



MAIN:
Paul at his studio
INSET LEFT:
Window displays at
JL Stratford City



A BIG DRAW

Colourful, playful, bold: illustrator Paul Thurlby's award-winning work will make you feel like you've stepped back into another world. Featuring in children's books, advertising and design, Paul's illustrations have a strong retro aesthetic – and now he's putting his bright stamp on John Lewis' latest campaign, 'national treasures'. Dalia Dawood caught up with him to find out about his career...

PHOTOS: DARREN LANE

HOW DID YOU GET INTO ILLUSTRATION?

I've been drawing since junior school and my teachers saw my talent and encouraged me, but at secondary school there was no focus on art. After I graduated, I took an office job I didn't like and tried to do illustration on the side but I felt like my main job was stifling my creativity, it was so mundane. I'd be falling asleep at my desk and my boss would shout at me saying 'Where's your motivation?' and I'd reply 'I'm an illustrator!' I was in a bit of debt so I needed the money to promote my illustration work. I finally had the courage to quit and focus on my illustrations full time. It was the best feeling because I could set my own direction and do what I loved.

VINTAGE AESTHETICS INSPIRE A LOT OF YOUR WORK. WHAT DO YOU FIND INSPIRATIONAL ABOUT IT?

I try to go towards simplicity with my work. I'm not thinking about 'vintagey' designs when I create an illustration, I just create what I like and I'm inspired by, which is a lot of '50s and '60s art because it's colourful and appealing. If it's bright and bold, I'm attracted to it.

DO OTHER ARTISTS AND ILLUSTRATORS INSPIRE YOU?

Definitely. I collect vintage posters and have an original print by French artist Bernard Villemot that I bought a few years ago. I also admire Leonetto Capiello's work. He was recognised as

the father of advertising posters in his time, and he created some amazing works. Everything comes from somewhere, so I'll always be drawn to and inspired by the work of other artists but it's how you make it your own that counts.

BRANDS ARE INCREASINGLY COLLABORATING WITH ARTISTS TO MARKET THEMSELVES... WHY DO YOU THINK ILLUSTRATION IS SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE PLATFORM FOR ADVERTISING?

Illustration has more originality and individuality than, say, photography. It's more playful and can feel more unique to the brand. You can

do whatever you want and be really creative in how you advertise your company. Cartoons are popular with everyone and create a dream world that you can escape into.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE WITH JOHN LEWIS?

They got in touch with me and it sounded like an exciting project, especially doing window displays. I like trying new things and this is something I was interested to explore.

YOU'VE WORKED ON ADS, POSTERS, BOOKS: WHY IS VARIETY IMPORTANT TO YOUR WORK?

It gets a bit boring if you just do one thing. Having variety allows me to approach things in different ways. I'm especially happy if I'm commissioned to do posters – I find the look of them very striking. My favourite was the Sarson's Vinegar posters. The agency gave me enough time to do a good job, that was their priority – they knew it wouldn't happen in just a couple of hours.





National treasures

What is it?

A summer-long campaign in John Lewis celebrating 'all the things we love' – ie, the quirkiness that makes up the British nation – through a series of summer events, bespoke products and in-store activities. Each branch will have a pop-up shop and striking window displays made up of Paul's illustrations. "There's no better brand to celebrate Britishness than John Lewis, and there's no better time to celebrate than right now," says Peter Cross, Director, Customer Experience. It is part of three seasonal campaigns called 'Big Moments' that will run every year, in a bid to build stronger relationships with customers.

When is it happening?

The campaign runs from 26 April to 20 August.

How can I get involved?

Partners can help bring the campaign to life in shops by spreading the word about national treasures to customers and taking part in local branch events, including hosting tea parties to tie in with Marie Curie's national 'Blooming Great Tea Party' event on 9 June. Find out more about what you can do from your local leadership team.



WHICH OF YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS HAVE YOU ENJOYED WORKING ON MOST?

The Alphabet book I created because it was a personal project, and all my own ideas. It was my first published book, although it wasn't intended to be one. I just wanted to challenge myself, so I thought to do the alphabet but make each letter into a word and shape. I started off thinking it's for kids but I soon forgot about that... I was having too much fun! It was very rewarding to be the illustrator and creative director of a project, and the publishers didn't change anything about it, they respected my final work.

WHICH LETTER WAS HARDEST TO COME UP WITH?

I was stuck on a few of them! I had a pocket dictionary and if something triggered an image in my head, I'd go with it. G for graffiti was hard because I wondered how I'd get it to work, and N for newspaper was tricky because of the shape. But the hardest one of all was Q. There aren't many words to play with and it has a bit of an odd shape, but I really liked that it challenged me. I had a 'eureka' moment when I finally solved it! I chose quicksand.

WHICH PART OF THE ILLUSTRATION PROCESS DO YOU LIKE MOST?

It depends on the work. For the Alphabet book, coming up with the ideas was my favourite part, but with other things it's seeing the finished product. I remember doing a campaign for the French Tourist Board, and one day I was going to the tube station and looked up and saw three huge posters in front of me... they were mine! I was embarrassed at first but I found it funny that one minute I was working on them on screen and suddenly they're massive posters.

IS YOUR WORK PRODUCED ENTIRELY DIGITALLY?

Everything starts out with pencil sketches. I use ink to add a bit of detail and then scan and assemble it all in Photoshop. I'd really like to do some more painting; it's very satisfying to use traditional methods. But there's so much value in using digital techniques in your process.

Check out more of Paul's work on his website: www.paulthurlby.com 



Inside JL Dubai

Alison Tay, Editor-in-Chief of *Grazia* Middle East, takes us on a personal tour of the new John Lewis shop-in-shop in Dubai



John Lewis, that bastion of Britishness, has appeared like a mirage in the Dubai desert. The shop within a shop forms part of newly opened Singaporean super brand Robinsons which – in our city of superlatives that's home to the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building – claimed the title of the biggest department store in the Emirate measuring a staggering 18,000 sq m when it opened its doors on 28 March 2017.

As you might expect, John Lewis maintains a quiet dignity in a city that likes to shout. When we make *Grazia* every week, even as an international title, it's important to us that our readers should open the magazine and know they're in the Middle East.



So being greeted by an ivy-strewn section where bouquets are being created by Volet – one of the region's most artistic florists – the moment customers step off the escalator at the second floor into John Lewis certainly reminds us we're in Dubai, while Designers Guild sets work hard to keep our feet firmly grounded on British soil.

The highlight for me is The Sleep Room (above), a wooden-slatted, yurt-like structure that wouldn't look out of place in the Healing Fields at Glastonbury – another favourite British institution – housing six luxury double beds with mattresses made from silk and cashmere and dawn-till-dusk ceiling projections.

And true to Dubai's spending power and demand for the biggest catwalk names, the childrenswear department reads like the Fashion Week show schedule, including Paul Smith Junior, Kenzo, Stella McCartney Kids, Hugo Boss, Chloé and Little Marc Jacobs.



There's something about making yourself a new home abroad that makes you treasure the fabric of your childhood even more, and hold the traditions you grew up with even dearer; and John Lewis is among them.

As a new Brit in town carving out a career for myself in the Middle East, I feel as if John Lewis Dubai and I have a lot in common. I've been made to feel part of the family here and I know that it won't be long before John Lewis feels just as at home in the UAE as I do. 