



THE PEOPLE

drawing on life

people and places influence andrea cobb's style

by Dena White

Life in Durham, North Carolina, is a far cry from life in New York City. Andrea Cobb knows that. The thirty-something Durham native returned to the Triangle in 1996 after spending a decade in the city that never sleeps.

“Everything here is very separated and pre-defined,” Cobb, a freelance illustrator, explained. “In New York City, you live between one extreme and the other.”

Cobb does editorial, packaging and corporate illustration for clients including *The Independent Weekly*, Carolina Power & Light, GlaxoSmithKline, Duke University and Whole Foods Market. She is also earning a certificate in Web development from Duke University to make herself more marketable to design firms.

A fine art foundation

“At this point in my career, it would be ideal to be on a design team,” Cobb said, “whether it’s in my own studio at home or someplace else.” Traditionally the illustrator’s role in

projects is contracted out. “The kind of work environment we create is probably a lot like a writer’s,” Cobb added. “Although you may think illustrators just ‘draw pictures,’ all design fundamentals are essential in the process of delivering a successful product.”

Approaching illustration with a fine art foundation has been the way to work for Cobb. Her style the past few years has leaned toward Matisse-oriented cutouts: simple shapes, bright colors and patterns.

“Klee and Picasso are my big inspirations right now. Playful and edgy,” Cobb explained. “I hope that people will always recognize my work, and know that they can expect to see it evolve. I want to get back to more line work,” she added. “The paper cutout phase has been well received, but I’m ready to move into another stage.”

Cobb, who enjoys mixed media and gouache painting, reminisced about her days at the Parsons School of Design where she earned a B.F.A., followed by years in New York as a working illustrator. She chose to attend Parsons, in part because it was situated in the Big Apple. After graduating, she worked for an art supply store, public schools, a real estate company, for one of her teachers, Steven Guarnaccia, for several design firms, and for a company that makes prototypes for the toy products that emerge from movies like “The Lion King” and “Nightmare Before Christmas.”

Booking it

To gain freelance work, Cobb shopped her portfolio around prolifically. “They have a really good system in New York where each



Illustrator Andrea Cobb aims to create recognizable work in an ever-evolving style. Two examples of her work appear at the left.

publication and design firm has a drop-off date so you can bring your portfolio – one day for photographers, one day for illustrators, and so on.”

Things are a little different in the Triangle. “I’m not sure if people prefer to meet the artists with their books, receive direct mail promos, come to my studio, or what. I do know that, like a lot of artists, I feel awkward half the time. I’m a very strong businessperson, but not a natural networker. This is where the Web is great for showing work. It’s much cheaper and very convenient for everyone.”

Cobb finds showing her portfolio to be a generally positive experience. “I think artists can be really sensitive about what people tell them about their work, but any criticism is constructive.”

She attributes much of that attitude to a former teacher, Clyde Fowler, at the North Carolina School for the Arts in Winston-Salem, which she entered at age 15, following in her brother’s footsteps. “Fowler,” she said, “was blood, sweat and tears. He kicks butt! Having talent is only a fraction of the big picture. Clyde taught everything from skill to presentation to tweaking a Southern accent. He gave you what it takes to grow up and be ready for the world.”

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