

Contents

Introduction:

Make great illustration _____ 6

Play with lettering

Establishing mood _____ 10
Inventive numerals _____ 12
Unexpected materials _____ 14
Typographic mashup _____ 16
Speech balloons _____ 18
Hand-lettering _____ 20

Create characters

Emotive animals _____ 24
Packing a punch _____ 26
Lovable creatures _____ 28
Transmutation _____ 30
From benign to sinister _____ 32
Playing with proportions _____ 34
Creating conflict _____ 36
Infantilizing _____ 38
Nostalgic parody _____ 40

Invent new worlds

Cityscapes _____ 44
Embracing chaos _____ 46
Lost in pattern _____ 48
Comical fantasy _____ 50
Optical paradox _____ 52
Conjuring ghosts _____ 54
Noir style _____ 56

Experiment with caricature

Facial symbolism _____ 60
Referencing an icon _____ 62
Contortion _____ 64
Facial recognition _____ 66
Recycled materials _____ 68
Natural features _____ 70
Harnessing animation _____ 72

Transform clichés

Subverting the obvious _____ 76
New art from old icons _____ 78
Serious comedy _____ 80
Intuitive thinking _____ 82
Playing with portraits _____ 84
Co-opting stereotypes _____ 86
Playful objects _____ 88

Use symbol and metaphor

Ideas from the past _____ 92
Suggested messages _____ 94
Startling juxtaposition _____ 96
Evoking sensuality _____ 98
Being clear _____ 100
Imprecise precision _____ 102
Visual puns _____ 104
Masks _____ 106
Mixed meanings _____ 108
Transforming the
commonplace _____ 110

Visualize data

Ironic information _____ 114
Complexity simplified _____ 116
Narrative icons _____ 118
Personalizing data _____ 120

Glossary _____ 122

Further reading _____ 124

Index _____ 125

Acknowledgements &
Picture credits _____ 128

Unexpected materials

Personalizing the illustrated letter

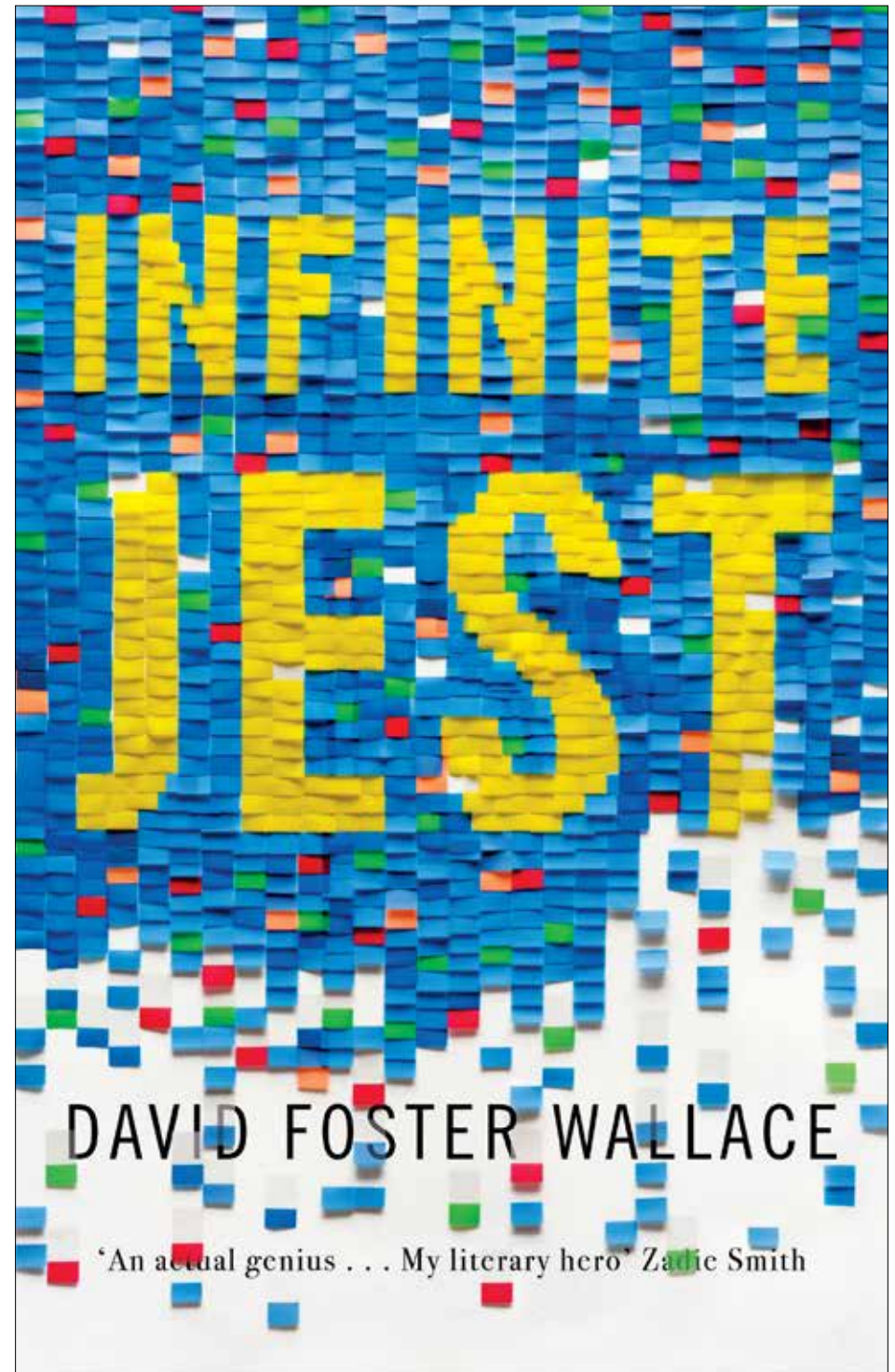
We tend to think of illustrated lettering in terms of classic book illumination or variations thereof. Picture a vaulted cell of medieval scribes in monks' habits, hunched over tables with ink pen or brush in hand, drawing, colouring and shading fanciful decorative initial capitals on ancient manuscripts. But today's illustration is rarely produced in this vintage manner, and not all illustrated lettering is akin to illumination. In fact, Jon Gray's pseudo-typography for this paperback book cover is made from Post-it notes – not even drawn with pen or brush, but collaged from equal-sized snippets of coloured paper.

There was a logical reason for this solution. It references the 388 footnotes that play a key part in the reading of *Infinite Jest*, David Foster Wallace's 1996 generation-defining, 1,000-page, post-modern literary masterpiece, as well as making reference to the original blue-sky covers that adorned earlier editions.

This is not necessarily a model for any other lettering. 'The concept is tailored to this one specific book,' Gray says. 'I wouldn't use this idea for any other project.' But it does demonstrate the imaginative and technical range of illustration – not just as a pictorial medium but also as an approach to lettering, especially in using unexpected materials. He is quick to remind other letterers and illustrators alike that 'each project is individual' and, for him, 'type or image is created specifically for it. All forms are based on the content of the book.'

Another reason why he might never try this particular approach again is that the artwork ended up being 2 metres (7 feet) high and took three long days to make. In fact, even when reduced to book cover proportions it retains a sense of monumentality.

- ☒ Jon Gray, 2016
Infinite Jest, book cover
Little, Brown and Company
Art directors: Mario Pulice
and Nico Taylor



Speech balloons

Communicating in a bubble

The convention of using speech balloons in art started with so-called scroll lines that connected words to the mouths of speakers and dates back to artwork from around the seventh century. Similarly designed connective scrawls were found in the sixteenth century and were common in British and other nations' cartoons during the eighteenth century. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they became endemic to the language of comic strips and later, comic books.

Martha Rich's illustration with this colourful pile of speech balloons was created for a chapter in a book about all the excuses people make to not create art or to justify why they are not artists. 'Well, I definitely go through times where I come up with excuses to procrastinate on my art-making,' says Rich.

The audience played a big role in this image. Danielle Krysa, the book's author, asked her social-media followers to send her their excuses for not making art. She was overwhelmed by the response. The words in the speech bubbles are some of the actual replies. Since this is such a ubiquitous method of representing speech (or thoughts, in the case of thought balloons), it was logical that everybody would understand the reference. Colouring the balloons distinguishes the speakers and even indicates the tenor of the speech.

It is a simple idea to make the balloons into characters, handled deftly. Rich collaborated closely with Krysa – in fact, it was the author's idea of piling all the speech bubbles on the page that gave rise to the image.

☒ Martha Rich, 2016
'Excuses', illustration
for *Your Inner Critic
is a Big Jerk*
Chronicle Books



Lovable creatures

Crawling into the hearts of millions

It is always challenging to make a character that will appeal to people of a specific age. And to create one character that becomes universally popular involves investing it with distinct, delightful and comprehensible characteristics. Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, originally published in 1969, is among the exceptional few to appeal to children over many decades for these very reasons. Yet he didn't plan for it to become so beloved.

This character, like so many throughout history, had an unusual genesis. Carle had been using a hole puncher to punch holes into a stack of paper, and was inspired by the holes to create a story about a bookworm. The bookworm became a green worm and then, on his editor's advice, a caterpillar. His caterpillar was optimistic, roly-poly, a lovable sort of character with which children immediately identified.

When first conceived, the book was extremely challenging and expensive to produce, with die-cut holes and tactile printing techniques, but these special effects contribute to and underpin the joy of the character. Carle views himself primarily as a graphic designer and wherever possible, he says, 'I like to "stretch" paper, its surface, its size, holes, etc.'. Carle's personal story behind the creation of his famous character comes down to food. Although born in the USA, he spent his childhood in Germany suffering the deprivations of World War II. With this lovable but very hungry character he created a tale that, he says, 'was a chance to indulge in all those only dreamed-of goodies'.

So many wonderfully personable characters emerge from a need to create a more pleasant world, and often their creators' own real-life situations act as a springboard for invention. To make a character lovable is not just a matter of making it cute, but also making it relatable to the audience's own feelings and experiences.



☒ Eric Carle, 1969
The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Philomel/Putnam
Editor: Ann Beneduce

Noir style

When illustration interprets film

Noir is the generic term that film buffs apply to black-and-white Hollywood crime dramas of the 1940s and 1950s, usually hardboiled detective stories, which are stylishly photographed using light and shadow. The style has been much imitated and translates well to dramatic illustration that evokes a particular time and place.

Eda Akaltun was asked by the British Academy of Film and TV Awards (BAFTA) and StudioSmall to interpret the five Best Film nominees of 2012 for the covers of their Film Awards brochures. This artwork was for the award-winning film of that year, *The Artist*, a comedic black-and-white silent throwback to the 1920s. Akaltun wanted to represent the romance between the silent movie star George and the young dancer Peppy in a bold, graphic style.

The superbly photographed noir visual style of the film 'really suited the way I use textures and patterns to create contrast and depth', says Akaltun. In fact, she created a collage that employed photographic and graphic elements, and while it was in the noir spirit it was not a pastiche of the actual noir aesthetic. She wanted the image to immediately identify the film to the audience, so she chose a still from one of the most memorable moments in *The Artist*.

For Akaltun, the loving dance with the inanimate dinner jacket was a perfect embodiment of the hopeful romance in the film. She played with different aspects of composition and texture to centralize the subject while representing all of the main characters in the details. The result is a very personal interpretation of noir style.

☒ Eda Akaltun, 2012
The Artist
BAFTA Awards /
StudioSmall
Art director: Guy Marshall



Facial recognition

Playing on the drip factor

The 2016 election of Donald J. Trump to the presidency of the United States took many voters by surprise and was not greeted by every citizen with the same level of enthusiasm. The Trump caricatures started well before the election, when his candidacy was surprisingly picking up steam. Mr Trump offered visual commentators a very clear target, from his distinctive comb-over to the orange hue of his faux suntan. These characteristics give the impression that he's wearing a mask that, under intense scrutiny and in the harsh light of day, could easily melt before our very eyes.

Edel Rodriguez used these physical traits as a trigger for his August 2016 *Time* magazine cover that is both a caricature and a logo of sorts. With the title 'Meltdown', what this image implies first and foremost is the candidate's incapacity to withstand the heat of his new role in the spotlight. 'The concept was to show the Trump campaign in meltdown mode,' Rodriguez recalls, reacting to the many press revelations that exposed Trump's seeming inappropriateness for the job. For Rodriguez, focusing in on his face in a simplified manner, having it melt down the page, seemed the most ironic way to get the message across.

His primary goal is for people – even those who are not on top of the latest news – to recognize the personality that he is depicting at a quick glance. Although this particular image has a partisan tone, Rodriguez says that he makes images that directly address his chosen topic, to the best of his ability. 'The audience reaction is something that comes after and something I can't predict,' he says. The astute simplicity and extraordinary graphic power of this image certainly has touched a lot of nerves but it also transcends typical caricature, making it more of an illustrative emblem than a caricature or cartoon alone.

☒ Edel Rodriguez, 2016
'Meltdown'
Time magazine
Art director: D.W. Pine III





Recycled materials

A face that's not a face

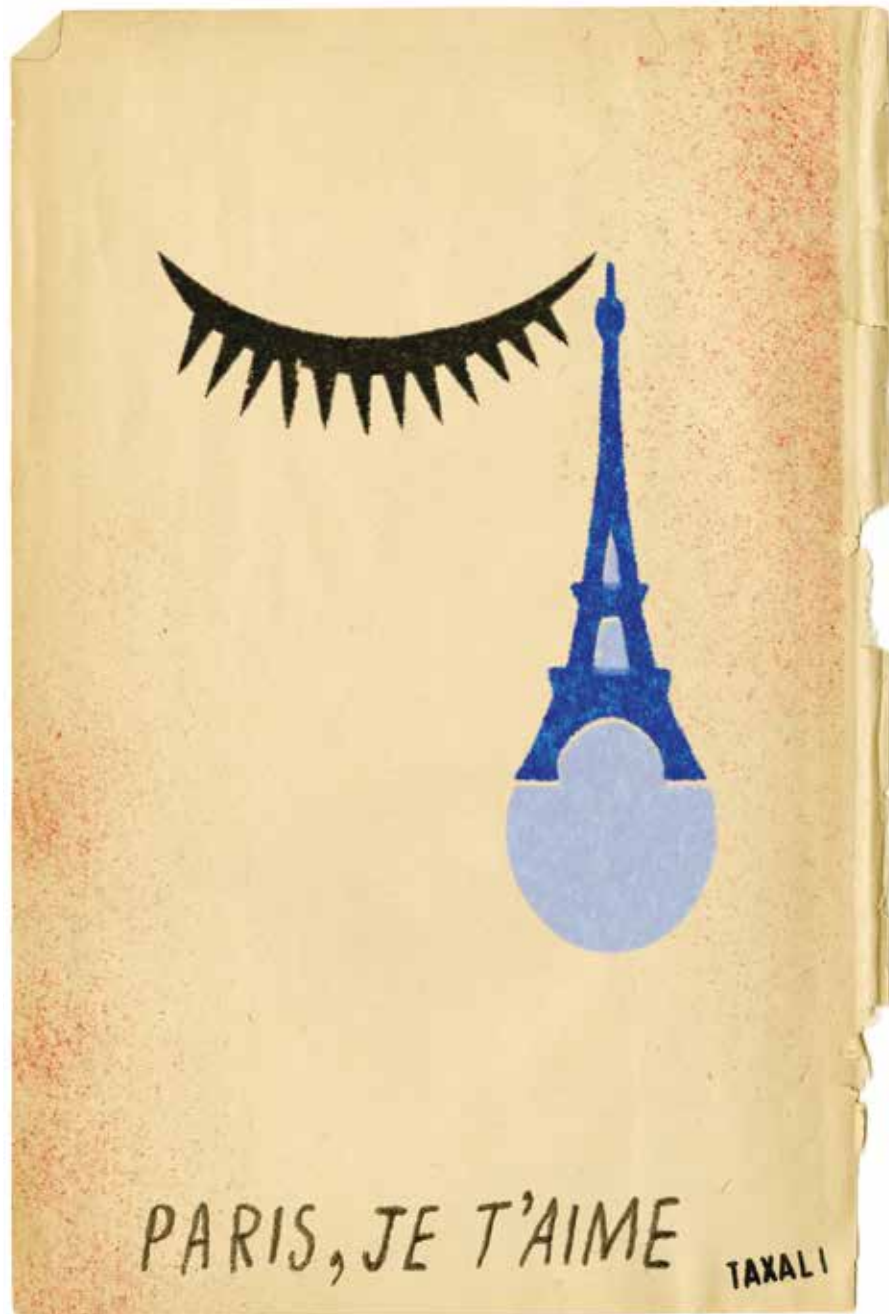
It is fairly common for characters to graphically emerge – indeed miraculously materialize – from the strangest places and things. You don't have to be a sorcerer to conjure a figure out of a cloud, or a face in a piece of marble or random items of trash.

Hanoch Piven's characters take shape and come to life through tricks of juxtaposition, but it is not by magic; rather, his work consists in gathering many objects that somehow represent true aspects of the characters he is depicting or his own ideas about them. 'Once I have these on my drawing board, a sudoku-like game begins of trying many options, with different objects coming in and out,' Piven says. The caricature is done when the various elements fuse together, resulting in a recognizable and decidedly clever representation.

This was a celebratory article about Steve Jobs for *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People, so it was clear to Piven that the two dominant objects needed to be a then-current Apple symbol (the iPhone) and an item representing ideas and leadership. 'I really love using light bulbs for noses and I have done it many times and usually feel guilty about using that same trick again,' admits Piven; 'but what's interesting is how different light bulbs suit different types of noses – and this pointy, candle-like nose, which can evoke many (including religious) associations, was difficult for me to resist.'

The primary goal of this and all Piven's illustrations is to communicate – 'hopefully in a fun and unexpected way'. To accomplish that, it is not enough to put the puzzle of materials together, he must understand the essence of the person he is depicting. Because appreciation of his work depends on the viewer deciphering the objects that he uses, it is essential to take into consideration exactly who the audience is and use props that clearly communicate that essence. Piven's constructions leave nothing to chance, but are strenuously planned to look as though they just casually came together.

☒ Hanoch Piven, 2007
 'Steve Jobs'
Time magazine
 Art director: Tom Miller



☒ Gary Taxali, 2015
 'Paris, je t'aime'
 (unpublished)

New art from old icons

Representing shared sadness

Parody is when a familiar image is used in a comic or ironic way. Homage is when an iconic image is used to smartly convey a new yet appropriately related idea. This is what Gary Taxali did in his illustrative response to the lethal terrorist attacks at the Bataclan theatre and elsewhere in Paris in 2015, when 130 people were killed.

What better symbol of France than the great Eiffel Tower? 'Everybody understands, and sadly most people think in clichés,' Taxali explains about opting for the obvious visual metaphors and symbols and then subverting them as a means to say something new about a subject that is not new. 'As an artist, it's my job to have an original point of view or idea in order to effectively communicate. There's no point in making pictures that have already been made. It's boring and offers nothing to anyone.' His image of a closed eye with a simple tear encompassing the Eiffel Tower was the strongest way he could find to portray his personal sadness, which was echoed in the public realm. He added the type 'Paris, je t'aime', which was a reference to the 2006 film of that name, itself a homage to the city. This was Taxali's way of processing the horror of the event. 'Paris is one of those cities that belongs to the world,' he says, 'and so I felt a powerful need to make something because of my connection to it.'

This atrocity gave rise to a widespread collective sadness. The audience is vital to this image because, with its use of an iconic image, it is an expression of how the whole world was feeling. One of the duties of an artist can be to record and communicate the emotions of humankind. In fact, 'Paris, je t'aime' went viral and was shared countless times on social media. Taxali received many emotional messages of gratitude from Parisians and people all over the world.

Playful objects

New life for old things

Combining real objects with drawing is not a new conceit but has the potential for decided originality because of its improvisational quality. If the marriage of object and drawing is truly unexpected then the pay-off can be delightfully entertaining or particularly poignant.

Christoph Niemann is a master of this kind of ironic playfulness. He takes an object or piece of paper and looks at it until he sees something that is completely unpredictable – it just happens, and therein lies the charm. Here he uses an ink bottle, which he photographed in such a way as to trigger a visual idea, and then transformed it into something else. When the opened bottle was photographed from above, it looked like a camera lens. Niemann then proceeded to draw a portrait of himself holding and aiming the bottle so that it does indeed look exactly like he's shooting a photograph.

'This series does not have a specific editorial purpose,' Niemann says. 'It's supposed to reveal an unexpected angle of a familiar object. This revelation should serve as an inspiration for me and for the audience to re-evaluate our visual surroundings.' He uses lots of other props as well, including a pencil-shaving as a flower, half an avocado as a baseball glove with the stone as the ball, two bananas as the hindquarters of a galloping yellow horse, and a seashell as the hair of a swimmer about to jump into the ocean. At first glance these appear to be obvious visual puns or substitutions. Yet finding the right artefact and combining it with the perfect gesture takes a keen vision and a distinct sense of humour. His drawings, which are collected in his book *Sunday Sketching*, are witty and surprising.

Niemann has made this method his own, but since it is about creating puns while at the same time busting clichés, the options for its application are infinite for any subject in any medium.

☒ Christoph Niemann, 2017
'Sunday Sketch: Camera'
Sunday Sketching
Abrams Books



Personalizing data

Graphically speaking to a friend

We receive a tsunami of information every day on the plethora of digital devices and analogue platforms that surround us. Making this tidal wave useful requires that it be accessible. Data should not only be simple to comprehend but also inviting. To achieve this, illustrators have joined forces with data providers and many have taken roles as reporters and researchers themselves.

In the joint project *Dear Data*, New York-based Giorgia Lupi and London-based Stefanie Posavec reveal how they found a way to communicate with each other across the Atlantic through the language of data visualization. 'For *Dear Data*, we used our personal data to get to know each other every week, over an entire year,' Lupi explains. They shared mundane subjects with one another, from their feelings to interactions with their partners, from the compliments they received to the sounds they heard. Then they would draw the visualizations by hand on postcard-sized sheets of card that they would send to each other by post each week. On the front of the postcard there would be a unique representation of their weekly data, and on the other side 'we would squeeze in detailed keys to our drawings', says Posavec, describing the codes that enabled the recipient to decipher the picture.

By removing technology from the equation, each artist was forced to invent different weekly visual languages, as hand-drawing data leads to designs that are incredibly customized. Highlighting the ubiquitous, almost domestic nature of data is a friendly way to bring the concept to a wider audience. This could function as a 'stepping-stone' for their interest or engagement in some of the bigger issues surrounding data – notably the problems of big data and data privacy – as much as encourage them to slow down and observe the small, apparently insignificant details of their own lives.

- ✉ Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec, 2016
Dear Data
Penguin Random House / Princeton Architectural Press

