Leo Dillon (March 2, 1933 – May 26, 2012) and Diane Dillon (née Sorber; born March 13, 1933) were American illustrators of children's books and adult paperback book and magazine covers. One obituary of Leo called the work of the husband-and-wife team "a seamless amalgam of both their hands".[3] In more than 50 years they created more than 100 speculative fiction book and magazine covers together as well as much interior artwork. Essentially all of their work in that field was joint.[1][2]
The Dillons won the Caldecott Medal in 1976 and 1977, the only consecutive awards of the honor.[4] In 1978 they were runners-up for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for children's illustrators; they were the U.S. nominee again in 1996.[5]

Biography

Leo Dillon, of Trinidadian immigrant parentage, was born and raised in East New York. He enlisted in the Navy for three years' service so that he could attend art school. He credited his interest in art and his inspiration to become an artist to his friend and mentor, Ralph Volman.[6] Diane Sorber hails from the Greater Los Angeles Area where her interest in art was encouraged early by her mother, who was a pianist.[6] The couple met at the Parsons School of Design in New York City in 1953 — where they "became instant archrivals and remained together from then on".[3] They graduated in 1956 and married the next year. This union resulted in an artistic collaboration, which the couple described as a third artist. Diane Dillon explained this in an interview through these words: "We could look at ourselves as one artist rather than two individuals, and that third artist was doing something neither one of us would do. We let it flow the way it flows when an artist is working by themselves and a color goes down that they didn't quite expect and that affects the next colors they use, and it seems to have a life of its own."[7]
An association with writer Harlan Ellison led to jobs doing book covers for his short story collections and both cover and interior woodcut illustration for his anthology Dangerous Visions. They illustrated a large number of mass market paperback book covers for the original Ace Science Fiction Specials, for which they won their first major award, science fiction's 1971 Hugo Award for Best Professional Artist. A detailed biography and introduction to their work and styles were written by Byron Preiss in a book he edited in 1981, entitled The Art of Leo & Diane Dillon. They once described their work as incorporating motifs derived from their respective heritages. This can be demonstrated in their work for Margaret Musgrove's Ashanti to Zulu, which used tribal motifs and combined historical with contemporary styles.[8]

On May 28, 2012, Ellison reported on his website his reception of a phone call from Diane announcing Leo's death at the age of 79 from lung cancer two days prior. Spectrum Fantastic Art, an annual art competition and art book project of which the couple were general managers, confirmed Leo's death on its website. The obituary of Leo in The New York Times praised the Dillons jointly as "one of the world's pre-eminent illustrators for young people, producing artwork — praised for its vibrancy, ecumenicalism and sheer sumptuous beauty — that was a seamless amalgam of both their hands", also noting the ethnoracial diversity of characters in the Dillons' work in the 1970s, "until then, the smiling faces portrayed in picture books had been overwhelmingly white."[3]

The Dillons had one surviving son. Lee (Lionel John Dillon III), born 1965, became an artist and collaborated with his parents several times, including the illustrations for Pish, Posh, Said Hieronymus Bosch by Nancy Willard (1991).[11] Both Leo and Diane lived in the Cobble Hill neighborhood at the time of Leo's death.

### Picture books illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon

- 1972 **Honey, I Love**, Eloise Greenfield / Viking
- 1973 **Blast Off**, Linda C. Cain and Susan Rosenbaum / Xerox
- 1974 **Whirlwind Is a Ghost Dancing**, compiled by Natalia Maree Belting / Dutton
- 1974 **The Third Gift**, Jan R. Carew / Little Brown
- 1975 **The Hundred Penny Box**, Sharon Bell Mathis / Viking
- 1975 **Song of the Boat**, Lorenz B. Graham / Crowell
- 1980 **Two Pair of Shoes**, P. L. Travers / Viking Press
- 1980 **Children of the Sun**, Jan R. Carew / Little Brown
- 1985 **Brother to the Wind**, Mildred Pitts Walter / Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books
- 1986 **All in a Day**, Mitsumasa Anno and Raymond Briggs / Hamish Hamilton (London) (Translation of: Marui chikyū no maru ichinichi.) —illustrations by 10 artists, including the Dillons
- 1987 **The Porcelain Cat**, Michael Patrick Hearn / Little Brown
- 1989 **The Color Wizard**, Barbara Brenner / Bantam Little Rooster
- 1990 **The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks**, Katherine Paterson / Lodestar
- 1990 **Aïda**, Leontyne Price / Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
- 1992 **Northern Lullaby**, Nancy White Carlstrom / Putnam
- 1992 **Switch on the Night**, Ray Bradbury / Knopf
- 1994 **What Am I?**, N. N. Charles / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press
- 1997 **To Everything There is a Season**, the Dillons / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press[clarification needed]
- 1999 **Wind Child**, Shirley Rousseau Murphy / HarperCollins
Picture books illustrated only by Diane Dillon

- 2018 *I Can Be Anything! Don't Tell Me I Can't*[^12]

Chapter books illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon

- 1964 *Hakon of Rogen's Saga*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1965 *A Slave's Tale*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1968 *Shamrock and Spear*, Pilkington / Holt, Rinehart, Winston
- 1968 *The Rider and His Horse*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1971 *The Untold Tale*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1971 *The Search*, Murray / Thomas / Scholastic[^clarification needed]
- 1974 *Burning Star*, Eth Clifford / Houghton Mifflin
- 1977 *The Planets* / Time Life Books
- 1979 *A Wrinkle in Time*, Madeleine L'Engle / (reissue)[^lower-alpha 1]
- 1984 *The Enchanted World: Legends of Valor* / Time Life Books
- 1985 *The Enchanted World: Magical Beasts* / Time Life Books
- 1987 *Wise Child*, Monica Furlong / Knopf
- 1988 *Sing A Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems*, Beatrice Schenk de Regniers / Scholastic — illustrated by many artists
- 1991 *Juniper*, Monica Furlong / Random House
- 1993 *It's Kwanzaa Time*, Goss Putnam [^clarification needed]
- 1995 *Sabriel*, Garth Nix / HarperCollins
- 2000 *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Jules Verne / HarperCollins (reissue)[^lower-alpha 1]
- 2001 *Mansa Musa*, Khephra Burns / Harcourt Brace & Co
- 2001 *Lirael*, Garth Nix / HarperCollins
Awards

- 1971 Hugo Award for Best Professional Artist
- 1977 Hamilton King Award – Society Of Illustrators
- 1978 Highly Commended runner-up as a duo, Hans Christian Andersen Award (body of work, children’s book illustration)[5]
- 1982 Balrog Award For Lifetime Contribution To Science Fiction/Fantasy
- 1982 Art Ninth Annual Lensman Award
- 1986 Coretta Scott King Award illustrator honor[13]
- 1988 Third Annual Keene State College Children's Literature Festival Award
- 1991 Doctorate Of Fine Art Degree - Parsons School Of Design
- 1992 Empire State Award For Children's And Adult Literature For Body Of Work
- 1992 Society Of Illustrators Gold Medal For Northern Lullaby From The Original Art Show Of Children's Picture Books
- 1997 Chesley Award For Best Science Fiction Hardcover Jacket Titled Gabriël
- 1997 The Grand Masters Award - For Body Of Work - From Spectrum - The Best In Contemporary Fantastic Art
- 1997 Society of Illustrators Hall Of Fame - Inducted By A Jury of Peers
- 2002 Virginia Hamilton Literary Award - For Body Of Work
- 2003 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor- For Rap A Tap Tap Here's Bojangles-Think Of That
- 2005 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award - For The People Could Fly-The Picture Book
- 2006 Knickerbocker Award - For Body Of Work - New York Library Association
- 2006 Doctorate Of Fine Arts - Montserrat School Of Art
- 2008 World Fantasy Convention Life Achievement Award[14]
- 2012 BolognaRagazzi Award - Fiction Honorable Mention - The Secret River[15]

Notes

a. The Dillons created cover illustrations for many books that were not first editions. By policy the cover images and cover illustrations displayed in Wikipedia book articles should be from the first editions but that is not always true. They should have captions but that is not always true.

References

1. Leo Dillon at the Internet Speculative Fiction Database (ISFDB). Retrieved July 8, 2013. Select a title to see its linked publication history and general information. Select a particular edition (title) for more data at that level, such as a front cover image or linked contents.


10. "Spectrum Fantastic Art".


Further reading

Diane and Leo Dillon first crossed paths in 1953 while attending college together. They met at the beginning of a vital time for change; the following decades would precipitate a revolution towards progressive values, civil rights, and social equality—and the design profession would not be excluded. This was an era when all the faces in children's books were white, but thanks to the Dillons, that was about to change. Diane and Leo didn't immediately fall in love. In fact, upon meeting at Parsons School for Design in New York City, they were instant rivals. “We sat next to each other and for th I just discovered the work of Leo and Diane Dillon and I was taken back to my childhood and the picture books that might have laid the foundation for my imagination. At best every artist is sort of a magician, but not many can bring this power to fruition like the illustrator of children's books, since the receptiveness of his audience is incomparable. For more than fifty years the Dillon's formed one of the most successful and influential illustrator partnership. In contrast to most other creative collaborations in the field they created their artworks together instead of dividing the work in This is an unofficial blog dedicated to sharing the art of Leo and Diane Dillon, and providing information on the artists and their work. If any information displayed on the site is incorrect, or if something important has been left out, please feel free to contact me. None of the work shared here belongs to me. About Me. Gjhhhh. View my complete profile. Blog Archive.