

ILLUSTRATION REVOLUTION

In print and on the web, illustrators are pushing the boundaries of their craft with storytelling art.

Gabi Campanario
 Consultant, INNOVATION International
 Media Consulting Group (USA)
 campanario@innovation-mediaconsulting.com

If you think illustration's only purpose in print media is to fill the blank spaces around the text, think again. Illustration has traditionally been used to "illuminate" stories, usually playing a secondary role to the words. But a quiet renaissance of the genre is on its way. A new crop of illustrators are proving it can stand on its own as a journalistic genre.

Here's a look at some leaders in this illustration revolution.



Combat artists

War reportage illustration deserves its own category. Contributions from artists on the battlefield were common during the American Civil War. The famous painter Winslow Homer's war drawings were published in *Harper's Magazine*. Now others continue the tradition:

STEVE MUMFORD. Mumford also witnessed the first years of the Iraq war as an embedded artist with the U.S. Army's Third Infantry Division. The New York artist filed his drawings and chronicles of war-ravaged Baghdad for *artnet.com* and later published the book *Baghdad Journals*. "Part of what I'd like to do is to revive an interest in artists," Mumford told ABC News while covering the war, "because I think that art can bring a lot that photography can't."

RICHARD JOHNSON. Scottish artist Richard Johnson was sent by the *Detroit Free Press* to cover the war in Iraq as an artist. He documented the everyday life of soldiers and civilians caught in the cross fire while embedded with the Marines. A few years later, while working for Canadian newspaper the *National Post*, Johnson put on his army boots again to draw and report alongside Canadian troops in Afghanistan, filing reports to his blog *Kandahar Journal*.

ABOVE: 'NIGHT CHECKPOINT IN BAGDAD' BY STEVE MUMFORD. **LEFT:** PAUL CASWELL, BY RICHARD JOHNSON



Visual essayists

PAUL MADONNA. Madonna is the author of *All Over Coffee*, a "comic strip without the comic," as he likes to describe it. The feature has appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* since 2003, first daily and now weekly in large format in the Sunday paper. Madonna's illustrations combine stunning street views of San Francisco with fiction-style narrative that gives each panel a sense of timelessness. Slices of overheard conversations are juxtaposed with elegant ink-wash drawings of the city's architecture. Madonna draws on site, straight to ink. "I just have a fold-up stool, pen and paper," he says. "It's about recording my surroundings, very similar to sketchbook work."

As a comic strip, *All Over Coffee* was a huge break from tradition. Reader reaction took a while to develop. "At first it confused people. This is not an accompanying illustration for a story, or a comic strip about characters and humor. This was taking an approach on comics completely different. I essentially made my surroundings my main character."

"Some of it is the old school journalism style of just being there and recording whatever is happening, filing the story really quickly."

A Madonna panel that ran after the American election day shows one of his trademark empty street scenes with Obama's face glowing on a poster hanging on the side of a house. The *Chronicle's* deadline required him to file this drawing before the election results were known.

STEVE BRODNER. This satirical illustrator and frequent contributor to *The New Yorker* is a veteran of the illustration world. He recently did a series of videos for the magazine's website in which he drew the presidential candidates and discussed the race for the White House. The illustrator's poignant portraits of politicians, sharp and informed commentary and fitting soundtrack provided a carefully edited, short but powerful multimedia show that underscores the potential of illustration beyond print. Brodner says that as the nature of journalism is changing "illustration fulfills a need of ideas. Illustrators are demonstrating they can be a major part of this industry. They are given credit for crafting a message."



ABOVE: FROM 'ALL OVER COFFEE' BY PAUL MADONNA. **BELOW:** STEVE BRODNER'S 'THE BATTLE OF IOWA'.





Sketchbook artists

WALT TAYLOR. Taylor publishes a weekly feature page with his sketches in the *The Virginian-Pilot*. The editorial page editor at the Norfolk, Virginia daily sought out his contributions after seeing his blog. Taylor's unique take on everyday life has become a popular feature in the Sunday paper. "I am continually stopped by people who tell me it's their favorite part of the paper," he says. Taylor draws on the streets trying to pick topics that are relevant to Norfolk. He seeks angles different from those the paper's photographers normally show.

URBAN SKETCHERS. Taylor also contributes to the collective blog Urban Sketchers, a network of artists/journalists around the world who share their drawings and the stories behind them online. During the U.S. elections, artists shared drawings and observations they captured while waiting to vote in New York or waiting for the results in Paris.

Multitasking cartoonists

Many American newspapers have eliminated editorial cartoonists from their staff. But there are still bright spots in the old tradition of cartooning:



STEVE BELL. Bell was sent by *The Guardian*, the same newspaper that relies on Kugler's talent, to cover the Democratic and Republican national conventions in the United States. Bell filed sketches and commentary on *The Guardian's* website.



DAN WASSERMAN. *The Boston Globe* cartoonist goes beyond the call of duty with his blog *Out of Line*, "a notebook of graphic disobedience," as the subtitle reads. Besides his regular cartoons for the newspaper, he blogs about the Massachusetts graphic arts community.

Olivier Kugler

<http://www.olivierkugler.com>

Veronica Lawlor

<http://www.veronicalawlor.com>

Studio 1482

<http://www.studio1482.com/>

Steve Mumford's Baghdad Journal

<http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/baghdadjournal.asp>

Richard Johnson's Kandahar Journal

<http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/kandaharjournal/default.aspx>

Paul Madonna

<http://www.paulmadonna.com>

All Over Coffee

<http://www.sfgate.com/comics/allovercoffee/>

Steve Brodner

<http://www.stevebrodner.com/>

Steve Brodner's

Naked Campaign videos

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/nakedcampaign/videos>

Walt Taylor

<http://crackskullbob.squarespace.com/>

Urban sketchers

<http://www.urbansketchers.com>

Steve Bell's convention sketchbook

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/series/stevebellconventionsketchbook>

Dan Wasserman

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/outofline/

GABI CAMPANARIO is a staff artist at *The Seattle Times* and the founder of *urbansketchers.com*. He also blogs his drawings and commentary about life in Seattle at <http://gabicampanario.blogspot.com>