



Illustration that Works: Professional Techniques for Artistic and Commercial Success

Greg Houston

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A straight-to-the-point “everything-you-need-to-know” guide to the world of professional illustration for aspiring artists and recent art-school graduates—not only the technical essentials (the difference between narrative versus conceptual illustration, diagramming a composition, mastering negative space, and the impact of different mediums from watercolor to digital to textiles), but industry insights, real-world insider advice, and honest personal development tips from an experienced teacher (“if you say your style is ‘manga’ or ‘anime’ then you have no style”).

From a *Newsweek* cover depicting the Bush family as characters on *Game of Thrones*; to the Sistine Chapel (the complete illustrated bible)—visual storytelling through illustration has been an important mode of communication in every culture since ancient times. Unlike a fine artist, an illustrator creates images that serve a specific purpose, and successful illustrators need much more than just talent.

Drawing on a decade of teaching, including at Maryland Institute College of Art and as cofounder of the new Baltimore Academy of Illustration, along with over three decades of professional experience as an illustrator for clients like Marvel Comics, Relapse Records, and *The Village Voice*—Greg Houston places aspiring artists and recent graduates squarely in the current marketplace, and inspires them to pursue work in the large and lucrative field of professional illustration in a way that will be personally and professionally rewarding for years to come. *Illustration that Works* demonstrates exactly why illustration is so important to the way we see and communicate today, and how it can be done effectively in an infinite number of styles.

Includes:

Thought-provoking assignments

- Illustrate an op-ed that's either pro or against religion in the public sphere
- Create 3 posters for an HBO documentary series on sex (that can still be displayed anywhere)
- Illustrate a pair of identical twins whose lives have veered apart dramatically

400 examples of artwork

- Assignments completed by talented students
- Pieces from 50 classic and contemporary master illustrators including Brian Sanders, Marshall Arisman, Roberto Parada, Steve Brodner, Paul Rogers, and Greg Spalenka
- Houston's own pieces, both finished and failed

Illustration that Works: Professional Techniques for Artistic and Commercial Success Details

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Tara says

The content of this book goes through several different aspects of creating illustrations, mostly from the technical/artistic side rather than behind the scenes strategies for getting work, dealing with clients, etc. Many chapters are ended with a student brief that has been tried and tested by the author in his classes with his own students, including successful images by others.

Strangely, meaning no disrespect to Houston, most of the visuals in this book (largely based on his own portfolio, but also many other illustrators) left me cold for inspiration, or didn't really speak to me at all, but of course I've already consumed so many other images that have turned me on to what is possible in the field that that wasn't really the reason why I picked up the book.

Lots of practical tips and a friendly tone that make it all seem possible!

NarniaGirl says

Received free through GoodReads First Reads - thank you.

Although I'm not an illustrator myself I do enjoy the whole concept of illustrations. Beautifully laid out this book covers many aspects of illustrating. Some of the illustrations I found a little stark and ugly but such is the nature of the craft. Some good pointers about the industry.

Nga says

Greg did a great job of explaining the fundamentals to create an effective and usable illustration piece. If you are looking for something inspiring, which sheds an enlightenment on creativity and aesthetics, and delves into the innermost of the artists' minds, then this book might not be the one. The book, instead, is very straightforward, like an aggregation of must and must-not formulas for illustrators and to-be illustrators. The author introduced important factors when creating an illustration, including concept, choice of medium, composition, style, and styling. Working as an illustrator for a wide range of clients for almost thirty years, Greg also shares his considerable advise on working with art directors and maintaining a professional attitude and performance. Another plus is that the book features not just his works but also many other illustrators', so more learning!

The only reason that I held off reading his book in the first place was that I'm completely not into his style. Most of his characters are very grotesque and spooky, as if they are walking out of a horror movie. Actually, that's not far from the truth. He draws his inspiration from legendary serial killers, criminals, corpses, Dracula, and many more as you can imagine. Even his caricatures of celebrities such as Miley Cyrus or Michael Jackson look quite scary, as if their skin were made of strands of meat. Yet his illustrations are undeniably worth studying. And tbh, what I like most about his book, is his voice. Humble, satirical, and encouraging.

Katie Voss says

Informative and engaging. It didn't entirely address my concerns about the art of making comics, but it had some good advice about illustration in general.

Laura Wyles says

This book is fascinating and definitely takes the reader beyond the mere visual illustration. It covers a wide range of professional illustrations and I will constantly be using it as a reference book in the future.

Susan says

I think this is a terrific book. I teach illustration and the whole approach is a help. There's a very generous feeling to the book-in the way Houston shares his thinking, his work, his best advice, and tips, and also in the enthusiasm he has for pieces of student work included in the book. He's a seasoned working illustrator, with a wide array of briefs and samples, and this is a genuine effort to reach out and help young people starting out on illustration careers. He's not using the pages to impress the reader with how clever and talented he is. It's a truly generous book. My favorite tip is at the end where he encourages young illustrators to keep pursuing their own art as well as doing what they need to do for work. Also the book is full of a sense of his personality. It's great.

Julia says

Fun introduction to illustration as a career. This would be a great book for a high school artist who is thinking about next steps, but doesn't actually have to learn much about the trade yet. The book has some fun "homework" challenges in it and gives lots of great ideas, showing the diversity of the field of illustration.

Mary Masters says

GREAT BOOK.

Cindy says

Great resource, particularly, for aspiring illustrators and graphic artists. This book hits on everything from dealing with clients to developing a portfolio of your own. It's filled with advice, lessons and examples. The examples are illustrations by the author and other professional illustrators which help bring his points to life visually. Highly recommend.

Blood Rose Books says

This is not my typical read by far...and I mean really far, however, I was interested in the topic that Houston presented in this book. I'm not even visually that creative of a person but what I liked about this book was the information on how to create what speaks to those who wish to purchase art as well as the changes that have been made throughout society. I also appreciated the assignments that Houston places within the book, all of which could be completed by anyone whether they want to be an artist or not. It was a pleasure to read this book and I really enjoyed the way that the information was presented to me as the reader.

Also a cool fact that many of the pictures within the book are from students that he has given the assignments too.
