



MAKE ART THAT SELLS
ILLUSTRATING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

PITCHING INSIGHT FINDING YOUR USP

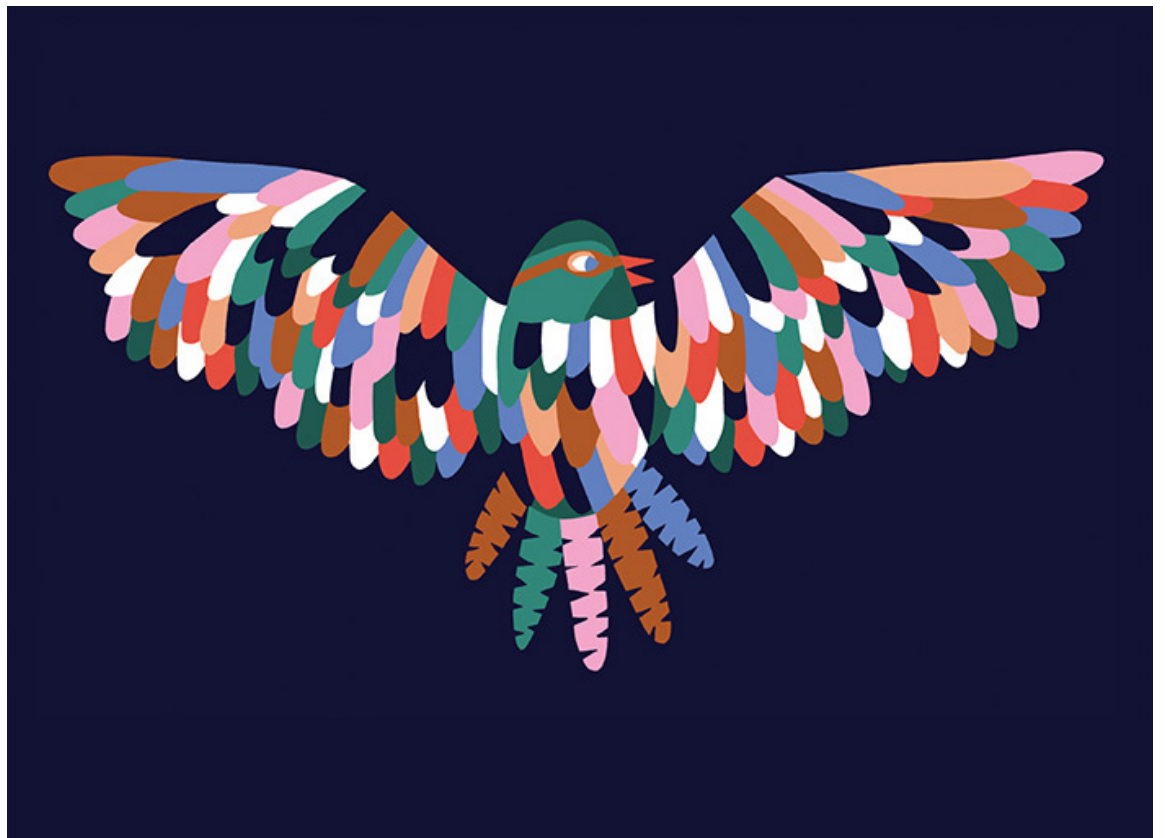
Week 3

This week I want to talk about your **USP**—your **Unique Selling Point**. What does that mean? Well, it's what makes you, **YOU**. There is only one you, you are unique—so shout it loud and proud!

A personal confession

Personally, when I think about my own USP I freak out. I overthink it all. What am I good at? What do I like? What is the point? It's very angsty and quite embarrassing really. It's far easier to see these qualities in someone else than yourself isn't it? So be brave, and talk to friends or peers for help.

I'm a freelance art director, so whilst I work in London a lot of the time, I actually live in Brighton on the South Coast of England. I share a studio with nine other creatives, including a costume designer, a jeweller, a fine art painter and several illustrators and print makers.



hellomarine.com

I sit with Marine (hellomarine.com) a fabulous illustrator from Paris. She oozes French style amid our sea of British quirk. Her USP is definitely her French accent! That and her gorgeous work, check it out if you get a moment.

The importance of a sketchbook

Keeping a sketchbook can help to discover your unique style. I hope you have been keeping one throughout this course. Today (and again at the end of the course) look back over your work and ask yourself the following:

1. What jumps out?
2. What excites you, and which did you enjoy the most?
3. How does it make you feel?

It's so important to have an **emotional connection** with your work. Perhaps there is a particular medium that you like to use? Or some quirky hand-lettering dotted around the edges?



Carolyn Gavin via www.brwnpaperbag.com

Here's a page from the sketchbook of Lilla's artist Carolyn Gavin—look at her trademark colours, and foliage. Beautiful, inspiring and distinctive!

Another personal confession

When you look through your sketchbook there should be something in there that makes you smile. It might make you laugh too. Crikey, I've got a whole heap of wonky drawings in my sketchbook that just make me laugh! Let's take this one for example . . .



This is a drawing of Adam, my very patient husband. We stopped for a break in a little café on a very cold, wet December afternoon. I can clearly remember the weather, the time of day, what we were drinking (hot chocolate) and eating (cinnamon whirls). By taking a moment to sit and draw I created a memory, and it's a memory of an afternoon that makes me smile. I instantly have an emotional connection to the picture. The drawing is a little wonky, and made more unique by the fact I only had four colours in my pencil case!

Why is a USP important?

Without it, we would all be the same, and that would be very boring indeed!

So as an Art Director I am begging you to break the rules and innovate.

Here's how:

TIP: You have to like what you are drawing—even if it's odd—deep down in your bones it has to make you happy. It's a gut feeling, which you'll find with enough practice.



1 DON'T FOLLOW THE CROWD

In a world of social media this can be really hard. We move through trends at an alarming rate and so the need to be unique is even more important. Be aware of trends, your peers and contemporaries, be aware of the markets . . . but then switch it off. Unplug, and get back to your roots. What do you like doing, and what makes you happy?

2 BE BRAVE AND CONFIDENT

Sounds easy, doesn't it? I've had to overcome some mental battles just to include my own dodgy drawing in this download—I get it. It's really hard to step out of your comfort zone and say LOOK AT ME. You feel vulnerable and exposed and you risk rejection. Try to push those feelings aside and be confident.

3 PUT THE HOURS IN

Practice drawing every day and keep a sketchbook, you will start to see the good work emerge.

4 DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND ENJOY IT!

When I look at an artist's work I can tell which part they really enjoyed doing and which they didn't. If you really love something, it will shine through.



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5 TRY TO MAINTAIN AN EMOTIONAL AND VISCERAL CONNECTION WITH YOUR WORK

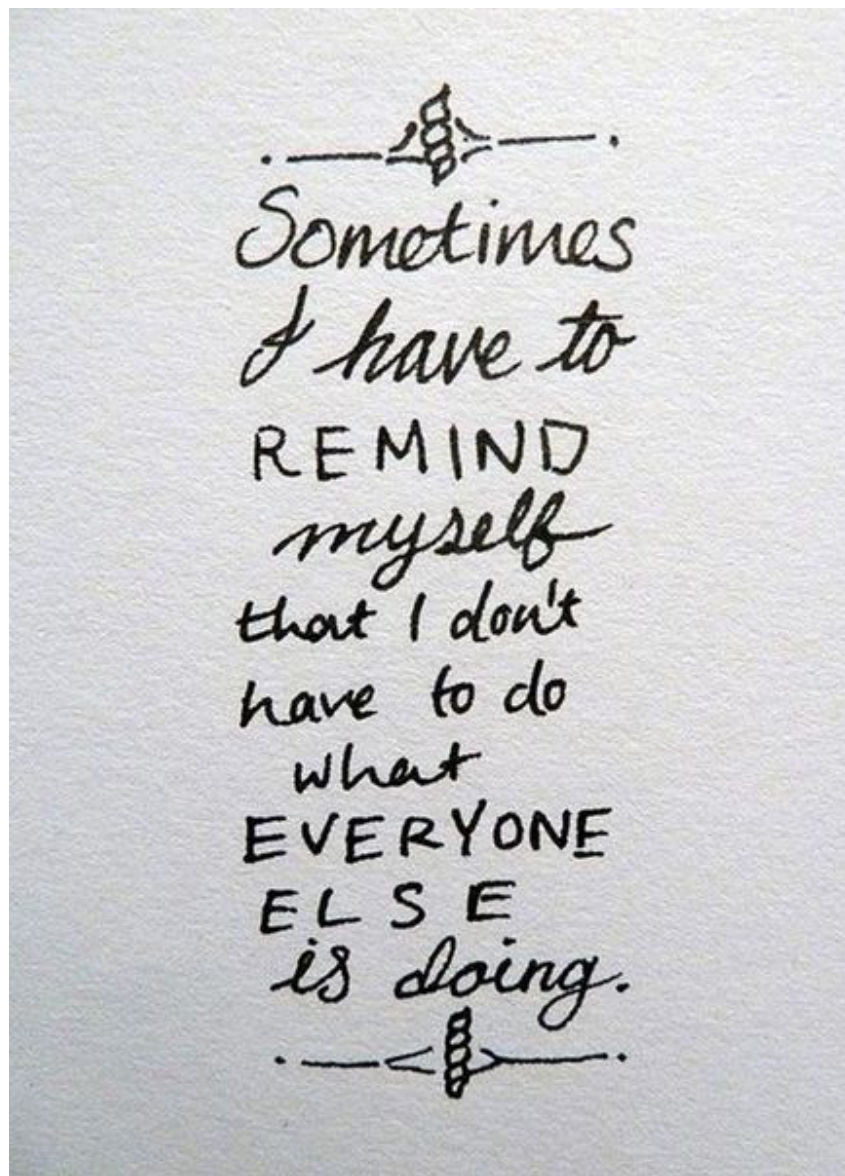
Be honest, still and quiet and listen to yourself. What **really** makes you happy? I am working hard on this right now myself. In the last year I have realised I actually prefer to do my artwork by hand, and have nothing at all to do with the computer. I spend my working day on the computer so getting away from it—going ‘analogue’ as I say—makes me much happier regardless of the outcome.

6 PEOPLE BUY YOUR JOY

I’ve learnt a lot from my years as an Art Director and to echo what Lilla says. You don’t have to be overly cute or saccharine, but I am drawn towards positive, happy, and fun artwork.

7 BREAK THE RULES

Be wild and innovative with your ideas.



A BRIEF WORD ON CONFIDENCE

Be confident and brave, but not cocky, argumentative or stubborn. Working in a creative environment should be an opportunity to learn, grow and collaborate together. **I will not work with someone, however lovely their work might be, if they are a tricky character, or if they have a reputation for being a diva.**

Zoë