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APPLIED ILLUSTRATIONS FOR A LONGBOARD
MANUFACTURING COMPANY

Thesis

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Applied Illustrations for a Longboard Manufacturing Company

Commissioned by
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Abstract

This thesis is about creating a series of illustrations for the longboard manufacturing company Lavia, located in Joensuu, Finland. The illustrations are part of the company's branding work in which their longboard artwork and graphic guidelines are redesigned. Illustrations are meant to increase the desirability of Lavia's products and are for commercial use.

The first part of the thesis is a visual examination of hand laboured longboards and how they are manufactured. Sustainability, sufficient work methods and controlled costs are the key issues here and are the reasons why the old practises had to get renewed. This thesis also includes a study on how manufacturing phases can affect illustration work and printing.

The thesis chronologically investigates how illustrations developed from the first sketches to the final designs. All the illustrations are attached and their backgrounds explained. The illustration methods used in this thesis are compared to one another.

Overall this thesis concerns a commissioned illustration project but it can be also seen as a learning process. There are a lot of issues considering client communication, work methods and finding a mutual goal. These aspects are something no illustrator can avoid in working life. This report might help to understand which actions could prevent any mistakes encountered during this project.

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Nimeke
Longboard-lautojen kuvitusprojekti

Toimeksiantaja
Lavia

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö on tehty Joensuulaiselle longboardeja valmistavalle yritykselle. Projektin päämäärä on uudistaa yrityksen graafista ilmettä ja valmistaa sarja kuvitustöitä tuotantoa varten. Lautojen kuvitukset lisäävät niiden haluttavuutta ja antavat niille oman ilmeen.

Raportin ensimmäisen osa on kuvaus longboardien valmistuksesta ja yrityksen historiasta. Yrityksen aiempien työtapojen tuomat ongelmat ovat syy koko projektin takana ja niiden läpikäyminen antaa pohjaa tulevalle työlle. Myös lautojen tunteminen on tärkeää niiden ollessa alustana kuvituksille. Käytetyt materiaalit ja työtavat ovat rajoittavassa osassa kuvituksen toteutusta ja niiden tuntemus tärkeässä osassa onnistunutta lopputulosta.

Toinen osa työstä seuraa kuvitusprosessia. Jokainen kuvitusprojektin kuva on selitetty ja julkaistu tässä työssä. Kulku alun suunnitelmista lopullisiin töihin on kirjattu aikajärjestyksessä, mikä helpottaa saamaan kokonaisvaltaisen kuvan kehitystyön vaiheista. Tärkeänä seikkana ovat myös työssä käytettyjen kuvitustyylien ja -tapojen hyvät ja huonot puolet verrattuina keskenään.

Tärkein seikka tässä työssä on valmiin kuvitussarjan valmistuminen, mutta myös oppimisprosessi. Asiakkaan kanssa kommunikointi, yhteisen tavoitteen asettaminen ja oikean työtavan löytäminen ovat tärkeitä seikkoja, ja kuvittamisen pariin haluavat henkilöt voivat oppia tässä työssä läpikäytyjen ongelmien kautta itse ehkäisemään niitä omassa työssään.

Kieli

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Sivumäärä 47

Aihesanat

Kuvitus, longboard, tilaustyö

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns an illustration project done for a small sized craft company. It takes place in Joensuu, North Karelia, where all the participants are located. The project's client is a longboard manufacturer, Lavia, and the commission work is illustration work. The subject could be defined into one phenomenon: longboarding. This sport has been raising its head up lately in Finland, and as the customer base is growing both locally and nationally, there is a serious chance to compete for shares in the market. This leads to the reason behind this work, to create a series of longboards for sale. The process is described from my, the author's, point of view, and the focus remains on illustration.

This is my first proper project of applied illustration and the first chance to create value for a client's offerings with my series of work. I find this important because my previous illustrating work can be described as a form of art. Originally I meant to write my thesis about illustration as a subject and profession but I realized after a few months that the actual illustration work can give me and my studies a lot more experience and content. This thesis is in a report form and follows the work phases in chronological order to give an insight on how it went step by step.

2 LONGBOARDING

Most people are familiar with skateboarding; it is a really popular sport globally and as it does not ask for any particular place, it does not limit anyone from doing it. Longboard's roots are pretty much the same as skateboard's. Surfers needed something to do on dry land while waves were not suitable for surfing. The first longboards were do-it-yourself productions, and each boarder had their own way of production. The common models and way of design developed during the years of use. Basically, the longboard is easily noticeable by its greater physical size compared to skateboard. In this thesis, the longboards I am working with are around one meter in length and around 20-30 cm in width. Lavia's longboards are roughly divided in two categories: city rollers and downhill boards. I will not go further through the sub categories of longboarding because

they are not related to my thesis. What matters for me in longboarding is the board itself. For an illustrator a longboard is pretty much divided in three important sections: the top of the board, the underside and trucks with wheels. The top of the board has a grip attached, trucks and wheels take their own space and the bottom side of the board is the area where illustration work is placed. The shape and design of a board determine the possibilities for illustrations.

2.1 LAVIA

Lavia is a starting company located in Joensuu, run by Jaakko Kukkonen and Tuomas Davidsson. They manufacture handmade, ecological longboards. Lavia is still a light-weight competitor in the longboard market but if the plans go right, there is potential for growth. This is partly the reason why I got the assignment for illustrations. Lavia was in need of new designs for their longboards. They had an abstract idea of what they were looking for but nothing concrete. The lack of Lavia's distinct idea behind the product line face lift caused the biggest problems during the project. The goal was to find a new way for their company to create longboard print graphics meanwhile creating a series of designs for commercial use.

We had an appointment where I got an overall image of the company and products. I gave a few work portfolios to give an image what I am able to do. After the meeting we agreed to work together as they needed print designs and I was looking for a thesis project focused on illustration. In this project Lavia handled the longboard manufacturing and I designed the illustrations and tried to resolve the usable way for print production.

2.2 Values and visual identity

Lavia could be described as an ecological old school handicraft company combined with modern thinking. What separates Lavia from other competitors on the market is the focus on reducing pollution rather than costs. Lavia is currently known for their use of fabrics for bottom visuals. The usage of fabrics makes each of their boards unique, but still all problems seem to beat advantages. When talking about desirable business

growth, there are few things which have to be reduced to a minimum such as time consumption and material costs. Briefly, the biggest problems have been the difficulty of finding suitable fabrics. All fabrics used must be somewhat old so there are no copyright violations. Also the strength, materials, coloring, and other visual aspects play a huge role as well. So finding a proper fabric for each longboard is way too much work when slowly moving to small scale mass production. Picture 1 is an example of one of Lavia's old longboard with fabric on it.



Picture 1. Example of Lavia's use of fabrics.

Lavia's visual identity is also one thing to think about. The current state is quite blurry. Lavia has a pretty clear image of what it stands for but the problem is to make customers get it. Current visual content is minimal and the current image of Lavia feels incomplete. My work will not be a visual guideline nor do I try to set direction. This illustration project is a new for all of us and it is refreshing to have nothing narrowing down ideas and inspiration.

3 MANUFACTURING PROCESS

I will go briefly through the building process even though it seems distant from my subject. As an illustrator I have to be familiar with the product I am working on. I was observing board building a few times and also had a chance to try manufacturing myself. These workshops gave me a deeper understanding of what possibilities I have and

which methods I am able to use for prints. It also shed light on what kind of issues causes struggle during manufacturing, including canvas and print work.

3.1 Process

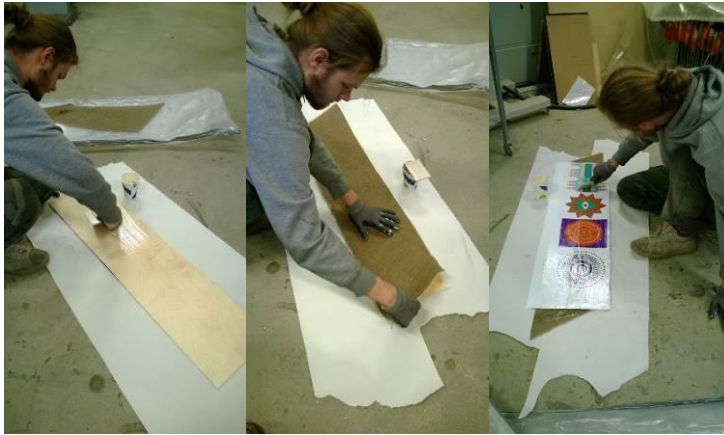
Everything starts with plywood which is locally produced and comes in 4 mm thick sheets. First, the plywood is cut into square pieces, 1,000 mm in height and 250 mm in width, approximately the size of one longboard. There are three layers of plywood glued together. The glue consists of one-third hardener and two-thirds epoxy resin. 70% of the glue is pine oil and does not have as many toxic ingredients compared to regular epoxy resin. Jaakko described that one does not have to be as exact with the measuring when mixing the glue and there are no toxic fumes which are normal with many of non-ecological epoxy resin products. The fourth layer is a cut piece of linen. Adding up these four layers creates a really flexible yet strong structure for the board. The strength of the linen epoxy resin combination is comparable with glass fiber but much more sufficient ecologically. On the linen comes the print or fabric which is also attached with a thin layer of glue. Picture 2 shows the structure of one board divided layer by layer. From top to bottom: Silicone sheet, plastic sheet, illustration print, linen and three layers of plywood. All of these are glued together.



Picture 2. All the layers of a Lavia longboard.

The older the plywood is, the weaker it gets so the plywood has to be fresh and moist. However, the use of dry plywood is not as big of a problem as it would be for regular skateboards, which tend to break after a short period of use. The normal use of longboards is not stressful for the structure so the deck can last for years even if there are no highly durable materials used.

The fabrics Lavia has been using are problematic. It is always a question how the fabric will act with the epoxy resin and how it sets with the linen beneath it. Fabrics tend to get wrinkly while getting glued, and it is hard to get them as smooth as wanted. The chemical reaction with the glue can make the fibers of the fabric spread and make the patterns all mixed up and mess the colors. These features cause a lot of waste material for Lavia. In Picture 3 Jaakko is experimenting with glue.



Picture 3. Gluing the layers together.

When all the layers of the board are glued together it is time to turn that pile of layers into a shaped longboard. The first thing is a mold. The mold Lavia is using is made of plastic foam. The mold has a special shape which gives the longboards their shape and the concave. A concave shape is essential for the customer for handling the board successfully. Here, concave basically means that the board looks slightly like a letter U when observed straight from front or back. The fact that all of Lavia's longboards are concaved removed the possibility of using the silk screening as a printing method. The screen would be under too much pressure because the surface is not flat. In Picture 4 there is a board mounted on a handmade mold.



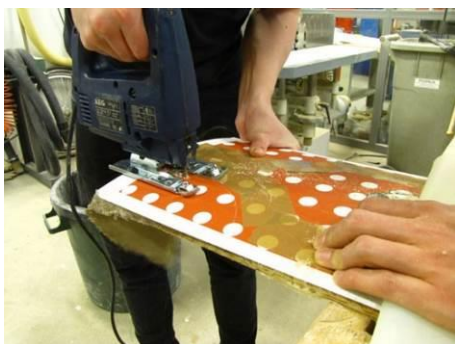
Picture 4. Board on the mold.

The board goes into a vacuum machine after it is carefully placed on the mold and stuffed into a plastic bag. A vacuum machine creates a suction which causes pressure from below inside the plastic bag, and during this phase the package becomes progressively tighter, pressing the contents together with great force. In Pictures 5 and 6 there is a longboard being packed for a vacuum machine. After half a day under high pressure the glue of the board will be dried and everything should be in shape and ready to get cut into shape.



Picture 5 and 6. Putting the board into the bag and vacuum machine for overnight.

Outlines of the board will be drawn using the model deck placed over the board. A model deck is a flat piece of plywood. A model piece is attached to the longboard with screws. When all the marks are drawn, there are two choices: either to cut it manually with an electric handsaw or cut it with a milling machine. The manual sawing enables making every possible shape, but it takes a lot of time. The manual saw machine is in use in Picture 7. The milling machine does the work really fast when the model deck is attached to the board, and the blade of the mill follows the shape of the model at an extremely high speed. After cutting there is only sanding and other finishing work to be done.



Picture 7. Manually sawing the deck.

The finished deck is either varnished or wax coated. Both of these substances will make the print side of the deck more durable and scratch proof. Varnish and wax are spread manually with a brush as seen in Picture 8.



Picture 8. Varnishing the longboard.

After attaching trucks, grip, and wheels the Lavia longboard is done. Trucks, wheels, and a deck with a grip can be seen in Picture 9.

All of the building work takes hours and finishing the details a few more. With these resources it is hard to speed up the production, but easy-to-attach prints which would function better than fabric could save serious amount of time.



Picture 9. A deck with a grip and longboard trucks with wheels.

4 ILLUSTRATION WORK

4.1 Getting started

After getting familiar with the board building process it was time to start the illustration work. As I wrote earlier, Lavia has been using fabrics for their boards' backsides. The idea was to get rid of them and come up with something new and fresh. The challenge was finding a proper method to do prints which are easy, cheap and quick to produce. At the moment when Lavia has no guaranteed funding, the expenses are the most important issue. I tried to figure out the way to get the prints done with already existing equipment so there will not be new investments for any of us. The current work place for Lavia is Karelia UAS's center of Design and Arts, Sirkkala, Joensuu. There are two big scale poster printers and room available for silk screen printing at Sirkkala. I have some knowledge of silk screening from my exchange period in Academie Minerva, Groningen. I applied for a silk screening course there and according to those lessons, it should be possible to print on the longboards. Also multiple videos on the internet are showing other companies printing on skateboards with silk screening equipment. The silk screening equipment should be invested in and the printing process with its multiple steps is time consuming. Also when working with a concave platform the printable area is dramatically limited, so we decided to leave it as second option. Also, Lavia's orientation towards fabrics and traditional prints would be completely gone if we started to silk screen the new illustrations, so we decided to give the poster printers a chance. The printer we were using is Epson Stylus 9900 pro model, which has capability of printing prints 1200 mm wide and as long as the roll of paper is. It is using ink spraying technique with max resolution of 2880 x 1440 DPI. The printing speed is 40 square meters per hour, which is fast enough for mass production. The best thing about this printer is that it prints on fine art materials which are for example canvases and some fabrics as well. The expenses are from 7 euro for a square meter of matte poster paper and 15 euro for a square meter of canvas. Even cheaper materials are possible to get. One square meter should be enough for four prints. One print is 1000 mm x 250 mm. So the expenses are low per longboard.

4.2 First experiments

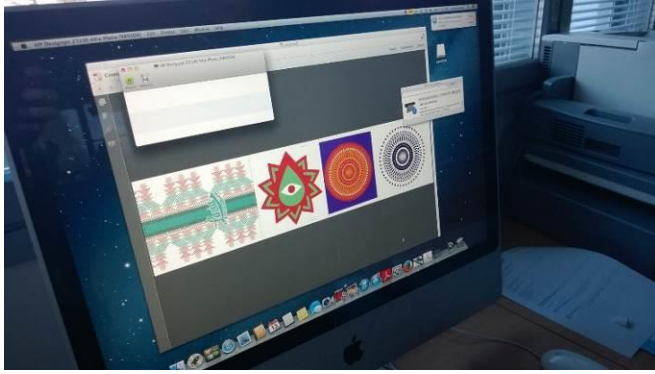
I made a few prototype vector illustrations with Adobe Illustrator CS5 which will be the most used software during the whole project. I was given the measurements and the out-

line drawings of the two most used longboard models of Lavia which I imported into Illustrator and worked on them. The assignment was to create a new flora theme or at least a flowery toned design. I decided to do pretty simplistic and quite abstract illustrations. The illustrations were saved as PDFs for print use. All the PDFs were set to print quality, 300 DPI, in 1 to 1 scale in CMYK color profile. Some of these experiments are in Picture 10.



Picture 10. The first experimental prototype illustrations done with the Adobe Illustrator.

I have to note at this point that the logo was designed by another designer who previously worked for Lavia. We decided to stick with the old logo because it has gained popularity amongst customers, but if my illustrations seemed not to fit with the old logo I had permission to make my own version of it.



Picture 11. Adjusting illustration PDF file for printing.



Picture 12. Printing the first prototype illustrations.

4.3 Development

The first experimental prints were printed on the matte poster paper. The printing equipment can be seen in Pictures 11 and 12. As my files are not saved with the same color profile that the printer uses, everything was printed with the regular settings. The print quality was excellent and we decided to try to attach it to a board. The next day we noticed that the glue did not absorb through the paper, which caused wrinkles. Another difficulty with the surface of the paper was how easily it got damaged. Even the slightest scratch made the paper look bad. The scratch proof material should absorb the ink even a little so it would not be on the surface as a layer of its own. We decided to ditch the poster paper and look for something else. We found a roll of canvas at the printing room so we decided to try it as well. The canvas paper is mostly used for art printing but as it has a beautiful and porous fabric-like texture it seems to be useful for longboards' illustrations as well. The canvas was pretty much perfect looking when coming out of the printer. The ink was little bit absorbed in the paper and the fabric-like texture with the illustration looked great. The illustration canvas was glued on the board. We added a

layer of glue over the canvas to avoid the wrinkles we had with the poster paper. Over the canvas came a piece of yellow silicone sheet for the vacuum bag. It is meant to help the fabric, canvas, paper, etc. to stay flat and cover the bag from glue. Apparently the canvas has some kind of paint coating which got stuck on the silicone. The illustration detached simultaneously. It might be that the glue reacted in unwanted way with the paint coating of the canvas. The result can be seen in Picture 13.



Picture 13. Silicone sheet and the canvas print after vacuuming.

Immediately after this experiment we did a quick experiment gluing identical canvas illustration but this time we set a piece of plastic in the middle of the canvas and the sheet of silicone. This time nothing got stuck and the illustration remained untouched.

5 ILLUSTRATIONS

We thought that now everything should be quite ready for actual work so I started to design new illustrations for actual, usable decks.

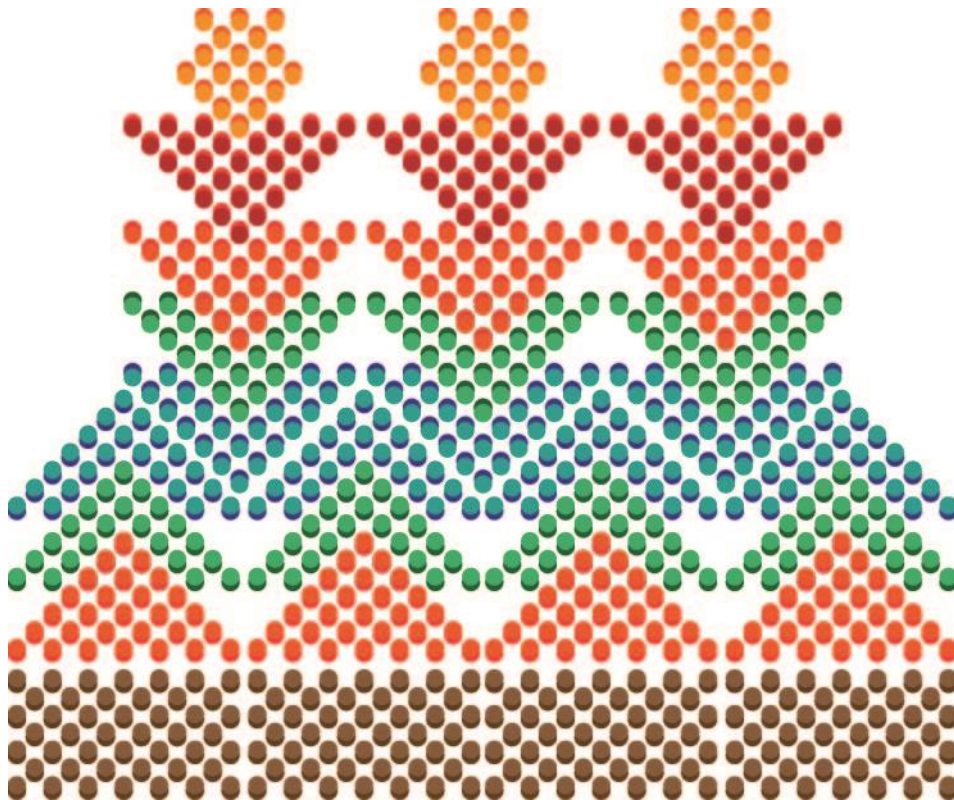
There were meetings and brainstorming. The discussion ran between the more subtle, pattern focused style and the more illustration focused, figure filled style. I believe this compromising and adapting during the project will teach me to become more sufficient illustrator as the illustrations in many cases should function in the context. The illustrations I normally produce would not necessarily work in this case because the message in this case depends on Lavia's values, not mine. One thing to point out is to remain characteristic style during the illustration process even though Lavia's brand image forces to

get rid of certain elements. I could be selective and only take part in projects which support my style but that would be harmful for my development as an illustrator and professional. Elements which I tried to reduce include profanity and vulgar content. My work is not completely known for this kind of material but it is one big part of my regular work. The style could be categorized as a punk style illustrations. This style movement was born simultaneously with the punk music. The torn, unpolished illustrations were a visual equivalent for the punk music as described by Heller & Chwast (2008, 164-165). The style is one of the key values which make me one of a kind illustrator; otherwise the work could be done by anyone else. In short; it would be a wasted opportunity for me to do something really anonymous which did blend in generic print design if there was one. Also, as I work as an illustrator and designer for Lavia I feel that I have the responsibility to come up with new ideas and new solutions.

As we managed to make a few prototypes while making the experiments with different materials, I had the opportunity to examine how different illustration styles look on the ready decks. As all the results were decent, we decided to do the same but with the recently gained knowledge. In the very first applicable illustration I was following the Lavia's request of including floral theme in it. I did some research about floral illustrations by reading illustrated books and catalogues of plants and flora. I researched floral illustrations used in board sports such as surfing, skateboarding and longboarding. The academic illustrations of plants and their structure were fascinating but hard to apply successfully on longboards so the influences of this research remained minimal. During the research I found out that the floral theme was a huge thing back in the first days of longboarding. The illustrations were highly influenced by the surfboard scene which is explained by the fact that longboards and the whole sport was originally created by surfers who were eager to surf even if the waves were not big enough. They took surfing to the streets, and the medium was the longboard. Surfboards' illustrations are specially known for having floral influences and exotic vibes. The roots located in Hawaii explain a lot of this. Getting familiarized with these subjects made me rethink the whole floral theme. The usual problem of being responsible for creating something completely new is a common issue in the fields of design and illustration. In this case, the problem was also trying to retain the unique pattern filled prints familiar to the fabrics Lavia has been using.

5.1 Flora

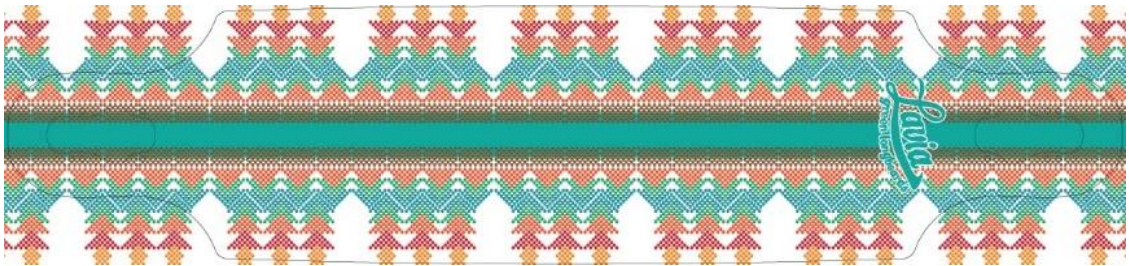
As previously stated, the floral theme is frequently used in this sport so the first thing for me was to study what has been done and how to find the most interesting characteristics to develop. The most intriguing part of the flora theme is the flower of the plant. I tried to figure out how to copy the style of needlework in illustration. I thought that the best way to duplicate this form of handicrafts was to simplify the illustrations to the max. I took the circle as a base element of my illustration and created a simplified floral pattern. The pattern included all the basic elements of flora: ground, roots, body, leaves and flowers. The illustrations remain abstract but still give the viewer the possibility to recognize a flower. As seen in Picture 14, the illustration is not working as its own so I multiplied it and created a pattern which covers the whole longboard. The whole illustration can be seen in Pictures 15 and 16. This design also cherishes the old roots of local Karelian handicrafts.



Picture 14. Part of illustration flora theme number one.

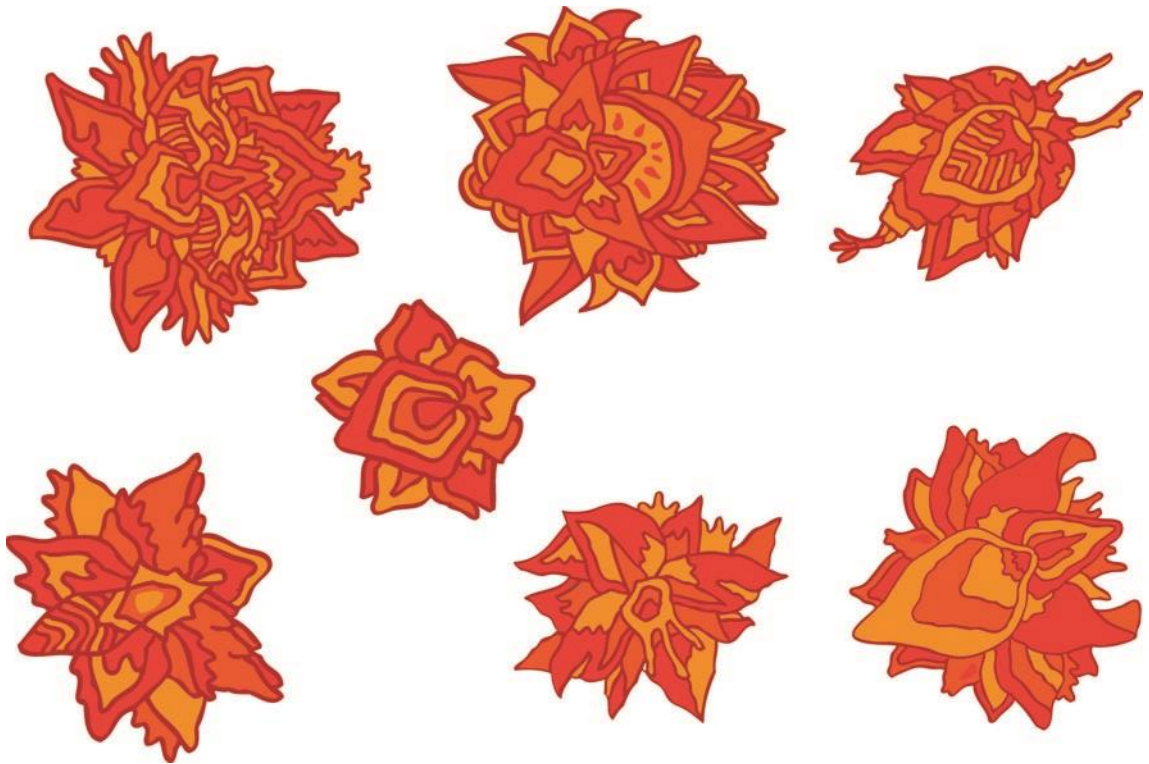


Picture 15. Floral theme number one on a longboard.



Picture 16. Floral theme number one as it was printed out.

When we got the first floral themed longboard done it was clear that the simplified illustration was not very strong or attractive. The quality was fine and the illustration itself was working as planned, but the fact that most of the potential new customers will see all the new Lavia longboards in the cityscape from a distance makes the most detailed designs unusable. Making people curious about the new Lavia products pushed me to create a characteristic and brighter version of the flora theme. The first floral illustration was completely done by computer so new drawings were done with plain black ink and regular A4 paper sheets. Only the coloring and the layout was done with computer. In Picture 17 the new flowers can be seen. The flowers were inked line drawings which were scanned, adjusted and colored with Illustrator.



Picture 17. Parts of the second flora theme.

I collected these four colored flower illustrations together and played with them. As these illustrations were live traced and transferred into vectors, I was able to scale the drawings as much as I wanted without losing the high quality resolution. These illustrations were scaled up approximately 10% and combined together creating one big illustration. The new floral theme is quite truthful to the roots of original longboard backside art and has the old school surf vibe. The illustration is below in Picture 18.



Picture 18. The second floral theme.

The new floral illustration is in a form of an exclamation mark which is the first characteristic recognized but as it is created from multiple small objects the illustration serves also the customers who are more into details. The longboard is custom made for this particular illustration and the shape is cut to follow the shape of the drawing. The new flora theme board is seen in physical form in the picture 19.



Picture 19. The new flora board.

There were also some other designs made with a floral theme but these illustrations worked more as a source of inspiration. One of the most potential inspirational illustrations is in Picture 20.



Picture 20. Retro flowers.

5.2 Characters

At this point of the process it seemed that the work was following same circle all the time. The circle starts by having a brainstorm session where ideas are thrown based on research and praxis. Good ideas are sketched and picked for further development. After a few corrections I handled the final print which got glued on a deck. This cycle remains the same no matter what I am illustrating for Lavia. Therefore the process of creating something new is overpowering the inspiration which grows over time. At the same time I do understand that it is due to circumstances and the deadline. Also, Lavia's production is partly relying on my illustrations so there is no time for some "productive breaks". I have to correct that I was not pushed or forced to produce material but there was no time to slack off. During the Lavia production I have had a few other commissioned works in which I had pretty much free hands to work. These projects felt refreshing. Work contained mainly character illustrations which I enjoyed the most. Characters can be used to serve several purposes and to illustrate moods and body language. In a single piece it is challenging to illustrate a character's nature and what is going on in the captured moment. Even a comic strip would ease to create extra value and depth into them. A one-frame comic strip is quite boring, which is why I try to fill character illustrations with small details. I do not want to be known for quickly consumable work but neither do I try to create Martin Handford's Waldo series.

5.2.1 Gentleman

The first character illustration that got into Lavia's production goes under the name; "gentleman". We had run the floral theme for months and as it started to be thoroughly used we arranged a new brainstorm meeting for fresh ideas. In this meeting I carried the guy illustration with me by coincidence. Lavia seemed to like the illustration and it was not reserved for a client so we decided to give it a try. First I scanned the illustration so I got an image file on my computer to work with. I usually do a small editing with Photoshop before the actual process. In Photoshop I removed all the extra content and adjusted all levels so the background was pure white and the inking solid black. All of this made the following steps easier for me. The adjusted file was modified in Illustrator with live trace tool. This action turns black lines into vectors which will not lose quality by scaling up in size and are easy to edit. All the content inside the black lines become selectable areas as well, meaning that all of them can be chosen and edited separately. A

problem I have encountered in this way of working is that hand drawn line loses a bit of its roughness and the outcome is a bit polished compared to the original piece.

I do not like to edit my illustrations to the maximum so normally it means vector transformation, level editing, and casual coloring. When I am creating collage and pieces with a filled-in background the computer comes in handy. I do have a small illustration bank of my own works which I use for creating backgrounds. This folder consists of shapes, figures, backgrounds, textures, collages and much more. Editing on PC is still rather fast way of processing illustrations compared to redrawing the hand drawn illustration. On Illustrator I have all the elements on different layers, so the picture is not a one flat image, this helps rearranging all elements. I have to note that most of the illustration work I have done while this project has been done with black ink on paper without coloring. There are no rights and wrongs in illustration for me. All the methods are as good as any; it is just a personal taste which makes me prefer certain materials and ways of working. I also think it is important or at least worth a try to experiment with different methods and materials. During this project I am going through a black and white phase. To serve everyone's needs there has to be variety in characters. Customers include different sexes with different tastes and styles. Naturally it is impossible for me to create something which pleases everyone's taste, but I did avoid using extremes in the picture. In gentleman's case the customizing work meant primarily coloring and background design. Line work in this illustration was pretty solid, so I left it untouched. This character's clothes were full of animal patterns so it felt natural to color it with earthy hues, and to make it pop out I chose to use something brighter for the background. As the patterns have a big role in the illustration I decided to include some repetitive shapes over the bright background. For colors I chose red and white. When finished, the gentleman illustration received the best feedback by far. This gave us the courage to continue the character series. The gentleman illustration is in Picture 21.



Picture 21. The gentleman

5.2.2 Girl

As Lavia's research showed, their main customer group consisted of women, so we thought it would be reasonable to publish a deck with a female illustration on it. For this design I received several links to websites and communities of female skate- and longboarders. These websites were my visual source and inspiration during the research phase. I also gained a good amount of information about the common ideologies and values among the female boarders. As I expected there was not a single general type of female longboarder, so I took bits from different quarters and combined them into one character illustration. The most constant feature was the attitude inside the female sport. It exuded the same carefree and happy lifestyle as did the surf movement decades ago. The female longboarder illustration has a main character as in the male board. This girl's clothes resemble the old school attitude, and her belongings are reminding of the ecological side of the brand. I kept the color work discreet and dark toned. The illustration is seen in Picture 22.



Picture 22. Girl.

The illustration itself was decent, but almost immediately after finishing it, it turned out to be not dynamic enough. This does not mean this work was worthless to make. We decided to stop creating the series of female and male illustrations as it felt too simple of an idea to assume that customers want something very similar to relate to. The new plan was to create a mixture of different styles. This sounds an even simpler idea to proceed with, but this project is a kick off for Lavia as a company and for me as an illustrator. As we all have limited backgrounds in this business, it is good to give more than one thing a shot. For us it is wiser to start to narrow down the choices when a bigger group of customers get to know Lavia and its products. This means waiting for a finished web-store, advertising and promotion. When a decent amount of boards are sold it is then easy to see in which direction the company has been turning and which products have been the most desirable.

5.2.3 Animals

Illustrating both sexes and mixing values was done to serve the preferences of as many customers as possible, but after the female version I started to consider if we had too shallow of an image what people are looking for and if they actually want to have these images of generalizations on their boards. To avoid biases and dull images we changed the course to something more abstract: animals. Animals are common characters in comics and cartoons. They are easy to identify with but mainly because of their actions, not because of how they look. Lavia suggested me to try to illustrate an animal figure which could represent longboarders but which remains neutral considering general appearance and gender. In Picture 23 is the tiger character from new collection.



Picture 23. The tiger.

The Tiger as an object allowed me to use natural patterns and colors freely meanwhile giving it some human qualities, as a skateboarder. This illustration is comical to fit previous longboard illustrations which all are anatomically fictional. In this particular work I wanted to give an extra rugged look and a worn out texture. The colors are brought to life with a careful use of gloom and gradient. The tiger illustration is in Picture 24. For the printable piece I had to fix the illustration a little bit. I changed everything bright and increased the contrast. Glue and linen would destroy the quality and make everything messy.



Picture 24. Tiger.

After the Tiger illustration finished I made a parrot. As we and many others liked the stylish dandy appearance there was more to come. The Parrot can be found in Picture 25.



Picture 25. The Parrot.

Parrot illustration is slightly connected to a gentleman piece as there is a similar style in both images. I added the same circles and almost a similar color for the background. I

did not have to change the worn out effect in this one because the background is light. Dark backgrounds cause a bit more problems in manufacturing.

5.2.4 Miscellaneous

Works which got into production are only a small part of all the illustrations. Instead of continuing development, my work process went constantly back and forth. This kind of working means a lot of effort and failures. Afterwards it surprises how many sketches there are lying around. Selected works were democratically chosen and I cannot complain about the decisions, but these various illustrations could have had potential in my opinion. In Picture 26 is a blue character digesting a burger.



Picture 26. Hamburger dude.

Biker guy is in Picture 27. This illustration has the most melancholic atmosphere and was supposed to be the head of the black series. This work helped me to sort out coloring work for the Tiger deck. Even though this did not fit the joyous Lavia brand, it was fun to do.



Picture 27. Biker guy.

To soften the depressive mood of the previous biker dude, the second one is representing caring and peacefulness. Animals often show up in my works, mostly because they have a genuine skill of sharing unconditional love. The peaceful, warm colored biker is in Picture 28.



Picture 28. Peace.

I also made a single piece custom illustration for a customer. She did order a unique longboard from Lavia and asked if the image could be a bit more aggressive and bright colored. Inspiration materials were gore genre movies and completely mental personas. The deck construction remained the same. This aggressive warrior with multiple limbs is in Picture 29. However, this warrior illustration was not exactly what the customer was asking for so it never got attached to a board. We did not give up on the idea so the project continued and the task remained the same. The client kept sending me her inspiration pieces and I sent her sketches based on them. We managed to match our ideas and the result is in Picture 30.



Picture 29. Angry warrior.



Picture 30. Skeleton.

Most of the illustrations are characters which are dominant in size and details. I did a small object illustration to mix things up. Picture 31 shows a continuing scenery.



Picture 31. Scenery.

This work was done rather quickly to get the idea but as it turned out to be messy when attached to a board we ditched the style. The problem is that the objects are so small that if the quality gets even slightly worse they become hard to perceive. Based on this I made radical changes and turned everything into abstract forms. The result is seen in Picture 32.



Picture 32. Candy board.

The candy board design got into production and the finished longboard was quality.

5.3 Collages

To enrich Lavia's selection there was one thing left to create: collages. Characters were done and the task was to illustrate something which would fit in the series. Previous illustrations consist of specific features which I could separate and use for collages. These works are supposed to support their origins. A few of collages are shown in Pictures 33, 34, and 35.



Picture 33. Black collage.



Picture 34. Safari collage.



Picture 35. Gentleman collage.

6 EVALUATION

Originally I was meant to write my thesis about illustration as a phenomenon and I am really glad how everything sorted out due to changes. Illustration has been always close to me and something I have always been doing, mostly for fun. When I started to go deeper into it and researching it became clear that it is not the subject itself which is fascinating. The actual illustrating, the way of expressing self is interesting. My history as an illustrator is not filled with commissioned works or strict deadlines; it is rather filled with the freedom to illustrate what comes to my mind. According to that this thesis project was a learning process. The first thing I learned was the importance of knowing the client. Knowing what the client is looking for and which values they cherish determined my way of work. When approaching new clients in future, I will have a list of things to ask based on knowledge I gathered during this particular project.

Learning the basics of longboard manufacturing also helped me as an illustrator. I have not had many projects in which I could have turned my illustrations into something concrete. Now, when the platform was a physical piece of longboard I had to adjust my working methods in a new way. I had to come out from my comfort zone and compromise. Lavia was looking for a pretty drastic changes for their longboard arts and as they had some problems coming up with the new direction I had to take the ideation work on my shoulders. It was reasonable since I was the illustrator they hired but on the other hand I was not given free hands for the work. There were a lot of elements I had to get rid of and themes which got ditched even though I saw a lot of potential in those. I could say this way of working was quite frustrating. In the end, the series of illustrations were approved by the client. Getting illustration series done was the goal I was reaching for, so overall, I am pleased with the project.

I will have more courage to recommend my concepts and explain their values. As an illustrator I see myself being the tool for a client to get their message through but also a source for ideas if there are not many by client's behalf.

6.1 Copyrights

There have recently been quite surprisingly many copyright frauds in Finland among big size companies. The best known cases are from Marimekko, in which some of its design team got caught for plagiarism. These works were based on existing, old pieces of different kinds of art. These unfortunate occasions have brought the whole plagiarizing issue back to discussion. (Kotirinta, P. 2013. Tuoreimman Marimekko-kohun suurin ongelma on valehtelu. Helsingin Sanomat, web article).

This thesis project was professional in the sense that I managed to create a complete series of illustrations for a company's merchandise. However, we did not talk much about copyrights. It should be an obvious thing to create a contract which determines ownership of illustrations and rights of using them in different contexts during and after the project. As described by Jokinen (2009, 11-13), I do own all the rights for my illustration immediately after it is finished. I did give Lavia the right to use them for their longboards as they are now, and as long as they use them in the way we agreed there is no need for me to limit their rights. What we have to do now when the longboards have hit the markets is to sign a contract which determines the percentage of income I receive from each sold product. As I did this project without any monetary compensation I will hold the copyright for each piece until Lavia would like to buy them for their use only.

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