

# On the map

Arundel-based bespoke map illustrator Lucie Conoley helps people document places that mean something to them, finds Simone Hellyer

We all have those places that mean something special to us; be it the street you grew up on, the place you had your first date with your future spouse or the beach that reminds you of someone you've lost. Places are important to people for many reasons, something that Arundel-based artist Lucie Conoley has discovered since launching her bespoke map illustration business, The Mips.

The Mips, or 'Most Important Places', was originally created as a side hustle alongside Lucie's job as a photography assistant, but has grown to become her full-time passion.

"I used to work in a photography studio in London and they knew that I liked to draw, so they would give me a little space to do a mural every so often. One time I was running out of ideas and my boss suggested that I do an illustrated map of the area we worked in. The wife of the company's owner saw it and commissioned the first one for their kitchen – a 10ft canvas," she explains. "Their son couldn't say map, he pronounced it 'mip', so that's where I got the name from."

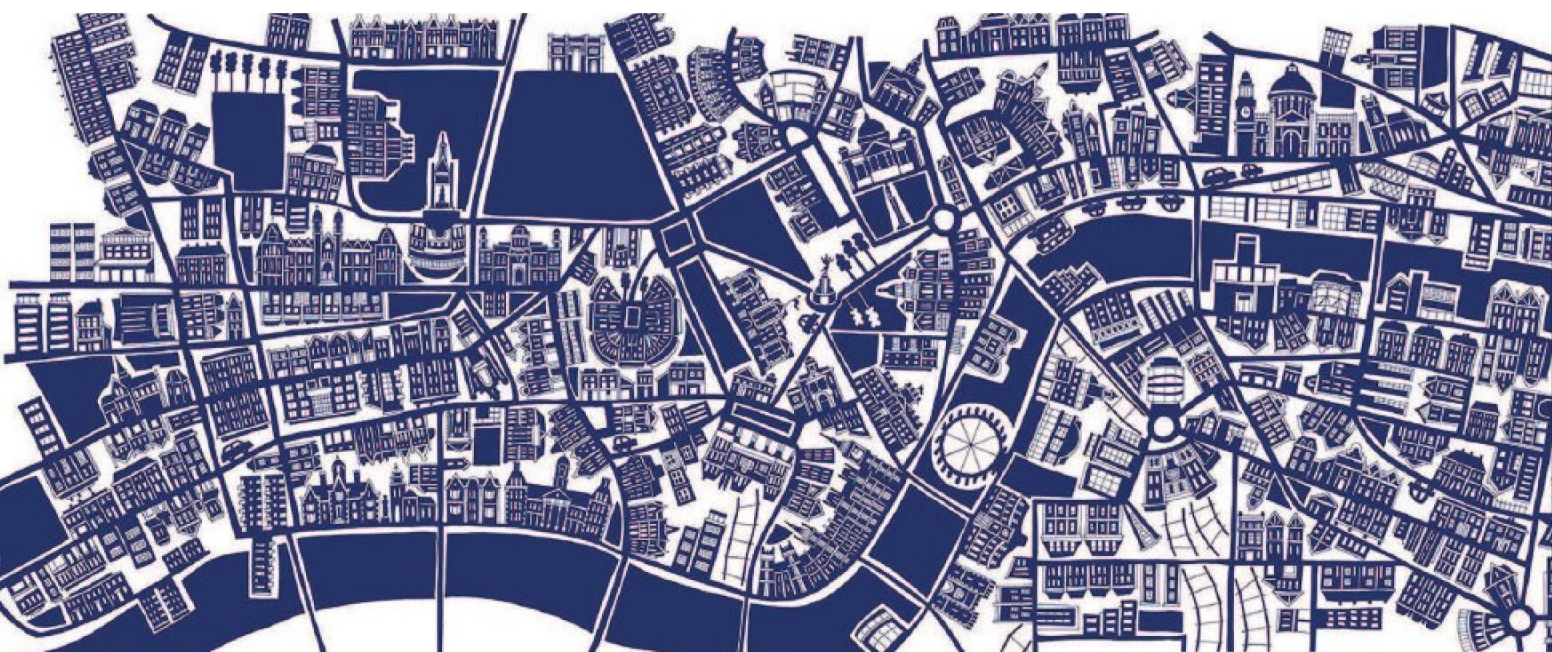


South London

Lucie now spends her days creating highly detailed maps of places, from Macclesfield to Marrakesh, that mean something to people. The maps she creates from her home in Arundel can either be highly detailed and help you find your way, creative pastiches that give a flavour of the area, or complete fantasy worlds.

"Most of my commissions come from people who want to highlight important or key moments in

their lives and they often want to combine areas to create their own fantasy map. I also like to include local legends or folklore – anything goes," she explains, adding: "I feel so fortunate because people share all these amazing events, places and personal information with me. I feel lucky to get that from people, it's really inspiring. And some people really go to town – I did one for a boy's 18th birthday recently and there was Quidditch in there,





the Eye of Sauron, yetis and all sorts. I love it when people go really bananas with it as it's so much fun to do."

With commissions coming in from all over the world, Lucie often creates maps of places she has never travelled to such as Gibraltar and Anchorage in Alaska. "I loved doing Anchorage because it was a grid system and I've never done one before. It was really interesting to see how the city is laid out and I love the end result as it's so graphic," she says.

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If you've had cause to venture to Cheshire recently, Lucie may have had a hand in guiding you around the county as Cheshire East Council is one of her growing list of corporate clients and commissioned her to create 20 fun 'you are here'-style maps. "I also did South West London for an estate agent and that was a real reference map, so it recorded every road in the Brixton, Clapham and Camberwell area. It was so intense to work on as there was so much detail," she adds.

With reference maps it is very important to get them geographically correct, but she has now got it down to a fine art, as she explains: "Getting the roads in the right place is always the tricky part. I always start with one road which I call the spine and as long as I get those big major roads plotted right, the rest of them all fall into place."



Arundel

Handily, Lucie's map plotting skills have proven useful in everyday life too: she amazed a friend with her impressive navigational skills on a recent trip to Marrakesh's labyrinthine souks.

With lots of Lucie's maps stretching to 10ft, the advances in illustration software have been a bit of a lifeline. "I do the large-scale ones on Adobe Illustrator – I've just done one of Douglas on the Isle of Man and that's 9ft and has taken me about four weeks to do. If I were to hand-draw that and then scale it up, it would take about six to eight weeks to complete," she says. But Lucie isn't ready to abandon traditional methods just yet: "A lot of my work is still hand-drawn and then

coloured in on Photoshop because I don't think you can beat just sitting down with a pencil and paper. I would love to do a massive hand-drawn map, but it's just not time or cost-effective."

Now a mum of three, Lucie has plans to expand The Mips now that her children are older. Her long-held desire to launch a crockery range is in progress and her ready-to-buy prints, including one of Arundel, are now available from [notonthehighstreet.com](http://notonthehighstreet.com) too. As much as she loves country life she does have one of her own maps of London on the wall of her art room to remind her of where it all started. ♦

[themips.co.uk](http://themips.co.uk)

**BELOW:**  
The Thames

