

Adobe Illustrator[™]

for Macintosh[®]



Ron Chan



Ron Chan, freelance illustrator.

Ron Chan is a dedicated Adobe Illustrator user, but he doesn't believe that sitting down at the computer is the best way to start an illustration.

"I do all my prep work traditionally," he says. "I start out drawing a rough sketch with markers on tissue. Then I do a more precise sketch with pencil, still on tissue. For me, it's faster than sketching on the computer. Also, I don't want the illustration to look too final too soon, which it tends to do once it's on the screen."

Chan then scans his sketch and opens it using Adobe Illustrator software, and proceeds to do things he couldn't do using traditional methods. "The program lets me

paint with flat, clean colors—right next to other colors," he says. "My style is to use lots of precise, geometric shapes. If I were painting, I'd never be able to have such precise control over the look of those shapes and the colors they contain."

An Early Adopter

Chan, who began his career with Hallmark Cards, Inc., has been an illustrator for 13 years. Among his clients are Estée Lauder cosmetics, *Macworld* magazine, Bantam Books, CompuServe and Hewlett-Packard.

Chan was invited by Adobe to test the first black-and-white version of Adobe Illustrator software in 1987. He was doing work for the *San Francisco Chronicle* at the



time and says, “They had an Apple® Macintosh computer there, but I barely knew how to turn it on.”

When the color version of Adobe Illustrator came out, Chan began using it at the *Chronicle* to create color covers for the newspaper’s *TV Week* section. “It saved us a lot of time,” he remembers, “and saved the newspaper \$400 a week on separations.”

Back to the Futura

Chan has dozens of Type 1 fonts, but his favorites are three sans serif faces: Futura®, Helvetica® Condensed, and DINEngschrift. He often draws custom fonts to go with his illustrations and prefers to start with Futura. “It matches other fonts well, goes with my illustration style, and is easy to manipulate in Adobe Illustrator,” he says. “Even when I create a custom font, I’ll often use Futura elsewhere in the illustration to complement it.”



Tokyo Living illustration created with Adobe Illustrator for the Tokyo Electric Power Company annual report.



Mandrill illustration created by Chan for the release of Adobe Illustrator 5.0.

Among the new features in Adobe Illustrator version 5.5 that Chan uses most is Tabs. He says the new text-handling features make it much easier to stay in Adobe Illustrator to create and design pieces with lots of copy.

Other features he uses frequently are the Pathfinder filters and filters that let him quickly change colors, such as Select Same Fill Color. “I typically experiment with four or five color variations in the course of creating an illustration,” he says. “Using those filters saves lots of time that I would otherwise spend hunting and pecking.”

Keeping Some Perspective

Chan says he spends 95 percent of his time using Adobe Illustrator; when he leaves the program, it’s often to create effects in the Adobe Photoshop™ or Adobe Dimensions™ programs. He uses Adobe Photoshop to resize scanned images and to create graphics for presentations.

He uses Adobe Dimensions to add depth. “For instance,” he says, “if I want to draw a curved flag, or make it look like it’s receding into the distance, I’ll use Adobe

Dimensions software so I don’t have to draw a curved flag in perspective. Or if I want to put a letter on a piece of paper that’s in perspective, I’ll bring the letter into Adobe Dimensions, match up the perspective, and then bring the objects back into Adobe Illustrator.”

Comparing his earlier work with his current illustrations, Chan says that using Adobe Illustrator and working on a computer have changed his style. “There’s a comic-book style of illustration that I’ve always liked and a 1930s poster style, like A.M. Cassandre’s. Before I began using the computer, I could only do the comic-book style. If I had tried to do the poster style, I would have had to spend so much time on technique, and on trying to work with colors right next to each other, that it would have taken time away from developing the concept and refining the drawing behind the illustration.”

For Ron Chan, the beauty of Adobe Illustrator software is that it does just the opposite; it lets him spend a lot less time on technique and a lot more time on creating the concepts and refining the look of illustrations that communicate.

Ron Chan Systems at-a-Glance

Hardware

Macintosh Quadra® 950 computer with
24 MB of RAM, 500 MB hard drive
Apple LaserWriter® II NT printer
Microtek flatbed scanner
340 MB La Cie™ Tsunami™ external drive
PLI 45 MB removable drive

Software

Adobe Illustrator
Adobe Photoshop
Adobe Dimensions
QuarkXPress®
Macromedia Director™
Add Depth

Front page artwork created by Ron Chan and provided courtesy of CompuServe Incorporated.

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