

Institution: Bath Spa University		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Reportage Illustration: Changing practices and creating new perspectives through visual journalism		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Tim Vyner	Professor of Illustration	1/4/1998 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>This research has developed new approaches to reportage illustration that have changed industry practices, created new perspectives and raised awareness and esteem amongst marginalised groups. Vyner's research into reportage illustration involves using hand-drawn imagery on location to communicate directly to audiences in a way that informs, raises awareness and adds value to sporting events which are in the global spotlight. The drawings and accompanying texts are empathetic and share perspectives on events and places that would otherwise go unreported. The work is carried out in public 'in the moment' and published widely through mainstream media: national newspapers, museum collections, charitable organisations, and online media. Since 2014, these projects have challenged the role of the illustrator and influenced the way illustration is commissioned. They have now become an integral part of major sports tournaments. An expert on visual journalism stated that: "Vyner is really challenging that role of the illustrator and the balance between text and image" (E6).</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The consistent theme of this research from 2000 to the present has been to question how 'reportage', observational drawing can influence and powerfully engage audiences about specialist subjects. Reportage illustration is a 'first hand' practice with the primary intention of capturing 'live' experiences onsite, resulting in an alternative view of events as they happen. Vyner's practice comes from a tradition of drawing as visual journalism; this practice is constantly being interrogated through research, which includes experimentation with new technologies and mediums (R2) and the employment of reportage illustration in new contexts.</p>		
2000-2008: Capturing Narratives		
<p>In the early 2000s, the initial purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which reportage illustration can capture external narratives around global sporting events in a unique way. The research also considered the possibilities for contributing to the 'post-tournament' legacy through exhibitions, workshops, and publication. Vyner documented the locations and excitement of the fans at FIFA World Cup in 2002 for the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), followed by Euro 2004 in Portugal with 'Englandfans' and the World Cup 2006 in Germany following the Ghanaian national team.</p>		
2008-2012: Mood and Atmosphere		
<p>After the Olympic Games in Beijing (2008), Vyner's research shifted focus towards the broader themes emerging from individual tournaments, exploring the specific nature and context of each event. Beijing 2008 was an economic and political statement to the world, and in the build-up to London 2012 there was a drive towards greater transparency (though no less controversy) around ticketing, infrastructure, and environmental costs. During this period Vyner developed ways of capturing the transition of a particular place in the drawings, rather than presenting more conventional visualisations of individual moments of sporting excellence (R2).</p>		

This early research provided Vyner with opportunities to witness major global sporting events, capturing the particular mood and atmosphere of each tournament and working directly with fan groups. He developed a reputation for working under pressure and capturing the unique nature of each place, exhibiting in London and throughout the UK at venues including The Bankside Gallery. Vyner's research aim of capturing the very nature of 'live' sport made him question the practice of reporting after the event and led to his investigation into finding alternative methods of capturing and sharing the action as it unfolds.

2012-2018: Exploring New Technologies

For London 2012, the research into capturing events as they happened led to experimentation with new technologies, which enabled drawings from events to be published as they happened in real time (R2). The iPad allowed Vyner to report 'from the field' and publish as a photojournalist would. This switch in methodology from traditional media of paper and ink, to new technologies, creating illustrations and moving images captured in the field, meant Vyner was now publishing directly from locations around the world, where the speed and frequency of outputs increased dramatically. Former expectations of a retrospective exhibition that 'looked back' at a tournament after the event (as for 2000 to 2008) were replaced by a daily deadline for uploading content to new audiences during live events, as they happened (from 2012 to 2018).

As technology developed, this research began to investigate more immediate illustration working processes. Much of this has required working in pressurised conditions to very short deadlines, with little margin for error, while retaining the intensity of 'the moment' in order to capture the spirit of any event. It is through these 'live' experiences that Vyner has developed research outcomes connecting with wider audiences in ways he could not have done before. Digital drawings are uploaded to a newspaper (or similar media outlet) website and viewed immediately by readers and subscribers. In this way, the outputs have contributed to new ways of publishing, which in turn have been at the forefront of developing the reach and popularity of the field. Planning and preparations before each event are significant. Projects evolve, sometimes taking months to plan, through collaboration with editors and creative directors as well as event organisers. In this way, the research is also creating new knowledge of how illustrators can interact and work with media providers and sports organisations.

Engagement and impact are often intertwined in this research. For example, Vyner's work for *The Times* newspaper as their Olympic Artist for London 2012 (R2), and providing daily insights for the *Telegraph* media group in 2018 at the World Cup in Russia (R1) each took 3-6 months of planning, including test events and timed uploads, in preparation for a series of sustained daily illustrations throughout the tournaments. This research requires Vyner to work in close collaboration with newspaper editors, designers and creative directors as a team to establish the look and feel of the editorial content. This places the illustrator at the heart of the story and provides innovative content for the newspaper. It also asserts a model of the illustrator as a proactive participant who is generating new and accessible public content.

2018-2020: Creating Connections

Over the last two years this methodology has been applied to new audiences to capture the Street Child World Cup in Moscow (2018) and the Street Child Cricket World Cup in London (2019) (R1). The strategy was to connect participants meaningfully in the moment of drawing and to build confidence through common experiences. The action of drawing on an iPad involves the audience immediately through informal presentations and performances. This insightful way of embedding reportage illustration into the Street Child United (SCU) program elevates drawing from something observed from a distance to something at the heart of the event.

The focus of this entire body of research is to explore and develop reportage illustration as a distinctive technique, capturing a 'collective spirit' to make time-sensitive instinctive artwork focusing on particular people and places. The accumulated narrative underpinning all this research comes from an extensive series of drawings, paintings and animations, documenting significant events in innovative ways to help shift industry approaches to commissioning illustration.

3. References to the research

R1: Vyner, T (2018) [Reportage Illustration as Visual Journalism in Two World Cups \(2018\) \[research portfolio\]](#).

This research portfolio brings together two projects that explore the potential of drawing to visually capture and communicate a unique testimony of global sporting events to open up new ways of audience engagement. The 'live' work was carried out intensively on location:

- May 2018, Street Child World Cup in Moscow
- June – July 2018, FIFA World Cup in Russia, for *The Telegraph*

The research timeline extends before and after to include public [lectures](#), [exhibitions](#), [industry reviews](#) and [workshops](#). The Street Child World Cup was hosted in Moscow by Locomotive Moscow FC. Vyner approached the British Council in Moscow who helped facilitate the project that included [football](#), [arts workshops](#) and a congress where a pop-up exhibition took place at the Amber Plaza, Moscow. Working for *The Telegraph* during the FIFA World Cup for 35 consecutive days was the result of a series of previous projects that has contributed to the development of the discipline of reportage illustration, and to engage new audiences in spotlight sporting events through drawing.

R2: Vyner, T (2021) [The Times Olympic Artist - Digital Methods for Location Drawing \(2008-2012\) \[research portfolio\]](#)

This research portfolio explores the way digital technology has changed the timeline of reportage illustration, resulting in projects that take place in real time, and makes a contribution to global sporting events as they happen and not only retrospectively.

The work combines post-event analogue methods, with the use of an iPad to create digital drawings and animations on location that contribute to the narrative of an Olympic Games and grows new audiences for reportage illustration that reflects the shifting habits of the general public to consume news in real time.

4. Details of the impact

The impact of Vyner's research can be seen in three key areas: a) changing industry practices, b) presenting different perspectives, c) raising awareness and esteem amongst marginalised groups.

Changing industry practices

Vyner's research has been at the forefront of shifting industry strategies to include illustration as part of news reporting. The commissioning of editorial illustration would traditionally provide a visual context 'in support' of an existing editorial opinion, where the text determines the content for the illustrator. However, Vyner's method, whereby the illustrator creates the original content, has encouraged editors to take an innovative approach to commissioning subject matter, where the artwork drives the narrative.

An expert in reportage illustration said:

Tim has repositioned the illustrator as a part of the press corps in a way I've never seen before...Tim is not only put within the press corps but is looked at as someone that the press aspires to be like... Tim is also expanding the role of the reportage artist into journalism by providing copy alongside image in his commissions (E6).

The Urban Sketcher's website similarly uses Vyner's work as an example of "the way new technology is playing a part in the revival of interest in reportage through new ways of production, recording and distribution" (E1, p7).

In 2018 *The Telegraph* (with a circulation of over 300,000) gave half of the back page of the Sports Edition to Vyner's illustrated journey of the World Cup. The Head of Sport at *The Telegraph* wrote that "It was a point of difference which separated our coverage from others and gave readers a new way to enjoy the tournament and a different perspective on it... It shows a freshness and willingness to innovate on our part". He also highlighted that Vyner's coverage

provided “good insights into what it was like to follow the tournament from a “fan” point of view” (E5).

Using iPads and other technology, newspapers including *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, and media companies like @Tortoise now look to commission reportage illustration as a regular feature in its own right. The projects Vyner has developed since 2014 invariably involve risk-taking. After initially approaching a media company, gallery or sponsor, possible outcomes are explored in collaboration with a team of people, including designers, editors and agencies. The unpredictable nature of these projects often requires brave commissioning from a select number of creative directors and editors. Vyner’s reputation for delivering high quality content, built over a number of years, has given national newspapers the confidence and insight to publish his work.

Vyner’s research practice has encouraged commercial organisations to consider reportage illustration as a meaningful way to grow new audiences. His approach directly influenced editorial decisions about the way *The Telegraph* decided to cover the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018 was controversial for a number of reasons. Political instability, fans’ safety and expense meant that the newspaper initially had reservations about how popular the World Cup was going to be. It was Vyner’s ability to be ‘in the room’ that persuaded them that reportage illustration would engage wider audiences who were interested in travel, history, arts and culture, as well as sport. Discussion with the Sports Editor and Creative Director resulted in a feature called ‘Back of the Nyet’: a daily illustration drawn on site, alongside a written diary to contextualise the images for 35 consecutive days. Advertising for their World Cup coverage listed Vyner as part of their team of sports journalists, enticing readers with the promise that “Throughout the Cup, *The Telegraph* will publish specially commissioned drawings and animations by artist Tim Vyner, capturing the atmosphere on the ground in Russia” (E5). Vyner’s research into reportage illustration provided *Telegraph* readers with a unique insight into the experience of attending the World Cup, offering a richer engagement with the tournament for those not able to attend in person.

Exposing people to different perspectives

Vyner’s adoption of new technologies, and success in changing the way the work is commissioned, has increased the reach of his research and created new ways of connecting with audiences.

The ubiquity of mobile phones and ‘citizen journalism’ has diminished photography’s special status in the hierarchy of news gathering. Reportage illustration provides a different way of looking at things and new ways of telling stories. The Author of *Reportage Illustration Visual Journalism* says that: “The creative power of the reportage illustrator holds more value within a contemporary journalistic landscape. Tim’s drawing is a kind of performative act... people come up to and look over his shoulder” (E6). Speaking in an interview in 2018, a former Senior Art Director of *The Times* gave Vyner’s work as a prime example of readers’ positive appreciation of and engagement with reportage journalism (E1, p4).

By presenting and sharing alternative perspectives on events and places, fans and participants can engage with reportage illustration ‘in the moment’, by seeing the artist at work on location. At the World Cup in 2018, Vyner was interviewed regularly on live streams from Russia to online platforms such as ‘itsnicethat’ (E4), arts magazines, the BBC, and events including public lectures at major heritage venues, such as the Holburne Museum in Bath (a live Instagram feed of the Holburne event had had 780 views; E2). Drawings published in the sports pages that illustrated Russia as a World Cup host appealed to a range of *Telegraph* readers, attracting those with an interest in travel, as well as sport’s fans.

The discovery and presentation of stories and images away from the football match or main event is key to Vyner’s development of reportage journalism. The author of *Reportage Illustration Visual Journalism* commented that “[Vyner] is looking 90 degrees to find the story off camera. That’s a really good journalistic trait to not just passively be commissioned by an art director” (E6).

Vyner's research is used to reflect on the unique cultural legacy of a particular tournament and to provide discussion and context for each event through retrospective exhibitions (at venues such as the National Football Museum; E4), public lectures and online showcases. It is also impacting on future generations of illustrators: "Tim's practice is utilised in pedagogy as an example of ambitious, boundary pushing work" (E6).

Raising awareness and esteem amongst marginalised groups

Reportage Illustration has helped to raise awareness, challenge preconceptions, and champion the rights of marginalised groups, such as street-connected young adults.

Vyner's proposal to capture the life and spirit of a Street Child United (SCU) tournament in 2018 became an integral part of two tournaments, raising awareness of the rights of street connected young adults, and connecting with participants in a way that facilitated debate and built confidence. Vyner's reportage illustration of the Street Child World Cup provided an individual record of this spotlight event as it happened. Artwork was exhibited during the tournament at the final congress, and provided a platform for participants, sponsors and organising charities to discuss and evaluate their experiences. Participants from the Team Egypt girls' team said, "The focus of these paintings was on the people and the cultures, more than the backgrounds...", "This was the first time that I saw this kind of art. It was new to me, completely" and "artistic activities are a pathway towards expressing my feelings" (E8).

Vyner's work has transformed the practice into a highly valued form of visual journalism, embedding it in the core values of the SCU tournament. The project manager for SCU said that Vyner's use of colour and his style of drawing "represents the spirit of the event much better than any other art form" (E7). The CEO of Street Child United clarified the benefits of using reportage illustration, rather than photography to document events: "it's gentle it's safe. And it's slower. It is easier to join in and it facilitates esteem", while the use of art is crucial to their international work "because the illustrations don't need language to explain them. So you have kids from all over the world who can just look and they can get it immediately." Talking about how Vyner's work connected to the key message of the charity, he said: "We say 'I am somebody' and [Vyner's] animations do this. Seeing themselves as part of this, someone has taken the time to draw me, I matter" (E7).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

E1: Evidence relating to Vyner's impact in the field of reportage illustration: Case Study and Interview in Gary Embury and Mario Minichiello, [Reportage Illustration, Visual Journalism](#) (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); *Urban Sketcher* review; Association of Illustrators review. Reportage Illustration launch and panel discussion at [House of Illustration](#) in June 2018.

E2: 10.10.20 [Big Draw Live](#) 'Reportage Illustration' Instagram Live [780 views] for 'The Big Draw'

E3: Street Child World Cup [Soccer and Sixes](#), an episode on the impact of the arts on SCU. [Interview with Vyner starts at 30 mins].

E4: Critical reviews and evidence of Vyner's reportage illustration: Snoad, L. [2018], "*Tim Vyner's realtime illustrations of the Street Child World Cup made us fall in love with footy again*". [It's Nice That.](#); [Road Trip to Russia](#) (2018) National Football Museum, Exhibition.

E5: Testimonial from *The Telegraph* Sports Editor. Details of [The Telegraph](#) placing Vyner as reportage illustrator alongside their full team of World Cup journalists. Plans to evaluate the impact of Vyner's illustrations with The Telegraph research group (8000 readers) had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.

E6: Testimonial from Senior Lecturer, University of the West of England, and author of *Reportage Illustration Visual Journalism* (2018).

E7: Interview with the CEO, Project Manager and Arts Coordinator at Street Child United.

E8: Responses from Team Egypt's Girls Team in the Street Child United World Cup (2018).