

Our best interviews of 2018: In conversation with top art and design talent

From new blood to masters of their field, *Digital Arts* spoke to everyone who was anyone in 2018 – but which chats were the very best?

Whether it's delving deeper into a news story, exploring an artist's portfolio, or putting together tutorials, *Digital Arts* is always asking questions, and this year we did that on our travels around Europe to Canada and the States, along with interviewing artists from the Far East and beyond from our base in the UK.

If the work is good, we want to know more, no matter if you're a newbie or a seasoned pro. It helps that in 2018 we saw so much good work from the world of art and illustration, which you can read more about [here](#).

Enough of the jabber – here are the most revealing, entertaining interviews from the past year, with stars ranging across film design, typography, illustration, animation and more.

Annie Atkins

"I used to think, 'God, it'd be so interesting to do the future, to get a job and do something futuristic...' And then I did a sci-fi movie set on a spaceship flying 200 years in the future, and I actually found it really weird."

We recently spoke to graphic designer Annie Atkins, the design legend behind all those little details in Wes Anderson's fantasy worlds. The pink Mendl's boxes from *The Grand Budapest Hotel*? The protest signs you saw in *Isle of Dogs*? Annie was

behind those little background details that helped flesh out the auteur's meticulous worlds.

Our chat with Annie happened at this year's Adobe Max conference in LA, where she gave a talk full of historical intrigue, and which demystified both the production design process and the barriers into entering the field.

The interview with her afterwards gave more of the same, including a story about her granddad that'll give you the chills, and how she aims to cultivate future talent with her regular and now global film design classes. Bonus points to anyone who can guess in the comments which sci-fi film Annie worked on that put her off the genre entirely?

Read the full interview here.

Jessica Hische

"I saw time and time again when I would show it to adults and especially college students that they would just constantly come back to me and go, 'I feel like I need this book. I don't have any children but I need this book'."

Digital Arts was on a Wes Anderson tip this autumn, what with interviewing Annie and the director's brother Eric Chase. Jessica Hische was once in Wes's orbit from doing the titling for his beloved *Moonrise Kingdom*, but her body of work, like Annie's, incorporates so much more.

Catching up with Giacomo Lee this year in LA, Jessica was proud to be talking about her first move into fiction, kid's lit at that, with the recently released *Tomorrow I'll Be Brave*. She explained how the book was inspired by her little one, and her hopes for the book to be loved by both children and adults.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Jorge Gutierrez

“Autism is my superpower.”

Speaking with our Neil Bennett, the director of *The Book of Life* Jorge Gutierrez opened up about being autistic, and how he stays positive in the face of cancelled projects.

It's a revealing chat that personally resonated with Neil and many readers, with a fascinating reveal of how and when Jorge discovered his autism – and why he deems it his superpower as a creative.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Nora Twomey

“I wasn’t even looking to direct something. I had my hands full. But when I read Deborah’s book, I just had that instant love.”

We spoke to director Nora Twomey about how she brought Oscar-nominated animation *The Breadwinner* to life – from the design of its characters to how their movement brings out their changing personalities.

Set in Taliban-era Afghanistan, *The Breadwinner* takes place in a very real Kabul under a theocracy filled with hardships and the constant threat of violence – which often becomes more than a threat. It’s also a coming-of-age story for our hero Paravana, who Nora reveals she fell in love with while reading the book the film’s based on.

Nora also revealed some more interesting tidbits, such as having the voice actors perform the film as a play first in order to fully round their characters – along with a whole lot more.

[Read the full interview here.](#)

Michael Marczewski

“Putting the old man with VR goggles in the boob cave was a random spark of a thought.”

Using Instagram in weird and wonderful ways this year was freelance director and animator Michael Marczewski, who created short videos that place stock footage clips within a bizarre digital world of mutated zits, toy dinosaurs and

accursed exercise machinery, as collaborated upon with artists like Jack Sachs and Peter Tarka.

We dared to enter Michael's mind for this interview, and managed to grab some VFX breakdowns that showed how the great man created his bizarro boob caves and monstrous mutated zits.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Joshua Slice

"I wanted a creative project to work on. In short, I just wanted to make a cute spider."

That's all Joshua Slice wanted to do – and mama he's a millionaire.

The 3D artist is the brains behind kids favourite Lucas the Spider, a CG creation which has netted millions of Youtube views and spawned a whole bunch of merch. We interviewed Joshua as he launched a Lucas plushie, with money raised going towards charities and a college fund for Joshua's nephew Lucas, who voices the fuzzy critter named in his honour.

A man who hasn't lost his soul, then, and in our interview we learn just how a creative can find success without making deals with the devil.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Hattie Stewart

"It's a form of therapy. I hope that for the half hour you get

to experience it you might feel a little lighter in life."

Doodle-bomber Hattie Stewart spoke to the fabulous Miriam Harris for a chat you can read and watch on video – we felt we had to push the boat out in order to fully take in her epic exhibition *I Don't Have Time For This*.

The illustration – painted onto a wooden stage with a team of helpers – reflects onto an equally giant mirror on the gallery ceiling, inviting punters to lie directly in the middle of her piece, among her four different worlds (best demonstrated in the video). It was on that stage that Hattie chatted about making the piece and the idea behind it, giving us our brightest and most colourful interview of the year.

Enjoy the full interview [here](#).

Lilian Darmono

“It’s confounding that we share the same air and planet with all these living things who eat, breathe, move, reproduce, and behave in such a different way from us.”

Lilian Darmono specialises in motion design and illustration, and we’re particularly in awe of her visualisation of animals in both mediums. In this interview, she talked us through her creative process for drawing lifelike animals, including gathering references and creating a personality. We dare you try reading it without feeling her infectious sense of passion for the animal kingdom.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Martina Paukova

“We all have a certain public face, public persona. We all want to be perceived as ambitious and having fun, being perpetually happy.”

You’ll have seen Martina’s illustrations at some point this year no doubt, so prolific is her output. When we spoke to her in January this year, the topic was her exhibition *Girls*, showing women relaxed and off-guard in domestic environments.

Our chat with Martina revealed her philosophies on the private and public self, and her desire to simply use her hands for moulding plasticine and playing ping pong.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Hazel Mead

“Call me sad but I have a little book which says ‘Dream Big’ on the front. In it I have a list of all the things I want to achieve in my career.”

We said we like to talk to new talent, and one artist full of promise is the UK’s Hazel Mead.

Hazel is one of those rare things, a new name with a number of different styles to her portfolio, but with a certain niche that’s already brought brands knocking at her door.

Her political edge has led her to her current explorations of different realms of feminism, downplaying the taboos associated with menstruation, and highlighting the various injustices regarding sanitary care. Speaking to her, though,

we learnt the path leading her to this was hardly a planned one, and Hazel reveals the struggles all new talent knows well – but with an optimism and determination to succeed.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Janne Ivvonen

“Something always catches my eye when I’m out and about; for example many of my characters are based on people I see on my daily walks in the town.”

From Brighton to Texas, to band merch and fashion lines, the Finnish illustrator talked to us this year about bursting out of his comfort zone, and showing us illustration can be so much more than editorial work.

We also learnt that he visited the US for the first time only recently, a surprise considering his various American influences and clients. Closer to home, Janne discussed his new studio base in Brighton and the new sense of optimism he had as a result – the same sort of sunniness you see in all his lovely comic-style work.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Manddy Wyckens

“My work is an expression of my conflicted relationship with womanhood. It is both a fascination and research; almost a fight.”

We spoke to French creative Manddy Wyckens about her evocative, nostalgic style and the path that led her to head

one of London's best and brightest studios, Studio AKA.

Just as interesting was to hear her thoughts on womanhood, and how her work re-appropriates the female form and what it means to her in such a beautiful and elegant way.

Read the full interview here.

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