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Born in Liverpool in 1966, **Ian Murray** holds a degree from Kingston Polytechnic and an MA in communication design. He has worked as a freelance illustrator for years – winning many awards, including a host of Benson & Hedges Illustrators Gold Awards – and now combines his design work with teaching at Manchester Metropolitan University.

What was your first Mac?

A Power Mac 7300 180MHz

What equipment do you use apart from your Mac?

As well as my G5 Quad Core Mac, I use a Canon Lide 30 A4 scanner, a LaCie 1TB external hard disk as a backup/scratch disk, a Wacom Cintiq 21UX and a second NEC 17in LCD display for menus, palettes and so on. Oh, and an old Epson 1290 A3 inkjet.

What are your tips for success?

You can't beat a bit of hard work to start with. Eventually, if you're good enough, you'll make it. As an illustrator, it helps to have a combination of an appealing visual language and solid ideas. Being a nice person is underrated: no one wants to work with

a *l@^er, however good their work is. A dash of good luck is always useful.

Talk us through these examples:

01 This was for an article in *Pilot* magazine about Delta Jets' new superfast business aircraft that looked set to take over from bigger, slower planes such as 747s. The article focused on the design of the aircraft, and so I worked on an isometric grid in Illustrator to compose the image.

Pilot is a US client of mine with whom I have worked for years. I have a great working relationship with the art director, who gives me quite a lot of freedom.

I always start a project with a pencil drawing, which I then scan and place into Illustrator to create vector shapes. I usually just work in black and white

in Illustrator and add colour later. Once I'm happy with the elements I've created, I export these out to Photoshop – happily, this works a lot better in CS3 than in previous versions.

The textures in my illustrations are scans of mono prints and other analogue 'mess' that I make or find. I archive these textures digitally, so I can recall and use them quickly. I then start to add colour from sets of swatches that I've put together in Photoshop. I use simple, limited colour palettes, as I find them easier and more effective to work with. Sometimes I use the blending filters in layers to overlay colour, but I mostly use Photoshop as a collage tool, really. My goal is to make the images look as non-digital as possible, so as to make the technology invisible.

02 This image, also for *Pilot*, was about people becoming too rigid in their approach to their careers, especially in a recession, and how sometimes that's the best time to become more flexible.

03 Another illustration for *Pilot*, on a feature about how pilots should build up enough flying hours on different types of aircraft so that they have a breadth of skills, enabling them to choose the plum jobs.

04 This was a piece for *GQ* magazine about chat-up lines, and how men can't resist using them. I worked with the idea of the quote marks forming horns on the guy's head, making him look caddish.

05 *People Management* magazine commissioned this image about



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managers getting together the right team. I worked with the idea of recipes and the manager mixing or blending people together to get the best team.

06 This image is about the various radio frequencies used by transport providers and how operators need to be fluent in many technologies in order to avoid major transport disasters. I wanted to hint at the operator being like a concert pianist in terms of dexterity and skill.

What or who are your influences?

Barbara Hepworth for her beautiful sense of proportion, combination of materials and sensual use of shape. Lucienne Day, whose fantastic colour sense and playful designs somehow managed to be of the time but also timeless. Jim Flora for his superb drawing skills, great sense of pattern and colour, and some insane ideas.

What mistakes have you made that you've learned from?

Always back things up. Time Machine makes this very easy now, so no excuses. However, once or twice in the past, I've had to repeat days of work in hours after a crash or a hard drive

dying, not a pleasant experience. Also, give clients what you think they need (and what you enjoy doing), not what you think they want.

How did you get your big break?

Being offered representation by Sharp Practice in the late 1980s. This gave me a good foothold as a freelancer and exposed my work to a great many high-profile clients.

What's your ideal project or commission?

A project with a sensitive/understanding client who likes to make beautiful work. Time: a project with a bit of time is always good, as it enables you to make considered judgements about a design. Working on cultural projects is enjoyable and publishing work is rewarding, too.

How far would you compromise your artistic principles for a fat paycheque?

I've done it in the past, but increasingly I'm much less likely to do this. What interests me now is producing work I'm proud of for a good fee. However, producing great work for a tiny fee doesn't really interest me, either.

What's your greatest creative inspiration?

I find that although it's sometimes difficult, the balance between freelance work and teaching is a great inspiration. It makes me eager to keep learning and it's great having a balance of working in isolation and with a team of people.

What excites you professionally?

A challenging, thoughtful brief from a client whom you respect.

What's wrong with design today?

Too much surface not enough thought. Everything being wanted yesterday. And a sense of proportion: people forgetting that although it's important to be passionate about design, it's very rarely a matter of life and death. I find that the best designers (contemporary and historical) always have interests and passions outside of design, making their lives richer and their design stronger.

Tell us about something good?

Being paid to draw stuff... it doesn't get any better than that.

What frustrates you?

Computers crashing.



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