



ILLUSTRATION: AN OVERLOOKED ART FORM?

The international avant-garde of young illustrators and graphic artists working in the applied arts finds inspiration by mixing pen and pixels. The full picture from the curator of "Illustrative".



“ Many writers consider illustration to be a second-rate form of expression, incapable of gaining independence from the written word and the press, confined as it is to the world of magazines, newspapers and cartoons ”

In hall 9 of the Oerlikon Fair in Zurich there is much nailing, drilling and carrying of cases as the fourth edition of Illustrative gets into full swing. Its curator Pascal Johanssen, a fine art specialist at the University of Berlin and himself a gallery owner, invites the public to a new and original event. “We’re presenting artists who are not among the traditional big names but are from the lesser known world of illustration”, he explains. According to him, it’s still rare to find art galleries that dare to invite illustrators and the specialist press in this field on account of long-standing prejudices. Many writers consider illustration to be a second-

rate form of expression, incapable of gaining independence from the written word and the press, confined as it is to the world of magazines, newspapers and cartoons. When Illustrative first started in 2006 in Berlin it was a success and quickly became a hit with the media, largely because no one had yet taken the trouble to search out personal projects undertaken by graphic artists and illustrators individually, as opposed to commission work for agencies and other clients. “Collaboration with Swatch as the main partner certainly adds visibility to our initiative”, explains Pascal Johanssen.



Diversity tolerated

“Neither the Kassel Dokumenta nor an art exhibition” is the prevailing view of the public and media, who expressed curiosity at the new trends on show during the latest edition of Illustrative. It is true that the works by graphic artists and installations on view to the public have nothing in common with the intellectual approach of 1990s modern art, largely devoid of inspiration since that time. The search for very young talent in the world of the graphic arts has opened up a forum for more integrative forms of expression tolerant of diversity in terms of methods and techniques.

PAGE 20-21

Illustrative presents artists who are not among the traditional big names but work in the less well known world of illustration.

PAGE 21

Top left: artist Eva Han works with mixed print collages www.sadart.versobu.com

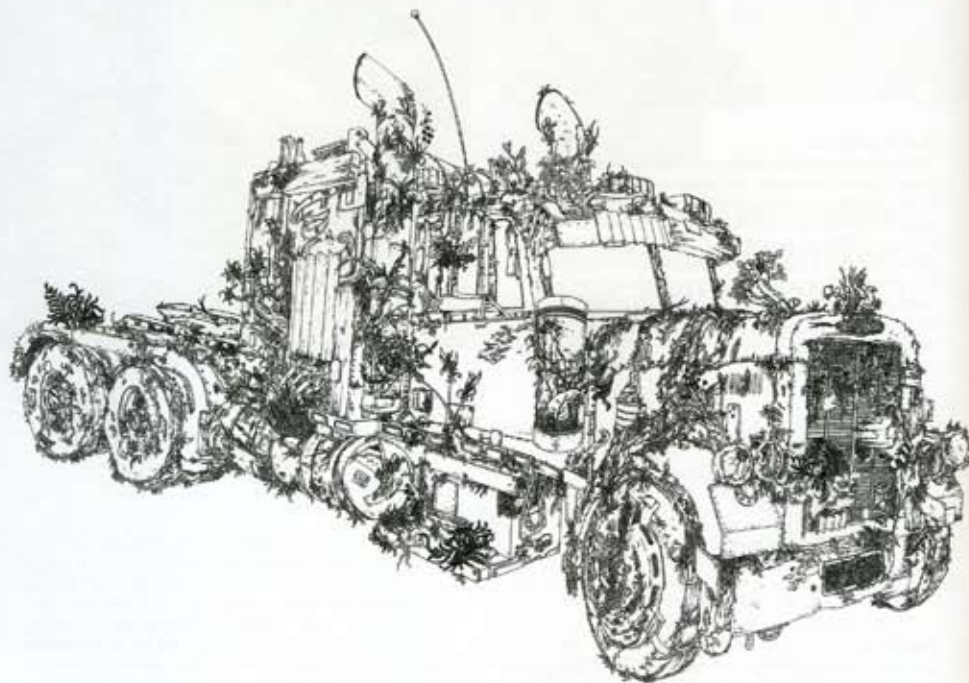


Eric Nyquist, illustrator in Pasadena, who aligns an ode with pencil and paper.

Julien Wille www.julienwille.com

“To date, only the Bauhaus in the early 1920s has been capable of combining the applied arts and the fine arts”

The authors of these installations make use of 3D collages, computerised images and acrylic paint. In short they combine computer science and personal talent with a disconcerting dexterity, enough indeed to rock the boat in well-established art circles. Is a picture produced by a computer program and a pencil worthy of consideration as a work of art? Do experimental collages and various borrowings from manual works deserve artistic recognition? Pascal Johanssen is in no doubt, provided an innovative approach is adopted. To date, only the Bauhaus in the early 1920s has been capable of combining the applied arts and the fine arts. Under the impulse of German architect, town planner and designer Walter Gropius, many artists, including Klee, Kandinsky and Johannes Itten, contributed to the explosion of works fusing modern materials and artistic expression into new categories. “This kind of formal research struggled to find a successor after the turmoil of the Second World War”, points out Pascal Johanssen.



PAGE 24

Daniel Stolte mastered a technique of digital processing that is completely invisible to the eye www.dstolte.de

PAGE 25

Tim Dinter's evocations of districts of capitals are completed in phases, sometimes analogue, sometimes digital www.timdinter.de

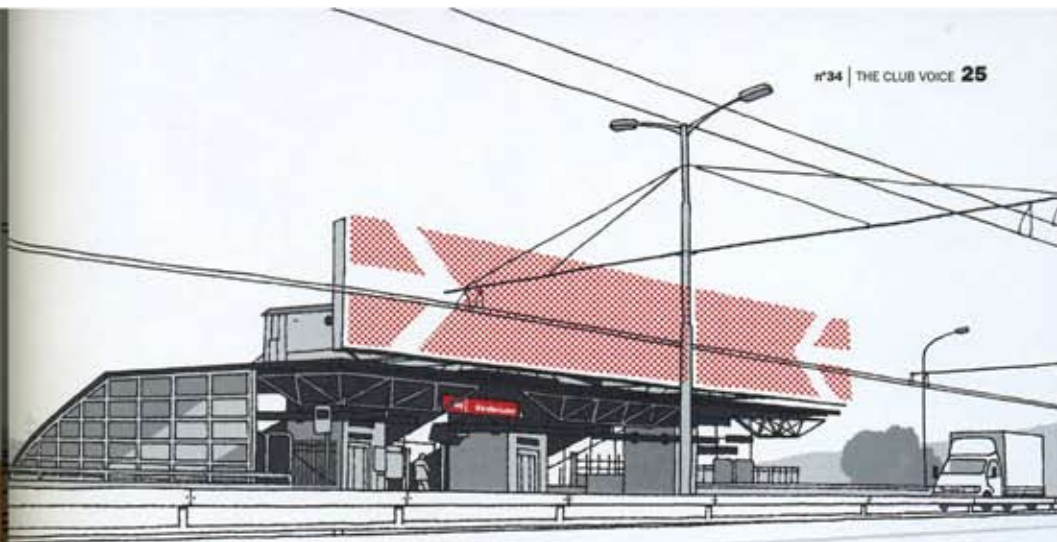
Which trends?

Most creative individuals featured at Illustrative follow what could be called a dual artistic and professional career. They don't consider themselves purely as artists, and work as professionals with an agency or on a freelance basis accepting commissions, fulfilling projects and orders. What sets them apart however is that they have the energy and conviction to develop personal projects.

Daniel Stolte represents one of the strongest trends in the field of illustration: he has mastered a technique of digital processing that is completely invisible to the eye. This freelance illustrator, published in the "New York Times" and "Die Zeit", is so skilled in computer technology that it becomes difficult to tell the difference between his work and real silk-screen prints, so deceptive is the patina of the colour.



“Most creative individuals featured at Illustrative follow what could be called a dual artistic and professional career”



He is joined by Roman Bittner and his cycle of "antique cities of tomorrow", vast ensembles grafted with minuscule reproductions of districts of Chicago, Berlin and New York. Here the railway station and its urban environment, reconstructed of a piece by the artist, resemble a new territory with architectural profiles borrowed from existing buildings in numerous US and European capitals. The Berlin illustrator uses outline drawing, but our eye no longer perceives this because of the sheer density he

achieves, which transcends technical coldness. His range of sepia tones is reminiscent of old photographs and their aura of sensibility. Tim Dinter meanwhile confuses the onlooker completely. Accessible on the surface, his evocations of districts of the German capital are completed in phases, sometimes analogue, sometimes digital. However his economy of means conveys an inimitable powdered light to all his plates.





Roman Bittner and his cycle of "antique cities of tomorrow", vast ensembles grafted with minuscule reproductions of districts of Chicago, Berlin and New York
www.aptsize.ch



Impressions of Illustrative, 17" - 20"
October 08, Zurich (Switzerland)

Artist Alina Günter www.alinagunter.ch



Artist Gary Saxon www.clubvoicemag.com**Fluid and sensual**

Generally, present day illustrations co-exist very easily with a wide variety of influences. Jan Feindt comes from the world of pop art, Jens Harder divides his creations comic-style into three frames. Eva Han works with mixed print collages. The list includes numerous influences ranging from graffiti, advertising and music to the contemporary media. This abundance of focal points seems to pose no obstacles to designers. Far from adhering to a discipline, they give the impression of evolving fluidly. While they employ acrylic paint, nothing prevents them from adding effects

using other techniques, either virtual or manual, sometimes not without traces of humour or mockery. Today's young emerging artists do not take themselves too seriously and have a certain lightness of touch. They embrace the decorative and distance themselves from the austere, as in the case of Eric Nyquist, an illustrator in Pasadena, who signs an ode with pencil and paper. Spontaneity and diversity prove that avant-garde talents are helping us see things differently, while revealing some unexpected subjects along the way.

Check out exclusive pictures of illustrative life.
www.watchtheclub.com/voice



Young Illustrators Award

No fewer than two thousand candidates approached the organisers of Illustrative 2008 in the hope of winning one of the "Young Illustrators Award" presented each year at the international exhibition. This prize recognises the work of three of the twenty best works selected by the jury in the illustrated animation, art book and illustration categories. Made up of artistic directors and editors of specialist magazines, the jury at the event is a high-profile collection of connoisseurs from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Japan, Great Britain and China. This year, as sponsor of the event, Swatch inaugurated a special prize for the production of a future limited-edition Swatch watch.

The 2008 special Swatch prize went to Christian Montenegro, a 36 year-old illustrator with a degree in graphic art from the University of Buenos Aires. An established artist in Argentina, he is also known in Germany and Great Britain and impressed the jury with the very high quality of his work. A talented colourist, he fluctuates between naive tones and ethnic motifs while laying claim to a very assertive personal style. His formal approach focuses on finely marked surfaces, such as wood grain, without compromising the freshness of his sometimes comical and tortuous motifs.



Left to right: Klaus Peter Mejer (Head of PR&Events Swatch), winners Rebecca Manley, Miriam Frei, Jenni Rope and Pascal Johansen (Director of Illustrative).

Christian Montenegro was the only male on the podium of Illustrative 2008. The other Young Illustrator Awards all went to women: Jenni Rope from Finland, Miriam Frei from Switzerland and Rebecca Manley from the United Kingdom. According to Pascal Johansen, the director of the event, the jury was very strict. "For every personal work received we looked to see if it was of interest and if it worked", he explains. The prize-winners of Illustrative 2008 benefit from the international renown of this artistic forum. Its director is now looking ahead to an even broader canvass: "The search for future talent must explore other cultural scenes and go beyond the purely western orbit."

Design by Christian Montenegro - winner of the special Swatch prize.



ClubArt THE GRAPHICS COLLECTION

Three artists inaugurate the ClubArt. The Graphics Collection series, with three exclusive watches in limited edition of 3,333 pieces, available only to Club Members. The first embodies the very pure design of Englishman Rory McGrath (OK-RM). The Swiss design collective Kärner Union signs off on the second watch with a delightfully fresh approach. The third reflects the creativity of talented Japanese artist Horiren.

Graph Paper (GZ198), Afreou Couti (GZ197)
Beautiful Women (GZ196)

See all online (ClubArt) The Graphics Collection NOW!
www.dunlop.com/clubart



“My mum used graph paper for her sketches and research into textures. This technical paper was all over the place and as a child I liked discovering the intersections and dots used as markers”



Rory McGrath, purity above all else

He missed the East End of London even when working for the 2x4 studio in New York: Rory McGrath, back from an eighteen month stay in the Big Apple, draws his energy from that part of London where, after graduating, he began his career as a freelance graphic artist, before embarking on active collaboration with Oliver Knight under the OK-RM label. His business card consists of two detachable sections and is a testimony to the duo's flexibility: either Oliver, or Rory, or both, everything hinges on the content of the project. They collaborate both in Europe and Japan: "85% of my work carries the OK-RM label and the rest I do on my own for others, it's a question of balance." The pressure of working on multiple projects scarcely affects him. "If the job is interesting, I don't mind making some sacrifices." More than large sums of money, it's his personal integrity that counts. "You must be able to be honest with yourself."

Given the surprising firmness of his convictions, does Rory see himself as an idealist? "No, but I want to carry on doing a job that gives me satisfaction and stay true to my convictions." What's more, this is a graphic artist who loves finding solutions that give substance to descriptive signs, whatever the medium. "A poster, a book, a website: it's a part of artistic expression that serves to communicate, provided everything unnecessary has been removed." Both the manufacturer Swoosh and Harvard Art Museum have turned to him to give coherency and a certain rigour to large-scale graphic projects. In his work the London based designer adopts a style imbued with objectivity, enabling him to apprehend details and include them in a wider process.

To the nearest millimetre

Rory McGrath grew up alongside designers and artists. His father, originally from Ireland, and his Caribbean born mother often took him on their travels, particularly to New Zealand. It's a specific memory linked to his mother that inspired the creation of the watch presented in the Swatch Club Art collection. "My mum used graph paper for her sketches and research into textures. This technical paper was all over the place and as a child I liked discovering the intersections and dots used as markers." So when he was given the task of illustrating the confined space of a watch, he wanted to distance himself from effects based simply on charm.

PAGE 34

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PAGE 35

Rory at illustrative OK.

“Rory McGrath, purity above all else”

In his eyes, the concept comes first and remains foremost when he designs his projects. For him, the idea is the guiding light of a project through to its completion. "On my watch, I like the purity of the graph paper, which I've reproduced correctly to scale - its strap could even be used to take measurements! By choice, I didn't specify the composition of this grid pattern, and it's even kept its original colour - blue - which graphic artists find so valuable since it has the property of being invisible to photocopiers when rough drafts are copied." On the dial of the Graph Paper (GZ158) model, the angles of the graph paper indicate the position of the hours, a result obtained by the designer through investigation. "By moving the format around the dial, I finally found this layout and decided to keep it."

The skateboard is also among the galaxy of objects on which the London graphic artist has left his mark. As the Artistic Director of Produce, a brand whose products are manufactured in Lausanne and distributed in Thailand, Rory McGrath is given total freedom to prepare annual collections. Its 2009 version is already complete. "It will feature symbols that have specific links to Swiss and Thai culture" says the designer, who is very attached to this small firm since its target audience is less intellectual than the habitués of East London lofts.

