



# Windows into Illustration: Leigh Hodgkinson

Article Author:

[Leigh Hodgkinson](#) [1]

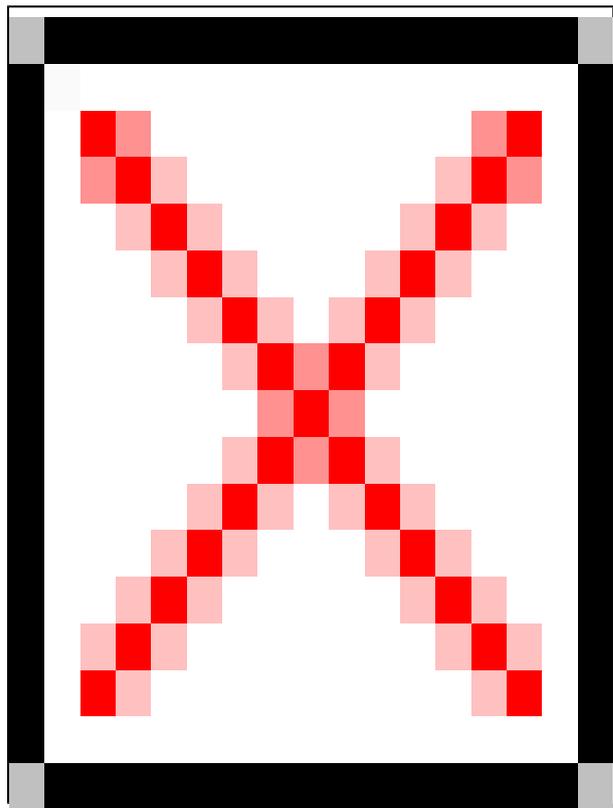
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Article Category:

Windows into Illustration

Byline:

**Leigh Hodgkinson** on how she went about illustrating **Scrummy!**



An award winning animator and the creative director of the first ?Charlie and Lola? animation series, Leigh Hodgkinson is also a picture book creator with a quirkily distinctive style and energetic use of the page. Her latest character, the little girl Sunny McCloud who first appeared in **Smile!** (she had lost hers?), is also the star of Leigh?s latest picture book about family life, **Scrummy!**, in which sandwiches turn out to be about much more than feeling hungry. Here **Leigh Hodgkinson** describes her approach and technique.

I like to work in a mix and match collage type way. In my ?Sunny McCloud? books I use lots of different materials and techniques. I draw on paper with an inky dip pen, paint with watercolours and scribble with colouring pencils. I also make a little library of tissue paper and glue textures that I chop up and use to create the artwork. I enjoy this part of the process immensely and love finishing the day with messy smudgy hands and colourful, paint stained fingers. It makes me feel like a real artist!

The next stage is to scan all the separate clumps of artwork that I have created into the computer. I then start to play with colour, scale and composition and I smarten the artwork up until I get the images exactly as I want them.

This way of working gives me a freedom that perhaps a ?traditional? approach wouldn?t give me. I always feel a little scared of a very clean and white piece of paper ? I might make a mistake and muck it up. So I scribble or paint or stick something on it so the paper isn?t quite so new. This stops me worrying and I can then get on and enjoy being creative!

Also, knowing that I have an opportunity once the artwork is in the computer to change or improve things if I am not happy is hugely liberating.

### **A loose, idiosyncratic feel**

I like my books to have a loose, idiosyncratic feel. For me, this is much more important than trying to create the 'perfect' image. I think if you draw and redraw something, you can get precious over what you are doing and you can sometimes squeeze all of the life out of it. Then you are left with artwork that looks stale and a little dull? and nobody wants that.

With my higgledy piggledy way of working, I never get bored or precious about what I create and I think (hope!) this makes the artwork fresh and fun. If I can capture in the artwork the oodles of energy and playfulness that go into actually creating it, then the finished result will reflect that and have that special magical spark woven into it.

I think a style which mixes different techniques works well for the world of Sunny McCloud. Sunny is a little girl who is brimming with fun and bouncing with enthusiasm and who has a slightly jaunty, angled way of looking at life. For me **Scummy!** is about blurring the gap between real and fantasy and how small children can bring a very special charm and logic to explain things? no matter how far fetched and ludicrous their ideas might be.

**Scummy!** is also all about families. I use the good old fashioned sandwich as a metaphor to explain that all families are different and each one is made up of individual ingredients (people!). I wanted to show how each ingredient (person!) contributes and is important in their own unique, special way. I liked the idea of being able to invent a special sandwich that is the recipe of your own family.

What made this book even more special to me is the fact that I have just had my first baby, so I have been thinking about families a lot. Perhaps the sandwich of my new little family of three would be something simple: me + my husband + little baby = egg sandwich. Delicious!

**Scummy!** (978 1 4083 0936 0) is published by Orchard Books in September at £10.99.

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