



JOY RICHU



SUMMARY

Hello, I'm Joy Richu, an Illustrator, Motion Designer, and Communication Designer with a background in Creative Writing. My expertise centers on utilizing storytelling to support clear brand communication and strengthen audience engagement. I work across multiple visual mediums to create clear, compelling, and narratively grounded creative solutions that drive measurable business impact. My clients include Coca-Cola, The New York Times, Diageo, and Mastercard. I am also the first-ever Kenyan recipient of the Cannes Lions See It Be It award.

EDUCATION

Vancouver Film School (VFS)

Digital Design

Associate's Degree

2017

With Honors (91.63%)

Vancouver Film School (VFS)

Foundation Visual Art and Design

Associate's Degree

2016

University of British Columbia (UBC)

Creative Writing

Bachelor of Fine Arts

2015

CONTACT INFO

Tel: +254713944441

E-mail: joy@joyrichu.com

Website: joyrichu.com

LinkedIn: /joyrichu

Instagram: @joyrichu

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Photoshop

Illustrator

After Effects

Premiere

Cinema 4D

LEADERSHIP AND AWARDS

See It Be It Jury —

Cannes Lions 2024, 2025

See It Be It Award —

Cannes Lions 2024

Arcturus Award: Online Video, Animation — *Vega Digital Awards 2017*

Awards 2017

Student Representative —

Vancouver Film School

2016, 2017

President — *Africa Awareness*

Initiative, UBC 2013

Co-VP External — *Africa*

Awareness Initiative, UBC 2012

International Leader Of

Tomorrow Award — *University*

of British Columbia 2011

#1 AS Level Psychology

Candidate, Kenya — *Cambridge*

International Examinations 2010

LANGUAGES

English, Kiswahili, Kikuyu



EXPERIENCE

Playing Card Designer — *Flick Solitaire, United Kingdom, 2026*

I created a suite of premium Limited Edition in-game assets for the Safari Canvas Season Pass, including two card backs, one tabletop, mobile and desktop wallpapers, ten collectible stickers, and three community emojis.

I developed these assets using Procreate for organic textures and Photoshop for final rendering, maintaining the established visual language of the original Safari Canvas Deck to ensure strong brand continuity. These additions enriched the player experience with fresh, collectible content that deepened engagement and strengthened the relationship between the game and its community.

Illustrator — *Global Dialogue, United Kingdom, 2025*

I developed the core visual language for Sankofa Futures, a programme by Global Dialogue, creating a programme emblem, a symbol library, and a series of hero illustrations that expressed its themes of continuity, collective memory, and indigenous knowledge systems. I produced these assets through a hand drawn process, completing the line work in Illustrator and final colour rendering in Photoshop to establish a cohesive neo African aesthetic. This work equipped the organisation with a distinctive and scalable visual system, supported by a custom symbol dictionary that deepened conceptual clarity and strengthened brand coherence across all Sankofa Futures platforms.

Speaker — *Cannes Lions, See It Be It Virtual Orientation, 2025*

I delivered a talk for the See It Be It Virtual Orientation, sharing negotiation insights grounded in my experience as an African creative and drawing connections between marketplace dynamics and boardroom strategy.

I prepared speaking notes and created a set of tailored illustrations to support visual learners, using metaphor driven storytelling to make negotiation principles more accessible and actionable. This session resonated strongly with participants, evidenced by the slides and insights they shared on social platforms, helping broaden awareness and engagement around the See It Be It initiative.

Editorial Illustrator — *Tablet Magazine, United States, 2025*

I crafted a two page editorial illustration for a feature examining legal immunity granted to Bill Gates and the broader work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Kenya, including agriculture, human vaccines, and livestock health. I approached the project by first grounding myself in the subject matter, developing an approved draft, and then producing a final illustration that balanced accurate visual storytelling with the practical requirements of print layout, including space for headers and body text. The resulting artwork supported the magazine's coverage of a complex topic and contributed to a more engaging and coherent reading experience for its audience.



EXPERIENCE CONT'D

Speaker — *Cannes Lions (See It Be It Africa Tour), Ghana, 2025*

I spoke at the debut See It Be It Africa Tour in Ghana, sharing insights from my experience in the programme with a community of women creative leaders from Ghana, Accra, and neighbouring countries. I prepared and delivered a talk that connected personal learnings with practical guidance on the application process, contributing to a cross continental exchange shaped by the perspectives of fellow alumnae. This session supported the initiative's goal of widening programme access and was reflected in the many participant testimonials shared online, highlighting the value and impact of the dialogue for their future careers in the creative industry.

Cover Illustrator — *MO Magazine, Belgium, 2024*

I illustrated the cover for a special issue focused on unconventional approaches to peace building, developing two initial concepts before finalising a direction that depicted a burning tire as a symbol of unrest reimagined through children portrayed as active peace builders. I created the sketch in Illustrator, provided colour scheme options for editorial review, and rendered the final artwork in Photoshop to deliver a visually striking and conceptually grounded cover. This illustration offered the magazine a thought provoking, on topic visual anchor that supported reader engagement and elevated the overall experience of the issue.

Speaker and Illustrator — *Design Matters, Denmark, 2024*

I delivered a talk titled *Distilling Culture: Capturing Cultural Essence in Design* at the Design Matters conference in Copenhagen, creating animated and illustrated presentation slides and incorporating sound clips from the Kenyan landscape to enrich the audience's understanding of cultural observation and representation. I also produced a customized illustration featuring the Design Matters logo for use on conference stickers and T-shirt graphics, and designed the cover artwork for the official conference booklet distributed to attendees. These contributions provided the conference with multiple creative assets that enhanced the overall experience for participants and strengthened the event's visual and conceptual coherence.

Illustrator — *Soapbox, United Kingdom, 2024*

I developed and executed a series of visuals for a youth resilience project by Soapbox for APRI, creating artwork for a report, microsite, podcast, and promotional materials ahead of COP28. I listened to each interview, distilled the narratives into clear directive statements, and created layered Photoshop assets—including cutouts, patterns, textures, and journal-inspired collage elements—that aligned with the brand's colour guidelines while giving each storyteller a distinct visual identity. This work provided APRI with a cohesive and adaptable visual system that strengthened the impact of their storytelling across platforms and helped raise awareness through striking, engaging imagery.



EXPERIENCE CONT'D

Illustrator — *Porsche USA, United States, 2024*

I produced an original artwork for Porsche USA focused on the new electric Macan, developing two concept sketches around the theme of modern luxury before finalising a direction titled *Celestial Drive*. I created the work by first producing a detailed black and white sketch to define composition and lighting, then rendering the final piece in Photoshop using colour, pattern, and atmospheric elements to highlight the Macan's curves and convey a sense of exploration, warmth, and elevated driving experience. This collaboration resulted in a bold, highly engaging artwork used in the brand's newsletter, presenting the Macan in a fresh and memorable way for their audience.

Playing Card Designer — *Flick Solitaire, United Kingdom, 2024*

I designed *Safari Canvas*, a digital deck for Flick Solitaire, establishing a thematic system in which each suit represented a distinct African landscape and creating all supporting assets, including 52 cards, a card back, card markers, a tabletop design, and in-game UI elements. I executed the work by defining a vibrant colour palette, crafting custom typography and suit symbols, and producing fully rendered illustrations in Photoshop, while also providing recorded process content for promotional use. This project resulted in a cohesive and visually compelling deck that enriched the app's offering and gave players a distinctive, landscape driven experience.

Book Cover Designer — *Restless Books, United States, 2023*

I crafted the cover for *The Book Censor's Library* by Bothayna Al-Essa, developing a visual concept centred on the rabbit that guides the protagonist through the story's layers of curiosity, discovery, and adventure. I arrived at this direction by reading the manuscript closely, identifying key narrative motifs, presenting two sketched concepts to the publisher, and then completing the final digital illustration and typography across galley and paperback formats using Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign. This work resulted in a cover that effectively communicated the book's core themes and supported its global promotion, receiving additional visibility when the title was nominated for the National Book Award for Translated Literature.

Illustrator: Coca-Cola Creations, Wozzaah — *Coca-Cola, Multi-Continental, 2023*

I illustrated the limited edition Wozzaah can for Coca-Cola Creations, developing a sun centred narrative that brought together mythical creatures, birds, foliage, bicycles, and a matatu to celebrate warmth, joy, and the vibrancy of life across Africa. I created multiple pencil iterations of the sun and character motifs before rendering the final artwork in Photoshop using brand colours, patterns, and African inspired visual elements, collaborating virtually with teams from VIRTUE, Forpeople, and Coca-Cola across the US, UK, and South Africa. This illustration became the foundation for an expansive creative ecosystem—including merchandise, interactive experiences, digital animation, and AI environments—supporting the product's successful debut in 2024, the same year Coca-Cola was named Brand of the Year at Cannes Lions.



EXPERIENCE CONT'D

Book Cover Illustrator — *Playwrights Canada Press, Canada, 2023*

I created the cover illustration for *Calpurnia*, developing two design directions that reflected the play's themes of race, family dynamics, and appropriation before finalising a vibrant visual concept aligned with the author's vision. I arrived at this solution by reading the play, consulting with the author, maintaining open communication with the managing editor, and rendering the selected direction using Illustrator and Photoshop. This cover contributed to the play's visibility by offering a striking and thematically grounded introduction that helped draw audiences in and supported its sales.

Editorial Illustrator — *Futura Sciences, France, 2023*

I executed a half page editorial illustration depicting the arrival of the first giant telescope in South Africa, creating a visual narrative that highlighted both the scientific milestone and its significance for the continent. I conducted research into the underlying technology to ensure accuracy, developed multiple sketches for review, and refined the artwork in response to the Art Director's feedback to achieve a precise and polished final illustration. This piece contributed to stronger reader engagement by clearly conveying the article's focus and offering a compelling visual entry point into the story.

Book Cover Illustrator — *Tilted Axis Press, United Kingdom, 2023*

I designed the cover artwork for *No Edges*, the first collection of Swahili fiction in English translation, developing a visually captivating concept that reflected the anthology's spirit and thematic range. I read the full collection, collaborated with the editorial team, and refined the chosen direction using Illustrator, Photoshop, and Procreate to achieve a polished final design. The cover generated immediate interest on social media, contributing to increased visibility and early sales for the book.

Label Design Illustrator: Smirnoff Wild Heat — *Diageo, Multi-Continental, 2022*

I crafted the label design and illustration for Smirnoff Wild Heat, developing three concept directions inspired by African mask traditions before finalising a single, custom mask design alongside hand drawn ingredient illustrations. I executed this work through extensive research into mask iconography across the continent, refining the selected direction in Illustrator, and collaborating closely with Diageo in the United Kingdom and Bulletproof in the United States through weekly online meetings. This project resulted in a fully realised, market ready label system and supporting assets prepared for future rollout across key markets.



EXPERIENCE CONT'D

Cover Illustrator — *The Dublin Inquirer, Ireland, 2022*

I illustrated the cover for a Dublin Inquirer edition whose lead story examined gaps in Dublin's late night bus service, centring the composition on a woman walking home alone at night to highlight the human impact of limited transit options. I developed a concept that used negative space to form the outline of a bus, creating a simple, symbolic device that reinforced the issue while maintaining strong visual clarity. This resulted in a striking, on topic cover that supported reader engagement and strengthened the edition's overall resonance.

Editorial Illustrator — *The New York Times, United States, 2021-2022*

I crafted editorial illustrations for The New York Times Book Review, creating visuals for features on *You Made a Fool of Death With Your Beauty* and *Radiant Fugitives*. I developed three distinct sketch directions for each assignment to interpret the brief from multiple angles, refining the selected concept in Photoshop and Illustrator in close collaboration with the Art Director. These illustrations delivered visually coherent, thematically aligned framing for the reviews and contributed to stronger reader engagement with the featured titles.

Live Illustrator — *Mastercard Foundation, Rwanda, 2022*

I served as a live illustrator at a two day Mastercard Foundation Ministerial Forum in Rwanda on building resilient education systems through technology, capturing and interpreting key ideas and discussions in real time. I translated complex concepts into clear, engaging visuals using Procreate, developing a cohesive digital collage that summarised the forum's central themes for attendees. This work supported high level communication at the event and provided a memorable visual reference that continued to inform subsequent conversations and initiatives.

Poster Designer — *Toronto Geometry Colloquium, University of Toronto, Canada, 2021*

I designed the event poster for the Toronto Geometry Colloquium, interpreting the theme *Weaving Justice Through Geometry* into a visual concept for the university's online talk series. I developed a series of illustrated drafts exploring different narrative and geometric approaches, refining the direction in close collaboration with the organising team. The final rendered illustration resulted in a colourful and compelling poster used across the university's website and social media channels to promote the event.

Cover Artist — *The Lancet, United Kingdom, 2020*

I was selected to create monthly cover illustrations for The Lancet HIV, translating each issue's central theme into a clear and visually compelling visual concept. I unpacked complex scientific briefs and distilled key messages into vibrant artwork, producing a cohesive yearlong series of covers for the publication. This work supported the journal's global readership by offering striking visual entry points into each issue's content and strengthening overall engagement.