



Above and below: series on the senses  
Left: metallic men as machines

Two young illustrators have their diverse wares on show this month: first Danica Ognjenovic unveils Volker Sträter's hefty collage style; then Lewis Blackwell follows Roderick Broomfield's sleight of hand

**C**hristmas 1987 was something of a turning point for Volker Sträter. Until then he was in the unhappy position of being an illustration student who hated his own work. "I had lost my powers of concentration" says Sträter, who left his native Germany two years ago at the age of 23 to study first in Ireland, then at St Martin's. "When I left Cork to come to London, I suffered a kind of culture shock. There were too many people, and

everything seemed so noisy. I couldn't concentrate any more."

So Sträter set himself a task. Instead of going back to his home in Germany over Christmas, he stayed in London and drew every day, eight hours a day, in the hope that he could come up with some new work that he liked. By the start of the new term, Sträter had surprised both himself and his tutors.

Now Sträter has a strong collage technique, and his home is crammed with boxes full of old books which he rips up and re-arranges for his pictures; he works metallic finishes and graphite paint into them and many end up as hefty 3D compositions: "Some of them end up this thick" says Sträter, pinching a three-inch slice out of the air with his thumb and forefinger.

His work divides into purely

abstract collage which Sträter describes as "decorative", plus some figurative illustrations, and more recent collage projects which he says have a message to communicate. (The message has even found favour with the AOI Annual.) Sträter is a serious-minded young man. For the most part, he set his own briefs while he was still studying advanced illustration at St Martin's. "I wanted to deal with subjects that I thought were relevant . . . I don't want to knock the people at St Martins who did commercial work, nor do I think it's wrong to ask students to tackle subjects like Italian Peppers, but I prefer to look at issues like war and rape. Of course, now I've done my own work I feel I can do my version of Italian Peppers." Or perhaps posters for *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. □



Volker Sträter's early bookworm work

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