



Mika Lietzén



What was the commission?

An article illustration for Inhimillisiä Uutisia web magazine. The name of the article was “Epävarmat päivät”, or “Uncertain Days”. It was a profile of a man who’s held a number of temporary jobs and never anything permanent.

What was the biggest challenge of this assignment?

Getting the colours right within the fairly quick deadline. Luckily this was for an online publication and not for print, so that gave me some leeway.

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

In this case I read the article and tried to get a general feeling about its tone. I also tried to spot any details that might be important or inspiring.

Describe your sketch process.

I do very small, postage-size idea sketches with a pencil, to see the viewpoint, the relative size of all the elements and characters in the image. Once I’m happy with it, I redo it digitally in the correct size. That version is then sent to the customer for approval. The final image is also done digitally, colours, everything. It’s all just pixels and bits.

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

More or less, yes.

What was the feedback you were given?

I was given a thumbs up. This seems to be fairly typical of editorial illustrations, it’s very easy to fit the illustration with the text and the headline if they are already there.



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

No. In the past I've felt I've went too far outside my comfort zone, so I've decided to try to stick to what is familiar. With this commission the subject matter was something that interests me, so that was helpful.

What did you learn from the process of this commission?

I did the image in a slightly higher resolution with somewhat thinner lines than I'm maybe used to, something I'd intended to do for a long time.

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

The article was very inspiring. There was a detail there of how, at one job, the man had felt alone and removed from his workmates for a variety of reasons, didn't hang out with them during the breaks and felt the topics of their conversations were something he couldn't take part in. That formed the basis of the image, the man alone with his uncertainty. He's working for now, but where will he be tomorrow? He's looking at the reader like he's asking for help. I like this sort of image which, hopefully, trigger emotions.



Was it a good brief?

Yes, I love illustrating articles because you often have either a complete article or a very detailed synopsis. Also, article illustrations allow the illustrator a little more space to play in, to create a story for the image, something which for me as a comic artist is actually very inspiring.

What skills helped you the most with this commission?

Comics, that's my main thing. I've done stories about characters similar to the one in the article, so his story felt familiar right away. Also photography. I take photos on film, and recently I've started taking photos with very minimalistic compositions. Usually the elements are centralised and there is a lot of space around the subject, similar to this illustration. It makes the image breathe, and gives it a strange calm. I love it.