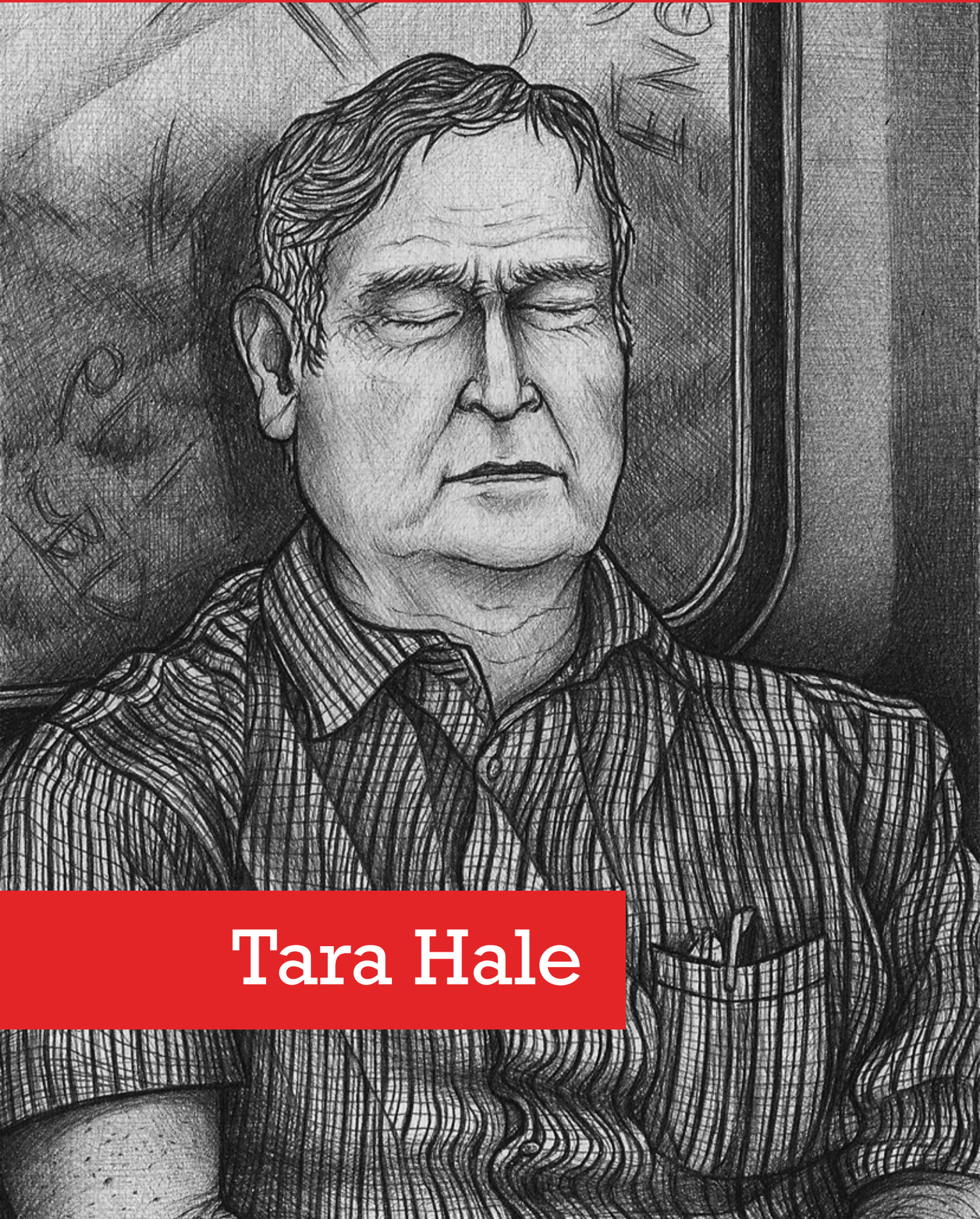


{PROFILE}



Tara Hale

# Tara Hale

I was instantly smitten when I saw Tara's "Asleep on the Train" series - created with black ballpoint pen on her train journeys. This detail-driven artist shares her work, teaching practice and details of her process (including ballpoint pens!) with Outline.

**Outline:** As a self-taught illustrator, we'd love to hear of the steps you have taken (consciously or unconsciously) to teach yourself how to capture such detail and precision in your illustration work. What attracts you to working in this kind of style?

**Tara:** Like many illustrators and artists, I have always drawn. It comes naturally to me and I find it relaxing. In order to challenge myself more and improve my skills, from a young age I started drawing portraits from photo reference because - to me - capturing someone's likeness exactly is very, very difficult. It forces you to draw what is actually there exactly and not what you think is there. You have to concentrate and pay attention to detail. I enjoy the

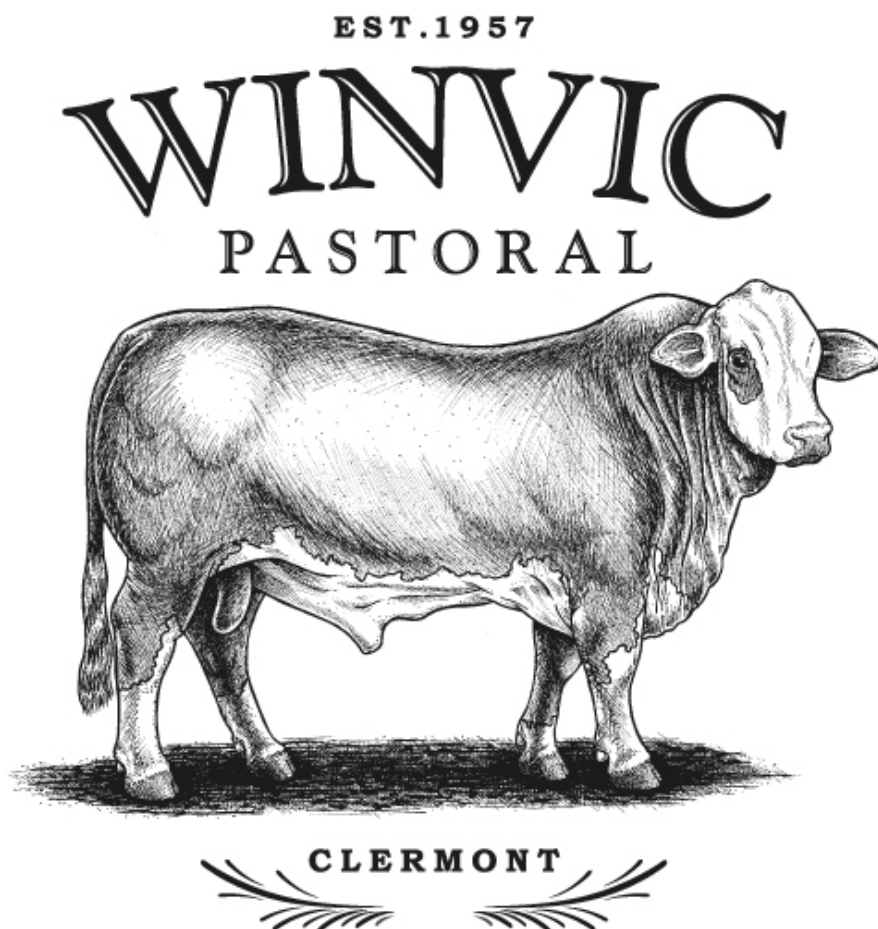
challenge of trying to get it right. I also really enjoy watching time lapse videos of other artists creating portraits to see their technique and I love looking at portraits in general - in all different styles - and try to really absorb how they're done. I think I like the detailed style of work as it appeals to my meticulous nature. I'm not really a 'throw paint on the canvas' kind of artist!

**Outline:** How do you manage your time as a graphic designer and illustrator? Are you able to combine the two through your work?

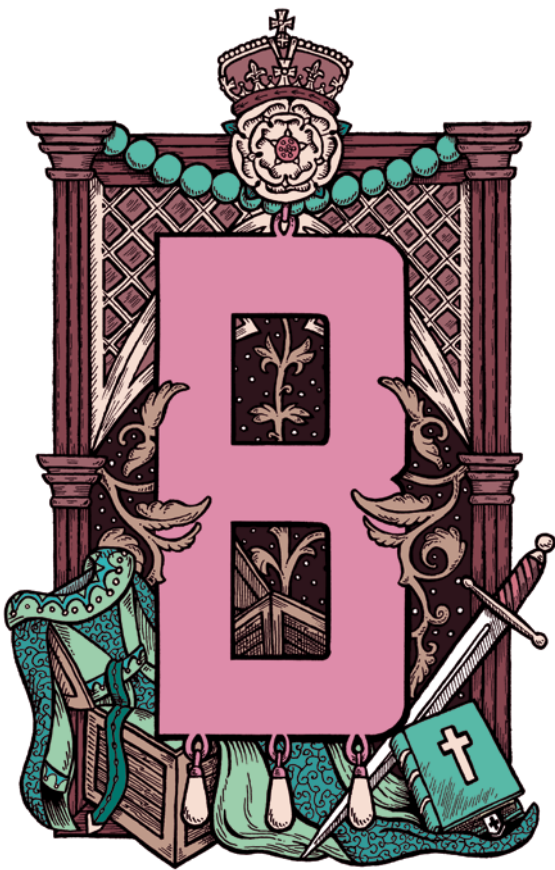
**Tara:** I have a full time job (Monday to Friday) as a Senior Graphic Designer so I have to fit any freelance Illustration or Design work in around that and the night time family routine so consequently I end up working some pretty late nights when I have freelance work on. I can run on about 5 hours sleep - any less and I'm a zombie! I would love to just illustrate and create art full time, but it's just not realistic for me at the moment. Sometimes at work I am able to combine design and illustration, so those are good jobs to work on. I have a very understanding and supportive husband so if I have a project that needs my attention, he takes up the slack which is very wonderful.

**Outline:** We'd love to learn more about the illustration course you have devised for the Griffith University's Queensland College of Art.

**Tara:** I have spent almost my entire career as a graphic designer and commercial illustrator working for different companies and seldom working exclusively as a freelance designer or full time illustrator/artist (unfortunately!). I have worked in Advertising, Design, Retail and Printing companies and because of that, I have had to be a bit of an illustration chameleon. In that role it has been important for me to be able to produce work in many different styles to suit different jobs, projects,



*Winvie logo (drawing - ink on watercolour paper),  
the rest of the logo belongs to MadeKnown design company*



Illustrations for the Globe Theatre in London: They were all done in ink and nib on watercolour paper at SRA4 size in 10 days from concept to final art. The colour was added digitally by Small Back Room

target markets and companies etc... I am not good at everything, but I like to give any style a try. I'm a bit of a 'Jack of All Trades'.

Consequently, I was approached in 2009 by a Lecturer at QCA to appear as a guest speaker for the Visual Communications students. It went well and shortly thereafter I was asked to write a brand new elective course for the Uni to begin in 2010. It's called 'Illustration for Design' (QCA2524 - <http://bit.ly/1mVY5c7>) and it's based around the concept of creating an illustration from a written brief from a 'client' and then by utilising different skills and styles and developing a concept from brainstorming sketch to completion, meet the brief to give the client what they want. It's a true commercial Illustration experience incorporating illustration and design and I tried to keep the course structure as 'real world' as possible. We covered a wide range of application of illustration including:

- Portraiture
- Fashion Illustration
- Children's Book Illustration
- Comic Book Art
- Skate Deck Art
- Murals
- Logos
- Instructional Diagrams

- Packaging Illustration
- Lettering

.....and a couple of others.

The classes were quite small, and there was a lot of drawing - very hands on, so you had to have a certain degree of skill and illustration knowledge beforehand to get the most out of it. It was not a 'learn to draw' class. There were no theory exams but there were weekly assessments, written rationales, and three major assessments. The course is only a Semester long and I taught 2 classes per semester for 2 years. It was a lot of marking but it was very rewarding. There are some amazingly talented young artists out there who were constantly blowing my mind. I think the course has changed a little since I had to stop lecturing and return to full time work, but at its core that's what it's still about apparently. It was an amazing experience and it gave me a whole new respect for teachers!

**Outline:** I particularly love the series, "Asleep on the Train." Could you tell us about this work - the medium, the background story, and the models you used?

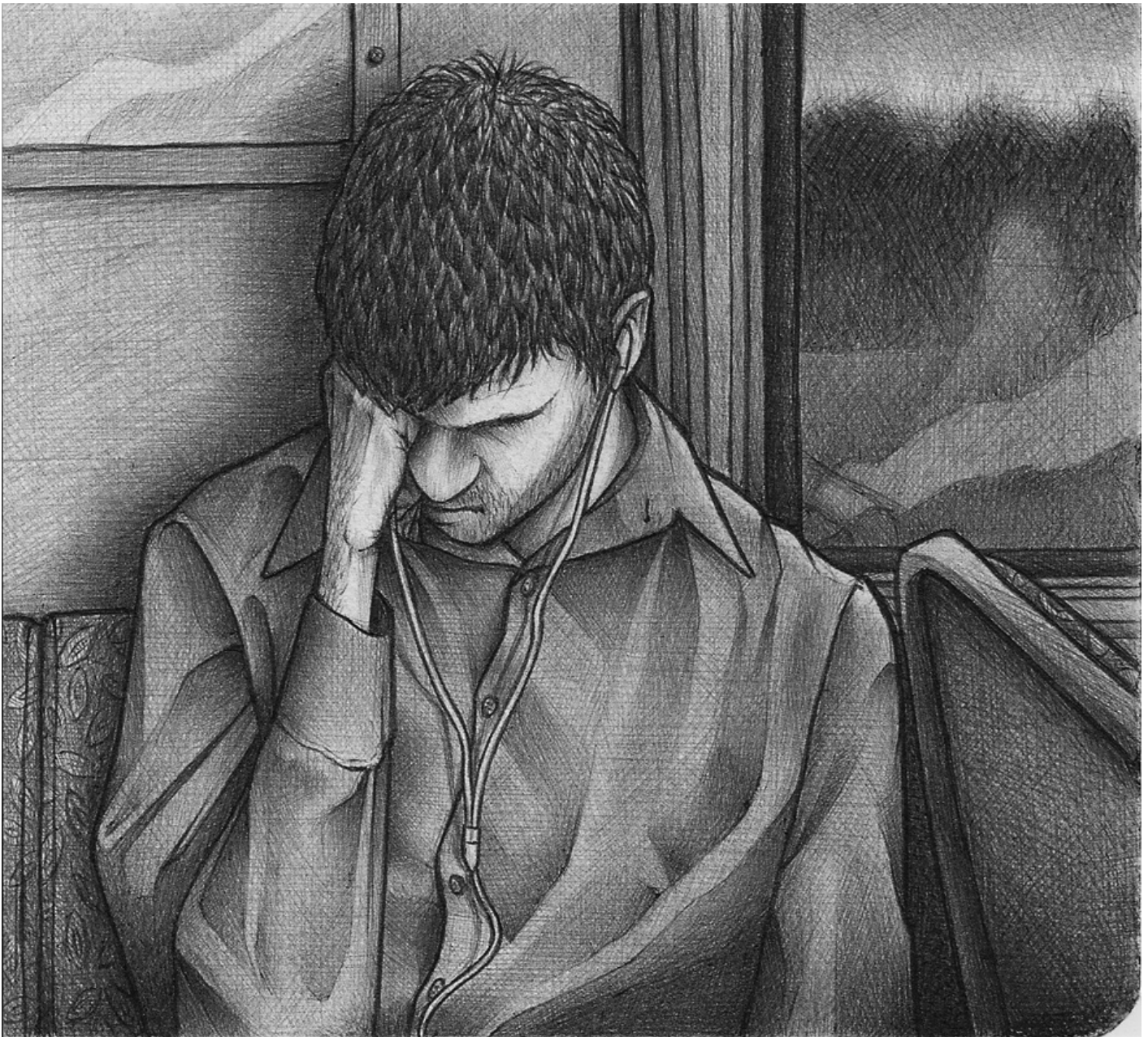
**Tara:** I used to commute to and from work on the train 5 days a week and my trip was about 45 minutes each way. I used to always carry an A5 sketchbook with me everywhere and a fine point black biro and one day I saw a man who was sleeping or just sitting with his eyes shut and he was so still I thought it would be great to try and draw him as a challenge. ('Asleep on the train #1 - <http://tarahale.com/people-3/>) That first one was pretty rough, but I really

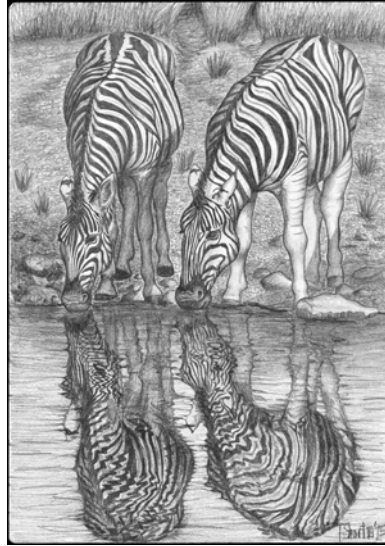
got a kick out of it given that I was on a moving train and drawing with a biro. Why a biro? Well, pencil smudged too much and I liked the challenge of trying use the pen in that way. I like the finality of biro. You're committed once you make a mark as there's no erasing! I would do a rough outline of the person and lightly mark areas of shading and then do as much as I could while they were sitting there. Then I'd spend the next few trips on the train finishing it off. All of the images in that series were done 100% on the train. I only ever told one of my subjects that I'd drawn him. I told him, gave him my card and got off the train. He just looked surprised and didn't say anything. I don't know what he thought as I never saw him again!

**Outline:** What are your favourite mediums to use?

**Tara:** I like biro, but in recent times I have found a love

for ink (with nib or brush) and watercolour. It's fair to say I'm a traditionalist. I really enjoy the tactile experience of ink or paint on paper and again, once you've made a mistake, it's very hard to fix it. You're committed! I like that there's no 'Undo' button on paper when you're using ink. And watercolour is pretty unforgiving in that regard too. I'm only fairly new at using watercolour which I tried as another way to challenge myself. I've only done a few portraits, but I really enjoy it. I like to record my efforts in time lapse video - I have recorded 4, but only have 2 up on my YouTube channel as I just never seem to have time to edit and upload them. In addition to the ones that are there, I have done one other private commission and one present for a family member which is a painting of Clint Eastwood. (<https://www.youtube.com/user/TaraHaleIllustration/videos>) You can follow my illustration adventures on my Instagram account as that's where I





generally upload snaps of new work ([http://instagram.com/tara\\_hale](http://instagram.com/tara_hale)).

I spend all my time at work on a computer so I really prefer not to be on it to create artwork if I don't have to... I only have a very old Wacom tablet which isn't terribly responsive, however I think my opinion of doing artwork on the computer could be swayed if I had a Cintiq!

**Outline:** Could you tell us about some of your illustration heroes?

**Tara:** Gosh there are so many... I like a really wide range of artists and styles.

Growing up I liked so many different artists... I got my inspiration from the comic book art from my brother's Phantom comics, the album cover art of my parent's records and MAD magazines. I also love many different classic artists.

I admire and am inspired by many different artists for their different skills. Some of my current favourites include:

- Norman Lindsay: One of my all time favourites, without a doubt. His work is just breathtakingly stunning - his sketches, lithographs, prints, sculpture and paintings - everything!
- Alberto Vargas - (pinups - traditional methods)
- Boris Vallejo & Julie Bell (fantasy - traditional methods)
- Yuko Shimizu (ink)
- Lois Van Baarle (digital)
- Brett Helquist (Pencil)
- David Galchutt (Painting)
- Chris Nieves (Portraits)
- Ken Taylor (Posters)
- Marcus Maguire (Tattoo)
- Ray Coffey (Charcoal)

- Diego Fazio (aka Diego Koi - Hyperrealistic Biro art)
- Banksy (street art)
- Muto (murals - animated)

I could go on and on...and on! I just love good art. And of course, I know many wonderfully talented IA members whose work I adore also!

**Outline:** What upcoming projects are you excited about?

**Tara:** I have just started working on my first children's book with an Australian author. It's in the very early stages so I don't want to go into it too much - but I am excited about it. It's been on my bucket list for a long time to have a chance to do that. I'll keep you posted! ●

{  **CLICK!** } **Tara Hale**

Website <http://tarahale.com>