



(left to right) Award-winning and distinguished illustrator, and MICA Illustration Department Chair José Villarrubia '83 (general fine arts) (photo by Keith Hutson); and MICA alumnus Orpheus Collar '09 (illustration) (photo by Bruce Weller).

Faculty Set the Example in Building Sustainable Professional Careers

TO LAUNCH A SUCCESSFUL CAREER, it's vital that students develop both a high degree of competency in their chosen discipline and make professional connections before they graduate. That's why MICA prides itself on hiring faculty who are active, award-winning artists and designers distinguished in their field.

For **Orpheus Collar '09** (illustration), a successful **graphic novelist** and **storyboard artist**, the chance to learn from and work with Illustration Department Chair **José Villarrubia '83** (general fine arts) set him on the road to success.

Villarrubia's work as a **comic book colorist, illustrator, and photographer** is renowned worldwide. The respect his work garners among his contemporaries was evident with his 2012 Harvey Award win, as nominees for the prestigious prize are selected among an open vote of comic book professionals. He has also been an educator for over 20 years, offering students both professional insight and connections.

"José Villarrubia was hugely important in my start in graphic novels. I worked as a coloring assistant to José my whole time at MICA, graduating with professional experience on 500-odd pages of comic book art and a bit of savings," Collar said.

After his graduation, that link to Villarrubia played a large part in one of Collar's first big projects—working as layout artist on *The New York Times'* best-selling graphic novel adaptation of Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*. His former teacher, who ended up acting as colorist for the project, suggested that Collar contact one of the artists being considered for the job of illustrating the book,

Hungarian artist Attila Futaki.

"José connected me to Attila Futaki, and Attila and I worked together on sample pages that helped secure the art contract—I drew the layouts, and Attila drew the finished illustrations. We continued this arrangement for the whole book. It was a fun job, ending in a lively trip to Budapest," Collar explained, adding, "I used my time working on *The Lightning Thief* as a kind of pitch for my next project, which was adapting another Rick Riordan book, *The Kane Chronicles: The Red Pyramid*. I wanted to show that I was capable of taking responsibility for the entire project—writing the story for the graphic novel, drawing layouts, coloring, everything."

Collar was successful, and his graphic novel adaptation of *The Red Pyramid*, released in 2012, went on to become another *New York Times* bestseller.

Since then, Collar has remained busy. He was colorist for Riordan's *Heroes of Olympus: The Lost Hero* graphic novel, released in October 2014, and created the animatics and storyboards for the CG-animated show *Space Racers*, which premiered on public television earlier this year. And in 2015, the graphic novel adaptation of *The Kane Chronicles: The Throne of Fire*, which Collar is adapting and illustrating, will be released as well.