Course sample

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Level 1

Illustration

Level HE4 – 40 CATS

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Front cover illustration
Paul Wearing

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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.
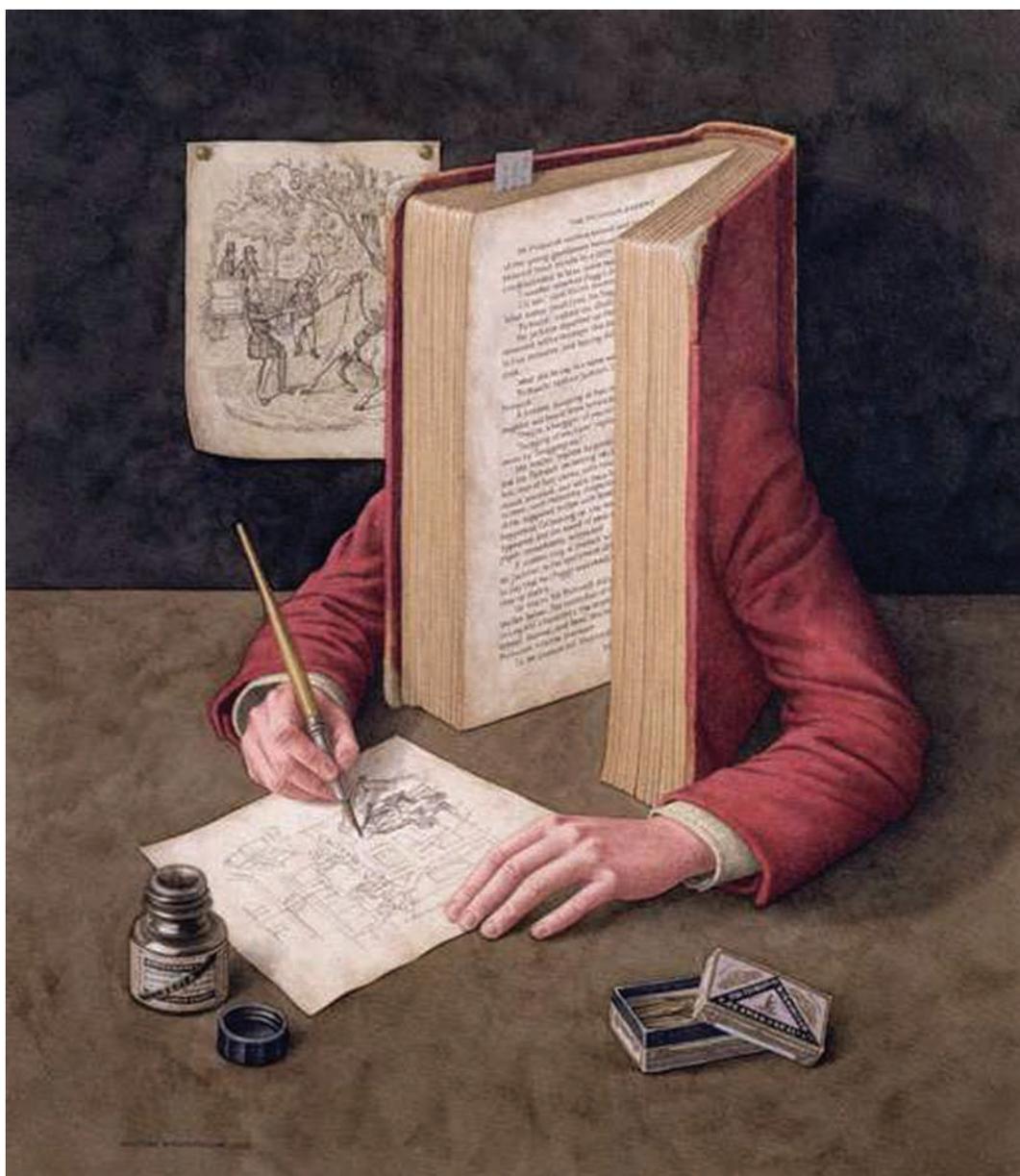
Part one
Getting started

"Illustrators – among the best of them is a unique ability to interpret the world."

Milton Glaser

Jonathan Worstenholme

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:

- show through your sketchbook studies, thumbnails, visuals and final artwork that you can generate, develop and communicate ideas through illustration

- demonstrate your understanding of the properties of a range of media, and select and use appropriate materials and techniques to create artwork

- work within set limits and boundaries in response to illustration briefs provided by clients

- provide evidence in your learning log of your developing knowledge of the work of other artists and illustrators and your critical reflections on their work

- show, through your selection and execution of projects and themes, and through your reflections on these choices and on your personal development in your learning log, that you are actively directing and designing 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.

Nicholas Garland

The history of illustration

William Hogarth

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

Edward Bawden

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.

John Minton

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 today

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.

Britta Teckentrup

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.

Project The key is communication

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.

Martin O'Neill

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.