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What was the commission?

A Finnish organisation, Finn Church Aid, that provides humanitarian assistance was publishing a report called "Youth on the move".

Their report was going to give a versatile view on mass displacement that young people are involved in, in the world's recent conflict areas. A printed report was going to include a spread with a summary of the whole topic. The illustrated spread was going to be accompanied with a few text blocks. The client was also hoping to use the visualisation in live presentations, seminars etc.

What was the biggest challenge of this assignment?

It is a diverse topic which needed a sensitive and sophisticated approach – also in visual sense. I have done a similar job for the same client before. They were quite pleased with the earlier outcome which gave them the idea of having a similar concept again. They wanted to have an illustration in the same style. There weren't any difficulties with this assignment and I enjoyed doing it.

What did you learn from the process of this commission?

I learned about the topic and think I am better educated after doing this job.

The client has kept me updated if there are some special events for use of the illustration. This leaves me with a good feeling of collaboration and mutual confidence.

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

Not exactly. I got to work the way I am used to.

Describe your sketch process.

At first I prepare the layout with the text the way I think would be nice. I make sure that the typography has enough white space, and the rest of the space is to be filled with illustration. I don't do so much sketching with pencil anymore. Like sculpting clay, I start to shape the things on computer. I imagined there should be an African girl in the background that I'm not sure of yet. She is running errands in a compromised district, maybe carrying a water canister. She is then displaced from her origin.

It takes some time but bits and blocks of the idea start taking shape if you have patience. There comes a point when it's time to present what you have stirred up for the client. That shouldn't take place too late because it is possible that you'll have to start something over. Then again, I like the client to have a good picture of my vision and the mood it is expressing.

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

Yes, I am satisfied with the outcome. I think the whole spread is nicely balanced with the text blocks and the illustration both in their own turns. I like to build a picture so that it gives a feeling that the text is subsumed inside the illustration. The whole thing is sort of customised especially for the occasion. I think it gives a touch of elegance to the piece.

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

Even though every commission is unique, I have my own distinctive style. I guess the illustrator and one's own handprint needs to be recognisable.



Was it a good brief?

The brief was detailed enough but also left room for creativity. The script was well prepared by workgroup and I got it at early stage. This left me a good amount of time to prepare the first version of the illustration. The brief didn't include much hopes, or demands, in an artistic sense.

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

The first thing is to get to know the script well. To absorb it. It certainly helps if you are aware of the subject before but also eager to get updated and more educated.

I read the script through a few times to build a visual angle and to understand the writer's standpoint. It is a good method to take a walk, go to the sauna and have a swim to digest the topic and think it over. I like a calm start, and don't want to rush in on things.



What was the feedback you were given?

The client was very pleased with the first version. They had a few comments and well-detailed propositions about how they see we could improve the outcome, and communicate their message better.

They used one round of corrections, which is typical. This is a good way to make the visualisation better. I am always happy to make improvements. Afterwards I got a nice commendatory email from the client. FCA has also used my illustration widely in their presentations and social media, which is also a nice credit!

What skills helped you the most with this commission?

Peaceful and friendly service leaves behind a good feeling from the project. I'm looking forward to giving more artistic assistance in the future assignments!