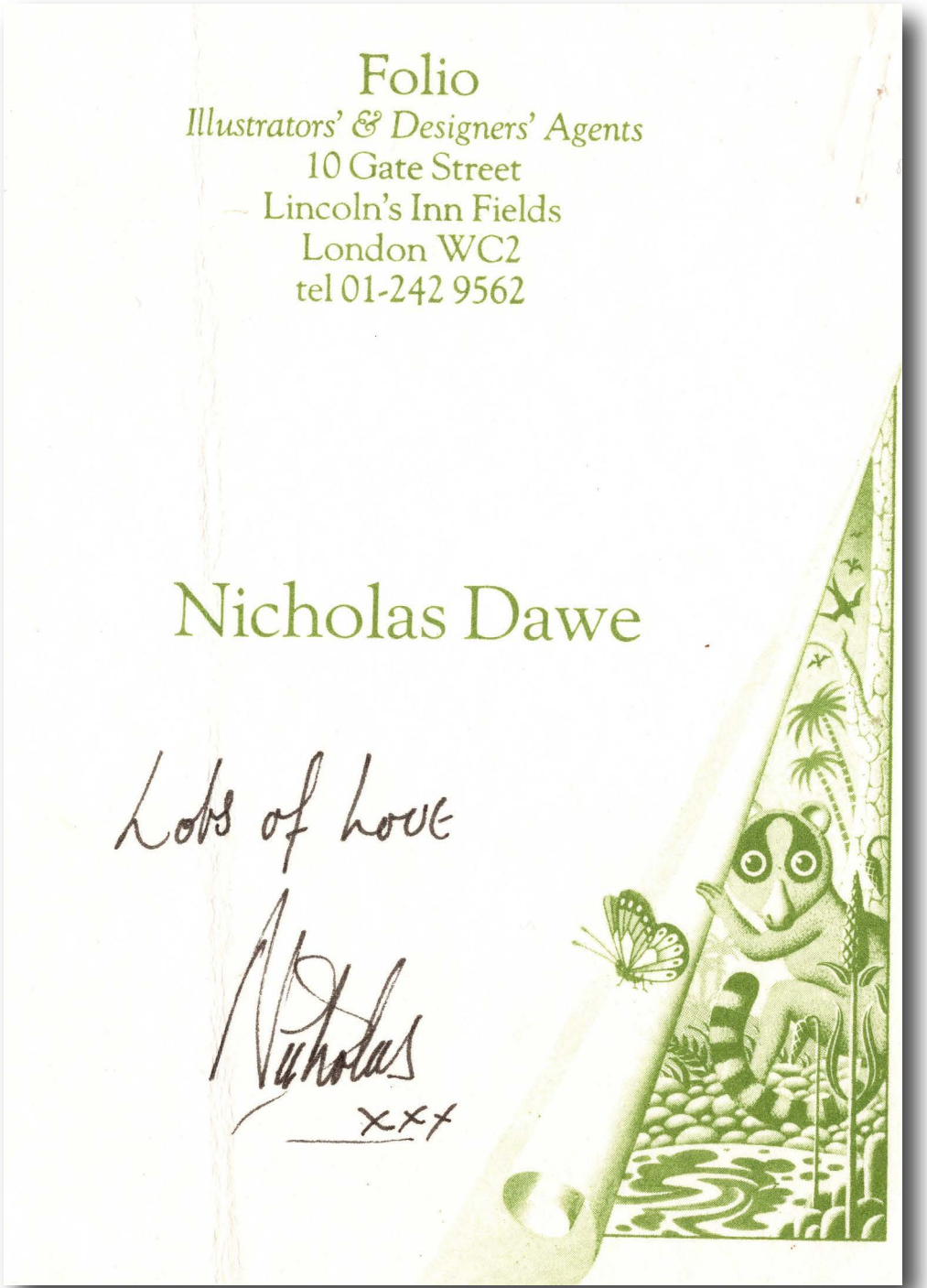
Folio at Fifty

Est. 1976

London





Early Folio compliment slip with illustration by Tony Meeuwissen



Charlie O'Farrell and Nicholas Dawe in the Folio office c.1980

Founded by Nicholas Dawe in the pre-digital world where transparencies, lightboxes and deadline dashes across the city for hand-created artwork were the norm, 50 years on Folio illustration agency remains at the forefront of the global illustration landscape and is the oldest UK-based agency still run in its original form by its founder.

It is amazing to me that Folio celebrates 50 years this year. It feels like only yesterday I started with a handful of artists yet half a century later we're reflecting on iconic artworks and anticipating great campaigns still to be created. I thank everyone who has been involved with Folio over the years, from artists and team members to agencies and clients. Folio has always moved with the times and, as the creative landscape shifts again, we look forward to continuing as your reliable partner – here's to the future!

Best wishes, Nicholas Dawe



Legacy

To mark our 50th anniversary, a selection of artists from our roster have created work inspired by the theme of 'legacy'.

Left: Illustration by JVG | Right: Logo by Nick Radford

Ricardo Bessa



You are a garden. All of your values, your memories, the trauma and the hang-ups that have taken root, they are the legacy that grows and blooms in you. Some of those things can be beautiful and soothing and some of them might be thorny and difficult. But through rot and root, you grow.

Billy Clark



I felt that a garden was a neat interpretation of the legacy theme. It represents the notion that what we plant today will remain long after we are gone.

Antoine Corbineau



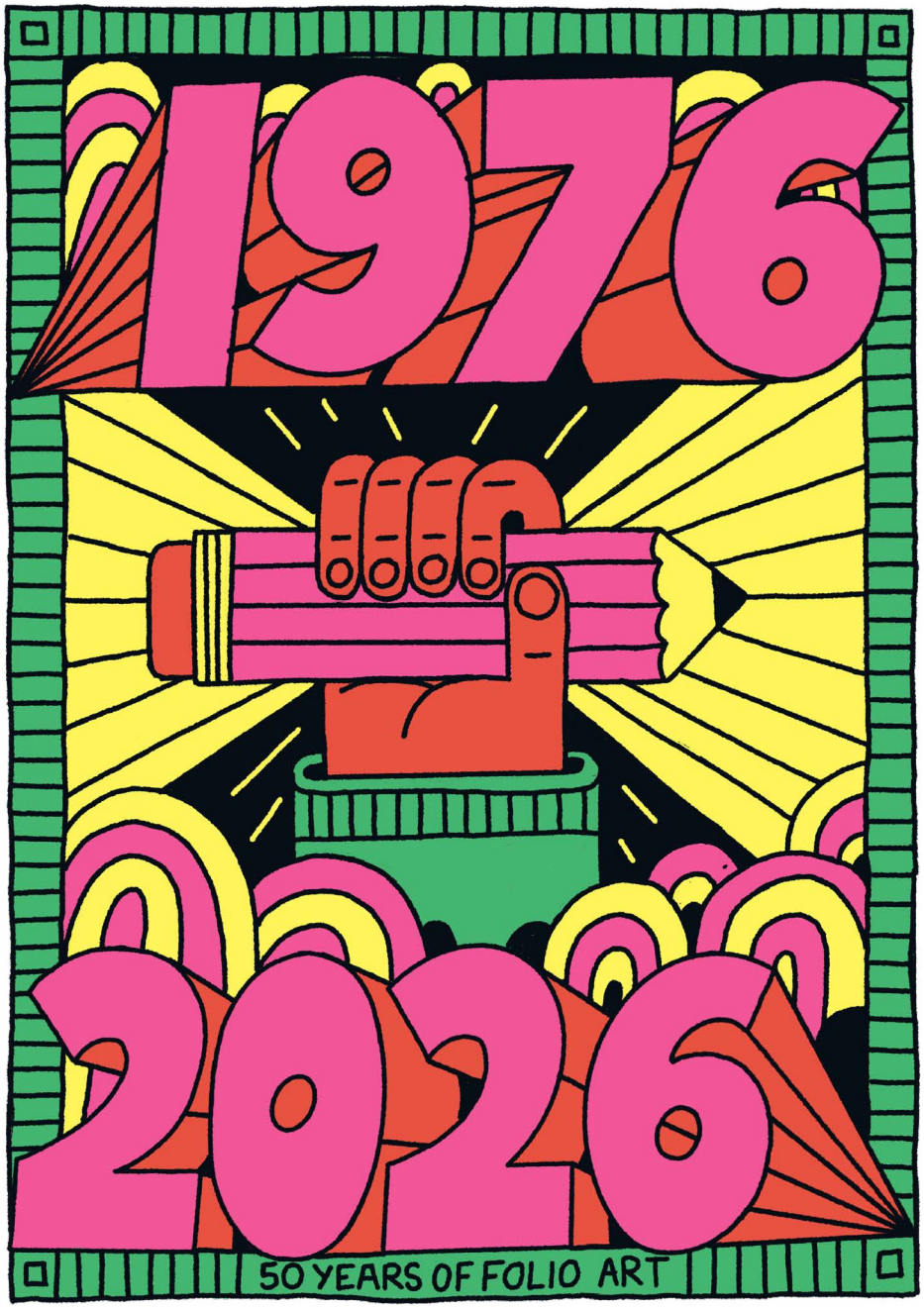
Welcome aboard the Art Rocket. Exploring the galaxies of creativity since 1976. Navigating shifting creative climates, inspiration black holes and the occasional space pirate — always in search of originality, new horizons and a legacy that lasts.

Owen Davey



Nothing epitomises legacy more for me than being a dad. On the surface, a swan appears graceful and effortless, while beneath the water its legs are constantly paddling to keep everything moving. The time I spend with my kids, the passions and conversations will, I hope, live on within them long after I'm gone.

John Devolle



I made this artwork to celebrate 50 years of Folio and 50 years of myself. Folio was born in a time before any kind of computer-aided art, so all illustrations at this time would have been hand made. My work is certainly going in that direction. I think it's always more interesting to see artwork created by hands.

Alex Green



I have been with Folio for around 20 years. Having seen the industry change over the decades, I've seen the portfolios reduce in size to now fit in the palm of the hand and be seen all over the world, instantly. Folio have been there since the beginning come rain or shine.

Nick Hayes



Communities are our legacy, communities that include our ecology and that when human and non human work together, for each other, they become the real version of mythic giants, big enough to conquer the corporate giants that govern our land.

HifuMiyo



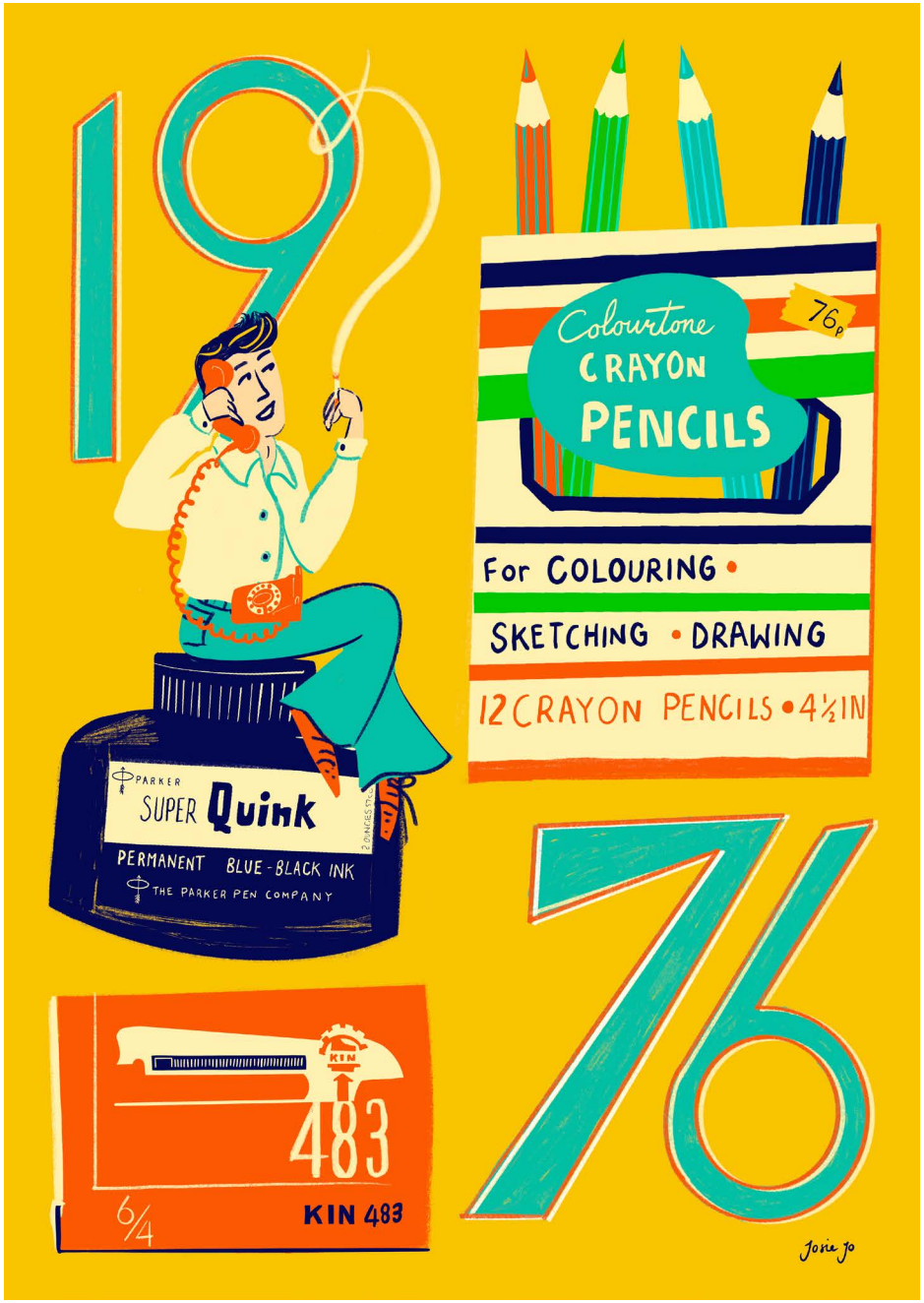
There is something fulfilling about looking at an illustration I drew simply because I felt like drawing it. It feels a little like cooking a meal just for myself, seasoning it exactly to my taste, and satisfying my own hunger. I may not be able to prepare a feast for a crowd, but an illustration can travel farther and find its way to you.

Bodil Jane



I can just imagine a Folio office/HQ looking like this, displaying all the things the illustrators have created over the years. This would just be a tiny little corner though, as it would probably be a way bigger space considering all the things that have been created with Folio over the years.

Josie Jo



Inspired by Folio founder, Nicholas Dawe — a master negotiator who could close any deal with just a phone call — this piece bridges legacy and tactile craft. By incorporating vintage 1976 art materials and a retro colour palette, I framed a passion for mid-century typography and the enduring spirit of the analogue era.

Chu-Chieh Lee



Folio provides a safe space for artists of all backgrounds to draw and create freely — and its legacy grows richer with time, carried forward by the artists it has supported along the way.

Nien-Ken Alec Lu



The artwork positions artists as the enduring legacy of human creativity and reminds us that AI can never inherit or replace the human behind the art.

Julian De Narvaez



A solitary figure navigates the stillness of a vast night, its reflection transformed by light into the suggestion of wings, while a bird traces a line across the water, a metaphor for legacy, and for art and ideas as a means of transcending our own time and enduring in the world of forms.

Camelia Pham



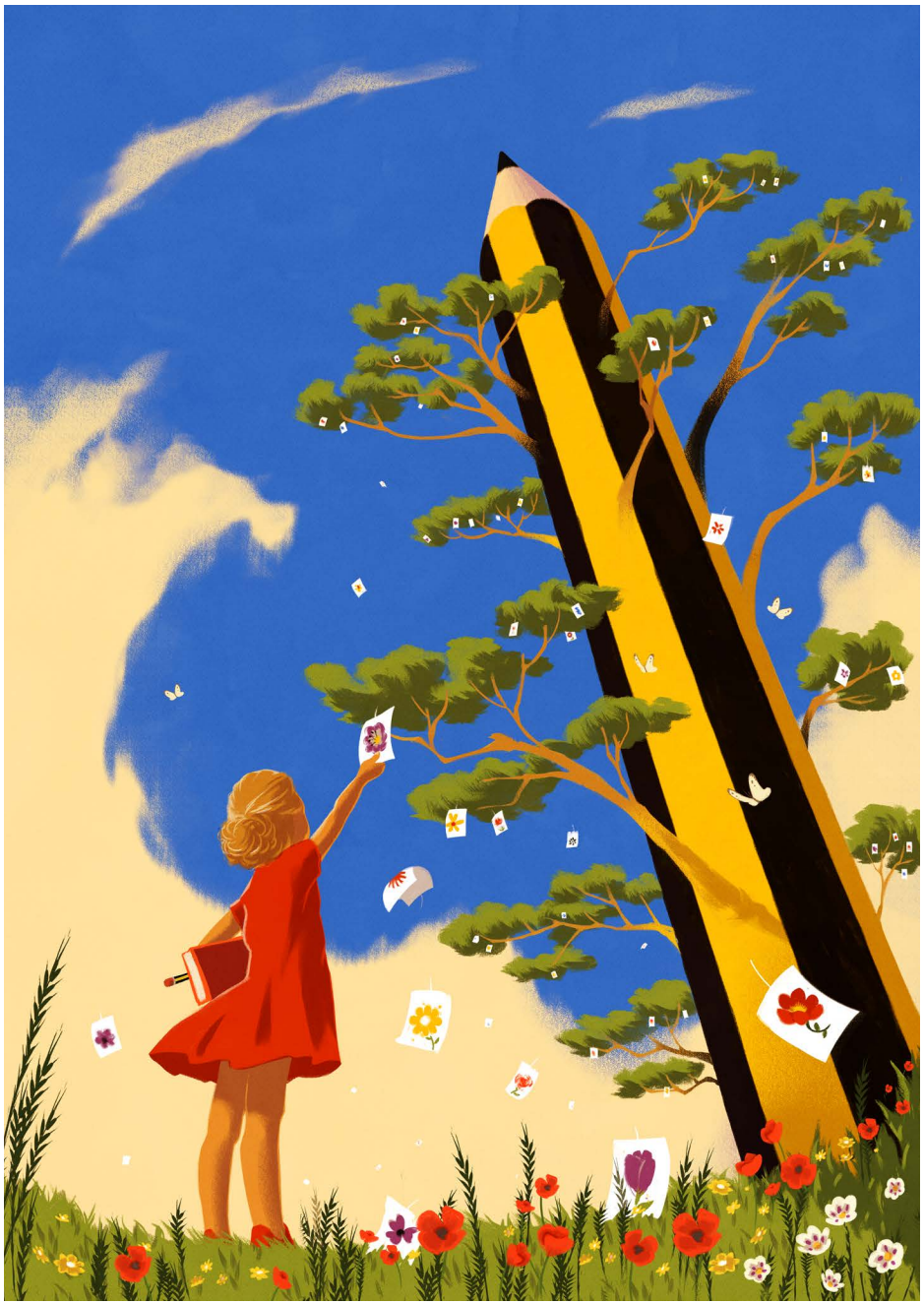
There's a proverb in Vietnamese that goes 'when enjoying the fruits, remember the one who planted the tree', which perfectly encapsulates my take on legacy. I'm truly grateful for previous artists and agencies who have created such a safe garden for me and other artists to enjoy just creating art and exploring ourselves.

Nick Radford



It felt fitting to do something typographic as I was initially taken on by Folio as somebody specialising in hand-rendered type. The tree's roots represent the agency's legacy, portfolio pages lie beneath, and the leaves show the growth of its artists and their amazing work.

Rui Ricardo



The pencil-like tree represents Folio's legacy rooted in the illustration world, with drawings of flowers of all sorts, shapes and styles blooming from the branches; inspiring whole new generations of artists and visual arts lovers.

Stephan Schmitz



If an illustration takes on a life of its own, gets shared, and connects with people around the world, I would consider it part of an illustrator's legacy.

Nicholas Stevenson



I think a lot about the chain of illustrators passing on knowledge, approaches and ideas down generations, us all standing on each others' shoulders and borrowing from one another. It's wonderful to celebrate the impact Folio and Folio artists have had over 50 years in this way.

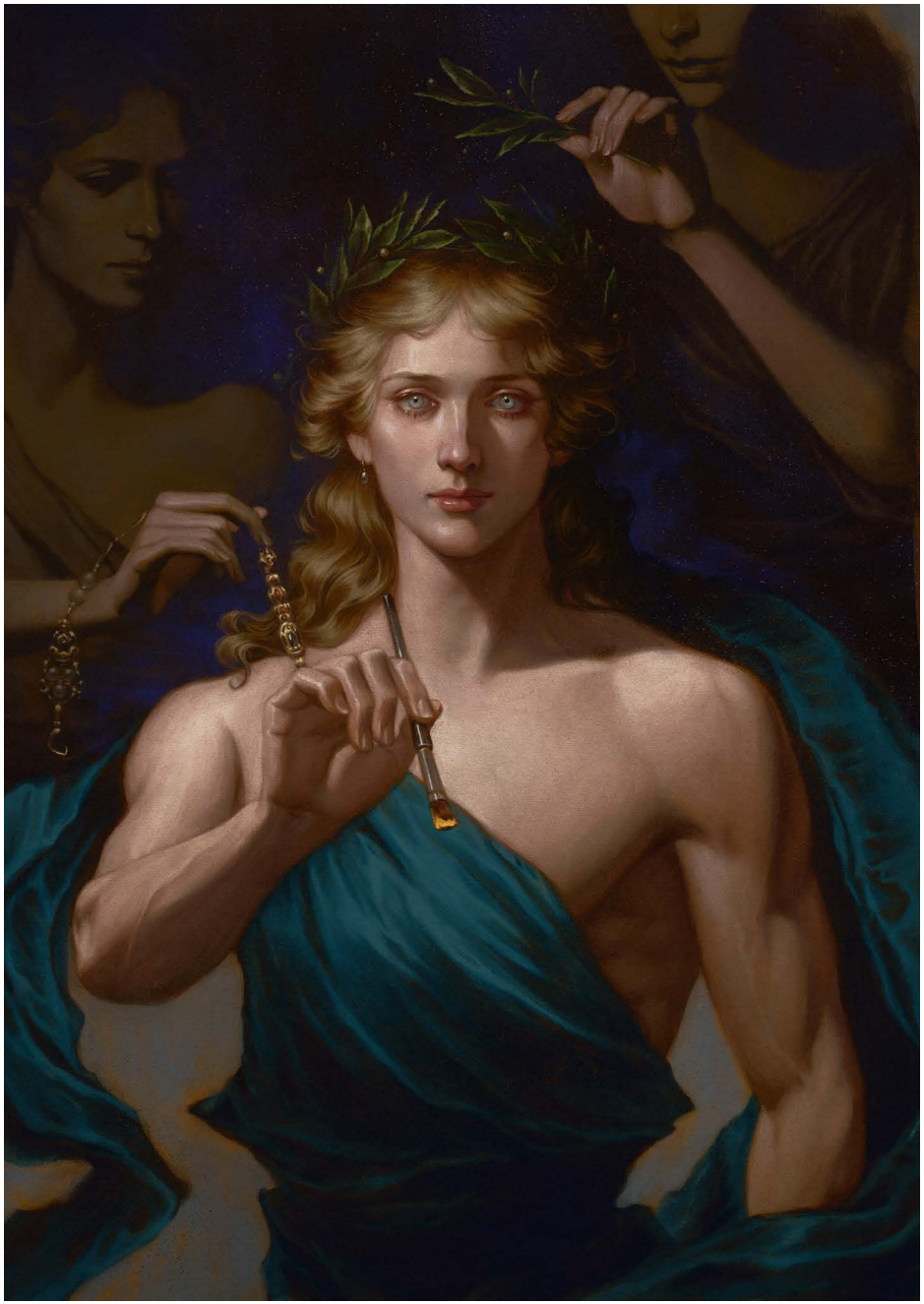


Folio Cornucopia, the urn of plenty. May your cup always be full of love, joy and projects.



Nature always wins in the end.

Elizabeth Wakou



For me, the past being continually transformed by the artist's paintbrush is the meaning of legacy. So I used Apollo, the classical patron of the Arts, as a figurative representation of artists, and painted him as the link between what artists inherit and what they choose to create.

Alexander Wells



I've been reading a lot of fantasy lately and just finished a book that drew heavily on Arthurian legend. It got me thinking about the mythos surrounding King Arthur and the enduring legacy it has left on fantasy literature and British folklore as a whole.

Folio Artists

Son of Alan
Daniel Atanasov
Ricardo Bessa
Fred Birchal
Jason Brooks
Sally Caulwell
Billy Clark
Daniel Clarke
Gabriel Corbera
Antoine Corbineau
Owen Davey
Mercedes deBellard
Eleni Debo
John Devolle
Michael Driver
Uran Duo
Kate Evans
Amelia Flower
Ella Ginn
Alex Green
Helen Green
Peter Greenwood
William Grill
Hatch
Nick Hayes
HifuMiyo
Bodil Jane
Carolyn Jenkins
Josie Jo
JVG
Sam Kalda
Olivia Knapp
Chu-Chieh Lee
Donghyun Lim
Joanna Lisowiec
Jia-yi Liu
Kei-Ella Loewe
Andrés Lozano
Nien-Ken Alec Lu
Sarah Maxwell
Rebecca Mock
Julian De Narvaez
Nabil Nezzar
Ollanski
Camelia Pham
Mister Phil
Nick Radford
Rui Ricardo
Juan Esteban Rodriguez
Kouzou Sakai
Stephan Schmitz
Anne Sharp
Nick Slater
Nicholas Stevenson
Karolis Strautniekas
Swindler & Swindler
Daniel Tingcungco
Trudy Tran
Edward Tuckwell
Elizabeth Wakou
Olivia Waller
Alexander Wells
Emanuel Wiemans

Take a closer look at our artists' portfolios at folioart.co.uk



Nick

I'm Nick and I founded Folio to help the artists I admire do more of what they love – creating artworks – by earning a fair living from their astonishing skills. I'm incredibly proud that Folio has nurtured and supported so many brilliant talents over the decades, fighting for their rights as freelance artists and partnering them in their creative journeys; I truly believe the world will always need the ingenuity of inspirational artists.

Folio Agents



David

Hi, I'm David! I was born in Newcastle but now live in London's Soho, a diverse community where you encounter the rainbow of human creativity every day. I studied fine art and am fascinated by the ingenuity of artists: watching creative responses develop from idea to artwork always brings a fresh thrill!



Katie

Hello, I'm Katie! I studied illustration and have always loved being surrounded by creative people and ideas.
As an agent, I enjoy discovering artists, championing their work and finding them dream jobs. When I'm not at my desk, you'll find me exploring museums, art fairs and the great outdoors, or getting lost in a good book!



Sally

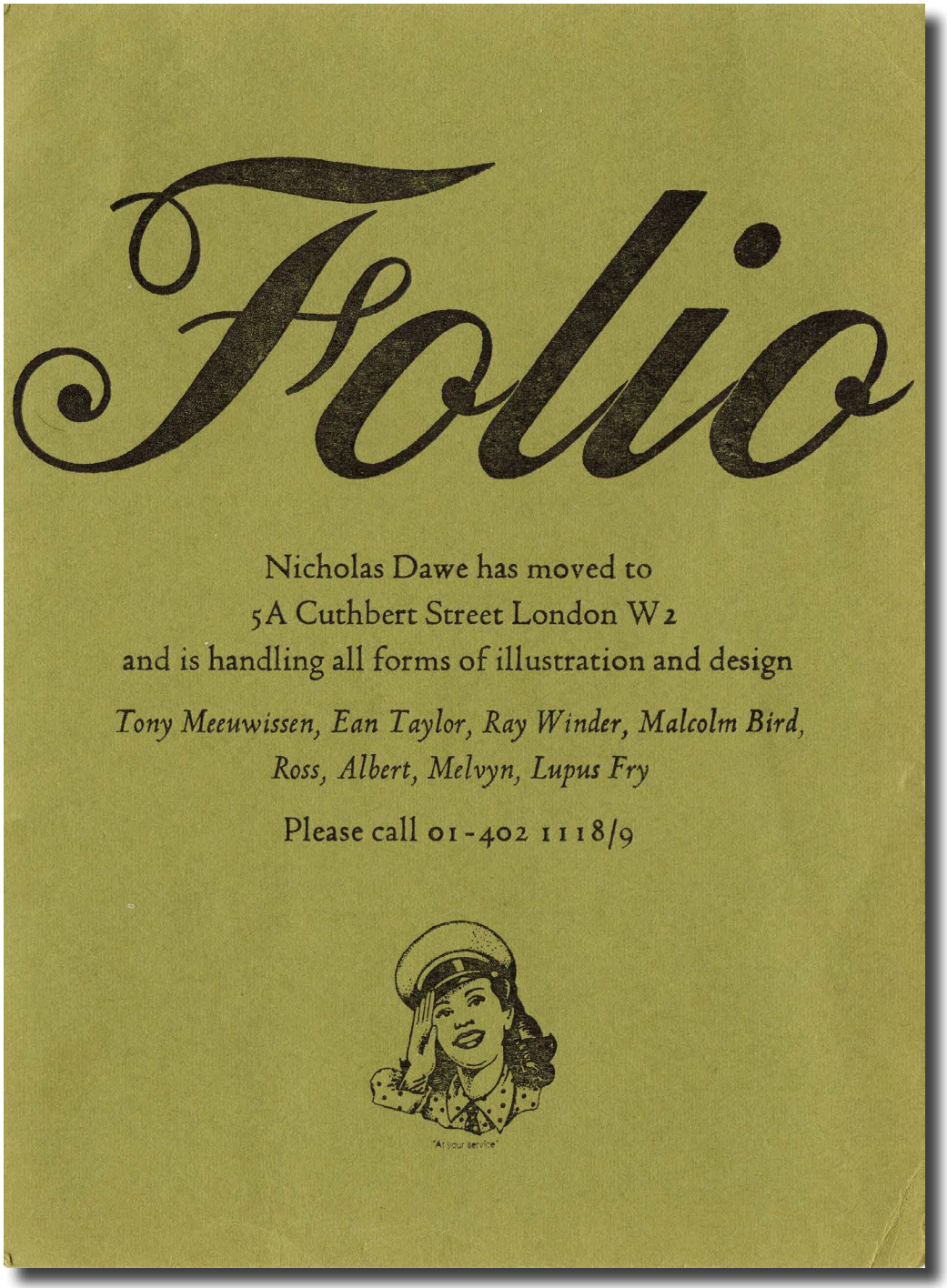
I'm Sally! I live in London but travel as often as I can to visit international museums and galleries – and to eat good food! As an agent, I love matching artists with their dream clients and supporting commissions as they come to life, especially when they take an artist's practice in a fresh new direction.



Kumi

Hello, I'm Kumi! Living in Glasgow, I am Folio's northern-most member. As an agent it is a joy to see artwork move with the seasons, from winter snowscapes to warm and sunny beach scenes. Outside of the office you can find me in my studio risoprinting or cooking at my Japanese Bangladeshi supper club.

Illustrations by Bodil Jane



Archival Folio contact card

Q&A

We join our founder Nicholas Dawe to find out more about Folio's past, present and future.

How did you get your start as an illustration agent?

I became very good friends with the illustrator George Underwood, who I met soon after leaving school and is now my oldest and dearest friend. When I was in my 20s, after spending time in Canada, I returned to England not knowing what I wanted to do. I had always been fascinated watching George work, and his agent, Andy Archer, was looking for someone to help him out – I went to meet Andy and he took me on.

My job was to run into the London design and ad agencies with all the artist portfolios. I would go to an agency, take their brief, call the artist to check they could do it, dash to the railway station, wrap up the package of reference material, fill out the form, and put the package on the Red Star train service. Then the artist would send the completed artwork back, I'd pick it up and take it to the agency. But they might need the work amended, so I'd return to the station, send it back to the artist ... it was hectic, and there were so many jobs going on at the same time, with artists living all over the place.

In between meetings, I was normally in local Soho establishments, like the French House, Coach and Horses, and the Colony Room. I spent my life on the phone in the French. Andy introduced me to many of the Soho regulars, such as Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud, George Melly, Jeffrey Bernard, Daniel Farson, John Hurt – that was a perk of the job!

> "I spent my life on the phone in the French"

What was it like dealing with physical artworks?

All the artworks – whether acrylic, watercolour, oils – were terribly delicate. They had to be wrapped thoroughly. Oil paintings were put into a deep frame because they would take several days to dry, so you had to be extremely careful.

Still, there were some disasters. I remember one time I saw the porter had dropped an artwork between the train and the platform – then the train ran it over. Another time, I unwrapped a fine airbrush illustration on my desk and the art director cracked open a can of Coke that sprayed across the artwork and immediately destroyed it!

You were a founder of the Association of Illustrators in 1973 – what led to its creation?

At that time, we did a lot of work with IPC magazines, one of the most powerful publishing houses. They paid by cheque but, before you could pay it into your bank, you had to sign on the back, which then transferred all your copyright to IPC. So, a group of agents got together and met in a bar in Soho to form the Association of Illustrators (I took the subs money on the door to create the first membership) and the goal was to stop IPC taking artists' copyright – and we won!

The next big issue was the return of original artworks, which agencies often kept. If the client wanted to buy the original, we could then sell them the artwork on behalf of the artist so they could make additional income from the job. Folio has been involved in trying to protect artists from the very beginning, and that has always been a strong motivation for me over the years.

How did you build up your initial client base?

Aside from Folio postcards and stickers, which I covered London with, and directories like *Creative Handbook* and *Contact*, I used to have a rotating exhibition in Covent Garden in the Zanzibar. It was a very famous watering hole for the creatives, and I managed to put artworks from all our illustrators in there and change the images every month – that was good promotion.

"Often imitated but never duplicated"

What is your favourite part about being an illustration agent?

I always love seeing artwork when it is finished. In the early years you didn't see it on a screen, it came in a package and you unwrapped it ... wow, breathtaking! Big pieces, small pieces – it just made your heart rush to have it like that, the actual artwork in your hand.

Some artists have been with Folio for decades – how have they adapted for long and successful careers?

All the artists with long careers can draw very well, so that gives them a strong technical foundation. They have adapted to the shift of mediums, from drawing boards to digital tablets, treating these as tools for their talents. They have adapted as Folio has, moving with the times, and they have kept clear heads, developing and evolving their unique styles.

If you could go back and start Folio again, would you do anything differently?

No, I don't think so. I like to support unique artists, those who are "often imitated but never duplicated", I always say. To this day, I still represent a few that I had at the beginning, which gives me enormous satisfaction; I look forward to that continuing, and developing relationships with amazing new artists who come through in the future.

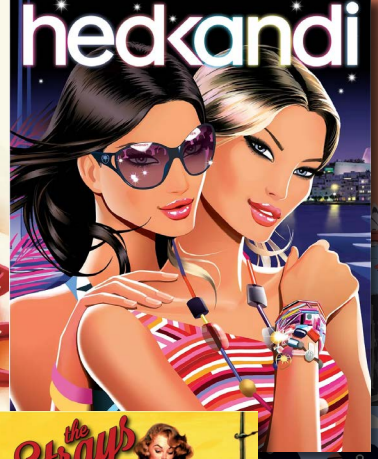
Listen to the full podcast at folioart.co.uk



Original Folio logo by Tony Meeuwissen

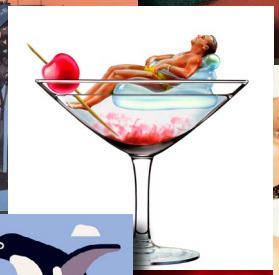
Folio Archive

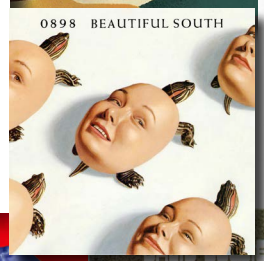








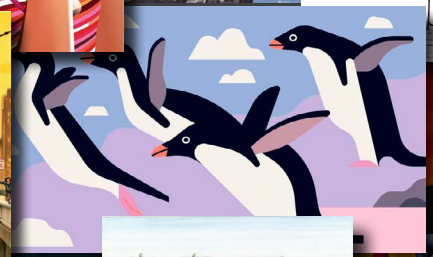








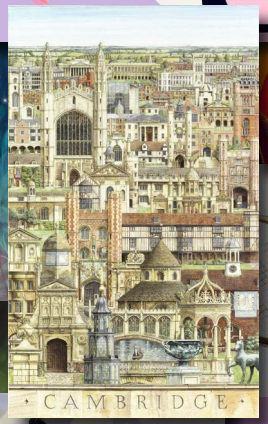




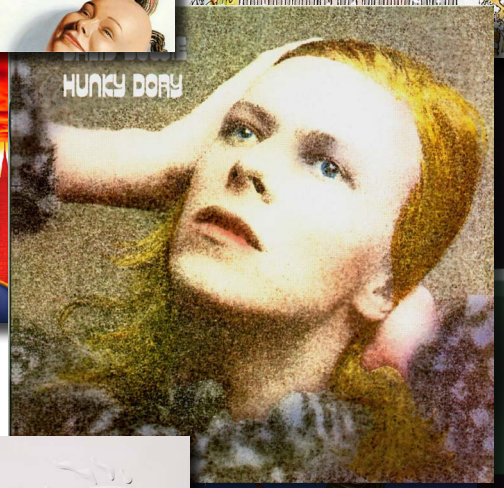
















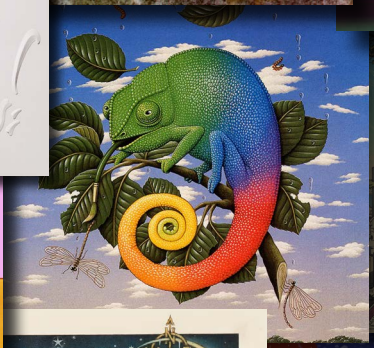




























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