



# Designer challenge

We challenged three designers to create a Japanese-inspired skate deck

This issue's challenge was to produce an illustration inspired by Japanese culture and design, which would be used on a skateboard deck. The idea should measure 75mm by 305mm (3 inches long, and the designer could use any style of illustration and colour. They need to reflect the influences of Japan in their current work.

Freya Harrison recently graduated from London College of Communication with a degree in illustration. Currently working on freelance projects, her editorial work has included pieces for *Time Out*, *Last Hours* magazine and *Ladyfest 08*, as well as artwork for various bands and club nights. She's also getting an exhibition ready for December with some other illustration

graduates, and hopes to start on a graphic novel in the near future.

Taipei-born Martin Hsu worked at Mighty Fine as a character designer and graphic artist after graduating from California State University Fullerton in 2001, where he studied animation. Since then, he's worked with a wide range of clients and has shown his work at a number of art galleries, including Nucleus, Thinkspace and M-modern, his currently working as a character designer for a pre-school show – *Ai Hoo, Hi-hi-yan* – at Nickelodeon Animation Studios, giving him the chance to introduce his native language to an American audience.

foolider began working on digital illustrations as a college student, and his

first job was to design t-shirts at a well-known sports company in 2005. His work has been featured on many magazine covers, and on mobile phone skins (part of the *ku-se-ka-e* trend, which means "changing clothes" in Japanese). He's also created illustrations at live events. His influences include animations such as *Lupin the Third*, illustrators such as Ipppei Gyobu ([www.ipppei.com](http://www.ipppei.com)), Takuchi Ito, Japanese old design, and graffiti magazines.

If you'd like to have a go at this Japanese design challenge, use the same skate deck size as we gave our designers. We'd love to see your finished design – send it to us at [ca-mail@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:ca-mail@futurenet.co.uk) and we'll show the best on our disc next time.



**Freya Harrison**  
London-based Harrison works on freelance projects for editorial and music clients, and was inspired by Japanese design for a project at [www.foolider.com](http://www.foolider.com).



**Martin Hsu**  
Art director and character designer Hsu is fascinated with current events and Chinese mythology, and has worked with clients that include Disney, Sprint and Nickelodeon. [www.martinhsu.com](http://www.martinhsu.com)



**foolider**  
Illustrator foolider's work often appears on magazine covers and mobile phones. His designs are influenced by *Lupin the Third* and Ipppei Gyobu. <http://foolider.posterous.com>



## Martin Hsu's project

**My inspiration for this design was the air quality in Los Angeles.** I was on my usual commute to work one morning on the freeway when something caught my attention far ahead. I'm not sure why I've never noticed it, but it was especially prominent on this morning. As I raised my head and looked into the distance, beneath the greyish blue sky was a thick layer of muddy smog.

I remember feeling surprised, and then disgusted by the idea of heading in the same direction as the pollution. I also remember feeling sorry for myself and everyone else who was about to be engulfed by this industrial cloud.

I knew I wanted to do something about it, and the idea of a form of cleansing came to mind. What would Buddha, the purest deity, do in this situation? Naturally, he would breathe in the smog and breathe out fresh air for all.

The idea of the gas mask came into my mind later, to show the severity of the problem – how horrible and polluted must the air be if Buddha had to put on a gas mask?

In the end, "Urban Cleansing" was created as a t-shirt for all environmentally conscious beings to enjoy. The design will travel even further now it has been converted to a deck with wheels attached.

Most of the elements in this design were inspired by oriental folk art – particularly the swirls on Buddha's head and the ornate smoke coming out of the gas mask. I think it is successful, in that it is a good blend of modern and traditional philosophies and design aesthetics. I can only hope the design speaks for itself and that the message is clear. Mostly I just want people to think it's a cool design.

I'm very proud of this "Urban Cleansing" image and am pleased to have the opportunity to showcase it as a skateboard design as well.



Illustration Graphics issue



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## Poignant projects

**Martin Hsu**

Location Silverlake, USA

Projects Urban Cleansing, Guardian of the West – The White Tiger, and Dragon Boy's Big Flight

URL [www.martinhsu.com](http://www.martinhsu.com)

Inspired both by manga and traditional Chinese art, Martin Hsu vibrantly juxtaposes Japanese design with iconic portrayals of Chinese mythology. With *Urban Cleansing*, Hsu aimed to create a design that would highlight the issue of poor air quality in Los Angeles. Utilising the peaceful image of Buddha with the stark addition of a gas mask, Hsu is proud to have created something both beautiful and poignant. "I absolutely love how graphic and sharp the ornate circular elements are on Buddha's head," he comments.

Part of a series of panels representing the four guardians of China, *The White Tiger* draws its roots from Chinese tradition, while being stylistically influenced by Japanese art. The tiger holding a Japanese demon in its mouth brings these two elements together perfectly. "I had a hard time staging the main characters among other decorative elements," says Hsu.

*Dragon Boy's Big Flight*, meanwhile, tells the story of a search for heritage in foreign lands. "My aim was to inject into this piece the essence of Japanese pop culture through energy and humour", Hsu explains, "and I really wanted Dragon Boy to break the surface and come to life. Does it get any better than a little boy in a dragon suit tearing through clouds on a giant dragon kite?"



eat

Illustrator. An admirer of him to find a harmonic form-

Japan six years ago. "Over the years, I never abandoned the traditional illustration that the project difficult. It took. It was very

The influence shows in fish-like figures and autumn leaves, but it gives it such an