustration

Buy a newspaper with a supplement and go through cutting out any article that contains an illustration.

Notice the heading for each article and read the text that the illustration refers to. Make a mental note about the way the illustration relates to the text, how its ideas relate to the meaning of the piece, how it extends the content of the piece.

Analyse the type of illustration – is it decorative, conceptual, informational? Does it use metaphor to convey an idea or does it have a narrative base? Is it representational, abstract or diagrammatic?

Now imagine that you've have been commissioned by the paper to create an illustration. Your task is to provide a visual interpretation of one of the headings below:

- How green is your food?
- The object of my desire
- The best restaurant in town.
- Finding your family history
- Loves me, loves me not
- An interview with Melvin Bragg
- Throwing your money away
- Paris, still the best place on earth

You may find it useful either to find some text that suits the heading or write a few sentences yourself. Your interpretation can be as personal or as open as you like. For example, you may decide to go and draw an object or place or situation – or your might decide to create your image in a more interpretive or conceptual way.

If you’re confronted with several hundred words of text to illustrate you may find it hard to identify key areas of focus. Approach the task in a series of stages. Start by reading the article all the way through to get a sense of its entire meaning. Try not to think about your visual interpretation at this point. You might find it useful to sum up the article in a short series of sentences.

Next, go through the article with a highlighter pen and identify sentences and words which you consider to be important aspects of the text. Be conscious of connections between these words and the way in which one aspect of the text relates to another. If you’ve been given a heading by an editor, that might point you in the direction of the aspects that you’ll need to respond to in your illustration. Finally, read the text again with a sheet of paper to hand and sketch down ideas as you read through the article. Don’t draw self-consciously. Enjoy the process of visual brainstorming and be open to whatever results from it.
Make a list of words that describe the illustration you want to create. This should be as clear as the analysis you made of the illustrations in the newspaper or magazine and will help you decide how to proceed. Identify what the function of your image will be. Will it contain information, offer opinion, clarify or decorate the text?

Working within the size of one of the images that you analysed earlier, create a visual in response to your ideas. Be thorough within your processes of idea generation and development and refer often to your heading and text. Be realistic about your abilities at this stage and choose content according to both the meaning you want to communicate and your confidence in achieving this visually.

When you've created a line visual that you feel is appropriate for the article go to the artwork stage. If you can identify a palette and medium that you think sums up the sense of the content you may find that you can photocopy your visual and colour it in or scan it digitally and explore several colour variations before moving onto the final artwork.

Using materials and a stylistic approach which you feel comfortable with, translate your visual into artwork. You might decide to trace the image onto a surface appropriate to the media you've chosen, scale up the format you intend to work within and trace from an enlargement or draw the image freehand, using your visual as a guide.

In your learning log note down the types of editorial illustration you related to most positively, the early ideas you considered, and the process by which you decided what aspects of the text you wanted to focus on.
Exercise: Travel guides

Your brief is to produce three illustrations for a series of books jackets, at the size of an existing travel guide, for the locations Istanbul, Helsinki and Milan.

The client would like you to create illustrations in which many elements are brought together in a diagrammatic way. They would also like the type to be hand-drawn in an appropriate style.

There are an infinite number of permutations available within this brief and therefore a high degree of flexibility. Write yourself a brief that is challenging but manageable. Be aware of the processes which have so far led to your development in ideas generation, visual research, image construction, understanding contexts and media usage. Use worksheets and sketchbooks to explore the problem you set yourself and refer to examples of work which solves similar types of problems.

Provide client visuals for all three covers and a mock-up for one.
Project Text and image

Most imagery is commissioned to work together with typography. The typographic dimension is organised by the designer according to the demands of the client. The worst form of commissioning is when the designer perceives the illustrator as a box-filler, someone who fills the gap and in some way decorates the text. Intelligent commissioning involves a considered fusion or marriage of text and image, both pictorially and conceptually.

Recent trends have provided more opportunities for illustrators to become creators of type and there are many examples of good design where the words are rendered using letterforms created by traditional or digital drawing. Creating a body of text or ‘copy’ is a more difficult task to achieve illustratively (although not impossible – the illuminated manuscript is evidence of this). For any illustrator, having the confidence and the ability to both generate text and select and employ existing typefaces is a useful skill. To be able to engage in dialogue with your client, and articulate an informed opinion on the relationship of text and image, is an increasingly valuable attribute for an illustrator.

- Font/typeface – the different varieties of letterforms
- Typography – the creation of typefaces and their arrangement to convey a message
- Expressive typography – Where the emotional content and meaning of the words is reflected in the form, size and position of the typeface
- Upper case – capital letters
- Lower case – small letters
- Ascender – the upward facing part of a letter
- Descender – the part of a letter that goes down
- Serif – the ‘curly’ or pointed bits at the end of letters
- Sans serif – font with no serifs.

When you come to create your own promotional materials – a logo, letterhead or website – try to demonstrate that you’re comfortable working with text and images and recognise the value of well-chosen type.

There are many different typefaces and these are used in a whole range of creative ways. You’re probably familiar with many of the standard typefaces that are used for creating documents. More unusual typefaces can be bought for use within design-oriented packages. Familiarise yourself with the different contexts where type is used, its function and how it inter-relates with imagery. Get used to ‘copying’ type freehand by drawing words as well as tracing over typefaces so that you gain a sense of how the letter forms are constructed within differing typefaces and develop an intuitive sense of the spacing of letters.
Exercise: Text and image

Begin by taking each pair of words in turn from the list below and writing them in your own handwriting.

| Big   | Small  | Fat | Thin | Fast | Slow | Fun  | Boring | Calm | Mad |

Now write each pair of opposites in a way that is descriptive – use the shape and size of the word and the relative position of the letters to express the meaning of the word. A fat ‘F’ may look different to a thin ‘F’. Write the words in both upper case and lower case.

Turning to your computer software, scroll through the fonts and select one that suits your word. Reflect the qualities you were seeking to express when hand-drawing the word. Be conscious of the roundness or pointedness of a letter form. Note whether it’s serif or sans serif. It may help to type the word several times in different fonts and make a direct comparison between them.

Print off the words in the typefaces you’ve selected in a size that reflects the meaning of each word. Your ‘fat’ word may be much larger than your ‘thin’ word, for example, and each may be in a different font.

Trace the typeface in pencil using the colour that best communicates its meaning.

Use a moodboard to explore other media qualities which communicate the meaning of your word – consider texture, line quality and colour combinations.

Draw your typed words freehand using a pencil and then render them using materials, media and colour appropriate to their meaning.
**Exercise: Packaging**

Produce a series of illustrations for packaging to be used for a new range of organic biscuits for children. There are three varieties in the range Raisin, Choc Chip and Ginger biscuits. The client specifically wants three illustrations featuring extinct animals interacting in some fun way with a biscuit to be used on the boxes. The drawings should be in full colour, and the client would like the colours to reflect the ‘flavour’ of the biscuit.

Go to the shops and research the market. How will you stand out amongst the others?

As it will probably be an adult who makes the purchase, you need to decide whether you will exploit ‘pester power’ or appeal to both adult and child. You may want to develop characters suitable for young children or employ a style of drawing to appeal to your all your audiences. You also need to decide whether you will have hand-drawn or ‘straight’ typography.

You need to submit all stages of the development process – thumbnails, visuals for all three designs and a mock-up for at least one.
Many illustrators aspire to work in children’s publishing as author/illustrator. This is a rewarding but competitive area of illustrative practice. The most highly sought after area tends to be picture books. This is an important aspect of illustrative practice with exciting and carefully constructed imagery that facilitates the reading process pivotal to a child’s educational development.

Picture books traditionally come in a 24- or 32-page format. They are seen as the first tools for encouraging reading and are generally designed for three to seven year olds. Picture books increasingly reflect a diversity of stylistic approaches and cultural contexts. At their best, they demonstrate a perfect synthesis of text and image – ‘a rhythmic syncopation of words and pictures’ (Maurice Sendak).

Illustrations in books for older children continue to expand upon the meaning in the text but the images are fewer; these images function as visual props to help children emerge as confident, independent readers.

Cover illustrations are designed to appeal directly to the child’s sense of enquiry.

In the UK, the use of illustrations in books for children diminishes significantly once the child can read. This is not the case elsewhere. In the US, picture books are in standard use for children up to the age of 10; in Scandinavia they are regarded as appropriate for people of all ages.
Children’s illustration is an increasingly broad area. Children’s clothing, foods and character merchandising, as well as traditional areas like magazine and educational publishing, offer opportunities for image-makers interested in targeting this audience. Whereas picture books require a sophisticated package of skills, including an understanding of sequence, pace and dramatic action as well as narrative ability, these broader design applications focus specifically upon a demonstration of audience understanding – what appeals, what conveys information, what sells.

Look at children’s clothes and toy catalogues as well as children’s magazines to identify the content and characteristics defining each age group. Often children depicted within each age bracket will be older than the audience they’re intended to reach. Familiarise yourself as much as possible with children’s culture – CBeebies and CITV, children’s animation – as well as visiting children’s libraries and stores selling children’s merchandise.
Exercise: Working for children

Collect as many examples of imagery for children as possible. Group the illustrations you've collected into the target age groups. Include at least one image for each age group.

- Pre-reader
- Pre-school (3–5)
- Early reader (5–7)
- Established reader (7–9)
- and Older age groups.

Take two of these age groups and, for each one, go through a process of brainstorming around at least one word chosen from this list:

- Festival
- Scary
- Wild
- Growing
- Journey
- Sad
- Family
- Discovery

Pick an animal appropriate for each age group and brainstorm to identify themes, images and ideas pertinent to your age groups.

Create a simple image of your animal engaged in an activity that communicates this word. Be conscious of the need to achieve stylistic consistency in the development of all the content you include within your imagery. Remember that you're creating the world in which your character operates.

Explore the colours and materials to use for your illustration. You're engaging in a process of visual communication and you need to be conscious of the nature of your visual language in the same way as you would use language when speaking to a child.

Are the target age brackets for children really as clear-cut as we've made them here? How did the function of image and text differ within the different age groupings? What is your response to the idea 'all children’s illustration has bright colours'? Make notes in your learning log.
Exercise: Educational strip

You have been asked to produce an illustrated strip of up to five frames for use in schools explaining to young teenagers how to cope with the onset of puberty. You can decide on which aspect you want to tackle. Due to the subject matter and the intended age group it is suggested that you use metaphor and humour when conveying the message – though take care not to trivialise a serious message. The client would also like you to provide a single illustration of your character for use on the front cover.

The leaflet is called What’s happening to my body? It’s all going mad!

You will probably find thumbnailing very useful here to work out how each frame will relate to the others.

You need to submit all stages of the development process – thumbnails, visuals and client visuals for the cartoon strip and the stand-alone illustration.
Assignment five

Seven days

The exercises that you’ve completed in this part should have helped you identify the forces which shape a commission and the processes to go through to create an illustration ready for print. You should now be ready to work as an illustrator.

This assignment is an opportunity to consolidate the understanding you’ve gained so far, reflect on the work you’ve enjoyed, the successes you’ve had and the areas of illustration you feel most drawn to. It allows you to create certain parts of the brief yourself so that you have the maximum capacity to show off your interests and talents.

As you think about what you’re going to produce, keep on with your ongoing visual research by looking at examples of existing work or contexts. Above all, be open-minded and analytical and try several variations until you arrive at a brief which feels most interesting for you.

The brief

The title is Seven days.

These can be the seven days of the week or random days that tell a story. Your interpretation can be objective or subjective. You can produce seven separate, one large diagrammatic or a continuous strip illustration. You can decide on the media and methods you will use; the context – magazine, newspaper, book, brochure or poster; and the intended audience.

You need to write yourself a brief that is clear and challenging but manageable.

What to do

Be aware of the processes which have so far led to your development in ideas generation, visual research, image construction, understanding contexts and media usage.

Make sure that you are clear what the final size should be, but you can work at any proportional size. Use worksheets and sketchbooks to explore solutions and refer to examples of work which solve similar types of problems. Think back to how you have treated similar briefs.

You need to submit all your working stages from thumbnails to final artwork.

Put your name and student number on the back of all the work you are submitting and send it together with your sketchbook pages and learning log to your tutor.