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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **Imagine** EX



**WORKSHOP**

## **PRO PHOTOSHOP LAYER TECHNIQUES**

How to control colour in  
your fantasy landscapes

## **SHARPEN YOUR CHARACTER DESIGN**

Discover new ways to  
create lively characters  
with **Christophe Young**



## **PROCREATE TUTORIAL PAINT & DRAW MASTERCLASS**

Recycle old sketches  
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ISSUE 206

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IMAGE!

## **CORE ART SKILLS**

**HARNESS THE BEAUTY  
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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF  
MARVEL'S KARLA ORTIZ

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## Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



Whether you're new to digital art or have been pushing pixels since the 90s, this issue has everything you could want. We begin by celebrating the artists – new and established – who are changing the way we see modern fantasy art. The likes of Craig Mullins and Iain McCaig

are honored starting on page 18, as well as the best new concept artists working today.

We also take time to meet Karla Ortiz, one of the best young artists around, who was a Concept Art Awards nominee this year, as we spend a day in her life. Discover how she works and be inspired.

This balance between new and established approaches continues through the issue. Over on page 74 Rafael Sarmento reveals how he reuses discarded sketches to create an original portrait piece. Using Procreate he bends and warps his old ideas to create a fresh character.

The wonderful thing about art is there's always another way to do something. And these different approaches can be used with your workflow to create interesting, original art. Give it a go.

*Ian*

Editor

ian.dean@futurenet.com

### EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...



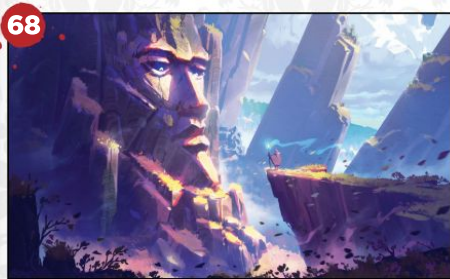
#### Concept Art Awards

The best of the film and video games art industries are celebrated, including the most talented newcomers.



#### Patrick O'Keefe

The acclaimed art director reveals how his rise to the top has taken a few twists and turns along the way.



#### Learn layer techniques and control colour

Game concept artist Anton Fedeev shares his workflow for creating stylised and inventive landscapes.

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# ImagineFX Contents

## Your art

### 10 FXPosé

We show your gorgeous art to the world!

## News and events

### 18 Concept Art Awards

Discover who went home with silverware at the event, hosted at LightBox Expo.

### 26 A day in the life of... Karla Ortiz

How the concept artist and illustrator maintains their mental and physical health.

### 28 Don't stop believing

Artist and author Iris Compiet reveals how she almost gave up on her career dreams.

### 30 When new worlds collide... We explore Amazon Games' New World.

### 34 Artist in Residence

François Gautier reveals where he translates some of his fears and sorrows into line-art.

## Features

### 40 The Art of Patrick O'Keefe

We meet the artist who keeps things simple, even in the complex world of Spider-Man.

### 48 Sketchbook: Tristan Tait

Kooky characters and odd clowns abound.

## Reviews

### 82 Hardware

### 84 Training

### 85 Books

## Regulars

### 3 Editor's letter

### 6 Resources

### 7 Next month

### 8 Print subscriptions

### 38 Recent editions

### 39 Letters

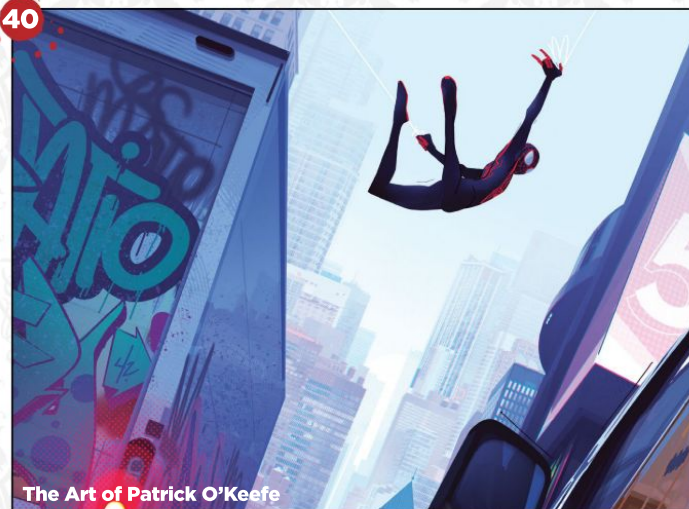
### 52 Digital subscriptions



Concept artists celebrated



A day in the life of... Karla Ortiz



The Art of Patrick O'Keefe



Don't stop believing



Artist in Residence:  
François Gautier

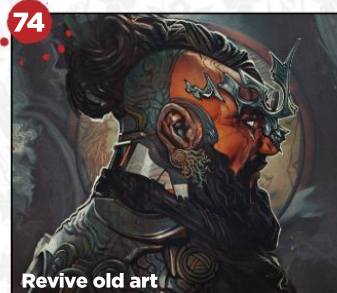


ImagineFX





Sketchbook: Tristan Tait



Revive old art



Character art



Colour and line-art



Comic panel skills

## Workshops

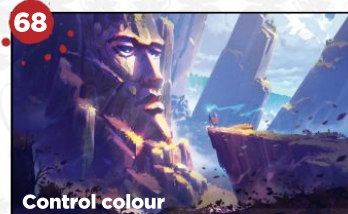
**54 Sharpen your character art**  
Christophe Young concepts a dieselpunk samurai character for our cover!

**60 Balance colour with line-art**  
Lauren Brown designs and paints a nouveau-themed character.

**66 Turn dabs into brush strokes**  
Isis Sousa on how Corel Painter 2022 handles dab customisation.

**68 Control colour in your scenes**  
Discover how Anton Fadeev brings a fantasy landscape to stunning life.

**74 Bring new life to unfinished art in Procreate**  
Rafael Sarmento reworks an older idea.



Control colour



First Impressions:  
Serena Malyon

## Traditional Artist

**88 Traditional FXPosé**  
Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, sent in by you!

**92 Workshop: Improve your comic panel skills**  
David Orellana reveals his novel approach and composition techniques when creating a simple comic page.

**98 First Impressions: Serena Malyon**  
Exploring her own personal challenges has helped this Canadian artist.





NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# Resources

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

## Editorial

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Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.  
Just visit [ifxm.ag/206characterdesign](http://ifxm.ag/206characterdesign)

## WORKSHOP VIDEOS



**OVER 5 HOURS**  
of video tutorials  
from pro artists  
to watch and  
learn from!

## Discover how to create compelling character art

See how Christophe Young designs and paints a dieselpunk samurai figure, applying pro-level colouring and lighting techniques to boost the realism level. His workshop is on page 54.



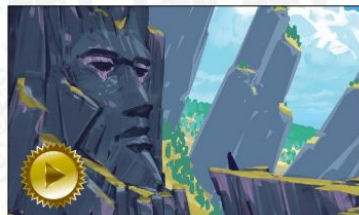
## Balance colours and line-art

Watch how Lauren Brown focuses attention on her Rose Queen. There's more on page 60.



## Don't waste unused ideas!

In Rafael Sarmento's workshop he creates new art from an old sketch. See page 74.



## Fantasy environment advice

Anton Fadeev shows how to paint rocks, clouds and grass. His workshop's on page 68.



## Customise Painter's dab tools

Follow Isis Sousa's video for creating stamp-type brushes from dabs. More on page 66.



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Next month

Next month in...  
FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**

# THE ART OF DUNE

The legacy of Frank Herbert – artists share why the desert planet continues to inspire



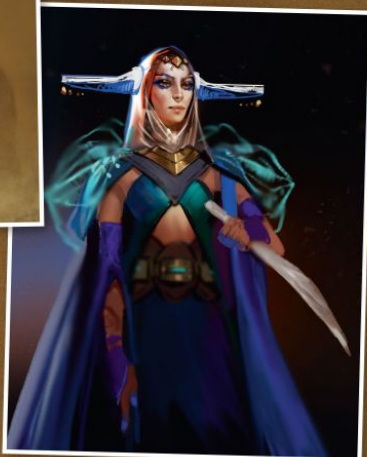
Artwork by Simon Gohard



Artwork by Henrik Sahström



Artwork by Devon Cady-Lee



Artwork by Maria Trappola

***All this... and more!***

## ***Dune – the movie's secrets***

Production designer Patrice Vermette opens up about designing Arrakis.

## ***Master fantasy portraiture***

Cynthia Sheppard reveals how to paint elegant fantasy art from reference.

## ***Making of Foundation***

Legendary concept artist Stephan Martinière on Apple TV's epic.

## ***Tony DiTerlizzi interviewed***

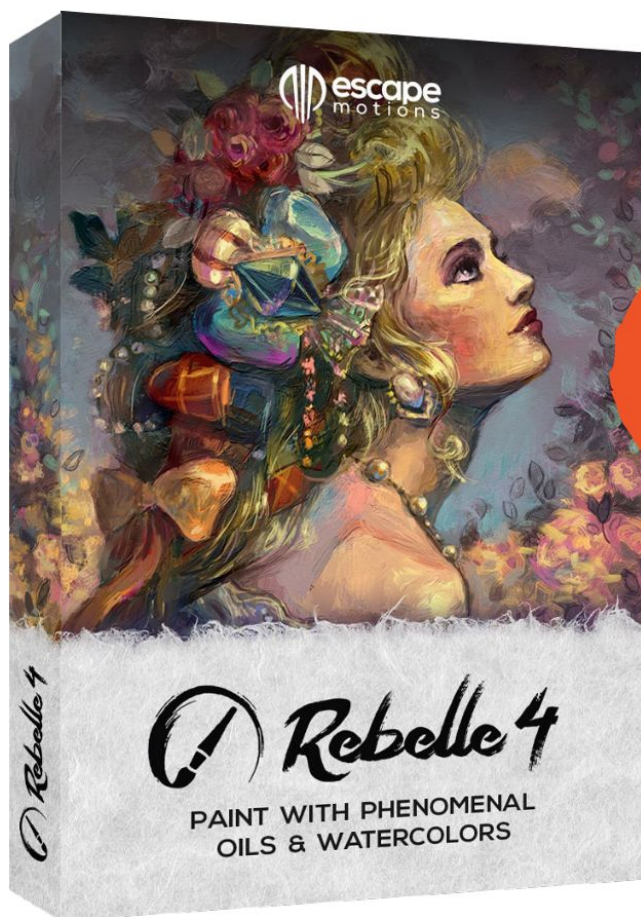
The D&D artist rediscovers the best fantasy art of the 1980s.

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# FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Justyna Gil

**LOCATION:** Poland **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** [artstation.com/gilyoona](http://artstation.com/gilyoona)

Justyna is a fantasy illustrator focusing on imaginative realism with a strong emphasis on colour and light. Her clients include Wizards of the Coast, CD Projekt Red, and many more.

### 1 VEIL OF PROTECTION

"This is an allegorical image that depicts the human heart subject to the seven deadly sins."

1



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2

### 2 MAGIC: THE GATHERING - THE ROYAL SCIONS

"Fake it till you make it. This piece of fan art was created shortly before I started working officially on MtG."



### 3 MAGIC: THE GATHERING - DAWNBRINGER AURELIA

"This is the first illustration I'd done after two years in game-dev, creating marketing assets."

### 4 FIFTH OATH OF THE RED ARMY

"This piece is an experiment where I wanted to perfect a realistic cinematic approach."

### 5 MAGIC: THE GATHERING - MADCAP

"Behold Lorehold imprudent students! Artwork that appeared on the Audacious Reshapers card."



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Want to submit your work? Visit [ifxm.ag/getinifx](http://ifxm.ag/getinifx)





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4



5



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## Bex Glendining

**LOCATION:** England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint **WEB:** lgions.com

Bex has worked as a cover artist, colourist and interior artist on projects such as *Seen*: Edmonia Lewis, *Penultimate Quest*, *Rolled & Told*, *Lupina* and multiple covers for Penguin Random House.

### 1 THE WORKSHOP

"This was a collaboration with XP-PEN. It shows one of my characters, a witch, in his workshop."



### 2 DRAGON'S HOARD

"Part of my Modern Myths and Monsters series, showing a dragon woman with her hoard."



### 3 REFLECTION

"A sombre illustration of a vampire and her reflection, which looks directly at the viewer, as if you're seeing a moment you shouldn't."



### 4 MODERN MEDUSA

"Another piece from my Modern Myths and Monsters series. It depicts a modern-day Medusa relaxing at a diner."



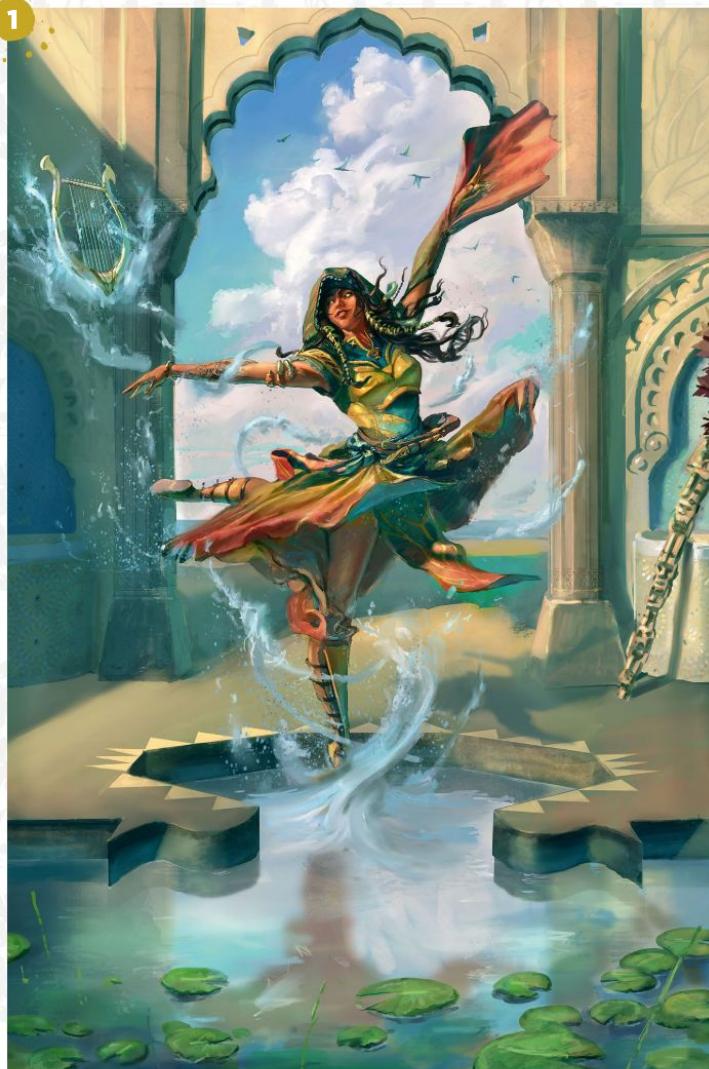




## William Hallett

**LOCATION:** England **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** [artstation.com/wil\\_hallett\\_art](http://artstation.com/wil_hallett_art)

Having grown up with his nose in fantasy books, it follows that William loves drawing and painting wizards and magical owls. "My main inspiration is narrative and character and I love to try to get that across in my work."



**1 ATALA: THE BIRD**  
"This is a character showcase piece exploring her carefree nature and a moment where she has matured in her magic use."

**2 IVY SALISTORM**  
"Another character showcase. I just love characters and everyone needs a formidable she-elf in their portfolio, no?"



**3 ELIZA AT THE COURT OF THE OWL KING**  
"This is an older personal piece, but still a favourite of mine. I love the story and fun feeling here."





## Daniel Isles (DirtyRobot)

LOCATION: Japan MEDIA: Pencil and ink, Photoshop, Procreate WEB: [danielisles.com](http://danielisles.com)

Daniel's illustrations have appeared across a variety of industries, including fashion, music and technology. "As an artist I'm committed to observation and expression to create entire worlds of my own," he says.

### 1 VINYL RUNNER (LP-02)

"The chase is on as the music boy LP-02 is struggling to catch the ultra-rare LP-01 to reach the top."

### 2 SEASONS COLLECTION - SUMMER

"Part of a Seasons collection. This piece depicts special summer moments, whether it's in peaceful solitude or with the ones you love."

### 3 GARDEN OF FAIRIES

"Visitors to this garden will feel like minutes have passed, only to find they've woken up years later."











## Andrew (SchmandrewART) Thompson

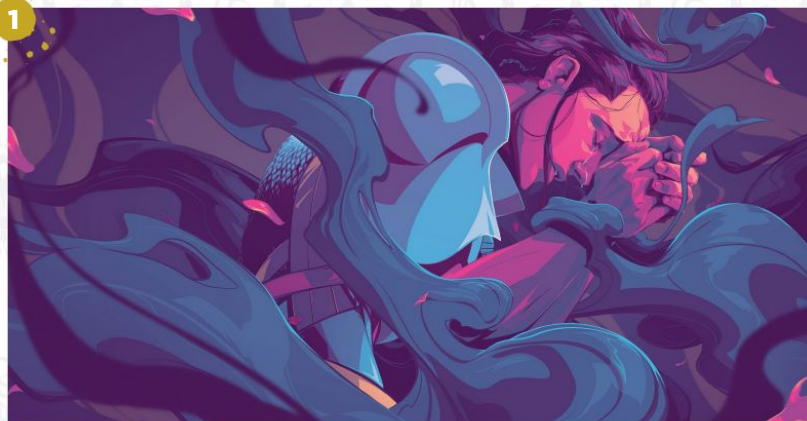
**LOCATION:** US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, Illustrator, pen and ink, acryla gouache **WEB:** schmandrewart.com

Andrew's work is a blend of fantasy illustration with pop art sensibilities. He's worked for Lucasfilm, Bethesda, Mondo, Sony, Reebok, Marvel and Wizards of the Coast, and teaches illustration at Columbus College of Art and Design.

### 1 **BROKEN**

"I pushed myself too far during the pandemic. Sketches from that time evolved into a comic called Broken. This is my favourite scene from it."

1



### 2 **AJANI**

"I've always loved Magic: The Gathering and was absolutely delighted to do a variant cover for Boom! Magic #5."

2



3



### 3 **JUMP IN**

"When the Into The Spider-Verse trailer dropped, I needed to do an illustration based on it. Luckily, I was given the opportunity to create an official piece through Gallery Nucleus and Marvel!"

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© Marvel





## Khurrum

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender WEB: [khurrumart.com](http://khurrumart.com)

Khurrum is a multi-disciplinary artist who creates illustrations for games, books and personal projects. When he's not painting, he works as a programmer and builds tools for artists and computing systems for climate scientists.

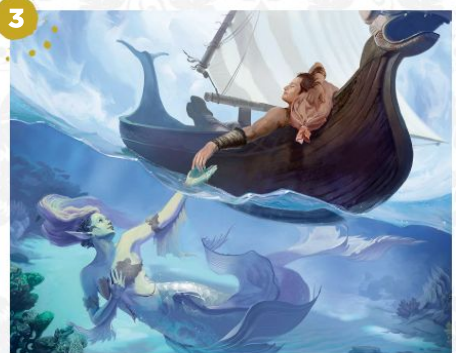
### 1 LITTLE RED

"This is a retelling of Little Red Riding Hood. Wolves are incredible creatures with a negative reputation; I wanted to push back on that idea."



### 2 ESCAPE

"Personal art that depicts a figure escaping a floating prison. It alludes to making a positive breakthrough with one's mental health."

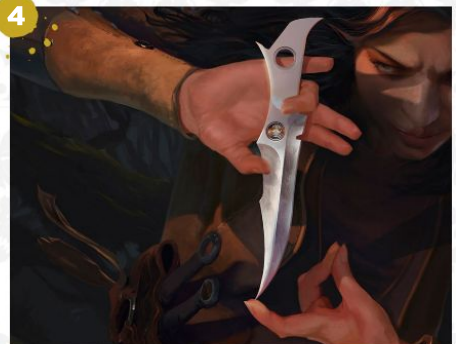


### 3 MERMAID TALES

"This image depicts a curious mermaid interacting with an unaware sailor."

### 4 SPARE DAGGER

"I was thrilled to get the chance to paint for a hybrid Magic: The Gathering and D&D Deck called Adventures in the Forgotten Realms."



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# ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY



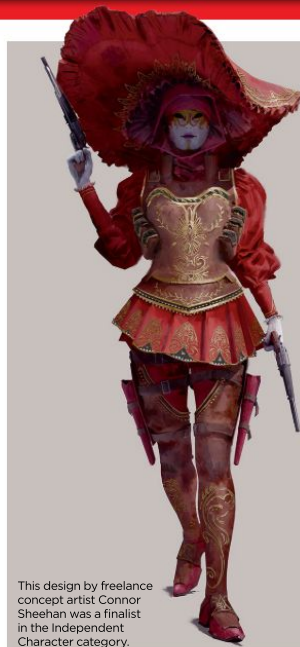
Art director, concept artist and storyboard artist Almu Redondo was a finalist in the Fan Art category with her Games of Thrones piece.



Leading art director and artist Eric Robles explained why concept art is key.



Ehsan Bigloo's art for The Tomorrow War made the Live Action Film Character shortlist.



This design by freelance concept artist Connor Sheehan was a finalist in the Independent Character category.

## A concept for success

**Art stars** We hear from the organisers, judges and winners from this year's Concept Art Awards, which took place at LightBox Expo Online



The third annual Concept Art Awards took place last month as part of LightBox Expo Online. Held on 11 September, the best artists working in film, animation and video games were celebrated and the spotlight was shone on the role that concept artists play in the industry.

The Concept Art Awards is put on by the Concept Art Association, an organisation "committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries," says co-founder **Nicole Hendrix**. "At the centre of our organisation is an annual Concept Art Awards show," she continues, "where we showcase and recognise these behind-the-scenes

individuals working in entertainment concept art."

The awards celebrate the work produced by artists at the biggest studios, such as Marvel Studios, Sucker Punch Productions and Blizzard Games, as well as students, newcomers and luminaries. This year saw submissions from 63 countries.

The awards were fronted by Aldis Hodge (co-founder of the art studio 9B Collective) and Krystina Arielle, the presenter of Star Wars: The High Republic show.



"We're honoured to be able to provide a platform for concept artists around the world to be showcased and celebrated", said Nicole on the night, who later tells us: "They all have stories to tell and being able to put a face to a name and artwork helps raise the profile of these artists." Presenter of this year's Game Character award **Dela Longfish** said at the event, "Concept artists contribute to the growth of video games both as a medium and an art form, and the work of the nominees this year is a great example of this."

### LOOKING BACK

There was a sense of reflection to this year's event, as presenters and award-





## KEEP UP WITH KARLA ORTIZ

The acclaimed concept artist and fine illustrator takes us through a typical day, and tells us the steps she's taking to stay fit, both mentally and physically.  
**Page 26**



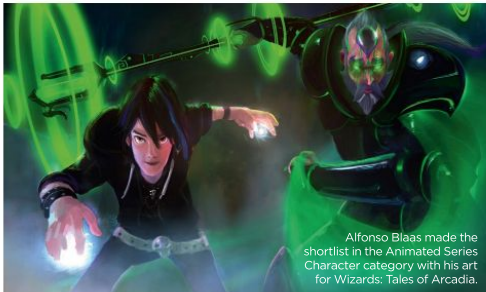
## CREATURE DISCOMFORTS

We catch up with Iris Compiet, who reveals that interest in her fantasy art only took off when she had reached a low point on her creative career path.  
**Page 28**

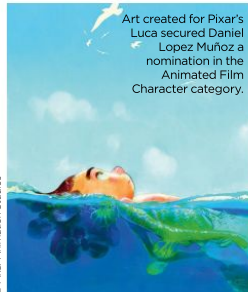


## EMBRACE THE DARK SIDE

French artist François Gautier takes us around his studio, which is chock-full of objects that inspire him to create intricate Gothic horror-themed art.  
**Page 34**



Alfonso Blaas made the shortlist in the Animated Series Character category with his art for *Wizards: Tales of Arcadia*.



Art created for Pixar's Luca secured Daniel Lopez Muñoz a nomination in the Animated Film Character category.



Netherlands-based Tom Sterckx was a finalist in the Student Environment category.

winners looked back on the year and how Covid has affected us all.

Concept Art Association co-founder **Rachel Meinerding** said at



the event: "Whether you're one of the concept artists working on one of the many streaming shows that kept us

going the past year, a student who found themselves working remotely from home, or if you were just doing art for yourself, thank you so much for sharing your art with us. It's always inspiring to see everything that everyone's been doing the past year."

New awards for this year included ArtStation's Rising Star, which was given to Airi Pan, a senior illustrator at Blizzard Games; and Adobe's Community Impact, which went to Abelle Hayford, the creator of the hashtag #drawingwhileblack.

Abelle Hayford received Adobe's Community Impact Award for her Drawing While Black hashtag, which was a call to action to the black creative community.



**Jasmine Whitaker**, product marketing manager at Adobe



commented on the night: "At Adobe, we know just how important it is to use your creative voice to foster connection, community empathy and, of course, storytelling. And I'm excited that this recipient has done just that and more. We're excited to announce Abelle Hayford as this year's Adobe Community Impact Award recipient... Abelle truly embodies Adobe's mission of bringing creativity for all."

## LIFETIME WINNERS

The 2021 Lifetime Achievement Recipients were awarded to 'the father of digital art' Craig Mullins (*Armageddon*, *Halo 2*) and Iain McCaig (*Star Wars* Episodes I to III,

Marvel's *Avengers*), an artist who has helped many to start their careers in the art entertainment industry.

James Paick and **John Park**, the co-founders of Brainstorm School presented the awards on the night to Craig Mullins. Acknowledging Craig's achievements, John said: "You've honestly made a huge impact in our lives and our career and really the community. And we just cannot thank you enough for the sheer amount of inspiration that you spread for the community and just the art education in the world."

Lifetime Achievement presenter Ryan Meinerding added: "Iain has helped shape the very best idea of what being a concept artist means and has done it inspiring and helping every artist he's met along the way."

"Iain is a force of nature. His capacity for inspiring, whether it be an entire project, character, design or a struggling new artist, is unlike anything I've ever witnessed in a human being."

## PLAN FOR 2022

As the curtain closes on this year's awards show, the Concept Art Association's co-founders, Nicole and Rachel are already planning 2022's event. Next year's show will be a physical event, with awards given in person at Pasadena Civic Auditorium during LightBox Expo on Saturday, 15 October. Streaming will remain for international viewers and participants.

Nicole tells us: "Artists are some of the hardest working people there are, constantly refining their craft and looking for inspiration in the world around them. For artists looking to submit next year, I would say keep learning, practise your skill and stay passionate."

The submissions window starts in May 2022 and runs most of next Summer, so sign up for the Concept Art Association newsletter on their site and start prepping. Maybe next year you can join the winners, and you can find them over the page.

**For a full list of the night's winners and to learn more about the Concept Art Awards visit [conceptartassociation.com](https://conceptartassociation.com).**

“It's always inspiring to see everything that everyone's been doing the past year”

# The Concept Art Awards 2021: **Winners**

The work of concept artists from around the world are celebrated in this year's awards



© Marvel/Disney+

## Live Action Series Environment

### HEX Transition by Jackson Sze

[instagram.com/jwsze](https://www.instagram.com/jwsze)

"Thank you so much for this. I am truly grateful for this recognition. Thank you to the Concept Art Association for creating the awards and for recognising the role that concept art plays in the industry."

## Live-Action Series Character

### Scarlet Witch by Andy Park

[artstation.com/andyparkart](https://www.artstation.com/andyparkart)

"I loved designing Wanda Maximov through the years from her first appearance in Avengers: Age of Ultron, culminating to her final Scarlet Witch form that you saw in WandaVision."



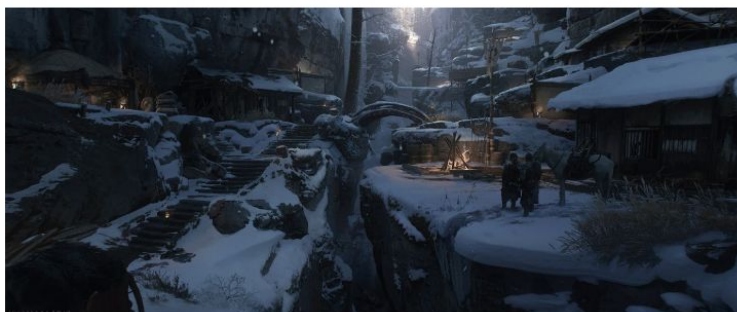
© Marvel/Disney+

## Video Game Environment

### Altan Warcamp by Romain Jouandeau

[romain-jouandeau.com](https://www.romain-jouandeau.com)

"I'm really happy that this piece got selected. Actually I feel lucky and grateful to have been able to work on that project."



© 2020 Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC





## Fan Art

### Mononoke (San) by Jude Smith

[artstation.com/jude\\_smith](http://artstation.com/jude_smith)

"I am truly honoured to receive this award after attending the first LightBox a couple of years ago. I felt really inspired and have been putting a lot more effort and thought into my art. So it feels really great right now to be recognised for that."



## Adobe Community Impact Award

### Abelle Hayford

[instagram.com/abellehayford](https://www.instagram.com/abellehayford)

"I'm very appreciative and thankful for your guys' support. When I first started #drawingwhileBlack in 2017, I made the hashtag in efforts to connect with creatives in my field of animation illustration."



## Independent Character The Parade of Six Armed Mani-Padme by Te Hu

[artstation.com/huteford](http://artstation.com/huteford)

"It's a great honour to accept this award. I want to give my thanks to Concept Art Association, LightBox Expo, and my parents. And all of those who supported me along the way. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

## Student Environment

**Glacier Oil Drilling by Shooting Jing**  
[shootingj.com](http://shootingj.com)

"I'm honoured to be one of the top four finalists. I may do some better pieces in the future, but this one is definitely a milestone for me."



## Student Character

**The Peacock Squire by Miriam Presas**  
[artstation.com/miriamart](http://artstation.com/miriamart)

"I just wanted to say thank you once again for the nomination and it's great to see so many fantastic entries this year. And congrats to all the nominees."



© Sucker Punch Productions/Sony Interactive Entertainment

## Video Game Character

**Ryuzo by Naomi Baker**  
[artstation.com/naomibaker](http://artstation.com/naomibaker)

"This is really, really cool. Thank you, Concept Art Association and all the judges, for liking Ryuzo's design as much as I enjoyed designing him."



© Verifix

**Animation Series Environment The Burning Polis by Ryan Brothers** [artstation.com/rybro](http://artstation.com/rybro)

"I just want to start by saying I am truly honoured and thankful for this amazing award. I want to say thank you so much Concept Art Association and LightBox Expo for allowing me to be a part of this event."



© Banjo Studios

**VR Environment Hut in the Garden by Cody Gramstad** [instagram.com/codygramstadart](https://www.instagram.com/codygramstadart)

"I just want to thank the Concept Art Association for presenting me this award. I wasn't expecting it and it's such a fantastic surprise."





## **ArtStation Rising Star Recipient** **Witch's Apprentice by Airi Pan**

[artstation.com/airipan](https://www.artstation.com/airipan)

"I want to say thank you for choosing me to be the recipient of this award. I remember only last year I was still an intern trying to make it into the concept art industry. So I can't think of an award more encouraging than something like this."

## **Independent Environment** **Purpura Petriosa – Kambé**

**by Romain Jouandeau**

[artstation.com/romain\\_jouandeau](https://www.artstation.com/romain_jouandeau)

"I'm really happy that piece of my personal project got selected. It's always a joy for me to work on those images, so I'm really happy if people like them."



## **Animation Series Character** **Morgana and Jim Troll Beast**

**by Alfonso Blaas**

[artstation.com/alfonso\\_blaas](https://www.artstation.com/alfonso_blaas)

"Thank you to the Concept Art Association and LightBox for this wonderful award. I love to thank my family and of course the crew and team of Tales of Arcadia, especially Francisco Ruiz Velasco."

## Animation Feature Environment

### Sea Monster World

by Daniel López Muñoz

[imdb.com/name/nm2215044](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2215044)

"Enormous thanks to Daniela Strijleva, who led the art team, Don Shank, who did a wonderful job leading the set designs of this film. My colleagues, our manager, Hana Yoon, thank you so much. Our leadership at Pixar, Jim, Pete, all our support teams, publicity, of course, and a special thanks to our IT team for setting us up so that we could work from home."



© Pixar Animation Studios



© Sony Pictures Animation/Velvet

## Animation Feature Character

### Katie Mitchell by Lindsey Olivares

[instagram.com/lindseyolivares](https://www.instagram.com/lindseyolivares)

"Thank you so much to Concept Art Association, it's a huge honour to be recognised for the character design work that I got to do on Katie Mitchell. Also a huge thank you to the folks at Sony Pictures Animation for supporting such bold, creative projects."



## 2021 LBX Concept Art Luminary Award Recipient Andy Park

[artstation.com/andyparkart](https://www.artstation.com/andyparkart)  
"I am deeply honoured to be recognised by a jury of my peers. So in all of humility, thank you very much."

## Lifetime Achievement Recipient

### Iain McCaig

[artstation.com/imccaig](https://www.artstation.com/imccaig)

"I'm grateful to an award like this for reminding me that, yes, you've suddenly left a legacy behind, and that it may have affected or touched any or all of you is an even bigger gift."



© Luciofilm





## Live Action Feature Character Winner

**Batman Tactical Suit by Jerad Marantz**  
[artstation.com/jrmarantz](http://artstation.com/jrmarantz)

"This award means a lot to me because it comes from my peers, people who actually respect and understand what concept art really is. I want to thank all the amazing concept artists that have inspired me over the years to push myself and be better. I've been very lucky with my time in the industry and the friends that I've been able to make. I've considered it an honour and a privilege to work with some of the best people, and I do not take that for granted."



## Live Action Feature Environment

**Battle Scene by Andrew Leung**

[instagram.com/anihausdrew](https://www.instagram.com/anihausdrew)

"I would like to thank the Concept Art Association for picking my battle scene keyframe illustration that I did for Mulan. It was an absolute pleasure to work on the film – one of my favourite productions to have worked on in recent years."

## Lifetime Achievement Recipient

**Craig Mullins**

[goodbrush.com](http://goodbrush.com)

"I'm honoured to receive the 2021 LightBox Expo Concept Art Luminary Award. I want to thank everyone at the Marvel Studios visual development team. You all inspire me to be better. It's been an honour of a lifetime to be able to grow and work with you on so many amazing projects."

Karla Ortiz worked on the HBO series *The Nevers*, which is set in the Victorian era and featuring characters with special abilities.



Property of HBO, The Nevers



Property of HBO, The Nevers

Karla's concept of Primrose from *The Nevers*, a 16-year-old girl who's 10 feet tall.

usually I'll have a lot of references and doodles up," she says

Karla can go from four to seven hours of focused work, explaining: "With intentional painting it takes a lot of brain power to make sure that every brush stroke is exactly where you want it to be, and that can fatigue like any muscle in the body."

## ATHLETIC APPROACH

Balancing how long to work and when and how to rest is important to Karla. She elaborates: "I went down this rabbit hole of like, 'okay, if we were to treat our brain as a muscle, and we're using our brain-muscle in the same way that any athlete would use their muscles, how long do athletes train for?"

"At the top Olympic level, athletes train for about four to five hours maximum. Any more than that and they risk injury, over-training, and they need rest just as much as anyone else in order to perform well." Karla believes we should treat our brain like an athlete considers their muscles.

The artist's six hours of focused work results in a "perfect zone," that "lies between hour two and hour five; I'm just on it. My brain is really thinking it through."

To help, Karla uses a timer to remind her to take breaks. Suffering from RSI (repetitive strain injury) she needs to avoid overworking her arms and fingers through repetitive motion, and regular breaks work best.

## A day in the life of... Karla Ortiz

**Art life** Concept Art Award nominee Karla Ortiz on taking things slower, and maintaining a fitness plan

"I've been working remotely for most of my 10 years in the industry, but there have been some shifts in my routine because of Covid," says Karla Ortiz. The artist is usually up around 9am but admits she's trying to rise earlier, "because one of the things that's really important to me is having my mornings to myself".

Lately, she's begun "bullet journaling" what's important for the day ahead. "I write down my

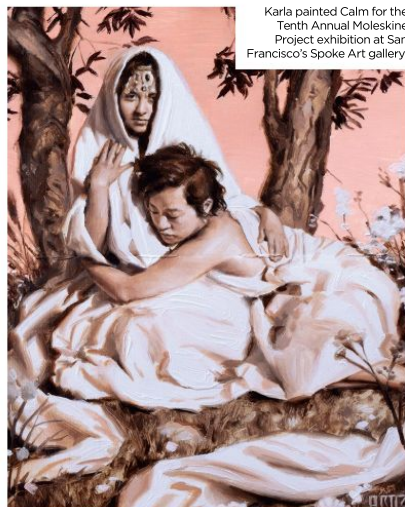
thoughts," she says, "meetings or things that I need to do. And it's a very meditative moment. And I need that. My brain gets overwhelmed if I'm just like, 'all right, get up, go, go, go.' I can't. I need time."

Karla's normal working day starts between 10:30am and 12pm. She'll then work straight through until the evening. Ahead of that stretch of painting she'll warm up in Photoshop. "I rarely start with a blank canvas -



Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art. [conceptartassociation.com](http://conceptartassociation.com).





Karla painted *Calm* for the Tenth Annual Moleskine Project exhibition at San Francisco's Spoke Art gallery.



Karla is comfortable working in both traditional media and with digital tools.

To help with her RSI and mental health Karla takes a break three times a week for strength training for an hour. Around 3pm her personal trainer will come to the house. "That's been one of the things that I've been pushing myself to do, because it's so easy for me to just not do anything. If I don't work out then arm pains and hand pain start to come in and then I'm not as effective anymore."

Karla will work until around 8pm, before breaking for dinner and catching up with her boyfriend. Then, depending on deadlines, she might go back to work for a couple of hours. But Covid has made her re-evaluate life: "I've been trying hard to avoid extra work. I've been trying to relax after dinner, read a book or play video games just because I like them."

"I think Covid made a lot of us rethink our lifestyles and how we operate. I used to be very 'go, go, go' and always had my schedule full.

“One of my goals has been to make time for either very few clients or for myself...”

Now, one of my goals has been to make time for either very few clients or for myself and my personal art."

### PRO ADVICE

Karla's life is one of finding balance in everything she does, so it's no surprise her advice follows a similar path.

"My main advice for people working in the industry is that it's important to give yourself time to rest and allow time for things other than art. You need to nourish your creative soul and make sure you're doing art that's really personal and just for you."

For those looking to get into the industry, Karla says: "It's important to connect with those that just got in, not just the people that have a lot of experience. They're sometimes better positioned to give you advice."

"But most importantly, be resilient and patient. It takes time to get your work to a standard that's professional. It takes time to be seen. It takes time to build the relationships that will continue for the rest of your career. And be kind, online and offline."



Karla's worked on *Doctor Strange*, *Black Panther*, *The Nevers* and more. See more of her art at [karlaortizart.com](http://karlaortizart.com).

Character concepts for Marvel's *Black Panther*, developed by Karla.



Property of Marvel Studios

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

A brief history of Karla Otiz's rise to the top, in her words...

### 1 Karla's first break

"Back then I was doing a lot of odd jobs like body painting at pool parties, concept work for indie comics and figurines, and I was posting my student art on a forum, Carolina Tello was following my progress, and when a junior position at NCsoft Paragon Studios opened up, she was like, 'Hey, do you want to, like, interview for us?'"

### 2 Making it in film

"I went to this workshop Brom and Iain McCaig were hosting in Seattle. Having worked hard paid off, as when I showed Iain my portfolio he was like, 'You're hired!' and I was like, 'Oh my God! Hired where?' And he was like, 'I don't know, but you're hired!'"

### 3 Moving to Marvel

"Doctor Strange was my first project at Marvel, and for my work to be given such praise so early on, felt good because you don't often get victories like that – it takes time. But when Ryan called me and said, 'Hey Karla, Congrats! They chose your design', I screamed into his ear on the phone and apologised."

### 4 Never say Nevers again

"I'm a big fan of Victorian-era design, and a lot of my personal art tends to have call-outs to the aesthetic of that time. I was one of a few concept artists on that project and got to be in the writer's room – the cast and crew were amazing."

### 5 Life as a fine artist

"One of my most meaningful shows was *Amour Et Légende*, a duet show I got to do with my friend and mentor, Iain McCaig in Paris in 2017, at La Galerie Arludik. We got to fill two gigantic rooms with around 60 or so pieces. It was amazing."



## Don't stop believing

Something wicked Faerie artist and author **Iris Compiet** shares how she almost gave up on art, before giving in to her passion



**Iris Compiet** had been drawing and painting, taking commissions and following the trends, going digital... but nothing was happening. "Nothing," she says, telling herself at the time, "I suck at this, I will never be an artist, I will never have a career." This was the low point, but also the moment when everything changed.

Settling on the idea she'll never be a 'proper' artist led her to switch tracks and "just create art for me". Iris says: "I felt like giving myself permission to be myself, my genuine, authentic self in my art, instead of a watered-down version of everybody else [...] I'm going to be the artist I wanted to be as a seven-year-old kid; I want to create art because I want to do it, and for no one else".

It was one of those brave decisions life forces upon us. "That was the magic moment," says Iris, "because that was the moment I started doing weird, mermaid sketches. Then all these fairies popped up. I started



Iris revealed how she painted the cover of *Faeries of the Faultlines* in *ImagineFX*, issue 198.

telling stories, and people were asking me like, 'what are you going to do with these stories?'"

Iris first released her own book, *Faeries of the Faultlines*, as a Kickstarter but it's now being republished with new content by Eye Of Newt Books. It's a beautiful illustrated compendium of faerie folklore. Her creatures are fun, twisted and sketchy, but believable. They're inspired by the places Iris visits; a nook in a tree or a muddy pool can be

interpreted as a hiding place for a faerie or two. It's a book designed to be packed away and referenced when you're out and about, "to rekindle that love for fantasy like you did as a child," says the artist.

Iris wants us to tap into that creative, innocent part of our brains that enable us to reappraise the world - to see a giant in the roll of a hill. "So it's more of a guide or a spark of imagination."

### SETTLED IN

Sat in her studio, surrounded by shelves of skulls, puppet heads and sculptures, Iris has found her place. Her workspace is situated in the attic of her house, and as such there are no straight walls. Everything is slanted and skewed, including her homemade shelves. A comfy sofa offers a space to read and reflect. Stacks of paper and art materials fill one wall. These are her obsession. "It's just a complete and utter mess," she laughs.

Fittingly, her process is "messy". Iris just puts pen to paper and lets the faeries emerge. After a handful of lines



Alongside her evocative artwork, Iris has made notes about her creations, much like a naturalist's journal.





"Everything you do as an artist, such as your painting, especially with watercolours, has its effect."

a form emerges, and this informs a story, and then more details take shape. "All of a sudden, something that I've witnessed two weeks ago will find its way to my paper," shares Iris. Sometimes, she tells us, it could be an experience going back five years, a idea at the back of her mind, a doodle or a note in her sketchbook could inform the painting. Occasionally, the idea will be insistent and forceful. She has to run home and draw it out of her system. "They scream to me [...] that's the story I need to tell right now. [...] It's chaotic," she laughs, "but I've come to accept it."

## GETTING CLOSER

Iris talks about her art like a storyteller. Each painting speaks to her and reveals a narrative and a reason to exist. Each faerie she paints has a little bit of her in it, confesses Iris. She paints alone, muttering and talking to the canvas. She pulls faces and etches out the characters from random lines, the happy accidents that occur as the materials blend. "People will think I'm crazy, I know it sounds weird," she says in a moment of self-realisation.



"But it comes alive on my paper and I see things move and I see things. It's breathing life into a piece."

The closer she can get to her paintings the better. Iris always uses paint mixed from natural ingredients. "It's a nature spirit [created] with nature," she says, explaining that all of her faeries are created from

"My paper," sighs Iris. "I'm like Smaug, but instead of gold and jewels I have paper and art materials."

watercolour or pencil, "because that's as close to nature as you can get."

Going further, she has used the resources around her to create her art. In Iceland she used water from pools and waterfalls to mix her colours, "imbu[ing] some of the nature around [me] in the piece," she says. Iris has even begun to create her own materials, detailing how she collected stones in Iceland to crush into dust to use to create her own paints.

*The reprinted Faeries of the Faultlines is out now from Eye Of Newt Books. Order it at [eyeofnewtpress.com/books/faeries](http://eyeofnewtpress.com/books/faeries).*

“I started telling stories, and people were asking me like, ‘what are you going to do with these stories?’”

Art director Charles Bradbury tells us: "One of the things I find most exciting as an artist on this project is [that] the breadth of themes and visual ideas we have to pull from is huge."



## When new worlds collide...

**Culture clash** Mixing influences can be challenging, **Ian Dean** meets the art directors behind Amazon Games' New World

**Amazon Games' first major release, New World, is a video game years in development, with the ambition to blend historical accuracy with fantasy. The concept art team reveal what it's taken to combine fact and fantasy in a massively multiplayer online open world inspired by 17th century exploration.**

New World is a jigsaw of influences. Its world, the continent of Aeternum, is where myths, folktales and legends of the era become real. "Aeternum is where all those tall tales are actually



true," says associate art director **Sojin Hwang**. "So we wanted to have this contrast between being grounded in reality while also embracing supernatural and fantasy elements."

Sojin explains how New World's island is a place where creatures are exaggerated and dramatic, yet believable. The secret? "It's all about visual contrast," says Sojin. "We have this scary, horrific forest, but you'll find beautiful, lush nature as well."

"A lot of the time we use bold, artistic visuals. We try to push as much as possible in some areas, but we also rely a lot on believable natural and familiar scenes to ground players, so when we put these supernatural elements in this world it stands out even more."

### ANCIENT CULTURES

The game is a jigsaw of real-world influences. It's a conflict of inspirations the art team has needed to wrestle with. The 17th century European aesthetic is overriding, but New World draws in aspects of Earth's oldest cultures; ancient Mayan, Aztec and even Egyptian architecture, myths and creatures exist in the same space.

"It's not an easy task, but we did our best trying to represent cultures in believable ways," says Sojin. She reveals how the team has undertaken extensive research into each culture featured in the game. The work is then reviewed by independent groups of people; experts from outside the team are drafted in to ensure the art and direction is true to each culture.



The sketch of the human figure at the base of the siege fire cannon shows how the artists expanded the scale of real-world medieval weapons.





Reference is important, says Charles: "Like many other artists, when I visit places, I take a massive number of reference pictures. Everything can be an inspiration."



"One example would be Ebonscale Reach," adds Sojin. This environment is inspired by ancient Chinese culture. A Chinese dynasty built a settlement in lush wetlands, with majestic waterfalls and towering cliffs.

Sojin explains: "We're inspired by traditional palaces and temples, and worked to be true to their culture and architectural style, and how they might reconstruct it with the resources they had on Aeternum. You'll see the effects of azoth and corruption here too; how the people have had to adapt to their

"Trying to convey the cataclysmic effects of azoth and corruption on the world and its inhabitants has been a challenge but also a lot of fun for our art team," says Charles.

environment and evolve in their architecture and gear."

Helping to create a world with authenticity, one member of the art team even built a replica hatchet to explore how its size and textures feel.

## PICTURE IT

With a game concept this broad, art director **CharlesBradbury** says building the visual language around



the narrative became a way to anchor the many cultural influences.

Charles tells us: "We always try to focus on the players and the experience we want them to have: an immersive supernatural world they can explore and get lost in. Using the world, the environment, the characters, ➔

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### THREE STEPS TO GETTING INTO GAMES

*New World's associate art director Sojin Hwang reveals how to break into the industry*

#### 1 Showcase your best art and sell yourself

"Do the hard work and show people who you are, by creating a portfolio. Showcasing your work is the most important part of selling yourself as an artist. This is a really important part of landing your dream job. Constructing a portfolio of your most impressive artwork to show off your talents is crucial to get into the industry."

#### 2 Prepare to get social

"Find ways to engage with studios and art directors. Create a website or post your artwork on social media. Always seek feedback. You could ask other developers and artists working in the industry to do a review of your site – ask them how you can improve upon it. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. It's okay to fail, but the most important part of failing is to learn from the mistake."

#### 3 Network and apply

"Meet and greet those in the industry and never fear rejection. Attend video game expos or conferences and network with other talented artists. Try to make connections to facilitate a future working relationship. Search for positions. It's always worth researching. Gaining experience as an artist outside of video gaming can also be useful, as it can contribute to your portfolio and showcase your diverse abilities. I hired one concept artist who had three years of experience as a prop fabricator, and he's been a great addition to the team."



Before becoming associate art director at Amazon Games, Sojin worked at Blizzard on many of its well-known games.

[amazongames.com](http://amazongames.com)

“We did our best trying to represent cultures in believable ways...”

"We wanted to maintain a level of relatability when we design the creatures. They're familiar in terms of what they are, but when it comes to visuals, we tried to make it different by giving them unique structure, materials and textures," reveals Sojin Hwang.



➔ creatures, gear and weapons we can convey a sense of story visually."

Patience helped too. Charles reveals how the game's visual direction changed over time as the concept for New World evolved. It was always about representing a place where myths and legends met, but how that translated into art evolved and grew.

"We didn't always nail it on the first try. How realistic or how supernatural to go and where to push on our

The concept art team explores differing levels of corruption present within the New World setting.

designs took some trial and error before it all started to feel like a cohesive whole," shares Charles, revealing even multi-million dollar video games suffer set-backs.

## ARTISTIC EXPLORATION

"This is true of any project," Charles elaborates, "especially early on." Working in game development is a process of exploration, and building an understanding of the space and

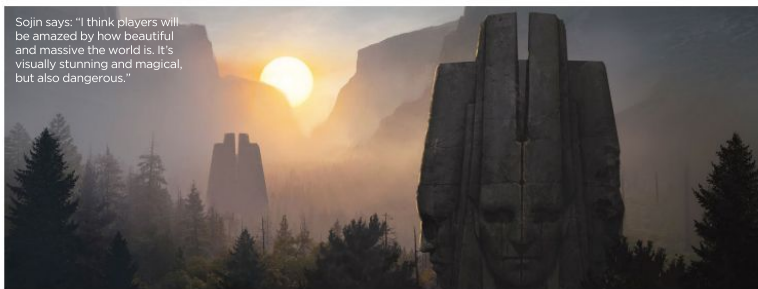
world you're crafting. "Even if those ideas don't make their way into the final product, they're still critically important as building blocks that lead you to the art that players ultimately see," says the art director. "As we move into post launch, in many ways it feels like we're just getting started. We have this supernatural world steeped in real culture entwined with magic and horrors, and there are tons of ideas we're holding on to for where that could take us in the future."

New World and the land of Aeternum is in its infancy, and both Charles and Sojin tell us the game will grow and expand in the coming years. It means more art, more exploration of cultural influences, and more artists...

"Yes," says Charles, "we have a growing internal concept art team, and we're always keeping an eye out for new artists across all our art disciplines to bring their own experience to the shores of Aeternum." Why not apply? ●



Sojin says: "I think players will be amazed by how beautiful and massive the world is. It's visually stunning and magical, but also dangerous."









This is my living room - I've taken this photo while sat at my work desk. This is where I watch a lot of films, listen to my music, read, play chess and entertain visitors. It only takes me one step to go from one area to the other.

## François Gautier

**Light and shade** The French artist reveals where he uses his inking skills to translate some of his fears and sorrows into intricate line-art...



**My workplace is also the place where I live, so the two are very closely linked. My creative space is an**

**extension of my living room; the division between the two is becoming increasingly blurred and soon they'll become one space.**

Over the years, I've accumulated more and more antiques and fancy objects that can be classified as symbolism, romanticism, Gothic or even horror. Just by chance I picked

up a black cat a few years ago, who now always keeps me company when I sit down and start drawing.

However, all these objects don't just act as decoration. They also have an important place in my creative process. In addition to being superb sources of inspiration, they help me

**“Over the years, I've accumulated more and more antiques and fancy objects”**

with my photography and staging, in order to highlight my creations and my drawings. This step is also an increasingly important part of my promotional process when I share my work on social networks.

### NATURAL LIGHT

Because I work most of the day in one place, I've positioned my desk next to the largest window in the room, which is the main source of natural light. It's a great way to clear my mind. I also like to surround myself with ➡



# Artist news, software & events

Ideas for designs or concepts often pop into my head. That's why I use Post-it notes to quickly write down my thoughts, so that I can develop or rework the ideas at a future date.

I bought this graphic tablet several years ago out of pure curiosity, just to explore digital drawing. At the time I never thought it would become one of my main art tools.

This wooden board acts as the background to all my Instagram photos. It's a off-cut from my living room table, and looks great when lit by the sun.



Fig. 9. British Museum zu London.

This skull is symbolic of my work. It's in a lot of my photos, and is the inspiration behind many of my achievements. For me, the skull represents the universality in humans.

My mug is probably the object I use the most – I'm a big coffee fan. I occasionally knock the mug over... you can imagine the mess this makes!

One of my friends urged me to start reading Berserk, as much for the grandiose story as for the magnificent drawings. So I acquired all the manga, and Berserk is now one of my favourite series.

Having studied product design, it was a wonderful surprise to find for sale this genuine Aluminium EA 108 chair, for the price of two new Blu-rays. A fabulous stroke of luck!





I'm not an avid reader, but I like to be inspired by great artists such as HR Giger or Leonardo Da Vinci, graphic novels or books on anatomy.



→ plants, in order to bring a little bit of nature into the room. I'm lucky to live in a quiet area, so I sometimes work on my balcony, and take a little air and the sunshine accompanied by a good beer.

I don't really have a fixed work schedule. I prefer to draw when



This drawing is the result of a challenge from an artist, who wanted me to reinterpret one of his works. I really like this kind of challenge, which pushes me out of my comfort zone.

This book is my greatest achievement to date. It was published by LOM ART, which discovered my artwork via my Instagram account.

This is how I take my photos. I place my wooden board on my desk, place the chosen design in the centre and then highlight it with my curiosities, all lit by natural light from my large window.



inspiration strikes, sometimes until late at night, with music (a lot of metal) or a podcast in the background. This can be during the week or the weekend.

## TRADITIONAL TOOLSET

I make most of my art using traditional media. My favorite tool is the fine liner pencil (mainly sizes 0.03 to 0.5), which stems from my years spent working in interior architecture and product design. I mostly work in black and white, but sometimes I like to add a few touches of golden ink.

I work almost exclusively at home (except for my mural projects, which I

create at the client's location), but this wasn't the case a few years ago. I had two workshops where I experimented with as many techniques and media as possible, such as painting, wood, glass and resin. As a result I acquired a lot of tools that I now keep at home. I'll revisit them from time to time when the mood takes me, transforming my apartment into a temporary workshop in the process.

At the moment I'm learning how to express myself through tattoos. I train on synthetic skin in my studio. Who knows - becoming a professional tattooist might be my future career! *François has always enjoyed experimenting with all forms of art. However, the artist is most happiest when drawing traditionally. His new colouring book, Dark Art, is available now. Explore François' work at [instagram.com/francois.gaugier.art](https://instagram.com/francois.gaugier.art).*

“ I prefer to draw when inspiration strikes, sometimes until late at night ”





My cabinet of curiosities is my favourite area in my whole apartment. My family helps me arrange the contents. All these objects make for great decoration, but also help with my photography.



Complete your collection!

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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



### Issue 205

November 2021

Joshua Swaby brings Harley Quinn to life on the cover! Inside there's Adi Granov's life lessons, Terry Dobson's tutorial on comic covers, David Najayama revamps Zorro and Igor Wolski draws in the ligne claire comic style.



### Issue 204

October 2021

Create spontaneous art with cover artist Ayran Oberto. Plus, master painter JS Rossbach shares his advice for perfecting portraits, learn to paint vintage fantasy art from 3D scans and master fish-eye perspective.



### Issue 203

September 2021

French artist Moon's bold cover art kicks off our illustration issue, which features workshops on how to control detail, paint with shapes and bright colours, and speed modelling. We also examine the NFT phenomenon.



### Issue 202

August 2021

Learn how to take your manga art to the next level, with detailed workshops from Yueko, Asia Ladowska and Angela Wang. We reveal alternative social networks for artists, and talk to Zeen Chin about his unique creative style.

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ImagineFX



# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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### Wishes come true

So, thanks to ImagineFX [and the] issue that had an animator who did Wish Dragon from Netflix, I got to see both a beautifully animated movie that also just had a wonderful story, which left me in a teary-eyed mess.

*@HatterDaisuke, via Twitter*

**Ian replies** Hi, glad you liked this issue. It's an older one now. But this is a reminder you can now pick up digital back issues alongside print back issues and catch up. Look out for another animation special coming soon.

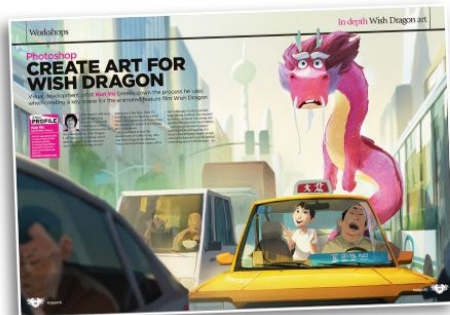
### Special issues

I have reached out about this in the past and it was never addressed, but I have been buying your magazine literally since the first issue and am a big fan of the spin-offs, especially the 'sketchbook' series. However, they kind of went downhill and greatly lost their way, with special issue five being almost identical to issue four and featuring nearly all the same work. After that the series has gone back to re-releasing the first special edition all over again.



**DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?** Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 205 at [ifxm.ag/single-ixf](http://ifxm.ag/single-ixf).

*Reader @HatterDaisuke loved our Wish Dragon issue (ImagineFX 199). Look out for a new animation special coming this winter.*



You can find special editions of ImagineFX in stores and online to accompany your regular magazine.

Is there any chance of this getting put back on track with new issues and not the same issues released again or follow-up issues featuring nearly everything the previous issue had? And are there any more specials due? I love the artist studios edition that's currently on sale, but an updated comic art or manga art would be wonderful again.

Thank you and it's great to see Ian at the helm.

*Andrew Armstrong, via email*

**Ian replies** Hi Andrew, we have five Sketchbook specials – Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4 and the Ultimate Sketchbook Collection. Each edition has new content, but we do reprint them and often create a new cover, so sorry for any confusion. I would expect a sixth volume is in the works!

In the meantime we have plenty of other specials out now and coming up, including The ImagineFX Annual, Art School and, as you've already spotted, Inside The Artist's Studio – I'm a fan of nosing around artists' sprawling workshops and studios. Find these and more here: [bit.ly/ixf-specials](http://bit.ly/ixf-specials).

### 3D or not 3D?

I've been reading ImagineFX for years (thanks for continuing to make a fab mag) and while I remember seeing the mag dabble with 3D in its early days (Poser?) I've noticed more and more 3D creeping into the mag. Are you turning into a 3D art mag?

*Rachel Evans via email*

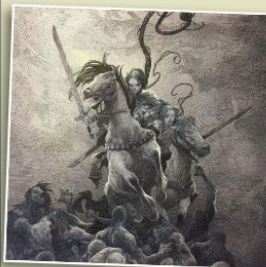
**Ian replies** Hi Rachel, as you say, 3D art and 3D software have always been a part of ImagineFX from issue one onwards. We launched as a digital art magazine for fantasy and sci-fi artists, and continue to focus on this content, and the use of 3D is becoming more important in the industry. But so too is 2D digital art software such as Procreate, as well as a knowledge of core traditional techniques. What's great about fantastical art in 2021 is that everything and anything goes. Keep reading because we'll be covering it all!



New works that have grabbed our attention



**Dimitris Pantazis**  
[@dimitripantazisart](https://twitter.com/dimitripantazisart)



**Alberto Varanda**  
[@albertovaranda](https://twitter.com/albertovaranda)



**Kiri Leonard**  
[@kirileonard](https://twitter.com/kirileonard)

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, and use the hashtag #imaginefx

## THE ART OF PATRICK O'KEEFE

**Ian Dean** meets the artist who keeps things simple, even in the complex world of Spider-Man



### ZERO DUX

The animation industry is sci-fiaverse, but it's not stopping Patrick: "These personal works is a way for me to play in a space I enjoy [...] hopefully they can serve as a nudge to the industry to try something like that out."



© Sony Pictures Entertainment



Some artists plan out their careers in detail. The path ahead is clear. Others stray from their chosen route; the road ahead forks, divides and backtracks. Patrick O'Keefe is in the latter category. He's managed to work across video games, films, animation, fine art and advertising, and it doesn't look like he's slowing down. "I always assumed I had a plan, but the plan always seemed to change," he tells us.

As a child Patrick would draw and paint on anything. When sketchbooks filled up he'd use a wall or a wooden plank. At school he was asked, as we all have been, what do you want to be? "A

cartoon," he replied. Like many he knew he wanted to be an artist from an early age. Growing up, his home was filled with paintings and drawings by his grandmother, as well as all the art books she had gathered over her life. His older brother is also an artist, "and like any annoying younger sibling I looked up to him and imitated his every action," he says.

Can you say you remember the moment you knew art was going to be your life? That's a memory not

### COSTUME STORE

Patrick got his first paying art job at the age of 16. Since then he's worked in construction, at coffee shops, and more to support his art.

everyone can recall, but for Patrick it's burned into his memory. He knew from an early age art would be his life.

"I was in a physics class at the beginning of my time in secondary school and my love for science was being inundated with math and equations," he describes. "It was then I realised that I would rather be

### Artist PROFILE

#### Patrick O'Keefe



LOCATION: US  
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Jean Paul Leon, Alberto Mielgo, Robh Ruppel and Neil Campbell Ross  
MEDIA: Photoshoph, traditional

WEB: okeefeartist.com

"I always assumed I had a plan, but the plan always seemed to change"



# Patrick O'Keefe

## MILES MORALES COVER NO.7

"Within the commercial arts industry, I've jumped around quite a bit as well, but that's because I'm always looking for a new challenge," says Patrick.





# Interview

painting these fantasies of space travel, and exotic worlds where instead there are no limits to my imagination."

Later, at Sheridan College he was forced to choose between animation and illustration. He opted for the latter. "I hated that I was forced to choose. Art schools can be outdated in that sense," he says. "They force young artists to pick a lane, and create a style. But we're ever-changing, and style is temporary; it's best that we just learn the foundational skills of art, and begin to gain an understanding of who we are."

## VARIETY MATTERS

What followed for Patrick was years of pinballing from one gig to the next. He worked as a storyboarding artist to support himself while studying at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Then a recession in the animation industry bumped him into a job on EA Games' *Need for Speed* franchise designing graffiti, while moonlighting in advertising for Mercedes, Honda, Amazon, McDonalds and Cineplex. Itchy feet led to ditching everything for LA and a job at Disney TV on its *Big Hero 6* animated series, Sony Pictures, and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. It's been a hectic career trajectory.

"I'm always looking for a new challenge," comments the artist, who says working across many industries has given him a unique take on work. "I do not always know the 'right' way to do things, but that can also be an advantage, as it allows me to not get bogged down with preconceived industry standards, or bad habits."

## BK STAIRS FINAL

A love of graffiti art lends Patrick's digital paintings a unique, urban sense of place and purpose.



Yet these different mediums are all one industry to Patrick: "Whether it be games, television, advertising, or film, we are always just trying to communicate visually with our audience. The medium never changes our ambitions."

There's no chance this artist was going to be happy staying still. Outside of his art and career in various industries he was equally energetic, turning his hand to many jobs and roles to support his dream of being a working artist.

**"All these different jobs helped me gain a unique perspective about life"**

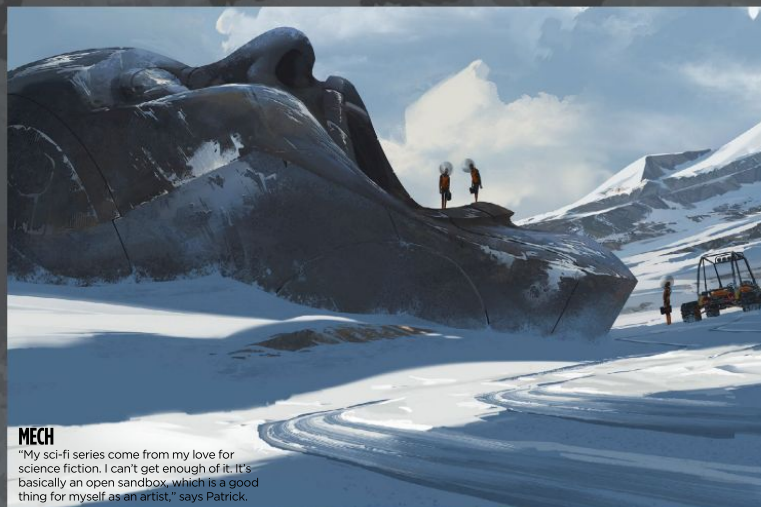
"I've worked many jobs even though my first paying gig as an artist was at the age of 16. I've worked in construction, at coffee shops, and a late-night souvlaki grill. I was a bathroom attendant in college," shares the artist. Just as we think his colourful jigsaw-like career couldn't get more diverse he reveals he and his wife ran a nightclub one summer when they were 20.

"All these different jobs helped me gain a unique perspective about life. They gave me distance from the art world and rewarded me with real-life experiences that I often use in my artwork to this day," he says.

## REDUCING LIFE

Patrick's digital art is graphic and bold. He strips back forms and shapes language to enable us to see everyday objects in new ways. There's even romance in discarded TV sets. Everything can be art through his eyes. His way of seeing the world is inspiring.

"Art is my way of understanding and making sense of the world," he explains. "I'll see something: a beam of light bouncing off an interesting colour that creates an unusual fill light, or a bit of rubbish sitting on the ground that creates an exciting



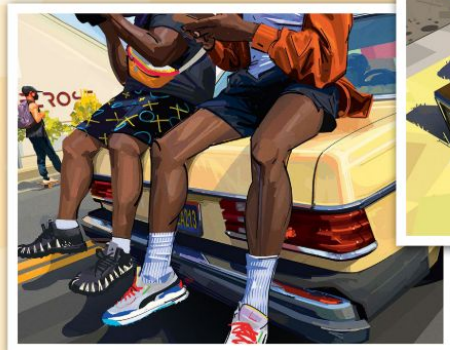
## MECH

"My sci-fi series come from my love for science fiction. I can't get enough of it; it's basically an open sandbox, which is a good thing for myself as an artist," says Patrick.



## WA JUNKCAR

"The process is about reducing the world down to its most graphic components," says Patrick. "Our brains are incredible at visual recognition, and are eager to fill in all the details that are being left out."



## A GRAPHIC WORLD

Reducing the world to its basic forms enables the viewer to fill in the blanks...

Ever since people began using digital software to create art the world has debated if this medium is really art. Patrick has a clear idea of what is and isn't art - or rather, how we should approach being creative.

"The medium is being embraced by those in the 'art world' that were previously afraid of it," he begins. "But honestly, I don't really care for conversations as to what is and what isn't art. Let's spend less time debating what art is, and more time making it; regardless of if it was made on a tablet or is a painting of a toilet."

Putting his ideas into practice Patrick has honed his own 'graphic reduction' style of digital painting.



## REDUCTIVE PAINTING

"My theory is that the world is more exciting to look at the more it is reduced. Our brains need to fill in the missing information and are excited to do so."

# Interview

► juxtaposition of texture, and painting it is my way to gain an understanding of it. It's also a way for me to remember: I see something I'm interested in, I recreate it to understand it, and now I have it stored in my memory for later use."

Part of Patrick's approach comes from his outlook on life and art, "the philosophy of the simple statement," he tells us, explaining he asks himself one question: "How can I make the simplest version of the statement I'm trying to convey?" As such, he reduces an image to its bare essentials. A scene is rendered just enough to communicate its form, material, and lighting.

"The emotion is expressed as singular as I can make it," the artist says. "If I have more to say and the statement begins to get complicated, it's okay, I can take those additional ideas and create a separate simple

## “How can I make the simplest version of the statement I am trying to convey?”

statement as a new painting. There is no limit to the amount of paintings we can create, but for clarity, I do try to limit the amount of information I put in each one."

### FINDING A STYLE

This style of painting falls in line with Patrick's heroes. He says he's "constantly marvelling at the work of artists like Robh Ruppel, Neil Campbell Ross, Alberto Mielgo and Jean Paul Leon". Adding to this is the artists' love to magpie styles – cinematographers Roger Deakins, Conrad Hall and Emmanuel Lubezki also make his list of influences. Working across comics, concept art and film, all of these people have one thing in common: clarity and masterful composition.

In Patrick's art, as with his heroes, details are secondary to the overall image. He tells us: "In so many paintings and concept art I find that the over-rendering of the details can be distracting, and although they might have all the details of the real world, they do not represent the feeling of the real world. By reducing the details and focusing on the feeling, I found a ►►

### MILES MORALES TEASER POSTER

Flip your art to check for mistakes? Harder to do in a Spider-Verse poster.



## ENTER THE SPIDER-VERSE

Patrick O'Keefe's myriad of experiences collided on Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

"Working with the unbelievably talented team on Spider-Verse was an absolute dream. I was incredibly humbled to be part of something that so many of my favourite artists were working on," shares Patrick as we discuss his work on Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.

For an artist as diverse as Patrick, who draws on his life across many industries, Miles Morales' big screen outing couldn't have been a better fit. The animated movie is a collision of styles and ideas. It's graphic and bold.

"I was merely a spoke in the wheel, adding my own perspective," says Patrick, who's still working on expanding Miles Morales' universe.

"I liked comic books growing up, but the time on Spider-Verse has been a master's degree in comic style. It's exciting and inspiring to find new materials to draw from and I only hope we can do them justice in our homage to such an incredible art form."

He tells us the team's goal was to create a "love letter to the comic book" and were given scope to express that joy in Marvel's heroes how they wished. Freed from the usual constraints of the film industry Patrick says they were able to "put that excitement into every aspect of the film and I truly believe that can be felt by those who watch it."



JUST THEN



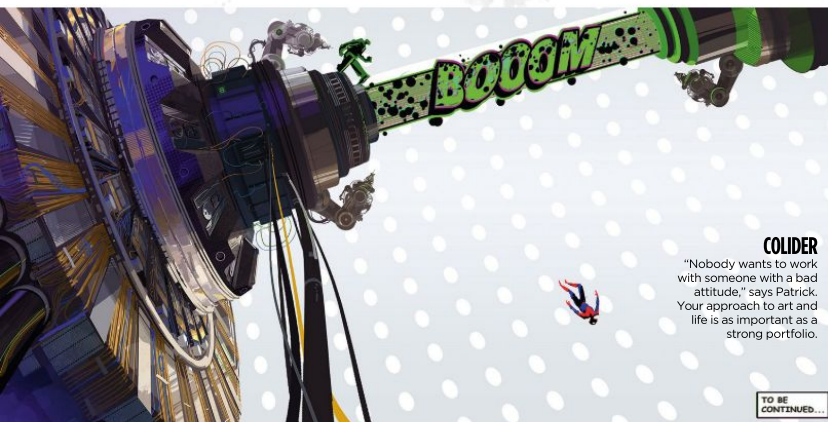




## PETER'S APARTMENT

This messy, lived-in version of Peter Parker's urban apartment was created first in 3D for the directors to gauge the space and ratios.

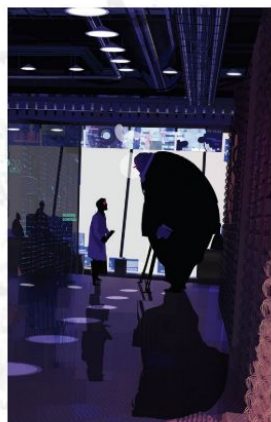
All images © Sony Pictures Entertainment



## COLIDER

"Nobody wants to work with someone with a bad attitude," says Patrick. Your approach to art and life is as important as a strong portfolio.

TO BE CONTINUED...



## OB ROOM

The artist's love of reduction filters into his professional work, here reducing a server room to its boldest shapes.



## SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE

There's emotion in the scene, Patrick says artists should put themselves into the painting to express themselves in their work.

EAT  
PAINT  
SLEEP



ImagineFX

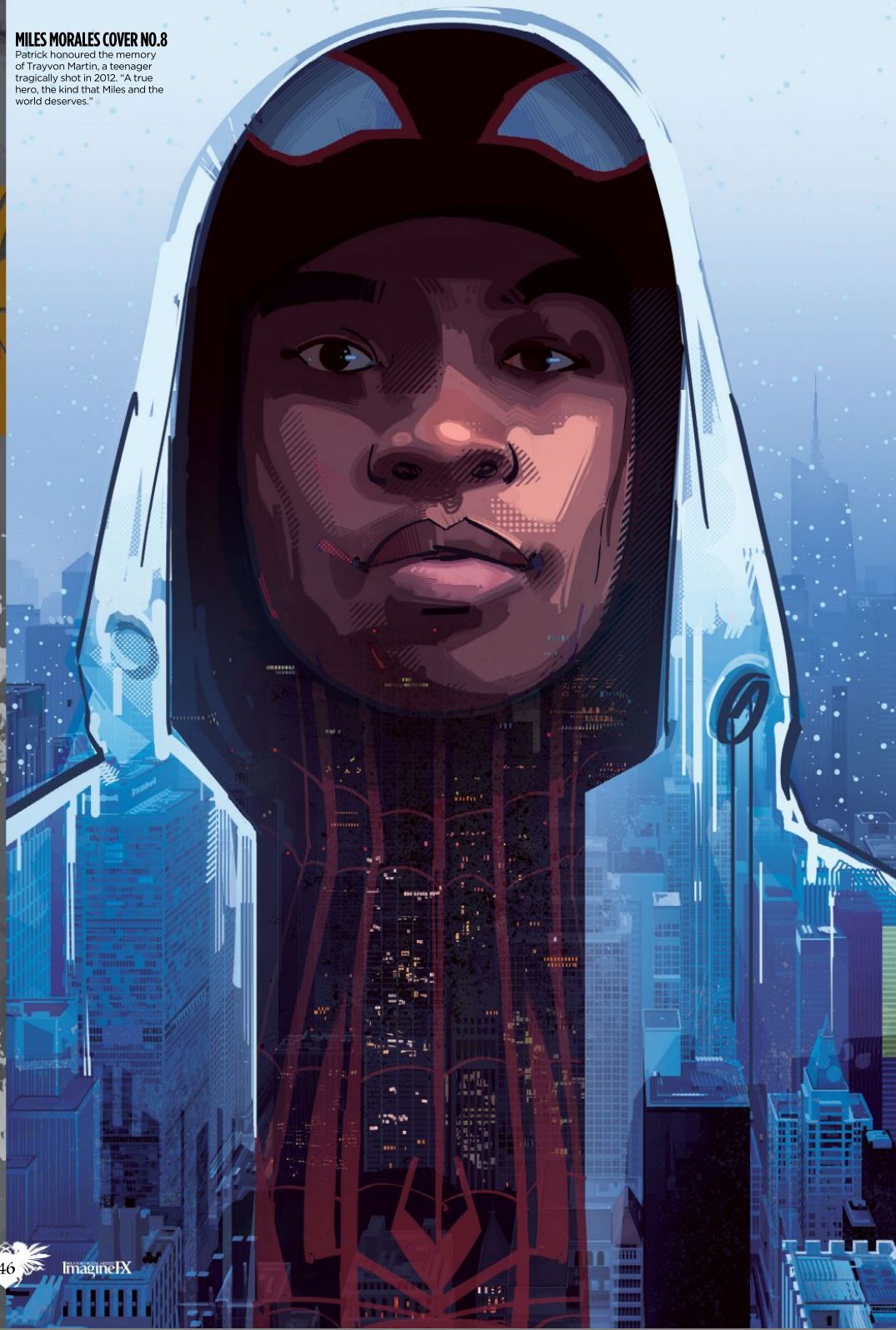




# Interview

## MILES MORALES COVER NO.8

Patrick honoured the memory of Trayvon Martin, a teenager tragically shot in 2012. "A true hero, the kind that Miles and the world deserves."



© Sony Pictures Entertainment





### UNTITLED

Want to work for Patrick O'Keefe? He looks for artists who don't hold anything back and put themselves into the art.

» greater connection to my work and the emotions I was trying to convey to the audience."

### THE ART DIRECTOR'S EYE

As an art director in the film industry Patrick is able to reflect on new artists' work and ideas. He takes great pleasure in the collaborative problem-solving that comes with the needs of the film industry. His time is spread across many different departments, which we like to think neatly fits into his restless personality.

He details a day in his life: "I'll spend time with the directors discussing the overall vision for the film, time in the modelling department building sets, time in the layout department ensuring the sets are meeting the needs of the story and performance. I'll spend time with production helping to assign tasks and presenting work to executives to show the progress of the team and getting their feedback and guidance.

**"I look for artists that [...] can bring a new point of view to a production"**

"At the end of the day there is little time for me to create new work, but it is very precious to me. I absolutely love the collaborative nature of film making: it's exciting, unpredictable and very rewarding. But I cherish the time I can sit still to create and feel the film for myself."

Just as he offers an insight into the life of a film's art director, Patrick shares what he loves to see and looks for in new artists' work. Beyond a strong portfolio and collaborative personality, he says: "I look for artists that have a unique perspective; someone that is unusual and can bring a new point of view to a production. I like artists that put themselves and their life experiences into their work. Stories are about expressing an

### MCDONALD'S: ALWAYS WORKING

Patrick worked with Director Yves Geleyn for Hornet and Leo Burnett London on this ad creative for the famous burger brand.



### FIGURE STUDY

Patrick simplifies his figures, often of people he sees in Los Angeles, to warm up for the day.

emotion, and artists need to be able to express themselves through their work. I encourage artists to always put themselves into the story, feel the situation and plot, look for experiences in your life when you feel what the protagonist is feeling. How did it feel to you? What does that look like?"

### STILL EMBRACING CHANGE

Reflecting on life now, he tells us how Covid has disrupted the creative industries and that collaborative approach to filmmaking that Patrick says is so important. "And of course it has taken the outside world away from so many of us," he says. For an artist who thrives on new experiences and finding inspiration in the real world and trying new things, Covid has hit hard. "Experiences that can't be manufactured," he describes, "ones that just happen, my unscripted life events... it's in those that I always find new direction and energy."

So what does the future hold? "I think I will hang out in the feature animation space for a while," he tells us. "I'm continuing my work with the Spider-Verse franchise and learning everything I can from the ridiculously talented filmmakers at Sony Pictures and Lord Miller Productions. That's the plan for now, but as I have now come to accept in my life: the plan always seems to change."



# Sketchbook

## Tristan Tait

Kooky characters – and a couple of unsettling clowns – come to life on the pages of this prolific illustrator's sketchbook

### Artist PROFILE

**Tristan Tait**

LOCATION: Australia

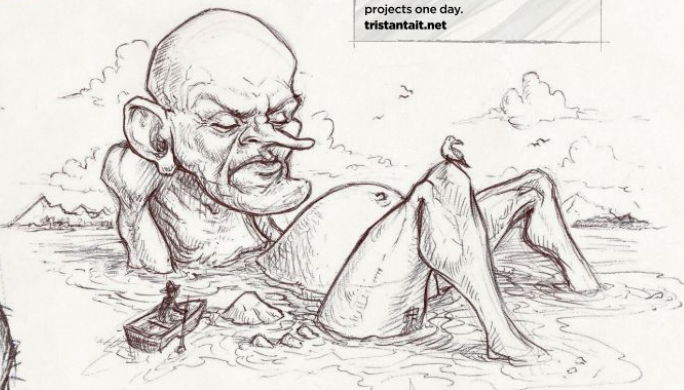


Tristan is an Australian freelance illustrator who loves testing the boundaries of different styles. He's worked on everything from children's books through to artwork for heavy metal bands, as well as character design for games, book covers, comics and some caricature work. Constantly excited by building new worlds, he hopes to publish a few of his own personal projects one day.  
[tristantait.net](http://tristantait.net)



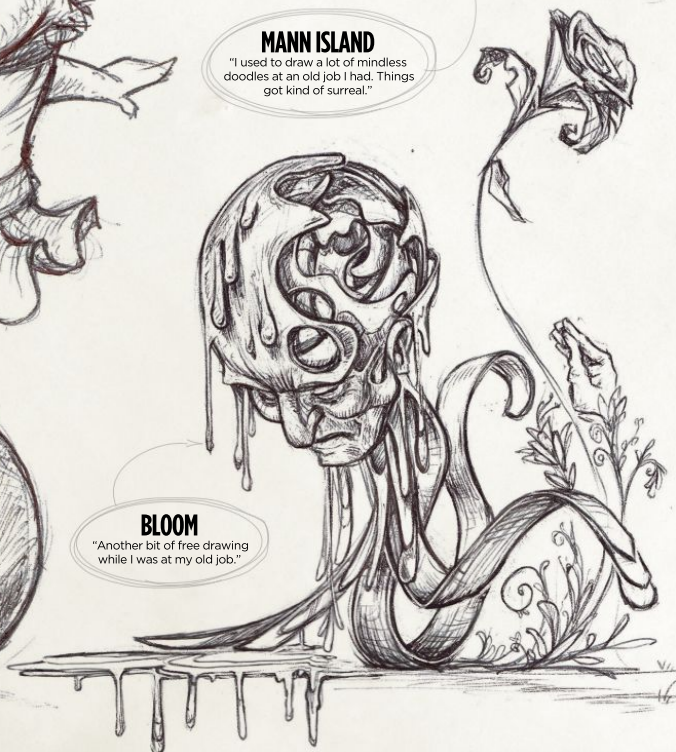
#### SHOWTIME

"Here I was working on my animal caricatures and I got a little carried away."



#### MANN ISLAND

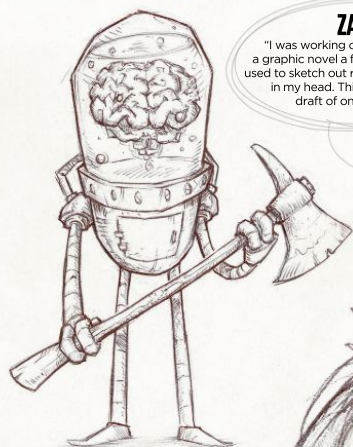
"I used to draw a lot of mindless doodles at an old job I had. Things got kind of surreal."



#### BLOOM

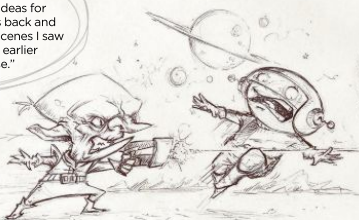
"Another bit of free drawing while I was at my old job."





**ZAP!**

"I was working on some ideas for a graphic novel a few years back and used to sketch out random scenes I saw in my head. This was an earlier draft of one of those."



**NIGHTMARE FUEL**

"An earlier unused monster concept for an animated short."

**KILL-BOT 3000**

"This guy was a fun little character for a game that ended up cancelled."

“I used to draw a lot of mindless doodles at an old job I had”



**LADY OF THE LAKE**

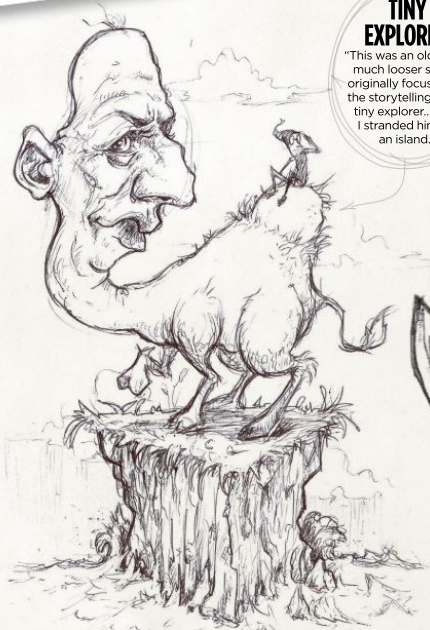
"A study for a personal piece that I've had floating around in my head for a while, mostly finding different ways to create weight and stability through pose."



# Sketchbook

## TINY EXPLORER

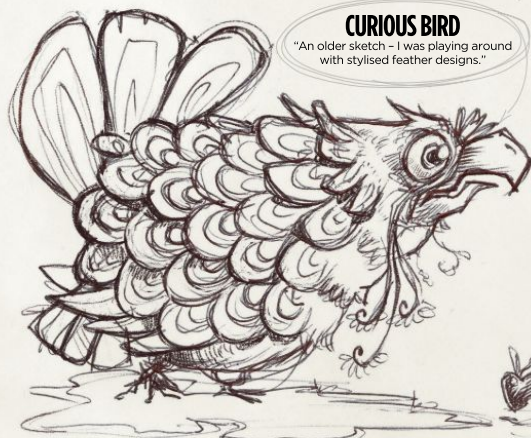
"This was an older and much looser sketch originally focusing on the storytelling of the tiny explorer... until I stranded him on an island."



“I wanted to be able to portray his entire walk and personality in one shot”

## CURIOUS BIRD

"An older sketch - I was playing around with stylised feather designs."



## FREE BALLOONS

"I got right into drawing strange clowns there for a while."



## SWAGGERMAN

"This one was a little bit of quick practice in movement. I wanted to be able to portray his entire walk and personality in one shot."





## SAY CHEESE

"Who doesn't like clowns, right?"



## PEAK PERFORMANCE

"Just a bit of fun with this one. I used it for some caricature promo for a while."

## FRIENDS IN THE WOODS

"Some concept work on a children's book idea I was playing around with at the time."



## UPSIDE DOWN

"This guy is just as fun when you spin him around."



Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)

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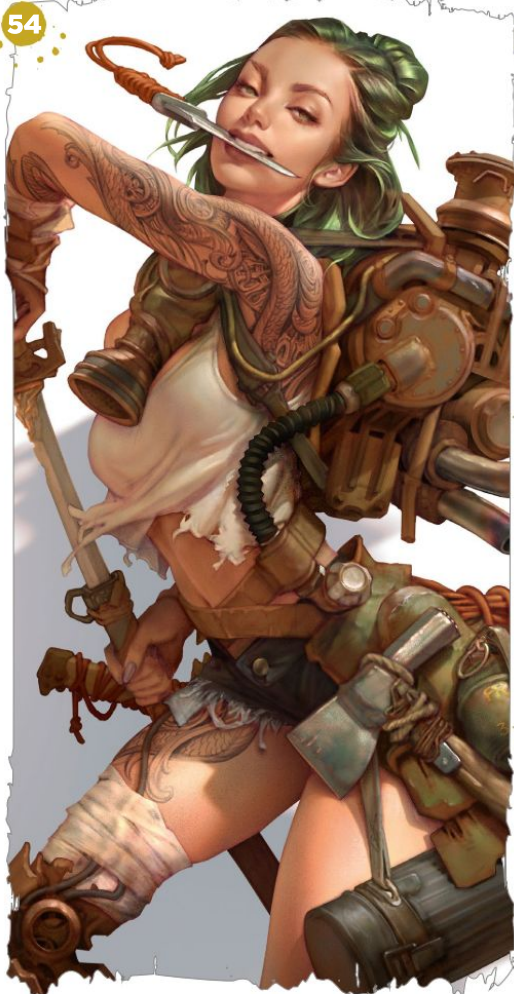
# Workshops

**Workshops assets  
are available...**

Download each workshop's resources by turning to page 6. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists



## This issue:

### 54 Sharpen your character art

Christophe Young concepts a dieselpunk samurai character.

### 60 Balance colour with line-art

Learn how Lauren Brown creates nouveau-inspired art.

### 66 Turning Dabs into brush Strokes

Isis Sousa on how Painter 2022 handles dab customisation.

### 68 Control colour in your scenes

Anton Fadeev brings a fantasy landscape to stunning life.

### 74 Bring new life to unfinished art

Rafael Sarmento explains how to rework an older idea.

## Photoshop

# SHARPEN YOUR CHARACTER ART



Discover how **Christophe Young** sketches, lines and paints a compelling concept of a dieselpunk samurai character

### Artist PROFILE

**Christophe Young**

LOCATION: Canada

Christophe is a professional concept artist and illustrator working in the video game industry. [fxm.ag/c-young](http://fxm.ag/c-young)

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!



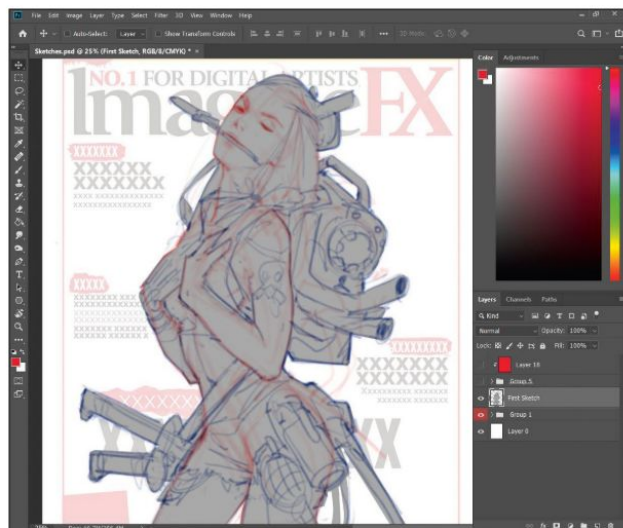
As a professional concept artist, I design and illustrate complex video game characters on a daily basis. As a disclaimer, properly building up to this level of complexity takes time and practice, so don't be discouraged if the first try flops!

Throughout this workshop, I'll give some insight into my design and illustration process to build a complex and believable fantasy character. Bear in mind that I won't be going into the specifics of

anatomy, perspective, structure, gesture, or composition, but having a strong foundation in these will help a lot in creating a dynamic and balanced image. I strongly believe that the success of a character illustration heavily relies on a strong basic gesture and good underlying anatomy.

With this in mind, I'll demonstrate how to layer on costume elements, props, weapons and a sympathetic facial expression to create a relatable character. I imagine this character as being particularly cheeky and

cunning, so we'll try to sell that personality in the way we draw the portrait. Moreover, I'll walk you through the colouring and lighting process when rendering the character. We'll briefly touch on skin tones, colour harmony, and material properties to create the illusion of realism. Finally, I'll walk you through the last clean up stages of the illustration. Finishing strong is just as important as rigorous planning and a strong initial sketch, so don't flake on the finishing touches! Let's get into it!



### 1 Explore poses in the initial sketch

In this first sketch, my main focus is to explore different pose options to propose to the editor. Because it's a cover, I try three or four variations to see how the composition works with the title and placeholder text. I also play with different thematics to drive the design in the second sketch stage. This was the third version, exploring a female dieselpunk, samurai-inspired character.

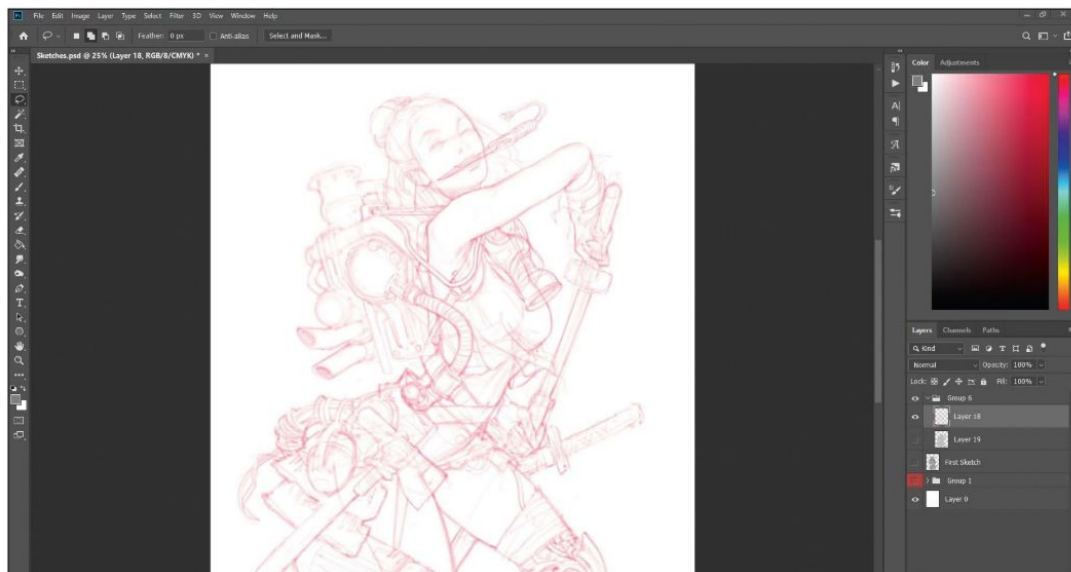


### 2 Second sketch stage

With the notes from the editor, I restart my sketch. I prefer to restart on a clean slate rather than fiddling with my messy first sketch. This time I take care to draw a nice gesture with proper proportions and anatomy. I change the arms to create a more dynamic pose and block in the diesel generator on her back. These elements will make a strong base for a complex design. ➡







## 3 Layering complexity to strengthen the design

With the base design drawn, I layer costume elements and props to push the design as far as I can. I try to keep in mind the main gesture lines to place the elements in a way that complements the pose and accentuates the silhouette. I'm also planning ahead where to have areas of rest and areas of details, which helps to create a balanced image.

**RESOURCES**

**WORKSHOP  
BRUSHES**

**PHOTOSHOP**

**CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
SOFT ROUND**

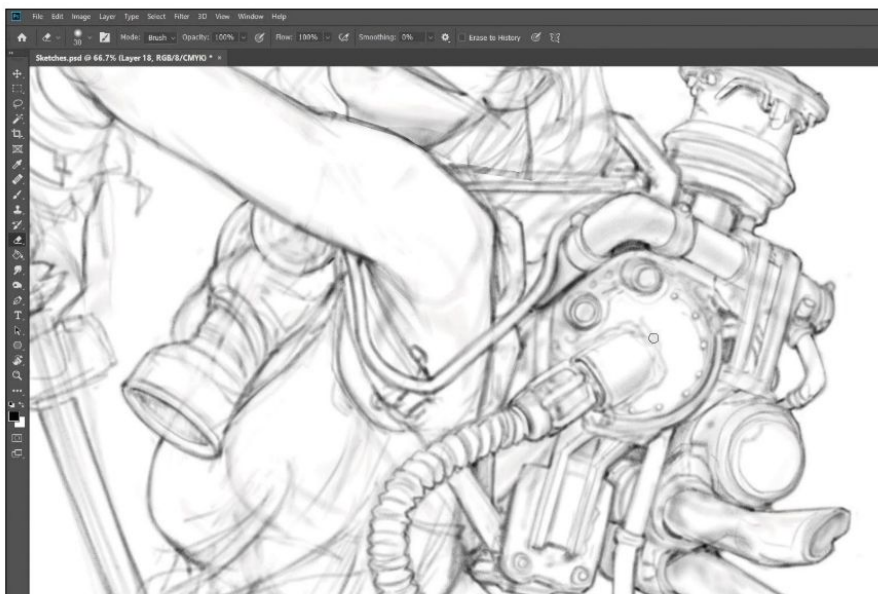
My all-purpose sketching and painting brush. Very flexible by varying the hardness and size.

**DOTS**

Used to add subtle texture to areas like specular highlights on skin and fabrics.

**RAKE**

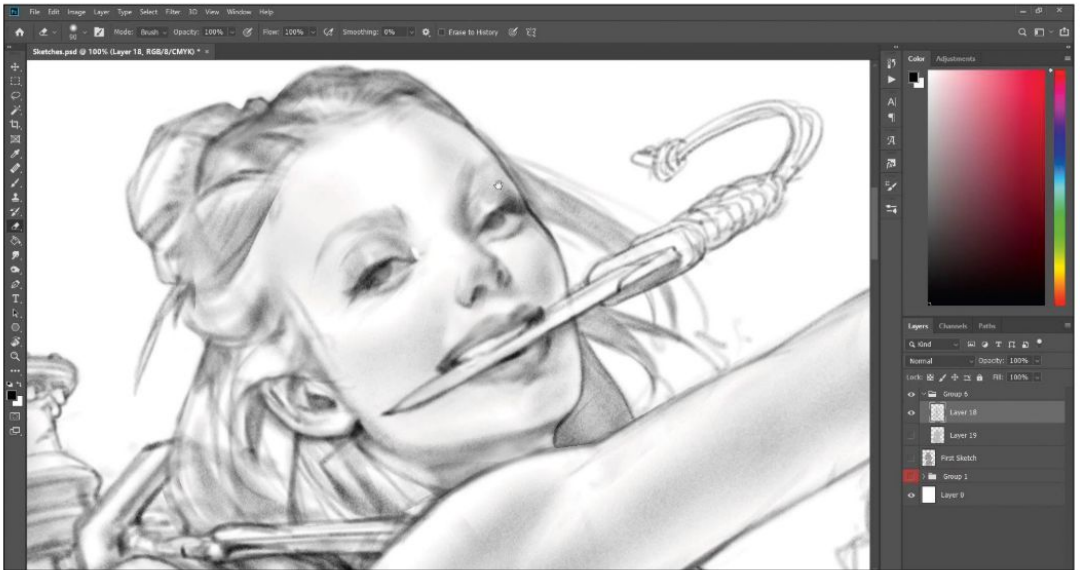
I love to use this brush for hair and other stringy materials. Creates cool, flowing brush strokes.



## 4 Refining the drawing

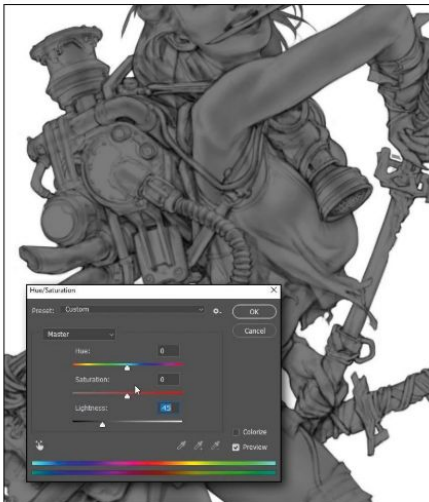
In this stage, all the elements have been roughed in. I zoom in one step to refine areas I know I'll need help with when painting. For example, these mechanical parts on her back are always tricky to paint well if the design isn't clear in the drawing, so I spend some time fleshing out the different details to guide me when I go in to paint.





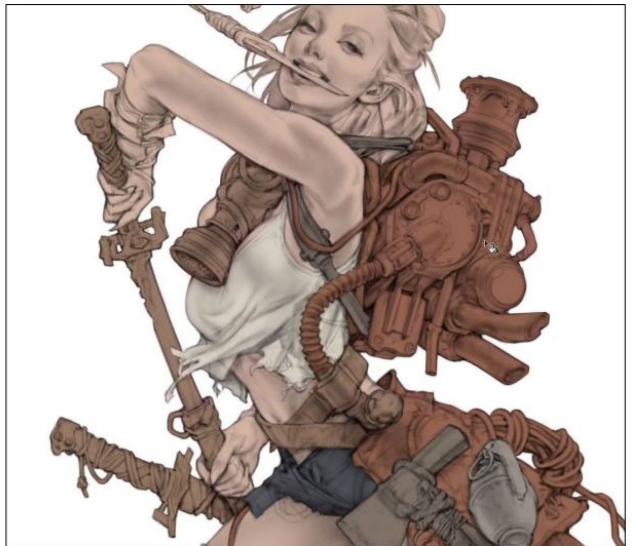
## 5 Fleshing out the portrait

I think the most important part of this image is the portrait, so I also spend some extra time in this drawing stage to refine some of the details in the face. I even plot some very soft shadows to guide me when I get round to adding colour and light to the face. I'll come back on many occasions to tweak the portrait and bring it to life.



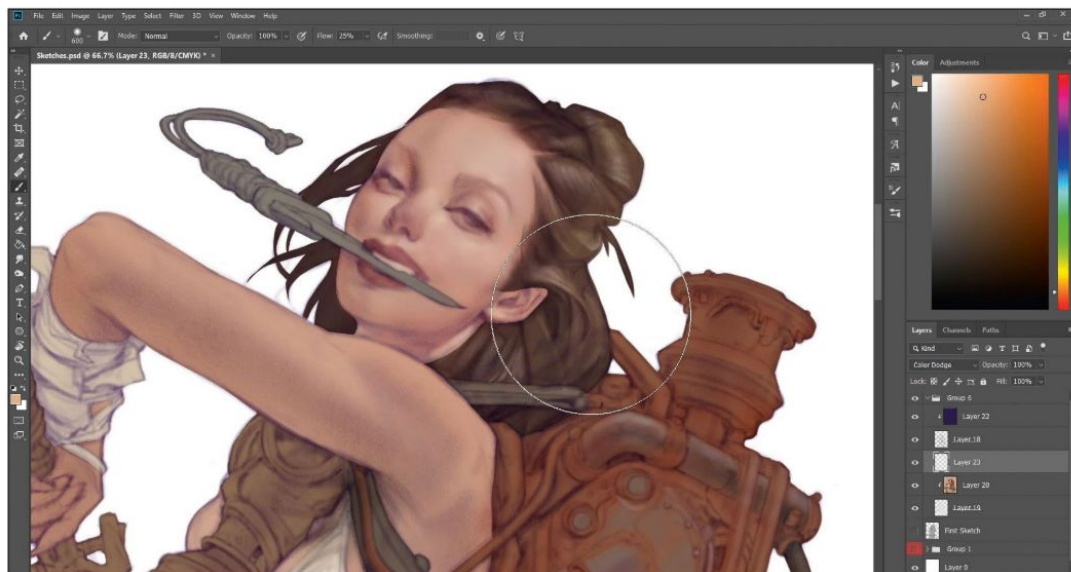
## 6 Silhouette block-in

Although this step sometimes feels to me like a passing stage, the importance of blocking in a nice silhouette is paramount to have a successful illustration. I make sure all the primary and secondary shapes are reading clearly, and that there's a sufficient amount of interesting shapes and rhythms to keep the eye moving around the character.



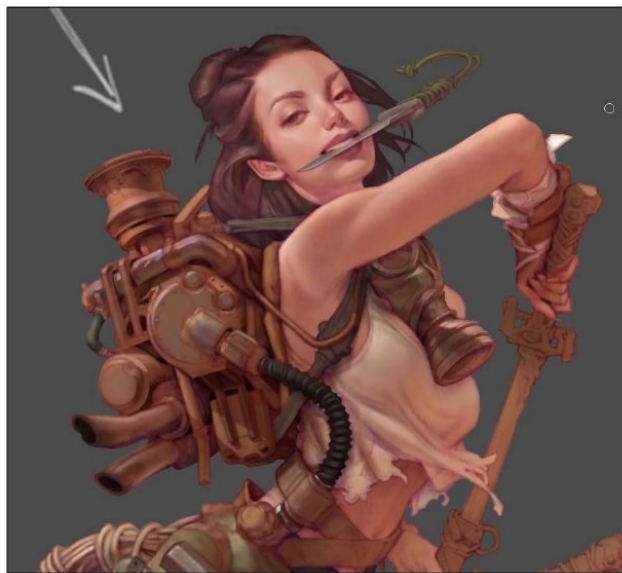
## 7 Apply colour flats to the artwork

Blocking in the major elements with flat colours helps me establish my main colour strategy and their hierarchy in the image before detailing everything. I'm trying out a very warm colour palette with a lot of oranges and sand tones, therefore my coolest colour here (the blue shorts) stays very desaturated to harmonise with the other colours. ➡



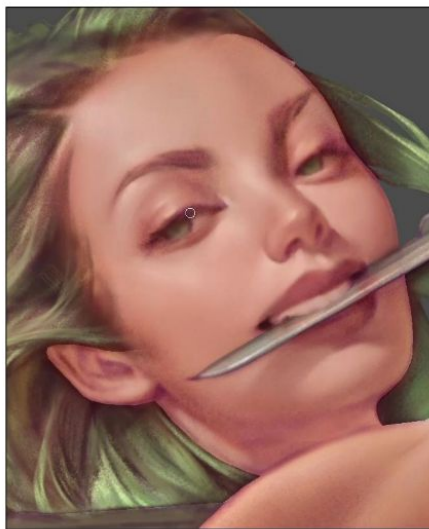
## 8 Select flats for the modelling stage

I can use these flat colours to easily select areas and start painting the general light and form. My main goal in this stage is to establish the light scheme and introduce a variety of warm and cool tones all around the image. If you look closely, there's a bit of a complementary colour scheme with purple-tinted shadows and warmer yellow highlights.



## 9 Lighting the equipment

Once I paint in the general form and lighting of the character, I duplicate the colour layer and bump the highlights using a Levels adjustment to bring out stronger highlights. I can control where they show using the Layer Mask. With this light layer, I paint in the sunlight hitting the diesel generator on her back.



## 10 Refining the portrait

I refine the portrait many times over the course of the painting. Here I decide to tint her hair and eyes a light green to complement the orange and red tones in the rusty metal and skin. I also zoom to work on the eyes, nose and mouth, being careful not to overwork them to stay in balance with the rest of the image's level of detail.





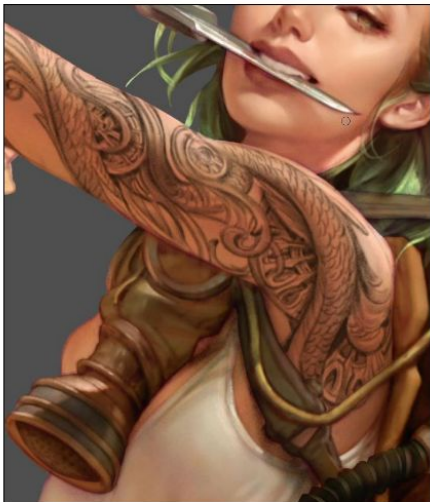
## 11 Make corrections

Once I'm happy with the colours and level of detail in the head, I make some final tweaks using the Liquify filter. These minuscule adjustments in the size of the features, how the eyes, eyebrows, and mouth are angled, and even tweaking the shape of the head, can really bring an expression to life and make for a much more appealing portrait.



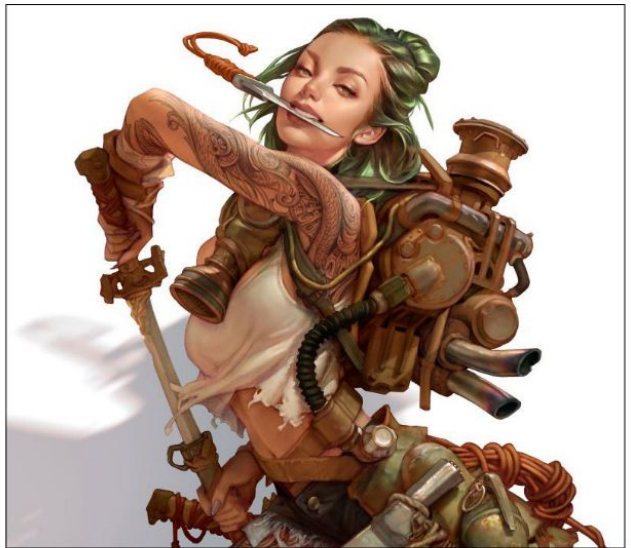
## 12 Adding details and contrast

I believe it's important to slowly build up to your brightest highlights and darkest shadows throughout your painting. In these final stages, I'm bringing out some of the brightest areas with sharper specular highlights. On the leg, I use a grainy brush to emulate skin pores that catch the light. This is one of my favourite parts of the process. My patience is finally rewarded!



## 13 Tattoo design

This also falls into the detailing stage, but since the tattoo plays such a large role in the design, I give it some extra time and care. I design the tattoo directly on the skin, using curves that follow the form of the arms juxtaposing some rococo-inspired ornamental elements for a sleek and elegant look. I also continued the design down her ribcage and far leg.



## 14 Finalising the image

After testing a few different styles of backgrounds, I settled on a more subtle drop shadow in the bottom left to let the head, leading arm and generator contrast with the stark white background at the top. It reinforces a triangular composition and has a nice graphic effect overall. Lately, I've been using more minimalistic backgrounds to emphasise my character designs. ●

## Photoshop

# BALANCE COLOUR WITH LINE-ART

**Lauren Brown** shows how she applies composition and painting techniques to create nouveau-inspired art



### Artist PROFILE

**Lauren Brown**  
LOCATION: US

Lauren is an illustrator and art director living in Austin, Texas. Her themes in her work focus on the intersection of nature and humanity with soft colour and whimsical line-work. [labillustration.com](http://labillustration.com)

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When I was asked to do this tutorial, I realised that it was the perfect excuse to finish my second

illustration in my series of fashionable plant queens that I dubbed the Avant Garden. One of the largest challenges in my work has been balancing detailed line-art with compelling colours. I started to realise that there had to be a star of the show in my illustrations. Is it colour, composition, striking lighting, line-art, character design? What was it that I really wanted to highlight in this piece?

When I considered that question, I found my answer: I wanted to illustrate this powerful Rose Queen in her own domain, fully confident, imposing and in control. The viewer should immediately feel captivated by this character and her world.

To accomplish this, I had to make sure the eye of the viewer travelled from the character, to her weapons, and then her surroundings. I began with choosing a strong composition that highlighted the Queen as the centre of this piece, and then crafting the graphic nouveau elements as a trellis to allow her own garden to frame her properly. The complex

line-art of the roses was a special challenge, but I employed various techniques to make this relatively simple figure stand out against the detailed foliage.

I used a combination of value and line thickness to push back the roses and kept the focus on the figure, preventing their complexity from distracting the viewer. The point of the piece was for the garden to feel impressive without taking away attention from its ruler.

Here, I'll demonstrate how to use and balance compelling, detailed line-art and harmonised colours to draw a viewer into an ethereal world.

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

DEFAULT BRUSHES:  
HARD ROUND  
PRESSURE SIZE

I use this default brush for harder surface rendering and line-art.

SOFT ROUND  
PRESSURE SIZE

I use this default brush for softer cast shadows and objects.

SOFT ROUND  
PRESSURE OPACITY

I use this brush for very soft lighting and VFX.



### 1 Sketching the idea

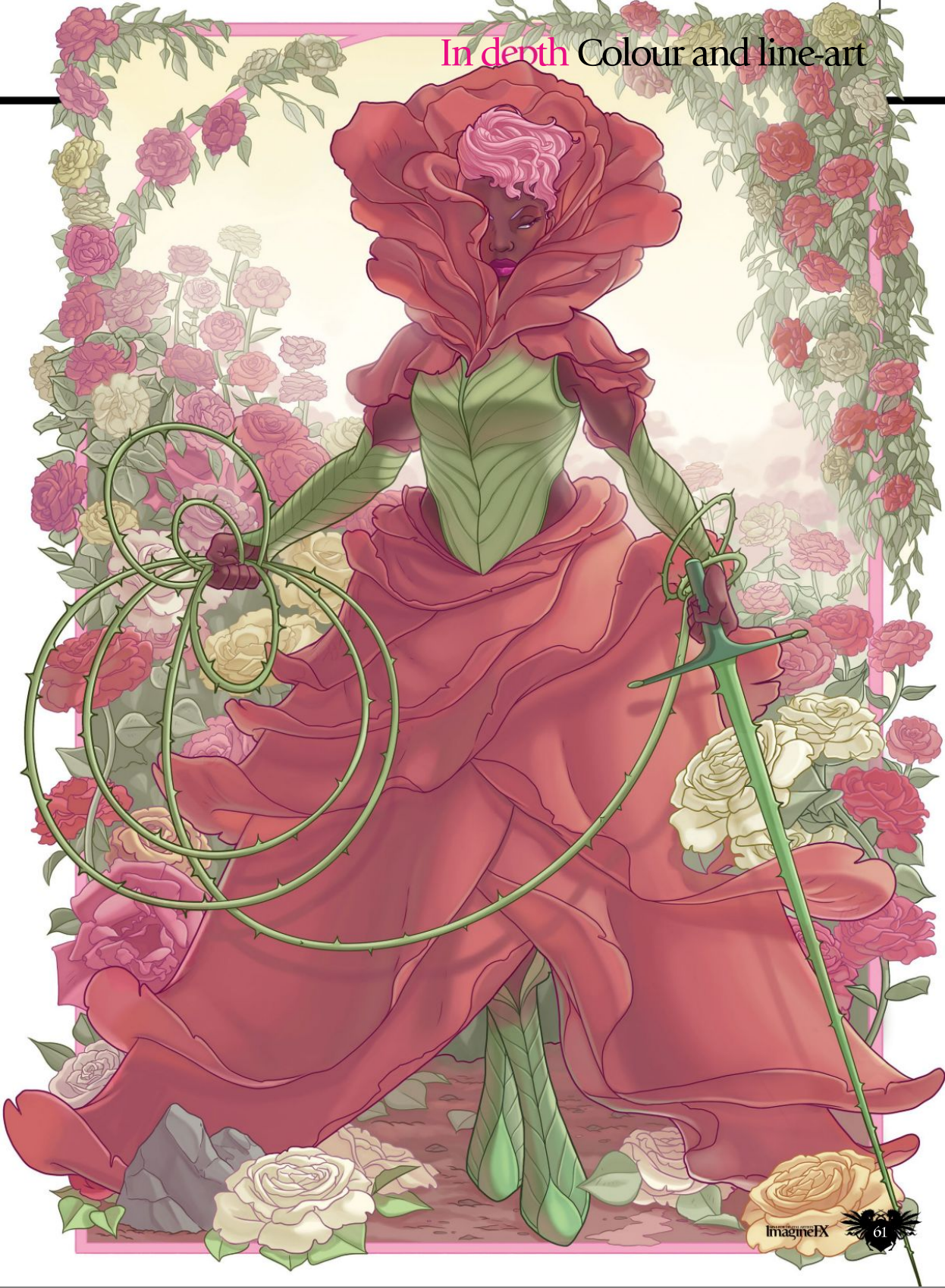
I plan out this piece across two different sketchbooks. I know I want to create a successor to my Mushroom Queen piece (as seen in issue 204 of ImagineFX), and roses are an excellent theme for a new garden with an entirely different feel and presence. I work out most of her aesthetic and mood in the sketch phase, combining elements of both hard and soft in her outfit to evoke the poetic meaning of roses.



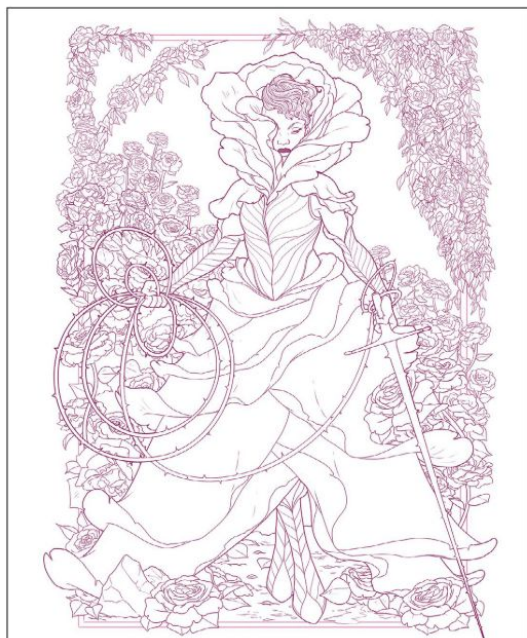
### 2 Line-art and composition planning

Counter to my normal process, I sketch and create clean lines of the character before planning the background. The challenge is to incorporate her rose garden seamlessly without overwhelming the figure. Also important is to evoke a sense of movement, and that's my priority when placing the foliage. I make rough sketches until I'm happy with the general composition, which allow for an area of visual rest around the character's head, so that the details won't become overwhelming. ➤➤



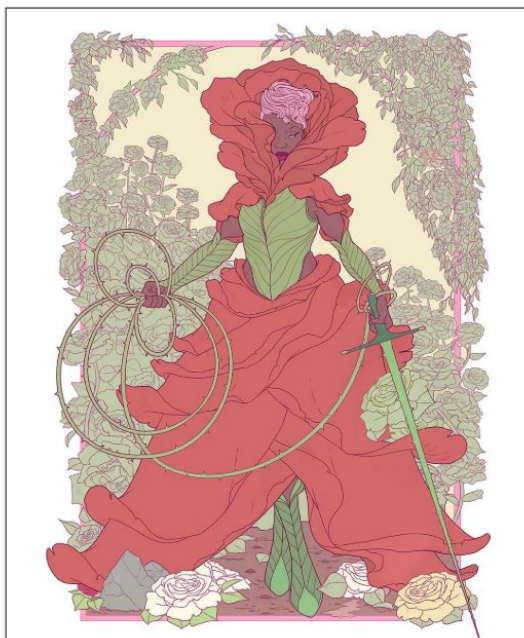






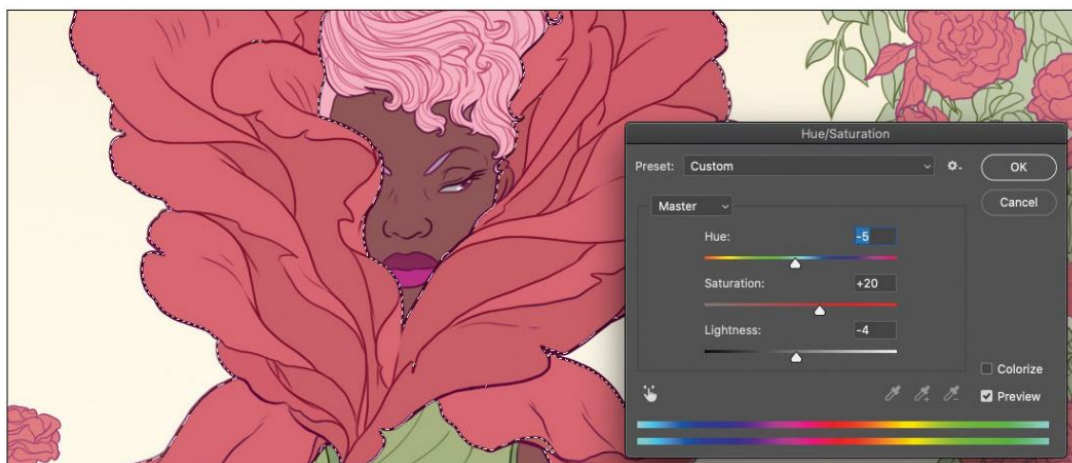
## 3 Detailed line-art

Now I need to showcase the detail and beauty of the roses to display the grandeur of her garden. Using plenty of reference images, I illustrate a few template roses, and duplicate variations of them around the image to help fill out the garden foliage. In the grand scheme of this illustration, these little repeats won't be noticeable once rendered, and it saves a little time. Most of this scene was drawn from scratch, however, and still took a considerable amount of time!



## 4 Placing flat colours

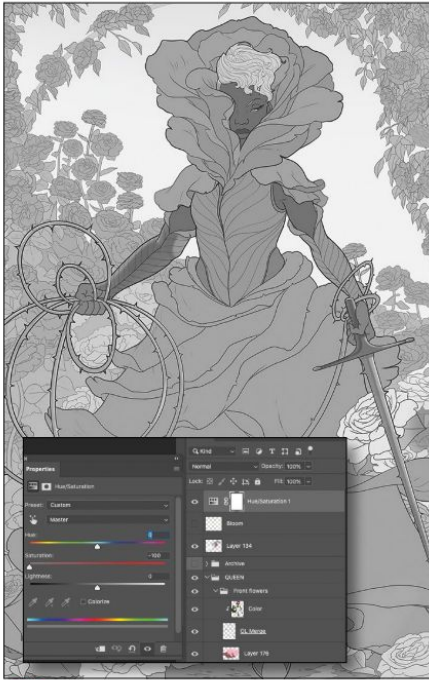
Next, I work out my flat colours. Here, I get to see how the colour relationships between the figure and background will work together. I start by laying down my base colours to identify my general value range. When I have an idea of what general colours I want in the scene, I'll fill in specific colours on top of my base colour at 80 per cent Opacity. This helps to create unity in the overall colour scheme, and I find it a good method to use for muted and pastel-coloured art.



## 5 Unifying my flat colours

The colours should be soft enough to let the lines shine through, but still vibrant enough on the Queen so she can stand out against the background. I use a lot of Hue/Saturation sliders in this step to experiment with combinations that work best in this limited colour palette.





## 6 Checking my values

I keep a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer over the entire file, so I can check my image in greyscale. This helps me to make adjustments if I see focal points that are too similar in value. Here, I want to ensure the Queen is commanding the values, rather than the background.

## BEFORE



## AFTER



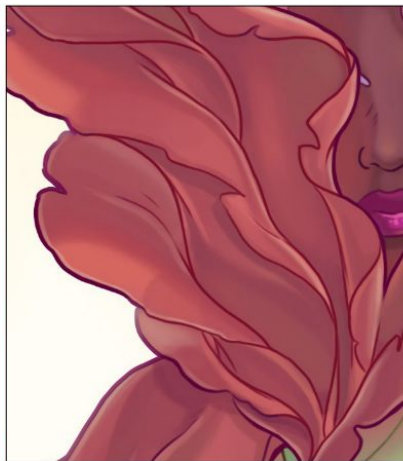
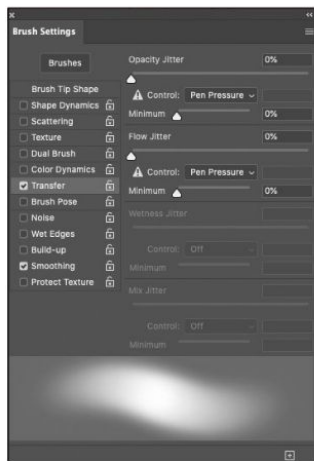
## 7 Colouring the line-art

Now that all flat colours are set, I begin to colour my lines. I use coloured line-art to emphasise my lines, and as a way to control my values when I render. I use Clipping Masks to colour my lines – these are layers that apply themselves to a parent layer, so any information drawn on the Mask layer will only apply to the parent layer. You can create a Clipping Mask by using Cmd+Alt+G, or hovering your mouse between the two layers you want to clip and holding down Alt (or Option, on Mac), and clicking when the Clipping Mask icon appears to apply it.



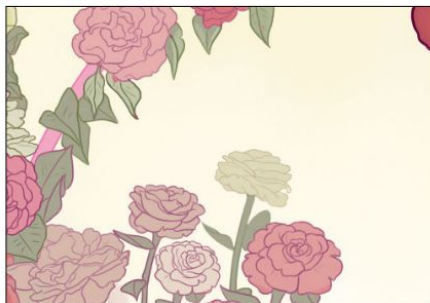
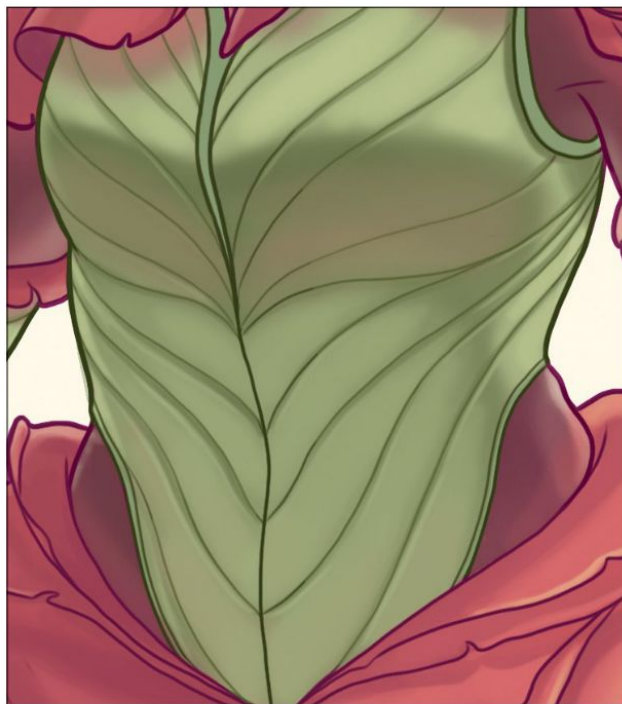
## 8 Rendering the Queen's skin

It's important to me that this Queen is dark-skinned, which some might consider a challenge in a pastel-coloured illustration. The trick to balancing this is creating a 'relative' dark skin tone: a colour that isn't necessarily in that dark of a range on the colour wheel, but is dark in comparison to the value range of everything else around it. Because the established colours of the rest of the scene sit in the upper range of lightness with lower saturation, the darkness of her skin and the brightness of the petals of her dress should stand out as intended. ➡



## 9 Working up the dress and collar

I use plenty of reference and play with colour and transparency to show how light interacts with rose petals. The light that shines through the petals will also reflect its colouration through the shadows they cast. Using a soft Round Brush with the Transfer setting on both Opacity and Flow on the minimum sliders, I simulate the diffused light passing through the petals and its cast shadows inside a Clipping mask layer.



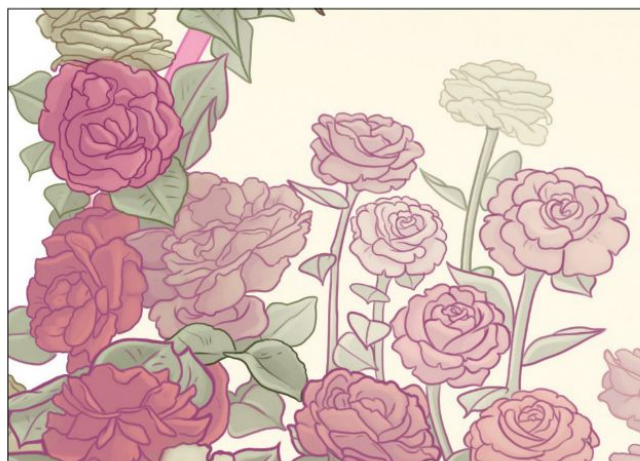
## 10 Refining the bodice

To unify my colours I use red bounce lighting from the roses reflected in the shadows of the green bodice. Adding a touch of the complementary colour gives shadows more depth, and also keeps the colour scheme feeling cohesive.

## 11 Choosing colours for the garden

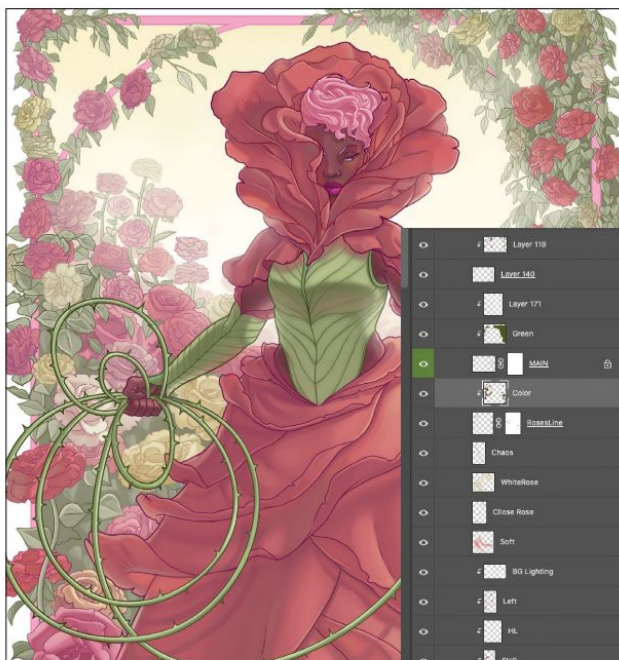
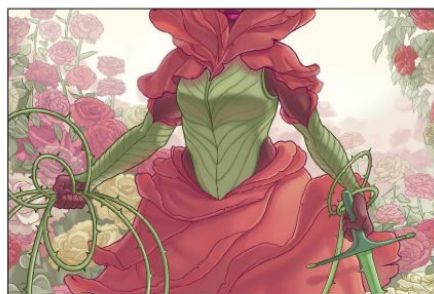
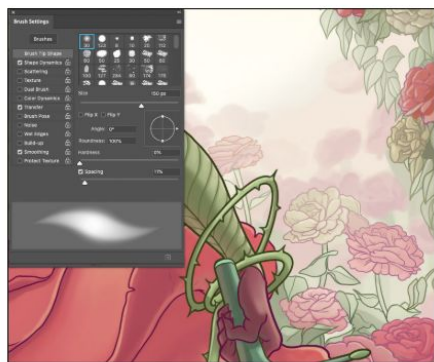
Now we're ready to render all of our foliage. With the main colours for the Queen set, it's easier for me to choose final colours for my roses. I chose a spread of colours, and generally keep any red roses away from the Queen, so as not to compete with her dress. My earlier use of Clipping Mask layers makes it easy to edit the line colours as I recolour the flowers.





## 12 Paint with light in the garden

I render subtractively by setting a darker colour on top of my base colours, and erase the shadows away using a layer mask. I find that this significantly reduces the rendering time for highly detailed objects, because it enables me to paint with light instead of having to build up shadows. Finally, I add a layer of darker shadow behind my main clusters of foliage to help groups of leaves and flowers stand out more.



## 13 Background details

Using a soft Round brush with the Transfer setting turned on, I add sections of painted flowers without line-art to convey distance and depth. This adds an atmosphere that conveys the idea that a garden extends much farther than what the viewer can currently see.

## 14 Making the final touches

I add in a final touch of lighting with a soft Round Opacity brush to do a final pass of atmosphere, using the local colour of the background. This bloom of lighting helps the piece feel more ethereal. I also lighten the edges of the line-art inside my Clipping mask layers to further convey the sense of atmosphere. Now the piece is finally complete! ●

## Core Skills: Painter 2021 – Part 2

# TURNING DABS INTO BRUSH STROKES

**Isis Sousa** introduces you to the possibilities that Painter 2022 offers for dab customisation in stamp-type brushes



**Artist PROFILE**  
**Isis Sousa**  
LOCATION: Norway

Isis is an art director, a Corel Painter Master Elite, a Xencelabs Artist and indie filmmaker. She also teaches and speaks at CG events.  
[isisousa.com](http://isisousa.com)

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Launch Painter and you come across hundreds of brushes, across the various categories of the New Brush Library. There's plenty of material for you to experiment with.

However, for many artists, being able to fine-tune a particular brush that meets their requirements or even create their own custom brushes – which is a fun, creative

process in itself – is an important step for their artistic expression.

There are several ways you can take advantage of the software's robust Brush Engine, especially when customising your tools. Just to give an example, when you select a brush, depending on the type or category, let's say, Sargent, in the Sargent Category, you can have up to eight drop-down menus on the Basic settings bar. These sub-menus

provide further options on Stroke, Size, Opacity, Blending, Impasto, Dab Profile, and finally, the extensive Advanced Brush Settings!

If you're a digital art beginner or new to Painter, knowing where all these Brush Settings options are located and how to use them can be initially daunting. That's why we'll be covering the quickest ways that you can alter a brush dab as well as how to create a brand new one.

**SIZE DROP-DOWN PANEL**  
Often underestimated and lesser-known set of functions for dab customisation.

**DAB PROFILE AND PAPER TEXTURES**  
Here the Paper Textures refer to the textures of your brush stroke, though they won't show in the dab itself.

**CAPTURED DABS**  
A set of fun, creative dabs you can use as alternatives on any default stamp-type brush.

### 1 Locating the drop-down panels

In these panels, the available settings depend on the brush/category. An airbrush may have different settings options than the Sargent Brush, for example. To save any brush or dab you customise from now on, go to Top Menu>Brushes>Save Variant.



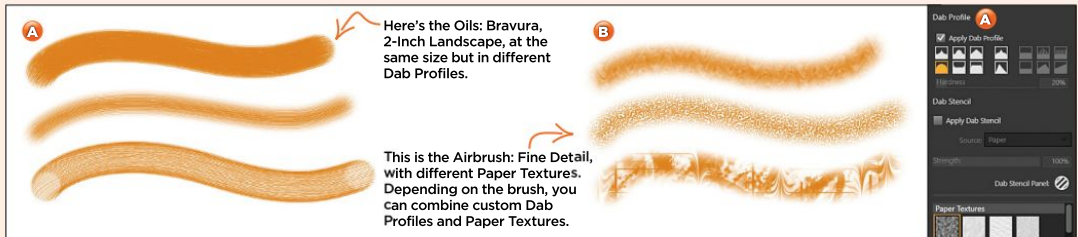
## 2 Size drop-down panel

This sub-menu provides several options that can change the appearance of your dab and expression of your brush stroke in surprising ways. They go well beyond the Size label, including Angle and Spacing settings. You can also introduce jitter or vary stroke thickness via the Expression options.

When you click Expression, a drop-down menu appears with several options. By default, the brush is set to Pressure. Notice that not all options may give a result depending on the brush. This means that you'll need to try each one, every time you switch tool, to see what's possible.

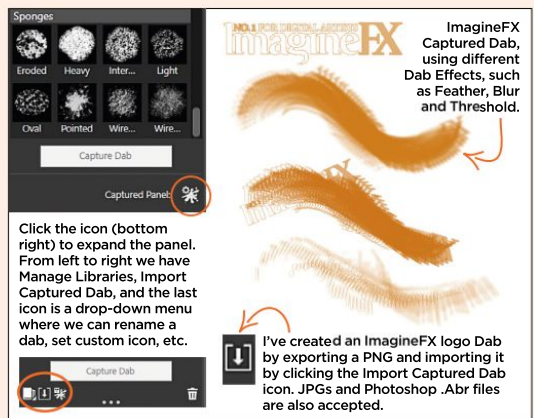
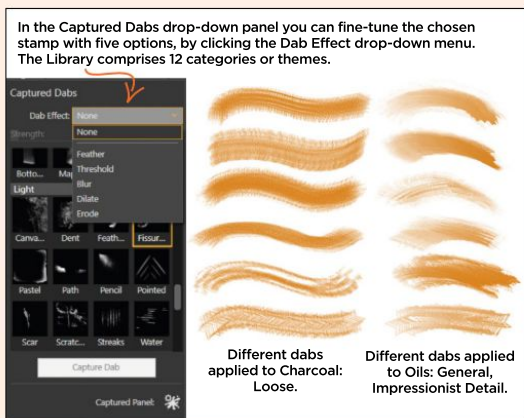
Notice how changing the Expression setting to, for example, Velocity, Direction and Random gave the Sargent brush these interesting, very different dab-stroke characteristics.

Further variants can be created if you take the time to explore the lower half of the panel and adjust the Angle settings by experimenting with the sliding controls.



## 3 Using the Dab Profile drop-down panel

You can change the dab to look more pointy, flat, round and so on, and also adjust the texture for the brush stroke – though the latest doesn't show on the dab itself. These can be combined with the other settings in the upper bar or other panels. In Painter, menus and options appear depending on the category and specific brush selected. This means that each brush has a set of Dab Profiles available. Some may not have this panel, while others may not have the Paper Textures, for example. The only way of knowing is taking the time to experiment.



## 4 Captured Dabs Library

This library is organised by categories and can be applied to any stamp-type brush. There are lots of expressive dabs like the Jellyfish, or more common ones such as coarse and clumps. Note that when you use these you can alter other brush settings as normal.

## 5 Create your own custom dabs

You can transform icons, shapes or even text into brush dabs. You can save them as JPG or PNG and import them into the Library. You can also import Photoshop stamps into Painter, so you don't need to make a separate set of dabs for these two art programs.





In depth Control colour

Photoshop

# CONTROL COLOUR IN YOUR SCENES



Discover **Anton Fadeev's** Photoshop layer techniques and bring a fantasy landscape to life

ImagineFX



69

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Anton Fadeev**  
 LOCATION: Russia

Anton has been an environment concept artist for over six years.  
[artstation.com/shant](http://artstation.com/shant)

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During my time as an environment concept artist, I've created many illustrations for a variety of projects. As I work on each of these landscape concepts I like to carry out small experiments (and continue to do this to this day) to either improve my workflow or develop new ways to create art.

There'll be times when you complete a painting or project, and not be entirely happy with the outcome. Early in my career I would often reflect on a painting and want to make changes, even when the work was almost finished. However, time is a luxury when creating concept art, and often it just wasn't feasible to make any of the alterations that I had in mind.

Because of this, I've always strived to gain as much control as possible over the shapes and colour palette I use in a painting, during every stage of the illustration process. In this workshop I'll present my method for creating an illustration, going from the first sketches to polishing the final image in Photoshop. I'll also show how I reduce the need for any corrective steps as much as possible.



## 1 Create the sketch of the landscape

When creating a landscape illustration I mentally divide the composition into three parts: the background, middle- and foreground, respectively. This further helps to keep the layer structure in order. On the first layer I create the line-art drawing. This is usually a rough sketch to set the tone and shape of the piece. I then add a new layer and make a cleaner, more detailed sketch over the top of the rough one. Finally, using shades of grey, I divide the sketch into the three 'background' layers. For each shade, I add a new layer and a new layer folder.

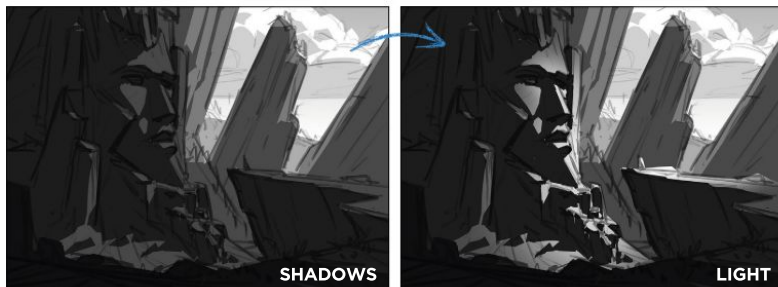


## 2 Develop additional sketches to explore the idea

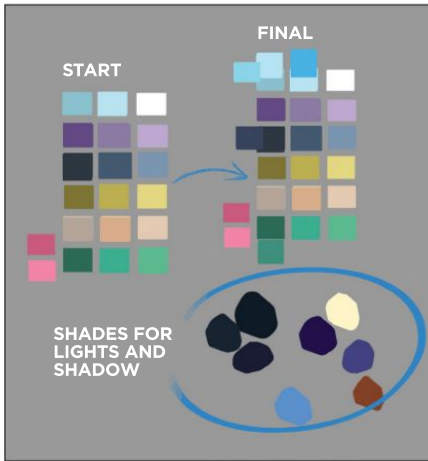
I always do a few sketches before moving on to the next step. This helps me to work out the idea in more detail and find the strongest angles and forms for the composition. The shapes should be clear and understandable. It's important to make them easily identifiable from a distance. Using perspective and the positioning of objects, I try to focus the viewer's attention on the elements I need them to see first.

## 3 Use shadow and light to create depth

For each background, I paint a drop shadow on a new layer. Then I apply a Clipping Mask to each background folder. Using Select Pixel on the shadow layer, I choose Select>Inverse and create a New Layer for lighting, then add a Layer Mask. I work on the highlighted areas with a Round Blurred brush. My 'lighting' layer is linked to the background folder using a Clipping Mask.







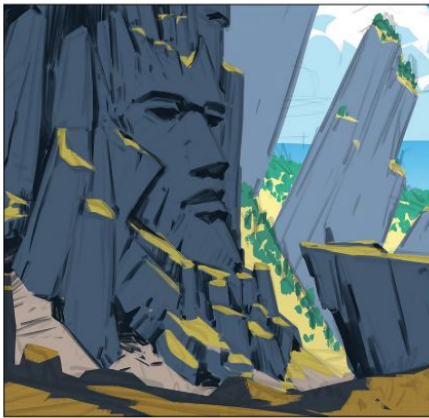
## 4 Define your colour palette

When deciding what colours to use, I opt for 'pure' or 'flat' shades untarnished by any effects of the light sources in a scene. For example, the stone will be grey, and the grass on it will be yellow. For each shade, I choose a lighter and darker version. I collect all the shades on a new layer. There's no guarantee that the first version of the colour palette will turn out to be perfect. As such, my palette develops as I add additional shades that look more harmonious together.



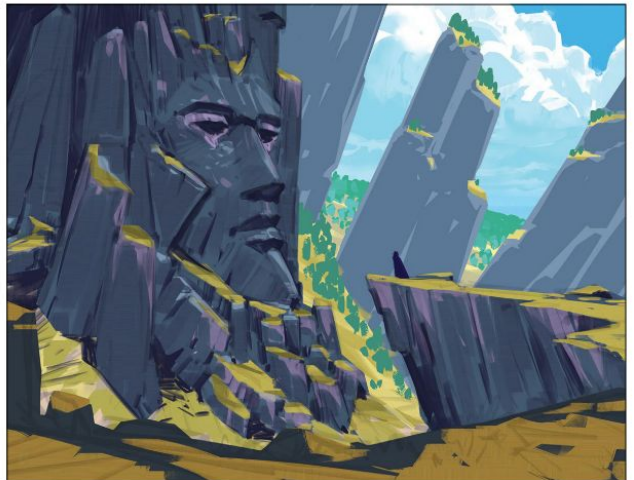
## 5 Colouring object in the landscape

The next stage is to define the colour tones of the objects in my scene. I do this by turning off the Opacity of the light and shadow layers. I reduce the Opacity of the line drawing layer to 50 per cent (as I near the end of the painting I'll hide this layer completely). I use flat colours to paint objects, and for each colour I add a new layer. The main task for me here is to make sure that the colour palette works and won't need to be altered later on in the process. Essentially, I front-load my decision making to ensure I don't need to modify it later. For my colour adjustments I use Photoshop's Color Balance, Levels and Hue/Saturation tools.



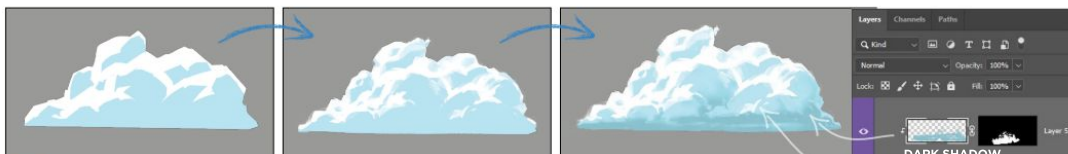
## 6 Defining the shadows

When working out the shadows, or ambient occlusion, in a scene I add a new layer to my painting and begin working on the darkest areas in the drawing. I want to give the main objects volume and emphasise important details. I ignore minor areas of the drawing and instead focus on key areas that I want the viewer to acknowledge. In this painting this means ignoring the foreground because my main focus is in the middle ground. Here I focus on the huge stone head and the rock in front of it, where a human-sized figure will stand.



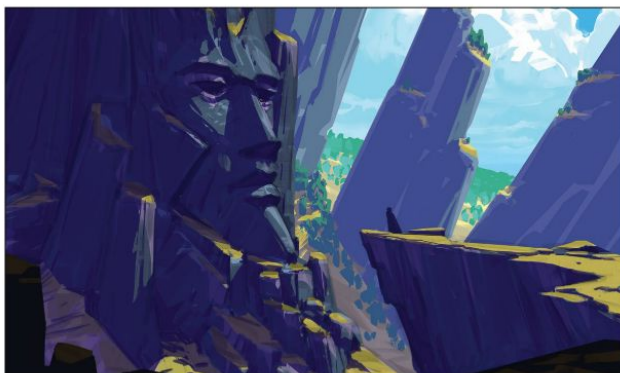
## 7 Surface texturing and experimenting

To build out the scene I need to add more detail on the surfaces of my various objects, such as rocks and grass. To do this I create a new layer and paint over this with a Flat brush with hard edges, slightly changing the palette to dark or light shades of the corresponding surface's colour. When working in this style of drawing, sometimes I use Color Dynamics in Brush Settings. This gives a textured effect to surfaces such as rocks. This is the time for experimentation, because different brush shapes give their own results, so have fun and mix things up! ➔



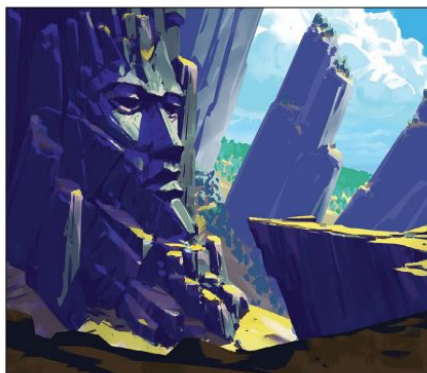
## 8 Painting stylised clouds

I want the clouds to have a stylised appearance to tie in with the painting's colourful tone. I use a Flat brush with hard edges to paint the clouds. I use white to roughly shape my clouds, then add a new layer above the white cloud layer and apply a Clipping Mask. Now I can paint shadows without fear of going beyond the cloud's boundaries. I adjust the shape of the clouds and their shadows with a texture brush, making them soft and airy. I now create a new layer and add a darker shadow in suitable areas, again using a texture brush.



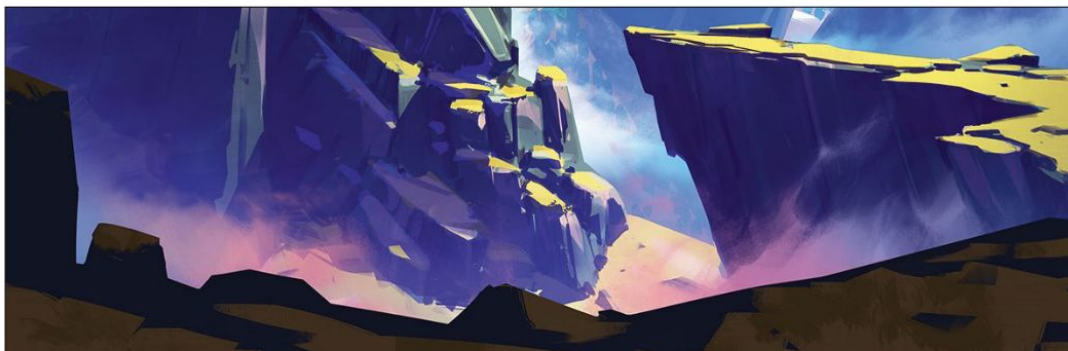
## 9 Finalising the colour shades

Returning to the early colour layers, I now adjust the direction and tone of the scene's shadows to harmonise the painting. I edit the shape of the shadows to pick up on the latest changes I made earlier. I change the shadow colour to dark purple and apply Multiple Blending Mode to the layer with 70 per cent Opacity. It's better to apply Multiple Blending Mode for the foreground and middle ground; for the background I use the standard Normal blend mode with 60 per cent Opacity.



## 10 Colour and lighting

I return to my highlights layer, select Overlay mode and pick the desired shade. I also add a new layer to paint reflected light sources on the darker areas using Color Dodge mode and Opacity on 70 per cent. To avoid having to adjust the lighting edges, I update the layer mask based on the updated edges of the shadow layer.



## 11 Establishing atmospheric perspective

It's time to add atmospheric perspective. This is when your scene begins to take on form and depth. I create a new layer between the background and middle ground, and set it to Lighten Blend mode. I choose a standard Round brush with soft edges and paint over the areas unevenly. In general, there should be a feeling that the fog has descended to the ground. The atmospheric perspective can be adjusted using layer transparency. I do the same thing between the middle- and foreground layers. If necessary, on a new layer I can add real fog or clouds, which will help to make the shapes of the objects in front of it stand out more.



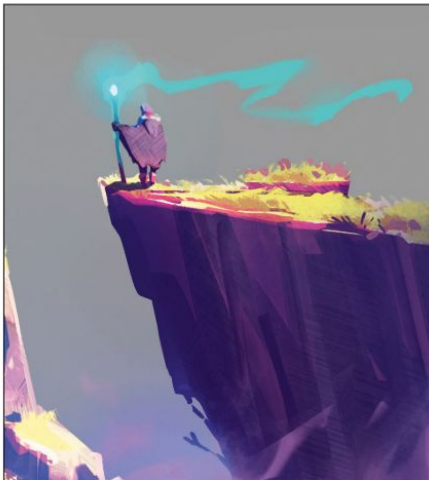


## 12 Additional coloured lighting

I create two new layers, and paint a flare effect on the brightest illuminated areas on one of them. In sunny weather, the desired effect can be achieved using red in Color Dodge mode on the edges of lit and shaded areas. On the second layer I paint a slight glow using a Standard brush with blurred edges. Here I use an orange colour on a new layer, with Blending Mode set to Color Dodge. If I feel like I'm overdoing things, I adjust the effect by altering the Opacity.

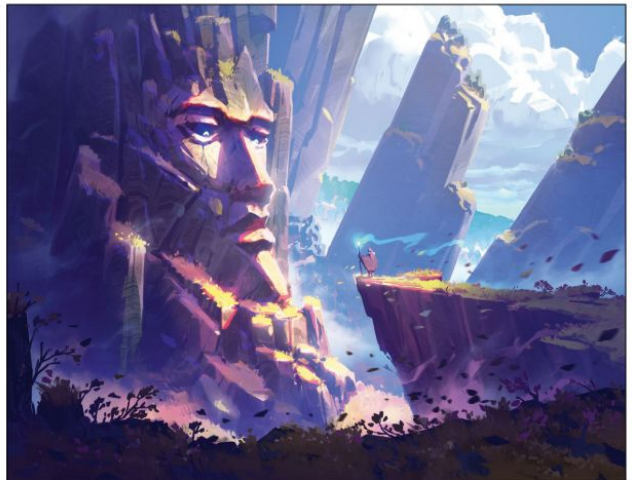
## 13 Adding volume and details to the grass

I create a new layer and paint a flat surface with a hard-edged brush. Then I add another layer for the grass. I do the same with the stones and add ambient occlusion. Using a texture brush I paint on another layer any areas that are covered with grass, including between the stones, using a shade that's darker than the grass. Color Dynamics in Brush Settings makes the colour less flat. On a new layer I draw the blades of grass, leaves and pebbles. I use a Multiply layer for any drop shadows.



## 14 Paint a figure to indicate scale

When you're depicting an epic landscape, painting a human figure is the easiest way to show the scale of objects. The viewer can compare the height of the person with objects in the scene, and determine their approximate size. Alternatively, you could use the same objects both in the foreground and in the background to create contrast, such as trees or ancient stone columns.



## 15 Polishing and adding detail

Once I'm happy with the perspective, colour palette and lighting I proceed to the detail stage. I create a new layer above all the lighting layers, use the Eyedropper to select the desired shade, and paint details such as cracks, pebbles, grass and branches. To create a glow effect such as the eyes of the giant sculpture I use white with a layer effect – here it's Outer Glow with blue hue. Additionally, you could create a Color Dodge layer and enhance the effect by painting the glow. Finally, I use a Motion Blur layer to enhance the sense of leaves blowing in the wind.

## Procreate

# BRING NEW LIFE TO UNFINISHED ART



In this workshop, **Rafael Sarmento** explains how to rework an older idea, creating a new illustration in the process

### Artist PROFILE

**Rafael Sarmento**

LOCATION: Brazil

Rafael is an illustrator and instructor. His clients include ArtStation, Procreate, DC Comics, Dark Horse Comics and many more. [rafsarmento.com](http://rafsarmento.com)

### GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!



I'm pretty sure we can all relate to the infamous, "unfinished" folder that's buried deep

down in your computer. Yes, that digital abyss filled with sketches, half-baked illustrations and ideas that we didn't finish for one reason or another. For me, the folder isn't an artwork grave, but rather a limbo for potential illustration ideas that I've believed had some potential for

another time, and that's exactly why I kept them.

From time to time, when I'm not in the best of moods, or it's one of those gloomy afternoons when I'm just feeling lazy, I spend time browsing through those files. I look for some older ideas that I still like, and then recycle them into something new. Some of these remind me of my own limitations at that time, which makes me realise that revamping something old into a

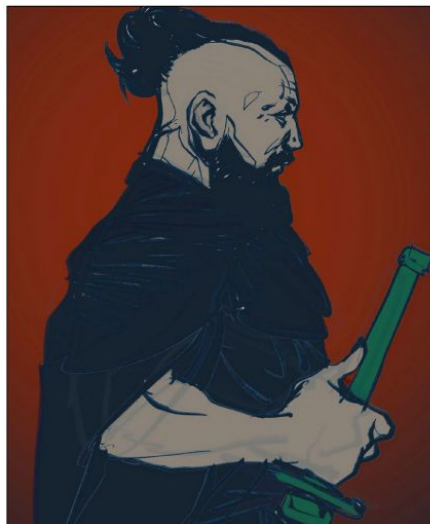
new piece isn't just about reusing that cool or unfinished idea, or searching for inspiration; it's also a great way to show you how much you've improved over time.

In this workshop, I'll show you how I've resurrected an older sketch that I've always liked – some sort of barbaric warrior – from the original sketch to a finished piece. We'll even do some "Frankensteining": adding fragments from other older pieces into this one. Let's get started...



### 1 Digging through the grave

It all starts with the old idea. In this case, when looking through my files, I found this sketch that for some reason I never worked up into an illustration. I really like it: there's a pure, raw energy that I've often found occurs when doodling. The freedom of scribbling can yield lively results, but now is the time to turn that promise into a finished painting.



### 2 Adding base colour

As I usually do during my working process, I start by sketching some thumbnails and developing the idea. I then choose my favourite composition to refine further. Since the sketch already exists I proceed to add some early colours, which I'll use to start "sculpting" the illustration. The Color Fill tool in Procreate is perfect for these quick iterations, before moving on to the painting stage. ➡

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
THE SKETCHY  
SARMENTO

This brush was created specifically for me by Max Ulichney, to emulate the Staedtler 8B – my favourite pencil. It's the basic brush I use for everything I've painted on this workshop.



In depth Revive old art





### 3 Working up the story design

Before I move on with the painting itself, I'll start establishing some traits of the character's design. This is when one of my very favourite aspects of the creative process starts to take place: setting up a storytelling background for the character. This will help me to

define the design decisions I'll make, and align everything into a concise concept.

I decide that he's a retro-futuristic, technologically enhanced knight. This immediately inspires me, and aligns everything into a concise concept. Who is he, and why is he here?





## 4 Defining the environment (or not)

Sometimes the background plays a huge role in defining your character. An environment can strengthen the characteristics of your figure. However, the opposite can also be true. A simple painterly setting will do for my knight, since all we'll need to know about the illustration will be actually focused on our character itself. But I will attempt some possible archetypes and symbolism in the background, to hint at his identity.



## 5 Liquify and solidify

One trick I've been developing in Procreate lately is what I call The Liquify Madness Extravaganza. Using the extraordinary Liquify tool, I'll create masses of pixel distortions and artefacts, then proceed to 'sculpt' shapes and textures into the composition. This often leads me to some fun and interesting results. The secret is to learn how to use and edit the results to uncover some real gems.



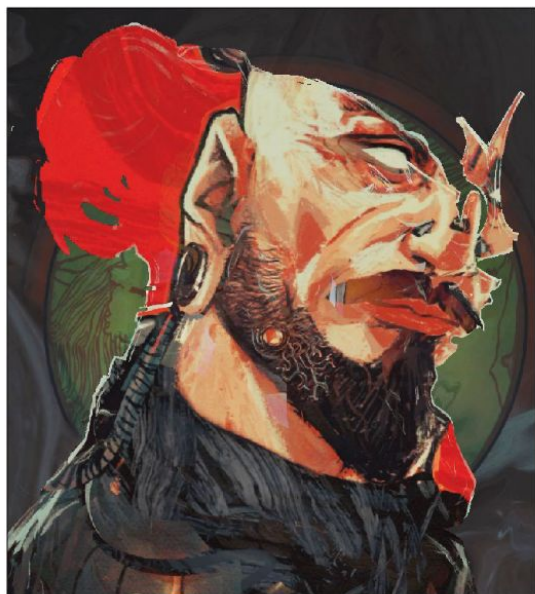
## 6 Designing the helmet

With the basic composition organised on the canvas, I start to define the elements that will give the illustration a sense of mystery and wonder. I decide he's a sovereign knight in a realm of storytelling that exists between the fantasy and sci-fi, and so he needs a helmet that will reflect this blend of ideas. Floating pieces will 'embrace' his head, while also acting as an ornate crown.



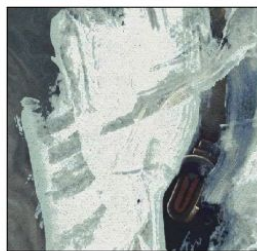
## 7 Recycling fragments of old artwork

Searching through my files, I find an older line work texture that was meant for another piece, and this may fit perfectly into the 'halo' piece. I cut, paste and edit the shapes, and change the layer properties, until I find the right balance. It can't distract the viewer from the focal point (the head) too much, but needs to work as a graphic motif that will bring attention on to the crowded bust. ➤➤



## 8 Forging the halo

After applying a texture to the halo piece, I come across an unfinished character illustration that has some elements which might work well for our knight. I throw them into the character's silhouette (using a Clipping Mask) and then begin editing the usable portions, using the Liquify tool and changing the layer properties to Darker or Lighter Color, while also erasing and painting over the element to fill in the gaps.



## 9 Textures and weight

Placing some handmade textures (again, dip into your archives and re-use as much as possible) and watercolour paper textures will add the 'teeth' that this painting needs. This creates a boundary between the traditional and digital media. I sculpt the white paint texture into specific spots, where the knight's drapery may benefit from the organic-looking impasto. Setting the texture's layer properties to different effects will create the tone I'm looking for.



## 10 Begin Frankensteining

The beauty of this approach – what I'm calling 'Frankensteining' – is that we not only make use of those unused ideas and visual motifs that we thought were cool, but there's also the possibility of merging all of these elements into a much better piece. Here I take a fragment from a portrait I've yet to finish that has an engaging metal plate design. This might improve the shoulder piece, and better balance the silhouette. You need to experiment and try new blends of old images.





## 11 Upgrading the garments

We gave our character a solid, basic armour and sword set – enough to make the ‘sci-fantasy’ knight concept work. But these elements are still lacking refinement, so I add to his garments and accessories with a wash of paint. Since I’m looking to achieve my own bend on the genre-defying amalgamation of fantasy and sci-fi, I add some technological hints to this quasi-medieval gentleman to give him a Krull-meets-Dune feel.



## 12 Embellishing the surfaces

Now we’ll get back to the Liquify trickery for a bit more fun! I duplicate the layers that I think will produce the desired distortions, such as the character itself, and choose the Crystals Liquify tool (with Momentum and Distortion both set to 100 per cent) to break it into interesting shapes. Setting the resulting layer to Darker Color gives me the material to work with, to give the armour and some other elements the extra textures that I’m looking for.



## 13 Design medieval cybernetics

Because we already have a larger portion of the composition already defined, I start refining the finer details. This rendering and designing stage – the elements that will make the character really shine – takes time, but it’s the moment when you’re able to unify your ideas.

I approach his armour, as well as the detailed organic cyber-enhancements in his arm and head, and still ask questions: can his red face be an actual armour piece by itself? How much of him is really... original? Never stop pushing your ideas.



## 14 Making the final touches

After the last few brushstrokes here and there, some colour adjustments and overall checks... behold the Knight of the Red Sun! From the ashes of an older illustration folder comes this behemoth of a warrior. Hope you had as much fun as I did! I can’t wait to see your own Frankensteins and experiments that might turn an old piece sketch or idea into a great addition to your growing portfolio. ●

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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



## Artist's Choice Award

Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

4  
PRODUCTS  
ON TEST



### HARDWARE

#### 82 Acer ConceptD CP3271K

A stunning screen for creatives who demand top-notch image quality, but is it good enough to justify its hefty price tag?

### TRAINING

#### 84 Gradients: Color, Form and Illusion

Illustrator James Gurney continues to make core art theory approachable.

### BOOKS

#### 85 Obliskura

Explore a fantasy world where the genre tropes have been left at the castle door.



#### 85 Nature Painting in Watercolor

Learn how to improve your watercolour skills while taking in the natural world.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★★ Great ★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious



This Acer monitor has some great features for digital artists, but lacks when it comes to ports and build quality.

# Acer ConceptD CP3271K

**SCREEN SCENE** A stunning screen for creatives who demand top-notch image quality, but is it good enough to justify its hefty price tag?

**Price** £1,250 **Company** Acer **Web** [store.acer.com](http://store.acer.com)

**W**hen looking for a monitor it makes sense to spend a bit more on a screen that's designed to display colour as accurately as possible. Acer's ConceptD range of computers and monitors are aimed squarely at artists, and as such the ConceptD CP3271K 27-inch monitor boasts top-quality display credentials.

The most significant feature of the CP3271K is its colour accuracy. Measured in terms of its deviance from optimal colour, lower values indicate more accurate colour representation, whereas higher values signify a monitor has a more noticeable colour cast. Most monitors with an emphasis on colour accuracy tend to boast a Delta-E deviance of

less than two. With the CP3271K, Acer has upped the ante and claims a Delta-E of less than one. That's impressive, and would make this one of the most colour-accurate monitors out of the box at this price point.

Colour space coverage impresses. Ninety nine per cent coverage of the relatively narrow sRGB colour spectrum is good, although cheaper monitors can also manage this. Ninety per cent coverage of the DCI-P3 video colour standard is much better, although it's possible to find monitors

that cover 95 per cent and even 98 per cent of this colour space.

You get an IPS LCD panel (IPS screens are the gold standard for digital art, providing colour and contrast consistency that only OLED displays can match). This monitor display's 4K (3,840x2,160) resolution and gives a fine pixel density of 163ppi, and the display goes up to 400cd/m2 brightness, making it eligible for an all-important DisplayHDR 400 certification.

The display panel of the CP3271K is an ordinary design, with narrow but not exceptionally thin black plastic bezels.

It's the stand which really sets the monitor apart from the crowd, though not necessarily in a good way. The

“One of the most colour-accurate monitors out of the box at this price point...”



A joystick 'hubbin' on the rear helps navigate menus. It's easy to move between dedicated modes for sRGB, DCI-P3, HDR and custom calibration pre-sets.



The fake wooden stand won't be to everyone's tastes, and it can feel lightweight and a little wobbly when in use.



The packaged shading hood is a nice touch to prevent glare.



Photograph © Acer

faux wood base has a grain pattern which could only really be found on plastic wood, and the plastic itself doesn't feel especially good quality.

Video port connectivity is good, with two HDMI and two DisplayPort connections. However, while you do get four USB 3.0 ports (two on the back, plus two easy-reach ports on the left-hand edge) there's no USB-C connection and therefore no USB Power Delivery to juice up a connected laptop or mobile device.

## BRIGHT AND CLEAR

The CP3271K impresses straight out of the box, with stunning clarity, brightness and colour fidelity. For maximum wow factor, it's best set to DCI-P3 mode, because this displays more colours and with greater intensity. By contrast, sRGB mode looks muted and flat by comparison, but this is to be expected from what is a more restrictive colour space.

Also included with the monitor is a shading hood, which makes the screen easier to see when there's glare from ambient lighting. The shading hood



There's no USB-C connection and so this monitor lacks USB Power Delivery for charging connected devices.

also helps shield the monitor from reflections. The matte anti-glare coating on the display itself is an extra line of defence against reflections, though it does inevitably add a slight shimmering effect when viewing black or very dark scenes. This can be distracting for creating art.

To the naked eye, backlight bleed (the visibility of the LED backlights which illuminate the LCD panel) is minimal, though as is typical for IPS LCD displays, black tones are never truly black.

However, for creative work a screen like the BenQ SW271 matches the Acer on screen size and resolution, but beats it for colour accuracy, colour space coverage and build quality, while still costing similar money. ●

## DETAILS

- Features
- 27-inch screen
- 4K, 144 Hz G-SYNC IPS technology
- PANTONE-validated 4K UHD display covering 90 per cent of the DCI-P3 colour gamut
- 1000:1 static contrast ratio
- Has a 400 cd/m2 brightness rating
- 3,840x2,160 (4K) resolution
- LED backlight

Rating



IN FOCUS

## THREE MORE 4K MONITORS

Looking for a different screen? Try one of these instead...

### Dell Ultrasharp U3219Q

Web [deals.dell.com](https://deals.dell.com)

Price From £800



This Dell monitor offers a lot of high-end features: 4K 32-inch screen, full sRGB coverage, with 95 per cent DCI-P3 and great colour uniformity, making it a solid choice for pro artists.

### Samsung U28E590D

Web [samsung.com](https://samsung.com)

Price From £250



This monitor may lack the top-end features of pricier screens but it still offers 100 per cent support for the sRGB colour space, high brightness level of 300cd/m2 and support for 60Hz 4K.

### Eizo ColorEdge CG319X

Web [eizocolour.com](https://eizocolour.com)

Price From £3,000



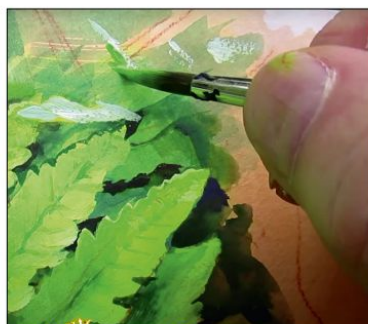
This 31-inch 4K monitor, with a 10-bit display and 24-bit colour look-up table represents the high end of monitors. It also offers 4,096x2,160 resolution and colour calibration software.

James' advice on how to use gradients will feed into your approach towards painting shadows.

The principles learned previously are then put into practice in one of four plein air painting studies.



In this chequerboard painting the colour of the light squares in shadow is the same as the dark squares in light.



James shows how graduating colours from dark to light and vice versa can add depth to a painting.

## Gradients: Color, Form and Illusion



**MEETS THE GRADE** James Gurney continues to make core art theory approachable, whether you're working traditionally or digitally

**Publisher** James Gurney **Price** \$24.50 **Format** DVD **Web** jamesgurney.com

**J**ames Gurney manages to make complex theories easy to understand. His latest instructional video takes a simple idea – paint colour gradients – and shows how this can be applied to your art.

The principles behind the process are applicable to watercolours, gouache and acrylic, as demonstrated here, or even digital art. The beauty of James' practical demonstrations is that the ideas transcend the medium.

The video is split into two stages: theory and practice. First we learn the principles with simple demonstrations, such as painting a graduated cylinder. Then we see James put knowledge into practice. He paints four plein air scenes. Each one reveals how the previous principle can be used, literally, in the field.

Which part of the video you get the most from will be determined by your

ability and experience, but there's always something to learn. If you understand the principles on offer then sit back and watch a modern master eke out a landscape with thoughtful brush marks. He shows how simple use of the theories can pull and push light around a landscape, and how gradients can bring your art to life – contrasting shadows across and below a fern leaf – and make complex ideas simple.

There are further degrees to the training video. We love how James answers viewers questions as he paints. The artist's responses reveal more of his own personal approaches to plein air, and offer insights and tips to beginners, such as prepping multiple papers ahead of painting ready for any scene. Fundamentally, James' ability to make art approachable and theory universal is reason enough to watch.

### DETAILS

**Topics covered**  
 ■ Paint watercolour, brushed, Brayer and in-brush gradients  
 ■ Gradient theory in practice  
 ■ Stippling with a blender brush  
 ■ Paint and blend gouache

**Length**  
 78 minutes

**Rating**  
 ★★★★★

### ARTIST PROFILE JAMES GURNEY

A self-taught artist and illustrator James Gurney started his career with the 1982 book, *An Artist's Guide To Sketching* – the product of a cross-country road trip. He worked as a background painter on the animated film *Fire and Ice* before focusing on book covers. His breakthrough book *Dinotopia: A Land Apart from Time* took his style of fantastical realism to new heights. His book, *Color and Light: A Guide for the Realist Painter*, was number one on Amazon for 52 weeks.



jamesgurney.com



# Obliskura

**DARK ARTS** Steel yourself for the unexpected and explore a fantasy world where the usual genre tropes have been left at the castle gates

**Author** Alex Konstad **Publisher** Caurette **Price** £38 **Web** caurette.com **Available** Now

**S**uccessfully Kickstarted into life earlier this year, Alex Konstad's handsome – albeit expensive – hardback introduces the reader to a distinctive world of dark fantasy.

The veteran illustrator and concept artist has worked for the likes of Netflix, Blizzard Entertainment and Games Workshop. Aspects of his personal style can be seen in his client work, but in Obliskura the artist has



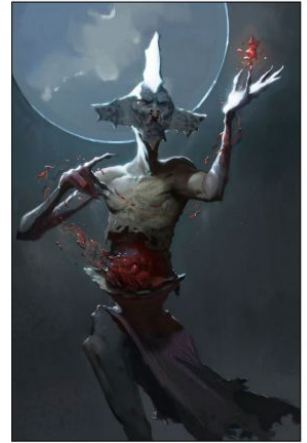
Alex Konstad has a keen eye for rendering his unique characters' clothing and armour.

been given full rein to build a compelling fantastical setting.

Across 200 A4-sized pages there are multi-limbed, outlandish figures, armoured beasts of burden and verdant landscapes. While there's a huge range of original designs on show, Alex has maintained consistency through his use of lighting and colours. It's a great opportunity to study and enjoy the artist's work 'offline'. Accompanying each artwork is a caption or prose from the artist, to further build up the atmosphere.

One small complaint is the book's black paper stock. While it offers a unique feel, this can result in Alex's art appearing a little muted on occasion. Overall, though, this artist's personal project is worth a closer look.

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆



Alex's experience in character design skills is apparent; the book is full of unique-looking figures.

# Nature Painting in Watercolor

**GOING GREEN** Learn how to improve your watercolour skills while getting in touch with the natural world, with this affordable guidebook

**Author** Kristine A Lombardi **Publisher** Walter Foster Publishing **Price** £15 **Web** quarto.com **Available** Now

**B**anish any thoughts of setting up your easel and painting sunlit valleys, dramatic clifftops or snow-covered forests – this accessible book is all about capturing the more humble aspects of nature on watercolour paper.

Illustrator and art teacher Kristine A Lombardi reveals that a doctor advised her to combat her stress levels by taking walks and focusing on what she could see in front of her. This

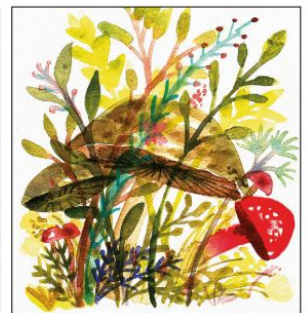


Kristine A Lombardi uses a stiff-bristled scrubber brush to remove some pigment from the purple pampas grass bloom, to create highlights.

led to the artist taking an avid interest in nature, and in turn helped her to bring this book to life.

Kristine begins by revealing her approach to obtaining reference (using her camera, in her sketchbook or collecting leaves, shells and more), before taking the reader through her watercolour toolkit. She describes her core brushes, and has insights on using and storing paint. She then goes on to demonstrate a range of watercolour painting techniques, which include using salt and even old credit cards.

The remainder of the book comprises step-by-step tutorials that sees Kristine painting slightly stylised flora and fauna: pampas grass, a woodpecker and birch bark, for example. Her prose is knowledgeable and encouraging – the artist goes into details where necessary, and she even accompanies her tutorials with handy



Kristine combines her advice on painting different types of mushrooms to create this piece.

standalone tips. The modest subject matter belies the solid art advice on offer, making this book ideal for beginner and intermediate artists.

**RATING** ★★★★★

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**Workshops assets are available...**

If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.

**NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS**  
**ImagineFX**

# Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



## This issue:

### **88 Traditional FXPosé**

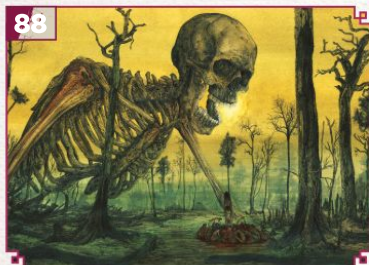
Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

### **92 Workshop: Improve your comic panel skills**

David Orellana reveals his approach and techniques when creating a simple comic page.

### **98 First Impressions: Serena Malyon**

Exploring her own personal challenges has helped this artist.





# FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

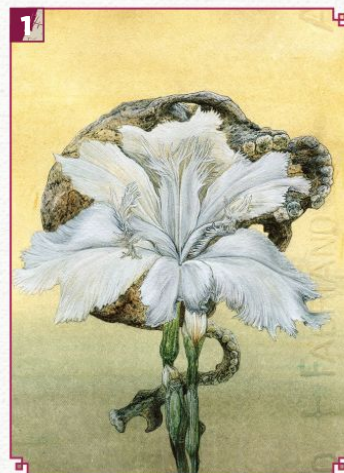


## Zakuro Aoyama

**LOCATION:** Brazil **MEDIA:** Watercolour, sumi ink, pencil

**WEB:** [zakuroaoyama.tumblr.com](http://zakuroaoyama.tumblr.com)

Zakuro's paintings and drawings are bolstered by his attention to detail and his fondness for the macabre. "I seek to convey a feeling of feverish joy and create an invitation to a melancholy eroticism," he tells us.



### 1 A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF THE ULTIMATE REST

"Beauty is instantaneous, and vanishes as surely as the decay of the reaped lily and the dryness of suspended bones."

### 2 HELP IS NOT COMING

"The scorching yellow covering the wilds that stretch as far as the eye can see describes the state of hopelessness in which we find ourselves."

### 3 LOVINGLY EMBRACING CALM AND FALLING ASLEEP

"I strive to portray emotions that escape photography. Sensations that linger between pleasure, and despair and corrupted purity."









## Melissa Sue Stanley

**LOCATION:** US **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, polymer clay, resin, acrylic, wool

**WEB:** [melissasuestanley.com](http://melissasuestanley.com)

Melissa's work finds small moments of magic and mystery hidden in gardens and mossy environments. Her storytelling project, The Woolbeasts, discovers the denizens of these worlds.

### 1 THE BERRY THIEVES

"These three Woolbeasts live inside the Treehouse. Specifically, inside the third kitchen cupboard to the left of the stove."

### 2 GET CURIOUS

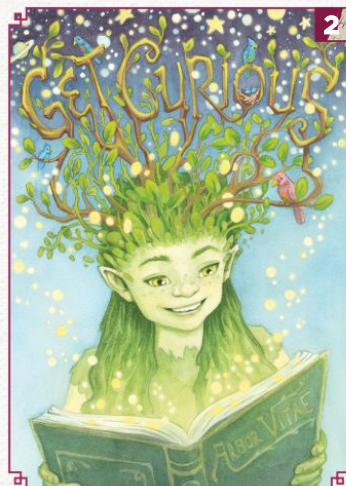
"It was a delight to create this traditional painting, and to have the creative freedom to illustrate the client's value - Get Curious - in a fantasy style."

### 3 TREEFOLK

"Woolbeasts began literally in wool, with yarn, 15 years ago. Now they're sculpted, hand-cast in resin and painted."

### 4 MAB, THE WANDERING FAE

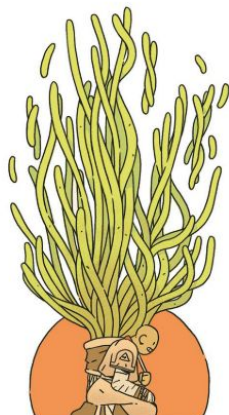
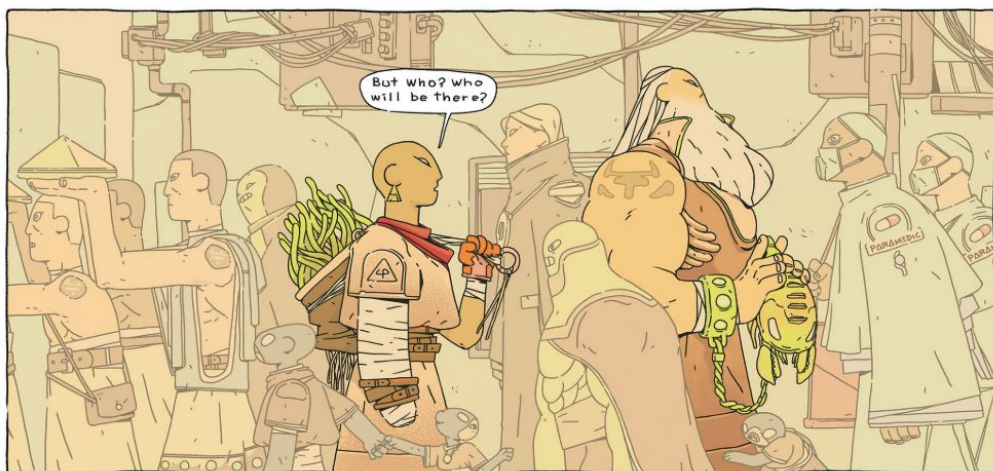
"Mab's few companions are of the root-vegetable variety. She's long been queen of the pastures and twisted elms."















Pencil

Photoshop

# IMPROVE YOUR COMIC PANEL SKILLS

DAVID ORELLANA reveals his approach and techniques when creating a simple comic page, from planning the action to the addition of lines and colour

This is a simple comic page from a personal project, which I'm going to use to introduce some ideas that I consider important. I

think they'll be helpful if you're taking your first steps in art or experiencing creative block.

When starting out in any artistic discipline, the usual approach is to learn the basic techniques, then build on them. Along the way you'd expect to increase your knowledge and reach a high level of excellence. It's a common strategy in fields such as illustration, character design and animation, and one that I followed when I started studying.

During that time I noticed that instructional books and tutorials were full of design rules: avoid

## MATERIALS

### PENCIL

- 0.5mm Pentel mechanical pencil

### ERASER

- Faber-Castell kneadable eraser

### PAPER

- DIN A4 100g regular paper

### DEVICES

- Huion Led Light Pad (L4S model)
- Wacom Cintiq 13HD

symmetry and frontal views, try not to make your characters look too rigid, and so on. The explanations behind these rules normally featured ambiguous words like "interesting" – a character with a very strong contrapposto is more "interesting" than a frontal, rigid one, for example. But no one defined the content of that word: at the end of the day, what is "interesting"?

When I reached a certain point of my education, I realised that these precepts led directly to a kind of work that I really hated: characters with a forced body gesture, exaggerated expressions and so on.

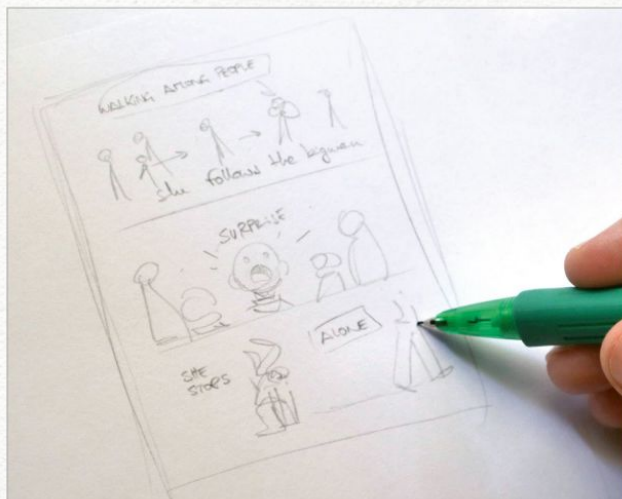
After a few years spent drawing this way for freelance projects I decided to turn everything around and develop my own art style. I

wanted to include elements from archaic art in my work, because I studied anthropology before fine arts. Now I draw colossal and rigid characters with hieratic expressions, against flat backgrounds. This opened up new art approaches.

Many people will see my art and will say it has mistakes, but that's the thinking that I want to escape from. I think it's better to be mistaken in pursuit of something special than to be right when doing what's considered to be safe. But this is just my way of working.



David is a cartoonist, animator and storyteller based in Spain. Alongside his freelance work he's created animated shorts, comics and more. See his art at [artstation.com/davilorium](http://artstation.com/davilorium). ▶▶



## 1 Planning the page

I try to conceive the page as a “meaning unit” within the chapter, because the panel will be another one within the page later on. Once I have a clear vision of the main idea of the page and what’s going to be happening on it, I divide the action into “events”. I imagine that these panels are stills from a film. In this stage sometimes I don’t even draw; it’s enough for me to write a few notes to form a very general idea of the page.



## 2 Establish a rough plot

When I have the general idea of the page at a narrative level, I make some thumbnails. These are very sketchy and will feature stick characters, arrows, marks and so on. This is something that I’ve picked up from working on animations – it’s the stage that sits between analysing the script and creating the storyboards.

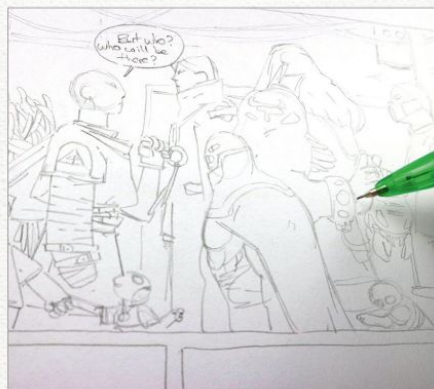


## 3 Sketching out the page

Next, I sketch out the entire page with a pencil. When I’m making quick drawings, I use traditional media, but for longer comic projects I always do the rendering with digital media because that enables me to have more control over everything, should I want to change something.

I prefer to use a pencil when sketching because my initial ideas and the first strokes are always more direct and spontaneous. When I draw with digital media I tend to erase, tidy things up and fix everything on the go. Everything flows naturally for me when I use a pencil. The end results always feel fresh, even with the occasional mistake. I try to avoid perfect renderings.





## 4 Building meaning into a panel

In a comic you can make any element from the surroundings work in favour of the story without having to worry about budget costs, unlike film productions, say. Here the main character is asking, "Who?" I have been keeping this question for this very moment, in which there's a crowd of people and a lot of visual information. The question hints at the mental state of the character: The crowd reinforces the question about the identity of that third character: the bearded guy walking forward among the crowd. You have unlimited resources to create meaning, so take full advantage of them.



## 5 Using metaphors in an unconstrained manner

I always try to use symbols in a unconventional manner, avoiding the tried and tested route. Here the main characters are walking in the opposite direction to everyone else, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're "going against the tide" or something like that. It's more related with a quest... or maybe not, I don't know! I think that's the right way to use metaphors - you have to give enough space to the readers so that they can come up with their own interpretations.



## 6 Creating rhythm

You can also sculpt time in comics. In my example, there's a lot of information in the first panel: characters are seeking something, they're surrounded by a crowd, and there's a question for a character who's not in the scene. You have to stop the reader in the panel and make them spend some time there. The next panel strongly contrasts with the earlier one. Instead of a sense of doubt, here we have a strong answer that's going to spin the course of the story. I'll separate the background with a flat colour and use a close-up shot to emphasise the character who's giving the blunt response.



## 7 Use everything you've got to reinforce ideas

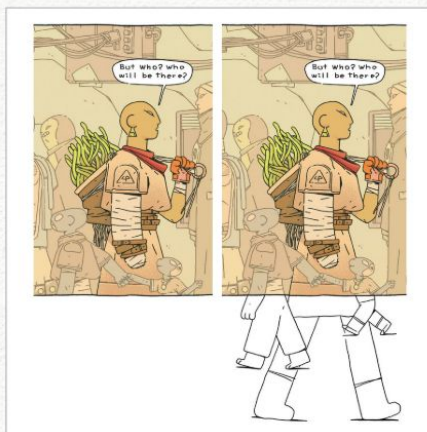
Here I've gone from a panel with a realistic background to the following two panels, where I've pulled the characters out of their environment to show them in an unfriendly setting. Seeing a character against a background with a different colour or surrounded by tubular plants will make the viewer quickly think that they're seeing a scene from a surrealist or experimental movie. Drawing the bearded character on a flat background, and the main character on a background covered by some sort of bizarre flora that's filling the available space helps to reinforce this moment of emotional turmoil. ➡➡





## 8 **Show only what's important to the story you're telling**

We've all read advice from comic experts who say that what happens between panels is as important or even more so, than what happens inside the actual panels. Well, that's about right! To design panels is to decide what part of the action is going to be seen by the viewer and what aspects they need to visualise themselves. This opens a whole range of creative possibilities, so take advantage of it to create moments and try to not show everything all the time.



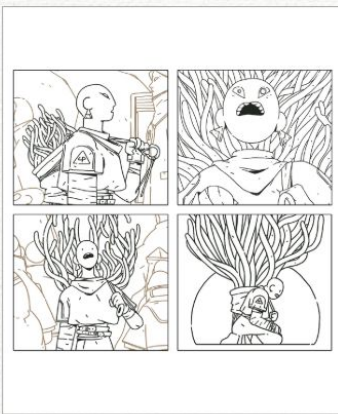
## 9 **Look beyond a panel's limits**

Between two panels there's time you can't see, but outside every panel there's also an unseen space. You can use it as you wish. These two characters work well compositionally, but if you try to imagine what their legs look like then you'll soon realise that everyone is actually at a different elevation. Not only do I not care about doing things like that, but sometimes I do it intentionally to just troll, or so the viewer can see how I've developed the drawing.



## 10 **Forcing the overlay technique**

We saw already a basic overlay with the profiles in the first panel, but here I'm going to force it even more. This kind of framing suits the character moment: she becomes isolated, nailed to the ground. Her companion goes away, tunnel vision, and so on. Some kinetic lines or a background with perspective lines vanishing into her face would have been more explicit, but here I'm using the overlay technique again, this time in a more extreme way to create more depth.



## 11 **Play with character design**

In mainstream animation your designs must be polished, for ease of reproduction. When I started to search my own personal art style, I realised that this had become a limiting factor and I had to let it go. Now I try to design characters with recognisable traits, but then vary everything in the panels. Here the character goes from having a nose to not having one, almond eyes to round eyes, and so on. It depends on the expressiveness of the moment; I don't care about anything else.



## 12 **Pull out figure from the panels**

There are comics where everything has to be dynamic looking. This isn't my style. I prefer the stability and stiffness of archaic art, and use a stable panel structure. When you're not used to pulling out the characters from the panels and you suddenly do, it has more visual impact than when you do it all the time. Here to close the page, I pull out the main character and leave her alone with her conflict. The weight that she carries twists and grows bigger than her.





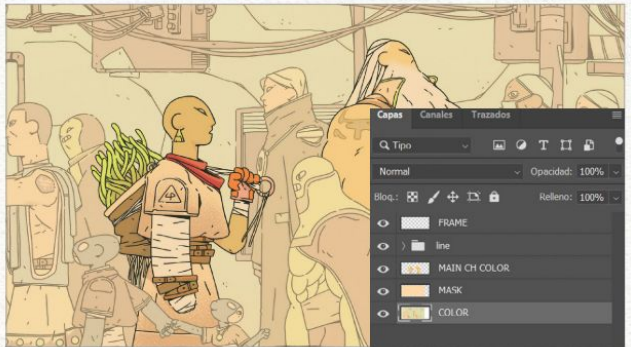
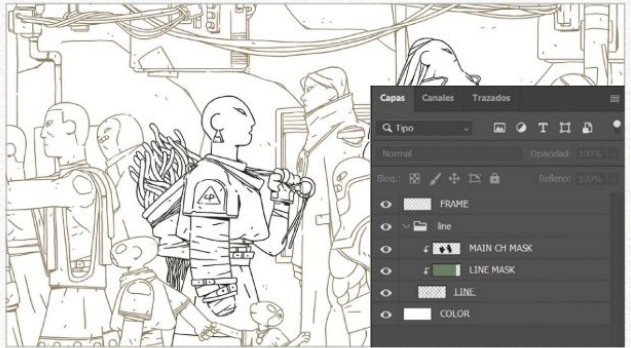
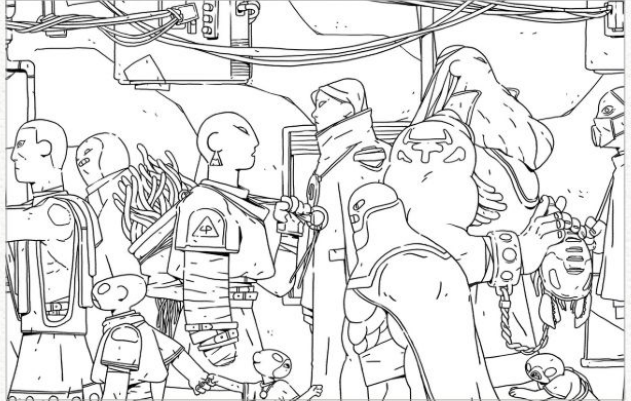
## 13 Adding colour to my line-art

For individual illustrations I tend to use traditional techniques, mainly alcohol markers. But in larger projects I add digital colour to the traditional line-art. This is something I started to do when I was a student because I didn't enough money to buy art supplies. A couple of years ago I returned to alcohol markers and ink, and right now I feel pretty comfortable with them. In the future I hope to work on large projects using purely traditional colouring media.



## 14 Make time for self-improvement

If you're wondering why there are just a few tips related with colour, it's because I'm colour blind. So this is the field that I can't really comment on. But even I have achieved ways of effective colouring. To work as a pro artist, you need to develop a system that enables you to complete client projects effectively, while giving you enough time for art experiments – such as new colouring techniques – while working on your personal projects.



## 15 Build depth with overlays

There are two ways of creating depth illusion in a drawing: perspective and overlays (when some shapes cover others, making us believe that they're closer to us). This panel features profiles and overlays because I'm interested in experimenting with that kind of Greek frieze look. I use the same line thickness for everything and then I divide the depth layers by varying the colour to reinforce the focal point. I do all my

lines in black and then I use a clipping mask to colourise the main characters with a darker outline than the rest.

Once I've coloured everything and reinforced the focal point of the panel, I apply a flat colour at a low opacity on top, excluding the main characters. Normally the ones that are closer should be darker, but that would be counterproductive because they would pop up more. Don't let reality ruin your drawing. 🍷



# First Impressions

✧ Serena Malyon ✧

Exploring her own personal challenges has helped this artist



**How did your childhood influence you?**

I grew up in Calgary, Alberta. I was lucky

enough to grow up with the Rocky Mountains in view, and I was always awestruck by the dramatic weather and sunsets. We have a lot of extreme weather, but it's often grand and inspiring, too.

I come from a fairly creative family, and they always encouraged me to try new things and find ways to express myself. Their encouragement has helped give me a strong artistic voice and given me the confidence to do this as a career.

**Is there a painting that caught your imagination when growing up?**

When I was 10, I had to do a project on Michelangelo for school. I ended up poring over the Sistine Chapel ceiling for ages, astonished that a person could have made such a masterpiece. That was when I really started paying attention to art, and tried improving my skills.



## AWAKENING

*"Most of my work in recent days has a bit more of 'me' in it," says Serena. This painting explores her identity.*

**What was your first paid commission like?**

My first job was with a local magazine – it was a big job and they took a chance on me. They needed seven interiors and a cover in about 11 days. I worked overtime on that job, agonising about it. The interiors aren't up to my current standards

“People can't hire you if they don't know you exist, so get your work out there”

due to the tight deadline, but I'm still proud of the cover.

**What was the last piece that you finished?**

Awakening is my latest piece, and it was a personal project about my identity. I have much greater confidence in my artistic vision

these days, and find it much easier to make works that reflect aspects of myself. Awakening is my purest expression of myself. It's the most vulnerable I've been, putting my bi/pan orientation out into the world for pride. But even in my other personal work, I try to explore aspects of myself, good and bad, and my place in the world.

**How has the industry changed?**

Social media is everything. No longer do I have to rely on a few big publishers seeing my work – I get contacted by all sorts of people for private commissions and projects. With self-publishing, Kickstarters, indie games and so on, the world of freelance illustration has really opened up. It takes time to find your audience, but there's enough work for everyone.

**What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?**

Stop being so nervous and just show people your work. People can't hire you if they don't know you exist, so get your work out there. It doesn't have to be perfect!

**Do you have a portfolio painting that means a lot to you, and why?**

My artwork Tokens comes to mind. It's about loss and remembrance. Carrying tokens of our loved ones with us on our journey.

**What is your next step in either your art or in life?**

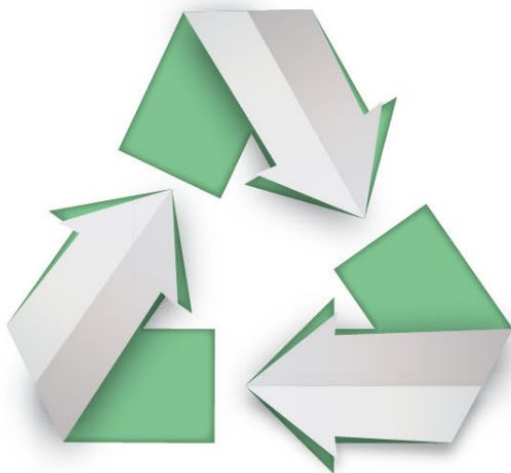
In the past few years I've been doing some world-building in my personal projects. I'd love to keep fleshing out my world of giants and find a way to bring my story to life. I have so many ideas for it and not enough time, but hopefully I'll get to do something with it soon.

Serena graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2012 and has since worked as a freelance illustrator. She's just started streaming her painting process on [twitch.tv/serenapaints](https://twitch.tv/serenapaints). You can see her full portfolio at [serenamalyon.com](https://serenamalyon.com).

## TOKENS

*"A woman rich in heirlooms. They're trinkets that remind her of lost loved ones and long-gone ancestors."*





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