

Schedule: Wednesdays 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: Tower 912

Credits: 3.00

Instructor: Abraham Evensen Tena

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Course Description

This class introduces students to the field of Illustration in its various genres, including editorial and narrative illustration. It also highlights the importance of “thinking in your sketchbook” to develop strong concepts. During this semester, we will focus on composition as a way to showcase your ideas, as well as research and observational drawing to build a strong, opinionated images.

Departmental Goals

By the end of the semester, you are expected to:

- Know specific techniques to reliably produce quality images, that comply with client requirements and communicate your opinion.
- Understand client/instructor/colleague feedback, as well as develop the ability to self-evaluate.
- Know the importance of brainstorming, conceptualization, taking risks, and “thinking in your sketchbook.”
- Understand the basics of healthy studio practice, efficient process work, and quality presentation of final illustrations.
- Develop knowledge of visual history and visual literacy, as well as best practices to further these beyond the classroom.

Course Objectives

This class has three main objectives:

- 1. Practical understanding of composition, as means of communicating opinion:** Looking at composition through the lens of illustration history, we will learn the basic language of pictorial arrangement, and use it to better share your world view within the constrains of four illustration assignments. We will borrow compositional devices from the disciplines of Theater, Photography, Film and the Modern Painting to ground our concepts.
- 2. To exercise visual problem solving as a service:** Focusing on developing an attitude of service, we will conduct exercises in class that will challenge your ability to conceptualize visual solutions. We will strive to “get out of our own heads” and search for clarity and generosity in our artwork, all in order to understand the principles of professional illustration practice.
- 3. Practical understanding of fundamental illustration process:** Starting from concise, goal oriented conceptualization, we seek the internalize the need for research, thumbnails, value and color comps, technique tests, and quality finishes. Not only are these needed to produce any image of ambition, but are also the means of communication with clients.

Class Materials

The most important tool for this class is your sketchbook. Purchase one that is, at minimum, 8.5” x 11”, 60 lb quality paper, and easy to scan or photocopy. You will need this sketchbook to take visual notes in class, brainstorm, gather reference, thumbnail, and sketch your ideas. It is important that you go beyond pencil or pen: use color pencils, markers or even wet media to sketch when necessary, since color is too important a communication tool to be left out when developing concepts. You may also try watercolor sketchbooks, toned paper sketchbooks, and sketchbooks with interesting formats.

During the semester, your process work will be as important as you final illustrations. All aspects of process work can be considered means of communication with artistic directors, and therefore you should be ready to present them with professionalism. That is why is your responsibility to bring photocopies of thumbnails, composition sketches, reference images, value and color comps, or any other parts of the process, ready to hang and be critiqued in class. Also, there may be times when you need to

work in class, towards your finished illustration or doing more process, and therefore you may bring the materials for finishes as well.

Assignments and Grading

Every week you will be assigned process work leading to one of four main assignments for the semester. Process work counts for 50% of the grade, and the final illustration the remaining 50%. The instructor will give specific instructions for process work, but regardless of particularities, there are 5 elements of image-making that you should address in your process:

- **Concept:** Clear and concise verbal description of the idea you attempt to communicate in your final illustration. Sometimes a one paragraph description by email is all you need. At the end, you should always measure your final illustration against your original concept.
- **Composition:** Deliberate arrangement of pictorial elements in the service of your concept. This is where perspective, weight, readability and point of view matters the most.
- **Value:** The darkest darks, the lightest lights, and all tones in between in an image. It helps drive the eye, establish hierarchy, and relates to issues of rendering and lighting.
- **Color:** From its use in naturalistic rendering, to its symbolic and cultural dimensions, color can be the most powerful visual device of all. Even a limited palette, or monochromatic image, implies choice and meaning.
- **Technique:** Formal properties such as form, shape, texture, anatomy, line quality brushstroke, and others as. A solid technique is not enough to make an illustration, but a good illustration can be hurt by poor technique.

Come ready to receive and provide feedback using these concepts. During your week of homework, think of ways to address these questions as they relate to your assignment. Rarely a single sketch, reference or part of the illustration process can solve all of them in one sitting.

There also will be exercises dealing with visual problem solving. Most of the time, these will be done in class, but sometimes you may have to complete them as homework (you will be notified if that is the case.) These assignments count towards your sketchbook grade, and each will receive an individual grade to be averaged at the end.

This is how your final grade will be divided:

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Assignment 1 | 15% |
| Assignment 2 | 15% |
| Assignment 3 | 15% |
| Assignment 4 | 15% |
| Sketchbook | 20% |
| Participation | 10% |
| Attendance | 10% |

While the instructor will provide feedback and a grade for every assignment, it is your responsibility to keep track of your progress during the semester. The instructor keeps a record of every assignment and attendance, so do contact him with any questions or concerns. You may receive an academic warning at mid-semester due to absences, poor performance, and/or lack of professionalism (late assignments, no communication, class disruption.) Reach out to your instructor as soon as possible with any question or concern.

At different points during the semester, the instructor may require that you work outside of the classroom and come back with your results. Likewise, visits to the museum and field work may happen at any point, so bring your ID for every session. Keep in mind that the instructor will pass attendance at the beginning and end of the class, so be sure to be back on time from any break or off-class assignment.

Consistent with other classes, more than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

Finally, here is an explanation on the meaning of each letter grade:

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|------------|--|
| A | Professional level work. |
| A - | Outstanding development, comprehension and quality |
| B + | Very good development, comprehension and quality |
| B | Good development, comprehension and quality |
| B - | Average development, comprehension and quality |
| C + | Marginal development, comprehension and quality |
| C | Unclear development, comprehension and quality |
| C - | Lacking any development, comprehension and quality |
| D | Not acceptable/did not follow direction |
| F | Not attempted and/or Missed Project/Critique |

Departmental Academic Progress Statement

A student whose average is below C+ in a semester's required and elective Illustration courses is placed on departmental probation and subject to remediation. Such remedial work may include any or all of the following: a mid-semester review; repeating one or more classes; repeating a semester or an entire year's requirements. A student whose average is below C+ in Illustration courses for a second semester is subject to dismissal from the department. A student who has repeated a year and whose semester average falls below C+ in Illustration courses will be dismissed from the department.

Classroom Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Massachusetts College of Art and Design is committed to fostering the academic, personal, and professional growth of our students. We are especially committed to ensuring that students with documented disabilities, as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), are provided equal access to all campus resources and opportunities. If you believe you have a disability that may warrant accommodations, I urge you to contact the Academic Resource Center (ARC) at arc@massart.edu or 617-879-7280. The ARC is located in the Tower Building, Rm 811. The Academic Resource Center provides academic support to all matriculated MassArt students through access to academic advisors, a learning specialist, academic coaches, professional writing and subject tutors, and training on assistive technology.

Assignment Description:

- (1) The Evolution of a Trend: In this assignment, you will be tasked with researching the evolution of a fashion or popular cultural trend, and illustrate it, using as a reference *The March of Progress*, by Rudolph Zallinger. These are the basic specifications for the illustration:
 - This illustration is for a modern lifestyle magazine. Research the genre and find a magazine for reference. The illustration should be at least 15" by 11"
 - Show a minimum of six steps towards the current stage of the trend, being as accurate as possible in your research. You can add more steps, branch out to other sub-cultures, and show a relationship between the steps
 - Include a background that it's appropriate for the trend. Make sure that the illustration is still readable as an evolution line, even with a complex background.
 - Include labels, dates or any other text based elements to clarify or enrich the information.
- (2) Forgotten Pictures: In this second illustration assignment, we will consider photography and how it impacts our understanding of pictorial composition. You will use your assigned photo as the basis for a larger composition, one that expands beyond the photo's frame. This illustration will be used as a cover for a coffee table book called "Mantua – 1940's", but the subject is pretty much up to you! Respond to the photo and a few facts about it: almost all these pictures were taken in Ohio in the 1940's. As with the last assignment, you will consider concept, composition, value, color and technique, following a specific process for every week. Here are the general specifications for the final illustration:
 - The coffee-table book's size will be 12" x 12"
 - Your final illustration must include the original photo, unaltered in neither size or appearance.
 - Leave space for the title "Mantua – 1940's". A recommended size for this text box is approximately .9" tall x 5" long.
- (3) "The Chase" Storyboard: For this third illustration, we will explore a new market: production art. There are many ways in which an illustrator can be of service to a movie, video game, comic book, theatrical play or any other complex production. Storyboard artists are directors on paper, making decisions about writing, casting, cinematography, and acting. We will explore filmic composition and how it can help us make better illustrations. A storyboard is a proposal on the way a story should be presented visually. It is similar to a comic book, with panels or vignettes describing linear action (moment to moment,) but that takes full advantage of film language to show opinion. We will adapt *The Chase*, by Annie Dillard to the movies, trying to convey an emotional response based on your take on the story. The aim in Storyboarding is not perfect drawing, but instead clear, opinionated and engaging composition. Here are the general specifications for the final storyboard:
 - There should be at least 7 vignettes for the story, each in the ratio of 16:9 (a good size is 8" horizontal x 4.5" vertical.)
 - Each frame should be accompanied by notes to help the viewer understand the direction of the story, the transition between shots and any sound effects you would like to add (do not use comic book speech bubbles.)
 - You can use any technique or color you want, but your focus should be in solid structural drawing (perspective, anatomy.) Consider your presentation
- (4) Poster for the Dream Speaker Series: For this final illustration, we will explore what modernism, the poster as a cultural artifact, and the re-introduction of graphic composition in western art has meant to contemporary illustration. Your task is to create a poster promoting a fictional event: a series of talks at Massart by the artists of your dreams, from the past or the present, dead or alive. This is your opportunity to both showcase your technical skills, create an arresting composition, and tell us about the kind of art you would like to see more of in your school. Consider this assignment "Portraiture Plus:" not only is important that we see the likeness of the artists in your illustration, but also visual arguments as to why he or she should speak to Massart.
 - The final should be a minimum of 18 by 24 inches. You may present original art or a high quality print, but the expectation of quality is the same.
 - The poster must include the name, last name, or name AND last name of the artist. You must also include text for the date, time, and location of this fictional talk.

- You have freedom to compose using any element you want, but of utmost prominence should be a portrait of the artist. Likeness will be important to the success of the assignment, but it can go beyond the face: consider brush stroke, technique, characterization, etc.

Class Calendar

| Date | Class | Homework |
|------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1/20 | What is Illustration? | Process: Characters, Backgrounds and Props |
| 1/27 | Theatrical composition | Process: Thumbnails, Value and Color Comps |
| 2/3 | Horizon line for composition | Technique test, Finish 1st Illustration |
| 2/10 | Photographic composition | Process: Characters, Backgrounds and Props |
| 2/17 | Subdivision for composition | Thumbnails, Value and Color Comps |
| 2/24 | Composing beyond the frame | Technique test, Finish 2nd Illustration |
| 3/2 | Filmic composition | Process: Characters, Backgrounds and Props |
| 3/9 | No Class | |
| 3/16 | Birds' eye view and planes | Process: Thumbnails, Value and Color Comps |
| 3/23 | No Class | |
| 3/30 | Perspective and point of view | Technique test, Finish 3rd Illustration |
| 4/6 | Modernist Composition | Process: Characters, Backgrounds and Props |
| 4/13 | Size vs Scale | Thumbnails, Value and Color Comps |
| 4/20 | Texture, surface treatment | Technique test, Finish 4th Illustration |
| 4/27 | Brief history of Poster | Technique test, Finish 4th Illustration |
| 5/4 | Final Critique | |

Note: the instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus at any point during the semester. If that is the case, the instructor will outline the changes and provide you with the proper replacement documentation.