IN THE WORDS OF

BRAD HOLLAND

Born in 1943, Freemont, Ohio
Resides in New York, New York

QUESTION: I don't know if you are aware of this, but lately the tattoo business has really taken off. Any regrets? I never did any more at a tattoo parlor than sweep up for a few weeks – although thirty years ago I started to write a novel based on the experience. It was about a Chicago politician and his girlfriend who wanted to get tattooed. An editor at Random House read the first hundred pages or so and said it was very funny and very well written. But the consensus of the other editors was that it was implausible. They said nobody was getting tattooed any longer – so much for having prophets on the payroll. Anyway, It had a great opening line: "I was never crazy about tattoos, although I thought they improved some people – especially the kind who hang around tattoo parlors."

QUESTION: You also worked at Hallmark Cards for a while. How would you describe you experience there? Short.

QUESTION: Short? Yep. I was there longer than at the tattoo parlor and I never had to sweep up the joint, but otherwise, it was short.

QUESTION: Hallmark is often considered one of the best places to work in the county. Did you find that to be the case? Well, I worked there a long time ago. The company had just started hiring kids out of college, so they paid their travel and moving expenses, then put them to work painting flowers and bunnies. I was the same age as they were – well, a few years younger, I guess – but since I had skipped college and didn't have a degree, they paid me less and I had to cover all my own expenses. Still after two years of freelancing in Chicago, I was grateful for a steady paycheck. It's the only time in my life that I've ever had one.

QUESTION: What kind of work did you do there? Eclectic. They took me off cards pretty quickly. They said my bunnies weren't friendly. They weren't either. They were in serious need of an attitude adjustment.

QUESTION: So if you didn't do cards, what kind of work did you do? They put me to work doing gift books: I did *A Christmas Carol* twice, once in black and white and once as a pop-up book. I *did The Legend of the Christmas Rose*, *The Wit and Wisdom of John F. Kennedy, The Wit and Wisdom of Pope John XXIII,* Abraham Lincoln and so on. It wasn't a bad job actually. I learned a lot, developed a style and got a portfolio together to come to New York.

QUESTION: Early in your career, Art Paul, the art director at Playboy, began to publish your work. Would you describe this as a break-through opportunity? Oh sure, in more ways than one. I wanted to approach illustration in a very different way than it was being practiced, and I needed a place to experiment. Art gave me a monthly feature and the go-ahead to

see what I could do. At the time, Playboy was the highest paying magazine in the world and had a huge circulation. So the opportunity was a double breakthrough. It gave me a space to try out new things and it exposed my pictures to a large audience.

QUESTION: What was Art Paul like to work with? He began as a sort of father figure to me, and as the years went by, became more like an older brother. When he was inducted into the Art Directors Hall of Fame, he asked me to make the speech introducing him to the audience at the Waldorf. We still stay in touch. I've been writing an account about my first years at Playboy. It's in three parts. Here are links to the first two parts:

http://drawger.com/holland/?article_id=9672
http://drawger.com/holland/?article_id=9626

QUESTION: Your work has clearly inspired generations of illustrators, artists, designers, and imitators. Who were your earliest influences?
Writers.The first book I can remember was Oscar Wilde's fairy tale, *The Happy Prince.* My grandmother read it to me so often I was finally able to read it to her. It was probably the single most influential book of my life.

QUESTION: Why do you say that? Because it affected me when I was so young. When I was older, I came under the spell of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain and H.L Mencken – and later I wanted to write plays like Shaw and Camus, but in a sense their effect on me was all prefigured in the influence *The Happy Prince* had on me when I was four or five.

QUESTION: How do you think writers influenced your visual art? Well, I think the impulse behind all art is the same. I just happened to be influenced by writers.

QUESTION: But specifically, how do you think the influence of writers manifested itself in your visual work? In several ways, but mainly in the assumption of independence. I never liked the idea that an illustrator was supposed to channel someone else's sensibility. I've always imagined my pictures were book jackets for stories I'll never get around to writing.

QUESTION: Your output has been prodigious, especially in editorial illustration. You have also done advertising work. Do you have a preference? No, I figure anybody who wants to work with me is somebody I want to work with.

QUESTION: What are the pros and cons of each?
It really depends on the clients.

QUESTION: Your work is frequently metaphorical, expressing ideas in unexpected ways. Can you describe the process? Mind over matter. You couldn't be more cryptic, could you? Well, I don't have a process. I just think this way naturally, so I never had to think about how I think. My problem, initially at least, was the reverse. Since I wanted to do pictures that were not what people expected, I had to create a demand for unexpected pictures.

QUESTION: Did you develop a process for that? Yeah, but a fairly simple one. I figured I just had to get my kind of pictures seen with enough frequency that other people wanted pictures like them.

QUESTION: And to do that...
To do that, I decided to go to the top art directors in the business – on the grounds that they'd be more likely to have the confidence to use work that was different from what other people were doing. And it tended to work out that way.

QUESTION: How critical to the process is the client's brief?
Well, you have to have some idea about what the client's expecting. Sometimes it's an end in itself and sometimes it's just a point of departure.

QUESTION: As an artist, do you prefer detailed instructions, or a simple understanding of the message?
I'm not fussy. I can work in most any fashion.

QUESTION: Like many successful artists, you have also taught illustration. What was the classroom/studio experience like?
I don't know that I'd dignify what I did by calling it teaching. I had a chair and a whip and I kept them from eating me. I figure that was some kind of success.

QUESTION: But are your students generally confident, or intimidated?
Sure, some of each, some of both. And some are lazy, and some are lost. Some are cagey and some are just busy working on their look or their attitude. It's about what you'd expect of any similar cross-section of humanity.
QUESTION: Do you find that discouraging? No, because I know what to expect from any random sample of people. I wouldn't expect to find any larger percentage of go-getters in a classroom than I would in the telephone company or the Post Office.

QUESTION: Surely more than in the Post Office!
Well, yes, probably.

QUESTION: Do you find that teaching is a learning experience, also?
Well, I've only done it once in a while, a semester here or there.

QUESTION: You have been a strong advocate for the protection of... ...copyright and intellectual property. Recently you testified before Congress on the issue of abandoned copyright. Would you explain this issue? It's actually a very simple issue. It's about artists' secondary rights, and who controls them. The claim that it's about abandoned copyrights is a pretense to change the copyright law.

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QUESTION: Who wants to change the law and why? An odd combination of left wing lawyers and big Internet corporations. The corporations are trying to create Internet empires out of providing the public with free access to other people's work. In the past, this would have been called theft, but that's where the lawyers come in. Taking a page out of Marx, they argue that individual creativity is a myth, that all creativity comes from the masses and that therefore the masses should have access to your work. This provides cover for what the corporations are trying to do.

QUESTION: So how would the law affect visual artists?
In a nutshell, it would create a new default position in copyright law. Currently, everything you create is protected by copyright from the moment you create it. You don't have to register your work or put a copyright symbol on it. Everything you do is protected. But under the Orphan Works Act – which is what this amendment is called – nothing you do would be protected unless you've first registered it with a for-profit registry. And this means everything: drawings, paintings, photographs, family snapshots, anything you've ever put on the Internet.

If you're a writer and write a dozen or so books in a lifetime, registering your work may not be a big deal. But artists and photographers make thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of pictures. It'll make compliance virtually impossible for most of us – which means that billions of images worldwide will be orphaned from the moment this bill passes.

QUESTION: Where does the bill stand now? They've tried to pass it twice. Once in 2006, and again in '08. We stopped it both times, but last time we got through by the skin of our teeth. The Senate passed their version of the bill by a backroom deal – there was never even a vote on it. The House almost did the same thing – it came down to an all night session, but in the end artists were able to stop it.

QUESTION: How? The old fashioned way. We wrote articles, set up Websites, mobilized artists, writers, photographers, musicians. We spent weeks in Washington lobbying Congressmen. We offered amendments to the bill. We got the Small Business Administration involved. It'd take too long to explain everything we had to do. When it was over, somebody wrote us that it was like Mr. Smith Goes to Washington– which in a way, it was except that no Senators tried to shoot themselves. Of course, I don't want to leave the impression that the bill is dead. It's almost a certainty they'll try to bring it back.

QUESTION: Is there anything artists can do for now?
Keep your flintlock beside the door.

QUESTION: You are a cofounder of the Illustrators' Partnership of America. Can you describe the organization and its work?
Well, we're more like a neighborhood watch group – and I'm afraid our neighborhood needs a lot of watching these days. We started it because it was clear that artists' rights are under a major threat in the digital era, and the existing artists organizations weren't doing anything about it.

QUESTION: Can illustration and graphic design encourage social change? I'm sure they can *try* to, but if I were really interested in changing something, I don't think I'd count on drawing pictures to do the trick. It's like when we wanted to stop the Orphan Works bill, we didn't draw pictures about it. We went to Washington. I guarantee you if we had counted on drawing pictures to stop that bill, the pictures would probably be orphans already.

QUESTION: So are you discounting the ability of visual art to affect social change? No, I wouldn't discount it, but I believe in looking at things realistically. Political art, no matter how great, has rarely ever affected events. Napoleon didn't end his invasion of Spain because Goya drew *The Disasters of War*. And Franco didn't send the German bombers back to Germany because Picasso painted *Guernica*. Artists make political art because people have the need to express their powerlessness in the face of forces larger than themselves. If the art has authority, it's an end in itself. But if you really want to change things – I'm just being honest here – I think you have to do more than draw pictures.

QUESTION: You keep using the expression "drawing pictures." Some people might think that by doing so you're diminishing the importance of visual art. Well, they might think that, but they'd be wrong. We're in a business where a lot of people say they're doing "works on paper." One of the things I learned from good writers is to say things simply.

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