



TIM MARRS

ILLUSTRATION AND ART DIRECTION

Born. Nottingham, U.K in 1972 to a Geordie Coal Miner Dad and a beautiful 18 year old Mum.

(Questions answered circa 2013 with the odd more recent bit added)

1. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESSES YOU GO THROUGH WHEN WORKING ON AN ILLUSTRATION COMMISSION FROM START TO FINISH?

Having a read of the brief whilst sipping a coffee is the norm, with some tunes rattling on in the background. If it's a more taxing brief the music will be softened and I'll sit in the thinking chair in the studio, with my sketchbook in hand, jotting some notes down, word association or just listing key descriptions from the brief is usual. Also using visuals/ sketches of possible content for compositions.

As my work is mostly computer based now, the initial sketches can give me an idea of content so I know what possible photos I might need, often I have images supplied by clients to use so these can be a starting point. It will depend also on the style brief, advertising and editorial processes may differ depending on how much visual research or idea generation I have to complete prior to making. I have a bank of textures and photos I've collected over the years so these are also starting points or I set about creating new if the brief needs it. I like to do this as often as I can, a bit of mark making etc can help me get in the mood for an image and help a more dynamic feel. Once all illustration parts are collated, photoshop gives me the chance to edit and compose, a little like a digital screen print...lots of layers. Once I have something I think answers the brief, I send a low rez jpeg via email to the client. The computer has helped speed my process up no end; I used to have to send pencil sketches, prior to a painted final, that often had no resemblance to the original pencil sketch. This new way of working gives the client a quicker visual that is closer to final and for editorial clients is far more efficient. Deadlines seem to be getting shorter and shorter I day for a rough and the final supplied on the second day is common.

So once the client gets back to me, they maybe request a few additions or changes but mostly I get the o.k to go ahead with final.



2. WHICH COMMISSIONS DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST, AND WHICH ARE MOST BENEFICIAL TO YOU (IF THESE AREN'T THE SAME)?

I like keeping busy so all briefs are enjoyable ... usually. Lately I've had a few moving image projects where initially I've been commissioned to create images for animation. This involves styling and interpreting scripts often a scene at a time. The whole process has been exciting and challenging. Coming from my more illustrative/ design background has helped when generating quite dynamic imagery that the animators then breathe some life into. I then help art direct alongside the director for the final adverts.

3. WOULD YOU SAY THAT A TRADITIONAL OR DIGITAL PROCESS HAS A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE IN YOUR WORK (I MEAN COMPUTERS OPPOSED TO PEN AND PAPER)? WHY?

The traditional process' has always had an important role in my process, without this my work wouldn't be what it is now. Having experimented with drawn and painted media in the past, my love of textures comes through in my digital work. Although my work is composed on the mac in photoshop the process is very similar to collage or screen printing and I have tried to keep the images as hand made looking as possible. The sketchbook is still a part of this process, so compositions and ideas are worked through and textures and backgrounds collated. Without both of these processes my work wouldn't be what it is.

4. WHO ARE THE ILLUSTRATORS ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS YOU MOST ADMIRE OR HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Illustrators: The Clayton Brothers, David Hughes, Dave McKean and Christian Northeast
Graphic designers: David Carson and Vaughan Oliver
Artists: Robert Rauschenberg, Peter Blake, Warhol and Eduardo Paolozzi
Photographers: Joel Sternfeld

5. WHAT METHODS DO YOU USE TO MARKET YOUR SERVICES? IS THERE ANYTHING THAT IS WORKING PARTICULARLY WELL?

Various publications, inc. contact, aoi images are traditional avenues to promote your work in but I also send direct email updates to clients, blog updates and website promos. Occasional more bespoke hand made / printed projects can be a more personal way of reaching out to a smaller more direct audience. i.e music magazines or travel mags. I've on occasions created something that reflects the theme or is a more personal response, a bespoke booklet that's eye catching, popped into an even more eye catching envelope and gets the art directors attention....well that's the idea.

Since writing this I think the world of instagram has become a good way of interacting directly with potential new clients and art directors.



6. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON WORKING WITH AGENTS / REPRESENTATIVES?

I'd recommend to all illustrators starting out that to at least try and establish your own client base, even if it is primarily editorial. Now that we can all promote ourselves via the web, its easier than ever to have a presence in the market place.

Most agents want exclusivity, which means they are your sole source of work. Its good to have control of how you promote yourself and who you promote to, being proactive in quiet times as an illustrator is essential, you cant and shouldn't rely on this one way of getting work.

The positives are obviously that the Agents have a wealth of experience, contacts and knowledge that can help promote and get work in areas that are traditionally harder to get known or seen in. ie advertising.

I've been very lucky, that I have two agents. One London based and the other in NYC, both have helped me establish myself as an illustrator and open many a door that I previously may have not been able to open.

7. DO YOU DO ANYTHING TO SUPPLEMENT YOUR INCOME? SECOND JOB OR SELL LIMITED EDITION PRINTS ETC.?

Not at present, but in the past I used to work part time in an art shop whilst establishing myself in the illo world and studying for a Masters. Also taught part time on a BTEC, which was fun most of the time but gets in the way when you're busy and have deadlines to meet.

I sell selected prints via Lumas gallery, which has a global high street presence along with an online gallery shop.

8. HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR WORK FRESH? DO YOU NEED TO CONSCIOUSLY ADAPT YOUR STYLE OR DOES IT PROGRESS NATURALLY?

Its hard to continually keep looking at ways of keeping your work fresh especially if you're busy. My style has had to evolve over the years to get more work or to appeal to a broader audience. In doing this some might say it lost an edge, but I break out and rough it up with a mark making fest when a job allows it.

Once graduating from my M.A with a very self-indulgent, rough and ready portfolio my work was well received but quite often excuses would be made by art directors, it would go something like – I'd like to commission you but my editor wouldn't go for it etc'. I was given valuable advice during this period and set about adapting and adding elements to my work that would make it more commissionable and with broader themes etc.

I keep sketchbooks now in varying degrees of success and detail, along with photographs that I take on my travels. Also occasional little screen printed or painted side projects that can filter through into my illustration work. Just breaking away from the computer screen and making work in a more traditional manor can be enough to get the juices flowing again.

9. WHERE DO YOU MOST COMMONLY FIND YOUR INSPIRATION? (I IMAGINE YOUR FIRST ANSWER WOULD BE 'EVERYWHERE' BUT IS THERE SOMETHING THAT REALLY GETS THE JUICES FLOWING?)

I've been working on various moving image projects of late and love seeing my work come to life in this style really has got me thinking and excited at a potential new chapter in my ever evolving life as an illustrator. Working with Chris Curtis has become a more permanent fixture since these-

early days when he worked at Passion pictures and I worked as a freelancer on occasional projects. We collaborate now on commercials and moving image projects at Curtismarrs.com

10. DID YOU STUDY FOR A DEGREE IN ILLUSTRATION OR RELATED SUBJECT? DO YOU THINK IT IS NECESSARY/ OF BENEFIT TO STUDY DESIGN AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL?

The combination of the educational process, the people you meet along this journey is key Just being exposed to new ideas, new ways of thinking/ working, having time to develop, grow up and open your mind are essential to help make you somebody who maybe able to cope with the very hard slog that it is to be an illustrator.

I did a BA in graphic design and illustration, then a Masters in illustration (design communication) both were essential in my development as an image maker. But my Foundation course was always the backbone to my mark making and gave me a strong starting point to enter the world of higher education with.

11. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING AN ART COLLEGE SHOULD TEACH A STUDENT OF ILLUSTRATION?

Keep experimenting and don't be obsessed with the word 'style' . You will never graduate as a finished illustrator. Drawing and mark making is a back bone to everything, keep away from the computer as long as you can and feeling like you're failing is good and normal its how you cope with and respond to this is key. This is a long journey and you need backbone to survive!

12. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE AN ASPIRING ILLUSTRATOR? WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN WHEN YOU WERE STARTING OUT, THAT YOU KNOW NOW?

I wouldn't change anything on this crazy journey I've taken so far.... The Masters was certainly a turning point for me and gave me the confidence to move forward with my work.

My advice to any illustrator would be simply to keep believing, keep looking for new avenues to see your work commissioned in, keep developing your work, be open to change, move to London, share a studio, travel and then move to the seaside..... it worked for me. But joking aside it is getting harder and harder to earn a living in this field and seems collaboration is the future and becoming more of all rounder with combined skills that are far broader than mine!

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14. DO YOU ACTIVELY USE SOCIAL MEDIA? WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO FOLLOW AND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I'm in the middle of a big website update, still the best way to see my work alongside twitter and Instagram. But this platform baffles me and seems lately to be populated often by women with questionable artistic talent claiming to be fine artists standing seductively in front of their canvases and have over 50k followers. What does this even mean ?

15. WHATS NEXT? DO YOU HAVE ANY DREAMS OR AMBITIONS FOR YOUR WORK?

I've always been quietly confident with my skills and where they might take me, but i think at the start of this journey would never have dreamt of the opportunities, work and clients i've had the pleasure of working with. So the key is maybe to think bigger Ha! So why not a Movie ? To help Art direct and visualise something would be epic.

15. TELL US ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION?

5 x GCSE'S A-C and D in maths and D in English language. – Along time ago!

2 x A levels. B in Art and D in CDT 1988-90

ART FOUNDATION – MERIT West Notts college of Art – 1990-91

BA GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION 2-1 Hull University 1991-1994

MA DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION/ILLUSTRATION Central Saint Martins of Art 1996-99

KEEP THE FAITH AND KEEP DREAMING BIG AND WORKING HARD, FIND THINGS TO DO THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY, IF YOU GET PAID FOR THEM EVEN BETTER! WHO WANTS TO WORK IN AN OFFICE RIGHT?

Love Marrs x