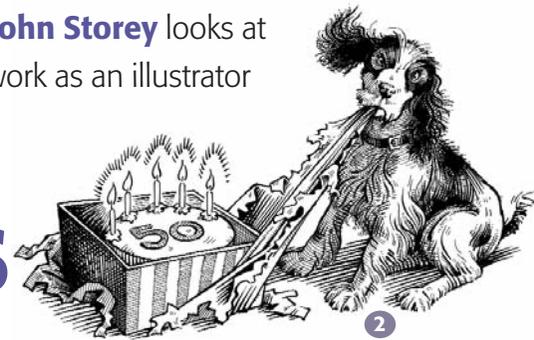


3 Website logo and letterhead, based on an oil painting *Intimations of a heart attack* 2007

In recent issues of **Venue**, we have explored the ways in which the arts and new technology are meeting on many fronts. Here **John Storey** looks at the impact changes in technology have had on his work as an illustrator

Changing tools



1 *Hanged on Tuesday* illustration for radio listing page, **Radio Times** 1973

2 *Don't let Misty eat all the cake* birthday party invitation

Looking back over almost 40 years as a freelance illustrator, there have been many changes to my work brought about for artistic reasons, but also many influenced by changes in technology.

Full-colour reproduction was in widespread use by the 1970s, but for most bread-and-butter work illustrators still had to use a black-and-white drawing technique that would reproduce well on newsprint stock. This meant, usually, a line style of drawing. At Bristol where I had been on the Diploma in Art and Design course, we were encouraged to find a method of drawing that would meet this criterion. I used a draughtsman's pen made by Rapidograph which had a very fine tubular nib; it was designed to give a line of constant thickness, and in this way was different from the normal flexible steel nib of a dip pen. This characteristic also enabled you to draw regularly-sized circular dots using a stippling technique, something that I

and other illustrators of the time used to produce tonal variation in our drawings.

All newspapers and a great many magazines were still at that time using the letterpress method of printing, and this had an influence on the way the drawing looked when finally printed. The illustration *Hanged on Tuesday* originally appeared in the *Radio Times* in 1973, and was drawn using only one size of pen nib; the reproduction method has produced the variations in dot size. Dots placed close together become smaller and denser, while dots placed further apart become larger, and their pattern more noticeable – a small but important visual element in the final printed version. It's a vital lesson for illustrators: you will (and should) be judged on the final reproduced image, not the appearance of the actual artwork.

To explore how I work now, and demonstrate how technology influences decisions, I would like



4 **Merry Solstice**
self publicity card,
Dec 2007

to talk about another image *Merry Solstice* from 2007. It is one of a series of self-publicity cards featuring my take on the 'Green man'.

I drew a number of pencil sketches where I tried to define and refine the initial idea, giving shape to the way the figure would be distorted by the wind. Having finalised the rough, and knowing that I intended this piece to be coloured on the computer, two tracings were done: one of the sky and clouds, the other of the figure, lettering and foreground. The

blowing cloud was then traced onto watercolour paper, and a tonal painting in greys was produced. The other elements were traced again using a fine-tipped black pen, and further refinements were made. Both final elements were then scanned into the computer and coloured in using the software packages Photoshop and Painter. That level of detail is only possible with the use of a drawing tablet, my most essential and favourite piece of technology. Lastly, the image is printed; the

quality of the reproduction available on home technology is one area of the digital world I still find amazing.

Technology is only there, in the end, to be exploited as another tool for the image maker. For all the changes over the years, I still regard the visual idea as the most important part of any illustration.

5 **Riverside**
Truck Rental
health and safety
leaflet *Always*
wear your high
visibility jacket,
gloves and boots,
June 2008

John Storey

In over 30 years as a freelance illustrator, John Storey has worked across a wide range of media, including most national newspapers and leading magazines in fields ranging from *The Radio Times* to *Car magazine*. He has also illustrated advertisements, and his book work has included illustrating children's books for leading publishers – among them Macmillan, Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press – and this aspect of his work is currently expanding. John, who lives in Huntingdon, is also a part-time lecturer in Drawing/Painting, Life Drawing and Graphic Design at Huntingdonshire Regional College.

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