

the DANCE



Notes: Reflections & Process

BY ZOE TAYLOR

The exuberant fashion drawings of the Chinese illustrator **JIAKUANG** meshrise with their rich colours, dynamic forms and fondness for pattern and detail. Rendering her work in vivid watercolour, she will happily paint her models deep green or magenta if it helps to electrify an image and she seems to enjoy depicting their trainers with special attention to detail.

Her characters bend as if made of rubber and she playfully distorts them, giving them large, dreamy eyes, long, muscular necks, broad shoulders and tiny, spindly hands. Emphasising the muscular curves in their elongated legs and arms, she bestows her characters – the men, in particular – with a sense of elegant voluptuousness. It's this, perhaps, along with her interest in male beauty and a lyrical sensibility, which explains why her work is so popular with men's magazines.

Although she is a recent graduate of Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia, her work has already appeared in the Chinese editions of publications such as **Q, ELLE MEN** and **PHM**, as well as in European magazines such as **NUMERO HOMME, DAZED & CONFUSED** and the Scandinavian gay lifestyle magazine **DORIAN**.

Finding her work "a breath of fresh air", Richard Kirroy recently commissioned her to make exclusive new work for **DECOY**, his limited edition publication devoted solely to menswear fashion illustration.

Interpreting looks from the Spring/Summer 2015 (SS15) and Autumn/Winter 2015 (AW14) collections, she selected designers who are celebrated for their progressive, eccentric or youth-subculture obsessed approaches. In every case, she invented her own models. Drawing the opening look from J.W. Anderson SS15, she poetically referenced the bucolic themes of the collection by showing the model dancing, eyes closed, among giant leaves and flowers. For Look 15 of Thom Browne's SS15 collection – a padded jacket and short ensemble with butterfly appliques sewn on to long socks and a Thunderbirds-inspired cap – she avoided the collection's references to the 1982 sci-fi film **TRON**, instead situating the character in a contemporary urban setting (a gallery or a store, for example, with vibrant, black-and-white graphics that intensify the dynamism of the outfit's stripes). For Sankianz AW14, she showed the clothes on wildly dancing clubbers in an image so loaded with movement and detail that it almost becomes abstract. The eye is eventually anchored by the pixelated head designs on a pair of Sankianz's oversized baggy shorts.



Sankianz: AW14 for DECOY vol. 5, 2015



DECOY
JIAKUWAN

Illustrator

BRIEF: I created four images interpreting established looks from the menswear spring/summer 2015 collection of JW Anderson. Reinterpreting the iconic 'Bomber' and the autumn/winter 2014 collection of Saint Laurent.

MATERIALS: Watercolour on paper.

RESEARCH: I was listening to FKA twigs intensively at that time. So naturally I looked into dance moves of performers, particularly Jaden Smith and Tyler the Creator. I always like to inject the images with aspects of youth culture. It's almost like a ritual that I browse through archives of pictures featuring skaters and people at dance parties that I've collected.

PROCESS: After I've found the image references that I'm content with, I put them in one folder and look at them back and forth to read the mood. Then I scan the images back into Photoshop. It will take me a few days usually about an hour or two. I'll have the feeling that everything is in the right place with the right posture from which clothes are displayed at the proper angle. Finally I will move on to colour the line work traced from the previous sketches.

RESISTANCES: What I would perceive as a challenge is to come up with different narratives for the four looks I selected. I'd imagine myself working on a fashion magazine editorial where I will do the casting and set design and taking photos except styling the look. For this project the characters I created are a Jamaican boy calling to reggae tunes (J. Anderson), a homesick student (Jad Smith), a boy posing in front of walls of graffiti, posters (Thomas Brown) and teenagers being themselves at EDM parties.

INSIGHT: Ethnic models interest me. And I noticed it seems to be a rarity to feature ethnicity in fashion illustrations. So, this time I 'cast' black models. I find body language, proportions and skin tones utterly beautiful and enjoyable to illustrate.

DISTRACTIONS: Doing research browsing images is most fun and distracting for me. I get carried away far from what I'm supposed to watch and learn. But it's not too late to come back after taking an inspirational detour with more ideas stocked.

NUMBERS: 11. In November 2014 I moved to a new house and the first project I did is this one. I completed all the sketches while sitting on the floor before I purchased a chair and desk.

PLAY: Be inquisitive and young at heart and draw as many boys as I wish.

jiaakuwan@nublr.com
Decoy 3 is available now at richardkelly.com



Thomas Brown SS15 for DECOY vol 5, 2015



J.W. Anderson SS15 for DECOY vol 5, 2015

CREATING the SPACE of PLAY



BEN STOPHER, Programme Director Interactive & Visual Communication at the LCC and **ANDREW KULMAN**, Professor of Graphic Art at Birmingham City University champion the value of play in education

ANDREW KULMAN
Nicholas Rawling and Imogen Charnson from the experimental workshop Paper Cinema believe that getting the best results comes from letting go of the perfectionist mind to freedom the aesthetic. Paper Cinema are regular visitors to Illustration at Birmingham City University's School of Visual Communication, where their approach to finding creative solutions derives from the immediacy of working with hands, something Charnson believes is lost in the 'digital age'.

As Director of Illustration Studies I needed to develop more opportunities for students to learn by doing, immersive workshops where experiences remain long after the event has passed. I asked colleagues, Richard Schofield, Jan Docks and Jo Newman to see if they could bring in individuals or collectives who would offer imaginative and collaborative workshops. I would offer them a brief and challenge one day narratives with the students. Fabric, Lenny enabling us to create cardboard worlds and Frances Harlech getting recent students to realise their own imaginary journeys from paint and mud. Paper Cinema go that bit further; they make films with the students in a day, from the seed of an idea to finished product. Rawling believes the immersive nature of the workshop is due to the short pace, there's no time to be saved, decisions have to be made, the turn-around has to be quick. It has long been proven that the most effective way of transmitting knowledge is by allowing the learner to actively participate in solving practical problems, at BCU this has been realized through experimentation and exploration.

As we see over and over again, with the need to embed collaboration into the curriculum in art colleges it becomes important to find ways of doing this that doesn't feel like an imposed one-way lesson. This is where Paper Cinema provide a perfect answer: "Illustration is very singular form of expression so the tasks within the workshop allows for 'collaboration,'" observes Rawling. A typical lecturer could be an Inquisitive Corpse exercise, this is a new way to break rules and shows how rules are broken in a creative manner.

The intellectual and practical tools given to students have proven very beneficial for the course and we're finding these same students start to show a confidence to not hold back and challenge conventional approaches.

Founded in 2004 by Nicholas Rawling, Imogen Charnson and Christopher Reed, The Paper Cinema perform a unique blend of live animation and music, which continues to tour around Britain and Internationally.
http://papercinema.com

BEN STOPHER
The internet tells me that to *play* is to 'engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose.' While this definition captures some of what I consider important about the concept of *play*, it misses much. An aspect of this definition that to me, up close, appears hollow, is the idea that play is not attached to serious purpose. The idea that play is not attached to serious purpose from serious purpose offends ideals of creative practice here.

The second way in which the standard definition falls short is that it does not address the purpose of play in a creative educational context. The act of play in this context is fundamentally to do with the explicit production of a kind of space integral to the creative process. A great analogy – that is not mine – is to liken this kind of play to the kind of play in the steering wheel of your car, i.e. a free, non-prescribed movement without explicit consequence. This sense of play starts to speak to the kind of creative space that the act of play in creative practice seeks to create.

These additional conceptions of play start to describe why play has become both a thing and a word increasingly valued by creative educators. The production of space, an individual's sense of ownership, and the freedom to act in that space in a way that focuses consideration of the motives for such situations is an important tool in sustaining developmental creative practice.

At London College of Communication, LCC, both the undergraduate and postgraduate Illustration courses are intentionally co-located in a programme community with provision both in games and interaction design. These courses provide the illustration subject here with methods and tools to both value and design play of various kinds. What is most apparent in this exchange is that in creative practice play takes many forms and serves many purposes all central to the development of contemporary creative practice.



Top left: BCU Above: LCC