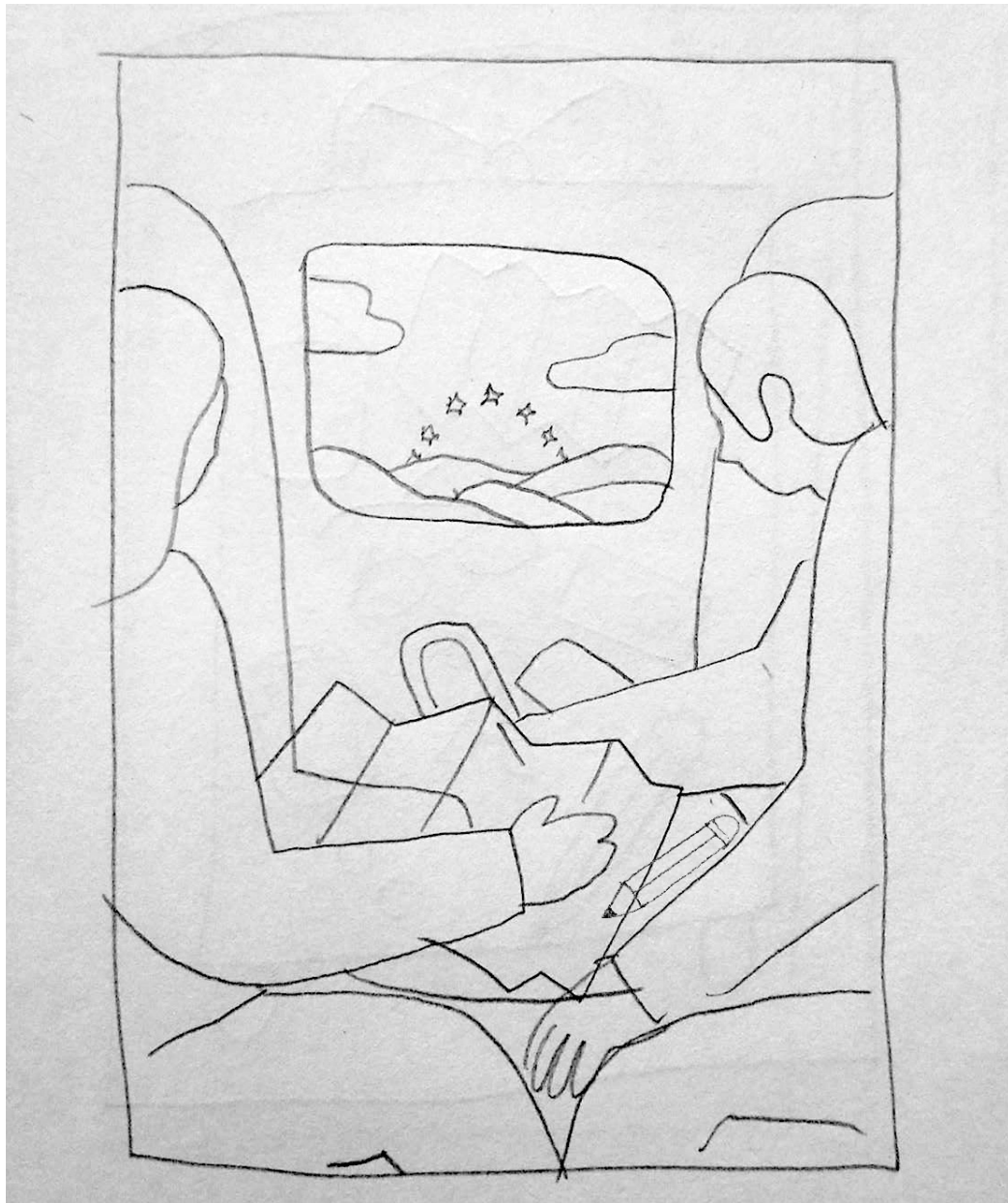




Emmi-Riikka Vartiainen



What was the commission?

Editorial illustration for Suomen Kuvalehti magazine. The subject was young people traveling in the EU and the relationship between youth and EU. The aim was to create a simple illustration but with an idea that would bring something to the article instead of just describing the text in an image.

What was the biggest challenge of this assignment?

Coming up with a good idea for an illustration, that is required to be simple, can be challenging. The subject and briefing was broad, so settling on one idea felt tough and I came up with several trying to improve upon the previous ones. But in the end the first one ended up being the best after all.

What is the first thing you do when you receive a commission?

I read through the brief several times and try to absorb it before doing anything else. I write a list of key words from the brief to help solidify it in my mind.

Describe your sketch process.

I make very rough pencil sketches when I'm coming up with the idea. Then I draft the composition, shapes, and colours I'm thinking of in Adobe Illustrator. After that I start cleaning out the vector shapes and adding details. Some parts I draw straight into Illustrator without penciling first. Finally I do textures and some minute details in Photoshop and colour adjustment if needed.



Did you have to go outside of your “comfort zone” in this commission?

Not really. I had very much freedom on the illustration, so I could tailor it pretty much to my liking with the style, colours and characters. I think the illustration represents me well.

What did you learn from the process of this commission?

Don't panic if the idea just doesn't seem to hit you. Take a break and get back to it, sleep on it if you've got the time. Trying to force out an idea won't create the best result. Taking a step back definitely worked and cleared out the plate.

What inspired you to make the commission the way you did?

I didn't have any specific inspiration, just an idea that a somewhat symmetrical and cropped composition would probably look really nice with this illustration.

Was it a good brief?

The brief was good in the way that it was very compact. The only requirements were that it would have to be fairly simple, with a good idea that gave extra value to the article, and a list of key words that were central to the article for aid. Sometimes it makes the process faster if the client has an idea of what the illustration could be or what it should have. But having freedom on the subject is a good thinking exercise for the artist, so I value that.



Did the finished work turn out the way you thought it would?

Usually around halfway through the process I start losing the original mental image that I originally had as it molds into the actual illustration, but yes I would say that it did. Except originally I thought the characters would be more focused on the map and the other traveling items, but it made sense that in the final work they'd be looking out the window.

What was the feedback you were given ?

The sketch was received favourably, and the client commented that the final illustration could convey positivity about the subject (the mood in the sketch was neutral, as there were no expressions). Before this I was unsure whether the illustration should be more neutral, but because of the comment I decided to build on a positive mood with the colours, expressions and poses. The final piece was well-received, and they commented that the colours suited youth well. The process went very smoothly.