



PRESSING
AHEAD

“STUDENTS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPING THEIR OWN IDEAS AND MATERIAL – THEY BECOME THE AUTHOR.”

Steve Braund is Course Leader for Illustration: Authorial Practice. He is too modest to say it himself, but his course and Falmouth-based publishing house, Atlantic Press, are leading the way in turning the world of conventional illustration on its head.

“Most illustration involves an illustrator producing work to a prescribed commercial brief – and they have very little input or control over their work and its usage,” explains Steve. “The idea behind illustration with authorial practice is that students take responsibility for developing their own ideas and material – they become the author.”

“The modern market is swamped with visual material. Illustrators who base their work on the latest trends and styles will find it has little longevity. On the other hand, people at the top of the tree like Graham Rawle (*Lost Consonants* in *The Guardian*) are greatly respected for the way they conceive and control their own work and ideas.”

This course was the first in the country with an academic focus on authorial illustration. Steve also initiated Falmouth’s annual Illustration Open Forum that attracts internationally acclaimed guest speakers such as Dave McKean, Russell Mills and George Hardie.

Originally from Launceston in Cornwall, Steve went on to work in London as a freelance illustrator. With a client list including Heinemann, Puffin, Corgi, *The Sunday Times*, *The Financial Times*, *Radio Times* and *Reader’s Digest*, it’s hardly surprising University College Falmouth headhunted him in 1987. In 1998 he was invited to become a member of the Society of Illustrators in New York.

Steve also started Atlantic Press in 1998, with the underpinning ethos being authorial practice. “A lot of the independent publishers are starting to move in this direction,” says Steve. “A lot of exciting work is coming out – so much so that the big players are starting to look around.

One of our students, Chris Crump, illustrated a book, *The Valley of Secrets*, written by Charmian Hussey and published by St Piran, which became a cult book with copies going on eBay for thousands of pounds. It finally ended up being taken on by Hodder after a big bidding war. They hailed it as the next Harry Potter – it’s been the biggest launch for a paperback book that Hodder have ever done. The author and illustrator collaborated every step of the way.”

Now part-owned by University College Falmouth, Atlantic Press publishes high quality authorial illustration books and graphic novels. Titles so far include *Fried Eggs in Brine* by Paul Slater (“A very successful illustrator known for his work in *The Times* for about 20 years, this is his first self-authored book,” says Steve) and *The Funeral*, the first book by course graduate, Barnaby Richards, who has also just designed a t-shirt for leading retailer, Paul Smith.

With internationally acclaimed illustrators like Benoît Jacques introducing Steve to a distributor for Atlantic Press in France, the benefits for students of having a publishing house on the doorstep hardly need to be spelt out. The experience they can gain working on live projects also goes way beyond creative inspiration. “Paul Slater came to finalise things before *Fried Eggs*... went to print, and there were lots of students there to hear him worry about it!” says Steve. “We want students to understand the whole publishing process, from concept to realisation – but also the practical ins and outs of printing, distribution and marketing.”

www.atlanticpressbooks.com
www.falmouth.ac.uk/authorialillustration