

It's All About the Pictures

For as long as I can remember, I have always loved stories. As a child that meant spending plenty of time reading countless books, and twice as long looking at the pictures that accompanied the words. I won't bother denying it—I'm very guilty of judging books by their covers. If the picture on the front wasn't exciting, brightly colored, and inviting, then I had no interest in what was inside.

Now, as an artist, I get to become the storyteller. The illustrations I produce still reflect the bright, whimsical pictures that caught my eye as a child. I don't only want to show the reader what's happening throughout a narrative; I want to engage the reader, make them smile, and allow them to discover something completely new every time they see my work. I plan on producing a collection of children's books throughout my career that beg to be picked up, looked through, and shared.

While I still spend time working with a variety of other mediums (especially oil and watercolor), I've recently gravitated toward working in a combination of acrylic ink and colored pencil. On a cold press illustration board, I use these tools to produce bright, colorful illustrations in a style all my own. I always begin with an monochromatic underpainting—I find it best to get all of the problem solving (forms, values, and composition, for example) out of the way first. Then, with values in place, I lay color washes down. The colored pencils are by far my favorite part; with just ink I can still make a fun, colorful image, but it doesn't fully come to life until I add details with the pencils. I use a combination of rendered and graphic styles to produce playful and lighthearted illustrations.

I have no doubt that my interest in illustration developed from exploring the plethora of picture books my mother and father read to me at a very young age. Since then, I've been driven to make art that would be found in those books, and give a child the same sense of wonder, amusement, and curiosity that I've experience my entire life. A very personal goal of mine is to have the illustrations I produce immediately recognized as my own—that is, I want my illustration style to stand out and be my signature. Just as it's easy to identify an illustration as a Rockwell, for example, it's also easy to recognize the work of children's illustrators like Stephen Gammell, Mercer Mayer, or my personal favorite, Tomie Depoala. Their styles are so their own, you could pick their books off the shelf without having to read their names. As someone who judges books by the picture on the cover, I certainly did that a lot!

My work excites me because, when I consider it all as a whole, I relive the challenge of making it and see the potential in the direction it's going. I don't intend to sit tight in children's illustration—I'll be exploring editorial and advertising illustration as well. I believe that, as a whole, my work is about sharing. I look forward to sharing stories with my audience through illustration, and I hope my work will be inspiring enough that others will want to continue to share it with the people in their lives. My favorite stories took me to where I am today; I'd love to have the honor of providing that for someone else.