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Fashion Illustration and Costume Design

Dora De vries , Edith Head & Bonnie Cashin

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GABY
Lester Rossin, Assoc.

FASHION ILLUSTRATION and costume design

dora de vries • edith head • bonnie cashin



DORA de VRIES

three top artists offer advice on breaking into their specialized fields.

FASHION illustration consists of exaggerated truth. Even though you sketch a tired model whose gown is clothes-pinned to conform with her body configuration, you must make it appear to fit perfectly, the model seeming to sparkle with freshness and life. Statuesque poses are no longer in vogue among fashion artists; today, the emphasis is on suggested movement. (Tomorrow the wheel may swing back to the other extreme, but fashion sketching for advertising layouts is now rendered with freehand ease and informality, even in relatively formalized subject matter.) Art directors argue that movement emphasizes the lines of the dress and subjugates the model to secondary importance. Here are tips on media, methods and art materials, offered by three leaders in the field of fashion illustration and fashion design.

DORA de VRIES: (instructor at Art Students League of N. Y., and Parsons School of Design, whose work appears in: "New Yorker," "Town & Country," and for many national advertising accounts.)

"There's only one way to break into the fashion field. That's by showing your work around to every art director, buyer and agency who will look. Once you've gotten that all-important first assignment, bear in mind that all fashion art is consciously exaggerated. If a highnote of the style is long sleeves, make them *really long*; if the gown is off-the-shoulder, draw your model with a very long neck and drop the dress to a point just above the raised-eyebrow level. Dramatize merchandise; leave no doubt about its qualities. A photographer couldn't get away with nearly as much without being called a liar. Artistic license permits you much freedom, just as long as you keep your sketching free and suggestive rather than detailed.

"Fashion artists who can draw more than just clothing have a bigger market and are more in demand than the monotonously repetitive hack who draws everything in one-two-three, formalized pattern. *Tight* art should be avoided for fashion sketching."

BONNIE CASHIN: (Chouinard Art Institute graduate and recent winner of the annual Nieman-Marcus Fashion Award.)

"A successful career in the field of costume design is built primarily on a solid knowledge of design principles and facility in drawing. No amount of native talent or imagination can substitute for serious training in the basic fundamentals of art, as taught at the better schools."

Miss Cashin, petite, black-haired and blue-eyed, has always been considered an individualist and member of the avant-garde. Early training after school was as designer for a Los Angeles ballet company and backstage with the costume department of the Roxy Theater in New York. This led to an association with Adler & Adler (for whom she is still an important designer) and then

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RIDING SHOP, SIXTH FLOOR

Fashion sketch by Dora de Vries,
for Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.

back to California to do film designing for 20th Century-Fox. (Among her assignments: "Laura," "Anna & The King of Siam," "Snake Pit.")

Bonnie Cashin is a painstaking researcher. Long hours of her working day are devoted to library files, history books, museums, where she seeks bits of inspiration to be alchemized into practical, unique fashions. Her suggestions to artists in the field: keep it fresh, mobile, full of dramatic color, and, above all, practical.

EDITH HEAD: (Chouinard graduate and chief designer for Paramount Studios.)

Native Californian, Edith Head, was appointed executive designer at Paramount in 1938, the first woman to hold any such job in the motion picture industry.

Miss Head is one of Hollywood's favorite designers, and stars Hedy Lamarr, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Fontaine, Elizabeth Scott and Ginger Rogers are among her clientele. Winner of the 1949 Academy Award (for her period costumes films: "Samson & Delilah," "Sunset Boulevard" and "All About Eve.") Her advice to designers: "Stay away from Hollywood if you're planning to grab the big money you think is available. It's a vastly overcrowded business at the moment. If you are willing to start down at the level of studio sketch artist, you'll develop by a hard but rewarding route.

"Studio designing is steady work only if you're under contract. Basic requirement for such a job: thorough ability in rendering. The 'glamorized' sketch won't do at all—detail and individuality are most important. Your sketches will be seen by the cameraman, producer and director, whose prosaic viewpoint is notoriously lacking in appreciation of 'art for art's sake.'

"The costume must fit the period of the story and the limitations of the individual who will wear it. You must also be constantly aware of how the fabrics will photograph in either black and white or full color." ●



Fashion sketches by Bonnie Cashin, for Adler & Adler, Inc.



Edith Head, Chouinard Institute graduate and now one of Hollywood's top costume designers, created the pictured Minoan Court costume for "Samson & Delilah." The artist noted materials were to be gold lame with pear-shaped and cabochon rubies set in antique gold. Below: Hedy Lamarr, as she appeared in the gown in the motion picture.



BOOK JACKET DESIGNING

Illustrations by Joe Karov of the Art Career School

BOOK jackets sell books. Often, they are the difference between a sale and a miss. If a book has gained a reputation the status of the jacket may be of lesser importance, but for the large mass of titles that reach the market, an eye-arresting jacket makes cash register music.

Three basic elements make the good jacket design. (1) *Judicious use of color.* (2) *Subject appeal.* (3) *A design that stands out above other books on display.*

It is not only the customer who is sold by the jacket; the bookseller often buys titles because he too likes the cover piece. Since most titles are sold in mass lots to book store proprietors by personal solicitation of a salesman, it is the cover that is of primary importance. Most of the time this salesman doesn't have the actual book, which is probably not yet printed. He carries a dummy edition with only the jacket design completed. The interior portion may not be printed for many months to come; publishers quite often determine length of initial press run by advance orders.

Jacket designing is a good business. You may not receive a great deal for each one—sometimes no more than \$25.00

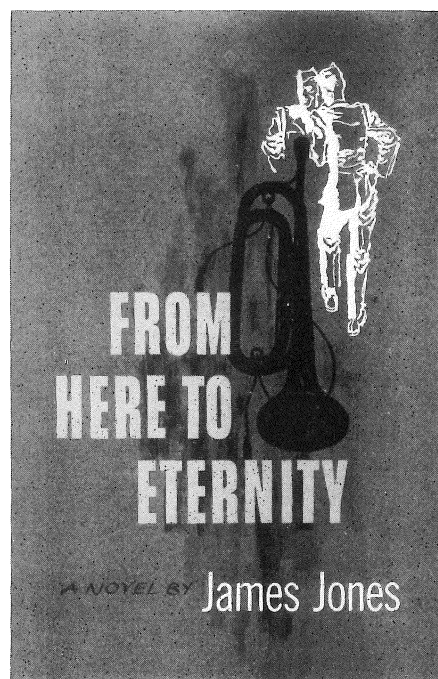
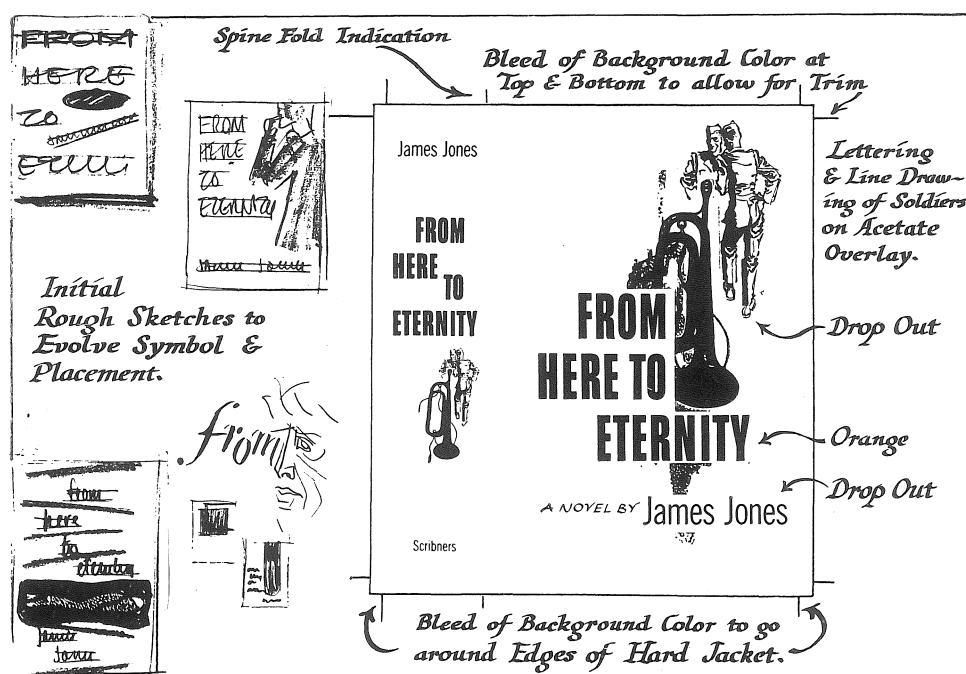
for a low budget book—but a good artist will be given many titles in a relatively short time. Publishers have their personal favorites. And as your reputation grows, so will your annual income.

Juvenile books and trade books (how-to-do-it) are a large and worthwhile market for you. They pay middle-bracket fees, usually ranging between \$100 and \$500 for the jacket and some interior work. Well established designers often work on a royalty basis—so much for each book printed or sold. On a big press run this is much to be preferred. If a book becomes a best seller, the royalty designer may earn a thousand dollars or more.

ARE YOU A NEWCOMER?

You will need to know what to do *after* you have interested a publisher in giving you a commission. Here is your procedure.

ROUGH SKETCHES: Newcomers should submit several roughs, indicating color areas with color, type areas with free hand lettering or ruled lines for minor portions. Do these on pliable paper stock so that the publisher can wrap your rough around a dummy book to judge how it



book jacket DESIGN:

by Joe Karov

A SKA book jacket whose major problem was to suggest the Pre-Pearl Harbor army with its laxity and unpreparedness. Symbols chosen by the artist to convey this atmosphere were the bugle and two loafing soldiers. Karov was limited to three colors and one halftone. Bugle and background were made half-larger than actual size then photostated, and remainder of layout was full size. One overlay sheet indicated the color separation area for benefit of engraver. Joe Karov, now instructor at the Art Career School in N.Y.C. started his book jacket career by knocking on doors and lugging a full sample kit. His style was individual, so he made progress.

looks. Work on paper that is sensibly larger than the actual area designed. The publisher can trim it. Work in actual size.

To the publisher (and author) it is imperative that your lettering on the front of the jacket always be designed to stress the importance of the title and the name of the author—particularly if the latter's name is well known and will help sell books. Make your illustration bold, but not dominant over the title. Consider the lettering to be just as important as the art.

Use restraint in attempting the bizarre with lettering. It may be very well to create a fine arts approach, to print the lettering sideways or upside down, but—take it easy. Remember above all else that this title must be *readable* when it is displayed. Few customers will bother to stand on their heads to see what the name of a book is.

Another point; find out how your work is to be reproduced—on what stock, by what printing method. Certain limitations are imposed by these factors. If the jacket budget will not allow for more than one or two colors, there's little sense in doing a four color presentation. As the cover designer you will usually be permitted to select the stock or fabric. Talk this over with the publisher. Stock manufacturers will supply you with swatch books on request, or most probably, the publisher will have several of these on hand for your use.

THE PROCEDURE

The publisher may give you a layout sheet of his proposed book jacket dimensions. This will be the exact size of the entire jacket plus a fraction more for bleed purposes. (Bleed: $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch additional area which will be sliced off by the trimming knife and will give the effect of the illustrated matter extending beyond the actual printed limits.) Always balance your design to allow for bleed. Never have the title or important subject matter too close to the edge.

THE END PAPERS

If you are to do the inside art to the book, you will next concern yourself with the end papers, which are located just inside the cover, front and back. These are the first glimpse the browser has of the interior of the book he contemplates buying. You've already socked him over the head with a "flash" illustration on the jacket; he's indicated his willingness to see more, so tone down your boldness on these end leaves. Use one color and a tinted paper. Keep your subject matter generalized—you're not yet actually telling the specific details of the story—just setting the scene. For example, a good end paper theme for a novel about Jean LaFitte, the pirate, would be a stylized map of New Orleans, drawn in the wood cut manner that suggests the early Nineteenth Century.

The binding of the book intrudes right down the center of your overall end paper design, so keep important elements away from the center. The right hand portion of your illustration will appear in the back of the book. Or you may prefer to make two separate designs, or as a second alternative, simply make a repeat pattern design for both portions of the end leaves.

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS

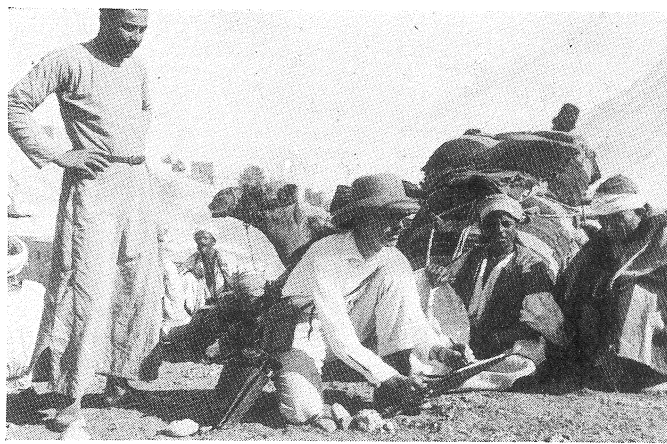
The final element of book design art concerns itself with the spot cuts or inside illustrations for the story, which may

(please turn to page 20)

BOOK ILLUSTRATING TIPS

by

DEAN CORNWELL



The illustrator should travel as much as his means permit, making sketches and color notes for future work. Here, Cornwell sketches outside the walls of Jerusalem.

FEW books today feature the work of "name" illustrators, and for a very obvious reason. The cost of process plates to reproduce original paintings in full color, is almost prohibitive for most publishers to consider—they must first pay a famous artist to render a specific painting to suit their needs. Those book jackets and interior illustrations that *are* the work of name artists are often arranged by using previously completed works (for which the artist receives a relatively small royalty). This is not too satisfactory, for the work fits the story only in the most generalized manner, usually by a stretch of coincidence. I'd say that the largest part of book illustration in color is done by lesser-known artists, whose fees will be small enough to allow the publisher to lavish several thousand dollars on the color plates. This is not to say the work is inferior; it is simply a question of having to pay properly for the many years that have gone into the background of the name artist.

I was approached by a rather well-established book company recently and asked if I would accept the commission to illustrate an entire book. The price was not over \$2,000—it most likely would have come to somewhat less. I turned it down, not because I dislike money, but simply because serious book illustration consumes much time and preparation, and, spreading my time over what would have been required, would have earned me very little indeed, in view of the size of the undertaking. Of course, you and I have both seen books illustrated by current "long-haired" name painters. On examination, though, the art work proves to consist of hasty drybrush marks, some color splattered here and there, and a prominent signature in the corner. This kind of art isn't worth the cost of the pig-

(please turn to page 21)

(continued from page 9)

Roose, Peter Arno—but we're not concerned with exceptions (most of whom work through Repts anyhow.) So, get yourself established with an art agency or advertising concern. You will need the technical experience. Do you know how your work will be reproduced? Do you know about halftones, routings, overlays, ben day, format? The agency is your practical school for learning.

WHO PAYS WHAT?

If you are a beginner and your work has come to the attention of a magazine or publisher (or you have been intelligent enough to promote yourself some free lance work) you will probably wonder just how much you will receive in payment. You *will not* be paid according to the size of reproduction. You may not even receive more for color work than for black and white. The fact is you will be paid according to your standing and reputation. A newcomer may get \$75.00 for an illustration while a veteran receives \$1,000 or more for the same job. There is no scale. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know how much you should receive if the question is put to you by the art director. Honesty is recommended. They'll know you are a beginner anyway. Art editors and agency directors are usually quite fair. They know they must play fair, for some day you may very well be more experienced and will remember. Talent in the illustration field is not so commonplace that gifted artists need be abused. Don't worry too much if you receive less than you think you should. You are gaining experience. And it is the use to which your art is put that determines the rate of payment. A direct mail piece does not pay nearly so much as does a job for a national billboard or ad.

On the average, the smaller national magazines will pay \$15.00 to perhaps a hundred dollars for story illustrations in black and white. (Smaller magazines are those whose circulation is in the thousands rather than the millions.) The "big" magazines pay \$400 to several thousand for their art work. They work almost exclusively through your Representative, however, for the reasons mentioned earlier. Better start out by selling your work to smaller publishers until you have made a reasonable impression on the market.



MAGAZINE ILLUSTRATION:

by Gilbert Bundy

THIS MATTER OF TAX

Better not forget that Uncle Sugar wants his cut of your income for illustrating. You may be paying your agent 10% to 25%; don't overlook the fact that the Federal Government wants that much or more too. So keep a book account of sales and expenses. Commercial art is just as much a business as any other. And—most important—do your drawing with the best materials and on the better quality working media. Your reputation is based on how your work looks when it is printed, so don't lose out on quality simply to save a few cents. Which means that you had better be sure you are going to sell before you put it down in its final stage.

THE DEADLINE

You must work on schedule. If your illustration is a day late in arriving at the engraver, it may mean several thousand dollars to a big magazine. You can be sure they'll cut you off their family tree like a rotten banana if you abuse the deadline schedule. Find out what it is and have your work ready before that time—delivered. Always ship (if you can't personally bring it in) by the fastest insured means. Railway express, air parcel post, personal messenger. At the least, by first class mail. Get a receipt. Protect yourself. If it's late you won't be paid; if it's lost you may as well get back the insured value. ●

book jacket DESIGNING:

(continued from page 19)

be simple pen and ink sketches or more elaborate color renderings. These should be handled as independent jobs, faithful to the theme and subject matter of the book, usually being specific and illustrating portions of the text. To do these properly, the artist must read the book.

PAYMENT FOR BOOK JACKETS

Book publishers have no set rate scale either. Here too it depends on the budget allocated by the publisher for art work. If the book has a small printing of only a few thousand, the cost of engravings will eat a big chunk out of what is left for the artist. You may get \$150 for a series of interior illustrations and only \$25 for the book jacket. A medium run book (in the juvenile or trade field) may earn you up to \$500 for the art work. A best seller (above 40,000 books printed) could net you a thousand dollars, maybe more. Special editions, deluxe printings or similar projects may bring in a truly sizeable sum. But, on the average, a book jacket offers around \$50 to \$100, with interior art work bringing you up to \$400.

Well-established book illustrators often work on a straight royalty basis. Thus, as the book sales increase, so do their earnings.

Book illustration is thus divided into three segments; jacket, end leaves and interior art. You may be commissioned to do just the jacket, or perhaps, all three. It is more usual for one artist to do it all, unless the content matter is pictorial to begin with. Book jacket designing is a good field for the commercial illustrator; it is closely related to other lucrative fields, such as record albums, national posters and magazine illustrating. ●

looks. Work on paper that is sensibly larger than the actual area designed. The publisher can trim it. Work in actual size.

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ment, and it is obvious that they are receiving a thousand dollars or so for the use of their signature.

Rockwell Kent is the best book illustrator I know. He works in black & white and monocolors, and usually writes his own text for the same books. Thus, he receives a sum as author as well, making it worth his while. Then too, Kent's art work finds a ready market in the form of prints from these same plates. It would seem, therefore, that it is the *re-use* of the book plates that will make book illustration worth the name artist's while.

I recently did a series of book illustrations in full color for the deluxe edition of Lloyd C. Douglas' "The Robe." I was commissioned by R.K.O. Pictures to do these. It seems they bought the film rights to the well-known best seller and used the illustrations as advance "class" publicity for the motion picture, which was never made. (LIFE Magazine reproduced these as a special feature, the reader may recall.) I doubt if this work would have been possible in the book had it not been subsidized by the motion picture company.

When I undertake a book assignment, here's my working method:

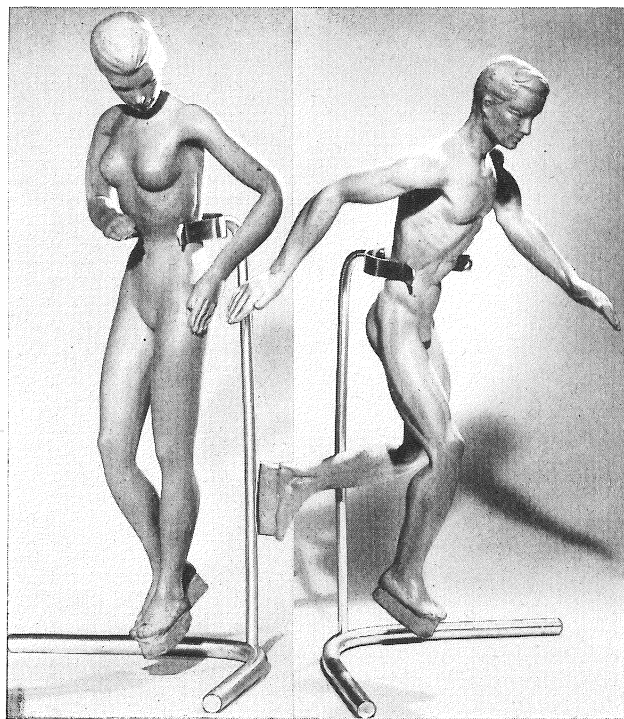
1. RESEARCH: *I go to the place.* Whatever the story calls for, I try to authenticate by sketching on the actual spot or one very similar. Almost all the money I've earned in my professional career has gone back into travel. It may be just across the street, or to Jerusalem, but I go. (Your budget may not permit this—mine does.) I take along a camera, sketch book and water colors. I may merely tint my pencil notes after I return to the hotel or camp, but I like to use color right away so I don't forget things.

For thirty years I've singled out unusual, crooked and twisted trees. They make fine backgrounds. I keep an eye cocked for odd rock formations, ramshackle houses and so on. It's also a good idea, when you're passing through various parts of the country, to make pencil notes as to how—say, Florida differs from Kentucky. Are the buildings structurally different? Are the barns painted in various colors? Remember—the story you're illustrating for a book or magazine may be set in a particular locale, and you'd better make sure you don't pull a boner, or the readers will be on your neck before the book is dry!

2. THIS QUESTION OF LOGIC: You've got to be careful of what you draw. Take a theoretical example. Let's say the story calls for the hero to be washed ashore on a desert island after a shipwreck. Well now, would a box of carpenter tools have been likely to float conveniently along with him? If not, you'd better not have the hero build a house with neatly sawed logs or with joined furniture. Keep it logical all the time. Boners can ruin the book for the reader; they can wipe out the carefully contrived atmosphere the author has painstakingly created. ●

THE HUMAN-ETTE

latest lifelike mannequin for artists



FIELD TESTED BY DESIGN: No detrimental effects after being submerged in water for one hour, sitting in freezer overnight or baking in oven at 150°.

UNTIL recently, the average artist has had to either hire professional models at rates upwards of \$2.00 an hour or content himself with drawing from stilted, stylized wooden mannequins. The former procedure tends to eat up profits at an alarming rate, and the latter somehow has never met with enthusiastic response. A short while ago a new concept in miniature models came on the market. Called the *Human-ette*, this versatile figure stands about 16" high and is an innovation in the art materials field. DESIGN subjected a *Human-ette* to field tests and found it worthy of high recommendation.

HUMAN-ETTE SEEMS ALIVE

The rubberized plastic looks, feels and bends like human flesh. It is washable, extremely durable, can be dropped without any harmful effect, and performs under all normal working conditions. Temperatures under which the average artist will work have no noticeable effect on its flexibility.

The manufacturer has fashioned the mannequin in male and female representations, and a handy bracket holds the figure in upright position.

The use of the *Human-ette* is simple. The artist can shape and mold the anatomical stance of the model to simulate every position of which the living model is capable. The construction has no visible joints; the secret of its flexibility is a complex "bone structure" concealed beneath the outer skin, consisting of 80 yards of flexible wire.

Anatomically, the mannequin is correct in all aspects, showing bone structure, muscles and ideal proportions. The figure is portable, weighing only 2½ pounds.

The original model was created by sculptor Jean Delasser for *Master Artists Materials, Inc. 131 W. 14th St., N. Y. C.*, and is available at most well-stocked art dealers. It sells for \$17.50.

DESIGN recommends the *Human-ette* to fine and commercial artists because of its reasonable price, durability, versatility and correct construction. ●