

Currents of Illustration

T.M. Detwiler—freelance illustrator/designer and former editorial art director of *Rolling Stone* and *Popular Science*—shares insights on the times and tides in editorial design.

by Allison Malafronte



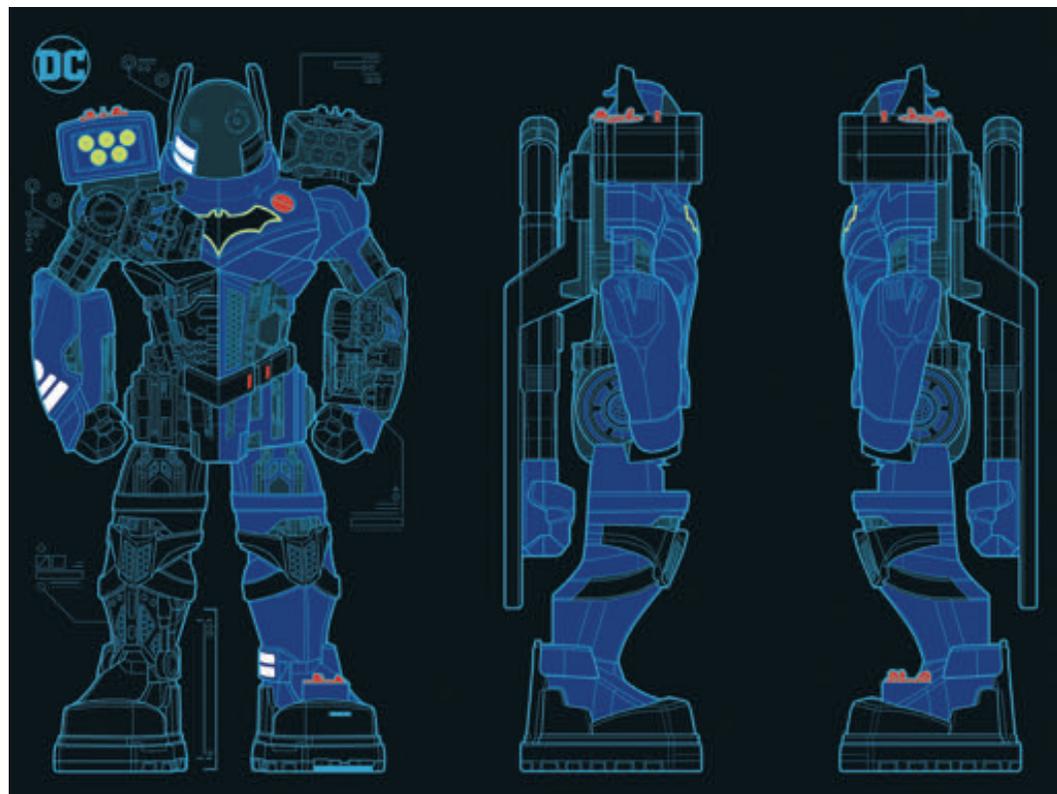
ESPN

ESPN commissioned Detwiler to create this illustration for its 2014 College Football Preview package of materials. The publisher used it digitally within the package and to promote the package online.



GOLF DIGEST

Illustrations for exercises and technical/medical subjects provide regular commissions for Detwiler. This one for the article "Exercises for Back Pain" appeared in the March 2017 issue of *Golf Digest*.



FISHER-PRICE

Detwiler battled a tight deadline for this detailed packaging illustration for the Fisher-Price BatBox—which was needed for the unveiling of a new toy at the May 2017 San Diego ComicCon.

If you were an American artist during the turn of the 20th century, you were likely employed in the field of illustration. With a newly empowered and quickly expanding print media, creating illustrations for magazines, books and commercial companies was one of the most consistent and lucrative careers around. The Golden Age of Illustration continued in print until the proliferation of photography made glossy images and creative photo shoots the editorial norm. By the new millennium, digital imagery dominated both print and digital media, and traditional art illustration played only a marginal role in magazine and book design.

Today, as an overabundance of digital imagery and information reaches a tipping point, traditional imagery is making a reappearance in print. Art directors are inviting portraits and paintings to live alongside the modern image, and illustrators are finding new ways to marry tradition and technology in their artwork. T.M. Detwiler—an artist, graphic designer and illustrator who has also held art director positions in publishing—is eminently qualified to speak to the changing tides of editorial design, the merits of both tradition and technology in illustration, and the artistic skills required to direct readers' experiences in a highly visual way.

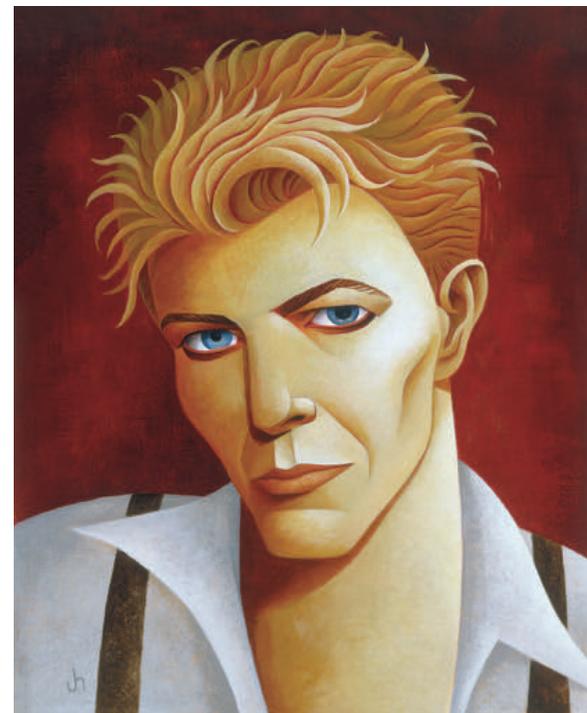
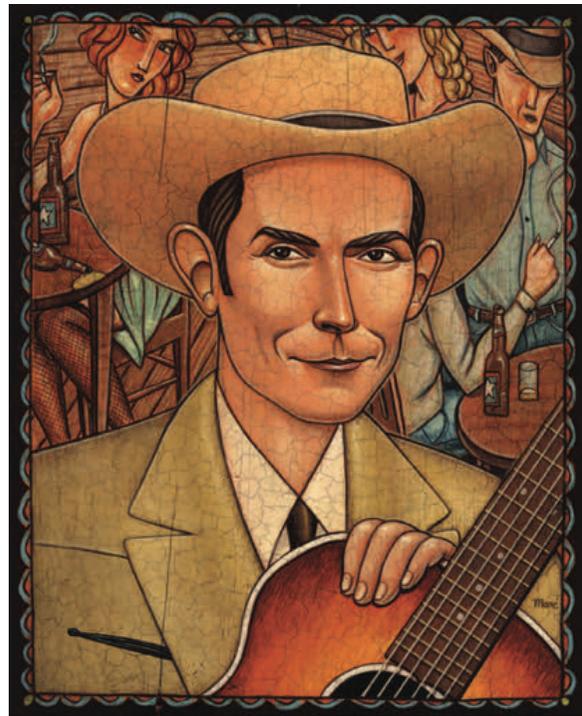
WHY ILLUSTRATION?

"As an editorial art director," says Detwiler, who has held that position with *Rolling Stone* and *Popular Science* magazines, "your job is to make the various elements of the book—editorial, typography, artwork, photography—come together in the most visually engaging way possible while communicating a cohesive message and story. In most cases, you're working with the editorial director, creative director and freelance photographers to direct photo shoots, come up with clever and creative themes to issues, and commission illustrations for the editorial well and departments."

Detwiler explains that illustrators are hired when there's a need for an image that, for one reason or another, does not exist. In the early days of print media, artists were hired to illustrate everything from news stories to product advertisements to entertainment editorial. Today the need for illustration is more targeted. Sometimes an illustrator is hired to create a novel portrait of a well-known personality, as in *Rolling Stone's* 2005 Immortals issue, for which Detwiler and his team commissioned 50 top illustrators to create portraits of the 50 greatest musicians and bands of all time (see Four All-Time Greats, page 10). Other times, an illustration completes a story that's lacking important journalistic information or imagery. For instance, when

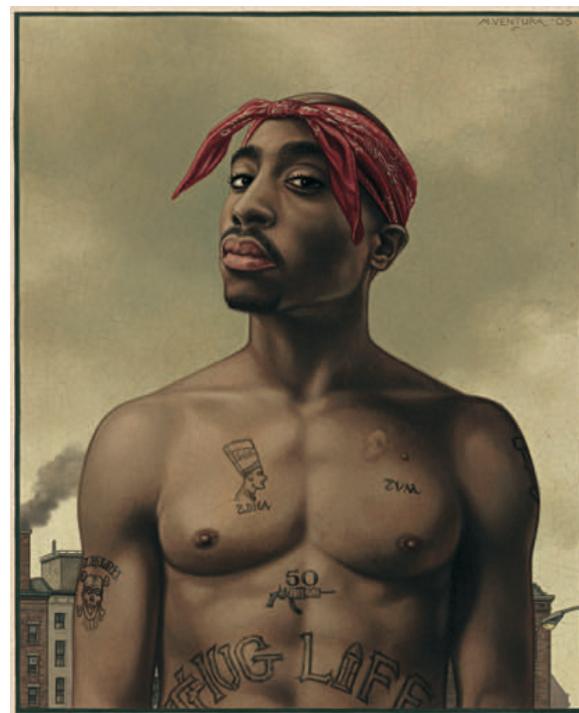
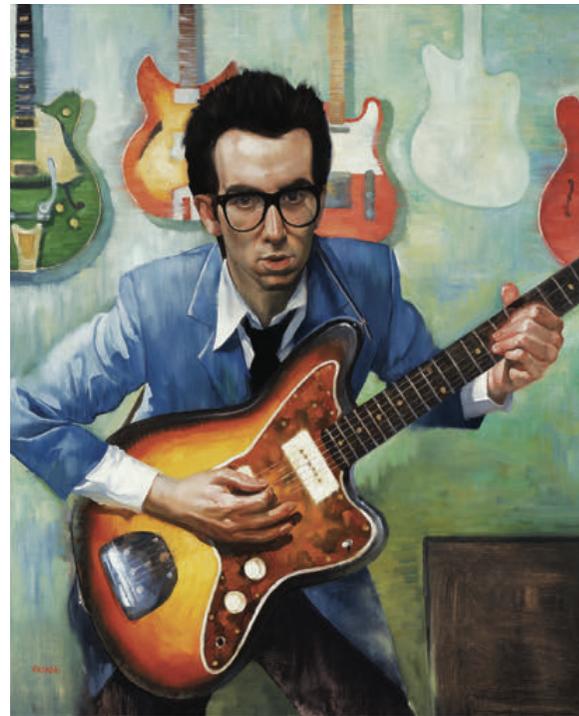
FOUR ALL-TIME GREATS

Below are four of the 50 musicians depicted by notable illustrators for *Rolling Stone's* May 2005 Immortals issue.



CLOCKWISE
Hank Williams
by Marc Burckhardt
originally painted in acrylic and
oil on wood

Elvis Costello
by Roberto Parada
originally painted in oil on linen



Tupac Shakur
by Marco Ventura
originally painted in oil on panel

David Bowie
by Jody Hewgill
originally painted in acrylic
on gessoed ragboard



POPULAR SCIENCE 1
Illustrator Marc Burckhardt's play on a butcher's diagram lends a light note to a *Popular Science* article on edible insects.

POPULAR SCIENCE 2
Illustrator Chris Koehler referenced Rorschach inkblots in an evocative illustration for a March 2014 *Popular Science* article on military-related PTSD.

Detwiler and his team were working on a story of a major train crash in 2005 for *Popular Science* magazine and photographs were not yet available, they had to rely on an illustrator to translate the information they did have into an image that visually told the story. Most often, an illustrator is hired in an intentional design strategy to ensure that the imagery throughout the book is varied. "If you have a magazine full of photography, and then suddenly you turn the page and there's a hand-drawn or digital illustration, most likely, the reader is going to pause," Detwiler says.

When hiring illustrators, Detwiler looks for highly skilled artists who can adapt their style to meet the vision and needs of the publication. He has hired artists working in a range of styles and techniques and says there's still a contingent of artists working in traditional media. "Although the majority of illustration is digital today, we do have illustrators working with graphite, charcoal, pen-and-ink and watercolor," he says. "*Rolling Stone* was a great champion of traditional illustration. Jann Wenner, the publisher when I worked there, was a huge fan of painting and illustration and ended up buying all 50 portraits from the Immortals issue and hanging them in our office."



MELDING SKILL SETS

As an in-demand freelance editorial illustrator himself for the last 10 years—working for such marquee clients

as ESPN, *Time*, *The New York Times* and *Men's Journal*, Detwiler specializes in vector illustration, which uses digitally rendered and interconnected shapes, points, arcs and lines to make an image (see illustrations on pages 8, 9 and 12). "These images are ideal for print because they're produced digitally and finished as high-resolution digital files that are infinitely scalable," he says. "Stylistically, these images are a bit more modern and are great for magazines looking for informational graphics with a computer-generated feel. They can take on a more hand-drawn appearance with the addition of filters or lines, or be re-proportioned using an editing program similar to CAD."

Today Detwiler works in InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator software, but he was trained in QuarkXPress while earning his bachelor of fine arts degree in communication design from Kutztown University, in Pennsylvania.

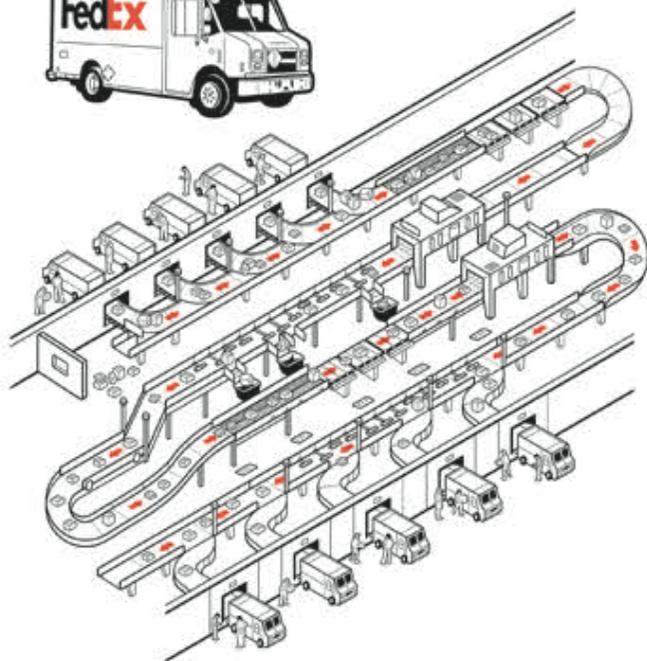
NEW YORK TIMES

Detwiler's illustration for the article "Are Barndoors a Good Idea?" appeared in the Home section of the *New York Times* Sunday edition (March 2018). Landing a commission with this prestigious newspaper marked the achievement of a long-sought goal.



WASHINGTONIAN

Detwiler had an on-going assignment for the Anatomy column of *Washingtonian* magazine, in which he presented a complex process for a service, product or concept in a simple, easy-to-understand graphic. "Anatomy of FedEx Delivery" appeared in the September 2013 issue.



He reveals that the core classes required for his major were instrumental in developing the artistic and design sense he uses in his work today. "I have a foundation in traditional art, which is extremely important to anyone working in design," he says. "As a graphic designer and illustrator, I'm applying all of the fine art principles I learned—drawing, composition, shape, value, scale, color—to create and communicate ideas and messages."

Those skills are also serving Detwiler well in his independent art—the work he produces when he's off the clock from his illustrative jobs. Working in a style quite different from his digital work, Detwiler is creating a new artistic identity for himself outside of his illustration portfolio. "Lately I'm painting more traditional, tactile experiences in acrylic," he says. "They're big paintings in black and white, very graphic but created with traditional media. I worked in a digital style and specific medium for so

▶ LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS IN THIS ARTICLE:

- T.M. DETWILER: TMDETWILER.COM
- CHRIS KOEHLER: CHRISKOEHLER.COM
- MARC BURCKHARDT: MARC BURCKHARDT.COM
- JODY HEWGILL: JODYHEWGILL.COM, INSTAGRAM: @JHEWGILL
- ROBERTO PARADA: ROBERTOPARADA.COM
- MARCO VENTURA: VENTURAMARCOART.COM, BEHANCE.NET/MARCOVENTURA

"I've seen traditional artists working digitally, using the same classical painting techniques that have been used for centuries, and the results are astounding."

—T.M. DETWILER

long that when I gave myself the freedom to create my own art—art that's not an assignment but motivated by my own ideas, experiences or feelings—it became this therapeutic expression that's the opposite of the work I do by profession."

OPEN THE GATES

As an artist and art director who sees the value in both traditional and digital media, Detwiler empathizes with the challenges traditional artists face in a digital world. "I've talked to several traditional illustrators who feel left behind by the digital age," he says. "I encourage them to at least try making digital artwork; I think they would be amazed at the possibilities. I have seen traditional artists working digitally, using the same classical painting techniques that have been used for centuries, and the results are astounding. Some artists will draw or paint an artwork first, scan it and then add effects, filters or details digitally. Others are starting and finishing the image completely in digital programs such as Photoshop or Illustrator or a combination of both. You don't have to throw away traditional skills or training to create digital art—you just have to merge them with the formats and language of our time. This will only serve to make the image more effective, efficient, and relevant." ♡

Allison Malafronte is an arts and design writer, editor and curator based in the New York area.



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