

Illustration websites

Go to www.prospects.ac.uk and click on Jobs & Work experience followed by Job profiles and then scroll to I to see information on Illustrator.

www.illustratorsireland.com website for the Irish Illustrators

www.theaoi.com website for the association of Illustrators in the UK

www.childrensillustrators.com website for those interested in illustrating for children. If you sign up for the newsletter you will see profiles on Editors and Publishing Directors of children's books. These might be useful contacts to send examples of work to. On this site you should also visit the Industry insider and Blog options where you will find pertinent information.

www.scbwi.org website for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

www.childrensbooksireland.com

www.illustrationweb.com agency that matches illustrators with clients

www.imi.org.uk Institute of Medical Illustrators

www.soc-botanical-artists.org Society of Botanical Artists

www.illustratorsagents.co.uk

www.houseofillustration.org.uk here you will find details of the Book Illustration Competition

Illustration agencies:

www.theillustratorsagency.com

www.goodillustration.com

www.wendylynn.com

What is the work like?

Illustration involves creating visual images. An illustrator uses their creative skills to convey ideas, facts or emotions.

Illustrators may use:

- drawing or sketching
- painting
- photography
- computer software.

Most illustrators specialise in one or more of the techniques.

Build up a portfolio of work which reflects your personal style and shows your versatility.

- book covers
- posters
- magazines
- exhibition materials
- packaging
- websites
- multimedia software, film or TV.

Specialists may illustrate medical, technical or scientific text books or instruction manuals.

Most illustrators work on a freelance basis. They take commissions from, for example:

- design agencies
- publishers
- [web or interactive designers](#).

As a freelancer, you spend time building up and marketing your business to potential customers. This might include:

- networking with other creatives
- working closely with [graphic designers](#)
- displaying your work.

Many freelance illustrators advertise their work on a website, either their own or a collective such as the [Association of Illustrators](#). You may be able to choose your own hours of work, but you may work long hours to meet deadlines.

Responsibilities

Work activities typically involve:

- liaising with clients, editors and authors in order to understand and interpret their business needs
- gaining knowledge of appropriate styles
- negotiating pricing and deadlines
- analysing a brief's specification and the text to be illustrated, as well as researching sources
- thinking creatively and using imagination to produce new ideas
- creating images and designs by using the traditional hand skills of drawing and painting, alongside other techniques, to meet design briefs
- using computer-aided design (CAD) packages to scan images and change size, colours and other elements
- providing roughs for approval
- redefining a brief through further consultation with the client to include new ideas or text as appropriate
- running the business, when working freelance

- speculatively approaching potential commissioners to seek new sources of work
- working within a set timescale, often to tight deadlines
- creating original pieces for self-promotion
- researching appropriate galleries to find suitable venues to exhibit work.

How do I become an illustrator?

You need to be very creative and have a good idea of how an illustration can convey a particular mood. You also need to be able to:

- pay great attention to detail
- communicate your ideas
- come up with creative ideas, but also to be able to listen carefully to what the client is asking for
- work to a brief, within the constraints of a budget and deadline
- deal with your illustrations being rejected and be prepared to rework them, sometimes at very short notice.

It is important to build up a portfolio of your work which reflects your personal style and demonstrates your versatility.

Illustration is a very competitive field with a large number of good-quality freelancers looking for work. You need to demonstrate that you can produce the type and style of illustration the client is looking for.

If you are self-employed, you need business skills so you can market your goods and services, deal with finances and develop your business.

Qualifications and training

There is no set entry route, but you need to develop your technical illustration skills. Although it is not a requirement, most illustrators have a degree. This could be in Illustration.

Career development

You can build up your career as an illustrator by taking on small commissions and adding each piece of work to your portfolio.

As you widen the diversity of your work, you can take on larger projects. You will gradually build up a reputation within the creative world.

What can I earn?

As a freelance illustrator, you are either paid a daily rate for an agreed number of days to complete a commission or you are paid a set fee for a project. You negotiate the rate of pay with your client. It will depend on the project and on your experience.

Illustrators can work on a variety of different products or projects, such as:

- Books and book jackets
- Educational, training and reference materials
- Instruction manuals, leaflets and sales brochures
- Greetings cards, giftware and packaging
- Advertising materials, posters and catalogues.

Very often illustrators work to a quite prescriptive brief from a client. Their work can be ordered, and would often follow a pattern such as:

- Discussing client needs and identifying a target audience for the work
- Agreeing the brief and contract with the client
- Developing visual ideas that suit the brief
- Seeking client approval for ideas with rough visuals
- Using drawing, sketching, painting and photographic skills to produce illustrations.
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- Case Studies

"Get to know the types, style, and format of books that are published. Look at the work that you produce and see what other illustrators have a similar aesthetic. Find out who their publishers are and create a list."

"Through the experience of working with Orchard Books, I started to gain a greater understanding of the process. This stood me in better stead working with Bloomsbury and Macmillan."

Advice to other illustrators

Get to know the types, style, and format of books that are published by particular publishers. Look at the style and nature of the work that you produce and see what other illustrators are producing work which may have a similar aesthetic. Find out who their publishers are and create a list.

"The process of writing a children's narrative can be very lengthy and problematic. It is like a puzzle to solve."

“Every year The Artists and Writers Handbook is published with up-to-date information and advice on publishers’ contacts and addresses. Through this resource you can find the best person to contact and make an appointment or send some samples of work to.

www.writersandartists.co.uk

“It is important that there is something about your work that will stand out: packaging, colour, character. Each publisher is flooded with manuscripts and samples each week, and there may be a chance of a submission being tossed onto the slush pile if it doesn’t make an instant impression.

“Also, visit the library. Although the internet is a fantastic resource, it is really important to value the work of artists from previous decades. There are hundreds of books in any high street bookshop that students can pick up and read. But in our university library there are copies of classic children’s fiction, which are out of print or hard to find, such as Maurice Sendak’s *Outside Over There*. These books are rare, precious artefacts (some with the last stamp date being 1973!)”

Finding work as a writer

“As an author, I have to generate work for myself and believe that it can be published. To make the work as good as I can make it – and be prepared to make changes to a project over a period of time without being paid. It is all about being self-motivated.

“If someone is trying to ‘get work’ then they have to learn how to promote themselves i.e. website, sending promotional Christmas cards, and being prepared to take rejection with a smile and move onto the next possibility.

“There are many other aspects of being an author that are rewarding. Working with children in schools promoting reading and literacy skills. Visiting book festivals, such as the Edinburgh International Book Fair, Aye Write and The Inverness Book Festival. It is a great way to meet interesting people from the same genre of work.”

[12345678](#)

Mark Boardman is a successful artist and illustrator, whose painterly style is distinctive and captivating. He creates book covers, posters and other illustration for editorial.

Mark’s ability to capture an atmospheric, often melancholy, mood has kept him much in demand. He also continues to develop and exhibit his personal painting work.

Starting a career in illustration

Mark never had any doubts that he wanted to pursue a career in art, and he chose an illustration course at University College Falmouth.

"I learnt professional conduct, self-promotion and how to fill in a tax return form – absolutely essential."

"I was looking for a course that had a strong grounding in traditional teaching methods.

"Originally I was split between fine art and illustration, but ended up going with illustration so that I could get concrete instruction in the technical and business aspects of the art world.

"The course was definitely the best choice I could have made, but it's only relatively recently that I've decided that I wanted to favour illustration over pursuing my own personal work."

"What I learned on the course – professional conduct, self-promotion and how to fill in a tax return form – was absolutely essential and I wouldn't be where I am now without it."

His career got off to a flying start when he won the D&AD New Blood Best Student Illustrator Award and was highlighted in the industry's Creative Review magazine.

"I actually ended up selling a few paintings after the Creative Review feature. At the time I wasn't really sure whether to pursue fine art or illustration. So for a while I was convinced that the fine art route would be more suitable."

Working as a freelance illustrator

Mark feels the key qualities for a freelance illustrator are, "dedication to your craft, the ability to work with a client to reach their goal. And enjoying your work without becoming too attached to artwork that you're not producing for yourself."

He has always wanted to work for himself, "It's terrifying... but in a really good way. I want to feel like I'm always moving myself forward, that every effort I make improves my standing even by the smallest degree. I also get to play death metal really loud while working!"

"I'm starting a new promotional campaign at the moment which involves physical mail-outs, email and portfolio meetings with potential clients. I don't currently have an agent. I tried that avenue once and found that it didn't work for me, but it's something I'd like to look into in the future."

"I'd really like to put out a small graphic novel as a promotional item. I'd also like to have another exhibition of my paintings. But I'm taking my time with my personal work at the moment, so it'll be a while."

Illustration work in paint and digital media

Working from his studio in Bristol with both digital and traditional media, Mark favours oils for personal work and Photoshop for illustration.

"Don't do any work for free under the promise of exposure."

"One of my favourite things in life is a great, painterly application of paint, and I try to keep that spontaneity in my digital work while not pretending that it's anything other than a digital piece.

"Though I have a lot of fun using it occasionally, I do have an issue with programs like Corel Painter, which tries to emulate how physical paint moves and acts in reality. I prefer digital art not to masquerade as real media, but to embrace the pros and cons of the medium.

"There are all sorts of things that can be done in Photoshop that cannot be done with physical paint, and vice versa. I like to work with lots of different layers, adding and removing bits and pieces and letting the image evolve naturally, something that would take an incredible amount of time if I had to wait for paint to dry in between each layer change."

Getting inspired for illustration

"I find turn-of-the-last-century painters inspire me the most on a technical level. The skill displayed in every brush stroke in works by the painters John Singer Sargent or Anders Zorn blows my mind every time I go back to them.

"I really enjoy that way of painting: using economy of stroke to convey the most information in the simplest way possible. You only have to press your nose up against some of those pieces to see what the artist was thinking while they were painting.

"Re-imagining the covers of Dostoyevsky's works for a Penguin Classics line would be incredible. I've been reading a lot of Murakami lately too; I'd love to work on covers for his books."

4 pieces of advice for a career in illustration

1. Get a great, cohesive portfolio and send it to everyone.
 2. Contextualise everything in your portfolio – don't leave its purpose to the potential client's imagination.
 3. Talk to agencies about what they'd like to see, even if they're not necessarily going to recruit you.
 4. Don't do any work for free under the promise of exposure.
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Children's illustrator and author Helen Craig, known for her 'Angelina Ballerina' drawings, discusses her mid-life move to illustration and learning skills to improve her writing.

Starting a creative career

"I come from a family with a grandfather who was an artist and a stage designer. My father was the same, my brother was a brilliant artist. I really felt overwhelmed by the talent around me, didn't think I could ever be as good as any of them.

"My father suggested I should go and join a photographic studio, what was called a commercial studio up in London where they did advertising photographs. We photographed ladies in fur coats and ladies' knitting patterns and things like that. Very dull and very boring.

"Then I started a studio on my own, which was quite frightening but fun. I learned a lot about making compositions and looking at things, so in a way it wasn't a waste of time, but eventually I didn't want to do it any more."

Getting into illustration

"You just had to go around asking people to look at your work."

"I started to think about illustration, which is what I always wanted to do.

"I was going to make a poster of mice making the alphabet, and I was going to sell it at the craft fairs where I sold my pottery. But in the end I turned it into this [concertina book], and I started to look for publishers.

"You just had to go around asking people to look at your work. So that was the first thing.

"It's a little mouse with her bottom in the air – very ungrainly – putting her shoes on, and then she glides onto the stage. That's one of the first ideas for Angelina, from my point of view.

Getting extra skills for writing

"Although I enjoy and love illustrating other peoples' work, because they have ideas I can't possibly have, I do also like to do my own, but I find it really quite difficult.

"I wanted to do a book which was a rewrite of what they call the nursery stories. But then that would mean the words have got to be stronger.

"I decided to do an A-level English course because I had never done one at school, I left school at a very early age. So I went and did adult education – two years of English A-level, which was one of the nicest things I've ever done.

"It really was a great help. Then I wrote 10 stories and illustrated them, which was very satisfying.

How to illustrate a book

"If there's no pleasure in your drawings, that transmits itself into the book."

"When a publisher gives me a text, first of all obviously I have to read it and make sure I like it.

"Then, unless the designer insists on dividing it up for me, I prefer to do it. So I will read it and then I will cut it up. I will decide which bits I like. The publisher will tell me how many pages I've got. For a usual picture book, it's usually 12 double pages, 24 single pages, or a combination.

"It's not a good idea to illustrate a book you don't like, because there won't be any pleasure in it. And if there's no pleasure in your drawings, I think that transmits itself into the book.

"My mother always said I didn't have any patience when I was little. If she could see me now..."

What advice do you have for illustrators looking to appeal to Albert Whitman & Co. Are there specific characters, subjects or mediums you are particularly interested in?

Each story has a different vision or look, and we rarely go into a project saying, "This needs to be done in gauche." I think illustrators need to be flexible with their styles and hone in on a few. The more you can offer visually, the more likely you will be get reviewed for different projects. Keep working on technique, and try to venture outside of their comfort zone. Sticking to one style only limits the possibilities. I also love a good website that showcases their artwork, and a good blog showcases their personality. It's nice to see who is behind that beautiful art.

What current trend in publishing are you most excited about?

That is difficult question to answer, especially concerning illustrators. I don't see one style trumping another. Some artists still prefer creating on paper, while others have flipped to producing 100% digital art. Because the stories published are so very different,

each book has the opportunity to shine. Wow me with spectacular work and I'll be happy!



6 tips for illustrators

Hennie Haworth is a freelance illustrator. She has worked with many major brands, including Waitrose and Vodafone. She shared six pieces of advice for illustrators starting out. Hennie Haworth's illustrations have featured in many magazines, including Elle and Company. She has also worked with fashion designers.

Starting an illustration career

"I studied illustration at Brighton University. When I left, I worked in a school for a year as a chemistry lab technician.

"During that time I did lots of free work, often for not-for-profit magazines. I tried to get as much illustration experience as possible.

"You have to be really good at time management and at being self-motivated."

"I developed contacts, and pestered magazine art directors to look at my work. Slowly, jobs began to come in, and slowly, I started getting paid for them."

"Mainly I've learned skills on the job. At college, I hadn't ever thought I'd want to be a freelance illustrator.

"I didn't know what I wanted at the time, but the course was more geared towards fine art. It was only after I left, and thought 'What should I do?' that I started drawing.

"When I realised I wanted to pursue it, I got back in touch with my tutors and started talking about it with them."

Finding work as an illustrator

"Mainly I do [illustrations for magazines](#), newspapers and book covers.

"I've also done work for food packaging and children's clothes.

"To begin with, I looked in magazines and inside book covers to find the details of art directors.

"From these, you can look up the company, call them up, and try to book an appointment to show them your portfolio.

"If you have a website, they can quickly see your work before you go in."

Working with designers

"At university I was doing work with pen machines, making bleeding ink splodges. and I thought afterwards they might make nice wallpaper patterns.

"I sent out print outs of my work to Habitat. I didn't know who the art director was because some companies don't give out names, so I just addressed it to 'Art Director' and hoped it went somewhere.

"Keep trying to be creative, even if you're really annoyed with a project."

"They called me and said they liked it, so we had meetings, and discussed doing a range.

"I had to work with the project manager in charge of surface and tableware, who told me what she liked about my work and what she wanted.

"It was good to do a project so different to what I was used to. In the process, I learned a lot about what I could have done better, and what things I would do differently next time."

6 tips for illustrators

1. Learn to work independently

"You have to be really good at time management and at being self-motivated. Sometimes people let you down.

"You have to keep trying to be creative, even though you might be really annoyed with a project.

"Sometimes, too, you just have to take a break and leave it for a day, before going back to it.

"Projects can be delayed or even cancelled. You can't take it too personally. You have to keep positive."

2. Link up with other creatives

"I was working at home for year, and didn't really have a support network.

"Later, I moved into a studio with around forty other people working in various areas of design.

"It was really nice to be able to get advice from all those different people while I worked.

"Instead of being quite closed off in your own work, you can see how other people approach projects.

"When someone they know needs an illustrator, they can recommend you and get you work."

3. Learn to dialogue with your clients

"If you can get advice about what your client is looking for, you can work together to make it better."

"Partnerships with other companies are often important.

"It's nice when you have a proper collaboration where they say what they want and you can go away and interpret it by doing your own thing.

"But do try to make sure your work pleases them, too.

"It can be annoying if people are quick to say 'yes' to everything you suggest. If you can get a bit of advice about what they're looking for, you can work together to make it better.

4. Promote yourself effectively

"It's good to have a website showing different categories of what you can do.

"I have split my [illustration portfolio](#) up in this way so it's easy to navigate.

"Find as many contacts as you can through magazines and books and email your website off to them all. That's how you start."

5. Don't be put off by low paid projects

"When you first start, you often find you're doing jobs for hardly anything. It can be useful, though, because you have done them favours, and later on they can return them.

"If you're starting out and you get a project, try not to be too picky about who the client is, or what the budget is.

"If you do choose to do some not-for-profit magazine jobs, you will still build up contacts.

"It might also enable you to develop your style. Often people aren't as picky with what they want you to do because you're doing them a favour.

"It gets you experience and shows people you can be trusted to commission."

6. Develop your own style

"Versatility is important. Aim to specialise in a few different subject areas and methods of working. You don't want to get bored, or pigeonholed.

"At the same time, it's also important to keep your own personal style, otherwise people don't know who they are commissioning.

"Keep hold of your identity."

When looking to appeal to Simon & Schuster's children's list, what things should an illustrator include in their Childrensillustrators.com portfolio and what should they avoid?

I think it's important to draw what you want to be hired for; the age range - do you want to work on young picture books, chapter books, middle grades? The content - do you love drawing animals? People? Landscapes? And media - do you want to work in color or black and white? Digital or traditional? Show us what you love to do, and eventually you'll get hired to do it. I also think it's critical to show characters in context: environments, rooms, full scenes. I see a lot of portfolios with character studies, and that's great, but I also want to see that you can tell a full story in a setting. Don't only fill your book with fully rendered characters, alone, against a white background.

Lauren Rille, Associate Art Director Simon&Schuster

What tips could you offer illustrators wishing to appeal specifically to EBYR?

Practice, practice, practice, and practice some more. Fine-tune your art so that your samples show creativity, imagination, and technical consistency.

Do research and become familiar with our list of published books. Submit a sample of your best work with a link to your website. Update us with new samples as they become available.

Our choice of illustrator for a manuscript is driven by the feelings, images, and styles that are generated as the text is read aloud. The illustration style that is

chosen is manuscript specific. So we use a wide range of artists and styles to illustrate our picture books.

Gayle Brown, Art Director, Eerdams Books

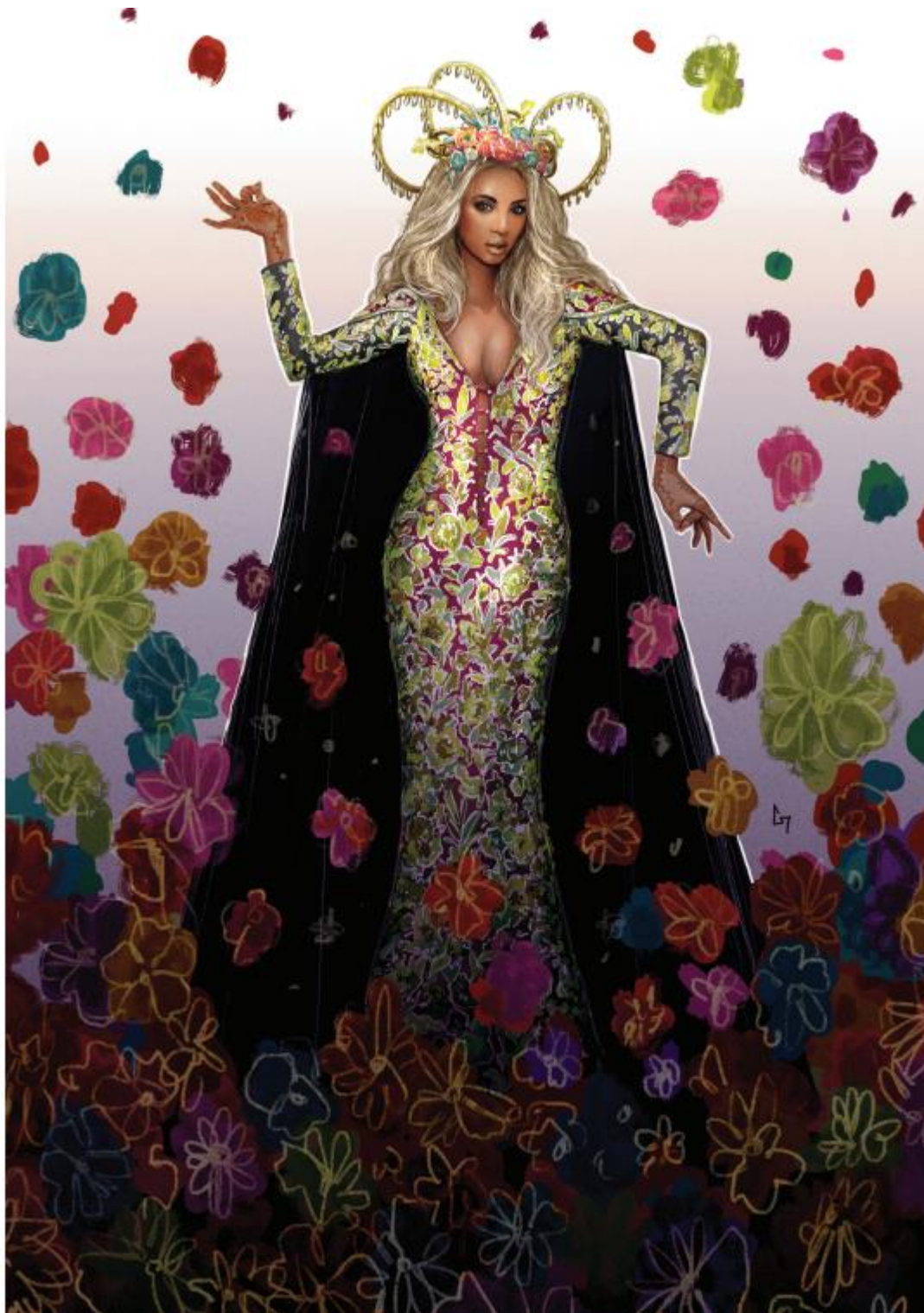
What advice would you offer illustrators looking to appeal to FSG?

Look at books we have published recently to get an idea of our sensibility. I'd also definitely take out a portfolio on Childrensillustrators.com as I use the site often for my searches. Send postcards! I have an inspiration wall right behind my desk where I stick postcards showing artwork from folks with whom I'd like to work with. Whenever I need an artist for a project, I visit Childrensillustrators.com and look at my board to get ideas.

Joyce Peskin, Associate Art Director, Farrar Straus Giroux Books

Conor Merriman is a 20-year-old, Dublin based illustrator and designer, undergoing his final year in Visual Communications in the National College of Art and Design (NCAD).

I met him underneath the main arch on the NCAD campus on a fresh Wednesday morning, with his iPhone in hand, undoubtedly creating one of his incredible Snapchat illustrations.



Although still a student, Conor has worked with some of the biggest names in the fashion industry, such as H&M, Bourjois Paris, Vera Moda, and also some of Ireland's biggest publications such as The Irish Times and Xposé Magazine.

“The first big client that I worked for was Tommy Hilfiger. It came about very randomly; one of the PR women who worked for Tommy Hilfiger grew up with my cousin, and she remembered when I was younger that I used to draw, and they were thinking ‘oh maybe we could get in an illustrator’ for their upcoming event, then she Facebooked me, saw my portfolio and that was it.

“Before that, I worked for Social and Personal Magazine, and did a few illustrations for their wedding mag and their main mag and from that then, just word of mouth I began building my portfolio. It just grew from there.”

It was his outgoing personality and hunger for success that landed Conor with the coveted job of illustrating for fashion powerhouse, H&M.

“I was a sales advisor in H&M. I was working there for about a year and when I went into my interview I pretty much said, ‘I don’t want to stay as a sales advisor, I’ll do this for about a year, but I want to do design. Is there any chance I could do this in the company?’ And they were like, ‘well this has never happened before! So let’s see what happens?’

“From there, I was in the company three months, and then I was on the phone to the head of the press office in London and next thing, I was designing all of the back offices for the UK and Ireland, I designed their layout system of how their rosters are, mostly visual graphic design,” Conor explains.

“They had their 10th birthday in March, and the PR girls flew over for a meeting with me to talk about illustrating the event, and that went really well. That was one of the main ones where I met lots of bloggers, social media people, magazines, all that kind of stuff.

“And then from there, I went over to London Fashion Week, September gone, and I illustrated for H&M Oxford Circus. I got photographed for their Instagram account, and that was really, really fun.”

With the help of social media and incentives like Dublin Fashion Festival (DFF), Conor feels that Ireland has definitely been put on the map fashion-wise.

“I think [the fashion industry in Ireland] is only being celebrated now, with the help of DFF, who are doing an amazing job. I think knitwear in particular, and those really textile orientated fashions, hard-labour work, I think they’re really being celebrated which is great to see.

“And hats as well - hats are huge! I’ve heard more and more people in the fashion industry discuss hats in the last two months than anything else, so I think hats are going to be huge.

“I also think social media has helped greatly. Without social media I wouldn’t be where I am today, it is because of my Instagram account. Take for example fashion bloggers and designers, they no longer have to depend on appearing on TV before they make it big, they’ve so much more accessibility than they used to and it’s a much richer experience for everyone. I think it’s onwards and upwards.”

Conor will graduate in May, and his design show, where all of the students in his course will showcase their work, will be held in June.

“After my degree show, I don’t know what I’ll do. It goes back and forth being like, ‘I’m going to be a fashion illustrator’, then ‘I’m going to go into branding’, just back and forth.

“I’d like to stay in the country for the next year, building up the clients, maybe do a couple of internships, get some more experience working more in design rather than illustration, and just build up a bigger portfolio,” Conor explains.

“And then maybe I’ll go to London for a year, see what happens. You never know, I’m lucky because it’s the type of job that you can work from home, you can also travel. Also for events, I don’t need anything only me and my markers, so I’m really lucky I can go anywhere with it.”

Conor Merriman is certainly a name we’re going to be hearing a lot more in the future. To see some more of his illustrations, check him out on Instagram [@Conor_Merriman](#), or follow him on Snapchat, where you may even laugh out loud and get some pretty concerned looks on a crowded bus - you have been warned!

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