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CHILDHOOD

PIXAR

DISNEY

DREAM

DARKE

MARVEL

MONDO

MICROSOFT

TARGET

STAR WARS

GUNS N ROSES

DC

GALLERY

1998

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“ My 4th-grade heart pumping a mile a minute as I witnessed the relentless nature of Arnold’s path of destruction. ”

#### BIRTH

Born in the year 1974 in McAdoo, in a small coal town in northeastern Pennsylvania, Whalen’s passion for illustration was evident in his youth.

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Beginning in sixth grade, he and his cousin drew countless versions of characters from the *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, browsing through several guides, comparing drawings, and compiling notebooks full of illustrations all summer long.

#### CHILDHOOD

Spending the majority of his Sunday afternoons visiting his grandmother’s candy store, surrounded by bright colors and packaging, sitting on a stepladder, reading racks of comics, Tom Whalen attributes these experiences to be the origin story of his fruitful design career.

#### HIGH SCHOOL

Whalen was continually inspired by comics, and the art stuck with him as he spent “every hour of spare time” at his father’s hand-me-down drafting table, emerging with his own unique style. Stemming from those hundreds of drawings, Whalen continued art through high school.

#### COLLEGE

Following high school, his mother encouraged him to apply to art schools, and he attended Kutztown University to formally study illustration and graphic design, which is where he first merged his love of drawing with the possibilities of design.

“ What I really loved seeing were the **variations** and **colorways** next to each other, and seeing those **come to life** during the process ”

# DESIGN STYLE

Shifting from hand-drawn illustration at a younger age, Whalen now primarily creates vector illustrations carefully considering typography using Adobe Illustrator. Whalen's work incorporates geometric shapes, limited color palettes, appropriate type and unique compositions as he precisely integrates different interactions between objects and characters together. He also incorporates multiple backgrounds in one piece and includes specific references to the media, having thoroughly studied them. Some of his work has been described as "modern vintage," inspired by Russian constructivist poster art, comic books, and horror film posters. Much of his work for older features seamlessly integrates elements of 1950 to 1960 advertising with sci-fi superheroes.



2016 Disney Pixar Wall-E

2019 Denali National Park

2020 Frank Lloyd Foundation



# INSPIRATIONS

2017 Marvel Comics Captain America

## SOCIAL INFLUENCES

Growing up in his grandmother's candy store, his surroundings also influenced his love for typography, packaging, and product design as he has made recent ventures into the toy and branding industry for several corporations. Whalen also often recognizes The Cartoonist Society of Philadelphia and The Autumn Society as two groups that have influenced him as an artist by allowing him to meet fellow talented artists that challenge and inspire him.

2019 Denali National Park

2019 Capturing Natural Parks

## MEDIA INFLUENCES

Calling himself a "child of the '80s," Whalen connected with cartoons popular at the time including Transformers, G.I. Joe, Voltron, He-Man. In 1984, the Transformers were his favorite in fourth grade. As a large fan of robotic things, he was intrigued with the adventures they took, sparking his imagination to this day. Having created illustrations for the Transformers series when he became older, he "fe[el]t very fortunate to once again be able to play in a universe that inspired [him]." Similarly, watching *The Terminator* for the first time at a sleepover, Whalen was captivated by the concept of time travel and still appreciates the scary monster designs; Arnold Schwarzenegger's action films remain his most inspirational movies. Likewise, comic books including *the Avengers*, *Spider-Man*, and *Batman Adventures* were his favorites as he admired the extensive art of John Romita, Jr. known for his work for Marvel.

2014 The Oh My Disney Gallery

## HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

From a young age, Whalen was inspired by the comic artist Todd McFarlane, the artist for *The Amazing Spider-Man*, Steve Ditko, the artist and co-creator of Marvel's *Spider-Man* and *Doctor Strange*, and Jack Kirby. As a youth, these artists from comic books and animations influenced his use of many bright color palettes and storytelling in his own work. Taking that passion to college at Kutztown University, concentrating in the fields of graphic design and illustration, he was heavily influenced and inspired by Saul Bass, Milton Glaser, and Jan Tschichold, who inspired Whalen to discover his own style. Since then, he tends to incorporate and consider typography as a critical component of his own work.

2015 Cyclops Print Works Lilo & Stitch



# IMPACT



Recently, Tom Whalen has partnered with an illustrator named Dave Perillo to create a new exhibit for Gallery 1988 in Los Angeles which features over 40 pop culture “best friend sets” which are 4x4-inch prints of *Ghostbusters*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Spongebob Squarepants*, *Space Jam*, *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter* illustrations, and more. This exhibit represents traveling into the sci-fi world and both artists have a distinguishable bright and illustrative vector style that reinterprets these characters in a more modern sense. Dave Perillo similarly has a deep background in design and typography and is fascinated with sci-fi culture.

Another designer reminiscent of Tom Whalen’s vector work is Ben the Illustrator, who has created illustrations for Pixar, Smart Cars, and Delta Airlines, and focuses on developing more urban scenes with the similar use of very vibrant yet unrestricted colors. In the movie poster industry, Grzegorz Domaradzki (Gabz) is well known having worked for Marvel, Paramount, and Warner Bros. Also starting as a hobby, Gabz first created vector movie posters for his personal collection before being recognized and becoming a freelance illustrator. In particular, his work with *Star Wars* media is reminiscent of Whalen’s with a min-color palette and large centralized images integrated into the composition. However, Gabz emanates a more realistic nature to some of his illustrations using gradients and less abstract forms.

**“ If at all possible, I’d highly recommend studying as many disciplines as possible (fine art, design, illustration, sculpture) to give your creativity a chance to grow in different mediums. ”**

While creating numerous impressive posters for Disney, Marvel, Lucas film, and Microsoft, Tom Whalen maintains a similar process. When describing his process, Whalen begins with watching the content for his poster, then developing the “main hook” or image around which the poster will revolve. He tends to have a large anchor point in the middle of his work and include relevant themed items cascaded around the center. After creating a pencil sketch that he scans into Adobe Illustrator, he traces and fills in main shapes patiently with the pen tool, and increasingly adds detail; every component is drawn independently and on separate pages so he can create varied and specific compositions as he chooses. He often changes the edges of his canvas area to create interesting figures with his cropping. Whalen’s philosophy regarding his narrow but effective color palettes is trial and error, consistently playing with the CMYK window. Admiring the character traits of Spock, he focuses on getting down to business and not beating around the bush. This down-to-earth philosophy has inspired other rising designers and illustrators today.



A	B	C	D	E
F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O
P	Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y
Z	A	B		

- Design Influences**
- A. Dave Perillo Little Green Men
  - B. Dave Perillo Finding Dory
  - C. Dave Perillo Batman Adventures
  - D. Gabz Game of Death
  - E. Dave Perillo Yosemite Sam
  - F. Dave Perillo Monsters Inc.
  - G. Dave Perillo Ratatouille
  - H. Ben the Illustrator The Gaurdian
  - I. Dave Perillo Looney Tunes: Granny
  - J. Dave Perillo Batman Adventures
  - K. Dave Perillo Sylvester
  - L. Dave Perillo Russel: Up
  - M. Dave Perillo Toy Story: Lotso
  - N. Dave Perillo Disney Cars
  - O. Dave Perillo Batman
  - P. Dave Perillo Gossamer
  - Q. Dave Perillo Disney Cars
  - R. Ben the Illustrator The Gaurdian
  - S. Dave Perillo Road Runner
  - T. Dave Perillo Incredibles
  - U. Dave Perillo Disney: Walle
  - V. Ben Illustrator Fast Company
  - W. Dave Perillo Daffy Duck
  - X. Gabz Captain America
  - Y. Dave Perillo Marvin
  - Z. Gabz Jack White
  - A. Ben Illustrator Dream Workspace
  - B. Dave Perillo Barnyard Dawg

# CAREER JOURNEY

1986

Beginning in 6th grade, he drew countless versions of Marvel characters, compiling notebooks full of illustrations to sell locally.



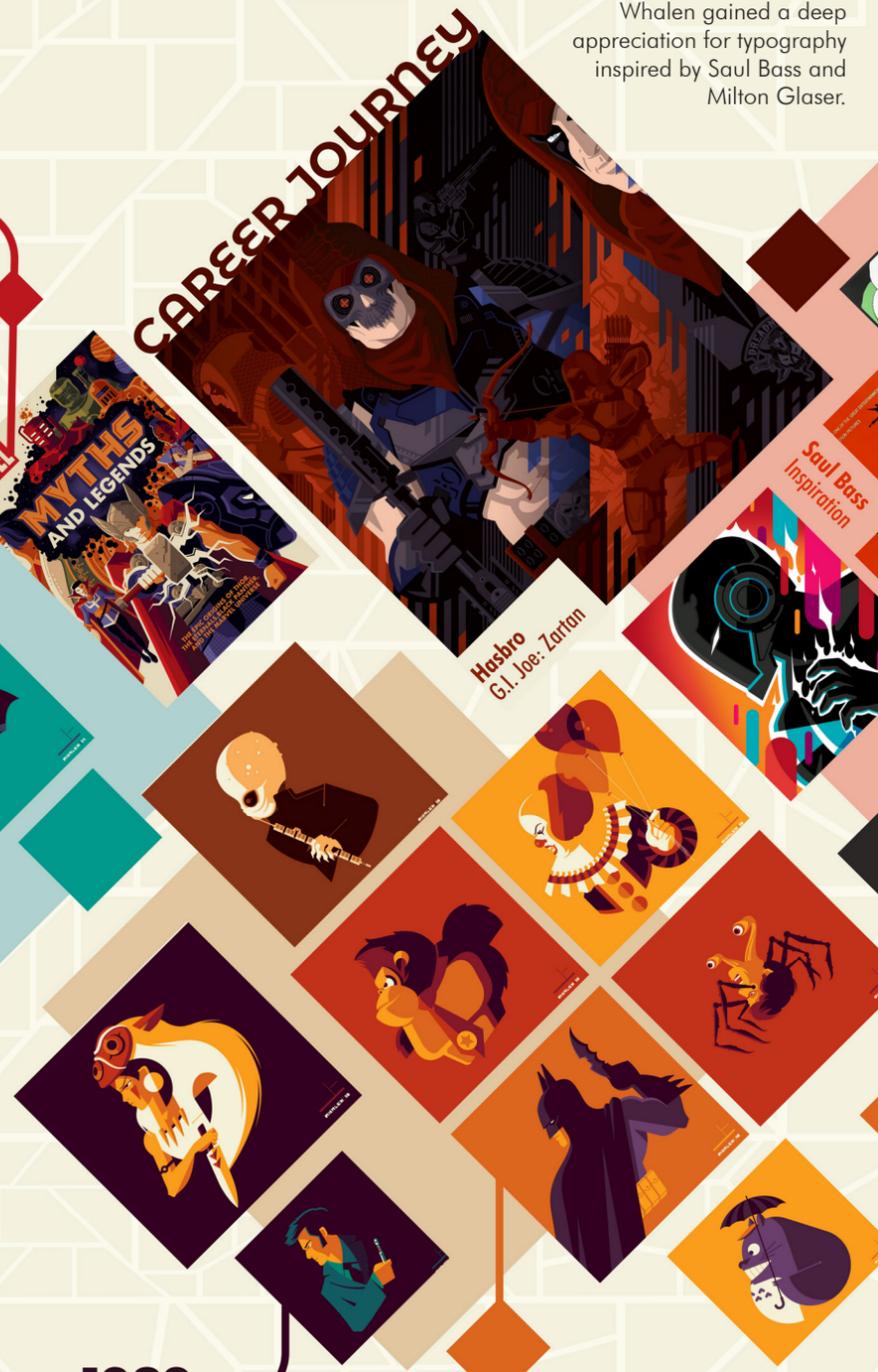
Whalen's first business endeavor began as he invested great deals of time into producing a small comic zine. He decided to try selling it at the Artist Alley at Wizard World Philly, but since the table would be empty with only a couple of issues, Whalen created 3x5 prints of his favorite pop culture characters, which in fact ended up being more popular.

1989

As Whalen passionately continued art throughout high school, he described that his "11x17-inch drawing pad and a pencil were staples of [his] high school existence."

1992

At Kutztown University, Whalen gained a deep appreciation for typography inspired by Saul Bass and Milton Glaser.



1992

Whalen began working as an editorial illustrator, which remained the foundation of his style. He cites that the little prints helped him find his unique voice.

1994

Eventually expanding into the poster illustration world, he first contacted the Colonial Theatre in hopes of creating posters every month for a year for their First Friday Fright Night series. His first series was sold at the theatre and displayed in windows.

1998

Mondo and Gallery 1988 is where Whalen first gained recognition and success within the movie poster industry.

2022

For the past 20 years, Whalen has gained an impressive repertoire of clients including Disney, Marvel, The Beatles, and Microsoft



While Tom Whalen has created many impressive illustrations for Disney, he is also accomplished in design in other mediums, in particular, a limited edition Star Trek x Vannan watch in 2020. He states that his design skills were tested in this role by having to create something effective for an unconventional shape, but also realizing the shape is functional and will wrap around one's wrist, so certain sections are not always visible while others should taper off. As a fan of Star Trek, Spock is his favorite character because he "love[s] the way he always delivers the cold, hard facts," mixed in with the occasional moment of humanity.

