

### Overview

**Name:** Emiliano Ponzi  
**Company:** Emiliano Ponzi  
**Location:** Milan, Italy  
**Industry:** Graphic arts  
**Product:** Corel® Painter™



Emiliano Ponzi

## Seeing the world with different eyes

**At the tender age of 32, he already has clients many other illustrators can only dream of, including the cream of the international publishing and advertising world. Emiliano Ponzi is a real shooting star in the illustration world. But unlike his forebears – the great Italian masters – Emiliano Ponzi uses Corel Painter and a digital pen.**

With the intriguing caption: “No sex please – we’re middle class”, Ponzi depicts a blonde woman seated on the edge of a bed, clothed only in a negligee, stockings and red high heels. Black clouds are hanging over her head and tiny raindrops are falling from it, surrounding her with a sort of grey veil. “I really love this illustration,” comments Emiliano Ponzi. “I created it for one of my first key clients – the New York Times.” The young illustrator with the quirky black-rimmed glasses was studying at Italy’s well-known Istituto Europeo di Design in Milan and working with a few smaller clients. One day in 2005, he followed his intuition and sent some examples of his work to one of the key movers and shakers at the New York Times. “I wasn’t really expecting an answer,” he says. “But just a few minutes later a mail popped into my inbox. He loved the illustrations and said he’d forwarded my work to the newspaper’s graphics department. A few hours later I had my first order from them.” Since that day, Emiliano Ponzi’s client list sounds like a Who’s Who of publishing and advertising – including Saatchi &



“No sex please, we are middle class”, *The New York Times* 2010

Saatchi, Swatch, the Rolling Stone magazine, Italy’s Mondadori and France’s iconic newspaper Le Monde.

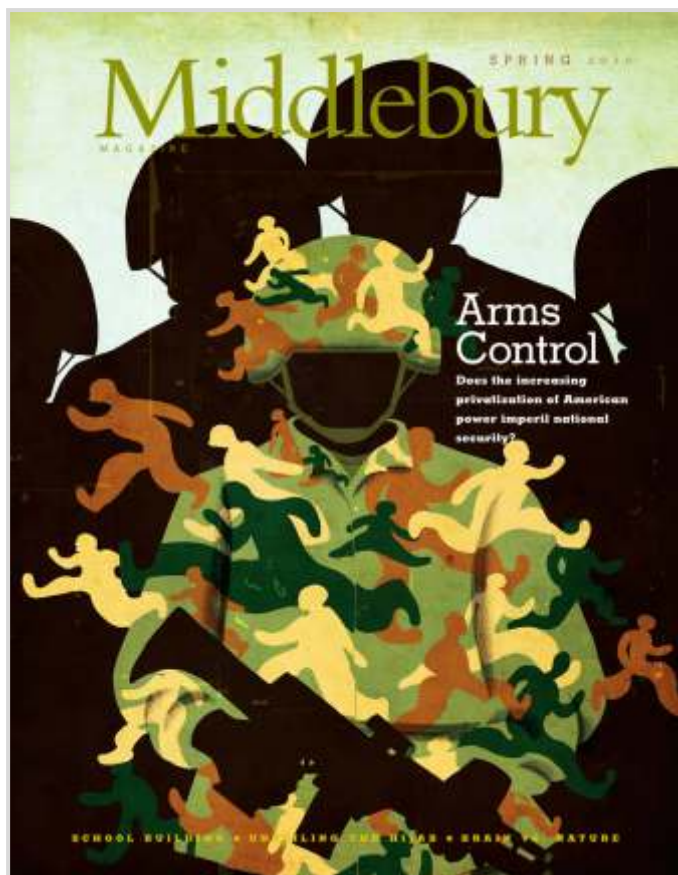
Ponzi’s one rule of thumb? Less is more. There’s a minimalist element in his illustrations, with little decoration so that all the focus is on the message. “With the woman in the negligee, the idea was to show how today’s women sometimes have an ambivalent attitude to their own femininity. They have to think of a hundred things at once: their career, family, financial issues, the future, social pressures and so on.

That’s what the black clouds represent.” Ponzi’s drawings look slightly surreal, and there’s an intense atmosphere about them. “I like my figures to leave their usual context – a book can become a dragon’s mouth, for example, and the markings on a soldier’s camouflage suit turn into people fleeing war.”

### A virtual paintbrush for very real pictures

People imagine illustrators at a desk with an array of tools and paints around them. Not Ponzi, however. “I only use graphics software – nothing else. No physical paintbrushes, no turpentine, no time-consuming corrections. I’ve been using Corel Painter for years,” he comments. “If I remember rightly, the first version I learned to use was Corel

Painter 4. Once I’d got the hang of it, I threw all my paintbrushes and acrylic paints straight in the bin! I really enjoy having the contents of an entire art materials store all together in one single software product.”



"Arms control", Middlebury Magazine Cover, 2010

Ponzi finds that no other program helps to inspire him as much as Painter. "In the beginning is the word," he says, somewhat changing the biblical reference. After all, his ideas for illustrations always start with words – an article, a novel or an advertising slogan. "Then I pick up my Wacom® Cintiq® digital pen, choose the 2B pencil, grab my graphics tablet and get started." Using the tablet and digital pen makes the process more intuitive, almost like using a real pencil and paper.

"I'd say my work is 20 per cent intuition and talent, and 80 per cent hard work," comments Ponzi. What's important to him is that the message and the idea behind it come over quickly and clearly. He starts by producing several sketches in black and white, then discusses them with his client to find the most suitable one. Once it's been selected, he starts filling out the contours with color. He often uses warm, autumnal tones washed across a wide surface, like a watercolor. "I've tried other painting software in the past," he notes, "but I must say none of them offers such extensive libraries as Corel Painter. The choice of bristle brushes alone is fantastic." Adaptable



"Prologue" from the book "Il fiore di Novembre", Triennale Design Museum, Milan, Italy, 2009

painting tools, realistic brushes, a large selection of surface textures and intelligent composition tools are just some of the features that make working with Corel's digital painting software a really creative experience.

"Of course, using Painter can lead you astray if you're not careful," says Ponzi. "You can't let yourself get carried away with all the gimmicks. Just like with a 'real' drawing, there are techniques you need to master to get the best performance out of the software program." It certainly seems like he has no problem mastering them, going by the pile of awards in his office: a prize from the Society of Illustrators 2010 and another from How magazine, the Italian Illustration Award, and the ADC Young Gun Award, to name but a few. In his illustrations for book covers, ads and magazines, he creates a dreamlike and slightly retro atmosphere with references to the '20s as well as the '50s.

### The future of digital painting

As Emiliano Ponzi explains: "Digital painting clearly has its limits too. But oddly enough, these limits help me to develop an original language, a new style if you like, that has nothing more to do with conventional methods of painting." He enjoys using the animation tools too: "I hope Corel develops them further and increases their flexibility, because they have huge potential."

Along with his work for the world's advertising and publishing firms, the young artist teaches students from all over the world. As early as 2004, he was invited to give a guest lecture at the renowned Savannah College of Art and Design. He also regularly teaches design at the MiMaster di illustrazione in Milan. One day, he believes, digital painting won't be seen as an imitation of conventional painting, but rather as an art in its own right – a way of seeing the world through different eyes.



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