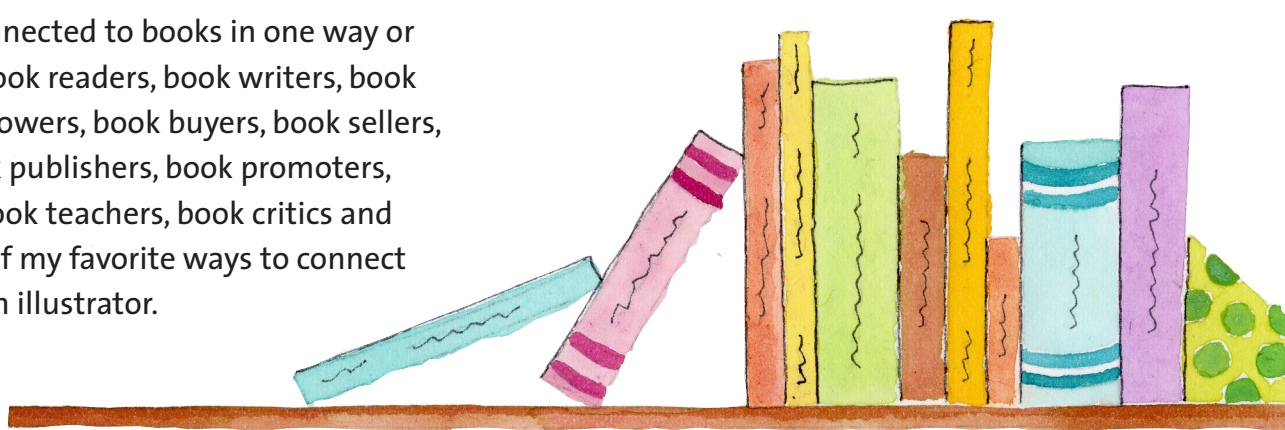


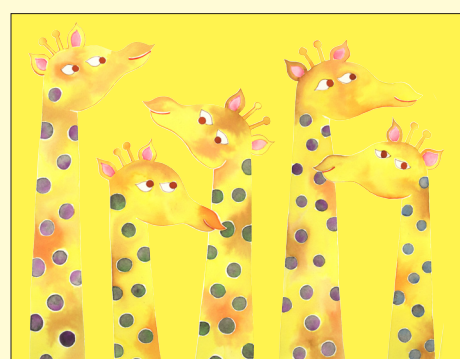
Some Things I Think About While Illustrating

by Ingrid Hess

Most of us are connected to books in one way or another. We are book readers, book writers, book lenders, book borrowers, book buyers, book sellers, book editors, book publishers, book promoters, book designers, book teachers, book critics and book lovers. One of my favorite ways to connect with books is as an illustrator.



I work in three medias: painting, drawing with computer and cut-paper. Regardless of which of these techniques I am using, I try to simplify objects into flat shapes while still keeping their essence intact.



painting image

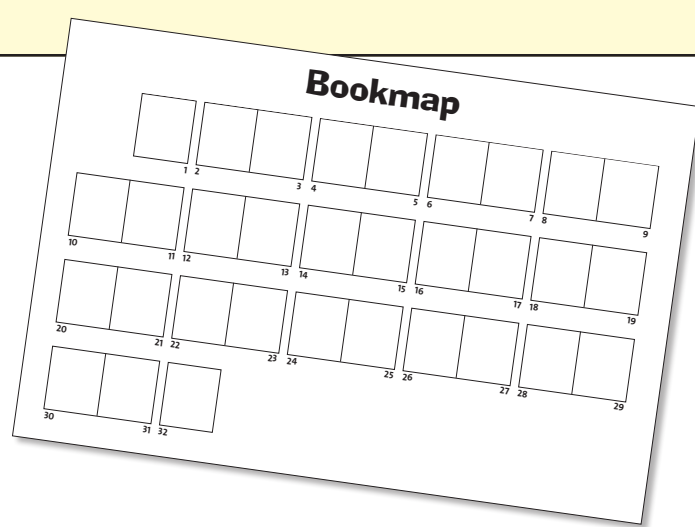


drawing with computer



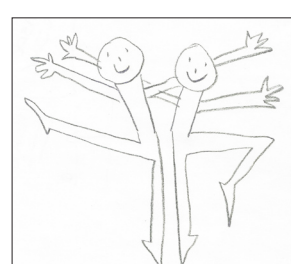
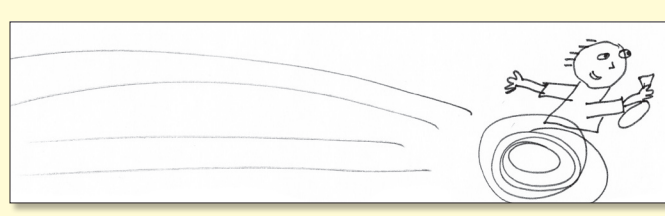
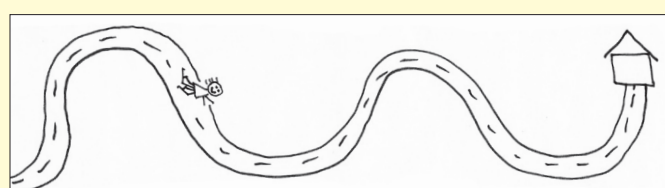
cut paper

When I receive a story to illustrate, the first thing I do is figure out how to divide the text. I make a bookmap. A bookmap is a sheet of paper that has a small rectangle drawn for every page in the book. Thirty-two pages is the standard length for a children's book. Then I split up the text, keeping in mind how to properly pace the book. I think about what scenes would make good illustrations, where it makes sense to have pauses and how the story will best flow.



Once the text has been divided, I start sketching thumbnails. A thumbnail is a very quick, very small sketch. I can usually sketch a thumbnail in about 20 seconds. The sole purpose of these thumbnails is for me to figure out a variety of ways that I can block out any given spread.

Every spread gets at least three thumbnails. Imagine that I am illustrating "Jack and the Beanstalk" and I am working on the spread that has the text "Jack grabbed the beans and ran home at top speed." The three thumbnails on the right are examples of what I might create. When the thumbnails are done I pick the one thumbnail for each spread to take to final art. Because a successful children's book is so dependent on good pacing, I need to make sure that the final set of thumbnails contains a balance of close-ups and wide angles, lots of details and sparse details, lots of text and little text.



first sketch



second sketch



third sketch



final art

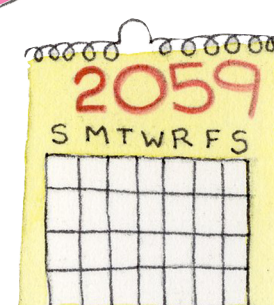
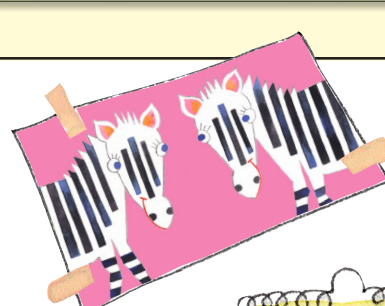
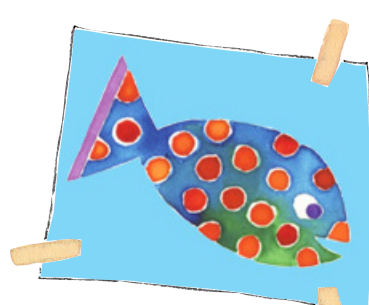
I create many versions of each image from the thumbnails to the final art. Along the way my editor weighs in to make sure my sketches are in keeping with the goal of the project. I am asked to make changes. This is an acceptable part of the process. The goal is to not ever have to change final art. If changes are required on final art, a mistake has been made somewhere along the way.

As an illustrator I think about social elements like diversity, stereotypes, and peace & justice issues as well as design elements like shape, pattern, and balance.



I don't think much about how many fingers are on each hand, whether the proportions I use are accurate and if things are really three-dimensional.

Two of the most fun situations I ever had to illustrate were an exploding toilet and a portrait of my mother's family.



I consider it a privilege to illustrate books and hope to continue to make pictures well into my future.