

## Association of Illustrators Announces Leadership

The Association of Illustrators is delighted to announce the appointment of three new Directors to its board; illustrator Montana Forbes, Publisher Deirdre McDermott and AOI CEO Ren Renwick.

Chairman David Gilbert says *“This is an exciting time for the AOI. We have grown around 12% year on year and I am confident that the board and staff can continue to deliver the best possible service to members in the years to come. Montana, Deidre and Ren all bring commitment, insight and provocation to our board which I welcome.”*

Montana Forbes is a fashion, beauty and lifestyle illustrator of 13 years, represented by Illustration Ltd. She grew up between Harare, London and Atlanta and studied Visual Communication at The American Intercontinental University in London.

Montana says: *“I am very excited to get involved with the AOI at board level to further support the organisations’ mission. I look forward to act as a sounding board for ideas that relate to matters concerning illustrators, at various levels of their careers. I also hope to develop my skills and experience in new areas; working alongside the other members of the board whose careers I have a great admiration for.”*

Deirdre McDermott is the Picture Book Publisher and Creative Director at Walker Books, the largest independent children’s publisher in the UK. Working with her talented team of picture book designers and editors, Deirdre has collaborated closely with distinguished bookmakers Helen Oxenbury, Chris Haughton, Jimmy Liao, Anita Jeram, John Burningham, Jean Jullien, and Oliver Jeffers - amongst many others.

Deirdre Says: *“It is an honour to become more closely involved with the board of such a significant organisation as the AOI, and I am thrilled to be included in their vision as they continue to be a pioneering voice in the world of UK, and, indeed, global illustration. The power of illustration to tell a story is of constant fascination to me and it is important that we continue to encourage and create spaces where children can share in stories together. The AOI and Walker Books have established a valuable relationship in recent years, and this is a relationship I am keen to develop further through continued collaborative conversation.”*

Ren Renwick has been Managing Director of The AOI since 2016. The board recently agreed a promotion to CEO to reflect the sophistication and breadth of the role. Under Ren’s leadership the AOI has relaunched its website, seen membership grow by 12% year on year, reinvigorated a national programme of sell -out events, re-launched Varoom and refreshed the AOI brand.

Ren says *“It is a huge privilege to work at the AOI alongside such a passionate, committed and knowledgeable team. With them I am confident that we are delivering the best possible service for illustrators, and championing illustration on the UK and global stage. Our industry is vibrant, exciting and full of potential. We are committed to ensuring illustrators have the best possible careers within it.”*

Montana, Deirdre and Ren join Sam Arthur (NoBrow Books), Roderick Mills (Brighton University), Darryl Clifton (Camberwell UAL), Silver Baumgart (James Ware Stephenson Solicitors) and Vicki Willden Lebrecht (Bright Group) as Directors under the Chairmanship of David Gilbert.

ENDS

### Notes to Editors

Images and biogs of the Board of the AOI can be found at <https://theaoi.com/about/board/>

The Association of Illustrators (AOI) is the UK's leading illustration body supporting and sustaining illustrators and the illustration industry. Established in 1973 the AOI offers members professional advice, online resources and a growing programme of events. The AOI has successfully to increase the standing of illustration as a profession and improve commercial and ethical conditions. With a membership that includes freelance illustrators, agents, students and colleges the AOI continues to support and educate future generations at every stage of their career.

[www.theaoi.com](http://www.theaoi.com)