

You're almost done writing your novel/designing your game/brand of vodka and it's time to start thinking about presentation. Apart from a nicely formatted interior or well designed box/bottle/container, the cover art is a hugely important part of this! It's the first impression anyone will get of your hard work, so it needs to represent what's inside well.

There's a few steps to commissioning an artist. Once you know what they are, it's mostly common sense. I've assembled them into one handy PDF for you.

1. Write a brief for the illustration.

First step is writing a brief for the illustration, so your artist has an overview of what you want. You might think it's clear, but no one has been thinking about this product as long as you have. Make sure it comes across!

Include:

- Scope. How many illustrations do you need? One, ten, fifty-two? One big, detailed illustration for your box art and one hundred small sketches as gameplay material?
- An introduction to your product. If it's a book, what's the story? If it's a game, what kind of game is it?
- Technical specs: what are the dimensions going to be? How many pixels/millimeters? What DPI?
- What mood and target audience are you going for? A YA book cover has different needs than an adult one.

- References if you're particular about certain elements - if you have a certain style in mind, or already designed a Flux Capacitor that you want in the illustration, that's important to know. A little side note: Most artists are empowered by parameters, but are crippled by micromanaging.

2. Find an artist with the style you like.

Step 1 and 2 are interchangeable. Writing a brief might become easier if you already have an artist in mind.

- Be mindful of who you're writing to. Karla Ortiz has worked for Marvel, ILM, Universal Studios, HBO etc., yet she gets emails from self-publishing authors asking her if she has time to do a book cover for them. Hint: she doesn't have the time and you probably don't have the budget - I'll get to budgets later.
- I get it though, how do you find lesser-known artists if they're lesser-known? ArtStation.com and HireAnIllustrator.com are good resources to find yourself an artist. It takes a bit of clicking through, but they're out there, trust me (Hello, you found me!)

3. Write them to ask if they can create an illustration for your product.

You found your artist, and their skill level seems like it would fit your budget! Time to write them a pleasant e-mail.



Include:

- An introduction. Seems like a no-brainer, but most people don't introduce themselves and just ask if the artist can create “an illustration” for them.
- The deadline. Sometimes clients underestimate how long it'll take to make a certain illustration. Or sometimes they underestimate how far in advance they need to book the artist they're writing.
- Usage. Is it going to be a Kickstarter, in-store, self-published ebook or a physical book?
- Budget. This is a big one! You can't have a conversation about commissioning an artist without having a budget. Keep in mind you're not buying an off-the-shelf, premade piece of art. You're buying the rights to use a specific piece of art, made especially for you. My paintings start at around € 450,- (excluding taxes) for a simple illustration with one character. Prices for self-publishing vary from € 400,- to € 2000,- depending on complexity, to give you a ballpark.

4. Sign a contract! Even if it's a short one.

A contract is nothing scary. It just outlines the agreements you made and gives you something to reference, should you disagree on something.

It also doesn't have to be ten pages long. Just make sure you've outlined your working method, deadline and budget in some official way. Professional artists usually have a contract for self-publishers available, so you don't have to come up with one yourself.

5. Some artists might ask you for a 30-50% deposit

This is pretty standard practice for commissioned work, especially if you're a new or unfamiliar client.

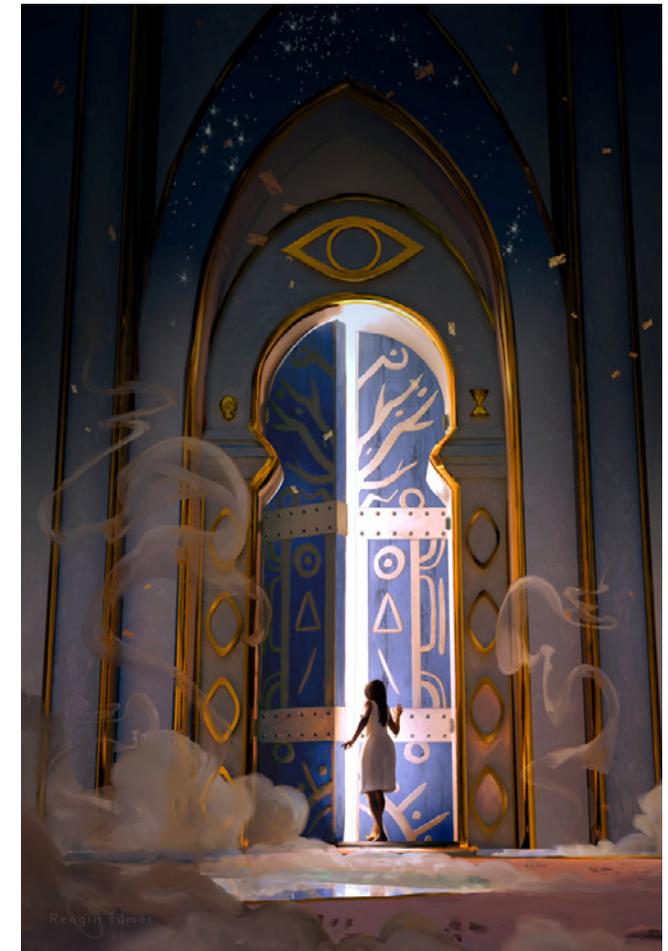
6. The work can start!

Most artists will give you 1-5 thumbnails to choose from as a starting point. This makes sure you've got all noses pointing in the same direction before committing to the illustration and putting in the time to make it beautiful and ready for your product. Keep in mind that once you choose and the artist starts working on your final illustration, you don't get to go back without extra costs.

7. Giving feedback

Most artists include about two feedback rounds in the fee, for small-medium changes. Any extra feedback rounds might cost extra, so ask your artist beforehand.

Examples of changes in this stage are: can his arm be a bit higher; can you move her a bit to the right; can the light be a bit brighter; etc. Requests like “can we change the camera perspective” or “can we go for the other concept instead” are not included in this phase, since that basically means starting over or solving a whole other host of problems created by the change. The impact of a certain change might depend on the situation, so just ask your artist and be mindful of their answers and expertise.



Give your feedback all at once, instead of giving some notes and coming back with more a few days later when the artist has already started. It creates confusion and as a result your illustration takes longer to finish.

8. The illustration is done!

After payment in full you get the full artwork to use on your product, hooray!

Some additional notes:

- Some artists will do the typography for you, some artists purely do the illustration work. Be mindful of their skillset and be clear on what you expect from the get-go. It's usually clear from their portfolio what they do and don't do. But if you're not sure: ask!
- I've also seen mentions of people asking their artists to be a publisher! Artists aren't publishers, unless specifically stated on their website.
- If you're on a tight deadline, the artist might add a rush fee. Also: be prompt with your responses and feedback, otherwise the artist can't continue. Communication is key! If you can't respond right away, just let them know so the artist can plan accordingly.

That's it!

You've commissioned your artist and gotten a beautiful piece of custom work out of it!

Everyone works a little differently, but these steps are the basic cornerstones that every professional gig goes through. It also reflects on how I work with my clients. I hope this guide helps you in having a great relationship with the artists you commission!

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 [rengin.tumer](https://www.facebook.com/rengin.tumer)

Or just email me at artbiz@rengintumer.com if you want to get in touch!