



Samuli Siirala



What was the commission?

The commission was to create a coat of arms for an upcoming long drink brand. It should have Finnish animals, things from Helsinki and fruit. It should look believable but also have humour.

Describe your sketch process.

I always start with thumbnails - very small, very quick sketches to try out several compositions. These are rarely shown to the client. I then move on to progressively more detailed sketches until I have a fully rounded idea I can send to the client.

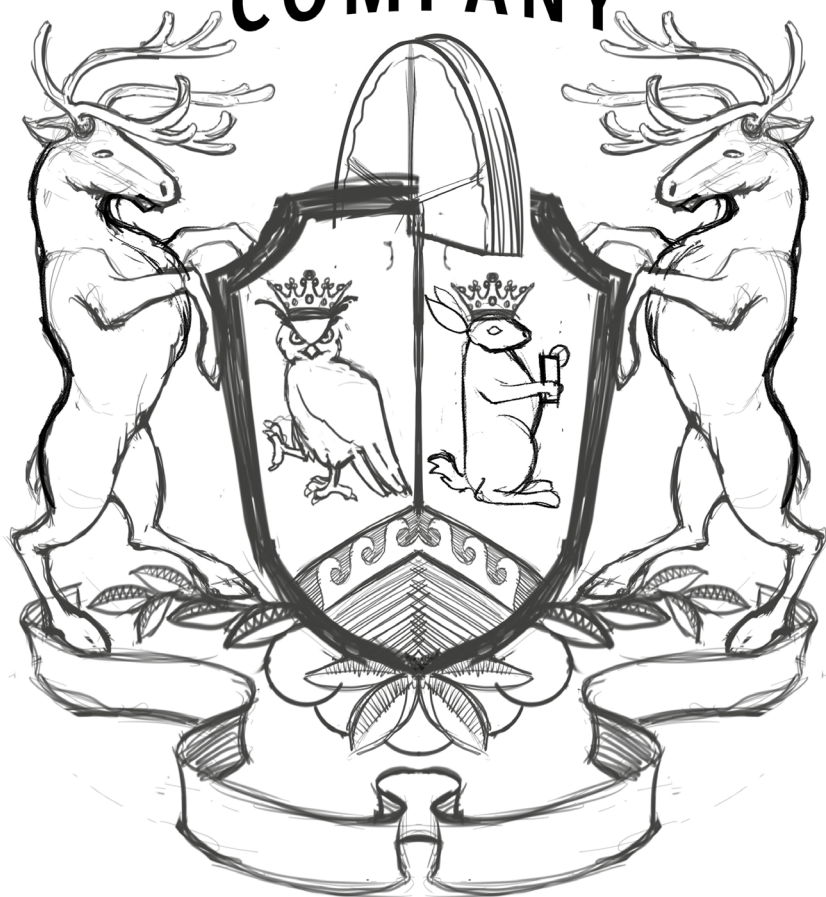
What is the first thing you do when you receive a commission?

The first thing I do is work out the tone of the picture. What is the target audience, how much can I push the picture and are there things that I absolutely shouldn't do. Then I read about the subject. Only after that I start to work on the picture itself.

What was the biggest challenge of this assignment?

Learning to make a traditional coat of arms was a challenge, but also distilling the essence of a new brand into only a couple elements.

NEW LONG DRINK COMPANY



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

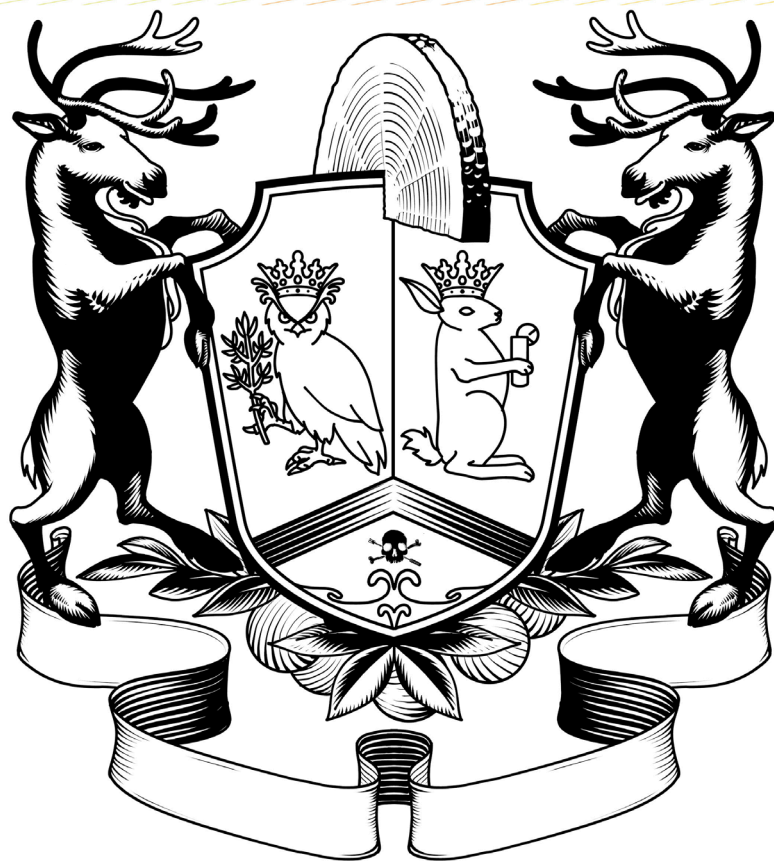
We went through several iterations to work out the elements in the crest and I think we hit on just the right combination of gravitas and hilarity. I love the typography added by the client. It turned out even better than I thought it would.

What was the feedback you were given ?

Very enthusiastic, the client loved the design and told me the product line was very positively received at trade shows. Its future is looking bright!

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

Absolutely! I knew next to nothing about heraldry. As such, the coat of arms is not completely “by the book” but it’s serious enough to not look like an obvious parody until you take a closer look.



What did you learn from the process of this commission?

Obviously I learned a lot about heraldry, but I also learned how I could better break down and simplify complex elements so that they read well in small sizes. That has come in handy many times since.

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

I love the graphic artists of early 1900's who worked completely in black and white and conveyed three dimensions with only lines and shadows. The style is so strong and punchy. I've used it before and it's always a treat.

Was it a good brief?

The client was very clear and logical in what they wanted, which is crucial, but they also allowed me to make my own interpretation of their idea, which means that I could fully utilise my skills. It was a very good brief. I seem to mostly get very good briefs.

What skills helped you the most with this commission?

I think mostly, an inquisitive mind. I just love re-searching illustration subjects and learning about very different things in the process. I also like to think that I am good at communicating clearly with the client so we can get things done with the minimum amount of wasted effort.