THE age of illustration

An introduction to the world of illustration, from the 1890s to now.

By Elenore Graber

THE AGE OF illustration

Written and Illustrated
By Elenore Graber

This book is dedicated to all the kids that dream of being artists.

Never stop making art.

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Introduction

An illustration is more than just a drawing or painting that looks nice. Illustrations are made to work hand-in-hand with text, with written words. The words could be about anything.

They could be telling a story,
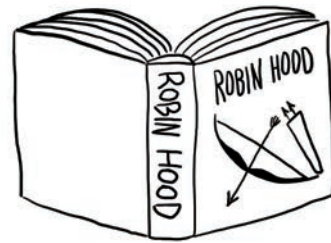
or selling a product,

or trying to get you to do something.

llustrations are usually more than just one person's idea; illustrators often work on a big creative team. They work alongside

designers,

writers,

art directors,

and sometimes clients to make big ideas come to life.

Illustrations are all around us. You see them every day; and if you pay attention, you'll start to see them everywhere. You can find them in books, on posters, on packaging, in advertising, and online. Illustrators can work as concept artists for movies, as fashion designers behind the biggest brands, or even in educating medical professionals with illustrated diagrams. In almost every industry, an illustrator fits in somewhere.

But how did it all start? Where did this world of illustration come from? Who are the people are behind it?

This book is going to try to answer those questions.
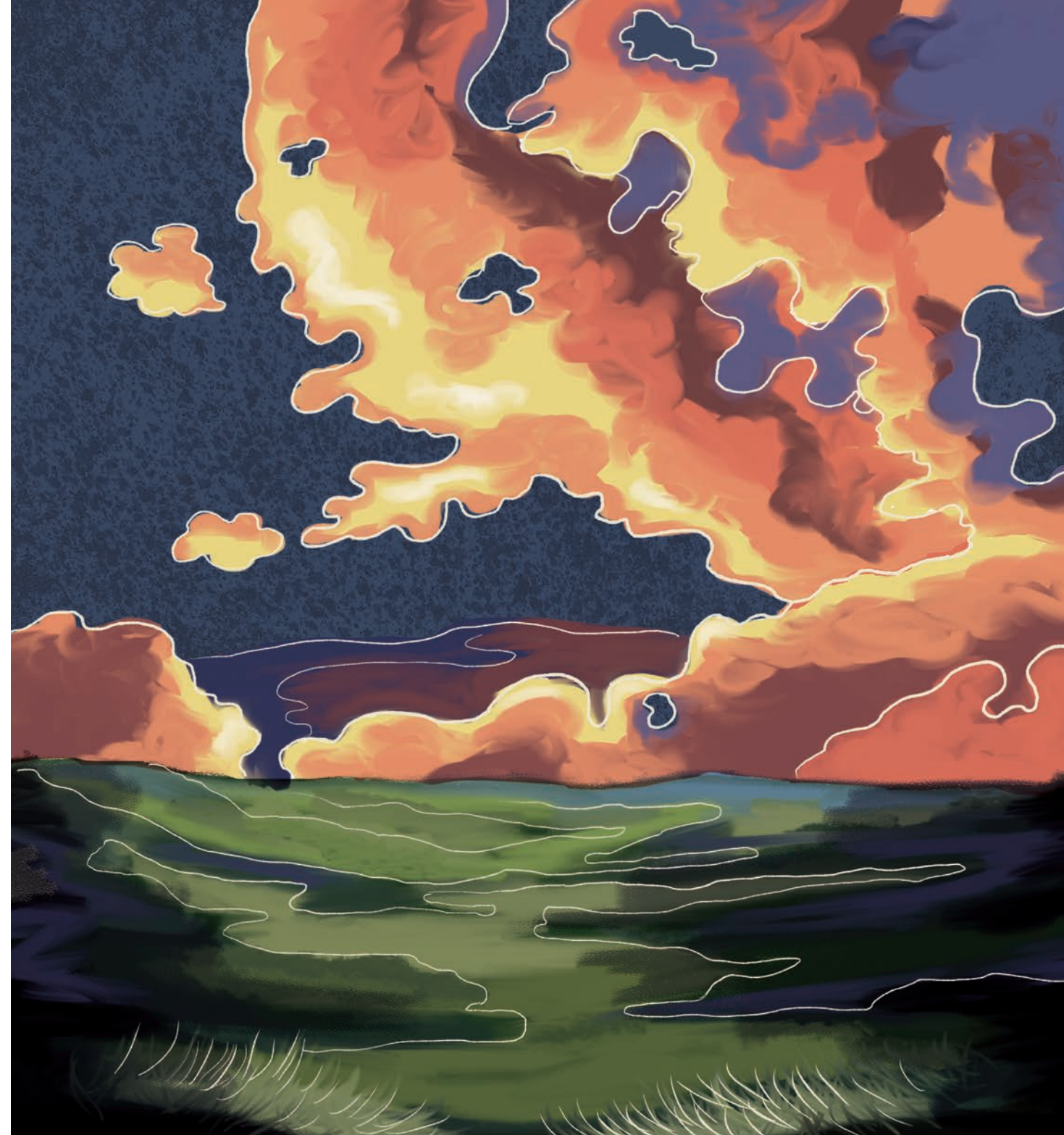
The Beginning 1890-1910

The Beginning of a New Era

Big things were starting to change in the world of art. In the past, if you wanted to see a painting or a drawing, you had to go somewhere and see it in person. You had to go to a church, or a gallery, or maybe a rich person's house. This meant that if you lived outside the city, or in a far-away country, chances are you wouldn't get to see very much art in your life.

Another thing about the past was that artists usually only made art for one type of person: rich people. Nobles, royalty, church leaders—these were the only people with enough money to afford to pay artist salaries. This meant that many artists had to make art that made rich people feel good, since those were the only people who could buy their work. This limited artists, and the world of art. But that all started to change in the 19th century, with the help of two big changes.

First, art started to become much cheaper to reproduce with the help of brand-new printing techniques. What does that mean? Well, in the past, if an artist made a painting, the only way you could have another copy was if the artist did the exact same painting all over again, stroke by stroke. This would take forever and be very expensive (not to mention, no fun for the artists!) But with new technology, it became easier and easier for companies to reproduce a piece of art, allowing people to see it all over the world.

And why did publishing companies do this? That's all because of the second reason: more people than ever were learning to read. People were reading novels, magazines, posters, advertisements, labels; you name it. And what fun is a magazine if there's no pictures in it? Who doesn't love judging a book by the picture on its cover?

Suddenly, art is everywhere. And it isn't just made for rich people anymore, it isn't made to just hang on a wall and look impressive. Now art is being made to be seen by more people and do more than it ever has before. There is a whole new world of art—of illustration—in the works, and here are some people that helped make it.
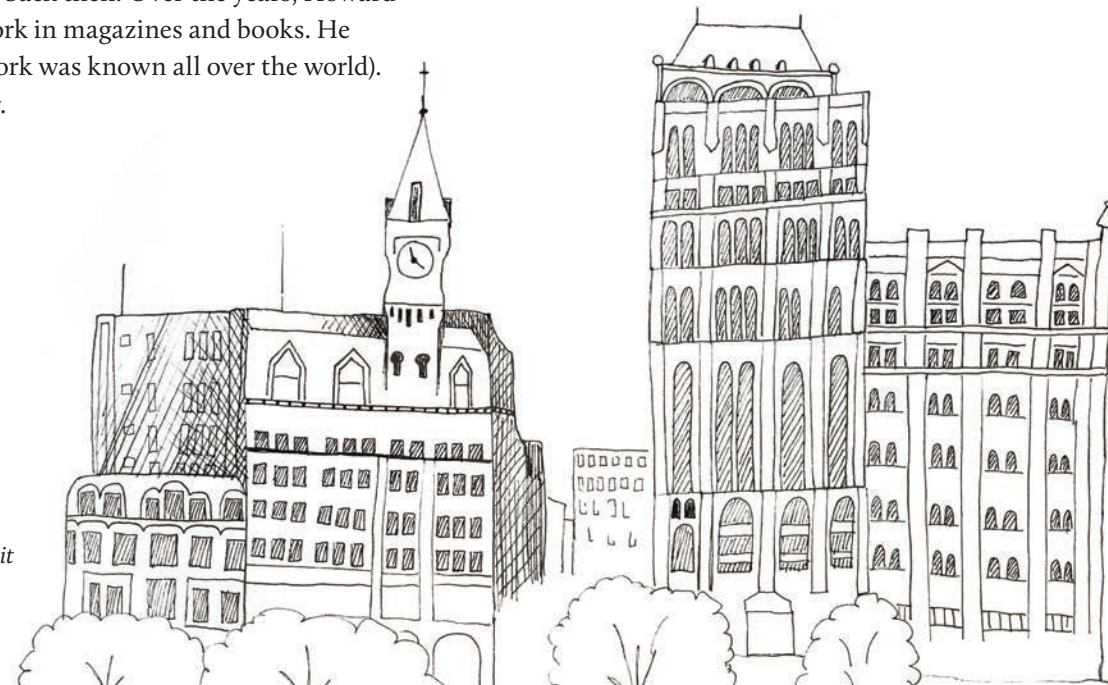
Howard Pyle

Born: March 5th, 1853

Died: November 9th, 1911

From: Wilmington, Delaware

In the 1890s, a man named Howard Pyle decided to start teaching at the Drexel Institute of Art and Science. His goal was to pass on what he had learned over the course of his career to the next generation of artists. At the time he started teaching, there were no schools teaching illustration classes. This was because illustration was still a new career field, brought on by that newfangled printing technology.

Growing up, Howard didn't really care much about school, but he did love writing and drawing. As an adult, he went to art school, before moving to New York to try and become a commercial illustrator. When he was there, his first job was a two-page spread (which is one image that spans across two full pages) in the magazine Harper's Monthly. He was paid $75, which was a lot of money back then. Over the years, Howard became more and more successful publishing his work in magazines and books. He eventually became world-renowned (meaning his work was known all over the world). His work continues to be very influential even today.

Howard worked primarily in oil paint, a traditional medium that has been used by fine artists for centuries.

For inspiration, Howard studied the works of past artists as well as his contemporaries (people creating artwork at the same time as him).

Some of his most famous work are his paintings of pirates. There aren't many surviving images showing what pirate clothes looked like, so Howard had to use his imagination. His ideas about pirates continue to inspire and influence people today.

"The Buccaneer was a Picturesque Fellow" 1905

New York in the late 19th century looked very different than it does today.

Work Examples

"The Coming of Lancaster" 1908. This illustration comes from the book "The Scabbard" which is a fictionalized retelling of the story of King Richard the 2nd of England. Howard loved stories from ancient and medieval Europe, and was drawn to stories from that time.
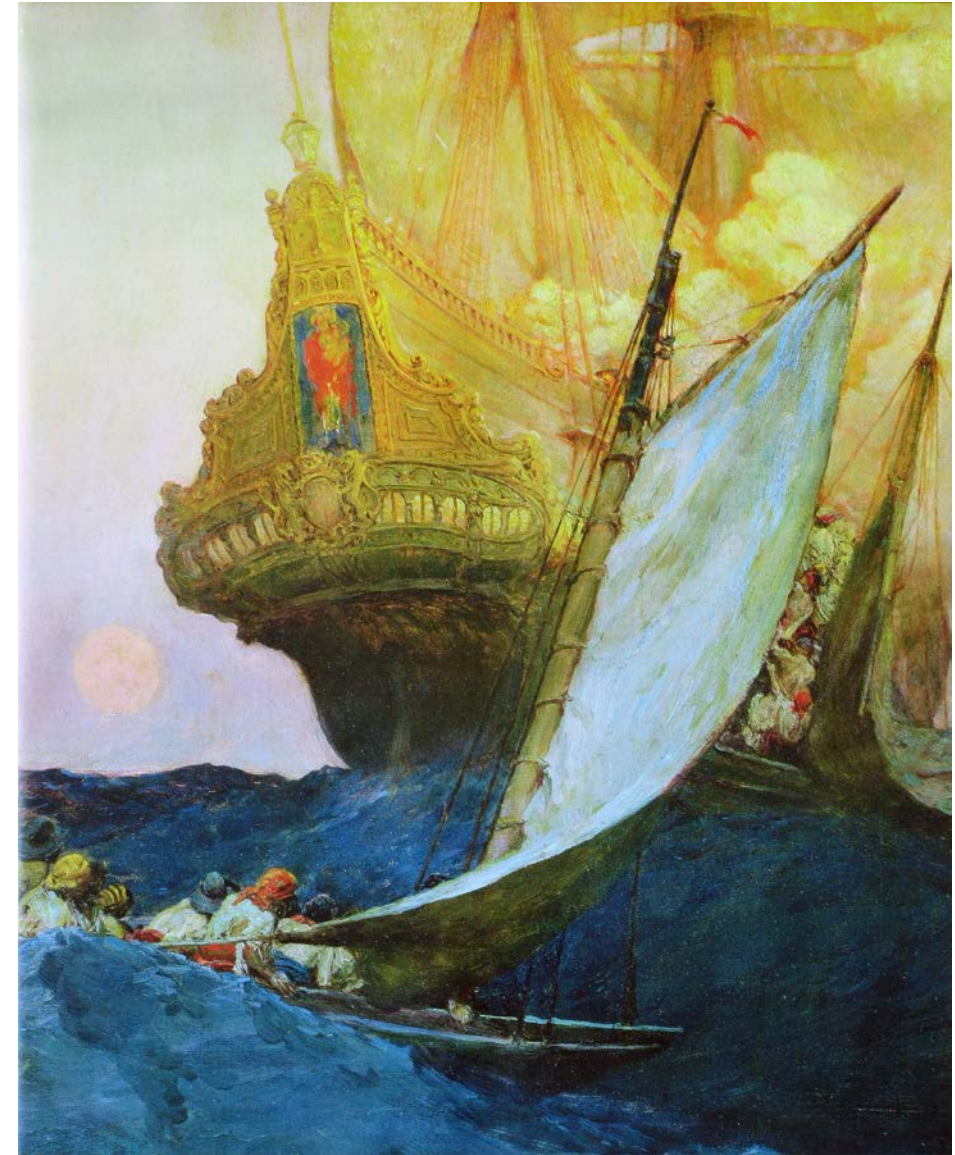
"An Attack on a Galleon" 1905. Here's another one of Howard's famous illustrations depicting a pirate story. This one was published in Harper's Magazine.

"Studies in Expression. When Women Are Jurors" by Charles Dana Gibson.
First published in 1902 by Life magazine.

Elizabeth Shippen Green

Born: September 1, 1871

Died: May 29, 1954

From: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

When Howard Pyle was teaching at the Drexel Institute, he taught a young woman named Elizabeth Shippen Green. This new age of illustration was opening up opportunities for women artists that never existed before. This was because more and more people—especially women—were buying and reading books and magazines.

After graduating, Elizabeth joined The Plastic Club, an organization founded by and for women artists who wanted to promote their work and support each other. This club helped women sell their art and make a living. This was important because, at this time, some people viewed art made by women as inferior to art made by men. Women had to work very hard to prove to the world that their artwork was just as good—and sometimes better.

Elizabeth went on to publish her artwork in magazines like *The Ladies' Home Journal*, T*he Saturday Evening Post*, and *Harper's Magazine*; as well as children's books.

Elizabeth's artwork is highly decorative, meaning it uses a lot of line and pattern. This style works very well for color printing and is why she was so successful in the publication industry.

Her artwork often focuses on life from the perspective of women and children, since in her time their experiences were often ignored. Everyday scenes are a common theme in Elizabeth's paintings

"The Journey" 1903

In the 1910s, women made up 70% of magazine readership.

Work Examples

"The Library" 1905. Watercolor painting for Harper's Magazine.

(Left) "*Miguela, Kneeling Still, Put It To Her Lip*", Harper's Magazine, 1906. *This watercolor painting was created to accompany the story "The Spanish Jade" by Maurice Hewlett, which was published in* Harper's Magazine.
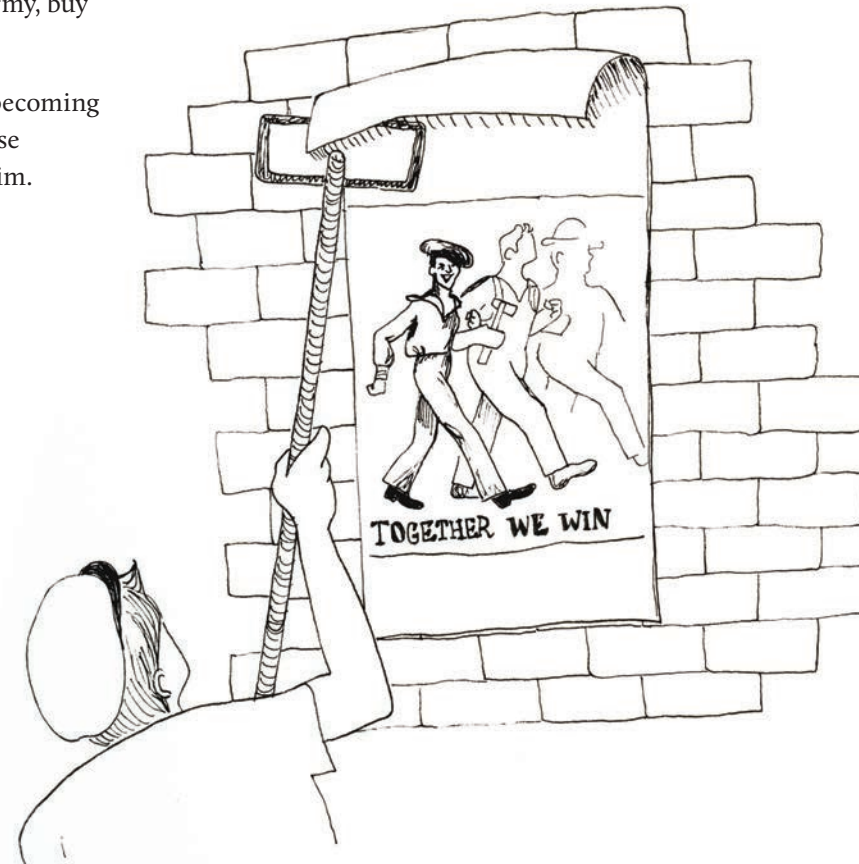
James Montgomery Flagg

Born: June 18, 1877

Died: May 27, 1960

From: New York, New York

You've probably seen the iconic image of Uncle Sam pointing his finger at the viewer with the caption "I Want YOU for the US Army." Over 4 million copies of the poster were printed during World War 1, and it's considered one of the most famous wartime images. It was designed in 1916 by James Montgomery Flagg and is an example of one of the many ways illustration is used: in propaganda. James made a name for himself creating these kinds of images, which encouraged people to do all sorts of things; like join the army, buy war bonds, or pay taxes.

The face of Uncle Sam is a famous one. You might wonder who the real-life inspiration was. Well, believe it or not, James actually used himself as the model! The only thing he changed about his appearance was making himself look old.

The publication industry continued to grow in the 1910s. By now, successful illustrators were becoming like celebrities, since everyone saw their work and recognized the artists. James was one of these famous artists. People were excited to see his work, and looked forward to seeing more from him.

"I Want YOU!" 1917

TOGETHER WE WIN

Work Examples
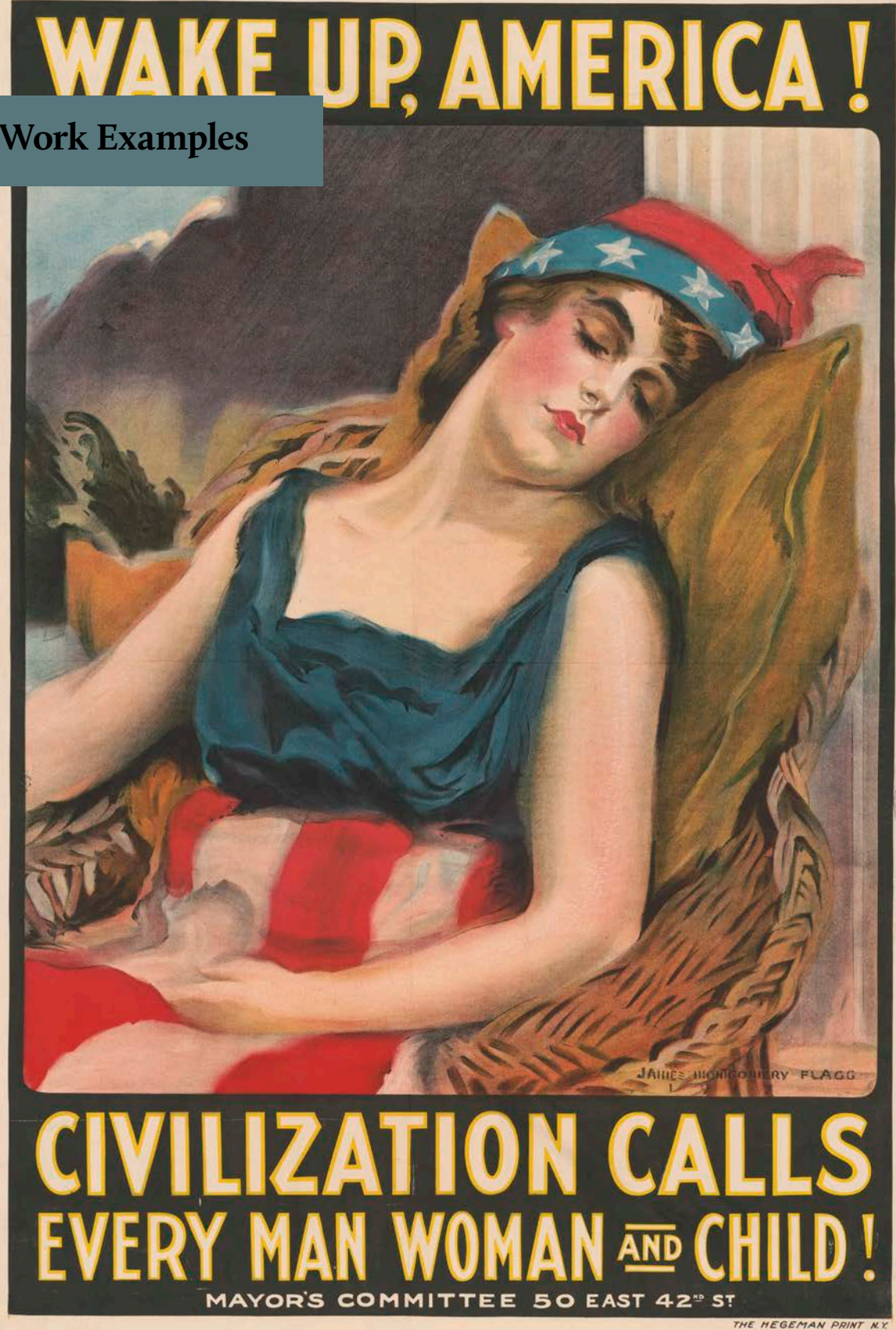
"Together We Win" 1917. This a proganda poster made during World War 1.

(Right)   *"Wake Up America! Civilization Calls Every Man, Woman, and Child!" 1917
Proganda Poster for World War 1. The sleeping woman is Columbia, and she represents the USA.
This poster urges Americans to join the war effort.*

A NEW
GENERATION
## 1920-1940

A New Generation of Artists

With time comes more change, and in the early and mid 20th century, there was a lot of it! Women earned the right to vote, there were two world wars, the economy boomed, then tanked, and then bounced back again. Young people had more freedom, and with this freedom they pushed the boundaries of what is considered "normal." In the 1920s, people started describing what they called the "Generation Gap," which was a sudden change in the way younger people lived compared to their parents. The world was full of new ideas.

And so many new things! New technology brought in things like radio, TV, and movies. One man—you might have heard of him before—named Walt Disney was getting his start making films at this time. People were traveling; either by
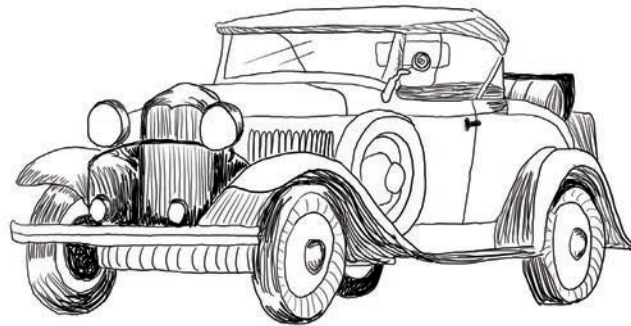
car, train, boat, or even airplane! There were new fashions, new dances, new music and new entertainment. The world was an exciting place, and the art of this time matched that excitement. Now, instead of rich old people determining what kind of art is made, young people are leading the way.

The illustration and publication industry reflected the culture and shaped it at the same time. People wanted to see art they could relate to. Art has a way of helping people better understand the world they're living in, and many artists at this time took advantage of that.
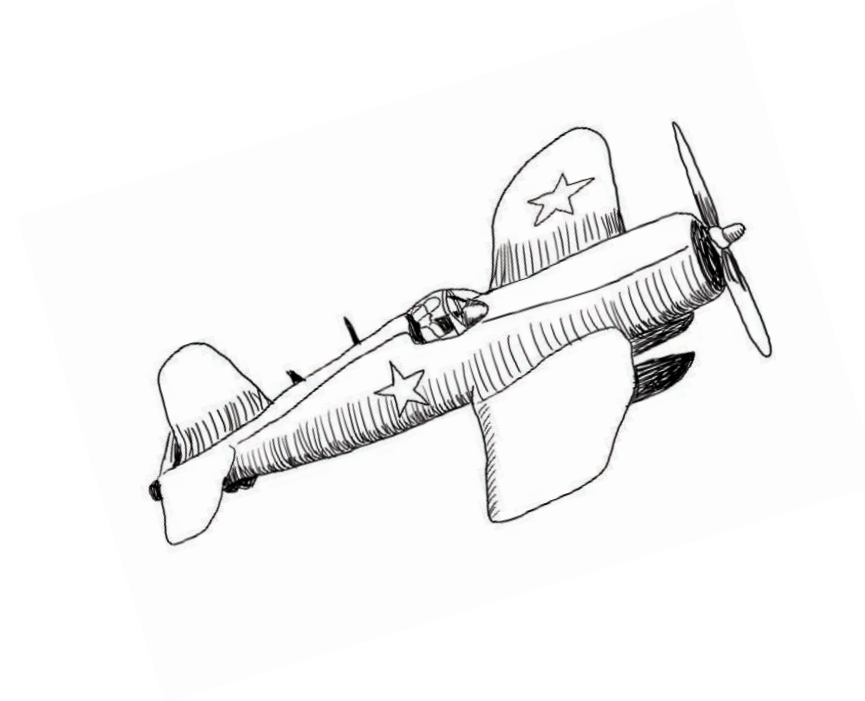
Norman Rockwell

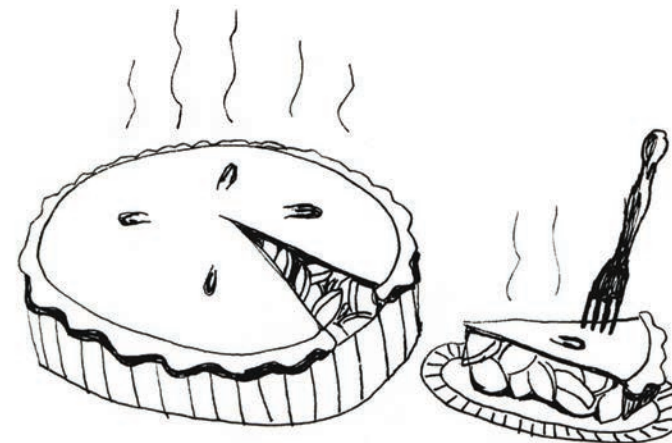*Born: June 18, 1877*

Died: May 27, 1960

From: New York, New York

If there were ever an artist who understood his audience perfectly, it was probably Norman Rockwell. He became famous for painting images of ordinary, American life in a way that people immediately understood. Starting in 1916, Norman got a job painting covers for the Saturday Evening Post, a job he would have for the next 47 years. In that time, Norman would become one of the most iconic American painters, with a style that everybody recognizes to this day.

Norman had a long career as an artist and was—and still is—beloved by people all over the world, especially Americans. He used his artwork to address important issues like racism, poverty, politics, civil rights, science, and the American way of life. His paintings are now considered examples of "Americana," which are things that remind people of American culture.

Norman worked primarily with oil paint. This medium has a long tradition of being used for realism in paintings. While these paintings are realistic, Norman often chose to slightly exaggerate the expressions in order to make them more lively.

"An Army of Friendship" 1933 for Boy's Life *magazine.*

Ever heard the phrase "As American as apple pie?" Apple pie is an example of Americana.
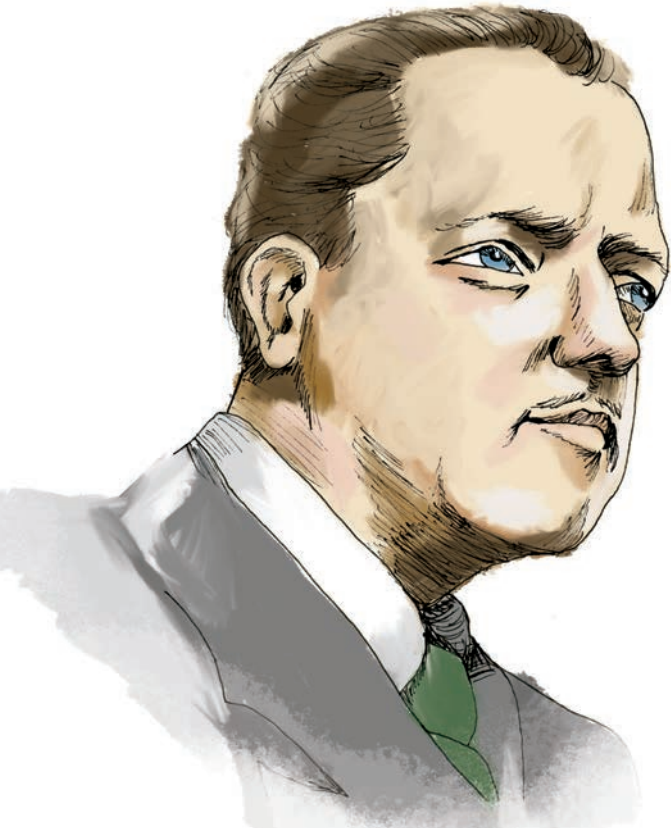
Work Examples

"Marbles Champ" 1939, cover for The Saturday Evening Post. *This is an example of how Norman exaggerates faces just enough that the emotions come across very clearly, but not so much that they look crazy.*

"Christmas Trio" 1923, The Saturday Evening Post. *You can see Norman's use of oil paint allows for fine details in the faces.*

Gustaf Tenggren

*Born: November 3, 1896*

Died: April 9, 1970

From: Vastergotland, Sweden

You probably don't know the name, but there's no doubt you've seen the work of Gustaf Tenggren before. Or at least work inspired by him. In the 1930s, Gustaf was hired by a film company to make concept art and promotional illustrations. What film company?
You might have heard of it before: Walt Disney. Gustaf worked on movies like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Bambi*, and *Pinocchio*.

But he didn't stay with Disney forever. Gustaf had other interests, and he didn't stick with one art style, either.
He wanted to do his own thing, and not get hung up on his past work. He moved on to work with a children's book company, Little Golden Books. He created illustrations for books like *The Poky Little Puppy* and *The Shy Little Kitten*.
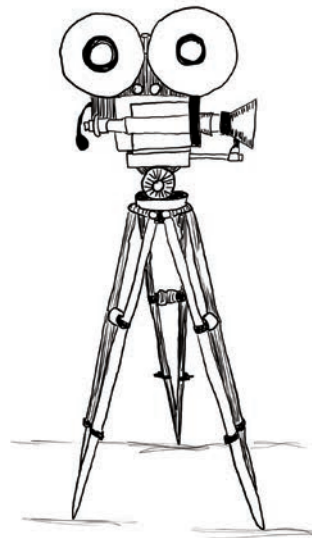
Gustaf took inspiration from a wide range of sources, including Swedish folklore and folk art. "Folklore" are stories and legends that are tied to a community, and "folk art" is art that is inspired by a local culture. Gustaf also looked at fine art, which allowed him to develop a lot of helpful skills. He was also inspired by the woods which grew around his childhood home. This woods would eventually feature in many of his paintings and illustrations.
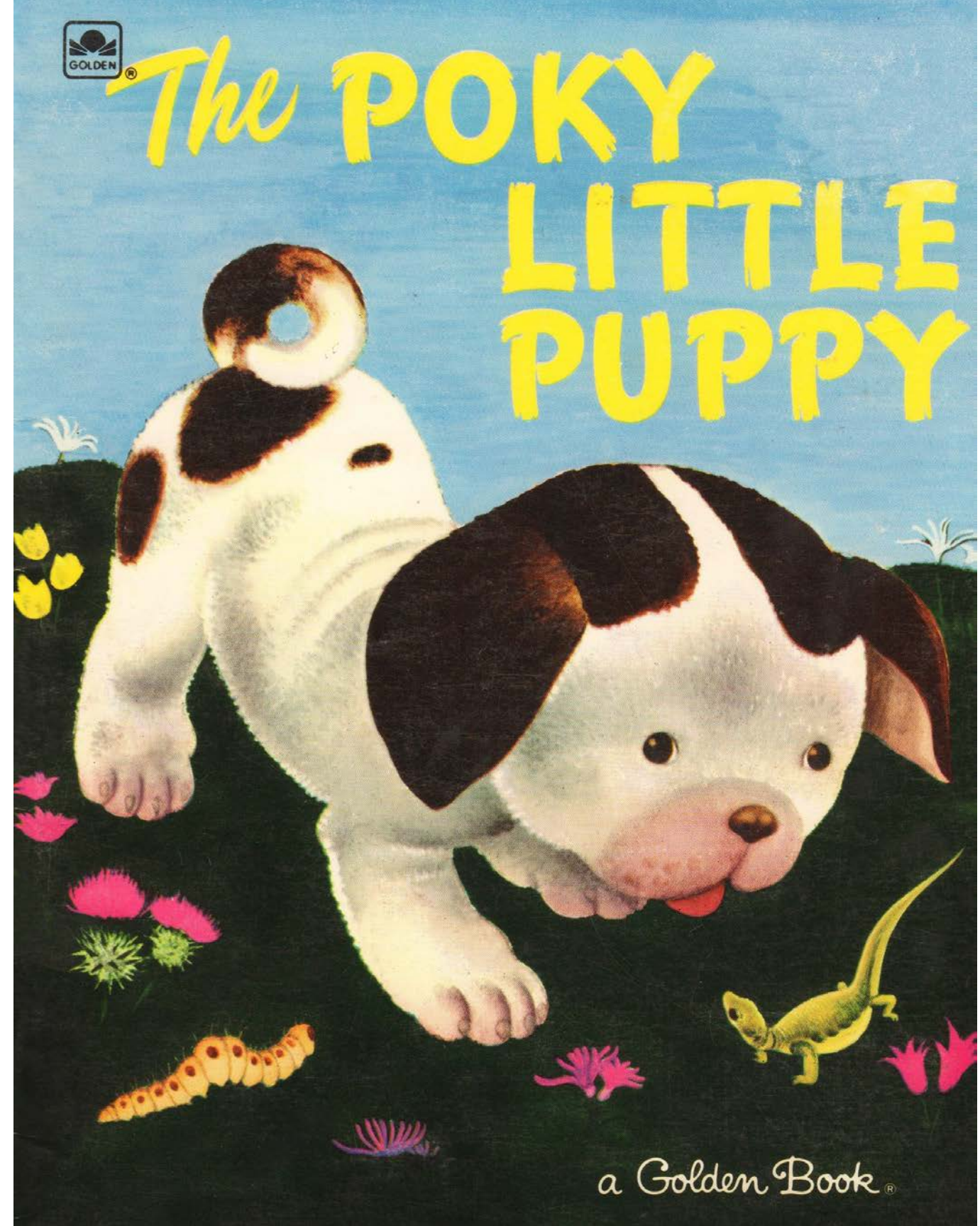
"Pinocchio Concept Painting" 1938

Work Examples

"Thumbelina Cover" 1953 for Little Golden Books.
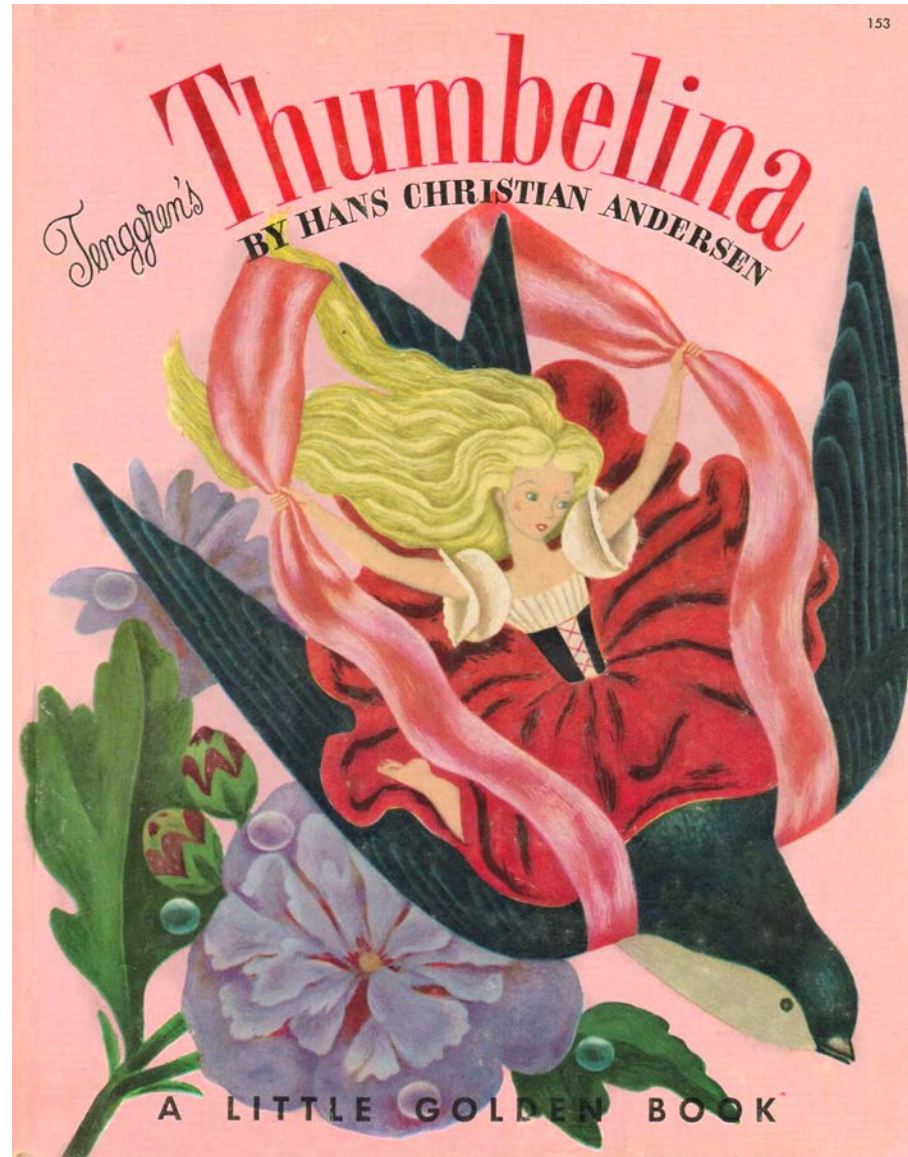
(*Left*)   *"The Poky Little Puppy" from 1942 is one of the best selling children's books of all time. By 2000, it had sold over 15 million copies. Gustaf created the cover as well as illustrated the book.*

"The Red Shaw" by Dean Cornwell. 1921

Bill Mauldin

Born: October 29, 1921

Died: January 22, 2003

From: Mountain Park, New Mexico

In 1941, American entered in World War 2. Times were hard for everyone, and people looked to the new forms of media to help them better understand their situation. People read the newspaper and listened to the radio to get the facts about the war, but they also wanted to understand it in a more personal way. That's where cartoonists like Bill Mauldin come in.

Bill was hired by the soldier's magazine Stars and Stripes to document the soldier's experience on the frontlines. The comics followed two ordinary soldiers, Willie and Joe, and their everyday lives and struggles. The subject matter was often brutally honest, meaning that it didn't hold back in what it showed. Bill was opinionated, and some people didn't like that. Some people only wanted positive messages about the war. But it was important to Bill to tell the truth, and show people what being a solider was actually like.

War is very serious and often sad, and Bill combined this saddness with his humor. *Irony,* which is when someone says the opposite of what they mean in order to make a point, is something you'll find in a lot of Bill's comics. For instance, the caption of the cartoon to the right is "Fresh, sprited American troops, flushed with victory, are bringing in thousands of hungry, ragged, battle-weary prisoners." Do you see the irony in that statement?

Bill's cartoons were a comfort to soldiers, who saw themselves in the characters Bill created.

Work Examples

This cartoon has no original caption. Bill once said that this was one of his favorite drawings that he made.

(Left)   *"Remember that warm, soft mud last summer?"* Bill Mauldin,
Stars and Stripes magazine.

EXPERIMENTATION
1950-1970

Experimentation Everywhere

After World War 2, people were a bit shook up. Lots of men and women went off to war, and not all of them came home. Those who did come home were usually hurt, either physically or mentally. Most people felt confused or lost. Combat had resulted in destruction all across Europe, and many people felt that the old way of doing things didn't work anymore. The world had changed again, for better or worse.

In America, the end of the war meant that the economy was booming. People were going back to work, and they worked a lot. Young people were getting married, buying houses, and having kids. In fact, they had so many kids, the children of World War 2 veterans are known as "Baby Boomers" since there were so many children born at that time. The economic boom meant that Americans suddenly had a lot of extra cash. Companies understood this, which lead to what is known today as the "Golden Age of Advertising."

Besides buying things and having kids, people were enjoying new music, new fashion, traveling, and higher levels of education. The Baby Boomer generation continued to push the boundaries of social norms. They wanted more freedom, and they were (and many still are) passionate about civil rights. Issues like racism, sexism, and LGBTQ rights came to a head in the 1960s. People were asking tough questions, and the art world reflected all of this.
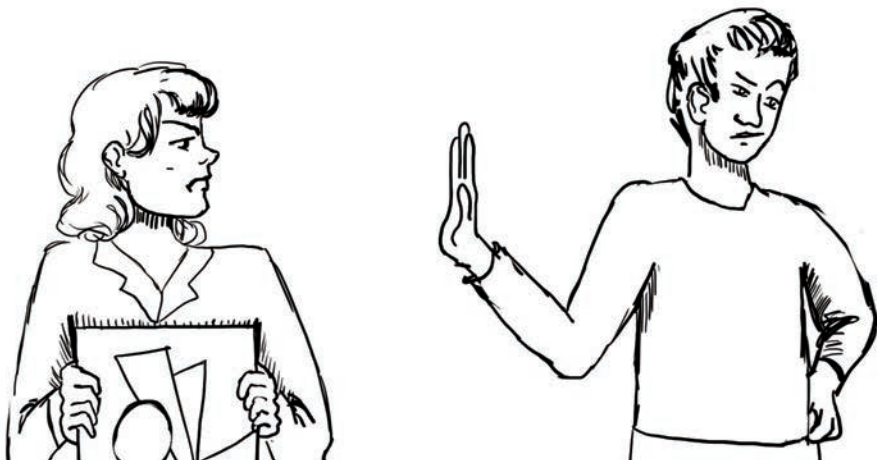
Lorraine Fox

Born: *May 22, 1922*

Died: *March 26, 1976*

From: *Brooklyn, New York*

Even in this world of social change, some things still don't change fast enough. For Lorraine Fox, this meant that she was dealing with the same stigma—unfair reputation—that artists like Elizabeth Shippen Green had to deal with. There were still people out there that viewed women's art as being inferior to men's, just because a woman made it. Thankfully, Lorraine wasn't trying to make it all other own. Growing up, she got support from her brother, Gill Fox, who was an artist himself. And from her mother, who worked a hard job cleaning houses in order to pay for her to attend art school.

Lorraine started off working in advertising, creating illustrations for magazines like *Good Housekeeping* and Cosmopolitan. But as life went on and she became successful, she began to create more personal work that was more meaningful to her.

The world of commerical illustration was (and still is) a competitive one. Lorraine's style stood out from the competition, allowing her to stand out from the crowd. This kind of work is simplier than the art a lot of other people were making at the same time. Later on in her career, Lorraine's style would become looser, and more complex.

"Swing Set" by Lorraine Fox. Date unknown

Work Examples

"Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream" illustration for a record cover, 1959. This is a great example of how Lorraine's style changed when she started working on less "commerical" projects and she had more freedom to do what she wanted.

(Right)   "Woman Baking," illustration from 1956.

*Poster advertising a concert at Fillmore West,
Wes Wilson 1966.*

Milton Glaser

Born: June 26, 1929

Died: June 26, 2020

From: New York, New York

If you are lucky enough to think of a good idea, there is a chance that someone might copy it. One person who's ideas get copied a lot is man named Milton Glaser, who designed the famous "I Love New York" logo. Milton designed this logo to help get more people interested in visiting New York City, and it has become one of the most iconic logos in the world. Everybody has seen it. Which is why so many people have copied it, making their own versions.

It was around this time that Graphic Design was becoming an important part of the advertising industry. Graphic Design is the art of putting together images, typography, and big ideas in order to send a clear message. Of course, people had been creating beautiful images and telling big stories with type long before Milton came around. But he had a way of doing things that was unlike anyone else before him.

Milton got the idea for the "I Love New York" logo while riding in a taxi. He quickly sketched the idea out on a napkin before finishing it when he got back to his office.

You can buy a lot of merchandise with the "I Love NY" logo on it. Things like t-shirts, mugs, bags, snowglobes, and even salt and pepper shakers!

Work Examples

"Poppy Gives Thanks," 1969. The poster is an example of "Glaser Stencil," a font designed by Milton that was featured in many of his works.

(Left)   *"Dylan" 1966. This poster is almost as well-known as the "I Love NY" logo. It was included in the 1967 album "Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits."*

Brian Froud

Born: May 6, 1947

From: Winchester, United Kingdom

When life gets difficult, sometimes it's fun to escape into a new world. A fantasy world is full of possibilities. Those possibilities include wonderful things like fairies, magic, flying ships, swords and sorcerers; anything you can imagine. At this time, people were enjoying books and movies that explored these possibilities and more. Books like The Lord of the Rings and movies like Star Wars and The Never-ending Story tapped into people's wildest imaginations.

And one person who helped inspire the fantastical worlds like the ones of *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth* was a man named Brian Froud. Brian's illustrations helped to inspire the look of these films. His art helped to define the appearance of the sets, costumes, special effects, and characters. From here, a new kind of illustration emerged: concept art.

Brian's art is often highly detailed, which helps make it seem like his characters live in a totally different world from our own. These worlds that Brian creates seem like worlds that we could find ourselves wandering around in. His paintings are often a little bit dark. Not scary, but just a little bit mysterious.

"Go West!" 1976

Work Examples

"Three Headed Man Fantasy Illustration" 1973.

"Gwenhwyfar" date unknown. This charcter is a common one in Welsh and British folklore. She was the wife of King Arthur and Queen of the Faeries.

TECHNOLOGY &
INCLUSIVITY
1980- PRESENT

Art for Everyone

After decades of the illustration industry growing and changing with the times, it seems like it is finally ready for the most important change so far: inclusivity. From the beginning, artists have struggled to find their place in a world that only cared about the work of a select few. We've seen a little bit of this in this book so far. But the fight for representation doesn't end with women. The art of people of color and other minorities has consistently been pushed to the sidelines. The quest to make the art world a safe place for everyone continues to this day, and there's still a lot to do.

Remember back in the beginning of this book, when we talked about how changing technology shifted the course of art history, making way for a new type of artist? Well, we've seen that happen again in recent years. Technology has changed the way people think about and approach art. And this time, it was tech that you're probably a bit more familiar with: the computer.

In 1984, Apple released their Macintosh, one of the first personal computers. In 1987, a company called Adobe created a design software called Illustrator. Shortly after that, Adobe purchased the license for another computer program, called Photoshop. These inventions all lead to a new digital revolution in illustration. Personal computers and design software allowed artists to create brand-new art styles, using brand-new techniques.
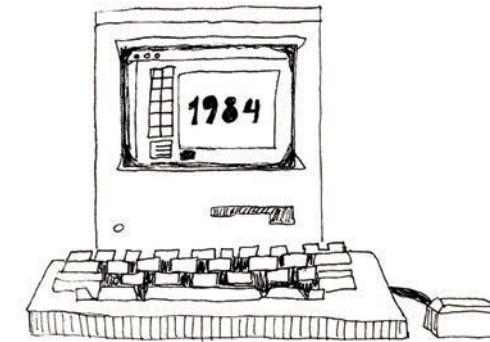
Some people were scared that digital art would destroy the working artist, since it enabled anyone to create art if they wanted to. They thought, if you can make art on a computer, what's the use in doing things the old way? They thought that all the traditions that made the world of illustration great would go away.

Turns out, they were wrong. Computers didn't kill the art world, they just expanded it. Just the same as it has been for the last 120 years, with each new generation comes new ideas, each one bigger and more exciting than the last.
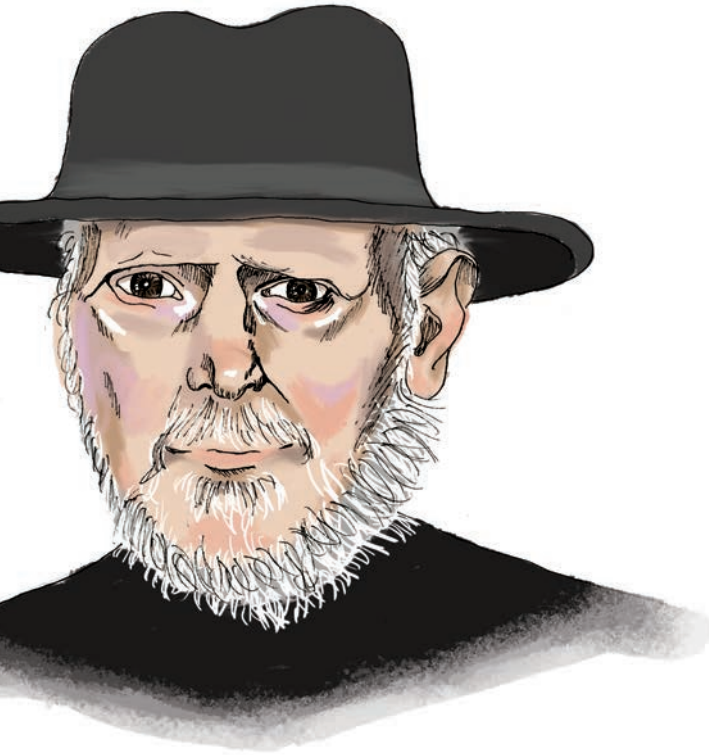
Frank Miller

Born: January 27, 1957

From: Olney, Maryland

Comic books: even if you don't read them, you're probably familiar with the stories and characters within them. The most famous ones are heroes like Superman and Batman, or villains like the Joker or Lex Luther. The tradition started in the 1930s with Superman, and continued throughout the rest of the 20th century. Many people loved comic books, but some people thought that comics were a waste of time. They didn't see the art in comics as "real art," they didn't take it seriously. They just thought comic books were for kids.

That started to change in the 1980s and 90s, thanks in part to a man named Frank Miller. Frank was not only a comic book inker (meaning he's responsible for penciling in and adding all the black outlines to the artwork) but he also wrote a lot of comics. His books, which were eventually called graphic novels, took a more serious approach to storytelling. Books like *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Sin City*, and *300* continue to influence artists to this day. Many of his works have also been adapted into movies and TV shows. He helped people see that comics could be more than just silly stories, they could be important works of art in their own right.
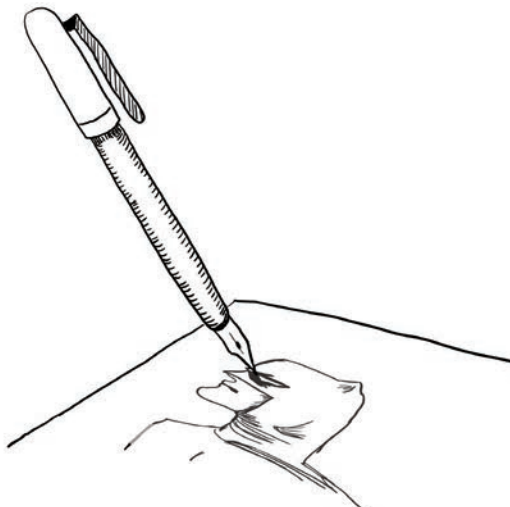
Frank likes to use strong contrast (light and dark) in his art in order to create a sense of drama. This suits the kind of stories that Frank likes to tell. His comics are often dark, serious, violent, and sometimes sad. His characters often fall into a "morally gray" area, meaning that they don't act like typical heroes or villians.

Just like in all illustration, everything about how the images are made to look serves a certain purpose. For Frank, the way he draws serves to help tell the story as much as the words do.

"Batman: The Dark Knight Returns" front cover. 1986

Work Examples

Cover art for "Batman: The Dark Knight Returns" issue #3. 1986

(Left)   *Promotion art for "The Big Fat Kill" 1994*
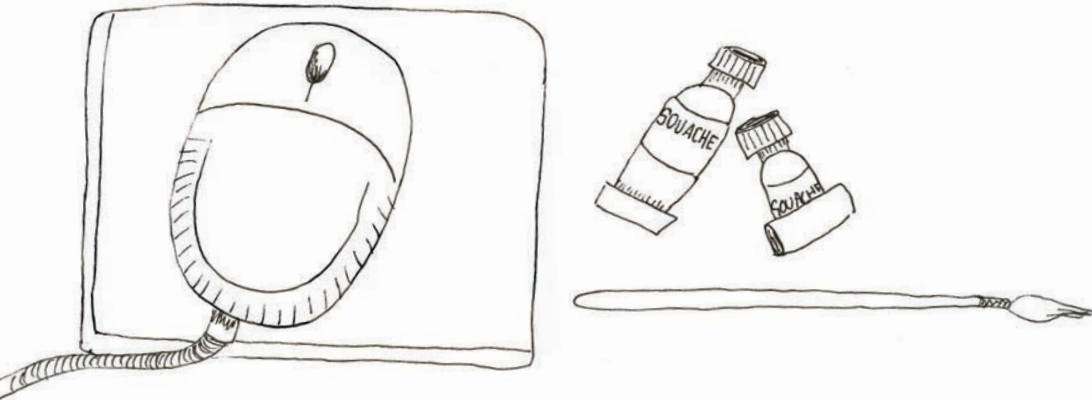
Nancy Stahl

Born: 1951

From: Long Island, New York

With new technology comes the opportunity to be the first to try something completely different. In the world of illustration, the big new thing was vector illustration. Vector illustration is made on the computer with programs like Adobe Illustrator. Images are created using mathematical points, which are tracked by the computer. The software allows for a level of control and precision that never been seen before. An early adopter of this technique was a woman named Nancy Stahl.

Nancy started off her career working with gouache, a painting medium that is useful in creating bright, flat fields of color. Nancy loved the effect that gouache had, but she discovered that vector illustration did an even better job at creating the look she was after for her work. Artists like Nancy show that in the world of illustration, you have to adaptable and open to change if you want to succeed.

In 2003, Nancy created a series of stamp designs for the United States Postal Service (USPS.) She was tasked with creating animal designs, which is a subject matter she was not familar with at the time. But, like usual, Nancy was able to be adaptable. She pushed herself to learn about a new topic in order to improve and grow her skills.

"Egret" stamp design for the United States Postal Service. 2003

Knowledge of both digital and traditional mediums is necessary for modern illustrators.

Work Examples

Illustration for Co-Ed: Security Management Magazine.

"Coyote" Poster to benefit Nature Bridge

*"Eddie Bauer Catalog Cover", Mark English 1982*

Anna & Elena Balbusso

From: Milan, Italy

In the past, where you lived had a big impact on the job you could do. Different places have different opportunities available. For instance, if you wanted to work in advertising, you would probably move to New York City in order to get a job. Today, we live in a world where you can work as an illustrator from anywhere, with the help of the internet. Twin sisters Elena and Anna Balbusso prove this.

Elena and Anna are book illustrators from Milan, Italy. And they produce work for the international publishing company Tor Books. Their artwork is often featured on the company website tor.com, accompanying the science fiction and fantasy stories published by Tor. Where the sisters live has nothing to do with their ability to find work as illustrators. And it shows that now, more than ever, anyone anywhere can be and illustrator if they want to.
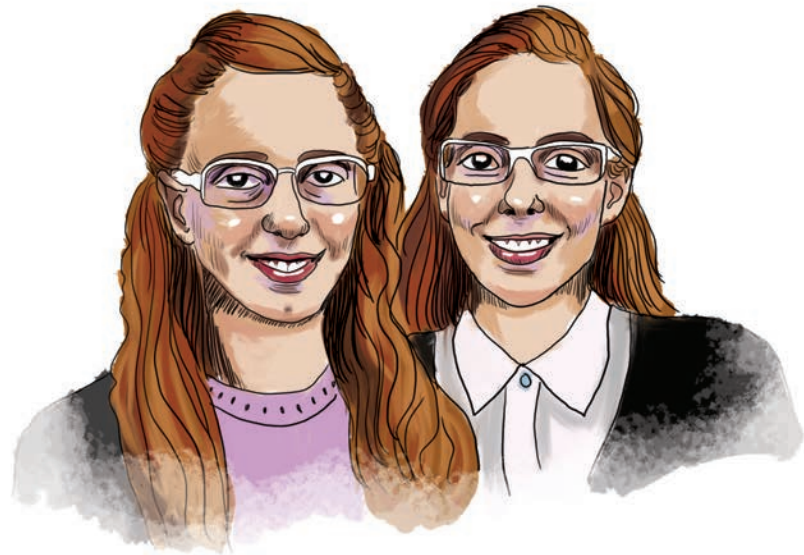
Cover art for the novel "The Goblin Emperor" 2014. Tor Publishing

Work Examples
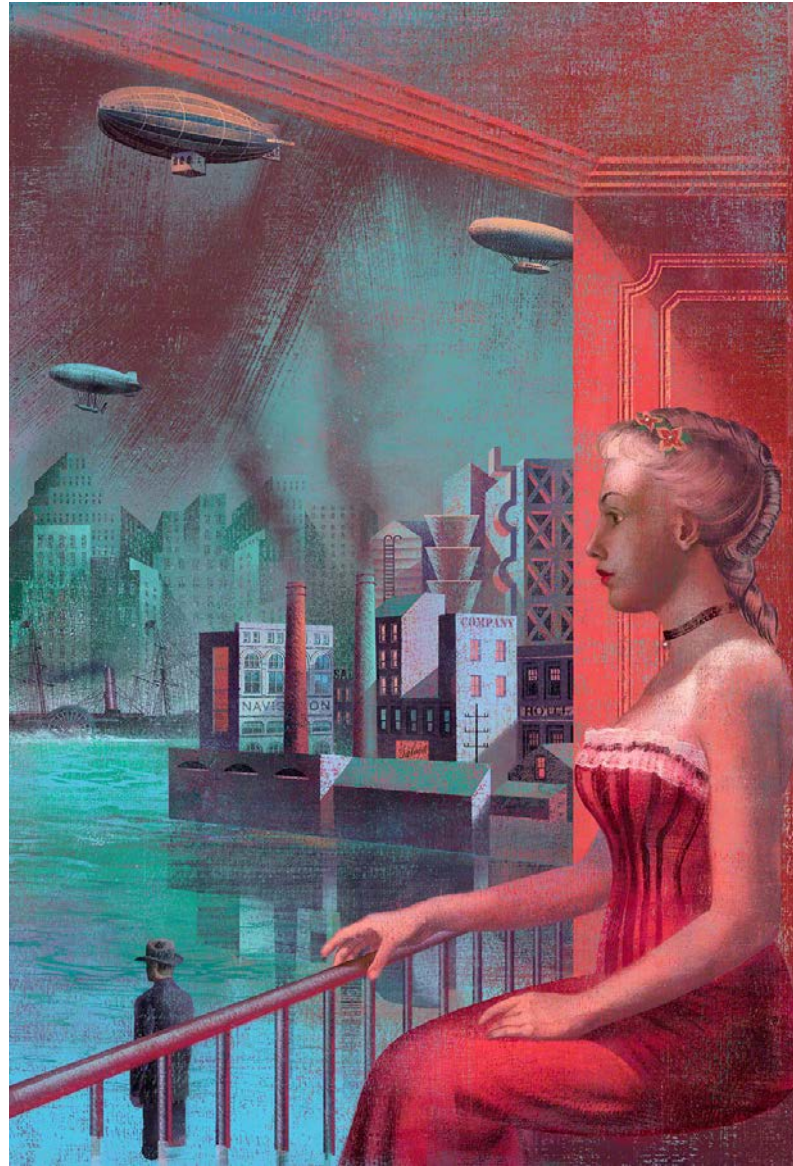
"Karen Memory" 2015. This illustration accompanied the story of the same name on the Tor Publishing *website.*

(Right)   Cover art for "Sisters of the Cresent Empress" 2017, Tor Publishing

"Men Reading" J.C Leyendecker, 1914

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