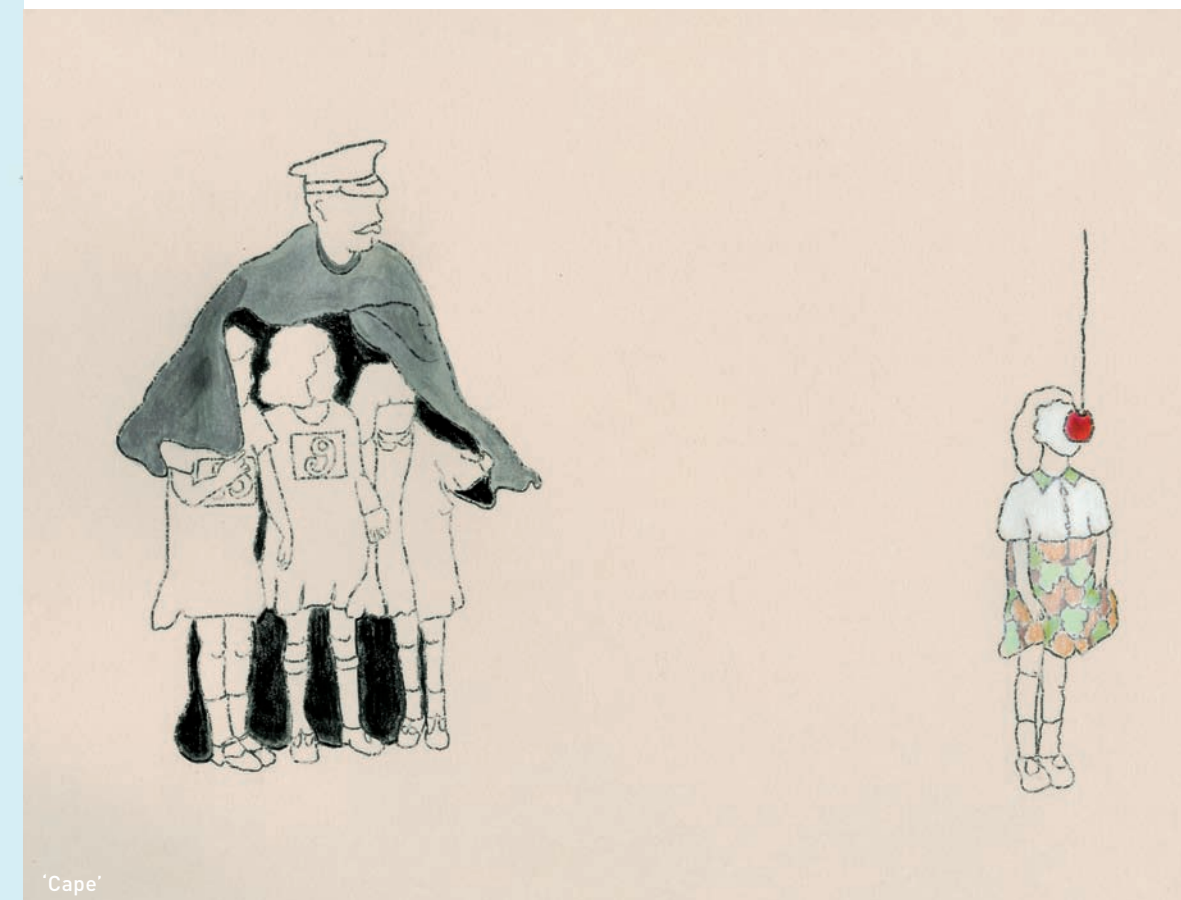


# AGE OF INNOCENCE

Alyson Fox is a great many things: an artist, a photographer, a clothes designer, a visual merchandiser and all-round source of inspiration. For now, though, we are mainly going to focus on her wonderfully simple but emotive illustrations. She was catapulted into recognition by Design Sponge, one of the primary online design blogs and has produced work for the New York Times.



'Apples and Tongues'



'Cape'

WORDS: Rohini Wahi  
IMAGES: Courtesy of Alyson Fox

Alyson's work is a smattering of lines and block colours somehow effortlessly forming a narrative across a blank piece of paper, giving the impression of new forms developing each time you blink. She works simply in ink, coloured pencil and watercolours.

Her artistic style was developed in childhood, when she liked to use her mother's make up pencils to draw all over the walls. However her style really evolved in university where she worked mostly with found objects. 'I had a professor in sculpture tell me that he wanted me to pile all the information on and then just strip it away to the essentials. So I began to draw

as simply and as thoughtfully as possible. I did a lot of blind contour drawings and drawing with my right hand (I am left handed). All of it just stuck' says Alyson.

Alyson works mostly from old family photographs, found images and her own imagination to make 'half true' stories that are left open-ended for the viewer to fill in the blanks. She views her imagery as 'an ongoing series of my fictional family. They have a sort of snap shot photo quality to them'.

Her imagery creates a Stepford Wives form of tension, tranquil and pristine with an underlying current of menace. Alyson describes her work as 'childlike with adult

experience'. On one hand, Alyson's imagery contains the most innocent of elements: the doll-like clothes of her subjects, their childlike features and big cuddly polar bears, but her unlikely narratives touch on themes such as gender roles, violence, childhood, memories and sexuality.

There is something unsettling, in what looks like an illustration of a European soldier shielding a trio of young girls from the sight of another young girl biting into an apple hanging from an invisible tree. Could it be the body language of the three girls, which alludes to some threat? Perhaps it is the distance between the solitary girl and the grouping, which

guarantees their safety? Or maybe, it's because the figure of the lone girl looks as though rather than standing and reaching for the apple on a string, she may be hanging from it.

All of Alyson's imagery has an element of discovery, an almost cinematic vision encompassed within an uneasy circumstance or with something about to occur. 'I like my work to be very familiar but alarming', says Alyson. Perhaps this is where the Stepford Wife peculiarity stems from – a faceless, sinister mono-society that builds up Alyson's familial infrastructure.

Alyson's narratives often emerge

from fragmented sentences that creep into her head in everyday life, which she then writes down. Words and sentences like 'trophies' and 'a pool' or 'tents with a string of animals'. She explains that her inspiration may stem from: 'things that come to me throughout the day from either an image I see, a poem I read or as I am falling asleep. I can't break apart each drawing and its meaning. I think if I ever could I would stop.'

Keep an eye out for Alyson's next project, a whimsical home-ware and jewellery range with her illustrations printed on. Her art is currently available to buy through [littlepaperplanes.com](http://littlepaperplanes.com).