

# My back pages.

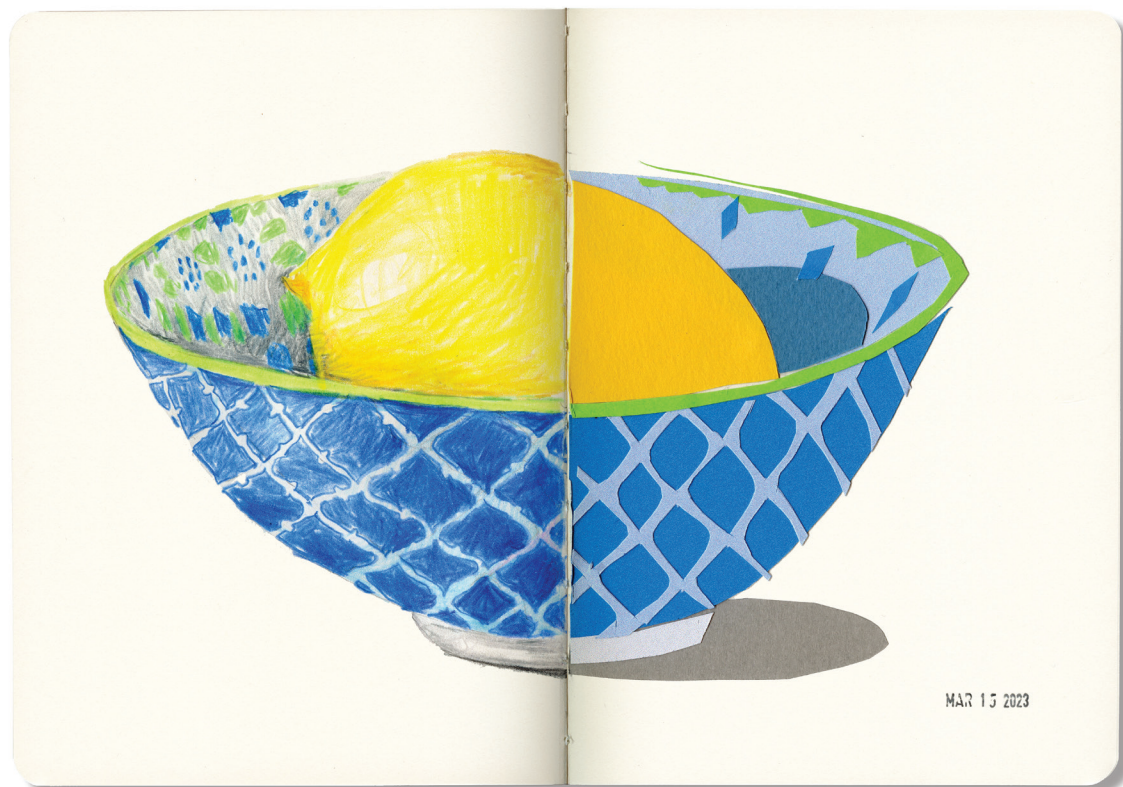
I can't imagine approaching a project in design or illustration without the benefit of a habit I formed early on—working in a sketchbook. When I draw in a sketchbook, I feel like I'm making room in my head, like moving stuff from the dining room table to the garage. It permits a certain aimless visual wandering with no particular destination. No creative brief, no rules, no deadline, no judgment. It's a perfect place for conducting tests and storing pieces of ideas.

Occasionally I work on assignments in my sketchbook, but much of the time I'm just drawing with no end game in mind. Yet, strangely enough, the sketchbook is remarkably practical for the job of an illustrator. It is a research lab containing experiments often unfinished and inconclusive. What makes it so productive is that it houses these records of disparate musings made without expectation—each one adding to a catalogue of possibilities. A sketchbook

allows a certain fearlessness to arise. Things happen over time, what once was an aimless doodle collides with another random sketch, and suddenly an idea is born. It's a repetitious journaling that pays off when you least expect it. Keith Richards didn't go to bed with the assignment to write a hit song, but he awakened to jot down the three-note riff that would one day become *Satisfaction*.

Much of the content of my sketchbook is a mystery to me, and that's a good thing. Sketching is an analog process, yet one of the most useful ways to elevate our work. With the simplest of tools, we can create realities from nothing and pose "what-ifs" with only a few lines. Sketches are the shorthand between problem and solution, designer and client, imagined and real. They are the work behind the work.

Ultimately, they represent a trove of half-baked ideas—sort of a garage full of parts waiting for a car to fix.



Sketchbooks, 1993-2023