

POSY SIMMONDS - GRADUATION CEREMONY SPEECH TRANSCRIPT

HONORARY FELLOWSHIP AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH GIVEN AT THE 2013 FALMOUTH
UNIVERSITY GRADUATION CEREMONY

Transcript

"Thank you very much indeed. I need my spectacles and while I find them can I just commend the graduates' shoes, I particularly find the gold shoes were very good as well. Now, I'm feeling very, very honoured, grateful and delighted to have been made an honorary fellow of this splendid University of Falmouth, and I'm particularly pleased because it's a Cornish university and Cornwall has always played an important part in my life. Very early on it was summer holidays, but later on I spent a lot of time up the coast a bit both living and working. In those days before email and fax I used to send my drawings to the Guardian Red Star from Bodmin Parkway. Many of you may not know what Red Star is. You put your parcel on the train and then somebody collected it at the other end.

I know I would've been delighted to have been a student here at Falmouth. I went to the Central, now Central Saint Martins, in those days it was in the middle of Holborn where the air is really like often breathing through an old sock. And this is not to mean that I think of Falmouth as just a place of fresh air and sand and beaches and hunky lifeguards, because I know very well from my husband, who used to teach here some years ago, what an industrious place Falmouth is. I remember him saying that for one particular project the foundation students had each done so much work that they couldn't carry it themselves into the crit, they had to get people to help them. And I know myself from my visits here what an industrious creative hub Falmouth is.

Now, I suppose I should give you a piece of advice. If you're going for any sort of interview don't drink red wine beforehand, because it makes your lips go black. Have some white wine instead! And I've found that July and August are brilliant months for getting work. This is because regular artists, contributors, animators, designers go on holiday and those who are organising things always need someone to fill in. And that's really how I got one of my first jobs. In those days before having your own website you did a schlep round with a black carrying case, and I'd done it, I'd been round to see all kinds of editors and magazines and newspapers and publishers that I could think of, but nothing happened. Mid-August suddenly the phone rang and it was the Times woman's page, there were holes in the page, their usual illustrator was on holiday, would I come in and draw there and do it by five o'clock? So I had complete kittens. I went in; the article I had to illustrate was on loft insulation, so there weren't very many jokes. But I did it.

And that's another startling thing when you get out of college; I was used to spending say six weeks on a drawing at college and when you get out you find these awful deadlines. I mean that is if you're going freelance, there are these terrible deadlines. So you get used pretty quick to delivering on time. And the other thing you get is pretty terrible and daft briefs for doing a

drawing. One of the earliest jobs I did was educational publishing. This was a book which had hundreds of little tiny pictures in and they were all horizontal, and each one was accompanied by a bit of what your orders were, and they were very strict. And one of these little horizontal things said please would you demonstrate the concept of high, higher, highest. You will draw three diving boards, high, higher, highest with three men of different heights standing on top. And however I drew it, whatever perspective I used in this tiny horizontal thing, I couldn't demonstrate it. So what I'm saying is when you get a daft instruction like that, challenge it and tell them that they are daft.

I think it's a very exciting time to be an illustrator now. Illustration used to have a slightly cosy image that you might have a teapot at one elbow and maybe a cat at the other, and Radio Four on, and you might be drawing pictures of mice in aprons. I mean it's very wrong. But there was this association that illustration was something that was just decorative, that it was just aligned to a text. But I mean illustration of course can be decorative and splendidly so. But it can also do other things. It can narrate, illuminate, it can describe, it can explain, it can also contradict what the text is saying. So as an illustrator you're allowed your own point of view. It's a very rich thing. And particularly now with the new technology and the rise of comics and new ways of narrative in graphic novels, it's a brilliant time to be drawing.

Now, I need my specs because I've nearly... I've got them all in the wrong order. So what I'm going to say is, in conclusion, but I'm not going to go on and talk about the drainage patterns of the Nile or the evolution of bee language, I'm going to say that you're all about to embark on a new chapter of your lives and I'd like to congratulate you all on your degrees and all the hard work and achievement that you've put into your years at Falmouth, and I wish you much success in your future careers. I want you to remember that the world is your lobster. And one final thing; be alert because Britain needs alerts. Thank you very much!"