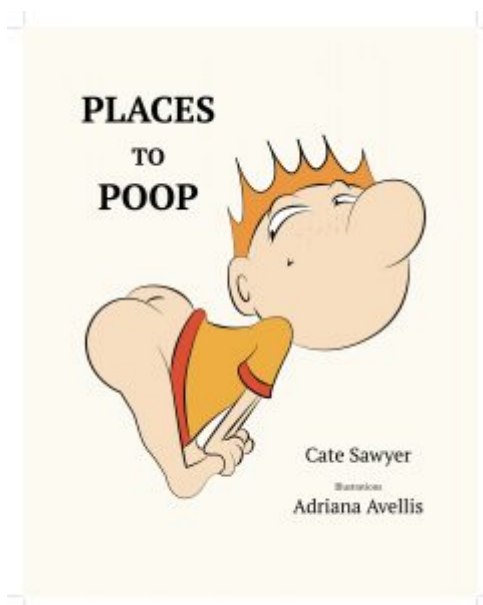


Breaking into the Industry from an Illustrator's Perspective

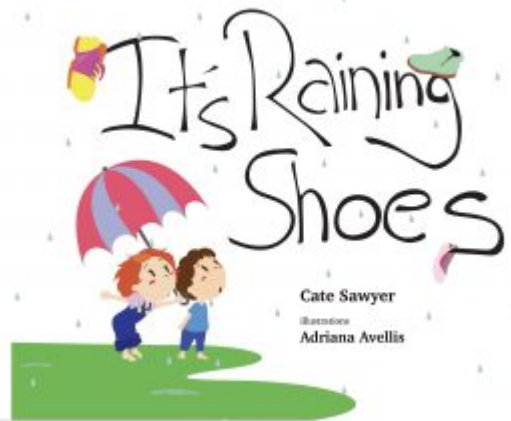
Illustrator Adriana Avellis has partnered with Children's Book Author Cate Sawyer to release *Places to Poop*, *It's Raining Shoes*, *The Umbilical Family*, and *Discombobulated*. As a contemporary, new, vibrant illustrator I thought you'd be interested to hear more about her and how she broke into the exclusive industry.



You studied at Newcastle University in NSW. Did your connection with the university play any part in you getting your breakthrough to publication?

My Bachelor Degree in Visual Communication Design helped me build the foundations of my style and personal confidence about being an illustrator. I had many wonderful tutors who encouraged us to not be afraid to get out there, and that was what motivated me to contact Hawkeye Publishing and brought me to right now. I originally contacted Hawkeye asking if I could do an internship with them. They weren't able to accommodate that, but they did connect me with Cate Sawyer and we ended up working together.

You went on to study at the London College of Art. Tell us about that.



University of Newcastle was really a place for me to begin to find my voice as an artist. I learnt about foundations, the elements necessary to construct a design, and understand the meaning behind the construction.

I found, after I went into the field and began practising and creating, that I was restless to continue to learn. The reason for my studying the Diploma of Illustration through the London Art College, was to work on my skills specifically as an illustrator. I learned more illustration focused techniques, including colour palette, character design, composition, editorial design, sequential design, etc.

The reason I decided to further my studies is so I could not only build my portfolio, but to challenge myself. Studying illustration isn't just the creative aspect – it's understanding deadlines, time management, working to a brief and collaborating with clients. Both of my courses of study have been exceptionally beneficial to my career.

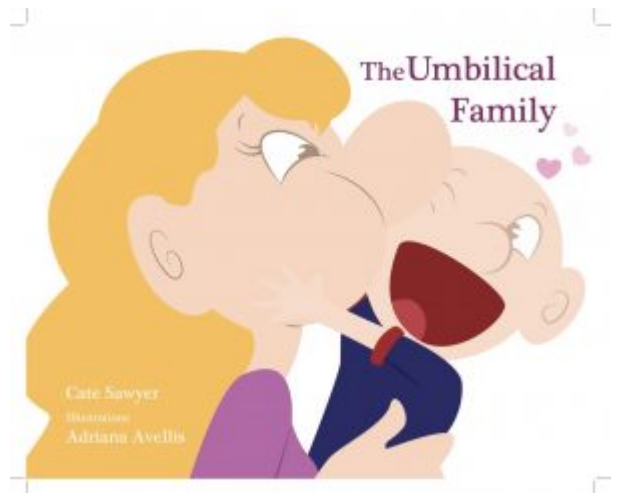
How hard is it for new graduates to break into illustrating?



I found it quite difficult. The creative world is very competitive and there are so many different branches to choose. Initially, I applied for a lot of design jobs, mostly entry level, however I always managed to miss the mark just slightly with what they required from me.

I also contacted publishing houses, hoping (in my young, enthusiastic mind) that someone would give me a push in the right direction. I sent emails out and said I was an illustrator wanting to work in the publishing world and wanting advice on how I could do that. It was pretty brutal when no one got back to me (wiser and older me now understands the processes). I tried to think of other avenues, and when I finally got a response – even though it wasn't exactly the response I was looking for, I ran with it. It takes thick skin, patience and hard work to be in this industry, and for graduates, they just have to be smart and find out different ways they can break in.

What do you enjoy most about illustrating?



It makes me happy. I have been drawing since I was very young, and when I was seven, I decided that I was going to work as a Disney artist. The way the creative team designed these animations that made me feel so much was astounding and filled me with wonder. When I draw, I love the different reactions I get from people, most of the cartoons/illustrations I create are designed to make people laugh. The ability to make someone happy and laugh is beautiful.

What do you enjoy least?

Having creative blocks. They are the absolute worst. Some days I am absolutely fine, the ideas flow and everything is perfect, I could draw from when I wake up to when I go to bed. But those blocks can sometimes hit me for days... and days. When I'm blocked, whatever I create just doesn't look right, I have an idea in my head but I just can't execute it.

Why release 4 books at once?

It's a good idea to establish a rich trail of work. Breaking into the industry with one book is like going to battle with slingshot while everyone else has machine guns. Releasing all four gives variety to our audience, gives them the opportunity to get to know us.

What made you decide to work with Cate Sawyer?

When I received her response to my email asking to meet because she was looking for an illustrator to create some children's books with her, I was ecstatic. I'm pretty sure I still have it somewhere.

The moment I met Cate I knew we would get along. She was friendly and enthusiastic about my artwork (which was the greatest thing ever for me, being new to the industry). Working with someone so established with such a wealth of knowledge and experience has been incredible. Cate encourages me and works with me as equals.

How long has it taken in between meeting the author, and the books going on sale? What was involved in the process?

Three years. Three years with planning, getting side tracked, re-planning, writing, designing, scrapping ideas, creating new ones and finally reaching our goal.

What are your personal favourite children's picture books?

I've always been in love with the *Winnie the Pooh* books – E.H Shepard's illustrations are so beautiful and the stories are something today I feel nostalgic about.

Another is the Dr. Seuss books. I cannot even count how many times I read the *Fox in Socks* as a kid. That book is at my parent's house in absolute tatters because myself and my brother and sister read it so much.

My favourite children's book of all time, however, has to be *Little Moebie* by Martin Waddell, Illustrated by Jill Barton. The illustrations were so soft and playful, and worked in so well with the story.

Which illustrators have most informed your own artistic development, and why?

There are a lot of influences around and I can't say it's just specific to illustrators. An Illustrator I do admire and

follow is Tim Von Rueden, an independent artist. Tim's artwork has such detail and a mixture of semi-realistic and stylised work, he is an incredible artist. Mostly, I look at the work of Disney animators. I could look at my portfolio and see a lot of influence there. I learnt to draw drawing Disney characters.

What's next for [Adriana Avellis](#)?

I still have a day job – my artwork is not yet providing a full time income, however, I am working on a lovely new book with Cate Sawyer, some exciting personal art projects on the go, and the usual client work. I am now receiving more author approaches; which is exciting.

Interview by [Carolyn Martinez](#), Author, Editor & Guest Speaker.