

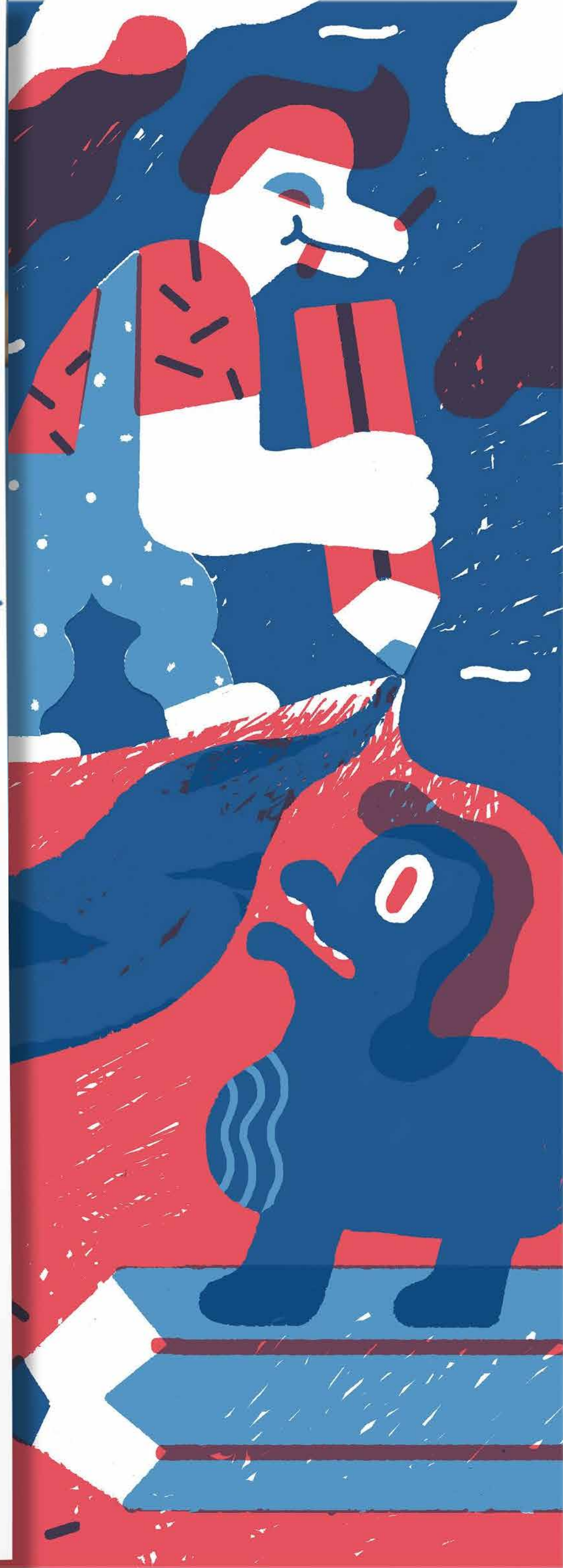
Behind the Scenes



Uncovering
the illustration
department





at the WdKA



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Colofon

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Printed by Veenman+

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University of Applied Sciences

Foreword



“Behind the Scenes”

**Illustration
department
Willem de
Kooning
Academy**

**University
of Applied
Sciences**

In this first issue of “Behind the Scenes”, the Willem de Kooning Academy’s Illustration department wishes to present an impression of its education programme: what kind of projects are our students working on, and what the professional practice of the graduates look like? We have chosen a tabloid format in order to provide our students’ work with the space it deserves. “Behind the Scenes” is ambitious, relevant and bold – which is precisely what we expect from our students.

The WdKA’s Illustration programme provides a applicable and practice-oriented professional education for visual designers. The professional practice of illustrators is not easy to define. Illustration is closely connected to other disciplines, while illustration techniques are also applied across a wide variety of disciplines. One of our goals at the WdKA is to help students deal with this complexity by focusing on the sense and meaning of illustration. What is required of illustrators nowadays? What is their role? What can illustration be, and how can it be used? The focus of the education programme is on finding answers to these questions through research and experimentation.

Students work on challenging projects that combine a variety of learning goals. The focus is not merely on personal growth or on developing a distinctive visual style, but also on realising narrative, informative and autonomous/authorial designs connected to personal, local, national and global contemporary issues and challenges. Students decide for themselves how they wish to apply illustration, for example in

publications, products, events, animations or games. During the projects, students learn to work collaboratively in teams that include illustrators, designers and non-designers. In doing so, they already begin building up their professional network during their studies. The curriculum gradually progresses from illustration towards multidisciplinary graduation profiles that introduce students to a social, commercial and autonomous professional practices. Students learn to understand the challenges related to these practices, thereby gaining insight into their own opportunities and possibilities as illustrators. The WdKA’s Illustration students thus develop into the new generation of game-changers and leaders required by the contemporary professional practice.

This publication is intended for colleagues from other Illustration departments as well as professional practitioners, and illustration students. Our goal is to establish a dialogue on what really matters for an Illustration programme. Since there are now so many Illustration education programmes worldwide, it is crucial to be able to distinguish these programmes from one another. This publication should also be of value to representatives from the professional practice, since it allows them to gain a better understanding of what they can expect from WdKA illustrators. Finally, the realisation process in itself provides everyone involved with a rich and inspiring learning experience.

Rotterdam, March
2017

Danai Fuengshunut

Head of Illustration
department



Foundation Year



Veerle van Herk
Ervin Poot

The first project of the foundation year for Illustration students traditionally focuses on a specific location in Rotterdam.

Last year this location was Heijplaat. After visiting the location, students were asked to realize a richly illustrated publication that should be in some way connected to the location. The design was also subject to a number of requirements, such as: a minimum number of pages, specific dimensions, the publication must be digitally reproducible.

Students are free to choose the topic of the story, and to determine how illustration will be used for this story. The goal of this project is to familiarize students with the design process. Students must also be able to realize a meaningful product based on their own ideas and sources of inspiration. The possible target audience of the publication may be different for each student. The project allows students to explore for the first time the context of the professional practice.

During the project, Illustration students also take classes and workshops on subjects such as: creativity, projects, book illustration, work-flow, inspiration, style frames, composition, typography, layout and prototypes. Students also take classes at the Publication Station on subjects such as: print, reproduction, bookbinding and Adobe InDesign. The project also includes field excursions to: the Rotterdam Central Library, various bookshops, and the Rotterdam comics museum.



Veerle van Herk

first year illustration



Danai: What did you think of the introduction at the WdKA? What was it like for you to come and study here?

Veerle: I was really looking forward to beginning my studies at the Willem de Kooning Academy. After taking a year off from studying, which I spent mostly illustrating by myself, I was happy to start working based on assignments.

D: What was it like for you to have this as your first project?

V: It was great to be able to start by publishing a book of my own, which was something I had already done before, for my secondary school graduation project. This was the aspect of illustration which I had explored the most up until now. I also enjoyed the fact that I was given a specific guideline, in this case Heijplaat. Still I felt I was given very much freedom, so that I could realize the book in a form that was appealing to me.

D: What were for you the major challenges, or the aspects that you found difficult in the beginning?

V: We were given eight weeks to realise the book. During this period,

the classes were also oriented on the making process. It was a challenge to schedule how much time I would allow myself for the thinking and making processes. What I enjoyed the most was giving shape to the story. I found Heijplaat a fascinating location: A small village with four churches, a supermarket and a bakery. It's like nothing here has changed since the 1970s. Consulting the websites of local associations, as well as interviews and other sources, gave me a great deal of inspiration for the story. I really enjoyed developing and illustrating the characters for my book.

D: What would you do differently if you were given such an assignment again?

V: I decided to use a technique for my illustrations which I hadn't used before: silkscreen printing. This is a very time-consuming technique, which I had underestimated a bit. Looking back, and with the experience I've gained in the meantime, I would have approached the form and the planning differently. This would have spared me a lot of stress and 10-hour days of silkscreen printing!

D: What would you suggest to other new students for this project, based on what you have learned?

V: Start by asking yourself what kind of book would appeal the most to you, if you saw it in a bookshop.

D: Do you like graphic novels with not too much text? Do you like writing a story of your own?

V: As long as you're making something that has a form that appeals to you, you can go on enjoying to work on it. It was also very helpful for me to spend a lot of time at the academy. It was good to be working among other students who were also working creatively. The print stations also have so many possibilities that you can experiment with.

D: What else would you like to learn during the Illustration programme, that hasn't been addressed yet?

V: This project required very little background knowledge of digital technologies. This was something that appealed to me at that point, but I would also like to work on getting to know all of the digital possibilities of illustration.



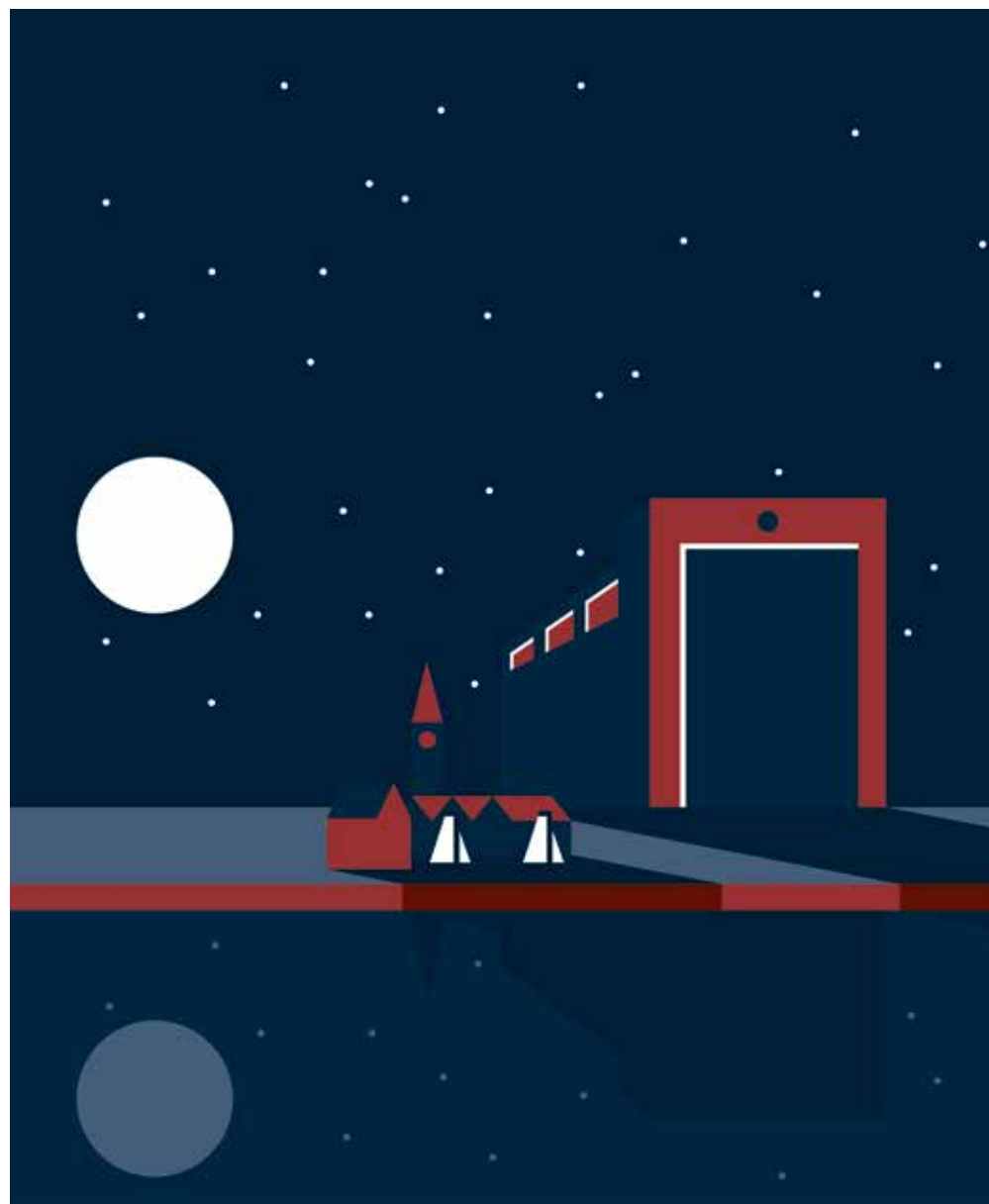
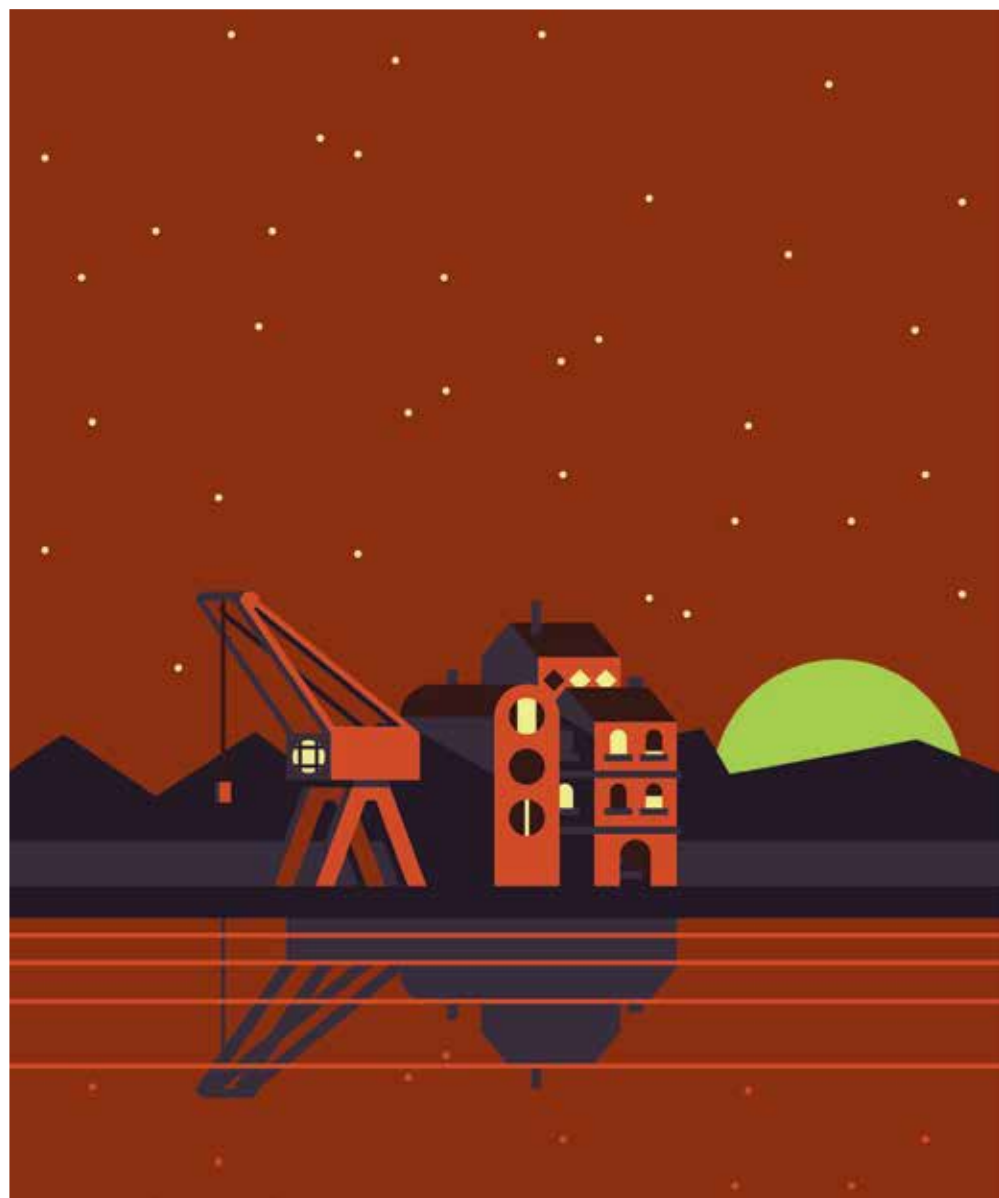


Photo by Gert-Jan Pos

Ervin Poot

first year illustration

Danai: What did you think of the introduction at the WdKA? What was it like for you to come and study here?

Ervin: I was really looking forward to come study at the WdKA, for quite some time already. Now that I was here at last, there was suddenly a lot to process. The first weeks were well structured. I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with everything and everyone here, from the stations to my fellow students.

D: What was it like for you to have this as your first assignment at the academy? Was it more or less as you expected?

E: Absolutely! I was thrown in the deep end, which was something new for me. But I also really liked it, and it completely met my expectations. Because after all, I'm really here to learn. Though the supervision is very good, you still really need to take the initiative. If you want to learn something, you have to do something. We were also very well informed. It was always clear what was expected of me.

D: What were for you the major challenges, or the aspects that you found difficult in the beginning?

E: The fact that I was discovering new things, leaving the familiar behind and seeking out something new. I held on too long to one single good idea, which really slowed

things down for a while. But sometimes it's hard to let go of that idea. For me, the best part of this quarter was discovering new printing techniques. That was really something of a revelation. And it was also very useful to me in making my book.

D: What would you do differently if you were given such an assignment again?

E: Next time I would try to keep an open mind, rather than holding on to my first idea. That really got me stuck for a while.

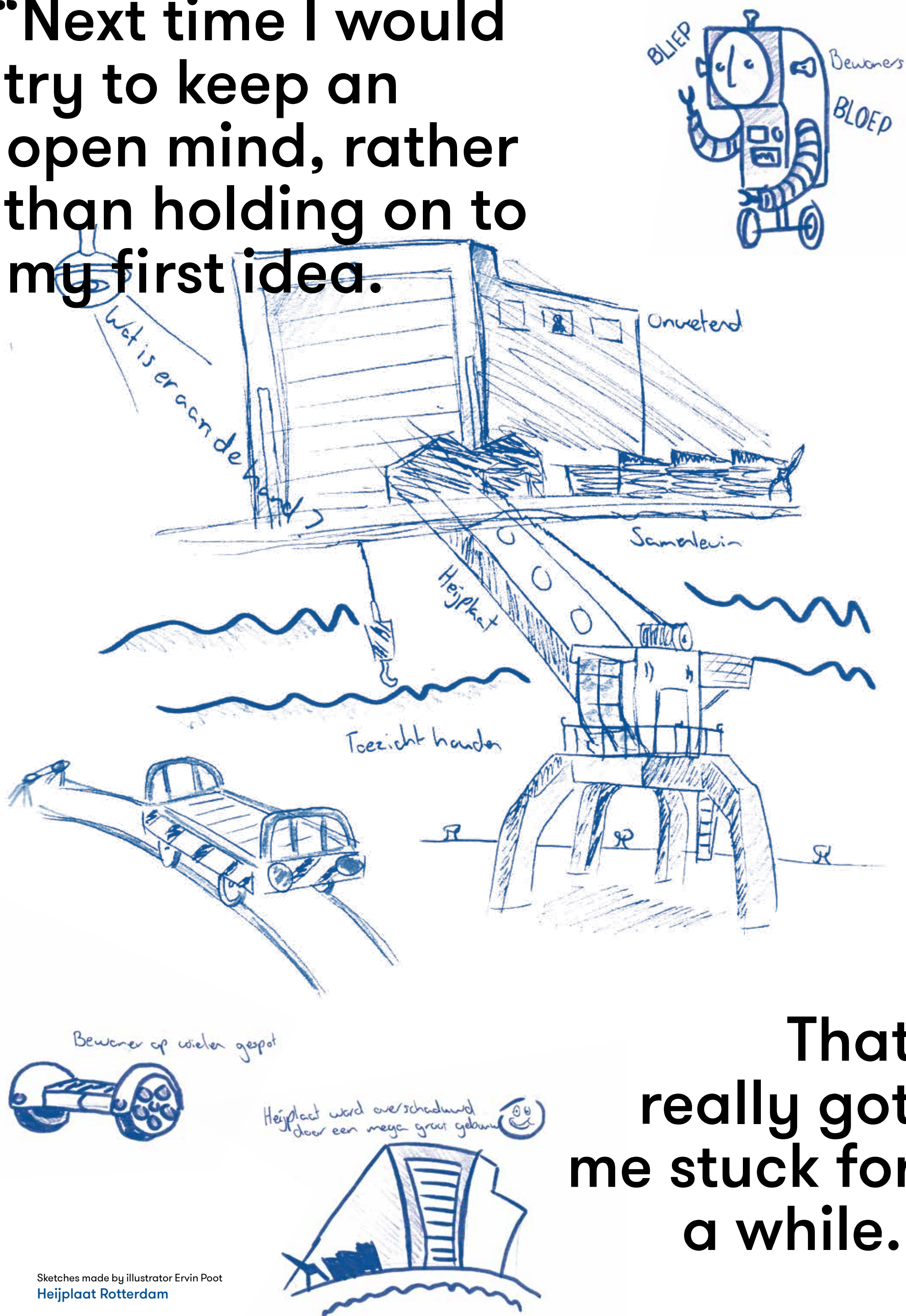
D: What would you suggest to other new students for this project, based on what you have learned?

E: The one thing I would advise them is: Try things out! There are so many possibilities that are open to you at the WdKA. So don't be held back just because some things are unknown and unfamiliar. If you want to learn something, just go ask a tutor or student. I learned so much this way during the first quarter!

D: What else would you like to learn during the Illustration programme, that hasn't been addressed yet?

E: Everything! No, actually, I'm really open to whatever comes across my path. I want to learn and do as many different things as possible, so that I can find out a bit about everything. That way, I'll eventually be able to branch out and grow into what I really like.

“Next time I would try to keep an open mind, rather than holding on to my first idea.”



That really got me stuck for a while.”

Inside the Box

Reinier Landwehr
Janneke Wingelaar
Max Terpstra
Isa Gaastra

Assignment:
“Create an innovative
artistic presentation that
demonstrates who you are
as an image maker, and
why you do what you do.”



It's already a tradition for the Illustration department: at the beginning of each new year, all of our second-year students give a five minute public presentation. Everything is allowed, everything is possible, the only requirement is that all of the student's presentation materials must fit into a cardboard moving box.

So how did students actually experience this assignment? In order to find out, we asked Isa, Reinier, Max and Janneke.

Interviews by Lars Deltrap
Photos by Gert-Jan Pos

Reinier Landwehr

second year illustration



“I often have a hundred thousand ideas —

so I thought: why not just show them all?”



“In the beginning I found it a difficult assignment because you needed to research yourself. That’s not something you do so easily. Still, at a certain point I found it quite interesting to think about why you do the things you do.

I came to realize that I prefer to invent things while I’m in busy making them, as I go along. So when I got stuck at one point during the assignment, my solution was to just go on working and trying things out. I wanted to turn the box into a head: to give the audience a glimpse of what’s inside my own head. I’m always busy in my head and I often have a hundred thousand ideas, so I thought: why not just show them all? The final result was a big, crazy, colorful box filled with many little boxes and curiosities, like a little world of its own.

I’m quite pleased with the result. In the beginning I was afraid it might turn out to be an uncoordinated mess, but in the end all the parts really fit together, and really fit with me as well. For this assignment we were allowed to work in whichever way we pleased. Illustration is so broad, there are so many different ways to approach it. I chose to work with clay, spray cans and acrylics, so that I could present the broadest possible image of myself.

I learned to get to work even faster and to go on experimenting, so that you can see at once what works and what doesn’t. I always like to jump into an assignment head-first, with a blank sheet and without too many expectations of the desired results. My advice to other students working on this assignment would be: allow yourself to be surprised, so that you can surprise others.”



Janneke Wingelaar

second year illustration



“It doesn’t really matter which medium you choose, as long as there’s a story behind it”



The classes focused mainly on helping you to discover what your own passions are. I also came to understand through the classes that you shouldn’t work too literally, but rather based on a feeling or on the materials. It was a very free assignment, which is something I really liked.

There was enough time to work independently on the assignment. I went to work at once, sewing and building. I wanted to do a lot in this assignment, and sometimes I forgot that everything needed to fit into that one box. If it didn’t fit, you just had to look for a new solution; that was the challenge. Since I could do something I felt passionately about, I really enjoyed working on this assignment. I wanted to show people who I am, and also to shock them a little bit, but in a positive way. I think I succeeded at that. I was able to show them that I’m not just a typical illustrator, and that I sometimes find other solutions to assignments. As an illustrator you really have the possibility of seeking and pushing these boundaries: it doesn’t really matter which medium you choose, as long as there’s a story behind it.

I would advise students working on this assignment not to spend too much time thinking about all the possibilities. You really don’t have that much time. Instead, go on with doing what you enjoyed doing up until now, expand upon that, and show the results. Just get to work, and don’t forget to have fun.





“You
have
to
think

outside of
the box in
order to get
into the box”



Max Terpstra

second year illustration



“For this assignment, you needed to present to an audience your own personal drive as an image maker, and everything had to fit inside a cardboard moving box. My box contained a wooden factory made up of a number of smaller parts.

I had decided to present the work process of an image maker as a machine made up of small parts: one for observing, one for processing, etc. During the presentation I said nothing, but instead spent five minutes exploring the machine. My goal was to communicate that I was trying to gain a better understanding of my own work process as an image maker. Judging from the positive responses from the audience, I guess I was successful in this.

I’d found it difficult to begin the assignment, since there were so many ways to approach this. On one hand there was complete freedom, on the other hand everything needed to fit inside the box. I liked the fact that it was a personal

assignment, rather than working on a specific theme. It was entirely up to you to decide how you wanted to complete the assignment.

My advice to students for this assignment would be to really use as much as possible the freedom you’ve been given. It doesn’t matter whether you complete the assignment in two or three dimensions: either way, you’re still illustrating. Usually the tendency is to start making drawings right away, but now you can also use materials that are not flat. It has to fit in the box, but of course you can also take it out of the box. Actually you can do anything: you have to think outside of the box in order to get it into the box.”

Isa Gaastra

second year illustration



“For this assignment I thought a lot about who I am, what I want to be as an illustrator, and how I got to the point where I am now. I wanted to highlight an essential aspect of my personality. This was important to me because my personality plays such an important role in the illustrations I make.

I really enjoyed writing my story and painting my book. It was great to take such a personal research and communicate it visually. Sometimes it can be hard to visually represent something that's so close to yourself. In this assignment I really experienced that you can better keep things small, since there's really no way to touch upon all aspects of your personality in a five-minute presentation. That's why it's so important to make choices and set priorities.

It was really great that we had so much freedom for this assignment. Everyone could complete the assignment in whichever way they

found most interesting. I learned a lot about my fellow students during the final presentations.

I believe this kind of assignment is absolutely relevant to the Illustration department, since it requires you to tell a story using images. It's also great to be challenged to work in three dimensions. As an illustrator you're often used to thinking only in two dimensions, while there are so many other possibilities.

My advice to students doing this assignment would be: keep it close to yourself. This is a great opportunity to combine who you are with what you really like.”

“It was really great to have so much freedom.”





Impression of the presentations as seen from the audience's point of view

Touring the Stations

Floor Milou Smit
Leendert Duijvenbode
Damian van Soest

“Stations”

Next to 13 majors and three Practices WdKA offers its students high-tech meeting interdisciplinary spaces – Stations.

Stations are the place for creating prototypes, experimenting, remixing and improving your ideas. All of the Willem de Kooning Academy's students and staff members are welcome to work in our Stations, regardless of their major specialisation, minor, elective module or study year.

The Stations are where you can explore the viability of your ideas and find out how to turn them into fully-functioning creations.



Photo by Ossip van Duivenbode

Three students
were asked to
make a project
using at least
three stations.*

That's the only condition they were given, for the rest, the brief was open. The academy offers a wide range of facilities that the students are free to use. This project was meant to get the students out of their usual stations and experiment with techniques they hadn't used before.

Interviews by Rachel Sender
Process photos by Floor Milou Smit,
Leendert Jacob van Duijvenbode,
and Damian van Soest

Floor Milou Smit

third year illustration

Rachel: Hello! Can you please introduce yourself?

Floor: I'm Floor Milou Smit and I am a third year illustration student.

R: What are your ambitions as an illustration student?

F: As a student I want to experiment and try new things, to find out what subjects and techniques I like best and to gradually evolve my personal illustration style.

R: What was relevant for you in the project?

F: I wanted to use this opportunity to try something I hadn't done before but have had in mind for some time.

R: What stations did you work in for this project and why did you chose them?

F: I started in the Drawing Station. Here I sketched up my ideas and produced the illustrations that I was going to apply to a set of t-shirts. Second was the Publication Station, where I silk screened the back of my t-shirts. The third and final station was the Fabric Station, where I used the embroidery machine to embroider two small designs onto the front of the t-shirts.

The drawing station is my 'home base', where I start almost all of my projects. The publication station is also quite familiar territory, but I had never silkscreened on a t-shirt before. The fabric station was the least familiar and I had never used the embroidery machine before, so my curiosity led me to this (part of the) station.

R: What was necessary/essential for you in these stations?

F: The openness, freedom and accessibility to go ahead and work on my project.

R: How is your station related to illustration?

F: Drawing station (as the name implies) is the perfect place to draw and paint! Digital or analog. Publication studio is great for making prints of your illustrations and Fabric station offers some very interesting options for getting your illustrations onto fabric.

R: What are your best mistakes during the process of this project?

F: Haha 'best mistakes' is a good oxymoron! But yeah silkscreening didn't go too well at first, which nonetheless gave some interesting textures.

R: Where can these results take you in the future?

F: I liked applying my illustrations to clothing so I want to do that again, using what I have learned to get better results.

R: What is illustration in your opinion and what do you enjoy most about being an illustrator?

F: I think the core of illustration, to me, is visualising a story. There is such a vast amount of ways to do this. But I love how broad illustration can be.

R: How are your interests supported in the WdKA?

F: There is much freedom within the illustration major to shape your study to your own interests. Also I can complement my major by taking certain courses and choosing an autonomous minor.

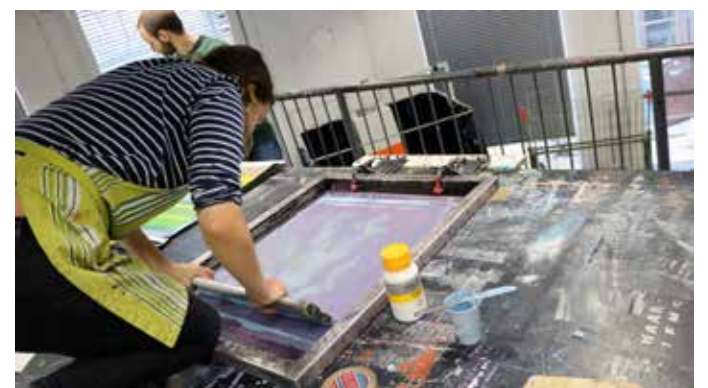


Photo by Gert-Jan Pos / Model Thijmen Brinkman

Leendert Jacob van Duijvenbode

second year illustration



Rachel: Please introduce yourself.

Leendert: My name is Leendert, and I am a 2nd year illustration student with a love towards graphic design.

R: What are our ambitions as an illustration student?

L: I love to experiment. For me, illustration is a really vague concept. A lot of people relate illustration to a more traditional approach. I am looking for more original ways to illustrate, like photographing.

R: What was relevant for you in the project?

L: The experiment for this work was essential for me. I did not start with a sketch, but I started by just creating some objects. I want to be able to create work with the tools I got at the moment. The pink scarf was the first thing I created and while I finished it some ideas came to mind of what I could do with it. In my opinion this is one of the strongest skills a designer needs to possess, to think up a design with the tools that were given.

R: What stations did you work in for this project?

L: The main station for this project was the Fabric Station. It was there where I created the blankets for this project. I also made use of the drawing station, publication station, print station and the photo studio. I think the photo studio was the most important station cause here I captured the visual for the design.

R: What was necessary/essential for you in these stations?

L: The most essential thing to me was the help of the teachers. I always feel like I'm asking them too much, but they always gladly help. For example, fabrics are totally new for me, and I never used a knitting or sewing machine, so I needed a lot of help. One of the great things is that not only the teachers will help you when you're struggling, but you can expect the same of fellow students.

R: What drove you to choose those stations?

L: I am really bored with the traditional ways of illustrating. And illustration means creating visuals. Drawing is not the only way to create visuals. I love to search for new ways to create new work so I can distinguish myself from other designers. And mostly I follow my current interests. For now, creating work with fabric interests me, so that is how I chose to make use of the Fabric Station.

R: How is your station related to illustration?

L: That is a rather difficult question, because I am not that familiar with illustrators who make use of fabrics. But still, one of the reasons I wanted to experiment with fabrics are the "Don't hug me I'm scared" movies of Becky Sloan and Joe Pelling. For me, the way they created the whole atmosphere in the videos is also illustration. So I think the reason the station is related to illustration is because almost everything can be related to illustration.

R: What part of this project did you enjoy the most?

L: Definitely the knitting of the blankets. It is really frustrating to work with the fabric machines, but in the end, when you finished and the blanket falls off the machine, you really feel like you created something. Maybe that is because the blanket is more touchable than a piece of paper.

R: What are your best mistakes during the process of this project?

L: Maybe it's not really a mistake because it was supposed to be that way, but I think the greatest mistake this project was not working from a sketch. I didn't sketch this project because I wanted to see what I could do on the spot with the blankets. I wouldn't recommend this way of working because it can get really stressful in your head.

R: Would you do it like this again?

L: Starting earlier to create some objects is the only thing I would do differently next time.

R: Where can these results take you in the future?

L: In my opinion these kind of experiments show me how I can make use of my work. I always find it hard to create a visual that really connects with the rest of the design, and its ways like these where I learn this the best. Just trying out. So for me, it improves my perspective of the ways I can make use of design.

R: What is illustration in your opinion and what do you enjoy the most about being an illustrator?

L: For me, illustrating is just creating visuals. In my opinion a photographer is some kind of illustrator too. A graphic designer is in a way an illustrator, and so on. I wouldn't even call myself an illustrator because I get the impression from my surroundings that illustrating is limited to drawing. So my definition of illustration is creating visuals and the thing I enjoy from that is that I'm not limited to certain tools. I can make use of typography, photography, fabrics, statues, etc. It is the freedom I enjoy the most.

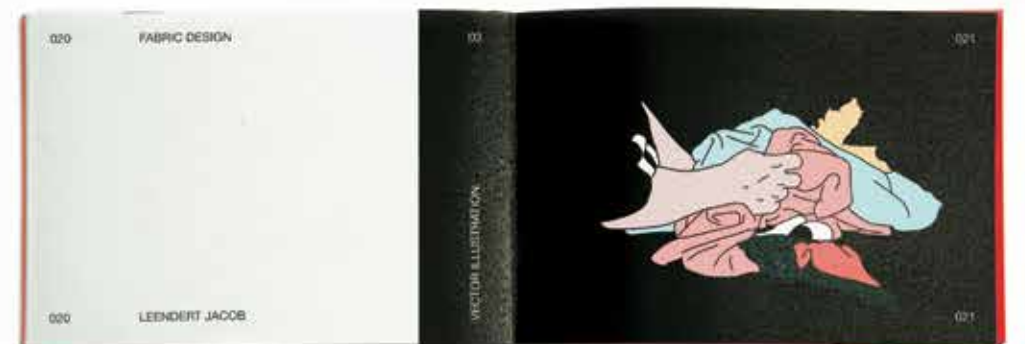
R: What aspects of illustration are you interested in?

L: I want to leave drawing for what it is and search for more progressive ways of illustrating. I want to try to make use of photographing just like I did in this project to capture visuals I created.

R: How are these aspects/interests supported in the WdKA?

L: I can create almost every image that comes to my mind on the WdKA so that is the way they're supporting me to explore more original ways to illustrate. I'm also given the freedom to do things as radical as I want to do them so there is really much room for improvement in my opinion.

“I can create almost every image that comes to my mind in the WdKA —



they're supporting me to explore more original ways to illustrate."

Rachel: Please introduce yourself.

Damian: My name is Damian van Soest and i'm an first year illustration student. Before this i studied Graphic Design & Visualisation. In my part time i work as a freelancer and give drawing classes to adults.

R: What are your ambitions as an illustration student?

D: Of course i have the ambition to have my work in a big gallery or collaborate with great and famous clothing lines. But I also think that if my work would be appreciated by the general public or just locally in Rotterdam i would also be happy. If i could do what i want for the rest of my life than I would be the happiest illustrator in the world.

R: What was relevant for you in the project?

D: I worked in four stations for this project: print station, publication station, fabric station and drawing station.

R: What stations did you work in for this project?

D: I worked in four stations for this project, Print station, publication station, fabric station and drawing station

R: What was necessary/essential for you in these station?

D: The help from people and their knowledge was really necessary in the stations. Because without them you don't know how to work the machines and they can help you work more efficiently. Also the different environments were really inspiring, you have a different perspective and thats helpful for new ideas and inspiration.

R: What drove you to chose those stations?

D: I looked at what I wanted to do and how i was going to produce it. I had never worked in the fabric station before this so this was a great opportunity to have a go.

R: How is your station related to illustration?

D: The drawing station is where it all begins with sketching and painting. Most people don't think about the fabric station with illustration. But if you use fabric for printing on it of binding a book it can be very useful. The same goes for the print and publication station.

R: What part of this project did you enjoy the most?

D: What I enjoyed the most was digitalising the icons and trying out different textures for the illustrations. Also the interaction with different students in different stations. I got the chance to discover new things and new ways to work with illustration.

R: What are your best mistakes during the process of this project?

D: I would say the time management and my thinking process. I need to learn how to be quicker at making choices. Sometimes you just need to make things instead of dreaming about them. Many things could go wrong but you never know if you don't try it.

R: Would you do it like this again?

D: I would love to! If I had more time i would also consider different techniques and maybe work with only stations that I don't know. Like the interaction station for more interactivity. I also considered using VR technology that we have at school.

R: Where can these results take you in the future?

D: Now that i've learned how to work in certain stations I will use that station quicker in my projects. I will also try to experiment more in different stations.

R: What is illustration in your opinion and what do you enjoy the most about being an illustrator?

D: Illustration is telling a story with images that you make. It doesn't matter with what kind of materials you make it. Illustrators have the tool & talent for bringing a feeling over. Making content that can really mean something to people.

Damian van Soest

first year illustration





“Most people don’t think about the Fabric Station for illustration.”



But if you use fabric for printing on it or binding a book it can be very useful.”



Graduation Project

Isabelle Oud
Lizer van Hattem
Pim van Dijk
Wietse Treurniet
Chris Timmermans
Roel van Eekelen

Commercial



WdKA students learn to be creating pioneers and to develop a critical, experimental and innovative attitude.

Social

During the graduation phase, students demonstrate their ability to conduct a relevant and original research project, and based on this research, to design final products that are relevant to the contemporary professional practice. Students graduate in either an autonomous, social or commercial profile.

Autonomous

Isabelle Oud

Graduated in 2016

Eva & Adam

This story is not about Adam and Eve, but about Eve and Adam. Man and woman are still not equal, there are still more male in top positions than woman.

Because we live in a society in which Christianity has had an important role, I decided to rewrite the story of Adam and Eve. Eve is in the second Genesis not equal to Adam. She is being blamed of committing a sin. By giving Eve a different role I want to show children that as a female you can achieve just as much as a male.

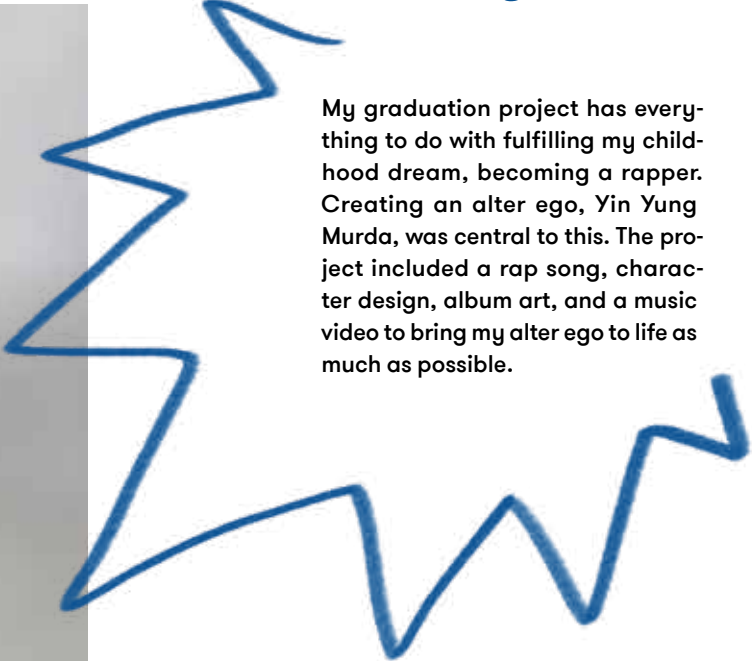


Eva snapte het niet. Ze ging naar haar vriend de slang. "Waarom waardeert De Stem Van Boven Adam meer dan mij, terwijl wij dezelfde problemen moeten oplossen?" De slang antwoordde: "Ik weet het niet Eva. Het enige verschil tussen jullie is dat jij een vrouw bent en Adam een man." Eva haalde haar schouders op.

Lizer van Hattem

Graduated in 2015

Yin Yung Murda



My graduation project has everything to do with fulfilling my childhood dream, becoming a rapper. Creating an alter ego, Yin Yung Murda, was central to this. The project included a rap song, character design, album art, and a music video to bring my alter ego to life as much as possible.

Pim van Dijk, Chris Timmermans & Wietse Treurniet

Graduated in 2016

Nimbi



For our graduation project, we decided as a team to develop a game. A game in which the look & feel speaks directly to the player, and can be played by anyone.

The game is called "Nimbi", a puzzle adventure game that plays inside the imagination of a child called Nimbi. In the game you follow Nimbi in his search for an explanation to the mysterious disappearance of his imaginary friend.

By using various animal onesies that Nimbi finds or gets during his adventure, he gets special skills and characteristics that the player has to use to overcome the complex obstacles and challenges. This game is made in such a way that one does not need any game experience to play it, and targets everyone that likes to puzzle.

It is a challenging puzzle game that puts the resourcefulness and logics of the player to the test.

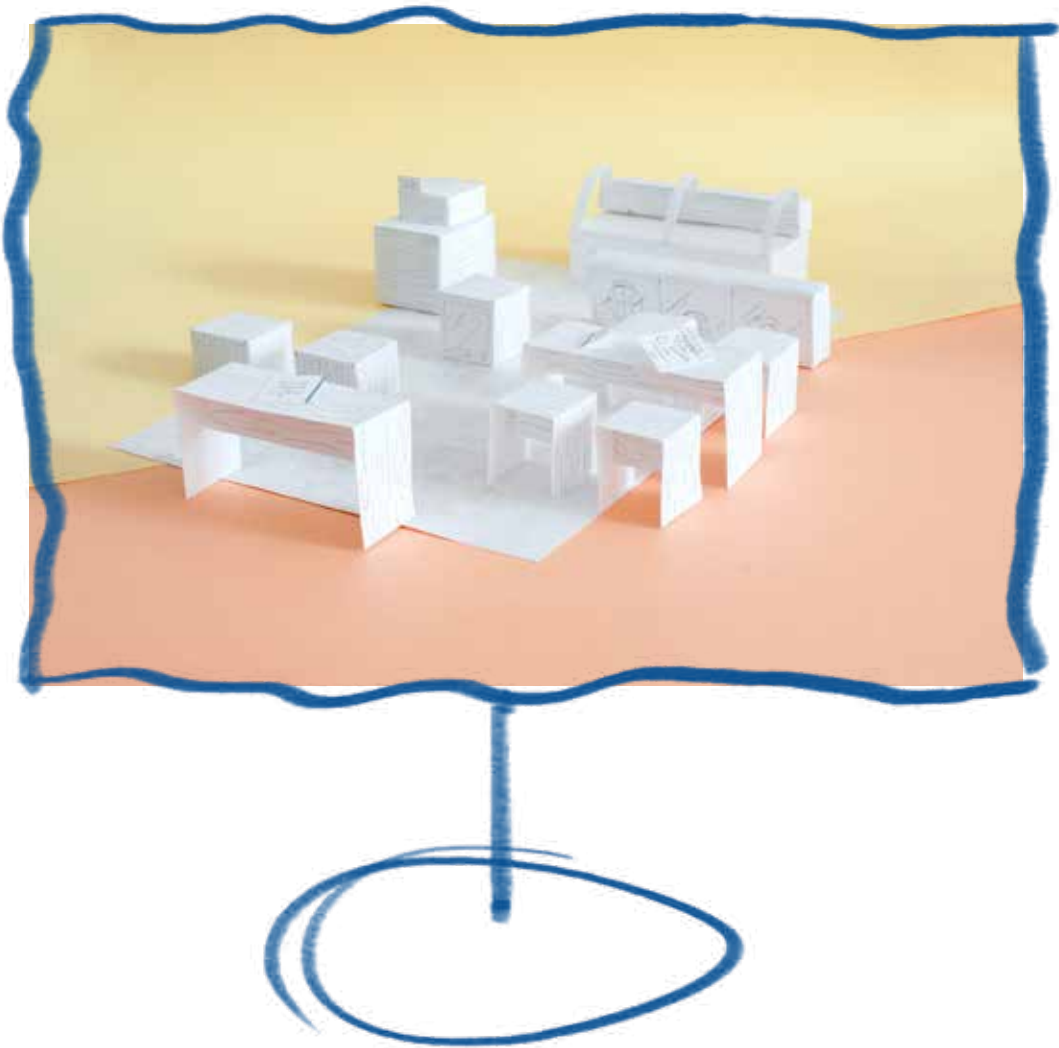


Concept Art

Roel van Eekelen

Graduated in 2015

Cafeteria Het Goede Leven
Café The Good Life



I always feel at home in snack bars: those old-fashioned snack bars with sticky tables and crackling fat. The snack bar “Het Goede Leven” (The Good Life) is my way of paying tribute to this gradually disappearing deep-fried culture, by presenting it in a fresh new context.

I did this by giving my own personal twist to the familiar elements that can be found in every snack bar. The standing table with the subscription magazines, the sticky seats, the menus in the light boxes, the dusty TV with football or gossip shows, and of course the refrigerated display counter with its brown oasis of snacks.

Alumnus Project

Ming Sin Ho





Ming Sin Ho

Alumnus illustration 2013

Ming Sin Ho, Willem de Kooning Academy alumnus, graduated in 2013. Since then he's always had plenty of interesting work commissions; everything just seems to fall into place. How does he see his profession, and what did he get out of his years studying illustration at the academy?

"In my family, we ate French fries and Chinese food every day. My father had come to the Netherlands from Shanghai, and worked for a while in a Chinese restaurant before opening his own snack bar in Utrecht, in the Twijnstraat. That was something quite unusual at the time, a regular snack bar run by a Chinese. My father and mother spent their evenings peeling and cutting potatoes. They hoped I

would find a job working for a bank. They wanted me to do something that would allow me to earn money. But when I showed my mother what I was making, she really believed in me."

After completing the Grafisch Lyceum secondary school in Utrecht and Zwolle, Ming Sin Ho was admitted to the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam. He graduated in 2013, and since then has had no trouble at all in finding work commissions. In 2016 he designed the new visual identity of the Crossing Border music and literature festival in The Hague: the poster, tickets, wristbands, website, t-shirts and other products. Even the festival tent was decorated with an application of his design. "They started by asking me if I could design the website. Next came the poster, followed by the rest." The festival was looking for a new visual identity, as well as a new audience. They were looking for something fresh and new."

Ming Sin Ho's simple but distinctive drawings were exactly what the festival needed. His use of bright colours without outlines is typical of the (new) Dutch School: an approach to illustration



characterised by broad fields of colour, a graphic interpretation of reality that can be applied in murals as well as on a smaller scale in websites and magazines.

Paper, print, digital, painting, silk-screen printing, on walls, on delivery trucks or online: there's nothing he hasn't tried. "At this point I'd really like to explore animation. Animation is very time-consuming. Still, I want to make a film for which I'll do everything myself: script, drawing, animation, even composing the music. I also want to take the time to make more non-commercial work. For which I prefer to work a bit more loosely."

In his apartment on the Statenweg in Rotterdam, his computer and that of his Korean girlfriend are set up so they can both work sitting back-to-back. Outside the window, four lanes of traffic are moving in and out of the city. There's a painting on the wall that Ming is busy working on. The figures are rendered in big fields of gentle blue, yellow, green and red. He goes on endlessly fitting the shapes together. "Like a set of building blocks." He finds inspiration in the sketchbooks he's always drawing in when he's sitting in a train or in a bar. His sketchbooks are full of extraterrestrial beings. "Lots of aliens, creatures from another world."

Extraterrestrial life is purely non commercial work; work commissions, however, are a bit more down-to-earth. "These days I have two methods for when I start working on something. Either I go on endlessly fitting the colours and shapes together until I arrive at something interesting, or I conduct research and formulate a concept. For the Erasmus job I worked with an agency, with an art director, the whole bit. Then it's really all about figuring out what I want to show, and to whom. Working collaboratively in a team is a really interesting aspect of this kind of job."

In late September 2016, Ming's interactive exhibition in the Rotterdam

public library, on the ideas and legacy of Desiderius Erasmus, was officially opened by King Willem Alexander. Ming designed animations and images for four interactive walls that introduce visitors to the unique way of thinking of this enlightened philosopher from Rotterdam. They are given questions to answer, allowing them to better understand who Erasmus was. "By familiarising yourself with his working methods, you somehow learn to think the way Erasmus did. You also learn about how important language is." The four interactive walls constitute a permanent exhibition.

"When I finished my secondary vocational education, many of my classmates went looking for a job right away. But I wanted more. I really just wanted to do something interesting. I had studied multimedia and design. Now I wanted to study illustration in Rotterdam. Drawing is freedom. I can make up anything I want. I don't remember what I made during my first year, but I do remember being a good student."

"I had chosen Rotterdam because the city appealed to me. I still live here. It's a big, open, refreshing city. The art school was modern and no-nonsense, more business-oriented than other academies. We studied idea development, which at first seemed kind of vague to me. Just cutting out pictures. But gradually something started to emerge out of the collection of images I had gathered. So idea development, and other subjects too of course, really taught me to look differently; to keep looking and thinking a bit further, rather than automatically choosing the easiest solution or always going with your first idea."

"At the academy I really felt like an artist. I just wanted to make cool drawings. By the time I began my internship, I also started asking myself more seriously how I was going to make a living with my drawings. I did my internship at the fashion brand Gsus, with Rick

Hedof as external supervisor. It was hard work and very challenging. In art school, you're always surrounded by other creative types. You influence each other and learn from each other. It takes four years; those are really your own years. At home all alone, you'll never manage, you'll just go on messing around. And the academy is great, but you really need to be motivated and to take initiative."

After his internship, Ming Sin Ho was introduced to clients by Rick Hedof, who's also an illustrator and is younger than Ming. That's where it all took off. Ming has plenty of work, so he never really has to look for work commissions. "I've been making commercial work, you could even say corporate work, for the SNS Bank: infographics, icons and short animations. This provides me with a steady income. So now my parents are kind of proud of me, because I work for a bank after all. At least I don't hear my father complain anymore."



**“Rotterdam,
I still live here.
It’s a big,
open,
refreshing
city.”**







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Typefaces:
GT Sectra, GT Walsheim

Printed by Veenman+

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University of Applied Sciences