



# GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS AT WORK





**THIS IS A PICTURE OF A HUMAN HARD AT WORK MAKING COMICS**



THIS IS AUSTRALIA



IT IS HOME TO A COMMUNITY OF COMICS MAKERS.



SOME ARTISTS ARE WORLD FAMOUS



OTHERS ARE BELOVED LOCAL STORYTELLERS



THIS PIECE OF RESEARCH CAME ABOUT BECAUSE THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO WERE MAKING COMICS IN AUSTRALIA.



WHO ARE THEY?

AND WE HEARD ALL THESE STORIES ABOUT COMICS MAKERS WHO WERE USING THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS IN SETTINGS THAT SURPRISED US.

I WORKED WITH A LAWYER TO MAKE THIS CONTRACT (IT'S A COMIC!)



SO WE DECIDED TO LOOK INTO IT.



LOOK INTO IT, WILL YOU?

TURN IT INTO A COMIC OR SOMETHING



HOW DO THEY GET BY?

WHAT SKILLS DO THEY HAVE?





# GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS IN AUSTRALIA

A PORTRAIT OF A CREATIVE COMMUNITY

WE ARE A SMALL TEAM OF AUSTRALIAN COMICS RESEARCHERS.

THIS POSTER ILLUSTRATES WHAT WE LEARNED WHEN WE EXPLORED THE LIVES AND WORKING HABITS OF CARTOONISTS, COMICS MAKERS AND GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS IN AUSTRALIA.

WE STARTED THIS PROJECT BECAUSE WE HEARD STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE FROM THE COMICS COMMUNITY WHO WERE USING THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS IN SETTINGS OUTSIDE OF THE USUAL ARTS AND MEDIA SPACES.

WE GOT IN TOUCH WITH AS MANY COMICS MAKERS THAT WE COULD FIND IN AUSTRALIA AND ASKED THEM TO COMPLETE AN ONLINE SURVEY. WE HAD ABOUT 260 ANONYMOUS RESPONSES.

WE ALSO WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE GRAPHIC STORYTELLER'S SKILLSET.

WE ASKED THEM ABOUT HOW THEY DEVELOPED THEIR SKILLS AND ASKED THEM TO DESCRIBE HOW THESE SKILLS HAD BEEN PUT TO USE IN INDUSTRIES OUTSIDE OF THE ARTS.





COMICS FAIRS AND CONVENTIONS LIKE THIS ONE ARE USEFUL EVENTS FOR UNDERSTANDING HOW THE WORLD OF AUSTRALIAN COMICS WORKS.



BUT THIS ARTFORM IS DIFFERENT IN THAT THE ARTISTS CREATE MORE OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES THEMSELVES.

THINK ABOUT IT AS A CREATIVE COMMUNITY RATHER THAN AN INDUSTRY

ESTABLISHED ARTFORMS HAVE INSTITUTIONS THAT FACILITATE TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN ARTISTS AND THEIR AUDIENCE.

EVEN THOUGH IT'S FULL OF INDUSTRIAL HUMANS!



AND THIS CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS USUALLY RUN BY VOLUNTEERS AND DEVOTEES OF THE ARTFORM.

We're in it for the long haul.

SO, THIS ISN'T JUST A PLACE TO SELL COMICS AND MAKE MONEY

1/4 OF GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS HAVE BEEN MAKING COMICS SINCE THE EARLY NINETIES,

THESE ARTISTS STARTED MAKING COMICS JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO...THE ONLY BARRIER TO ENTRY WAS A \$20 TABLE FEE!

IT'S A SITE OF EXCHANGE A PLACE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS & SHARE SKILLS.

THIS IS THE CULTURAL ECOLOGY WHICH CULTIVATES THE GRAPHIC STORYTELLER'S SKILLSET.

WHICH OF THESE IS A COMIC?

ANSWER:  
ALL OF THEM






THIS ARTIST  
LOOKS A BIT  
STRESSED, RIGHT?

THEY ARE ONE OF THE  
PEOPLE **RUNNING**  
THE EVENT!

WORK LIKE THIS  
IS OFTEN UNPAID,  
OR POORLY PAID,  
BUT IT'S  
NECESSARY...

SO THAT  
ARTISTS LIKE  
WENDY HERE  
CAN DO THEIR  
THING



WENDY IS A DRAWING  
MACHINE! SHE MAKES A  
LIVING CREATING  
ART FOR THE COMICS  
COMMUNITY.

SHE MAKES  
COMMISSIONED  
ILLUSTRATIONS,  
PORTRAITS AND  
FAN ART.

AND  
SOMETIMES  
SHE GETS PAID  
TO WORK ON  
COMICS AT A  
PAGE RATE.

SHE'S VERY  
PROUD THAT  
SHE WORKS  
FULL TIME IN  
COMICS

BUT SHE FINDS  
IT HARD TO  
FIND TIME TO  
WORK ON HER  
OWN PROJECTS  
AND SHE LIVES  
BELOW THE  
POVERTY LINE.

WENDY





# INCOME

WE ASKED GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS HOW MUCH OF THEIR INCOME IS MADE FROM THEIR CREATIVE WORK.

11% OF ARTISTS SAID NONE AT ALL!

HALF OF THE ARTISTS MAKE LESS THAN 25%

BUT ONE QUARTER SAID THAT THEY MAKE ALL THEIR INCOME FROM CREATIVE WORK.

I'm lucky enough to be making a good living out of my art.

I have a full time day-job.

I work part time.

SO, A BIG CHUNK OF THE ARTISTS WE SURVEYED ARE USING THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS ALL THE TIME, AND GET THIS: 43% OF THESE "FULL-TIMERS" MAKE MORE THAN \$100K A YEAR

## PANEL: MAKING A LIVING FROM YOUR ART

What about grants? Can we get grants for making comics?

I looked into it. It seems IMPOSSIBLE.

Probably easier to do a Kickstarter.

I got a grant once.

But I still had to keep my day job

50%  
HAD NEVER RECEIVED OUTSIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THEIR PRACTICE.

21%  
HAD RECEIVED SUPPORT THROUGH CROWDFUNDING

26%  
HAD RECEIVED GOVERNMENT GRANTS.



# WORK

A LIFE IN COMICS IS OFTEN A **BALANCING ACT** BETWEEN PERSONAL WORK, FREELANCE WORK, DAY JOBS & SIDE HUSTLES.

ABOUT **50%** OF GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS **SUPPORT THEMSELVES WITH NON-CREATIVE WORK**. BUT WE LEARNED THAT THE DECISION TO HAVE A DAY JOB ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT MAKING MORE MONEY.

MAKES COFFEE.  
(ALSO MAKES COMICS)

COFFEE +  
COMIX

BUT THIS DECISION DOES HAVE AN **INFLUENCE** OVER THE WAY THEY USED THEIR CREATIVE TIME.

IN FACT WE FOUND **NO EVIDENCE** THAT SUGGESTS THAT ARTISTS WITH DAY JOBS HAVE HIGHER INCOMES.

WHILE ARTISTS WITH DAY JOBS HAD LESS CREATIVE TIME.

THEY WERE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE WORKING ON THEIR OWN PERSONAL PROJECTS AND TELLING THEIR OWN STORIES

Can you draw me as Aquaman? (but more handsome)

Sounds fun, but I only do my own stuff.

SHE DOESN'T LET ANYONE ELSE CALL THE SHOTS

FOR EXAMPLE: THIS IS **DENISE**

SHE GETS UP AT **5AM** EVERY DAY TO WORK ON HER GRAPHIC NOVEL

SHE DRAWS FOR THREE HOURS BEFORE STARTING HER **DAY JOB** AS A LEGAL CLERK.

SHE MAKES A **MODERATE** INCOME.

DENISE ONLY WORKS CREATIVELY ON HER OWN PERSONAL PROJECTS.

# AGE

GRAPHIC STORYTELLING IS A YOUNG ARTFORM WITH RELATIVELY YOUNG ARTISTS.

THREE QUARTERS ARE UNDER 44 AND ONE QUARTER IS UNDER 30

THIS ARTIST DOWN HERE IS **SABINE**.

SHE RUNS A BUSINESS SUPPORTING VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS AS A **GRAPHIC RECORDER**.

SHE WORKS ON HER OWN PERSONAL PROJECTS IN BETWEEN PERIODS OF DEMANDING CLIENT WORK. **SHE USES HER CREATIVE SKILLS 24/7.**

What's your secret?

ALSO, SABINE IS A **HIGHER INCOME EARNER!**

THROUGH THIS STUDY WE DISCOVERED MANY ARTISTS LIKE SABINE, AND ONE THING THAT THEY HAD IN COMMON WAS THAT THEY HAD FOUND WAYS TO PRESENT THEMSELVES AS **COMMUNICATION EXPERTS**

# ETHNICITY

WE ASKED GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS TO DESCRIBE THEIR ETHNICITY.



68%

EUROPEAN DESCENT

17.4%

P.O.C.

1.2%

INDIGENOUS

THIS TELLS US THAT THIS COMMUNITY HAS A LOT MORE WORK TO DO ON ETHNIC AND CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

Well, I learned that a cartoonist's skills are highly translatable even if you're not in a creative role. Everyone needs to communicate!

# GENDER

ONE COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR BELIEVING THE OLD STEREOTYPE OF "COMIC BOOK MEN" AND TO THINK OF THIS COMMUNITY AS ONE DOMINATED BY MALES.



THIS IS TRUE AMONG OLDER ARTISTS.

85% OF ARTISTS OVER 45 ARE MALE.

But



COOL KIDS TABLE



AMONG YOUNGER ARTISTS, AGED 18-30, THE GENDER MAKE-UP IS VERY DIFFERENT.

ONLY 27% IDENTIFIED AS MALE, WHILE 54% IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE AND 19% IDENTIFIED AS NON-BINARY.

THIS COMMUNITY IS MORE ENCOURAGING OF GENDER DIVERSITY THAN YOU MIGHT THINK!

# LOCATION

MOST OF THE ARTISTS WE SURVEYED LIVED IN EASTERN STATES WITH BIG URBAN CENTRES.

30%	28%	12%	11%
VIC	NSW	WA	QLD
6%	6%	1%	6%
TAS	SA	ACT	OVER SEAS

6% OF THE ARTISTS ARE AUSTRALIANS LIVING OVERSEAS.

6% ARE MIGRANTS LIVING IN AUSTRALIA.

I moved to the US to be closer to the big comic conventions

I moved to Australia to be closer to my sweetheart.

# EDUCATION

THIS COMIC IS A STORY ABOUT CARTOON ANIMALS.

THIS ONE IS A MEMOIR ABOUT PREGNANCY.

THIS ONE IS ABOUT PUNK ROCK

WHATEVER THE CONTENT OF THESE STORIES, THEIR AUTHORS HAVE LIKELY SPENT YEARS DEVELOPING A FLUENCY IN VISUAL LANGUAGE.

ABOUT HALF OF THESE ARTISTS WENT TO UNIVERSITY OR TAFE AND ABOUT ONE IN EIGHT HAVE POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS.

Well, I have a Ph.D.

I learned most of it from Youtube!

Did you go to uni to learn this?

I'm doctor.. of llama husbandry

HOWEVER, THIS EDUCATION IS LIKELY TO BE IN OTHER FIELDS.

IN FACT ONLY 3% CITED FORMAL TRAINING AS THEIR ONLY SOURCE OF LEARNING. MOST GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS HAVE TO DO MORE THAN GO TO UNI TO COMPLETE THEIR SKILLSET.

90% DESCRIBED SOME OF THEIR KEY SKILLS AS SELF-TAUGHT.

BUT EVEN MORE SAID THAT THEY LEARNED THEIR KEY SKILLS FROM OTHER ARTISTS THROUGH INFORMAL MENTORSHIPS OR PARTICIPATION IN A CREATIVE COMMUNITY

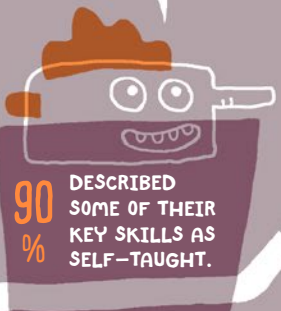
SKILL SHARE

THIS IS WHY EVENTS LIKE THESE ARE SO IMPORTANT!



How would I even?

I think you should just go up and say hi.



# SKILLS

GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS HAVE THE ABILITY TO TELL A STORY WITH TEXT AND IMAGES IN LITTLE SEQUENCED BOXES.

ON FACE VALUE IT IS INTENSELY PRACTICAL AND HERMETIC.

BUT WE'VE LEARNED THAT IT CAN ALSO BE SOCIAL AND CO-OPERATIVE.

**THIS SIDE**  
OF THE POSTER DESCRIBES HOW THIS SKILLSET IS NURTURED BY A CREATIVE COMMUNITY.

**THE OTHER SIDE**  
OF THE POSTER TAKES YOU TO SEE THE WORK PLACES IN WHICH THIS SKILLSET IS BEING USED.

THIS IS JOHN HENRY. HE STARTED MAKING COMICS IN ART SCHOOL.

THIS IS KERNOW. HE'S HERE SELLING A COMICS ANTHOLOGY THAT HE HELPED EDIT, CURATE AND PRINT.

TURN OVER THE POSTER TO SEE WHERE KERNOW AND JOHN HENRY HAVE TAKEN THE SKILLS THEY DEVELOPED IN SPACES LIKE THIS.



# COMICS FAIR

**BOOK STORE**

THESE DAYS, THE BEST SELLING COMICS ARE BEING SOLD IN BOOK STORES.

THEY'RE BEING SOLD IN BOOK STORES BECAUSE THEY'RE BEING SOLD IN BOOK STORES.

THEY'RE BEING SOLD IN BOOK STORES BECAUSE THEY'RE BEING SOLD IN BOOK STORES.

**CRISIS FEELS**

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**WENDY**

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**COMIX**

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**INCOME**

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# GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS IN AUSTRALIA

## A PORTRAIT OF A CREATIVE COMMUNITY

**EDUCATION**

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**WORK**

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**SKILLS**

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**HARD AT WORK MAKING COMICS**

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# GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS AT WORK

**THE OTHER SIDE**

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### TECHNICAL SKILLS

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Graphic design is a visual communication discipline that combines art and technology to create visual content that communicates a message or idea.

**ADVERTISING**

Advertising is a promotional activity that uses various media to reach a target audience and influence their behavior.

**MARKETING**

Marketing is the process of identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer needs and wants through the creation, promotion, and distribution of value.

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to meet the requirements of a project.

**ANALYTICS**

Analytics is the process of examining data sets to draw conclusions about the behavior of individuals or organizations.

**RESEARCH**

Research is the systematic investigation and analysis of facts and data to establish new knowledge or to correct and extend previous knowledge.

**WRITING**

Writing is the process of creating text that communicates a message or idea, often using a computer and word processing software.

**EDITING**

Editing is the process of reviewing and revising text to improve its clarity, accuracy, and style.

**DESIGN**

Design is the process of creating a plan or blueprint for a product or service, often using computer-aided design (CAD) software.

**PRODUCTION**

Production is the process of creating a physical or digital product, often using specialized equipment and software.

**QUALITY CONTROL**

Quality control is the process of ensuring that a product or service meets specific standards and requirements.

**LOGISTICS**

Logistics is the process of managing the flow of goods and services from the point of origin to the point of consumption.

**OPERATIONS**

Operations is the process of managing the day-to-day activities of an organization, often using specialized software and equipment.

**FINANCE**

Finance is the process of managing money, often using specialized software and equipment.

**LEGAL**

Legal is the process of ensuring that an organization complies with applicable laws and regulations.

**COMPLIANCE**

Compliance is the process of ensuring that an organization follows industry standards and best practices.

**SECURITY**

Security is the process of protecting an organization's assets and information from theft, loss, or damage.

**INTEGRITY**

Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.

**ETHICS**

Ethics is the study of moral principles and the right or wrong of certain actions or behaviors.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability is the quality of being answerable for one's actions and decisions.

**TRANSPARENCY**

Transparency is the quality of being open and honest about one's actions and decisions.

**COMMUNICATION**

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and feelings between two or more people.

**TEAMWORK**

Teamwork is the process of working together to achieve a common goal or objective.

**PROBLEM-SOLVING**

Problem-solving is the process of identifying a problem and finding a solution to it.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

Critical thinking is the process of analyzing information objectively and making a reasoned judgment.

**DECISION-MAKING**

Decision-making is the process of choosing between two or more alternatives.

**ORGANIZATION**

Organization is the process of arranging things or people in a particular order or structure.

**PLANNING**

Planning is the process of determining the best way to achieve a goal or objective.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation is the process of putting a plan or strategy into action.

**EVALUATION**

Evaluation is the process of assessing the value or quality of something.

**IMPROVEMENT**

Improvement is the process of making something better or more effective.

**ADAPTATION**

Adaptation is the process of adjusting to new conditions or circumstances.

**RESILIENCE**

Resilience is the ability to recover from or adjust to adversity.

**PERSEVERANCE**

Perseverance is the quality of continuing to try to achieve something despite difficulties or failure.

**CONFIDENCE**

Confidence is the belief in one's own abilities and the ability to succeed.

**POSITIVITY**

Positivity is the quality of being optimistic and hopeful.

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others.

**LEADERSHIP**

Leadership is the process of influencing and guiding others to achieve a common goal.

**COACHING**

Coaching is the process of helping someone to improve their performance in a particular area.

**MENTORING**

Mentoring is the process of providing guidance and support to someone who is less experienced.

**NETWORKING**

Networking is the process of building relationships with other people in a particular industry or field.

**COLLABORATION**

Collaboration is the process of working together to achieve a common goal.

**INNOVATION**

Innovation is the process of creating new ideas, products, or services.

**CREATIVITY**

Creativity is the ability to think of new and original ideas.

**IMAGINATION**

Imagination is the ability to form mental images of things that are not present to the senses.

**VISION**

Vision is the ability to see things from a new perspective or to have a clear idea of what one wants to achieve.

**AMBITION**

Ambition is the quality of having a strong desire to achieve something.

**GOALS**

Goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives that one wants to accomplish.

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### GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS AT WORK

#### HOW DO COMICS MAKERS USE THEIR SKILLS IN INDUSTRIES OUTSIDE THE ARTS?

**TECHNICAL SKILLS**

Graphic designers use their technical skills in various industries, such as architecture, engineering, and manufacturing. They use their skills to create visual representations of complex technical information, making it easier to understand and communicate.

**ADVERTISING**

Graphic designers use their skills in advertising to create eye-catching and effective promotional materials. They use their skills to design logos, brochures, and other marketing materials that help businesses reach their target audience.

**MARKETING**

Graphic designers use their skills in marketing to create visual content that helps businesses build their brand and engage with their customers. They use their skills to design social media posts, websites, and other marketing materials.

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Graphic designers use their skills in project management to ensure that their work is completed on time and to the highest quality. They use their skills to create project plans, manage resources, and communicate with clients.

**ANALYTICS**

Graphic designers use their skills in analytics to track and measure the effectiveness of their work. They use their skills to analyze data and identify areas for improvement.

**RESEARCH**

Graphic designers use their skills in research to stay up-to-date on the latest trends and technologies in their field. They use their skills to gather information and conduct experiments.

**WRITING**

Graphic designers use their skills in writing to create clear and concise text that complements their visual work. They use their skills to write copy for advertisements, websites, and other marketing materials.

**EDITING**

Graphic designers use their skills in editing to ensure that their work is polished and professional. They use their skills to proofread and revise their work, as well as to format and layout documents.

**DESIGN**

Graphic designers use their skills in design to create visually appealing and functional products. They use their skills to choose colors, fonts, and layouts that work well together.

**PRODUCTION**

Graphic designers use their skills in production to ensure that their work is printed or published correctly. They use their skills to manage the production process and troubleshoot any issues that arise.

**QUALITY CONTROL**

Graphic designers use their skills in quality control to ensure that their work meets the highest standards. They use their skills to inspect and test their work, as well as to provide feedback to their clients.

**LOGISTICS**

Graphic designers use their skills in logistics to ensure that their work is delivered to their clients on time and in the correct format. They use their skills to manage the shipping and distribution process.

**OPERATIONS**

Graphic designers use their skills in operations to ensure that their work is completed efficiently and effectively. They use their skills to manage their time and resources, as well as to coordinate with other team members.

**FINANCE**

Graphic designers use their skills in finance to manage their budgets and ensure that their work is profitable. They use their skills to track expenses and generate financial reports.

**LEGAL**

Graphic designers use their skills in legal to ensure that their work complies with applicable laws and regulations. They use their skills to review contracts and other legal documents.

**COMPLIANCE**

Graphic designers use their skills in compliance to ensure that their work follows industry standards and best practices. They use their skills to stay up-to-date on the latest regulations and requirements.

**SECURITY**

Graphic designers use their skills in security to protect their work and the work of their clients. They use their skills to implement security measures and prevent data breaches.

**INTEGRITY**

Graphic designers use their skills in integrity to ensure that their work is honest and ethical. They use their skills to provide accurate information and avoid conflicts of interest.

**ETHICS**

Graphic designers use their skills in ethics to ensure that their work is fair and just. They use their skills to respect the privacy and rights of their clients and the public.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

Graphic designers use their skills in accountability to ensure that they are responsible for their work and the work of their team. They use their skills to take ownership of their mistakes and learn from them.

**TRANSPARENCY**

Graphic designers use their skills in transparency to ensure that their work is open and honest. They use their skills to communicate clearly and honestly with their clients and the public.

**COMMUNICATION**

Graphic designers use their skills in communication to ensure that they are able to effectively convey their ideas and messages. They use their skills to listen to their clients and provide feedback.

**TEAMWORK**

Graphic designers use their skills in teamwork to ensure that they are able to work effectively with others. They use their skills to collaborate and share ideas with their colleagues.

**PROBLEM-SOLVING**

Graphic designers use their skills in problem-solving to ensure that they are able to overcome any challenges that arise. They use their skills to think creatively and find solutions to complex problems.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

Graphic designers use their skills in critical thinking to ensure that they are able to analyze information and make sound judgments. They use their skills to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their work and the work of others.

**DECISION-MAKING**

Graphic designers use their skills in decision-making to ensure that they are able to choose the best course of action. They use their skills to weigh the pros and cons of different options and make informed choices.

**ORGANIZATION**

Graphic designers use their skills in organization to ensure that they are able to manage their work and resources effectively. They use their skills to create systems and processes that work for them.

**PLANNING**

Graphic designers use their skills in planning to ensure that they are able to achieve their goals and objectives. They use their skills to set priorities and create a roadmap for their work.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Graphic designers use their skills in implementation to ensure that they are able to put their plans into action. They use their skills to execute their work and track their progress.

**EVALUATION**

Graphic designers use their skills in evaluation to ensure that they are able to assess the effectiveness of their work. They use their skills to gather feedback and make improvements.

**IMPROVEMENT**

Graphic designers use their skills in improvement to ensure that they are able to continuously learn and grow. They use their skills to seek out new opportunities and challenges.

**ADAPTATION**

Graphic designers use their skills in adaptation to ensure that they are able to adjust to changing circumstances. They use their skills to stay flexible and open to change.

**RESILIENCE**

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### GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS AT WORK

#### HOW DO COMICS MAKERS USE THEIR SKILLS IN INDUSTRIES OUTSIDE THE ARTS?

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**FIN**





# GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS AT WORK

HOW DO COMICS MAKERS USE THEIR  
SKILLS IN INDUSTRIES OUTSIDE THE ARTS?



THIS POSTER ILLUSTRATES SOME OF THE THINGS WE LEARNED WHEN WE ASKED CARTOONISTS AND COMICS MAKERS TO TALK ABOUT THE USE OF THEIR **SKILLS IN WORK OUTSIDE THE ARTS.**



BUT WE LEARNED THAT THE SKILLS SHARED BETWEEN ARTISTS IN THIS SMALL COMICS COMMUNITY ARE **TRANSLATABLE TO ALL KINDS OF PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS.**

**MOST COMICS MAKING IN AUSTRALIA IS SMALL-SCALE,** A CREATIVE PRACTICE SUPPORTED BY A COMMUNITY OF VOLUNTEERS AND ENTHUSIASTS RATHER THAN A MASS-MEDIA ART FORM.



IT TURNS OUT THAT THE ABILITY TO TELL STORIES WITH LITTLE PICTURES CAN BE REFRAMED AS A **COMMUNICATION EXPERTISE,** ONE THAT IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL FOR ORGANISATIONS.



SINCE  
BACK IN THE  
DAY  
WHEN PRINT  
MEDIA WAS  
INVENTED

CARTOONISTS AND  
ILLUSTRATORS  
HAVE FOUND WORK  
CREATING  
IMAGERY THAT  
SUPPORTS GREAT  
IDEAS.

The copywriter  
comes up with  
the ideas.

This illustrator  
makes the ideas  
look pretty..

while  
drinking this  
single malt

while drinking  
this terrible  
wine.

THESE  
"TRADITIONAL"  
ROLES ARE FOCUSED  
AROUND THE  
DELIVERY OF A  
CRAFTED PRODUCT.

Get the  
brief.

Make the  
thing.

Hand  
it in.

NEXT!

BRIEF

ART

What parts of  
this copy are  
making me want  
to VISUALISE?

If someone was  
reading this,  
what would they  
IMAGINE?

THAT'S  
what I draw.

THE ARTISTS WE  
SURVEYED DID A  
LOT OF THIS KIND  
OF WORK.

IN FACT, WHEN  
ARTISTS WERE  
ASKED ABOUT  
THEIR THREE MOST  
USEFUL SKILLS  
ILLUSTRATION WAS  
THE MOST COMMON  
SKILL CITED.

WE LEARNED THAT  
LOTS OF GRAPHIC  
STORYTELLERS  
UNDERSTAND THEIR  
PRACTICE AS A  
SPECIALIST CRAFT.

BUT WHEN WE ASKED  
ARTISTS TO DESCRIBE A  
SPECIFIC SITUATION  
WHERE  
THEIR SKILLS PROVED USEFUL  
IN AN INDUSTRY OUTSIDE  
THE ARTS THEY OFTEN TOLD  
A DIFFERENT KIND OF STORY.

I JUST  
LIKE TO  
MAKE  
STUFF



SOME OF THE STORIES WERE FUNNY

I drew a brain on a bald man's head at a science event.

It was for educational purposes.

I started taking staples out of old zines because I knew they rust and destroy paper, which I might not have known if I didn't have zinemaking experience.

As an archivist I brought an artist's eye to their collection.

SOME OF THEM WERE INTENSELY PRACTICAL

BUT AN INTERESTING THEME EMERGED FROM THESE STORIES.

MANY ARTISTS SAID THEY FELT MOST VALUABLE WHEN THEY WERE INTERACTING WITH NON ARTISTS: TALKING, SKETCHING AND IMPROVISING.

IT WASN'T THE SKILLS THAT THEY WERE USING WHEN THEY WERE ALONE IN THEIR STUDIOS FOCUSING ON THEIR CRAFT THAT WERE MOST NEEDED.

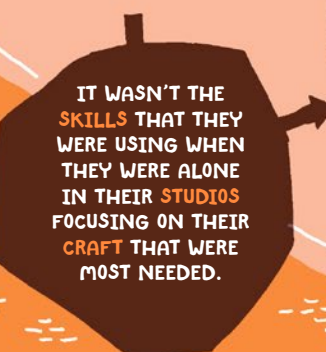
INSTEAD IT WAS SOCIAL, COLLABORATIVE AND IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS THAT WERE MOST CRUCIAL TO THE WORK

THE ARTISTS DESCRIBED THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH VISUAL LANGUAGE IN A ROOM WITH OTHER HUMANS, WHERE DECISIONS WERE BEING MADE OR PROBLEMS WERE BEING SOLVED.

TO NON-ARTISTS THIS SKILL CAN SEEM LIKE A KIND OF MAGIC!

She's drawing exactly what was in my head

oh!  
**NOW**  
I get what you guys are on about.



GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THEIR STUDIOS MAKING STUFF.

HERE THEY DEVELOP USEFUL TECHNICAL AND PROCEDURAL EXPERTISE

HOW ARE THESE CRAFT SKILLS USED IN WORKPLACES?

# TECHNICAL SKILLS

- FINE DRAFTSPERSONSHIP,
  - DIGITAL IMAGE MANIPULATION,
  - LETTERING,
  - PRINT PRODUCTION,
  - WEB DESIGN,
  - TECHNICAL DRAWING,
  - MASTERY OF TRADITIONAL MATERIALS,
  - DIGITAL PAINTING,
- AMONG OTHERS!

I learned everything I know about printing from comics.

At my job I am able to communicate with printers when nobody else has the confidence or language for it.

Simple knowledge of image editing software is in demand as a skill for all sorts of jobs these days.

Sure. Does this mean I can get off the phones?

Can you pretty up our Annual report?

A LOT OF GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS TOLD US THAT THESE CRAFT SKILLS WERE USEFUL IN ALL SORT OF WORKPLACES, EVEN THOSE THAT WEREN'T IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES.

THEY DESCRIBED THEMSELVES TAKING ON A LOT OF THE AD HOC CREATIVE WORK THAT IS MORE AND MORE COMMON IN ALL WORKPLACES.

To make my webcomic I had to learn how to work with code.

That experience led me to a non-creative day job where I run a web development company.



WHILE MAKING COMICS FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND SELF EXPRESSION, GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS DEVELOP AN ABILITY TO CRAFT BEAUTIFUL IMAGES,

BUT GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS HAVE VALUABLE ABILITIES THAT ARE LESS APPARENT THAN CRAFT SKILLS.

THEY CAN TRANSLATE IDEAS INTO VISUAL LANGUAGE AND VISUAL METAPHOR QUICKLY.

MANY ARTISTS WE SURVEYED SAID THAT THESE INTERPRETIVE SKILLS WERE AS VALUABLE AS THEIR TECHNICAL ABILITIES

# INTERPRETIVE SKILLS

- IMPROVISATIONAL SKETCHING,
- ACTIVE LISTENING,
- STORYTELLING,
- SYNTHESISING TECHNICAL JARGON INTO VISUAL LANGUAGE,
- READING AND REFLECTING BODY LANGUAGE,
- VISUAL INTERPRETATION OF DATA,



## THE TRICK

THE TRICK WAS TO PRESENT THEMSELVES NOT JUST AS THE PROVIDERS OF FINELY CRAFTED IMAGES

BUT AS COMMUNICATION EXPERTS

WHO CAN BRING VALUE TO AN ORGANISATION THROUGH THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF VISUAL LANGUAGE.

I'm a senior consultant in the tech industry,

I use my creative skills to design new products, ways of working, commercial and cultural strategies.

It's a combination of all of my creative skills that enables me to work in this space.

As important as those technical skills are there's an emerging field of much more **free-flowing conceptual drawing** that more and more businesses and roles are appreciating.

This sort of **drawing** happens on whiteboards, and is often rubbed out and lost after it has made an impact in a meeting,

but is nonetheless **powerful**.



Comics gave me the ability to **think in pictures**

to **translate complex business ideas** and messages into a simple cartoon illustration.

## WORKING WITH COMPLEXITY



I produce reports with **infographics, diagrams or flowcharts** for government departments.

I have been able to develop or improve these illustrations to help convey information more **meaningfully** by applying the **visual literacy** I learned through creating comics.



I am an **engineer and data scientist** in my day job.

Finding good ways to visualize designs or data so that they are **comprehensible** to both technical and non-technical **audiences** is invaluable.

GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS DESCRIBED THEIR ABILITY TO DRAW SIMPLY, CLEARLY AND QUICKLY AS AN INCREDIBLY USEFUL **COMMUNICATION TOOL**.

THEY OFTEN FIND THEMSELVES ACTING AS **INTERMEDIARIES** BETWEEN PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT FIELDS.

**24.2%** OF THE ARTISTS WE SURVEYED SAID THAT THEY FOUND IT EASY TO VISUALISE AN IDEA THAT WAS COMPLICATED FOR OTHERS TO UNDERSTAND.

**67%** OF THOSE ARTISTS SAID THAT THEY HAD DEVELOPED THIS ABILITY THROUGH THEIR CREATIVE PRACTICE.



# WORKING WITH VISUAL METAPHOR

COMICS IS A LANGUAGE  
OF NESTED VISUAL  
METAPHORS



MANY OF THE ARTISTS  
WE SURVEYED SAID THEIR  
ABILITY TO PRESENT  
NUANCED INFORMATION  
USING VISUAL METAPHOR  
WAS A POWERFUL  
WORKPLACE SKILL.

VISUAL METAPHORS CAN  
BE ENORMOUSLY VALUABLE  
IN ORGANISATIONAL  
COMMUNICATIONS  
BECAUSE THEY ARE  
EFFICIENT FRAMING  
DEVICES FOR BIG IDEAS  
OR KEY MESSAGES.  
THEY HELP CREATE A  
SIMPLE SHORTHAND FOR  
UNWIELDY IDEAS.



In my day job  
at a union the skills  
I've developed through  
cartooning come in handy  
every single day.

One time I used visual  
thinking to help workers  
understand a complex legal  
term in their employment  
contract.

It was relatively  
easy to come up with  
the right visual  
metaphor and to then  
flesh this out in a  
comic. It made the  
important information  
broadly accessible.





# DRAWING PLANS FOR THE FUTURE



I use **skills** that I developed from making **comics** in my work designing Museum galleries and **mapping** visitor experiences within those spaces.

TO MAKE A COMIC, A GRAPHIC STORYTELLER HAS TO CONCEIVE OF **HYPOTHETICAL HUMAN EXPERIENCES**, AND WORK OUT HOW TO NARRATE THEM FROM PANEL TO PANEL AND SCENE TO SCENE.

WHEN THIS **SKILL** IS TRANSFERRED TO OTHER INDUSTRIES, IT CAN BECOME **INDISPENSABLE** AS PART OF THE DESIGN OF NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, PARTICULARLY **SERVICES THAT MAY EXIST IN A FUTURE THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET**, OR SERVICES THAT REQUIRE COMPLICATED USER INTERACTION.

Use of visual narrative is an integral part of **human-centred design** work.

I've been employing **skills** accrued through work in comics on many product/service/system design projects.

It's **useful** in mapping customer journeys, prototyping solutions and generally synthesizing information into visual artefacts.



# HELPING HUMANS LEARN

I work as a pedagogy teacher at a university.

I help teachers teach better.

I use my creative skills in that job often.

I developed a visual comic-style brochure to educate young people about South Australian history.

comics skills are very very useful in schools, especially in “future focused learning spaces” where the priorities all relate to our skillset!

28% OF THE ARTISTS WE TALKED TO DESCRIBED THE USE OF THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING, FROM INTERNAL TRAINING WITHIN ORGANISATIONS TO PUBLIC-FACING EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS OFTEN FIND THEMSELVES DESIGNING RELATABLE RESOURCES THAT HELP PEOPLE LEARN NEW SKILLS AND UNDERSTAND NEW IDEAS AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE, FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH TO OLD AGE.



# DRAWING STORIES FOR HEALTH AND MEDICINE

My illustrations are utilised in surgery education

I have made comic art that provides health and safety information for Aboriginal women in custody.

Once, I created a series of illustrations: Facial expressions depicting happy, sad, angry etc. For use during a psychological therapy session.

GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS HAVE THE ABILITY TO HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND HOW COMPLICATED MEDICAL IDEAS ARE CONNECTED WITH THE ROUTINES AND EMBODIED EXPERIENCES OF DAILY LIFE.

14.6% OF THE ARTISTS WE SURVEYED SAID THAT THEY USED THEIR SKILLS TO HELP PEOPLE COMMUNICATE IN MEDICAL OR HEALTH CONTEXTS.

WHEN ARTISTS DEVELOP EMPATHY SKILLS AND ATTENTION TO FINE DETAILS, THEY CAN ALSO DEPICT PERSONAL ROUTINES AND EMBODIED SENSATIONS – LIKE PAIN – IN A WAY THAT IS MEANINGFUL TO BOTH ORDINARY INDIVIDUALS AND EXPERTS.




# A HUMAN TOUCH


10% OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS SAID THEIR CREATIVE PRACTICE HAS LED THEM TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN LISTENING AND OBSERVATION.

OTHERS DESCRIBED THE VALUE OF THEIR ABILITY TO DRAW HUMANS INTERACTING WITH EACH OTHER IN NARRATIVE FORM. GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS ARE ATTENTIVE TO BODY LANGUAGE AND FACIAL CUES AND HAVE AN ABILITY TO REFLECT NUANCED EMOTIONAL MOMENTS IN A FEW LINES.

MANY ARTISTS ALSO DESCRIBED HOW CLIENTS APPRECIATE THEIR HAND-MADE DRAWINGS AS 'FRIENDLY' OR 'HUMBLE', HELPING TO ADD A HUMAN TOUCH, PARTICULARLY WHEN COMMUNICATING A COMPLICATED SYSTEM, ABSTRACT CONCEPT OR PRECISE DESCRIPTION OF AN EMOTIONAL REALITY.



I worked with a couple of social workers for STARTTS, teaching comics to survivors of torture and trauma.



I worked with a large company, helping workers develop a visual language to describe the way they see themselves, the job they are trying to do, and the road map that will take them to the goals they are trying to achieve.

The major skill is listening to people talking and then drawing pictures of what they are thinking.

( which is very often different to what they are saying. )

# CASE STUDY COMICS FOR ORGANISATIONS

**SAM**  
MAKES COMICS  
JOURNALISM.

**AMEDEO**  
WORKS FOR A  
TRANSPORT UNION.

AMEDEO WAS  
LOOKING FOR FRESH  
WAYS TO TELL HIS  
UNION'S COMPLEX  
HISTORIES IN WAYS  
THAT INSPIRE NEW  
MEMBERSHIPS TO  
ACTION. AMEDEO  
APPROACHED SAM TO  
HELP HIM SOLVE THIS  
PROBLEM.

SAM'S  
SUPERPOWER IS  
DIGGING DEEP  
INTO A STORY TO  
IDENTIFY THE  
SPIRIT OF AN  
ISSUE AND THEN  
USING THAT TO  
COME UP WITH  
NEW VISUAL  
METAPHORS THAT  
ARE STARTLING  
AND PRECISE.

BUT, FIRST HE MAKES SURE  
HIS IDEAS ARE RELEVANT  
THROUGH COLLABORATIVE  
RESEARCH WITH HIS  
CLIENTS.

We can't just  
recycle stock  
images and write  
news articles  
because that's what  
we've been doing  
for forever and  
a day.

Cartoons  
can be more  
sophisticated than they  
seem. There's a lot  
of machinery that's  
invisible behind the  
googly eyes.

It was the very  
opposite of being  
alienated from your  
labour. It was very  
exciting.

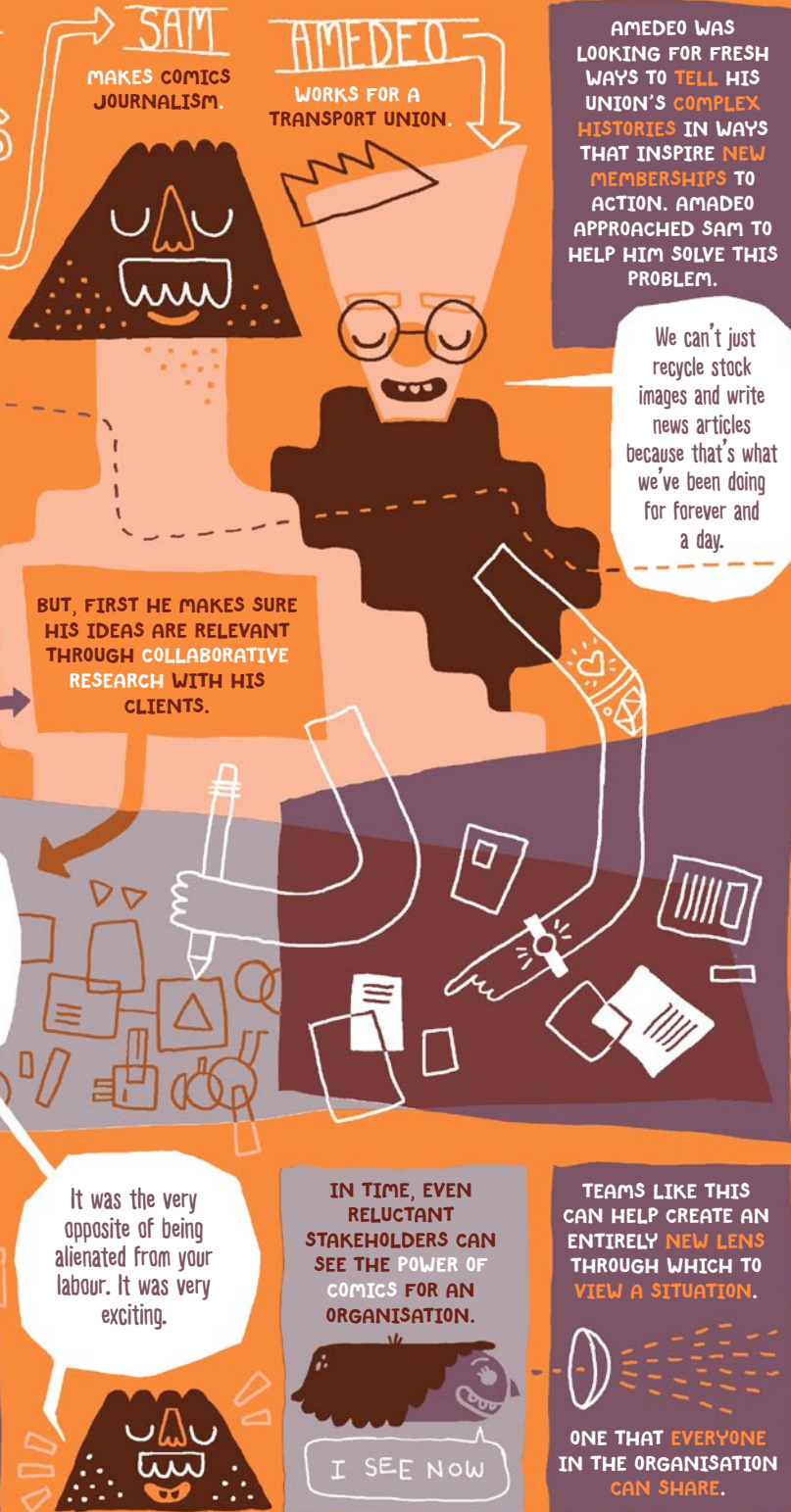
EVEN THOUGH HE IS A  
FREELANCER OR A GIG  
WORKER, SAM FEELS  
A GREAT SENSE OF  
AGENCY OVER WORK  
LIKE THIS.

IN TIME, EVEN  
RELUCTANT  
STAKEHOLDERS CAN  
SEE THE POWER OF  
COMICS FOR AN  
ORGANISATION.

I SEE NOW

TEAMS LIKE THIS  
CAN HELP CREATE AN  
ENTIRELY NEW LENS  
THROUGH WHICH TO  
VIEW A SITUATION.

ONE THAT EVERYONE  
IN THE ORGANISATION  
CAN SHARE.



## CASE STUDY

# GRAPHIC LAW

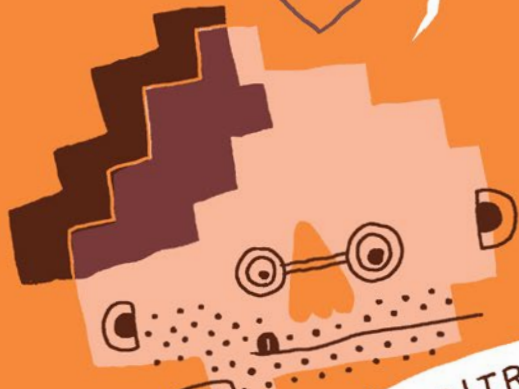
LOUI HAS BEEN  
MAKING COMICS  
SINCE THE 1980S.

My first job  
was for a  
motorcycle  
magazine

CAMILLA IS  
A PIONEER IN  
CONTRACT LAW.

SHE'S  
DEVELOPING  
A NEW KIND  
OF LEGAL  
CONTRACT  
THAT UTILISES  
COMICS.

THESE TWO WORK  
TOGETHER TO HELP  
ORDINARY PEOPLE  
GET A BETTER  
UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE CONTRACTS  
THAT THEY SIGN  
BY REPLACING  
'LEGALESE' WITH  
CAREFULLY CRAFTED  
VISUAL LANGUAGE.



LOUI'S JOB IS TO  
CREATE VISUAL  
METAPHORS THAT  
ARTICULATE A  
LEGAL CONCEPT,

CAMILLA'S  
JOB IS TO APPLY  
LEGAL RIGOUR TO THE  
VISUAL LANGUAGE TO  
ENSURE THAT IT IS AS  
PRECISE AND  
UNAMBIGUOUS AS  
POSSIBLE.

SO WHAT ARE  
THE SKILLS THAT  
CAN HELP MAKE  
A GOOD GRAPHIC  
CONTRACT?

CAMILLA IS  
LOOKING FOR MORE  
THAN JUST THE  
ABILITY TO MAKE  
NICE  
ILLUSTRATIONS:

there are  
some magnificent visual  
thinkers out there who  
can't **draw**, and then there  
are some amazing, talented  
artists who are not very  
good at **visual  
thinking**.

It's **VERY RARE** to  
find someone that  
can do both."

GRAPHIC LAW IS A  
NEW FIELD WITH  
**HUGE GROWTH**  
POTENTIAL.

A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF  
NEW OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR COMIC ARTISTS!



CASE  
STUDY

SERVICE  
DESIGN

THIS IS  
JOHN  
HENRY

HE  
STARTED  
MAKING  
COMICS AT  
ART  
SCHOOL



THIS IS  
KERNOW

He's been working with Australian graphics since the 1990s. Recently he edited and printed an outrageous comix anthology.

I turned every assignment I had into a comics project

NOW THESE TWO USE THEIR SKILLS IN AN EMERGING INDUSTRY CALLED SERVICE DESIGN OR USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN.

THEY HELP BIG ORGANISATIONS DESIGN NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

THEY OFTEN USE A KIND OF COMIC CALLED A JOURNEY MAP TO EXPLAIN THE WAY REAL PEOPLE MIGHT INTERACT WITH COMPLEX SITUATIONS.



THEY FIND THAT VISUAL STORYTELLING CAN GIVE DECISION-MAKERS EASY ACCESS TO THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE THAT PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE WHEN THEY START USING A NEW SYSTEM OR PRODUCT.

Now, I think I finally get what we're creating here.



We use visual language to make something real that isn't yet real

Comics can explain a reality that doesn't yet exist



## CASE STUDY:

# GRAPHIC MEDICINE

MARC  
makes  
comics

PENNI  
is a  
novelist.

TOGETHER THEY  
HAVE A SIDE GIG  
MAKING VISUAL  
STORIES FOR THE  
MENTAL HEALTH  
SECTOR.

THEY WORKED  
WITH A TEAM OF  
RESEARCHERS AND  
CLINICIANS WHO  
WERE CREATING  
ONLINE RESOURCES  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
SUFFERING FROM  
MENTAL HEALTH  
ISSUES.

MARC AND PENNI  
HELPED SOLVE A  
KEY PROBLEM:  
HOW TO GET  
YOUNG PEOPLE TO  
REALLY READ THE  
DRY CLINICAL  
MATERIALS.

It's all words.  
The kids don't  
see it as being  
relevant to their  
lives.



The young people are  
looking forward to  
the comics. They want  
more of them. It's  
remarkable.

MARC AND  
PENNI USED  
THEIR GRAPHIC  
STORYTELLING  
SKILLS TO CREATE  
A BRIDGE...

BETWEEN THE  
CLINICAL  
WORKERS AND  
THE REAL  
LIVES OF THEIR  
PATIENTS.





Australian Government

Australia  
Council  
for the Arts

UTS



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

RMIT  
UNIVERSITY

GRAPHIC STORYTELLERS  
AT WORK IS A RESEARCH  
PROJECT COMMISSIONED  
BY THE AUSTRALIA  
COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS.

THIS GRAPHIC SUMMARY  
WAS MADE BY AND  
FOR THE COMMUNITY  
OF COMICS MAKERS IN  
AUSTRALIA AND ANYONE  
ELSE WHO IS INTERESTED.

THIS WORK WAS DONE,  
KNOWLEDGE FOUND AND  
LINES DRAWN ON THE  
UNCEDDED LANDS OF THE  
DHARAWAL, GADIGAL AND  
WURUNDJERI PEOPLE.

NEW KNOWLEDGE  
DISCOVERED AND  
SCULPTED BY  
PAT GRANT,  
GABRIEL CLARK,

ELIZABETH MACFARLANE,  
RONNIE SCOTT,  
ELERI MAI HARRIS,  
CHRISTEN CORNELL  
AND RACHEL PERRY.

SPECIAL THANKS TO  
DEBORAH HO,  
MATT TAYLOR,  
CAMILLA ANDERSEN,  
LOUI SYLVESTRO,  
PENNI RUSSON,

MARC PEARSON,  
MARIO ALVAREZ,  
KERNOW CRAIG,  
JOHN HENRY PAJAK,  
SAM WALLMAN,  
AMEDEO D'APRANO,  
DAVID BLUMENSTEIN  
AND REBECCA MOSTYN.

