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ART/ILLUSTRATION

89 CRAIG FRAZIER / USA

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Craig Frazier: International Illustration

CRAIG FRAZIER'S GRAPHIC WORK TAKES US TO A DISTANT AND UNIQUE PLACE—A THOUGHTFUL PLATEAU WITH INTRIGUING DECEPTIONS AND ILLUSIONS; NO RULES OF GRAVITY OR PERSPECTIVE EXIST HERE. YET IT'S CALM AND PEACEFUL. A LESSON IN LIFE? MAYBE. IT'S WORTH THE TRIP.

Michael Schwab, *Designer and Illustrator*

CRAIG BECAME A HERO WHEN I MET HIM AT AN ILLUSTRATION CONFERENCE.

I'D ALWAYS ADMIRED HIS WORK, BUT THEN I FOUND MYSELF IN A RESTAURANT WITH A BUNCH OF OTHER GREENHORNS, MOUTH OPEN, LISTENING IN AWE AND THINKING: THAT'S A ROLE MODEL.

Christoph Niemann, *Illustrator, Artist, and Author*

I LIKE TO THINK THAT ONE OF THE EXPLANATIONS FOR CRAIG FRAZIER'S EXPRESSIVE AND MEMORABLE ILLUSTRATIONS IS THAT HE HAS BEEN—AND STILL IS—A DESIGNER.

Ivan Chermayeff, *Partner, Chermayeff & Geismar*



(Previous page) "Device Addiction;" (Above) "Trickladder;" (Right) "Ticonderoga #2"





"Late for the Sky"

Introduction by Joe Morse, Illustrator

Craig's very successful design career has informed an illustrative approach that values visual ideas constructed to communicate meaning. His great wit, sophisticated color, and the carved play of positive and negative shapes engages our reading of his images. ■ But at the heart of his work is drawing: the serious business of putting pen to paper. Craig found a language that rewards curiosity, challenges conformity, and welcomes contradiction. It also keeps him relevant: after 38 years in design and illustration, he is one of the best examples of an artist that has responded to the visual communication marketplace's upheaval by developing his own print and online projects and building numerous partnerships. Craig is the model I use for my Illustration students when I argue that ideas are at the center of what we do. Style fades and ideas remain.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO ADVANCE AND SEE IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR WORK PRODUCT AND POINT OF VIEW. DESIGN PROGRESS IS VERY TRACKABLE. IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE LEARNED ALL YOU CAN, YOU'RE DEAD.

Craig Frazier, *Illustrator*



Packaging for box set of "Absurd" Wines, Realm Cellars, Napa, California



What inspired or motivated you into your career?

I grew up loving to draw which led to my interest in design once I was exposed to it. It wasn't until I was a freshman in college that I heard of graphic design. I was taking art classes and a basic design class and immediately saw the difference—particularly the problem-solving aspect of design. That facet intrigued me. The idea that you could go to work and fix or make something every day seemed very attractive. Still does.

What is your work philosophy?

Work should be fulfilling since it consumes most of our waking hours. We do better when it's meaningful and we have some personal connection to it. The minute it becomes subjugated by money, fame, or the wishes of others, the game is over.

What is your design/illustration philosophy?

Design has to be an answer to a defined problem. It's got to work in service of a greater strategy. If it doesn't, it's just wall-paper. I always return to the question, "What are we trying to say here?" Purpose has to drive execution. The measure of good design has always got to be in the context of the job it sets out to do. Connecting with viewers is the goal.

What is your preferred medium for poster design?

I don't really care—it's just got to be arresting from 50 feet away.

In what way does design speak to you differently than illustration?

From a problem-solving discipline, design and illustration both speak to me the same way. They require defining and answering a specific communications challenge. The difference in the two is the scale of the problems and the number of conditions involved. Illustration tends to be a subset of a larger design scheme—even though it may do much of the heavy lifting and messaging. Design has a larger tool kit that requires a larger skill set. Design requires a greater command of writing, art direction, typography, strategy, and certainly the business that the client is trying to communicate within. Design requires a much more holistic view of things and has vastly more moving parts than illustration. Contrary to illustration, design usually puts you directly in contact with the client and the decision-makers. Illustration is typically insulated from that process—and often benefits from that distance.

Who is or was your greatest mentor?

I met David Lance Goines in college and stayed in contact after I started to work. He made me aware that design could be an intellectual profession. He taught me that draftsmanship and thinking were not mutually exclusive skills. I worked for Hall Kelley in my first job in Palo Alto and he taught me skills in typography, photography, and the fundamental principles of design. Years ago, I worked with Joe Montgomery who was the founder and CEO of Cannondale Bikes. He always returned calls, got his own coffee and welcomed ideas. I learned that a title doesn't excuse one from good manners.

What is your most difficult challenge you've had to overcome?

My biggest challenge—that I have not overcome—is that good ideas, working hard, and meaning well is not necessarily enough.

Who were some of your greatest past influences?

A photographer named Rudi Legname. We did a lot of work for Steelcase and an album cover for Van Morrison (*The Unarticulate Speech of the Heart*). He taught me so much about

seeing. There is the work of others like Ivan Chermayeff, Milton Glaser, John Casado, Paul Rand, Saul Bass, Irving Penn, Jean Michael Folon, and Brad Holland. My two young kids retaught me curiosity.

Who among your contemporaries today do you most admire?

Christoph Neimann, Pablo Amargo, David Plunkert, Joe Morse, Barry Blitt, John Cuneo, Kit Hinrichs, Guy Billout, Oliver Munday, Malika Favre—to name just a few.

What would be your dream assignment?

To be assigned to solve a problem I care about that lasts for 10 years and pays whatever I need at the time.

Who have been some of your favorite people or clients you have worked with?

Carl Hermann and Derry Noyes at the USPS have always had great regard and respect for good work. Tim Murray, former creative director for Goodwill. Most art directors at The New York Times. Lance Hidy, former art director for The Harvard Business Journal. Orlie Kraus, art director at The Wall Street Journal. And about another 100 receptive clients.

What are the most important ingredients you require from a client to do successful work?

A well-defined problem. A willingness to look at things differently. Visually curious. No preconceptions. Fair compensation.

What is your greatest professional achievement?

To be relevant and interested after 38 years.

What is the greatest satisfaction you get from your work?

Having an original idea.

What part of your work do you find most demanding?

Clients that believe design is a product governed by consensus.

What professional goals do you still have for yourself?

To keep doing work that keeps my hand and mind engaged.

What advice would you have for students starting out today?

On day one, start caring deeply about your work and discovering your own point of view. You can't throw that switch later on.

What interests do you have outside of your work?

I do design and drawing-oriented personal projects. I like designing and writing books. I like fly-fishing, biking, and printing on my wife's etching press. I love playing golf with my son and have a renewed interest in ping-pong.

What do you value most?

My wife, children, and friends—and humor.

What would you change if you had to do it all over again?

Nothing except get a little stock in every company I have helped.

Where do you seek inspiration?

Probably in the stories of others that are doing a good job.

Where do you see yourself in the future?

Still working at it.

Craig Frazier www.craigfrazier.com

See his *Graphis Master Portfolio* on graphis.com.

The 1988 World's Most Memorable Poster

Jan 24-Feb 8 Western Merchandise Mart

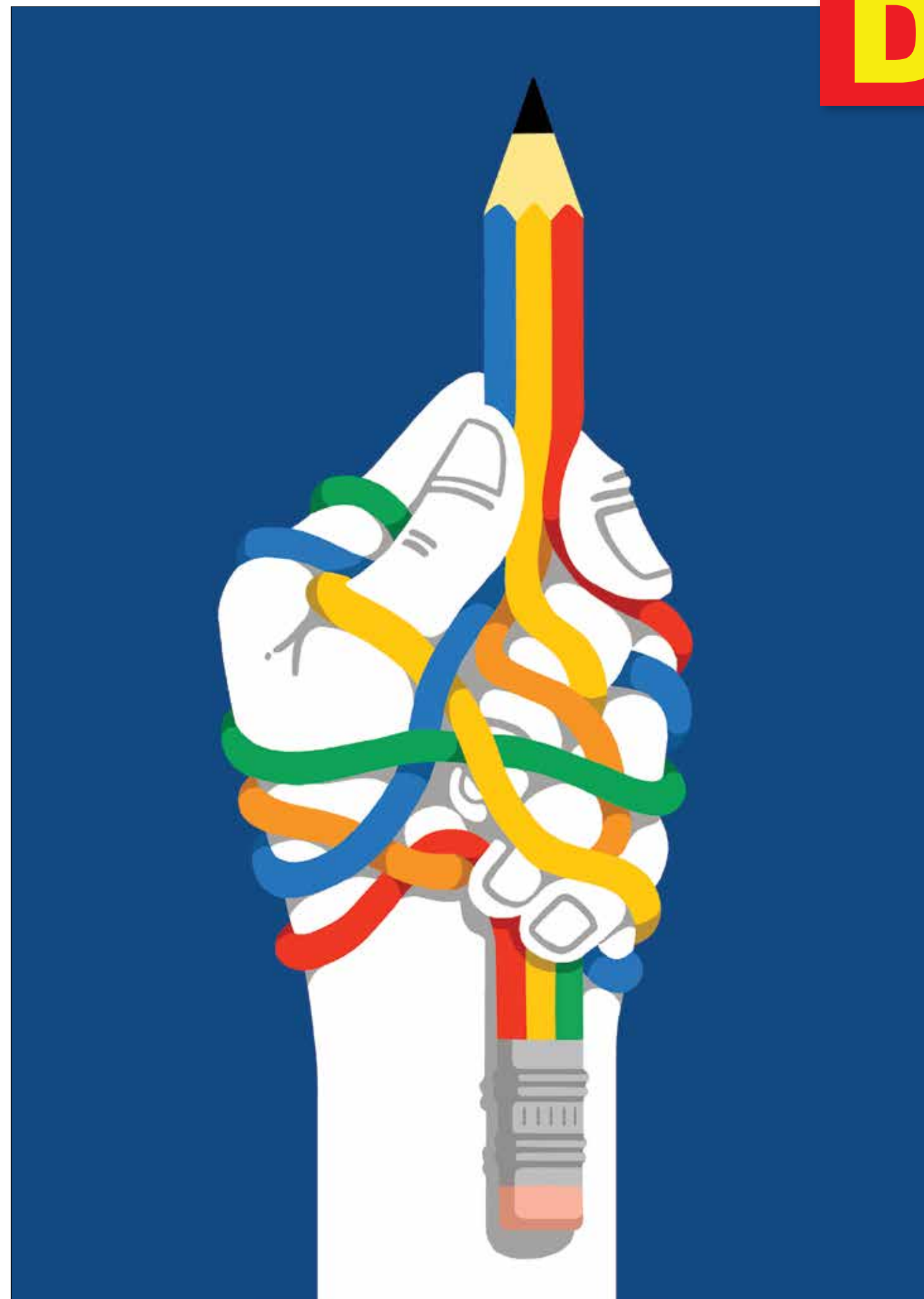


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Poster for 2015 Fillmore Jazz Festival

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Rejected illustration for a New York Times article on the complexity of the 2018 tax code