

bazaar

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Artists Group
"Circle of Dreams"

Amimi Cheng's CIRCLE OF STORIES

"The Hat Party"
0.3 Micron on paper



There are many different paths that one could take to become an illustrator but I believe, like with so many other things; passion and a strong interest are essential elements to stay motivated to continue the pursuit.

By bazaar staff

We wished to kick-start 2015 with a bit of whimsy, and our cover image by Hong Kong-based illustrator, Amimi Cheng, delivered us with the perfect dose. Amimi believes that illustrations transcend languages and cultural barriers, and sees her work as a form of communication. While this bazaar team is precisely located 6,632 kilometers away from Hong Kong, a closer look into Amimi's work reveals that art knows no race or country. We instantly connected with the characters she talentedly conveys; every person she carefully drew has a story, and every story can be interpreted differently.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, the talented illustrator has showcased her works in her hometown, the US, Canada, China, Taiwan, and now Kuwait. Upon graduating from the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in the U.S., she embarked on her illustrative journey and never looked back. Amimi currently works as a freelance illustrator, and is also an art teacher. She considers music as her companion while she works, and enjoys listening to classical and instrumental genres as well as movie soundtracks. When she's not working, she seeks inspiration in the art of the casual conversation: Amimi believes that a simple meet-up with friends at a coffee shop, for instance, can spark interesting ideas for her illustrations. Get to know the hat-loving, vintage-collecting, illustrator in this exclusive interview!

When did you first become interested in art and illustrating?

Since I was in kindergarten, I have been troubling my parents with my interest in drawing. I liked to draw everywhere – on the walls at home, my toys, clothes and even on my face, hands and legs. I considered drawing as a hobby, not as a potential future career, until I graduated from high school. I got a valuable chance to meet with creative directors from big advertising agencies and showed them my portfolio. I was surprised yet felt enlightened, as all of the creative directors I met suggested to me that I should consider becoming an illustrator.

How has your work progressed since you first embarked on your illustrating career?

At the very beginning, I simply wanted to express my negative emotions through drawing. As my desire to communicate with audiences grew, I expanded the subject matter to everyday life. My illustration work focuses more on reflecting human relationships, values and trends in society, as well as my imagination world.

What inspires your work?

A lot of my works are inspired by personal experience. The "east meets west" culture in Hong Kong has heavily influenced my values and beliefs, as well as my art style. The constant interactions and behaviors between different people have always captivated and have driven me to be observant of my surroundings, which in time has inspired much of my work.

What do you wish to communicate through your work?

Through my illustrations I want to inspire and motivate audiences to re-evaluate and rethink their lives, especially their relationships with their families, friends and the loved ones. I believe that in modern society we spend too much time pursuing our careers, achieving our goals, making money and we tend to forget about the importance of communicating with the people around you.

Can you tell us about the story behind the illustration, "Circle of Stories"?

I was invited by the MobArt Gallery (Hong Kong) to create wall art, on site, under the theme "Circle of _____" that was part of a program called "Detour 2014". At first, I did not have a solid idea for my artwork so I simply started to depict the people who passed by the hallway, who stopped by and watched my drawing process and people who I had conversation with. They are local people, tourists, families, elderlies, artists, designers, students, etc. Throughout the five days of working on site, I heard many interesting stories and point of views about life from different people. I believe everyone has his/her unique experience and stories to tell. The final illustration included a total of 270 people, so I named it "Circle of 270 stories".

What are some of the exhibitions that you have participated in, and can you tell us more about the experience?

Many years ago, I was told "Great work can lead you around the world". Those [continued...]



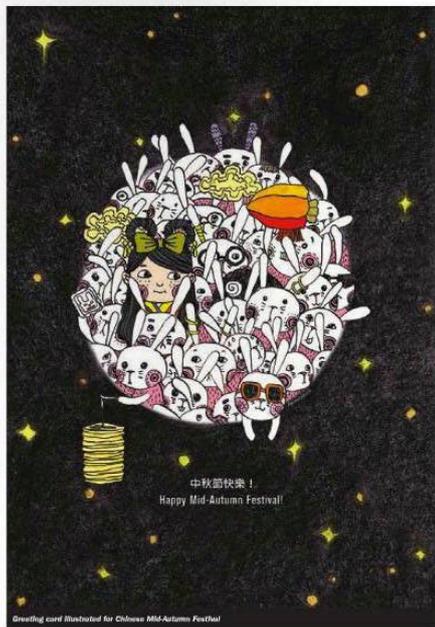
Working on site in FMO, Hong Kong



Sketching & drafting the outfit of each character



Progress on the second day



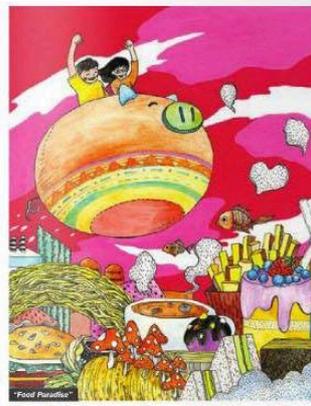
Creating card illustration for Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival

[...continued] words were so eye opening for me, it made me treasure every opportunity that I had to share my work with the public. I am honored that my work got accepted in the Society of Illustrators Student Scholarship Exhibition in New York, Kaohsiung Design Festival in Taiwan and the World Animal Day Exhibition Tour 2014 in Hong Kong. The huge amount of exposure for my work opened up many doors for me. I feel both excited and nervous every time because audiences might give me an instant reaction; the tension before you receive their comments, be it positive or negative, is never something you get used to. I am grateful to have met so many people from different countries who share

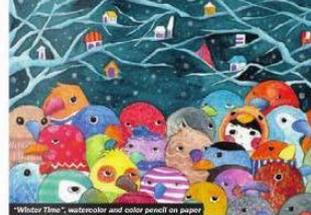
the common interest and passion in art through participating in exhibitions.

What does it take to become an illustrator? Would you say that it is based on pure talent alone or practice?

There are many different paths that one could take to become an illustrator but I believe, like with so many other things, passion and a strong interest are essential elements to stay motivated to continue the pursuit in becoming an illustrator. It's important to continuously create new work, share this work via social media and actively submit your work to competitions and publications to reach out to potential clients. I would also say that becoming an illustrator is not only based on



"Food Paradise"



"Winter Time", watercolor and color pencil on paper



Amini Cheng

pure talent, but constant practice is also important to develop one's talent and make improvements.

What are some of your goals in life and your career in illustration?

It has always been a dream of mine to become a children's book author and illustrator. I hope that one day I can travel around the world with just my sketchbook and drawing tools to interview people I meet on my journey, collecting stories from their lives and retelling them through my illustrations.

What's the best advice that you could give to an up and coming creative wishing to have a career as an illustrator?

I had a hard time in finding my illustration style

and was afraid to step out of my comfort zone to accept challenges. However, I soon realized that personal style comes when you do not limit yourself and worry about how others think about you. Also, don't be shy to share your work on social media and showcasing your work at art shows, because you will never know who would be interested in your work until you try! Be proactive and stay positive!

Finally, you seem to really like hats. Is there a reason behind this?

My hair is naturally curly, dry and frizzy all the time and it takes me a lot of time to take care of it before I go out. When I got into University, I started to lose patience in taking care of it because the assignments

and work occupied most of my time. To resolve this, I started to wear hats. It was first for practical reasons, but now I have totally fallen in love with hats. I began to collect different styles of hats and wear them for different occasions. My obsession with hats has also influenced my illustrations.

For more information about Amini Cheng, go to aminicheng.com or check out her blog thegiftoftherainforest.blogspot.com. Follow her on [Instagram @Amini.Cheng](https://www.instagram.com/Amini.Cheng) and on [Facebook: Amini Cheng Illustration](https://www.facebook.com/Amini.Cheng.Illustration). Circle of Stories' photo series photographed by Brian Jim. Amini Cheng's personal photo by Simon Lei.