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Stock

Steven Lamb

MORE RECIPES

Chicken broth with parsley and celery seed spaetzle (page 163); Squash and cinnamon soup with roasted seeds (page 183); Carrot soup with ginger and coriander (page 123); Chilled spiced watercress and yoghurt soup (page 669); Nasturtium and pink peppercorn soup (page 401); Roasted beetroot orzotto with lavender (page 68); Fairy ring champignon risotto (page 252); Lemon verbena pilaf (page 348); Cuttlefish with fennel and white beans (page 228); Paella (page 163); Chicken and cider stew with rosemary dumplings (page 617); Pheasant pie (page 468); Saffron speltotto with black pudding and parsley (page 548); Hare ragu (page 301); Roasted chilli mole (page 173)

SOURCING

barfieldsbutchers.co.uk and pegotyhedge.co.uk (for liquid stocks)

A good stock makes all the difference to soups, stews, sauces, gravy and risottos, which is extraordinary when you consider that most stocks are comprised essentially of leftovers, trimmings and remains. Making your own is a deeply satisfying process.

All stocks begin with a collection of aromatic vegetables, herbs and spices. Meat and fish stocks also need bones, scraps and trimmings, skin, sinew and even selected items of offal, to give them their full-bodied flavours.

Carrots, onions and celery stems are the holy trinity of stock vegetables. You need at least two of each and they should be chopped, but you can leave them chunky and even unpeeled as long as they are clean. You can either start your stock with raw veg or sauté them first to get some browning flavours going.

To the vegetable base, it's usual to add herbs such as bay and parsley, and sometimes spices or aromatics such as peppercorns. To this, you can add whatever bones, giblets, skins and frames are appropriate. A slosh of white wine often goes in and the last thing to add is cold water to cover the ingredients. Add only enough to cover them – there is no point diluting the flavours any more than you have to.

Slowly bring the stock to the boil, then turn the heat down to a gentle simmer. Leave the pan uncovered. With meat stocks, it is best to ladle off any 'scum' that rises to the surface (this is just protein from the meat). To get the most flavour out of the ingredients, meat stocks should simmer for 3–4 hours, being topped up with a little water only as much as necessary to keep the ingredients submerged. You can let the liquid level drop towards the end to concentrate the stock's flavour. Vegetable and fish stocks need only about 30 minutes' simmering, and fish stocks actually start to take on some undesirable flavours after this time. At the end of the cooking process, your stock needs to be strained (see page 613).

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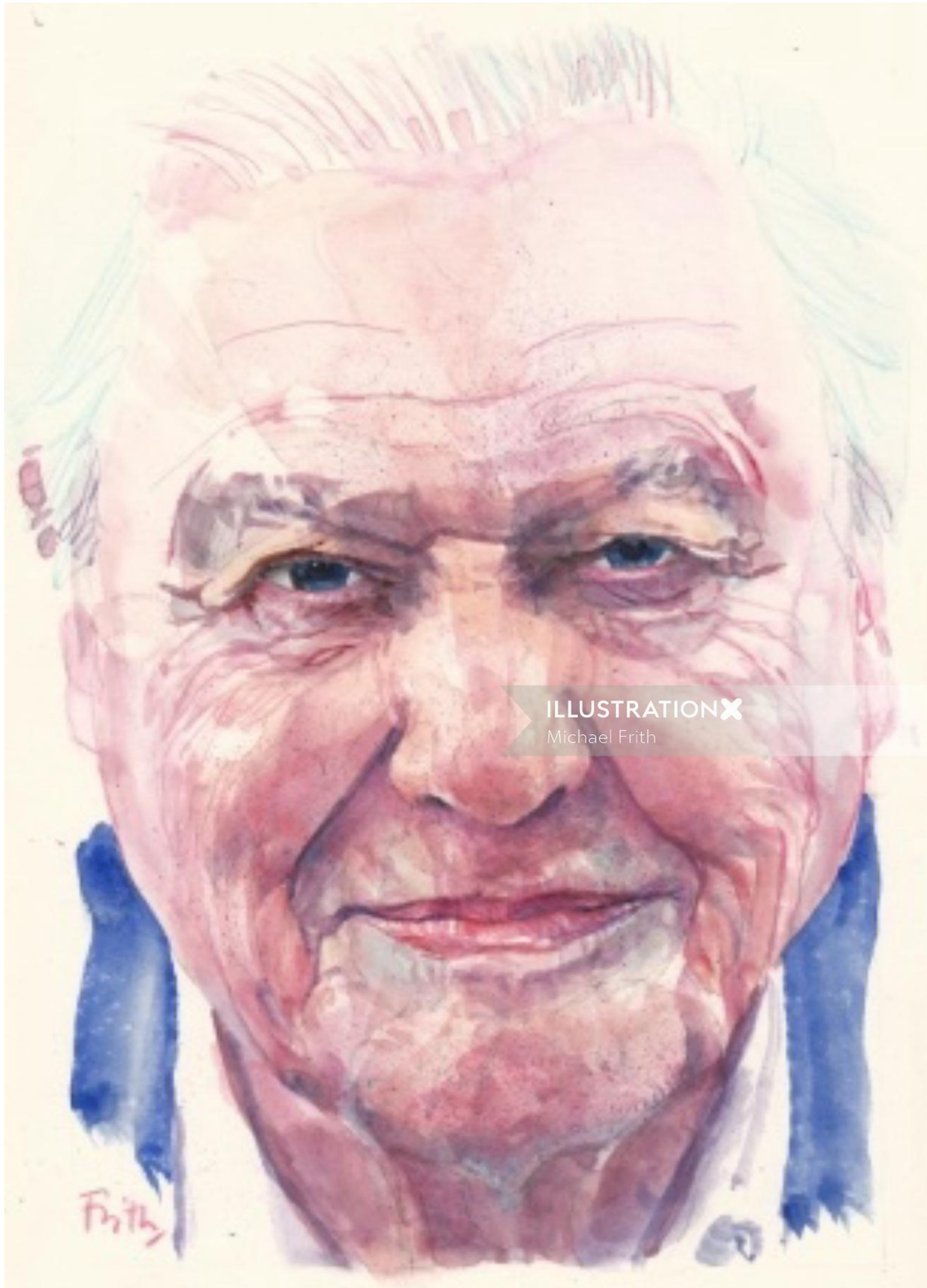
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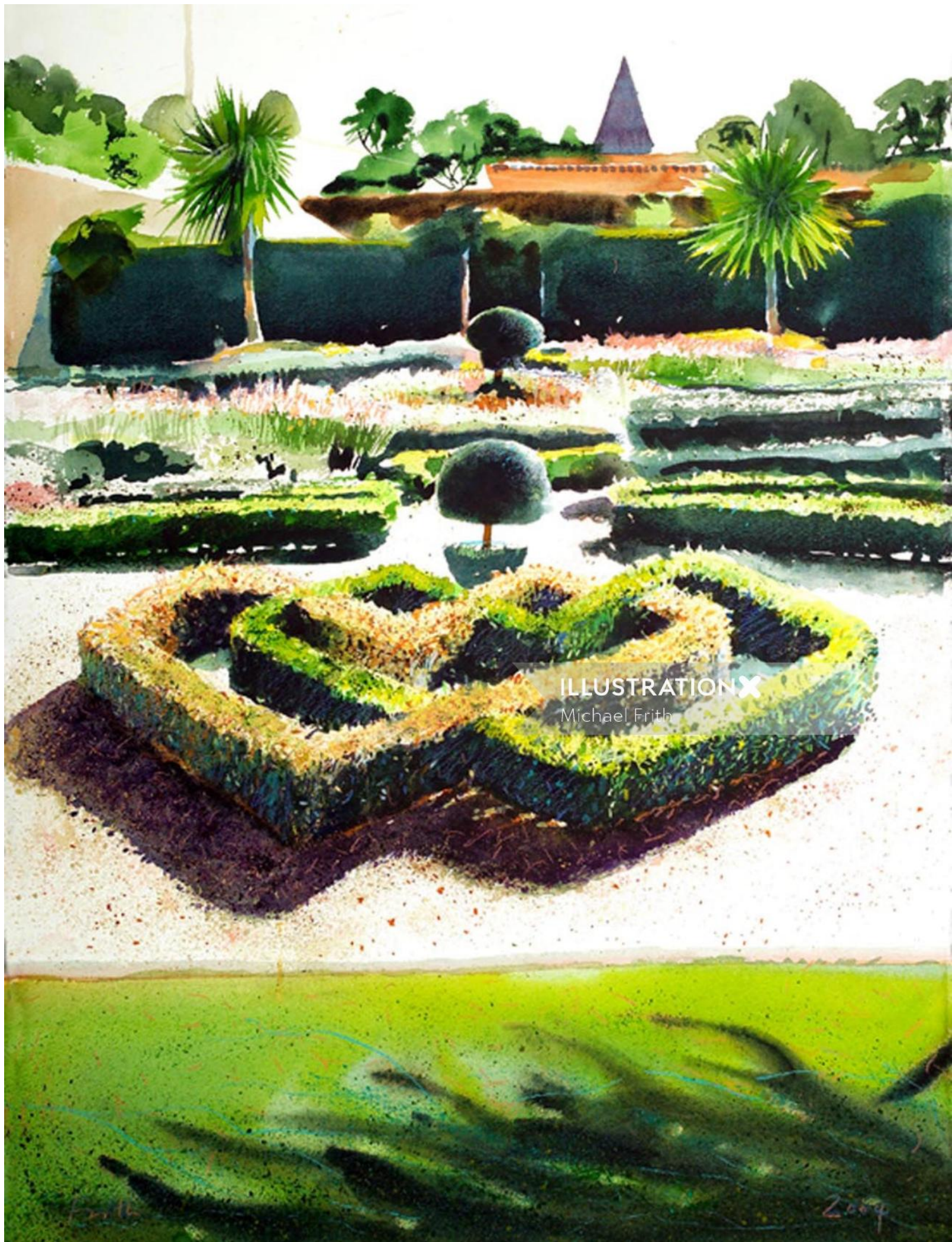
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Maple syrup

Nikki Duffy

When the snow falls from the branches with a particular kind of wet thud, the farmers of the Beauce know it's time to start tapping their trees. In this part of Quebec, and other parts of Canada and the eastern US, the first stirrings of the spring thaw signal the advent of the maple season. The thin, clear sap of the maple trees begins to rise, even while their branches are bare. A simple tap, inserted into the trunk, is all that's required to siphon off this mild nectar.

Maple syrup is rarely produced outside North America. Maple trees will certainly grow in other places, but rather specific seasonal temperature fluctuations are required to get the sap flowing. And some would say the sap just doesn't seem to taste the same without that frontier *terroir*.



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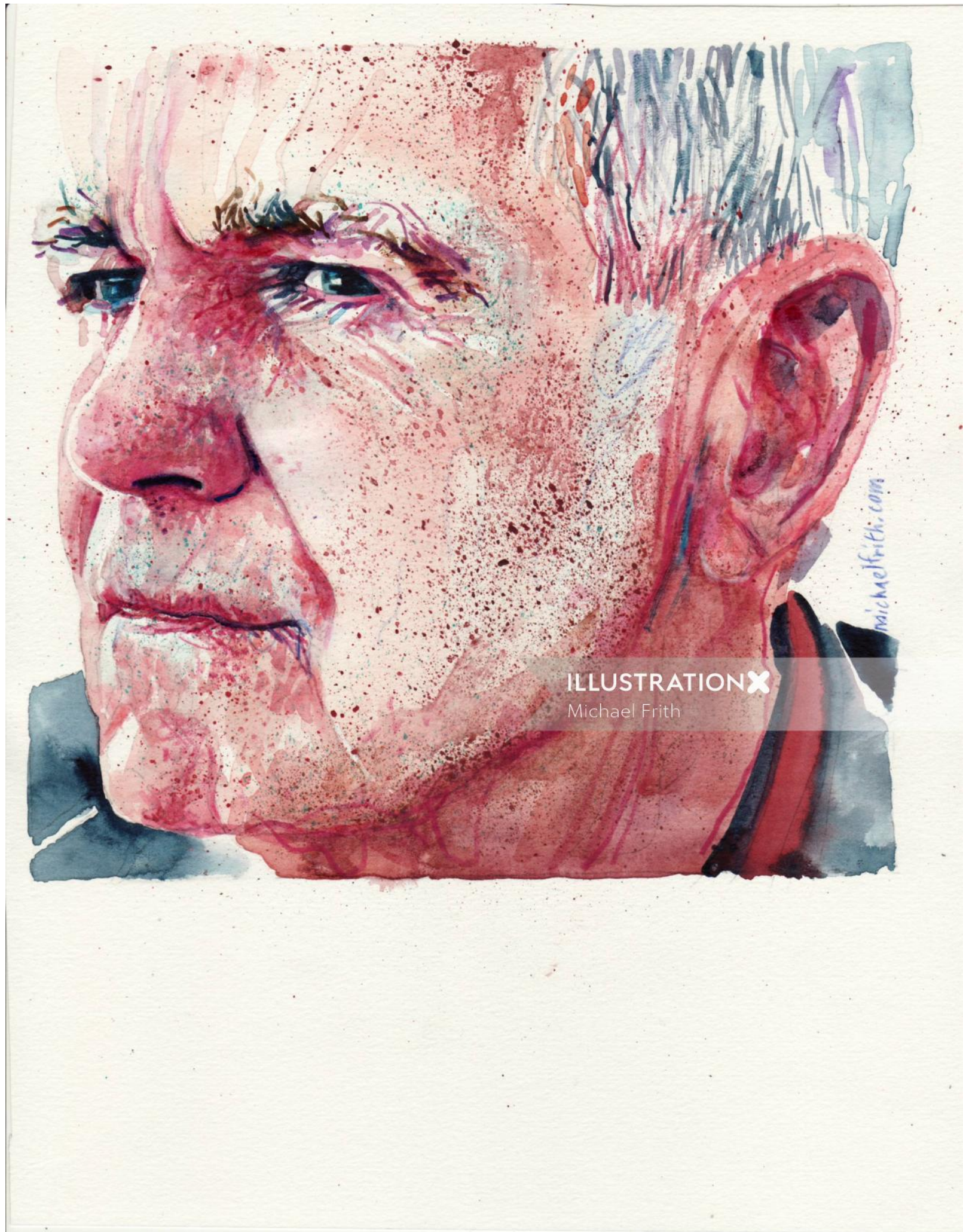
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