

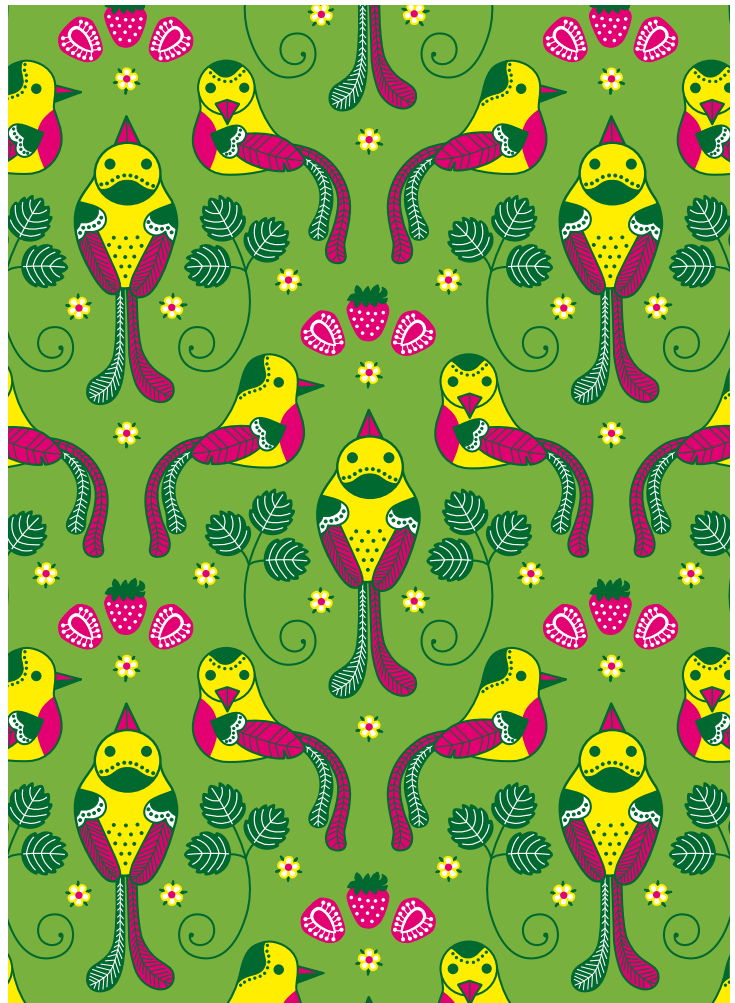
The digital route

Open College of the Arts student and graphic designer **Kati Meden** explains how she uses vector graphics in her illustrations

Digital illustration offers me many design options: I can vary colour, shape and width of lines, position the individual elements, reduce, enlarge, rotate and mirror them. I can delete elements or duplicate them. Other programme tools help to order elements, for example if I want to specify an identical distance between several elements.

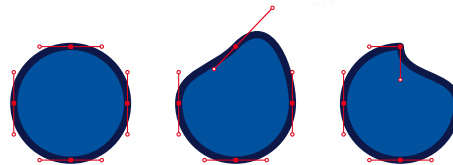
Learning to draw using a vector graphics editor was part of my training as a graphic designer. My approach to illustration has been shaped by my work in graphic design. I illustrate in the same way I would draw logos. My drawings look very simple and clean, without shading, light and shadow for example.

These are the steps I follow to create a vector drawing. My first idea is usually a traditional pencil sketch in my sketchbook or on a sheet of paper. I create separate detailed drawings for more complex forms like plants or animals. I scan these sketches and import them into my editor. Then I paste the drawing into a background layer and trace it digitally with the tools available to me in the editor. The mouse controls a digital pen that can be used to set individual points. When a new point is set, the editor creates a line to the previous point. I use this for all the elements until the picture is finished.



Pankow Patterns: Bird & Strawberry

The Pankow Patterns were developed during a class on botanical painting and drawing at an art school in Pankow, Berlin. The bird is based on a small figurine brought to class by our teacher. I assembled my drawings into a little pattern booklet.



Drawing with vectors

If the digital line does not correspond precisely to the pencil sketch or if I don't like the digital drawing for other reasons (this is frequently the case), I can correct it. I can either move the points of the outline and position them differently, or I can change how the line runs through a certain point by changing the position of the adjustment handles attached to each point.

Closed forms are composed of an outline and an interior area. I can colour each one independently, or I can deactivate them, creating interior

Focus on: Landscape with stars

“I often find inspiration for my free projects in childhood memories combined with adult experiences, often in nature. I would describe my style as naïve, ornamental and sometimes folklorist. Landscape With Stars was created as part commission and part free work, and used as the cover for a recording by the musician Ian D Hawgood. There was no detailed briefing, but there was, however, the title of the recording and the music. The musician gave me free rein in regard to the design. The result is a blend of a visual interpretation of the name Tents and Hills and the associations I had when listening to his music.”



■ I enjoy drawing plants that have medicinal uses. Even if I do not depict the plants' purpose explicitly, because the central idea is – on the surface – a different one, I like to send them along with my protagonists, so that they are protected on their journey, sleep well and can dream deeply, for example by using mugwort



■ I saw the musicians as a little boy spending the night outdoors. Because the music sounds ethereal, I created a connection between earth and sky. I love to depict different seasons or times of day in one picture to hint at processes of change



Hulda Rose and Hulda Circle

I created the two images Hulda Rose and Hulda Circle at a time when I was interested in the cycles of the year and in female archetypes in mythology.

areas without contours or vice versa. Keeping the interior area transparent is also possible. I can also adjust the width of the stroke, give it the appearance of a calligraphy pen or a brushstroke, or change it into a dotted line.

In the next step I assemble the detailed illustrations into a composition. While doing so I can change the size of the area used, which corresponds to the paper format I will print it on, and the positioning of the elements, for example moving them from the background to the foreground and vice versa.

Between the individual steps I frequently print my illustrations to check my results as a way of seeing what needs to be improved on. I add corrections with a pencil and sometimes



also some other elements, scan the printout again, place it under the digital drawing and then add the corrections made by hand to the digital image. I repeat these steps until I am happy with the elements and their arrangement and with the finished picture.

Most of the time a dedicated colour scheme develops alongside the drawing. Mixing the colours is similar to mixing colours with a brush and real colour. There are books with many different colour references that help me to match colours. Vector editors also have colour palettes with a limited choice of colours for those who don't want to mix their own. Usually I upload finished pictures to print-on-demand platforms so that



Biography

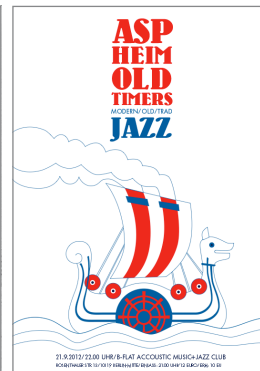
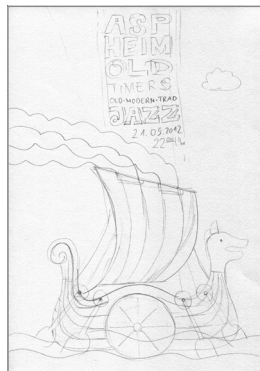
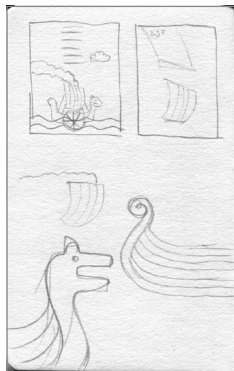
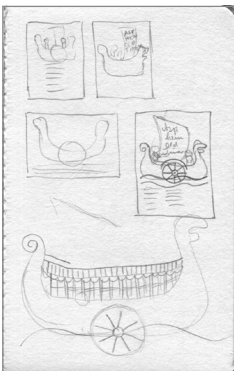
Kati Meden is a self-employed graphic designer from Berlin, and student at the Open College of the Arts. She owns the graphic design office goYippi design (www.goyippi.net) with her husband. Her independent projects can be viewed on www.katimedden.net.

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people can buy them as posters or greeting cards.

Sometimes parts of my free work also end up in projects commissioned by one of my graphic design customers. A unicorn escaped into my designs for a chain of bistros, a drawing of the Hindu deity Ganesha adorns a bottle label for chai syrup, and tasty fruits have found their way onto printed menus, muesli bars or smoothie labels. ●



Poster design: progressive steps in the creation of a concert poster for the Norwegian jazz band Aspheim Oldtimers as an exercise for Kati's online study module Illustration 1 at the Open College of the Arts.