

Stationers Report

Quentin Blake said, “If someone is asleep in bed dreaming, you don’t necessarily want to see the bed, but you might want to look at the dreams.” This quote encapsulates my year on my MA Children’s Literature: Children’s Illustration course at Goldsmiths, University of the London. I started my course in September 2018. I was part of a small group of 14 students. This number was perfect because it meant that we could get to know our classmates and tutors. It also meant that we had ample time with our tutors, this was key in my development as an illustrator, for my technique and my confidence.

I had two permanent tutors on my MA. Bruce Ingman is the head of the course. Bruce is a successful author illustrator; he often collaborates with the author Allan Alberg. My favourite of Bruce’s books is *The Pencil*. He is a fantastic tutor and a font of illustration knowledge. Colin McNaughton was my second tutor, Colin is also an author illustrator, one of his most well-known books is *Shh! (Don’t Tell Mr Wolf)*, a classic picture book that was read to me when I was little! It was enthralling to have a tutor whose work is embedded in the memory of my own childhood.

Observational drawing was the foundation of my first term. Each week we visited the local Primary school to draw the children. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience. The first week we visited the school we arrived during morning playtime; we were given the challenge of sketching the children as they were moving. The aim of this was to loosen us up. The children were curious of us at first, leading to an exploding pencil sharpener moment, and then quickly forgot our presence and continued to hurtle around the playground.

We were all encouraged to keep day to day sketchbooks, these were looked at by Bruce and Colin each week. I have become very disciplined with keeping a sketchbook during this year. I make observational drawings in my sketchbook every day, this has developed my illustration practise dramatically. Through keeping a sketchbook, I can record nuanced mannerisms in people and compositions that a camera would not give justice to. This has enriched my practise this year and will continue to do so after graduating.



Throughout the course we have had a cornucopia of workshops and external visits. We visited two publishers; Egmont and Walker Books. The visits were inspiring; it was exciting to see various books in different stages of development and how publishing houses work on a day to day basis.

We were given opportunities to explore different printing methods on the course. We had a mono printing workshop. I particularly enjoyed drawing through a thick layer of ink on a glass panel, creating an image I would use to make the print. We also had a silk screen printing workshop. Throughout the session we worked collaboratively, taking it in turns to hold the frame and screen in place whilst another would use a squeegee to pass the ink through the screens. My favourite workshop of the year was an



introduction to bookbinding. We made a collection of folded books and we were introduced to various stitching techniques, including Japanese stitching. I hope to continue to learn more about book binding and to so some additional workshops.

As well as the workshops mentioned above, we also had several sessions on how to use Photoshop and InDesign. This was incredibly helpful; both of

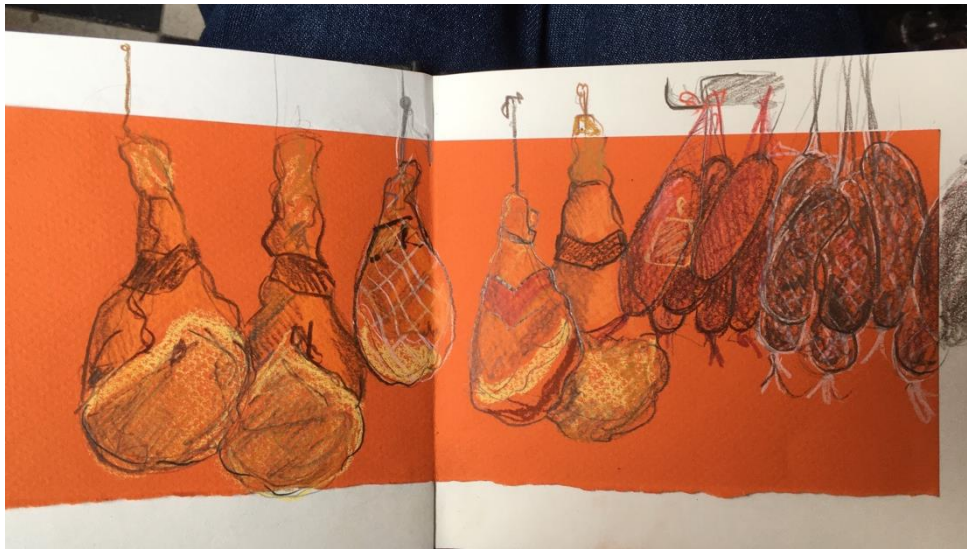
these computer programmes were vital for my final project. I used them to clean up my scanned artwork and format the stories into 32-page picture book dummies. I will continue to use my newly acquired digital skills after graduating. Knowing how to use Photoshop and InDesign has helped me to reach a professional level in my work.

During the course we had illustrators visit the university to do talks and sessions with us. I was fortunate enough to meet an illustrator, who's work I have cherished since childhood. The Illustrator is called Michael Forman. As a child I had some books of his signed, I decided to take the books with me and get them signed again. It was a lovely moment. His work has influenced my work, and my decision to become an illustrator of children's literature greatly.

At the end of March, we went to Bologna to the International Bologna Children's Book fair. It was a deeply informative and an eye-opening experience. The book fair was enormous, it was made up of halls of agents, publisher stands from all around the world, an illustrator's corner and various mini exhibitions. The sheer number of things to explore at the book fair was a little overwhelming at first. I spent a long time looking at fantastic books and beautiful artwork from publishers in other countries. I was particularly captivated by the Italian books; the work was wonderfully painterly and full of vitality. I also enjoyed the aesthetic qualities of the Taiwanese books.

Experiencing the book fair gave me a chance to see the entire children's literature industry in one space. I was able to catch glimpses of rights being sold and how book styles differ country to country. Going to the book fair was very beneficial as it enabled me to better understand the landscape of the wider children's literature industry. Aside from the fair itself, the beautiful terracotta city of Bologna was a wonderful place to spend a few days. A favourite moment of mine was sitting amongst the hustle and bustle of the old market one morning, whilst drawing and sipping on a cappuccino.

The academic module that I found most engaging, and useful to my future development and practise as a professional illustrator and Author, was a module on



Publishing. The Module was taught by Katharine Smales. Katharine has worked at Walker Books and at Macmillan Publishers. Katharine was a fantastic tutor. In this module we learnt about the role and relationships between the Author/ Illustrator, Agent and Editor. We also learnt about how the marketing of picture books works, how and which books end up in different retailers, how Amazon affects book sales and so much more. My course is unique in this module. Having a publishing module has meant that when we graduate, we are not naive to how the publishing industry works as a business. It has also taught us how to engage with editors and agents professionally and what to be aware of in a contract before signing. This module has been invaluable to my professional development and will be especially important now that I am entering the industry as a professional.

Having the opportunity to do the MA Children's Literature: Children's Illustration course will benefit me drastically in my professional life as an illustrator and author. It has given me an insight and understanding of the industry. It has helped me to develop my creative practise and style, which has in turn given me confidence. It has also given me the opportunity to meet people established in the industry who I will be keeping in touch with. I will be finishing the course feeling that I am at a professional level. I am also very excited by the prospect of being an illustrator and author of children's literature.

The grant I received has completely changed my life. Without it I would have struggled to afford to do this MA. It meant that, in combination with my undergraduate 1st class honours discount, I was able to pay the fees upfront. I was able to use my student loan to cover a majority of my living expenses, I have also taken on a one day a week job as a cheese monger. The grant gave me the gift of time, as it allowed me to devote myself to the MA and only have a job one day a week. This has meant that as an illustrator and author I have developed to a professional level, I feel that I have worked the hardest I possibly could have done during this year. This would not have been possible without help from the Stationer's. I will be forever grateful.



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