6-4-1969

New Concepts in Illustration Techniques for the Printed Media

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NEW CONCEPTS
IN
ILLUSTRATION TECHNIQUES
FOR THE
PRINTED MEDIA

by

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Submitted 4 June 1969

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is to acknowledge and give thanks to the following people directly responsible for making this thesis presentation possible:

Richard McAllen, Director, Web Offset Research, Graphic Arts Research Center, for allowing me complete access to the Web Lab facilities, and especially for the use of, the copy camera and related supplies;

Milt Nudo, Roland Giroux, pre-press technicians, Web Lab, for putting up with my presence;

Lawrence E. Butler, instructor, RIT School of Photography, and roommate, for shooting and printing the color photography illustrating this project book, forty hours of camera and darkroom work;

Jay Needleman, former Photo Editor, Reporter, for additional photo work included in the thesis report;

Paula Collins, GARC writer, for consenting to proofread my written report;

Barbara L. Proseus, Food Administration 2, for typesetting my written report on IBM MT/SC magnetic tape;

Pat Collins, former publisher of Reporter, for running off the IBM MT/SC tape in the IBM output typesetting unit, accounting for the professional appearance of this written report;

Skip Blumenthal, editor, Techmila ’69, for accepting wholeheartedly the illustrations I had to offer from part of my thesis for use in Techmila ’69;

To the Reporter, for use of the IBM MT/SC typesetting units.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore various personal illustration techniques, developing a series of refreshing concepts which could be used in commercial advertising and magazine illustration.

My prime area of research is the development of my illustration techniques. The technique I have employed involves the use of printed magazine photos and illustrations, and transferring them onto drawing paper by means of an ink solvent, such as lighter fluid. Using this stimulant in the beginning, I found potential subjects and ideas building onto them my personal drawing skills.

It is not the objective of this thesis to copy or redraw transferred photographs. The transfers were used only for incentive and guidance, helping to develop my personality in drawing. The progression in this shows up in my latest illustrations, which do NOT make use of any transfers.

Using selected illustrations and drawings, I will show thru experimentation with different screening techniques in a copy camera, how my illustrations can be used more advantageously in commercial advertising and magazine illustration.
ILLUSTRATION DEVELOPMENT

I first became acquainted with “transfer” drawings through a senior student in Art and Design, during my struggling days as a sophomore at RIT. Up to that point in my artistic career, I was not very comfortable nor adept at illustration. I had difficulty in coming up with things to illustrate, and further, had trouble in trying to execute them in a proper illustrative manner. Transfer drawing helped to relieve some of these anxieties.

Transfer drawing involves the use of printed photos and illustrations, color or black and white (although I have found color magazine photos to offer better “reproduction”). These magazine reproductions are then transferred onto drawing paper by means of an ink solvent. For this purpose, lighter fluid gives satisfactory results, and is about the cheapest and most accessible solvent to obtain. The transferred photo on paper acts as a stimulant before even beginning to draw, and surprisingly, potential subjects and ideas are often the result.

I could stop at this point and call the “drawing” finished. However, because I do not consider this to be art, nor does it show my true capabilities as an artist, I find it best and most rewarding to develop the transfer into a finished drawing, oft times distorting and obliterating the original illustration (which is my prime objective).

I first used transfers in a class drawing assignment. The theme was the “People of Rochester”, very general and broad as pertaining to the subject. Using miscellaneous magazine photos for the transfers, I was able to create a mood for myself. I limited my drawing tools to different grades of pencils, and for the subtle color affects already produced by the color photo transfer, I used color pastel scrapings. I periodically erased and redrew the pictures, building a very subtle foundation which generated into a very moody quality. The results are images that reflect the subtle disposition and quiet formality of the type of people and the environment I chose to depict: two men watching traffic or, perhaps, the world go by from their restrictive environs (Plate 1), a short order cook taking a break (Plate 2), a city-employed street sweeper doing his thing (Plate 3), and finally, an almost mystical interpretation of the pensiveness found (or perhaps imagined) in this section of the city (Plate 4). Plates 5 and 6 further illustrate later examples of personal development in this media, but neither are overly impressive in regard to my personal drawing technique.
Transfer drawing can be explained very simply thru a short dissertation on how to create a transfer. Select a magazine photograph, preferably one that appears to be saturated with much ink. In working and experimenting with a number of different magazines and testing out the paper quality and ink saturation of these publications, I have found “Life” magazine to offer the best qualities for transferring pictures. The paper is thin enough for the lighter fluid to penetrate and enough ink is on the paper so as to be transferred to another sheet. “Look” magazine, however, is not as susceptible to ink solvent as “Life.” “Look’s” paper is heavier and better in quality. The glossier stock tends to inhibit the transfer of photos, as well as the printing method “Look” is accustomed to.

With the selected photograph taken out of the magazine, it is advisable to place the image face down on the drawing paper. This way, lighter fluid can be poured onto the reverse side of the magazine allowing the ink to dissolve thru the underside of the magazine stock. If the fluid were to be poured on the image area, it would not have a chance to dissolve the ink thoroughly, and would inhibit a complete transfer of ink. Using a paper towel or piece of cloth as a burnisher, carefully but firmly rub the picture from the magazine “into” the drawing paper. The lighter fluid generally causes the magazine paper to become transparent, which eliminates the problem of not seeing where you might be rubbing the image. I recommend using paper toweling as the burnishing instrument, because this generally allows for an evenness of the transfer. The result is often unpredictable, magazine from the drawing paper. The final transferred image reveals a quality unlike anything that can be seen on the printed page. Plate 42 exemplifies this a subtle transfer of color, almost nonexistent, yet most effective in carrying thru the personable qualities of the picture.

Plate 43 is an example of a transferred photo after I have drawn over it, showing one of many possible illustration techniques that I use.

My revelation came about late in the summer of 1968, when I again tried using transfers in some of my illustration. The first drawing (Plate 7) includes a number of transferred magazine photos of assorted nature. Using my then present drawing skills, I developed the illustration into a conglomeration of unrelated elements, placing little emphasis on subject matter with more on technique. The drawing I feel is a success as it proved to me that I had the capabilities in producing illustration of
possible high caliber. This illustration I credit with giving me the confidence I needed to think about this technique as an idea for my master’s thesis.

I continued to draw that summer (Plates 8–13), still placing emphasis on technique over subject. The beginning of the Fall term of my fifth year, I showed what I had done to Professor Hans Barschel my graphic design adviser. He suggested I settle down in my selected drawing technique, and try to work more on subject matter, keeping in mind that this would help develop my personal drawing skills, and eventually would help me break away from using transfers altogether.

I did more illustrations (Plates 14–21) thru the Fall term and for a final project in my general studies elective (Post Modern Literature), I made up a series of unrelated illustrations interpreting how beat poetry, under the influence of Ginsberg, Kerouac and other beat poets and writers, might be encountered in dreams (Plates 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 20, and 21). For reasons I still cannot explain, most of my drawings in this series appear morbid and dark, with perhaps an overemphasis on death thru the many skull images. Beat poetry is not this at all but more alive and vital than I have depicted. I still would rather leave the interpretation up to the viewer, and with this feeling I have not titled any of my pieces in the project. I did however, come up with some very subtle effects I had not previously realized in my drawings (Plate 16). The unsubstantial use of color plays along with the elements in such a way, that it offers a dreamlike, emotional quality. This was apparent in further drawings.

Another technical aspect involved in my technique is that I use only a carbon pencil to achieve my desired effects. Carbon is extremely soft, and works well, from fine line work, to very black areas. It is a tool that has taken much time getting used to because of its softness. Once applied to the paper surface, I attain most of my effects by working the carbon into the paper with my fingers, and this, along with colored pastel, eventually blends into subtle color relationships and hues. The transfer images I start with never reveal themselves to be "copies" or "reproductions" after I have worked over them. There is always an element of my own personality which dissolves the transfer into an original illustration.

About midway in the Winter quarter I decided to seriously work up a definite plan of procedure for my proposed thesis. With my extensive background in the graphic arts reproduction area, I am concerned with
what happens to the original art when it goes to the copy camera. Just about all commercial art, be it advertising or magazine illustration, is prepared as "camera-ready" art. In other words, the art that is produced on the drawing board will appear in print as it exists. This places an extremely difficult burden on the graphic artist because he knows whatever he puts down on paper, it will show up in print. If the artist wants a special effect, he will have to cope with the means he has in producing it, usually by hand.

A majority of continuous tone illustrations reproduced today are shot by the cameraman as a normal halftone, dropping out the background whites. A halftone is an illustration or photograph that has been screened, breaking up the continuous tone areas into small dots. These dots are noticeable in newspaper photos, usually apparent thru the poorer quality reproduction and letter press operations most newspapers are accustomed to. The screen is coarse about 55-65 dots to the square inch. Magazine reproduction is generally much better, because of better paper and finer screening, which may run from 133 to 300 dots per square inch. Plate 44 is an example of a normal halftone screen reproduced from Plate 43. Likewise, Plates 45-48 are also normal halftones (in these instances, a 133 line screen has been used).

Working with the copy camera, I have discovered for myself some interesting methods of producing camera ready copy from fine art illustrations, which undoubtedly should place less of a strain on the artist. Using my illustrations to work from, I tried a variety of halftone shots using the 133 line screen. I reduced pictures enlarged them and did just about everything I could within the limitations of the normal screen. The inside cover and inside back cover of this thesis report are halftone blowups of Plate 20. In this instance, the halftone came out better than the original, the black and starkness of the images are more dramatic than they appear in the smaller original. Plate 45 is a halftone reproduced from Plate 30, in a one to one ratio, and Plate 46 is a sectional blowup of the same picture. Plates 45-48 are fairly good examples of commercial, or in this case, magazine illustrations.

My next step in the copy camera was to produce camera-ready art from original art. This sounds trivial, if it were not for the fact that my idea was to change the art in such a way thru the copy camera that the finished product would be totally unrelated and distorted as compared to the original. To emphasize this, I point to Plate 29 as an example. My intent was to work up a magazine ad, in this case for the
Advertising Council. Instead of shooting the halftone to the size it would be reproduced, I reduced the image the furthest the camera could take it, and shot it as a halftone (Plate 49). I took this negative, and proceeded to shoot it again, but instead of shooting it as a halftone, I enlarged the image as far as the camera could take it (300%), and exposed it to film in the camera as a line shot, which is a picture shot without a screen. The halftone dots on the original negative were enlarged, so therefore could be copied easily, with only the insignificant or lighter tones dropping out. The result is a positive (Plate 50), indicating the enlarged dot structure, almost a line drawing that has been stippled. I enlarged and shot this positive, with the finished ad shown in Plate 51. The ad, compared to the original art, is entirely different, with only your cameraman knowing for sure (to play on an old cliche).

Plate 67 is another example of the original art, shot as a small halftone, enlarged, shot again, and finally reproduced as pictured in Plate 68. Plate 69 is a demonstration of the use of 3M Color Keys in graphic arts. They are merely contacts of the positive and negative of the blown-up Egyptian picture, and by simply overlapping and registering the primary colors (yellow, magenta and cyan) in positive and negative, a variety of “process” colors can be attained.

My last example in this series is Plate 41, with the added camera work and results exemplified in Plates 52 and 53. Plate 52 incidentally, is a smaller reproduction of a large silkscreened poster, which was well circulated around RIT.

At this point in my project, I was ready to go ahead and produce some interesting variations in camera preparation and screening which will be explained in depth in the following section entitled “Techmila Project”.


Before leaving RIT upon graduation, I decided early in the Fall term of 1968 that I was going to bequeath for posterity a series of illustrations and a cover for Techmila ‘69, the student yearbook. The fact that no one was interested in taking on the responsibility of illustrating the book at the time of my inquiry was an open door for me to walk thru. The illustrations I mention encompass the cover and the divider section illustrations. The theme of the book, from my own decision, is in the form of early Americana, specifically, the colonial period of our nation. It was my intention to create a very unique series based on the old, with a flavor of the new. Unfortunately, I had the ideas, but not the method or direction I was going to take in order to fulfill this commitment. It would not be until the Spring quarter that I would finally hit on the method of operation.

I was working with the copy camera, experimenting with my work as previously mentioned, shooting and halftoning it for commercial use. At this point in my progression, I felt I was ready to produce other variations of screened drawings in the camera, and likewise, began work on the Techmila drawings. The illustrations (Plates 32–40) were a culmination of what I had learned from my illustration endeavors and were the first drawings that did not make use of any transfer material. The only research I did was just from general knowledge of the era, and visiting antique shops and looking at old books. The illustrations were fairly easy to produce, and were definitely products of my personality.

The next step was transforming these drawings into suitable reproductions for Techmila. My general idea was to reproduce them as they might have been reproduced in the colonial days, as woodcuts or engravings. I first tried reducing them in the camera, exposing them as halftones as I had done with the other work, and enlarge them. Results were mediocre (Plates 55, 57, 59, 61 and 63). They did not portray the rustic nor antiqueness I had in mind. I concluded that the screen I was using (133 line) was not the answer, and rather than try to find a coarser screen, I proceeded to make my own. I was not too familiar with screen production, and assumed the best way to get a bigger dot pattern was to enlarge it in the copy camera. Most halftone screens come in the positive, reversing to negative when shot onto film. With this in mind, I selected one of the Web Lab’s ‘D’ tints which is about 80% density and comes in positive form and shot it. What I did not know, and have since learned the hard way, was that halftone screens
are made up of "soft" dots, and tints are "hard" dots. Fortunately, because of an error in focusing the lens, I actually came up with a "soft" dot halftone from the tint.

With my new "screen", I shot the illustrations in the camera again. The dots were the right size on the negative, but the problem this time was that I could not in any way drop out the white background. Over exposing and over developing did not help, either (Plate 54 indicates this problem). Milt Nudo, pre-press technician, suggested I try making two exposures, one with the 133 line screen to break up the fine continuous tone areas, and the other with my home-made screen. This seemed to work fine, and with the exposure time decided on, I was able to produce the examples as pictured in Plates 56, 58, 60, 62, and 64. Comparing these with the plates directly before the aforementioned, an improvement is noticeable in quality. The feeling of old engravings is also captured. The final pieces (Plates 70–78) are reproductions as will appear in Techmila '69. The illustrations in the year book however, will be printed on parchment, and the cover (Plate 70) is to be embossed either in copper or silver on a dark brown cover, with a rub-in of black, to give an antique leather look. At the time of the submission of this thesis, the cover has still to be decided upon. Techmila '69 incidentally, will be available at the Fall 1969 registration.

Carrying the theme a little further, I made up a set of graphic ending marks for the articles in Techmila. Plate 65 is an enlarged reproduction of the mark, which is made directly from the cover illustration. Plate 66 is the final appearance of the mark.
CONCLUSION

I feel I have produced a wide variety of illustrations with a very apparent progression, starting with transfer drawings, and finally abandoning them in favor of my own personal and perhaps unique style. I have also related how it is possible to use fine art illustrations for commercial and graphic purposes. The conclusion I can offer at this time is—I was interested in the product, and was not happy with the means available in gaining the product. It is hoped that my small contribution in the graphic arts media will give others ideas and generate the feelings I hold for this field, and simply by experimenting and focusing on new ideas, a greater graphic arts industry will develop.
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RELATED RESOURCES

Related experiences:

Summer, 1967, employed by Web Lab, Graphic Arts Research Center as pre-press technician, working with copy camera, plate maker, and different graphic arts reproduction processes;

accumulation of five years work experience, Reporter Graphic Arts Editor;

exposure to transfer drawing techniques as a sophomore at RIT;

hundreds of Life magazines used for transfer drawing process;

exposure to beat poetry and writing thru general studies elective, Post Modern Literature, taught by Robert Koch, influencing a series of related drawings entitled Dreams;

qualified help from Milt Nudo, pre-press technologist, Web Lab, concerning double screen exposure in the copy camera;

back issues of Techmila.
BIBLIOGRAPHY continued

Techmila Project:

The resources listed below were used for inspiration in developing the Techmila illustrations.


VISUAL SECTION
Plate 6
Plate 13
Plate 29
Plate 34
SWAN ISLAND
The Caribbean Paradox!
See Page Twenty
Swan Island

The Caribbean Paradox

The Reporter asks, who were these students?

The foreign policy of the United States is stretched pretty thin in the region of latitude 17° 24' North and longitude 83° 58' 25" West. That is the location of Greater Swan Island. Exactly what Greater Swan Island is being used for, or by whom, or even who legally owns it, is open to international dispute.

Robert F. Kennedy, in his Cuban Missile Crisis Memoirs, that were published in McCall's magazine, referred to Greater Swan Island as being a CIA Training base, and a CIA radio broadcast station for all of Latin America.

However, the Office of Strategic and Functional Research of the United State's State Department paints an entirely different picture of the Island. One that would not be conducive to attracting the tourist trade, but one in which the CIA never appears.

Mr. Robert Hodgson, assistant geographer of the Office of Strategic and Functional Research, told the REPORTER that it was not unusual for his department to answer private citizens, rather than the Department of the Interior doing so, in cases where questions are aimed at "detailed economic and political" aspects of a US possession or Protectorate. However, Chris Harris, REPORTER Photo Editor, who put in the original request for information, said that his question was not concerned in any way with either political or economic aspects.

The release from the State Department is very interesting, keeping in mind the question of a CIA installation somewhere on the island. To quote from this release:

"There are three coconut palm trees on Greater Swan Island at the present time. Prior to the hurricane which occurred in 1955, there were a large number of palms but almost all were swept away in the storm." "Sports fishing is excellent, the water being exceptionally clear and blue and abounding in different types of fish. Ocean bathing is considered dangerous as a constant watch must be kept for shark and barracuda."

"The only shipping line authorized...to carry freight and passengers to and from the Swan Islands is operated by a Honduras Company....Their ships normally carry bananas and agricultural items such as fertilizer....The trip from Tampa normally occupies from three to five days."

"There is no aircraft landing strip."

"Due to the isolation of the island, any person going there must be completely self-sufficient, including drinking water."
For years now, the US Army has drawn heavily from the college campus to fill its quota for lower echelon officers. The program began in 1820, but the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) as we know it today began in 1916 as a result of a national defense act initiated that year. The act provides that anyone who successfully completes the required program will receive a Second Lieutenant’s commission in the US Army Reserve upon graduation. Other branches of the service have similar programs, but it’s the Army program that is coming to Tech this month.

The question is, how will RIT respond to an Army training center in the middle of the campus? SA President Greg Evans seems to feel that if there is any response at all, it will be mild. “You see, most everybody here is involved with some aspect of technology, they’ve found their goal in life already and now they’re mainly concerned with pursuing it, they’ll either accept it for themselves or forget about it,” he added.

Jack Campbell, SA vice-president, agreed. “The artists will probably be against it because that’s the ‘in’ thing among them, but I agree with Greg about the technical students.”

Though ROTC here at Tech will probably never attract legions, it will serve a qualified purpose. It will offer the individual a chance to fulfill his military obligation as a reserve officer and thus make his military experience socially bearable—at least more so than as a buck private. He will be paid $50 a month while in the program, and $150 while attending the ROTC summer camps, a requirement that must be fulfilled to receive a commission.

On February 14, during activities hour in room 01-200 of the Administration Tower, Captains David Hawley and David Shepard will be on campus to discuss what ROTC will be like here at Tech. On February 14, individual interviews will be held, “But no matter what they say, no matter what they tell you,” noted one RIT student last week, “the first place they send those Second Lieutenants is Vietnam . . . the front lines, man I don’t want no part of that shit!”

The good and bad qualities of ROTC are purely relative to the individual, and that’s why the program is optional. Whether it will be a resounding success on this campus is doubtful, due to the nature of our student body. It will be there, however, for those who want it—broadening the Institute’s scope—offering yet another choice to the student body, either to be hated and rejected, accepted and used, or merely to be ignored.
With the possible resignation of Peter Todd as track coach in mind, the Athletic Committee voted Friday, 7–1 supporting his no beard policy. The committee’s vote reiterated their stand of giving a coach complete authority over his team. A student committee on athletic policy was also set up.

The special meeting was called to consider a resolution presented by members of the track team, who threatened to not compete unless a decision was made. This resolution was drawn up by rebelling members of the team, who supported discus record holder Mike DiTorro’s right to wear a goatee.

Todd refuses to allow DiTorro to compete unless the goatee is shaven. This is in keeping with his policy, which states that no member of the track team will compete unless he is clean shaven.

The meeting, which gave equal time to both the team members and Todd, included the presence of Institute president Mark Ellingson and vice president of student personnel James Campbell.

George Southworth, a member of the Athletic Committee and co-captain of the team, lead those supporting DiTorro. Southworth has refused to run unless DiTorro is allowed to compete, and is supported by a number of other team members.

Todd feels that the situation has ruined the indoor season for RIT, but is confident that DiTorro will shave for the outdoor season.
she can afford to skip her lunch

the kids in Biafra wish they had that lunch
beauty blast '69

belle of the blast

alpha epsilon pi weekend

April 25
8:30-12:30
$1.25 per person

College-alumni union
free suds

Plate 52
alpha epsilon pi weekend

beauty blast '69

belle of the blast

April 25
8:30-12:30

College-alumni union
Free suds

Lincoln Zephyr

Plate 53
Plate 66
FIFTEEN MINUTES AT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS

Daylight Views of Sand-clad Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs
Fifteen Minutes At Pyramid of Gheops

Daylight Views of Sand-clad Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs
FIFTEEN MINUTES AT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS
Daylight Views of Sand-clad Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs
Fifteen Minutes at Pyramids of Gizeh

Pharaoh's Views of Eden: Eld's Ruined Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummified Tombs
FIFTEEN MINUTES AT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS
Daylight Views of Saqqara Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Temples
Plate 69
Fifteen Minutes at Pyramid of Cheops

Egyptian Views of Sand-Glaid Plains, Ruined Temples, and Mummified Tombs
Fifteen Minutes at Pyramid of Cheops
Daylight Views of Sand-strewn Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs

Plate 69
Fifteen Minutes At Pyramid Of Cheops
Daylight Views of Sand-clad Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs

Plate 69
FIFTEEN MINUTES AT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS
Daylight Views of Sand-clad Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs
Frightful images of Pharaohs or Gods?
MYSTIC VIEWS of Sand-aged Pharaoh Temples and Pharaonic Tombs
FIFTEEN MINUTES AT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS
Daylight Views of Sand-clad Plains, Ruined Temples and Mummy Tombs

Plate 69