



Windows into Illustration: Steve Antony

Article Author:

[Steve Antony](#) [1]

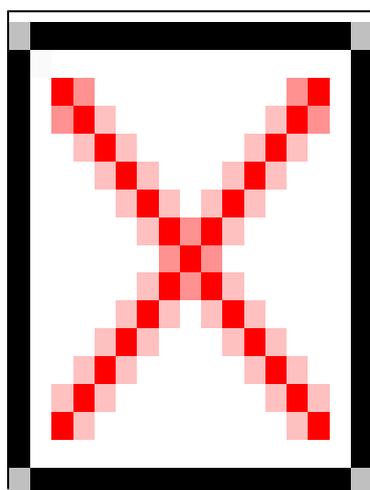
[207](#) [2]

Article Category:

Windows into Illustration

Byline:

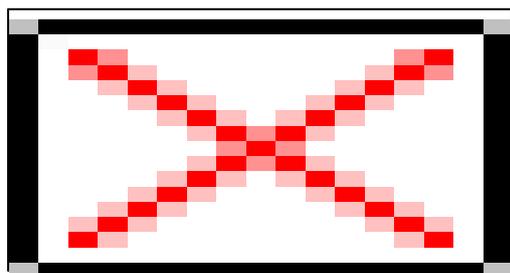
Steve Antony on **The Queen's Hat**



Steve Antony's debut picture book **The Queen's Hat** is a witty and stylish celebration of London, the Queen, and the new royal baby and has been extremely well reviewed. Antony chose red, white, blue and black as the colour palette for his royal story. Here he describes the creation of one of his witty, action-packed spreads.

The idea for [The Queen's Hat](#) [3] came from a news article featuring a photo of a windswept Queen holding on to her hat. I imagined the hat sweeping through London, followed by the Queen and a troop of marching men. I was instantly inspired, because the plot gave me the perfect device to stage a story filled with visual humour and iconic imagery.

I've chosen the 'London Zoo' spread to talk about, because, although Big Ben, Tower Bridge and a mind-boggling mathematical London Eye were all very challenging to render, it was the London Zoo spread that really pushed me out of my comfort zone. The idea of drawing 30 or so unique animals, along with a troop of guards, (and all in red, white, blue and black) was pretty daunting.



Firstly, I worked out the composition. A big, stomping elephant on the right side of the spread would have been a perfect starting point, but London Zoo doesn't house any elephants, so I gave the Queen a giraffe to ride instead. I decided that the rest of the spread would be filled with scrambling guards and a medley of stampeding animals. For a very long time this was all just one big scribble.

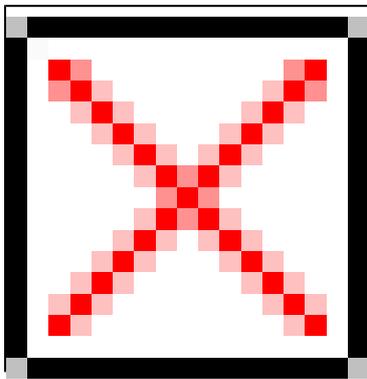
Figuring out which other animals to draw was time-consuming. I spent ages on London Zoo's website looking for animals that were best suited to my limited colour palette of red, white, blue and black. I visited the zoo a couple of times to meet the animals in person. It was around this time that I decided to draw the animals in black and white, so that they would stand out. This meant that I had to pick animals that weren't too solid in colour. Animals like the zebra and tiger were perfect, because of their patterned coats.

I explored how best to fill up the top left part of the spread to complete the composition. Birds were an obvious choice, but how was I to get the guards up there too? Then it dawned on me - monkey ropes!

Once I was confident with my design decisions, along with my animals, I drew the final illustration. I deconstructed my final image into several layers by tracing my original drawing. I did this so that I could add colour digitally in Photoshop. I scanned it all in, and many layers later, the image was complete.

There are many amusing things happening on this page that people will probably miss on their first reading. Things like a fish on a Busby, a hiding chameleon, a guard peering at a snail on his finger, a duck quacking. Every animal is different. The Queen's corgi is hanging from a dangling leg, and the tray-balancing butler is there too.

I'm really happy with the end result. At a recent Hay Festival event I was pleasantly surprised by how the children were so eager to point out all of the different animals, once they'd spotted the butler first, that is.



The Queen's Hat by Steve Antony is published by Hodder Children's Books, 978-

1444919141, £6.99 pbk.

Page Number:

6

Source URL (retrieved on Sep '20): <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/207/childrens-books/articles/windows-into-illustration/windows-into-illustration-steve-antony>

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/steve-antony>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/207>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/206/childrens-books/reviews/the-queens-hat>