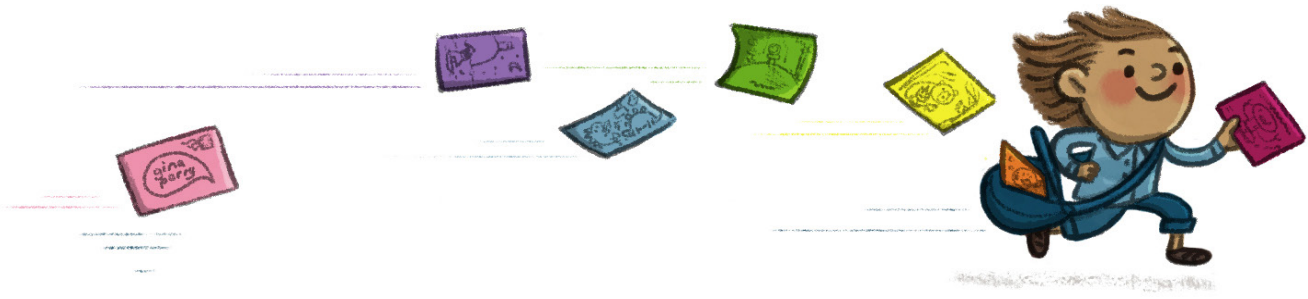


Illustrator's Showcase their work with #KidLitArtPostcard



By Nancy Goulet

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Like clockwork, Illustrator Gina Perry regularly shipped out cheerful postcards to children's publishing art directors and editors to drum up work. The New Hampshire artist launched the practice shortly after building her portfolio back in 2006. Since Perry has devotedly mailed her promotions several times a year.

Then Covid hit... Like many industries, most in publishing abandoned their offices and began working from home, leaving no forwarding addresses for illustrators to send their cards. "It was a waste of time, effort, and money to send anything out at that moment," Perry said.

Yet without the essential marketing tool, Perry wondered about her promotional prospects. And she knew she wasn't alone in this conundrum. "I knew there had to be something better for us," she said.

Hatching a Plan

Perry mulled the problem over. She brainstormed with friends and fellow illustrators. Eventually, a plan hatched. Perry devised a monthly social media event with an exclusive hashtag. Being an illustrator, Perry prepared to launch her idea by doing what she does best. She whipped up a promotional banner to post. Then she formally announced her idea on her blog (<http://www.ginaperry.com/blog>) and then on her social media accounts (Twitter: @ginamarieperry, Instagram: @ginaperry_books).



Gina Perry, #KidLitArtPostcard Founder

"Since Covid made mailing postcards futile, illustrators (especially without or in-between agents or representation) have to create and maintain huge email lists, or throw their work online and hope for the best. I'd like to try something different," she wrote. "Using Twitter, Instagram, and a very specific hashtag, let's meet to share one special image and make new connections."



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At a time when it is hard to connect with illustrators, this was an accessible, fun, and exciting way to see each other's work.

*Gina Perry, Illustrator
and #KidLitArtPostcard Founder*

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The Birth

And so it was, #KidLitArtPostcard was born, appearing the first Thursday of every month on Twitter and Instagram starting May 2021.

She did not expect what happened next. “I think it broke my Twitter,” she joked.

While Perry hoped for good results, she never anticipated the online event's success. In the first month the announcement amassed 72,000 Twitter impressions. Perry herself gained approximately 350 social media followers. And within the first six months, 2,500 posts with the hashtag sprouted on Instagram according to Perry's statistics.

Perry was elated with the results. And the benefits of the monthly online event mushroomed beyond her initial intent. “It's been all positives,” she said.

Building Community

For one, the event has built a community. “At a time when it is hard to connect with illustrators, this was an accessible, fun, and exciting way to see each other's

work.” The event also provides regular inspiration. “... This one-day event can be a great way to see the work of your peers, get inspired, and then move back to your desk work,” she added. And it offers motivation through a little social pressure. There's an imposed deadline to create new work to show monthly. “I rarely sent more than two postcards a year by snail mail,” said Perry. “But I managed to create fresh work most months...”

While Perry isn't sure how many the hashtag has directly helped, she has heard many anecdotes from artists who have landed agents and book deals. One of those artists is South Carolina illustrator Tatjana Mai-Wyss (Twitter: [@mai-wyss](#), Instagram: [@tatjanamaiwyss](#), Web: [tatjanamaiwyss.com](#)).

“I don't love promoting myself,” Mai-Wyss confessed. But #KidLitArtPostcard felt like a good fit. “It's like a billboard. People know where and when to look.” Prior to the event Mai-Wyss mailed cards up to three times a year. But since the launch of the event, she's posted regularly.

Many Benefits

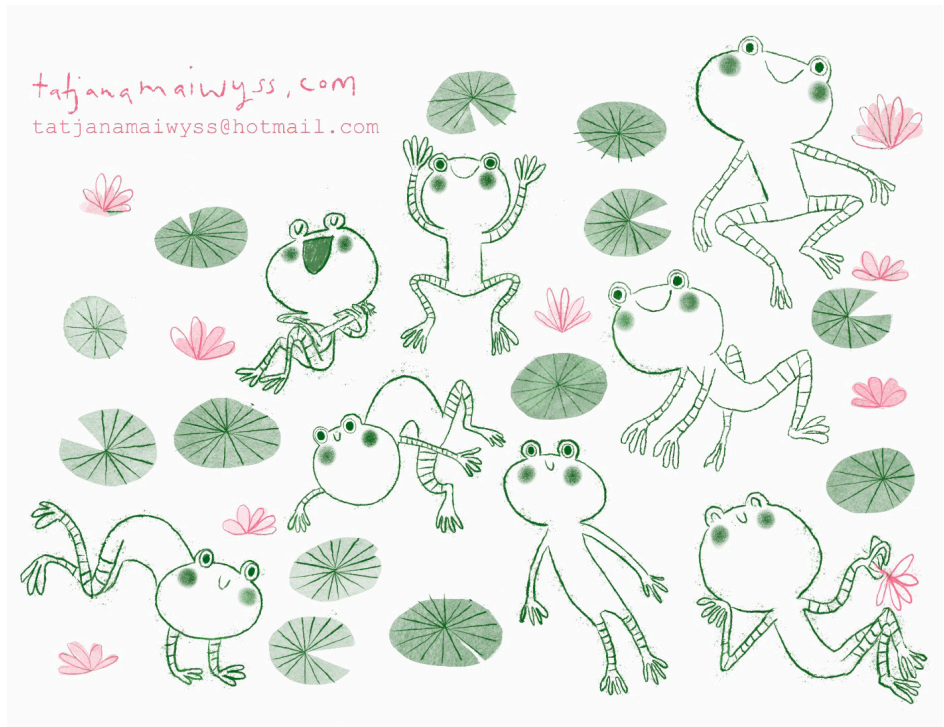
“It’s made me much more consistent,” she acknowledged. Eventually, her efforts caught the attention of agent Caryn Wiseman, Executive Agent at Andrea Brown Literary Agency who now represents Mai-Wyss.

Adam Ming also struck gold partly due to the event (Twitter: @AdamMingArt, Instagram: @adammingstudio, Web: AdamMing.com). “Every time I participated, something big seemed to happen,” said the Malaysian artist. Several in the industry retweeted his first post causing Lydia Silver of the Darley Anderson Illustration Agency to take note and eventually sign Ming. Since he’s been contracted to work on five books. Ming credits some of his success to Perry’s event saying the hashtag helped swell his following which connected him to opportunities. Before he began the #KidLitArtPostcard posting, 80 people followed him on Twitter. Since, the number has grown to 800+.

“The hashtag works because it’s being thoughtful to both illustrators and people looking for illustrators,” said Ming. “... It helps by introducing artists and people in publishing to one another, as well as maintain top of mind at regular intervals.”

Discovering New Talent

Those in the business enthusiastically agree. Wiseman said it’s helped make her job of discovering new talent easier. “I’m always on the lookout for new, up-and-coming illustrators,” she said. With the hashtag, the search is “all in one place. It makes it easy to scroll quickly.”



A New Way

Wiseman said she peruses the feeds regularly throughout event days and attributes the hashtag with the introduction of three new clients. “What they posted just caught my eye and made me want to delve into their portfolio. They called out to me,” she said.

Lori Kilkelly, literary agent and owner of LK Literary Agency, often drops in on the monthly events and highly recommends participation to any illustrator interested in working in children’s lit. “Professional illustrators know that in order to get work, people who may hire them need to not just know about them, but on a somewhat regular basis be reminded that their work could be/is a good fit,” she said. #KidLitArtPostcard provides this great reminder. “There’s incredible creativity out there in the midst of a fairly hellish last two years.”

Many have cheered Perry’s efforts to help make their promotional efforts during these trying times a little less hellish. Now a year later as the event celebrates its first anniversary, the need remains. Many publishing professionals have committed to working from home and some publishers have closed offices for good leaving many illustrators questioning whether #KidLitArtPostcard will become the new norm for illustration promotion?

Meanwhile, Perry hasn’t mailed out a new printed postcard since the event started and she has no plans of resuming. As she wrote in her blog, “I’m hoping that this idea resonates with my community of kidlit illustrators and we can put enough beauty and enthusiasm into this to make editors and art directors look forward to #KidLitArtPostcard almost as much as our old snail mail postcards.”



Nancy Goulet is an aspiring children’s author-illustrator, journalist, and principal of her boutique graphic design firm, *studiowink* (studiowink.com). Her illustration portfolio can be seen at <https://wordsandpicturesbynancygoulet.com/com>, Instagram: @nancygouletwordsandpictures, Twitter: @nancygouletswol. And if you’re an agent or editor—yes, she’s looking for representation and work. (Just following the article’s advice!)

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#KidLitArtPostcard

How to create your successful digital postcard



Looking to make your #KidLitArtPostcard images attract eyeballs? Here are some tips to help create art that captivates.

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A successful image is one that manages to make an impression...To me that means it should feel like a gift to the person receiving it. It should entertain or delight the recipient first, before they ask.

Adam Ming, Illustrator

”

Make great art

First things first, create compelling work. That’s going to differ for every artist. But no matter what, make it the best you can. “Make sure it’s art that puts you in the best light,” said Caryn Wiseman, Executive Agent at Andrea Brown Literary Agency.

“A successful image is one that manages to make an impression,” added Illustrator Adam Ming. “In one image it tells the agent/editor/etc. who you are. To me that means it should feel like a gift to the person receiving it. It should entertain or delight the recipient first, before they ask.”

Have fun

Show the kind of work you want to work on. If your engines rev drawing trucks, make sure to showcase vehicles. If you enjoy anthropomorphized animals, go wild. You get the picture. The idea is that you’ll get hired based on your passions. And also, they say your love for the subject will rub off on the work. “Make sure it’s something you’re going to have fun with,” said #KidLitArtPostcard creator Gina Perry.

Portfolio

Beyond the post, make sure your portfolio also exhibits more of your favored subjects, further showing your capabilities and proving you’re more than a one-trick pony. And be sure that your portfolio contains enough professional work to give viewers a full understanding of all you have to offer.

Own it

Like traditional postcards, professionals interested in work will reach out to illustrators directly should they wish to work with an illustrator. Agents, editors, and art directors need to know how to contact you once their interest has been piqued. So, it’s important to include your contact information in an obvious manner. Make sure to label your piece with your name and contact details. “If someone saves or prints out one of your illustrations you want them to be able to identify and find you easily,” said Lori Kilkelly, agent and owner of LK Literary Agency.

Include your Deets

For the same reason, also include your website, said Kilkelly. Slap it on your post, make sure it’s linked in your Twitter and Instagram profile. And once the viewer checks out your site, list your contact information in an obvious fashion, either in a contact link or at the bottom of every page. Remove every hurdle for the professional and show them how easy it will be to work with you.

The Right Type

Since contact is the goal, make sure that your details are legible and integrated with your image in some way. If you’re skilled with hand-lettering, Ming suggested implementing this skill as yet another tool in your kit.

#KidLitArtPostcard How to create your successful digital postcard



Gina Perry

Represented for books by Sean McCarthy
www.ginaperry.com ginacarey@comcast.net

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Make sure it's art that puts you in the best light.

*Caryn Wiseman, Executive Agent,
Andrea Brown Literary Agency*

Make sure it's something you're going to have fun with

*Gina Perry, Illustrator
and #KidLitArtPostcard Founder*

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Size matters

Don't forget to properly size your work and consider the composition for the platform you're posting on. And since many professionals tend to view the work from their phones, be sure it looks good on the small screen, Wiseman reminded. For proper dimensions, visit: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-image-sizes-guide/>.

Be up front

Advertise what you're looking for. If you're looking for agent representation, say so. If you're seeking work, don't be shy, advised Wiseman. "I've gone down the rabbit hole before just to find out the person's work I'm interested in already has representation. It's a huge waste of time."

Tag it

Don't forget the obvious. Include the hashtag #KidLitArtPostcard in the description area of your post to make it easy for professionals to find you come event day. It may sound obvious, but easy to forget. Don't!

Plan ahead

The event occurs the first Thursday of every month. On that day editors, art directors, and agents peruse postings using the event hashtag (#KidLitArtPostcard). Be sure to mark your calendar if you'd like to participate in the next event. **The upcoming dates are: April 7 / May 5 / June 2 / July 7 / August 4 / September 1 / October 6 / November 3 / December 1**

Basics

New to social media? Learn more about how to post by visiting these handy tutorials:

<https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-tweet>

<https://help.instagram.com/442418472487929>

