



Interview with Matthias Emde

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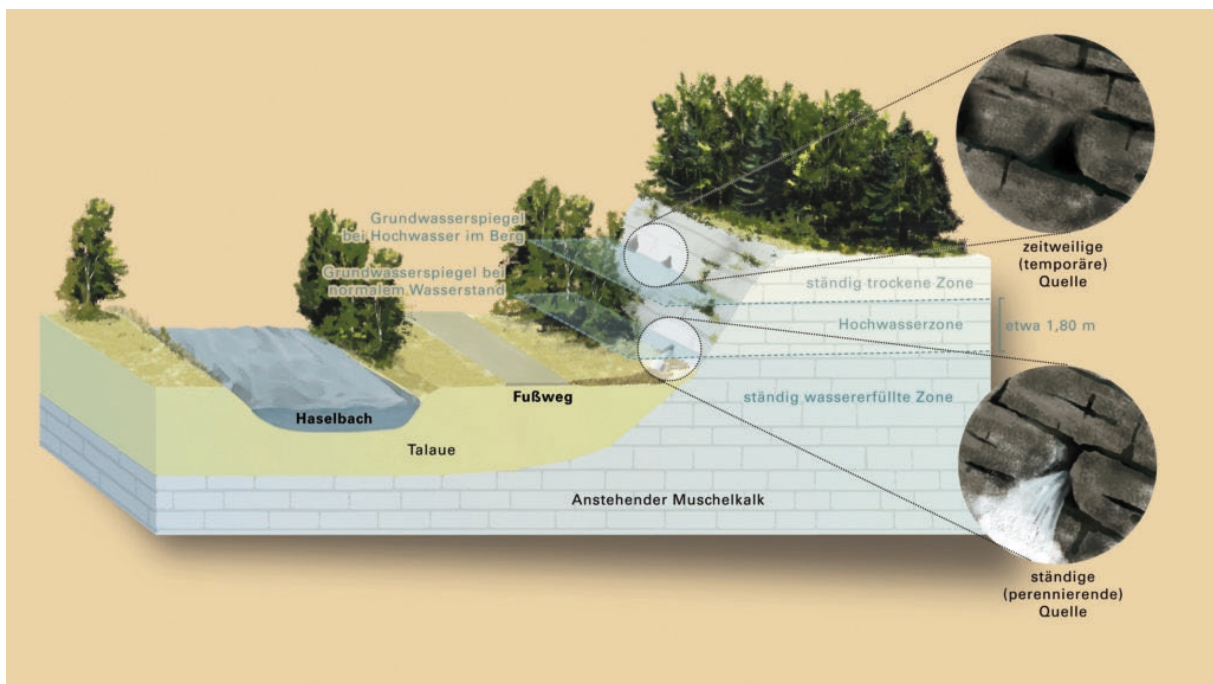
Matthias Emde runs a successful graphics office. He specializes in scientific illustration.

What are you working on right now?

At the moment I have several projects going on at the same time: two books for pre-school and primary school mathematics, a biology textbook, a graphic for an antibody therapy, graphics for a brochure on renewable energies, illustrations for a film about the mechanics of our monetary system, a historical map, illustrations on the development of vitamin D, technical illustrations for production monitoring and then I'm currently revising some illustrations that have been created over several years because the company's corporate design has changed, which is why the old look no longer fits. Uff, quite a lot, I'm just realizing.

Scientific illustration is one of your specialties. What are the particular challenges in this area?

It's not so much a challenge as a pleasure, because I can combine two passions with my work: Design and science. I have a degree in geology. However, illustration has been a great hobby for most of my life. I enjoy doing both, drawing and research. What is challenging in a positive sense is that I always have to deal with new topics and naturally learn a lot as a result. The didactic demands are also very exciting, because a graphic for schoolchildren looks different from one for interested adult laypeople and even completely different from one for a specialized scientific audience, even if it's about exactly the same topic.

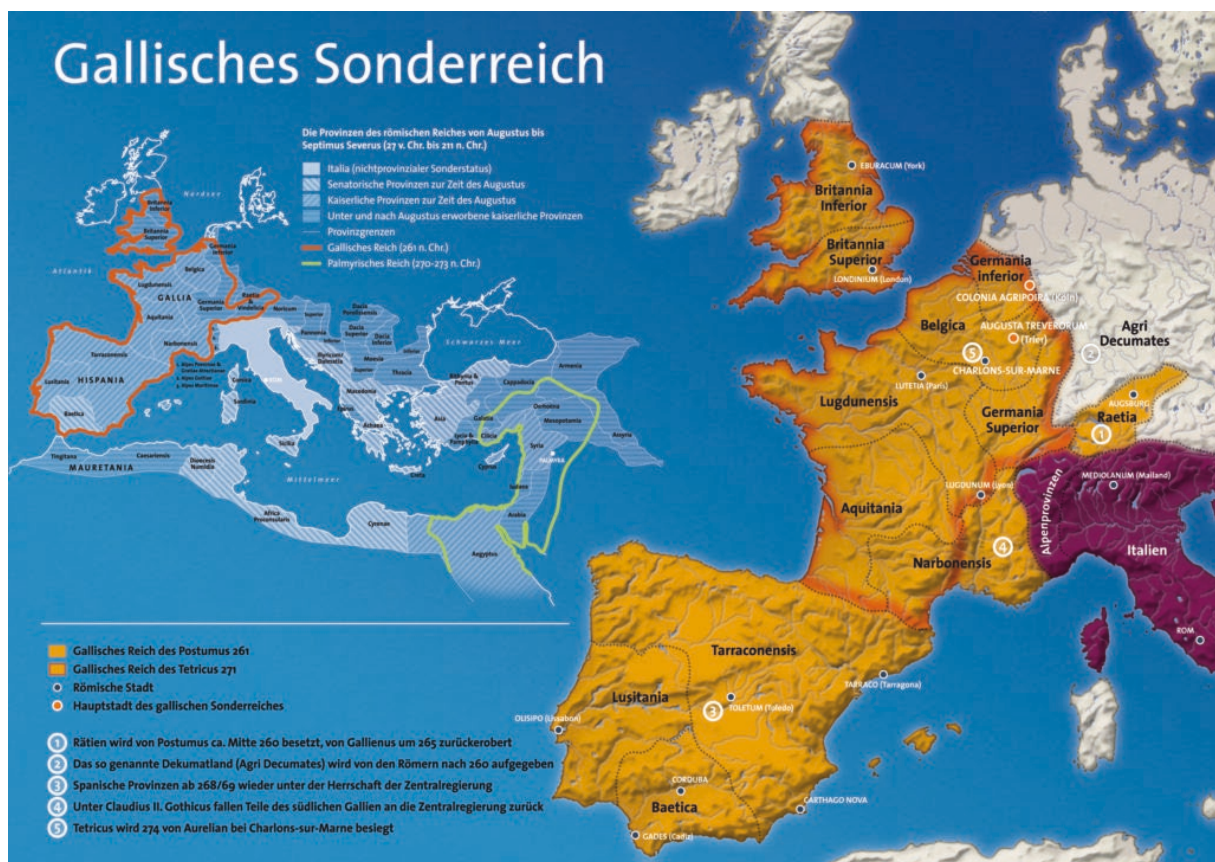


For display board on geological nature trail, customer: Hasel municipality, Baden-Württemberg

Do you have any favorite topics that you particularly enjoy illustrating?

I particularly enjoy illustrating complex topics, i.e. topics where the connections are not easy to understand and where you have to "dig in". I always find the creation process exciting, because I often

develop the solution together with my customers, contributing to the further development of the topic with my graphics. Then, of course, there are also topics that I find interesting in terms of content and society: for example, the connections between the so-called financial crisis, topics such as education and learning - my wish for the universe is to be allowed to illustrate something for Gerald Hüther. I'm also very interested in topics such as social change, renouncing consumption and permaculture.



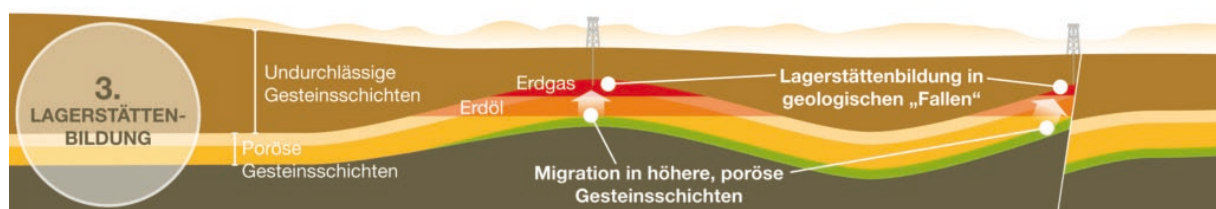
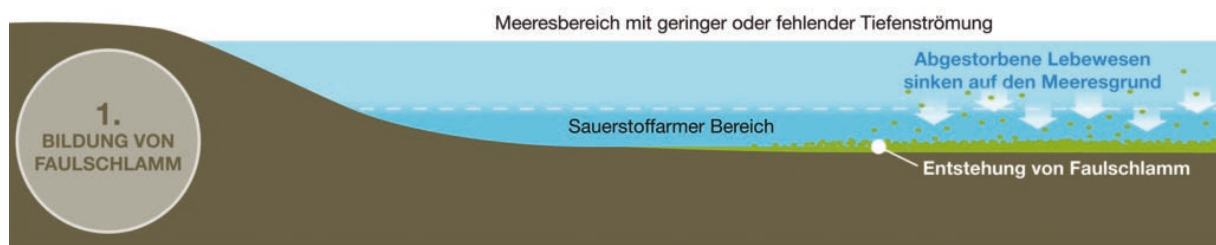
Map of the Gallic Empire, customer: epoc magazine

How much time do you spend researching? And: Do you always understand everything you illustrate?

Most of my clients provide me with very good background material and send me good briefings. So all in all, the research effort is perhaps 10, maximum 20 percent. However, I also ask very specific questions and develop most of the graphics in several steps, in which the experts are involved from time to time. This saves independent

research, which would ultimately have to be verified by experts anyway. Most topics are so specialized that there is little on the Internet that you can really rely on. Internet research usually helps me to know exactly what I need to ask the experts.

Regarding the "and" in the question: I have to understand the essence of what I am illustrating, otherwise nothing clever will come of it. You can usually tell from a scientific drawing whether the illustrator has understood what they are drawing. That's exactly the feedback I get from my customers from time to time - they appreciate the fact that I think along with them.



Origin of crude oil and natural gas, customer: Spektrum der Wissenschaft magazine

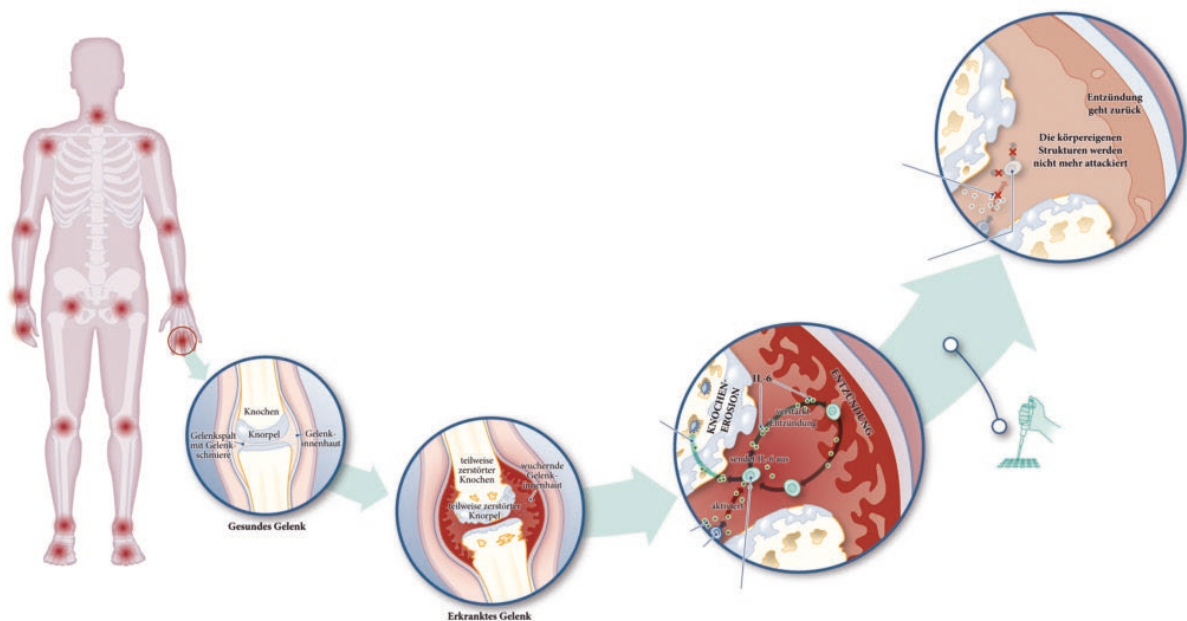
What software do you use to work on your illustrations?

Adobe Creative Suite, mainly Illustrator and Photoshop, occasionally also InDesign.

On your website, you don't appear as a lone fighter, but as a graphic design agency. Why did you decide to do this?

I do most of my jobs as an individual, although I don't see myself as a "fighter" here, but as a service provider or business partner.

However, I really enjoy working in a team and know a lot of people from different disciplines who do great work and are very reliable and professional. So when a customer calls or emails me with a request, I immediately see people in my mind's eye with whom it could be done. So why shouldn't I offer the same service? It often happens that I can't or don't want to deal with the request myself, not even in part, because others are simply better suited to it. In that case, I pass it on to one of my partners or colleagues, because that serves everyone better than if I do something that I'm not so good at (and then almost break my back) or simply have to turn the customer down.



Development and therapy, rheumatoid arthritis, client: Roche Diagnostics via Signum Communication advertising agency

You work together with other companies and freelancers for complex jobs, e.g. in web design. How does the organizational part of the collaboration work?

This varies greatly and depends on the type of request. Web design is still the easiest, because the separation between design and technology is common there. Most of the time, contact with the customer goes through me, I gather the information first and then talk to my partners. I remain the contact person, so I am also the project manager, coordinate timings and take care of communication between the individual participants - which is often enough a kind of "interpreting".

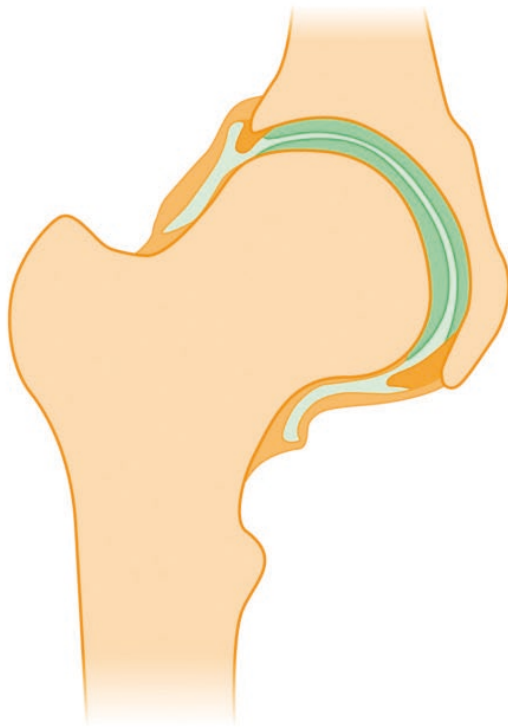
I've worked with my colleague Marcus Frey the most so far, and the collaboration is simply wonderful. I don't have to explain much at all and yet I almost always get exactly what I need from him. I like working with fellow illustrators anyway, and I've already had the honor of working with some of the IO team, such as Georg Stelzner, Torsten Wolber, Annette Gack and Erika Heil - to name just a few. I am completely open to the customer, and so far no one has had a problem with getting the service from a team instead of an individual.



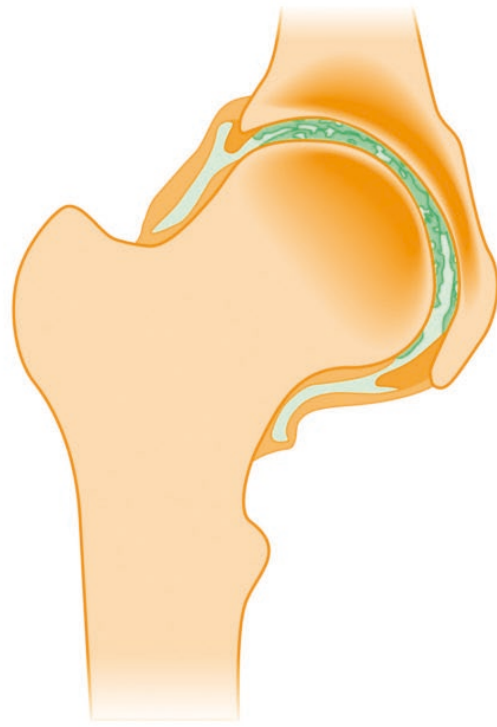
Animals in the big city, poster supplement, customer: Verlag Spektrum der Wissenschaft, magazine neo

How do you resolve conflicts - for example, if the customer is dissatisfied with the work of one of you on a joint order?

Interestingly, that hardly ever happens. Right from the start, my focus is always on listening carefully to what the customer wants, what their goals are and what they want to achieve with the work. What's more, I don't present the customer with a finished graphic out of the blue; they are always involved in the development and the intermediate steps. There would be no other way with these complex topics. First the content, then the "making beautiful". In the meantime, I notice if there is any sign of dissatisfaction and can react at an early stage by asking specific questions. I also always clarify the conditions at the very beginning, which creates a better mood.



Gesundes Hüftgelenk



Hüftgelenk mit Arthrose

For publication on the use of bone cement in prostheses, client: Heraeus Medical

Enforcing your own general terms and conditions is a topic that concerns many illustrators. You refer to your "General Terms and Conditions" on your website.

What reactions do you get from customers?

I also send out my GTC with every offer. Occasionally, individual sections of my GTC are adapted to the current order, but this is rare. So far, no one has ever rejected my T&Cs. In most cases, the conditions tailored to the customer are already formulated in the offer - this usually concerns the rights of use. These conditions "override" the GTC.

Thank you very much for the interview!

With pleasure!

Matthias Emde's IO portfolio

www.emde-grafik.de

All pictures for the interview: Emde-Grafik

The interview was conducted by Constanze Spengler for the Illustratoren Organisation e.V.