



Digital editorial art to the challenge of AI – we take a peek into the world of Sophie Mildner

It's hard to get a specific on the illustrators who work in Germany. Many work part-time, others might even practise another profession. Illustratoren Organisation e.V. (<https://illustratoren-organisation.de>) has about 3,000 members. We talk to Sophie Mildner who was shortlisted for the World Illustration Awards (2022).

by Ming Wong

Ming Wong (MW): Where are you from, Sophie? What is your professional training?

Sophie Mildner (SM): I was born in Germany in 1990, in the former GDR, right after the fall of the Berlin Wall. My parents always supported my creative energy, so I even got to go to a boarding school which specialised in the teaching of different art disciplines. Right after school, I was accepted at the University of Art and Design in Halle Burg Giebichenstein, where I studied communication design, specialising in illustrations. I got my bachelor's degree in 2014. After that I started my work as a freelance illustrator.

MW: What kind of illustrations do you do? If a customer/client came to you, what questions would you be asking them?

SM: I mostly do digital illustrations with my iPad for editorial purposes. Somehow my creative journey led me to that technique at this point. Usually, my clients already have clear ideas about how their images should look, so I mostly ask about the colour palette they want. Then it's about coming up with a good suggestion for the illustration.



MW: I noticed you have an agent. How does that work?

SM: My own website is essential for my work, but I also share it on Instagram and on my agent's website. She has her network and when I send her my newest works, she sends them to people who might be interested. If I'm lucky, she comes up with new projects and clients. Sometimes she advises me on how to illustrate for certain clients. She takes care of communication and the paperwork and goes to trade fairs for me. That's very convenient.

MW: Have you had inquiries or orders beyond Germany?

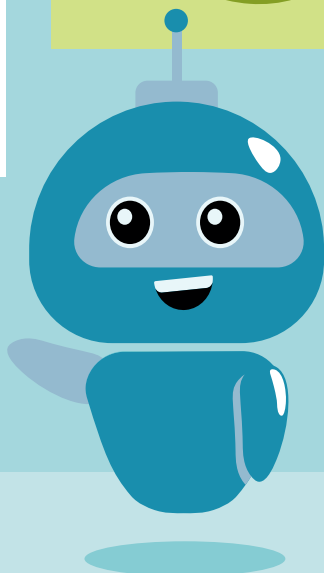
SM: To this point of time, my customers have mostly been German publishers, but I am optimistic that my work/business can still go abroad. There will be an exhibition in Shenzhen, China, with the Illustratoren Organisation e.V.. Maybe that will be a way to another level, you'll never know which efforts will bear fruits.

MW: Can illustrators today still make a living? How have AI and ChatGPT affected your industry?

SM: I think it is very hard to make a living just as an illustrator, especially at the beginning when you are just starting out and nobody knows what you can do. AI is a very controversial part of our creative work. It does help sometimes to speed up some processes, but it is also scary that for instance Meta uses the content posted on Instagram to train their AI. I absolutely disagree with that method, but I also would like to train my own AI just out of curiosity – just where are the borders of artificial intelligence? AI hasn't affected my work yet, but I am sure it is just a matter of time.

MW: I was attracted to your illustration here because our newsletter deals with work and business. What were you trying to convey here?

SM: The illustration is about people who won't stop talking, regardless of what their conversation partner wants. I found an article in a psychology magazine and I could really relate to that topic, maybe we all know this kind of person, so I made a picture based on it. The article had an example from a work relationship, so I put it in that setting. This illustration was just used for my portfolio.



Vokabeltraining

boarding school
Internat

suggestion
Vorschlag

curiosity
Neugier

to relate to
something
hier: etwas nach-
vollziehen können,
sich mit etwas
indentifizieren