



Windows into Illustration: Tim Hopgood

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[Tim Hopgood](#) [1]

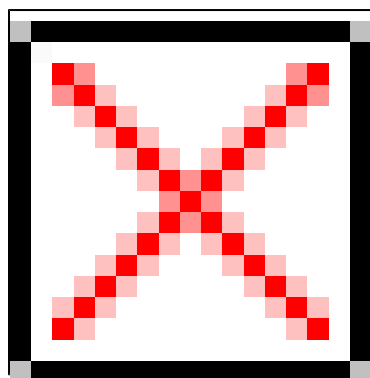
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Windows into Illustration

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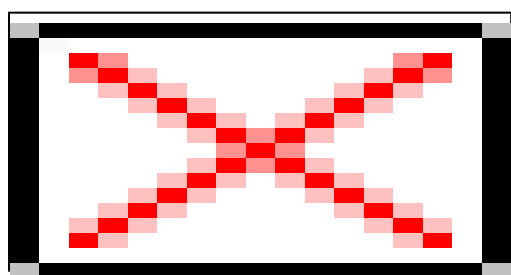
Illustrating **Henry Mancini**



Tim Hopgood's first book was published in 2006 and won the **Cambridgeshire Read it Again!** award for best debut picture book. In 2008 he won the **Booktrust Early Years Award** for Best Emerging Illustrator and now has a string of picture books to his name, including a series inspired by popular songs. Here he describes his approach to one of those, **Moon River**.

Moon River is the fourth picture book in the series, published by OUP Children's Books, inspired by classic songs. The words are written by Johnny Mercer and the music is by Henry Mancini; the song was written for Audrey Hepburn who sings it in the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Using the lyrics as a springboard and having listened to the song over and over again, I start by working out who the characters are in the story, what they look like and then, what's going to happen to them. While I was working on **Singing in the Rain**, I had already chosen **Moon River** as my next project, so the ideas for it had been building for some time.

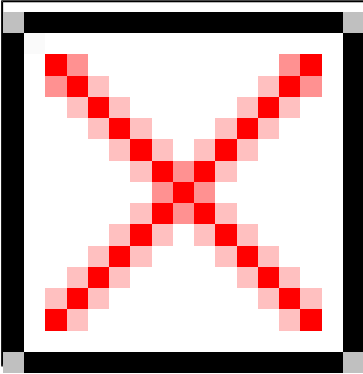


The spread I'm going to talk about is the opening scene. In it, we see a girl fast asleep in bed, hugging her teddy bear. In the room is a white rocking horse which is positioned by an open window. Outside we can see a big moon in the sky; the light from the moon drifts through the open window, entwines around the rocking horse and then makes its way towards the sleeping girl and her bear. On the bed-post is a straw hat and at the side of the bed is a guitar. In the film **Breakfast at Tiffany's**

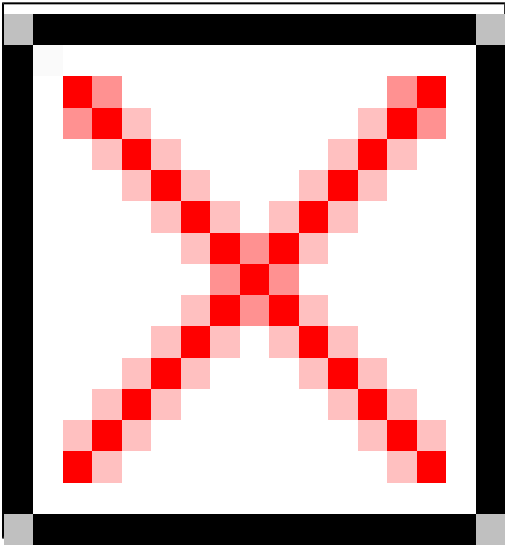
, Audrey Hepburn is seen sitting in her window singing the song while playing the guitar.

The room has an old-fashioned charm: there's a fireplace, a heavily patterned wallpaper, bare floorboards and blankets on the bed. I did this to help the reader relax into the book; it's not a contemporary setting, we're about to leave the stresses of the modern day far behind! On the mantelpiece there's a globe and a statue of the Eiffel Tower and a toy boat. These are here as a suggestion of the adventures and magic that's about to take place.

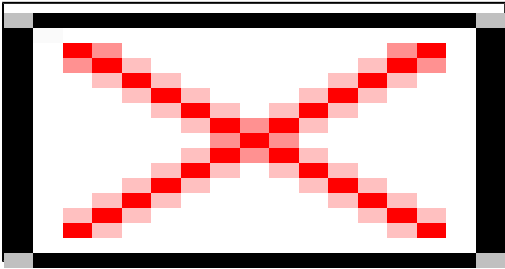
I deliberately chose a limited colour palette for this book. I stuck to a range of blues, and used black in places to make

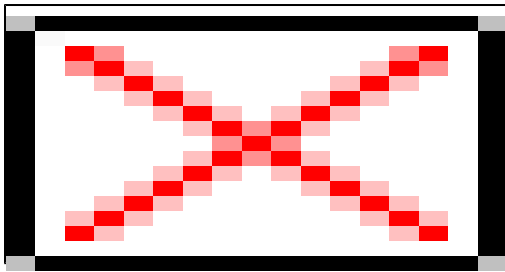


the images more dynamic. I wanted the colours throughout the book to have a magical, enchanting quality.



I spent a good deal of time trying to get the light from the moon to read as a river. I wanted it to look simple, but effective, and not too slick! My illustrations are compiled using an Apple Mac, but having said that, a lot of what I do is done by hand on paper. I use pencils, wax crayons, charcoal, chalk, paint and ink. If you stepped into my studio I think you'd be surprised by the amount of paper there is: I'm into mark-making! All my colour illustrations start off as black and white drawings that are scanned and then assembled using the computer. This enables me to experiment with the use of colour. Colour is intrinsic to me and I spend a long time choosing the colours for each spread.





When we turn the page, we discover that the rocking horse has come to life: we see the girl riding the white horse bounding out into the night sky and on the opposite page we see her 'huckleberry friend' the bear beckoning to her. He's wearing a blue necktie, an old straw hat and holding his guitar. Their magical adventure is about to -begin.

Moon River is published by Oxford, hardback £12.99

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