

INTRODUCTION

By MILTON GLASER

In 1968, Clay Felker and I started *New York* magazine with an illustrious group of writers, photographers and illustrators who were enthusiastic about redefining what a city magazine could be. It was in the early days of the “New Journalism,” a way of expressive reporting, practiced by Jimmy Breslin, Tom Wolfe, and Gloria Steinem, all of whom were associated with us. At the same time, a parallel movement arose in illustration with inspired practitioners like Robert Weaver, Tom Allen, Robert Grossman, Robert Andrew Parker, Barbara Nessim and numerous others. The practice of journalism and journalistic illustration were being simultaneously reinvented. In retrospect, it was a moment of endless possibilities for people in the visual and literary arts.

Clay and I had an idea that involved bringing back illustrative journalism in a sort of 19th century idea, probably best exemplified by Winslow Homer’s newspaper illustrations for *Harper’s Weekly*. Even though the circle of new American illustrators was outstanding, Clay felt that most of them were not really interested in representing a kind of objective reality. About the same time, I had been taking notice of some unusual illustrations that appeared from time to time in two British magazines, *The Observer* and the *Sunday Times Magazine*. They had an objective, almost neutral quality that intensified their sense of being “real.” The effect was powerful. Most illustrators go to some length to conceal the photographic origins of their work. Here those references were intensified and because of our belief in the reality of photography, the images were convincingly authentic. The author of those paintings was Julian Allen.

I showed the work to Clay and he responded enthusiastically. I flew to London to meet Julian with the idea of offering him a six-month contract to become a staff illustrator specializing in reportage. I remember at the time not knowing if he was interested or not. He had a Humphrey Bogart-like persona; his few carefully chosen responses were defined by a sense of coiled energy. I don’t remember if he agreed that night or later but within a very short time he was on his way to New York. That was June 1973.

Julian’s ability to create convincing illustrations of unwitnessed events became his trademark. With very few exceptions, no other illustrator was capable of creating the deadpan, seemingly objective paintings as well as he could. We worked together on many “secret histories” – Watergate, the oil cartels, a variety of mafia crime related stories and the Yom Kippur War (where he performed exactly like an old-time artist/reporter, including being wounded in a bus explosion).

Although Julian was not a verbal personality, he was a born storyteller. He was capable of painting a beautiful picture, but in his work, beauty was an occasional by-product. His ability to focus on the narrative heart of a story was unexcelled.

After the expiration of his contract, Julian continued work with us at the magazine but developed a brilliant career working for other publications, including *Rolling Stone*, *Time*, and *Vanity Fair*, as well. His enthusiasm for the work never diminished and in his all too brief life his contribution to the field of illustrative journalism established a standard that continues to inspire our profession.

JULIAN ALLEN'S FIVE LEGACIES

By STEVEN HELLER

An artist's legacy may be measured by what mental pictures his work conjures. It's funny how many things remind me of Julian Allen's work. I'd like to list but five:

1. THE INTERSECTION OF 42ND ST. AND FIFTH AVE.

In the early 70s, Julian did a series of paintings of famous revolutionary battles in New York and painted the historical events over contemporary photographs of New York. It was an inspired and, at the time, totally novel way of presenting recreations that had resonance for everyone.

2. **SUNSET BOULEVARD.** The other night when my cable was out, I popped in the video of this classic movie. And there it was the scene that Julian painted of Gloria Swanson, her eyes eerily wide open, her arm dramatically outstretched. Julian loved old movies and in his illustrations for a book on movie sequels brought these scenes back to life.

3. **THE CHELSEA HOTEL.** There was a time, and for quite a time, Julian was obsessed with punks. He was fascinated with Sid Vicious, the

only real punk, Julian would say. He painted him in at least three tableaux, as well as Sid in the famous suicide pact with his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, at the Chelsea Hotel. I can't go by that building without thinking of Julian's painting.

5. **WATERGATE.** Unlike the current Presidential scandal, where mental pictures serve no useful purpose, during Watergate the world struggled to conjure images of the besieged Richard Nixon and his henchmen involved in their banal illegal acts. Julian brought them all

to life. The inspired choice of Julian to make concrete Watergate's most private and secret moment gave all us readers of *New York* magazine a chance to see what was only suggested. This may not be Julian's crowning achievement as an artist, but it is one of his most important contributions to history. I, for one, can't think of Watergate without seeing Julian's images.

4. **THE YOM KIPPUR WAR.** When I read about Israeli and Palestinian peace talks my mind sometimes wanders to Julian's experience in the Sinai. How many illustrators do you know have been wounded covering a war. As some of you know, Julian was hurt when a bomb exploded on the bus that was taking him to a battlefield. His subsequent pencil portraits of wounded Egyptian and Israeli soldiers in the hospital tent where he was taken for treatment, were testaments to the senselessness of violent conflict and the resilience of the human spirit.

Not a bad legacy for an illustrator. Thanks, Julian.

1. THE INTERSECTION OF 42ND ST. AND FIFTH AVE.

below *Washington's Rout at 42nd Street: 1776*

2. SUNSET BOULEVARD

right *Sunset Boulevard: Movie Sequel*



3. THE CHELSEA HOTEL

above *Sid and Nancy*—Part of the 'Fatal Moments' series



4. THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

Various sketches



5. WATERGATE

right *Nixon at the Diner*

opposite page *Nixon Blues*

below *Nixon and Halderman*



RAISING ILLUSTRATION: JULIAN ALLEN AT MICA

By WHITNEY SHERMAN

There is an old saying that goes “Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach.” In reality, within the realm of contemporary illustration, those who can, do—and teach. While with us, Julian cast a very bright light on the study of illustration at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). It's not unusual for artists to find themselves drawn to education. Teaching is a very personal and challenging act, especially in the arts where learning is not based on formulaic texts, but on observation and practice. The decision to teach is a comment on an artist's own sense of fullness and need to share this fullness, on a willingness to reexamine oneself. Julian came to MICA in response to a search for Chair of Illustration acting on a desire to expand his role as an educator, to share his talents and professional experience. In doing this, he answered not only his own needs, but those of a newly emerged illustration department.

Previously illustration was located with graphic design under the umbrella of Visual Communications, an academic relationship favored by many art colleges and university art departments over the last 20 years. At MICA, it had become clear that this model didn't serve the needs and passions of students of illustration, nor those of the faculty there to teach them. An accomplished practitioner of illustration, Julian had much to share and had many ideas about how to do it.

His abilities as an inspiring teacher were born during his years at Parsons School of Design and the School of Visual Arts in New York, but blossomed at MICA as Chair of Illustration. A gentle leader whose charm and generosity were remarkable, Julian's natural instinct to unite things fostered his recognition in the value of incorporating existing faculty into his vision. That isn't to say he kept things as they were. His keen sense of people guided his decisions when adjusting faculty assignments. He left no doubt he'd thought things through, yet there always seemed a door left open, inviting dialogue on the thoughts behind his decisions. This openness fostered deep trust in him as a leader and facilitated more immediate results for his efforts. He was an egoless leader and that sense of him created devoted faculty.

Since the early 70s as a young illustrator/designer, I was drawn to Julian's work, becoming dedicated to it as student is to mentor. *New York* magazine was my textbook. Each month brilliantly conceived and rendered images provoked the viewer to believe in the truth of the image, then, with a wink, confirmed their illusion. Julian's artistic sensibility embraced this conceit, a simultaneously realistic and theatrical folly. He transcended his sources (press photography, photo reference, unlikely compositions) making his own kind of magic realism. I was a student of his illustrations bent on decoding their potent magic. Without him knowing, he'd become my long distance mentor. I'm positive there are others who felt the same way.

Within one year of coming to MICA, Julian retooled the curriculum within our department. His prodigious abilities as an artist spoke directly to colleagues in the other departments at the College, creating understanding and respect between historically “different” disciplines. Julian was plugged into drawing. He once told me he produced a finished piece daily. This is not hard to believe given his enthusiasm for drawing and illustration and the literally thousands of works he created. Looking through his originals recently, I was again awestruck at the volume of work and skill he wielded. A man of impressive cultural literacy and genuine curiosity in people, Julian built a high profile for illustration at MICA.

Julian's plan created a culture of illustration that prized ideas over surface. He crafted a program where students became educated in concept making and history along with hand skills. His respect for emerging technology and personal expression envisioned illustration's place in the 21st century.

Tapping his network of friends and associates, Julian brought theory and professional practice together in the classroom. Through all its parts, his program gave permission to students of different stripes to study and practice art created for the public's consumption. Julian connected students to a larger history of narrative work, one stretching back past the birth of printmaking and Renaissance painting to the earliest petrographic communications. This tradition of celebrating the language of illustration continues today in MICA's Illustration department with a team of award-winning full-time and adjunct faculty, departmentally initiated exhibitions such as *Comics on the Verge and Another Voice: Political Illustration from The Progressive* and interdisciplinary programming, such as Henrik Drescher/Wu Wing Yee's Babblelab.

Leading by example was Julian's way. He was a roll-up-your-sleeves kind of guy. He got his hands dirty. The students loved it. His manner was naturally alluring, especially to students dreaming of becoming illustrators. Julian was also a very private person. In the fall of 1998, after his summer-long illness, Julian could not fill his teaching role for the fall semester. Few people knew the extent or nature of his illness at that time, and all of us were still deeply hopeful for his return. In his absence, I took over his classes. The incoming sophomores had heard exciting things about the department and Julian. They came to class excited, charged, having anticipated their first class with him. Sadly, they were never to have this experience.

At the memorial held for Julian at MICA, many of us stood and spoke expressing our thoughts and feelings about him. His wife, Victoria described him as a beloved person. Certainly this was the truest appraisal among all our collective feelings. Something about him as an artist and as a man struck deeply in the heart of his colleagues and students, this department and College. In his brief time here, he left his indelible mark, the legacy of his spirit and passion for illustration and the artists who practiced it then, now and in the future.

JULIAN ALLEN

1942-1998



Julian Allen was born and raised in Cambridge, England, studied at the Cambridge College of Art, and completed his post-graduate studies in illustration and printmaking at the Central College of Art in London. He worked as a reporter-artist and freelance illustrator in London during the 1960s, primarily for the *Sunday Times* magazine.

In 1973 Allen's illustrations caught the attention of Clay Felker and Milton Glaser, then editor and art director of *New York* magazine, who invited Allen to move to New York and work as contributing editor and resident artist for the recently launched publication. Until he left the magazine to resume his freelance career in 1977, Allen pursued his journalistic approach to illustration covering diverse subjects and capturing some of the most infamous events of the day—the Watergate scandal; the Yom Kippur war in the Middle East (where he was injured in a bomb explosion); the Entebbe rescue; as well as the bicentennial of the American Revolution, gypsies in New York, youth gangs in the South Bronx, and numerous stories of New York subculture, politics, crime, and food.

Allen's illustrations have appeared on posters, book jackets, advertisements, and in nearly every major national and international magazine—*Esquire*, *GQ*, *Newsweek*, *New York*, *Rolling Stone*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The New Yorker*, *Time*, and many others. In 1990 he collaborated with writer Bruce Wagner to create the noir comic strip *Wild Palms*, which appeared monthly in *Details* magazine and later became an ABC TV miniseries produced by Oliver Stone. The success of that project led to a second, *Cul de Sac*, which also appeared in *Details*. In 1994, he was commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service to create a series of stamps depicting Blues singers, including Ma Rainey, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Robert Johnson.

During his distinguished career, Allen received numerous awards and medals from the Society of Illustrators, American Illustration (he was a founding member), European Illustration, Society of Publication Designers, and Communication Arts. His work is featured in the books *Innovators of American Illustration*, *Art for Survival*, *The Art of New York*, *This Face You Got*, *20 + 1 Best American Illustrators*, *Rolling Stone's The Illustrated Portraits*, and *The Graphic Design Reader*. Articles about his work have appeared in AIGA, Print, Graphis, Illustrators (Japan), and Creative Review (London).

For 18 years, Allen taught and lectured on illustration in England and the United States, as a visiting artist and lecturer at numerous institutions, and as a faculty member at Parsons School of Design, the School of Visual Arts, and Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), where he was chair of illustration at the time of his death on September 28, 1998, at the age of 55. Julian Allen is remembered as a generous and insightful teacher, and his vision continues to inform the evolution of illustration at MICA. He is survived by his wife, Victoria, and by his son and daughter, Rubin and Holly.

Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), founded in 1826, is consistently ranked among the very top tier of visual arts colleges in the nation and enrolls approximately 1,500 undergraduate students and 200 graduate students from 47 states and 48 foreign countries. MICA offers programs of study leading to the BFA, MA, and MFA degrees, as well as post-baccalaureate certificate programs and a full slate of credit and noncredit courses for adults, college-bound students, and children. MICA is also recognized as an important cultural resource for the Baltimore/Washington region, sponsoring many public and community-outreach programs, including more than 100 exhibitions by students, faculty, and nationally and internationally known artists annually, as well as artists' residencies, film series, lectures, readings, and performances. For more information, visit www.mica.edu.

Many thanks to Michelle Barnes, Milton Glaser, Steven Heller, Jillian Lowe, Gene Moz, Robert Priest, Whitney Sherman, and Veronique Vienne for their contributions.

Julian Allen's official Web site is online at www.julianallen.com.

