

01 This illustration by top UK design agency **ilovedust** is available at ClickforArt.com as a limited edition print at anything from an A3 giclée print to a 2mx1.1m canvas

02 Multiple Threadless winner **Rocky Davies**, the brains behind this eagle crest design, says the site can be a valuable promotional tool: "I've received quite a few emails that start off with, 'I saw your work on Threadless...'"

03 **Gavin Strange's** Droplet range of vinyl toys has provided him with an extra stream of income and welcome exposure worldwide

04 **Stereohype** is part competition site, part online gallery, and is gaining a reputation as an important shop window for designers and artists looking for wider recognition. It's also a vehicle for **FL@33** to sell its own work

Online outlets

You can boost both your reputation and income by making your designs available online. Before you go live, however, consider which online option suits you and your work...

For illustrators and, increasingly, digital designers, there's a burgeoning selection of openings to sell work on the internet – and enhance your reputation in the process.

A major growth area is the online T-shirt market, the best-known site being Threadless (www.threadless.com), a T-shirt-design competition site that sees around 700 submitted designs voted on weekly by visitors, with the six most popular being printed and sold through the site, earning the winning designers the tidy sum of \$2,500. Another popular T-shirt site with designers is Spreadshirt (www.spreadshirt.com), which follows a more conventional marketplace model whereby a design is picked by a customer to appear on a T-shirt or product, and the designer receives a self-determined commission.

Online art stores are proving to be an increasingly promising outlet for designers and illustrators. Launched in 2007, ClickforArt.com showcases street art, digital art, graphics, illustration and graffiti, as well as fine artists. All work is limited edition and is ostensibly for wall display, in sizes from A3 upwards.

"Despite earning just a percentage of what they could if they sold online themselves, [designers, illustrators

and artists] don't have to get involved in online shopping systems, search engine optimisation, credit-card handling, customer returns, framing, shipping, raising invoices and paying invoices," says ClickforArt.com creative director Darren Riley. As Riley points out, setting up an online store yourself involves a good deal of work, but this is no problem for some, such as Gavin Strange, who by day is senior online designer at Aardman Animations but by night runs JamFactory, an online portfolio-cum-store. Initially, Strange sold mainly T-shirts sporting his digital designs, but latterly he has branched out into vinyl toys, to great effect: "The range of toys is called Droplet (www.jam-factory.com/droplet) and they've been received amazingly well. I sell them online, but they're also available from places like Forbidden Planet. The initial run was for 5,000, and sales have paid for that and earned me £500 for the first quarter.

"It's also brilliant publicity," Strange adds, "because the packaging is branded with JamFactory, which gives me a marketable representation of myself in stores. I've also set up Facebook and Flickr Droplet groups, and the response has been massive. It has led to lots more opportunities for me in the designer vinyl toy market."

Riley, too, says the promotional aspect of ClickforArt.com is one of the site's big attractions for designers. "I know for a fact that artists we promote have consequently been signed up with the big illustration agencies and have also gained some high-profile overseas work."

The art store

Click into a whole new audience

Although only operational since June 2007, ClickforArt.com has developed a strong reputation as the site that's whetting the public's appetite for illustration and design to hang on their walls. The site currently receives requests from up to 10 artists a day, but can take on only a small number of these, reveals Darren Riley, ClickforArt.com's creative director.

So what's proving popular? Interestingly, Riley says, there's a move away from Banksy-inspired graffiti art for the residential market and an upsurge in digital designs. "We're seeing a backlash against overpriced stencils on reclaimed cardboard," he says. "Pure digital work is on the rise. It's now so prevalent in advertising and marketing it's a natural progression that the general public should wish to own it.

"We would love to sell more of our artists' outrageous work," adds Riley, "but it's the

softer, 'safer' work that you can guarantee will get snapped up."

ClickforArt.com artists earn a cut of the RRP, regardless of whether their work ends up on a two-metre boxed canvas or as a limited edition cushion – a new ClickforArt.com line. And what of its terms and conditions? "Artists' peace of mind was of utmost importance to us from day one," Riley says. "We spent a big chunk of money preparing our contracts with the UK's leading lawyer for the creative industry. The contract is artist friendly, in terms of language and protecting the intellectual property rights of the artist's work."

Riley reveals the site has also recently rethought its approach to marketing. "Selling art online is incredibly difficult; the buying public like to see it and feel it. So we now sell artwork to retailers, attend the big consumer shows and hold our own exhibitions. This is something that is hard for an artist, as an individual, to do."



Highly rated**Make sure your work gets the vote**

Threadless (www.threadless.com) is a magnet for designers seeking public acclaim. Each week, around 700 professional illustrators and designers, as well as amateurs, put forward T-shirt designs in the hope that theirs will be among the handful chosen to adorn the hugely popular Threadless T-shirts. Despite the weight of numbers, many designers go on to achieve multiple wins.

With revenue last year of around \$30 million, Threadless is a gargantuan shop window for designers and their work. And it's not just the winning designs that benefit from the exposure, as the top 300 submissions each week are put up for public voting.

One Threadless devotee, US-based freelance illustrator Rocky Davies, says that plenty of time and effort is required in order to win, but insists this is more than justified: "There's \$2,500 in cash and prizes, \$500 for reprints, and eligibility for year-end award prizes – not to mention the exposure and redirected traffic to my websites."

Of the type of work that tends to succeed on Threadless, Davies says, "There's a thin line to walk; you want to keep designs original but at the same time you need to study what works and what doesn't. It's a hard battle, as there are hundreds of very skilled artists frequenting Threadless. Ultimately, it's more about having fun than making money."



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Selling yourself**Cut out the middlemen by setting up your own online store**

Agathe Jacquillat and Tomi Vollaueschek are better known as FL@33 (www.flat33.com), a multi-disciplinary design studio whose book *Made&Sold: Products By Graphic Designers, Illustrators and Artists* (Laurence King Publishing) is due to be published later this year. Another venture of theirs, Stereohype (www.stereohype.com) – an online boutique offering limited editions and rare products – is also garnering serious attention.

Stereohype's regular competitions give emerging and established creatives the chance to promote their talent and get artworks not only featured but produced.

"Initially, we wanted to create a platform for FL@33 alone," says Vollaueschek. "A place where we could create and sell anything we felt like directly to customers around the world."

But before launching Stereohype in October 2004, the pair decided the collection should include work by handpicked designers, illustrators, photographers and artists: "Around half of our first-time customers claim to have found us via word of mouth; friends, family and existing customers recommending us. We offer our artists a great opportunity to get exposure and, in the case of our competitions, to win lots of Stereohype goodies as well."

Running your own shop, however, entails both work and risk, a fact that the Stereohype team accepted before they went live. "Additional designer wares [such as T-shirts, books and button badges] always cost money to start with," says Vollaueschek, "but if you get it right, they can provide extra income. You have to be willing to take the risk, for instance, of having plenty of XL-sized T-shirts lying around for some time [after] all other sizes have sold out."