ImagineFX

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

15
WAYS TO TO DEFINE A NEW DRAMATIC ART STYLE

FANTASY
ILLUSTRATION

Go beyond the canvas and craft your own art worlds with **Johan Egerkrans**

MASTERCLASS
ARTRAGE VITAE TECHNIQUES
Paint a loose and colourful portrait

ALSO INSIDE
ADVICE ON SURVIVING LIFE AFTER COLLEGE
CREATE PEN & INK ART WITH EMOTIONAL IMPACT
REBELLE 5 REVIEWED – BETTER THAN PAINTER?

PROCREATE
MASTER THE ART NOUVEAU STYLE
Boost your lighting, line-art & colour skills

FUTURE
ISSUE **210**

FROM ILLUSTRATOR TO AUTHOR, DISCOVER **TOM KIDD'S** STEAMPUNK UNIVERSE

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

When a painting isn't enough many artists stretch their imaginations and build entire worlds and universes, writing stories to flesh out the edges of their art. This issue we meet some of those artists.

Cover artist Johan Egerkrans has many books to his name, each filled with beautiful illustrations depicting dinosaurs and dragons. The artist's love of paleoart inspires his depictions of the world's dragon myths and legends. This issue he shares art from his latest book, Dragons (Drakar), and reveals his advice for designing and painting these fantastical beasts.

Traditional painter Tom Kidd takes us into the pages of his book, Gnemo – A Novel Tale of Airships, Adventure & Exploration, and reveals how his love of exploration and dull train rides helped him create his own world.

Film concept artist Paul Gerrard is thinking big with his project, Rivals. A graphic novel, video game and TV series are all in development.

If you're inspired, then our workshops this issue will reveal how to take your style up a gear and help you create your own worlds, too.

Editor
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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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Contents

22
Surviving life after college

28
The art of world building

34
Interview: Johan Egerkrans

30
Artist in Residence: Owen Weber

44
Tom Kidd: From artist to author

40 Sketchbook: Warrick Wong

58 ArtRage's oil brushes

52 Art Nouveau portrait

62 Style through shape

72 Polish your artworks

Workshops

92 Create art with emotion

Traditional Artist

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Resources

Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit: **ifxm.ag/illustrate210fantasy**

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

OVER 9 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

Paint an Art Nouveau-inspired female portrait in Procreate
Illustrator Maria Dimova draws on the natural world – specifically plants and flowers – and the Art Nouveau movement to help inform her beautiful portrait art. Her workshop is on page 52.
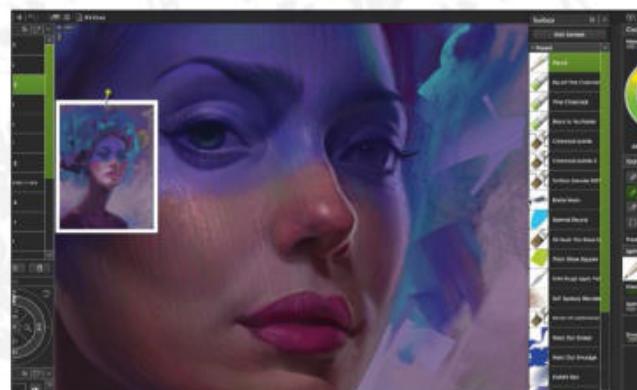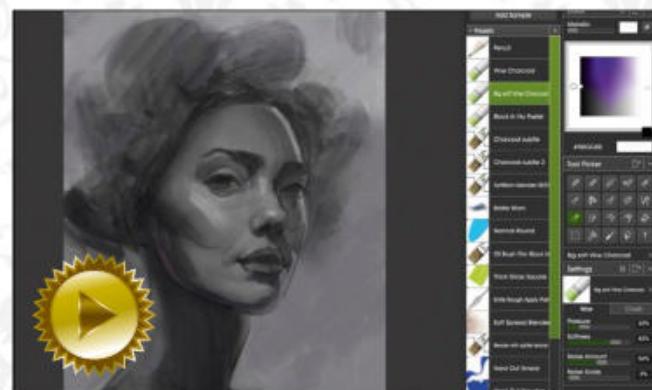
Refine your creative workflow for better results
Industry veteran Chris Petrocchi uses ArtRage to take her portrait art to the next level, by ensuring facial details, colours and textures are all working together. Turn to page 72 for more.

Get more from ArtRage
Paint in digital oils using bold brush strokes, with Daniel Ibanez's help. More on page 58.

Work with black and gold ink
See how François Gautier infuses his art with emotions. His workshop is on page 92.

ipso For press freedom with responsibility

Widely Recycled

FUTURE
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Next month in…

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2000 AD special edition

Celebrate 45 years of the galaxy's greatest comic with its artists!

Also in the issue…

Paint a calm cyberpunk scene
How to create an atmospheric manga illustration using Clip Studio Paint.

James Gurney masterclass
The legendary illustrator reveals how to paint and use gradients.

Get started in Rebelle 5
Paint a bold and colourful portrait using the new tools of Rebelle 5.

Pro results in ArtRage Vitae
Daniel Ibanez reveals how to get more from custom brushes in ArtRage.

ISSUE 211 ON SALE 18 FEBRUARY *IN PRINT & DIGITAL*

Artwork by Tom Foster © Rebellion

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STM's Myth laptop bag provides space, impact protection and sleek tailoring. The padded strap and back panel design provide all-round comfort, while the CableReady system lets you charge devices with cords out of sight.

Jennifer Voigt

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop
WEB: vhox.artstation.com

Jennifer is a freelance concept artist who loves to create quirky characters and creatures. Her work is characterised by colourful palettes and detailed line-art that often starts with messy scribbles.

1 WARMTH
"Discovering new creatures in my messy sketches always brings me warmth. But it does feel like a chase at times."

2 A CLANG OF ARMS
"This is inspired by a magpie couple visiting my balcony. Whenever they arrive, they land on the metal fence, which sounds like they're armed to the teeth."

3 JUST YOUR COMMON PLANTED SQUIRREL CAT
"The name is like a recipe for the process. I love combining whatever piques my interest to create wondrous beasts."

Godwin Akpan

LOCATION: Nigeria **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ZBrush, Blender, Vue, 3ds Max **WEB:** artstation.com/godwinakpan

Godwin is self-taught and works freelance in the entertainment industry. His core discipline is environment design, but he also enjoys character design and keyframe art. His influences are Dylan Cole, Feng Zhu and Cedric Peyravernay.

1 PLAY TIME
"This painting captures the loss of a pet coupled with the good memories that were once shared. It's a bittersweet feeling that really resonates with people who have lost a pet."

2 LOST WORLD
"Here's my interpretation of the famous temple in Cambodia, Angkor Wat. The painting explores what this ancient site would look like years in the future."

3 PLAYING WITH FIRE
"This painting depicts the power of magic. Using fire as a story element, I tried to explore how a child uses magic to paint her dreams of becoming a dancer."

FXPosé

Giuseppe De Iure

LOCATION: Italy **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender, Procreate **WEB:** artstation.com/giuseppedeiure

Giuseppe has been passionate about creating worlds and character designs since his childhood. "I'm in love with fantasy-related stuff, so I fill sketchbooks with orcs, dwarves and knights!"

1 PRISONERS
"Artwork done for Serpentarium. Fantasy races and a post-apocalyptic world make this an unusual and funny illustration."

2 PENANNGGLANN VAMPIRE
"Art done for Wyrd Edizioni. The aim was to create both a sensual and horrifying woman creature from Malay folklore."

© Serpentarium
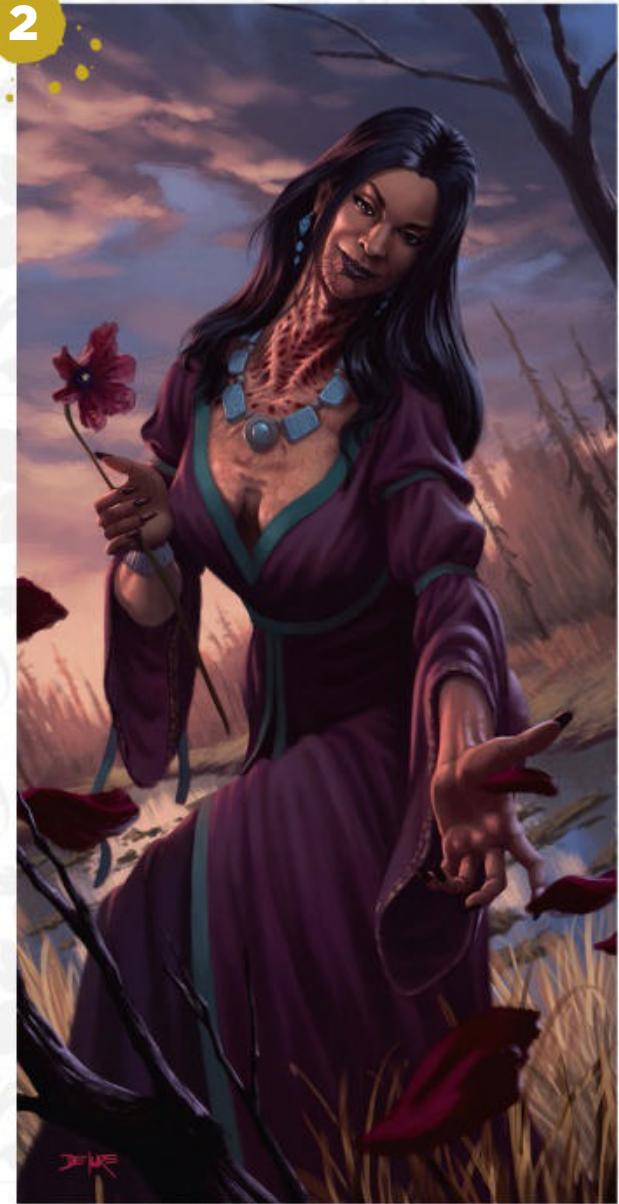
© Wyrd Edizioni

© Monte Cook Games

3 FROZEN CRYPT
"An illustration for Monte Cook Games. It depicts a ritual in a frozen crypt. Fortunately, I did it in the heat of summertime."

4 DARK GUARDIAN
"This piece, created for Wyrd Edizioni, depicts a semi-giant night guardian, who reveals himself only during the nighttime."

© Wyrd Edizioni

Want to submit your work? Visit http://ifxm.ag/getinifx

Kirsten Gaila

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Procreate **WEB:** kirstengailaart.wixsite.com/portfolio

Kirsten is studying animation at CalArts and aspires to go into visual development and design. "I especially love to experiment with a variety of shapes, colours and techniques to further liven my stories."

1 CLASSIC LA TRAFFIC
"I adore the ambience of chromosphere landscapes, so being stuck in traffic that strangely looked just as ambient made me want to draw such a character."

2 THE RIDE BACK HOME
"I wanted to depict that nostalgic ride back home after school. A huge inspiration for this piece was the idea of how atmospheric cities can be."

3 HEAR OUR CRY
"I find certain historical buildings mystical yet daunting, as if they were haunted. I wanted to create a story from that idea."

FXPosé

Yusra Shahid

LOCATION: India MEDIA: Procreate WEB: yusra.myportfolio.com

Yusra is a background and visual development artist, who works in animation. She brings her Indian culture and the traditions she grew up around into her art, as she believes it gives her a unique perspective.

1 THE HOBBIT'S VISITOR
"Gandalf visits an old friend. These images are part of a visual development project based around The Lord of the Rings."

2 BARAD-DUR
"Frodo, Sam and Gollum arrive at Barad-dûr. This is the enormous fortress where the Dark Lord Sauron resides."

3 GANDALF'S RESEARCH
"Gandalf researches and finds out about the history of the One Ring. I love painting these scenes in my style."

4 SARUMAN'S WORKSHOP
"Saruman oversees the orcs making weapons for the oncoming war, while the Eye of Sauron keeps watch."

Alexander Ngo

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate WEB: alexvngo.com

Alex is a freelance illustrator whose clients include Paizo, Hit Point Press and Green Ronin Publishing. "I enjoy painting works that have a strong sense of mood," says the artist.

1 BULEZAU
"I've been enjoying character design. Here's my rendition of a classic D&D monster."

2 ALL'S LOST
"This was my 'pandemic piece'. I just wanted to capture a feeling of despair and uncertainty."

3 BLOODCASTER
"I'd love to create work for Magic: The Gathering and this was my rendition of one of its cards from the Crimson Vow set."
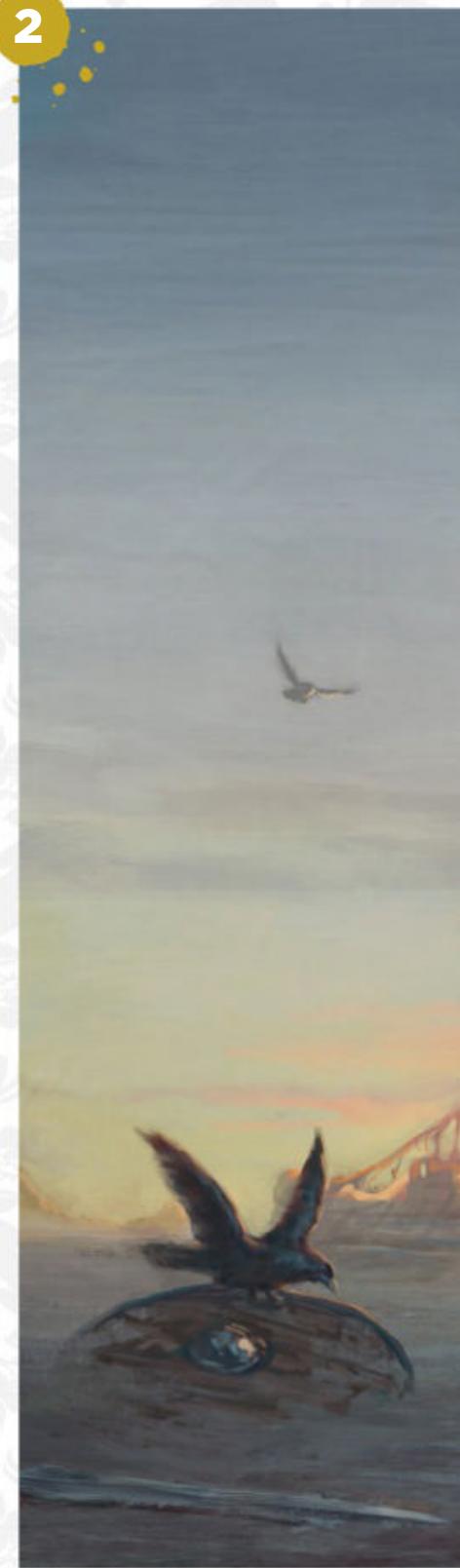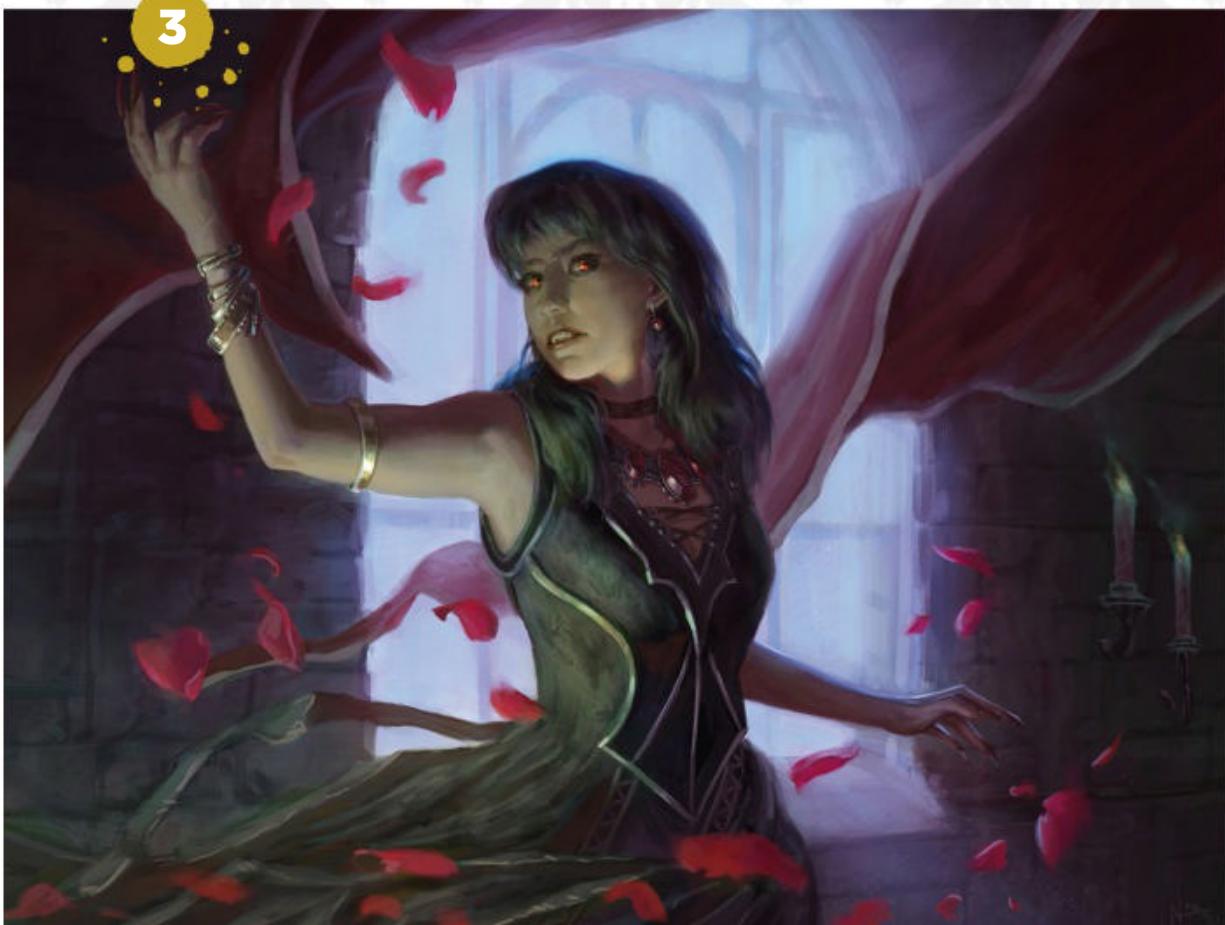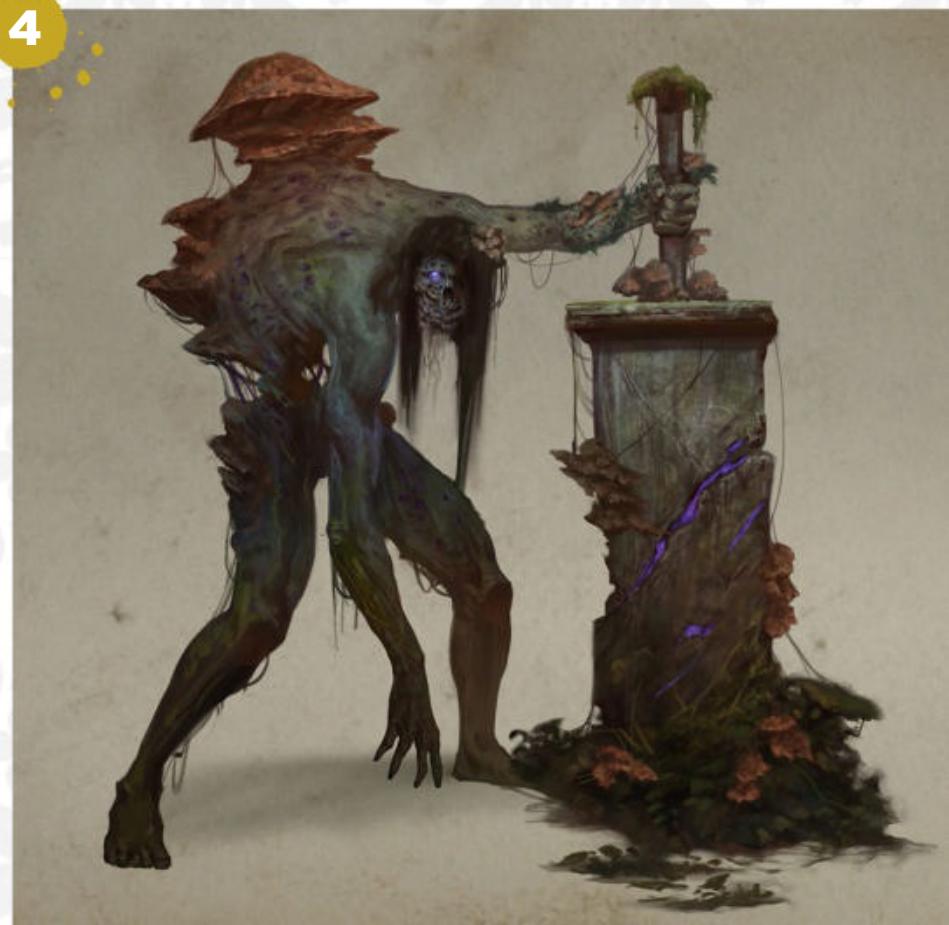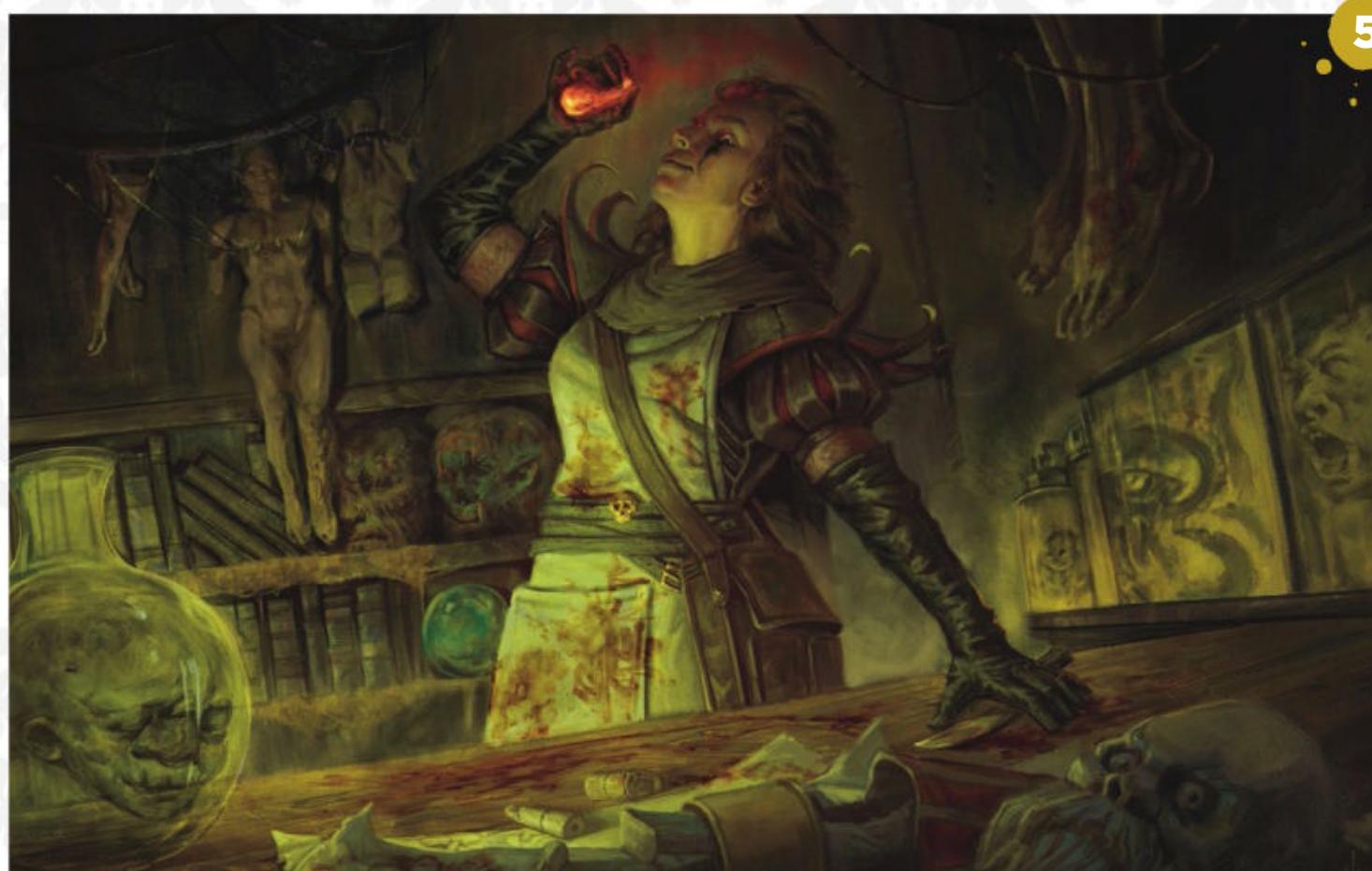
© Hit Point Press

5

4 SPORE ZOMBIE
"Another fun character design. Really enjoyed playing with all the different textures in this one."

5 SOPHIE'S LAB
"A fun painting I did for Hit Point Press's Heckna Project. I enjoyed trying to capture the feeling of a mad scientist in her lab."

FXPosé

George Kambadais

LOCATION: Greece **MEDIA:** Clip Studio Paint, Blender **WEB:** gkambadais.com

George is a self-taught comic book artist who's worked with DC Comics, Image, IDW and more. He likes exploring foreshortening and perspective, and always tries to bring new elements into his work.

© Shobo

1 VENOM
"What can I say? I love drawing Spider-Man (and playing with foreshortening) and his big list of foes! Hope I'll do it professionally one day."

2 TOBA
"This is a cover from Buckhead, a book that I'm doing for BOOM! Studios. I wanted to make the sword stand out, so I used a light green hue on everything else."

3 SPIDER-MOM
"I had this idea one day. What if Miles Morales's mother was bitten by the radioactive spider instead of Miles, and Miles was her 'guy in the chair'."

Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

JOHN CARTER
"A couple of months ago, I was approached by Dynamite Comics to work on a John Carter book. This is a try-out sketch."
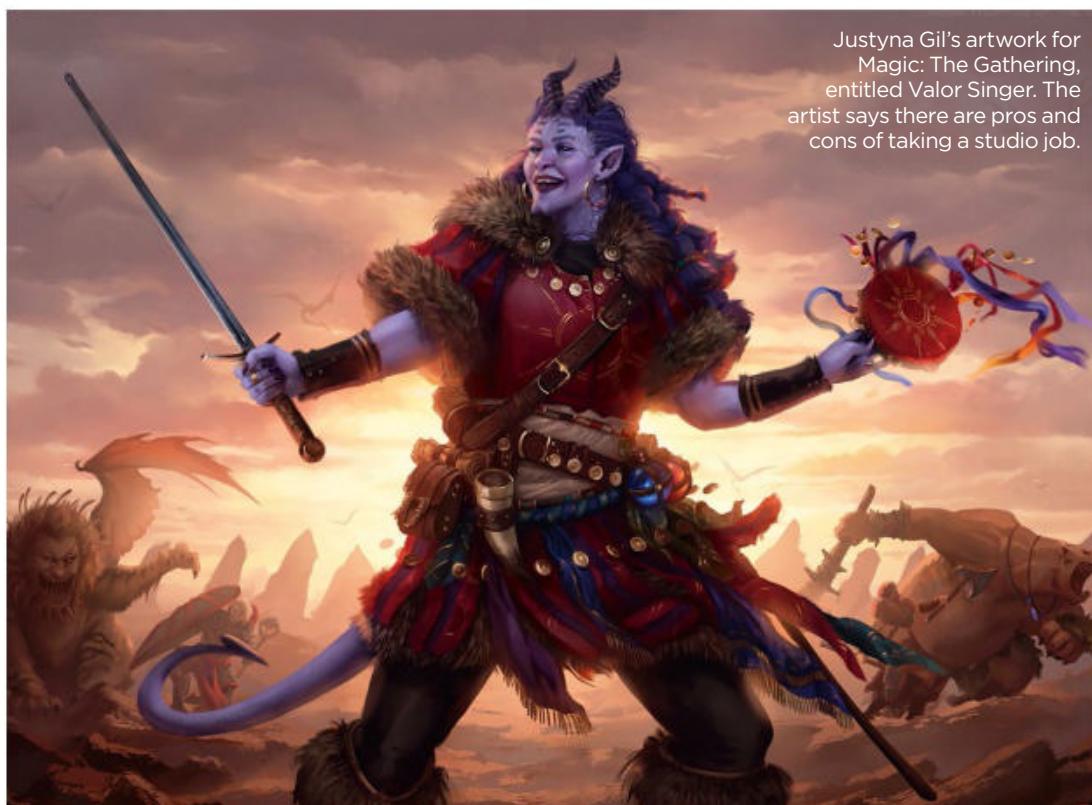
Justyna Gil's artwork for Magic: The Gathering, entitled Valor Singer. The artist says there are pros and cons of taking a studio job.
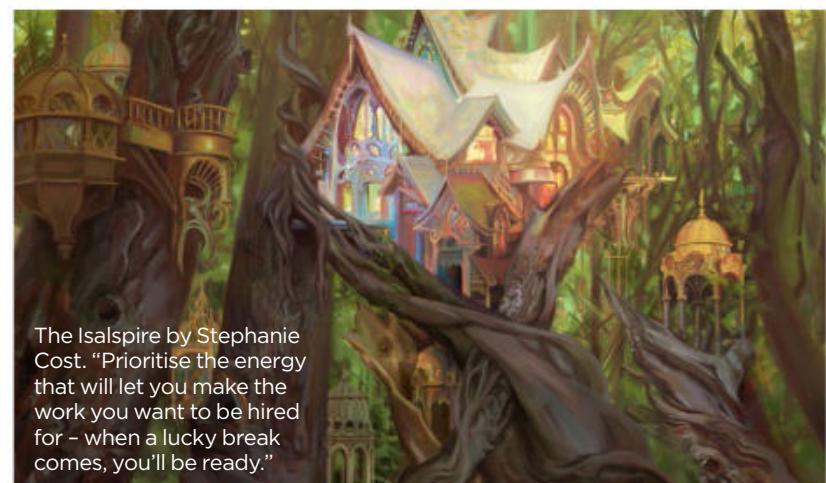
The Isalspire by Stephanie Cost. "Prioritise the energy that will let you make the work you want to be hired for – when a lucky break comes, you'll be ready."

© Wizards of the Coast
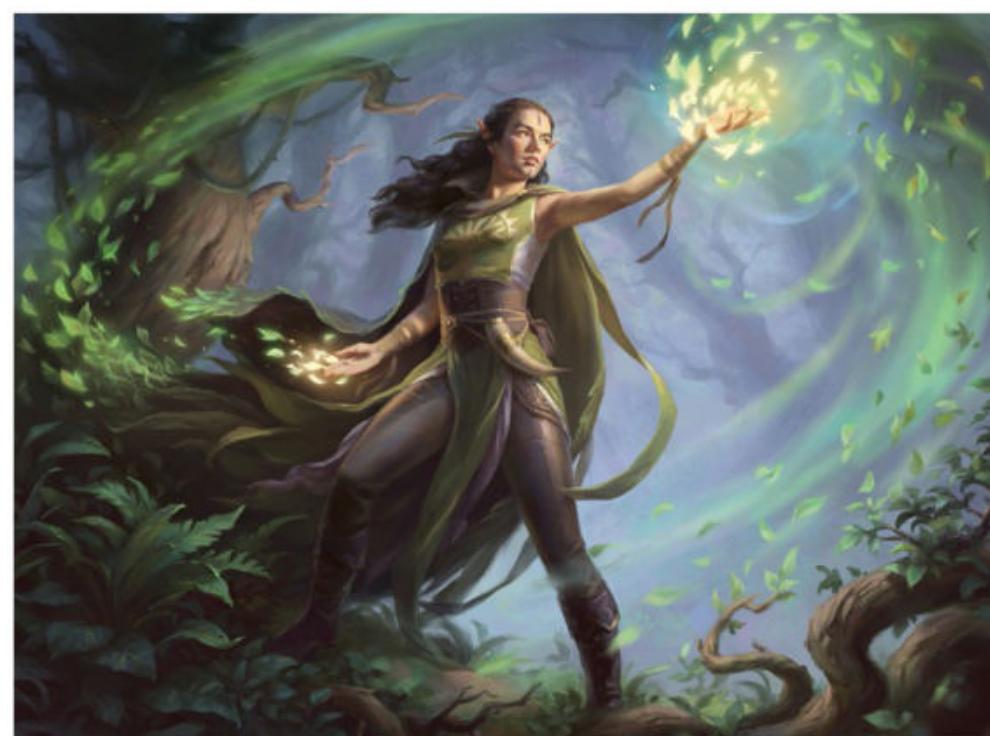
Surviving life after college

Life lessons **Tanya Combrinck** finds out how to survive as an artist in the real world after graduation

Transitioning from the structure of a university course to the chaos of real life is daunting and requires skilful decision-making and self-management. The first decision you face is whether to go for a studio job or try to make it as a freelancer.

"It's important to find a living situation that lets you build a portfolio of work similar to your end-goal career," says freelance illustrator **Stephanie Cost**. You will make lots of useful connections in a studio job and some say their skills improved much faster in this setting, but it could hold you back from doing what you want.

"One of the disadvantages of a studio job I found was the necessity to do assignments that weren't related to my field of interest," says fantasy illustrator **Justyna Gil**. "If you have a clear goal, I would recommend a freelance job all the way. Otherwise, getting a studio job first can help you work out the exact career path you want to follow."

Whichever route you take, building an online presence is key to finding work. "Social media is a fantastic resource for growing a following as well as getting your work in front of art directors and those responsible for

> **❝ Whichever route you take, building an online presence is key to finding work ❞**

making hiring decisions," says **Zara Alfonso**, who illustrates Warhammer and Magic: The Gathering. "Post regularly and check out how other artists have set up their social media, and try to emulate that. Twitter and ArtStation have gotten me a lot of work opportunities, and Discord has also become a popular

Nature's Aegis by Zara Alfonso. "Art is a long and difficult career path. It's important to take the time to appreciate the small victories."

platform for artists to connect on, so finding a Discord group related to the type of work you'd like to do is a great way to connect with peers."

JUST BE YOU

It may be tempting just to post your own work, but Brazil-based illustrator Ernanda Souza advises putting your personality out there and writing about your sources of inspiration. It's also important not to spread yourself too thin; focus your energies on the right platforms. **Ernanda** explains: "Nowadays Twitter and ArtStation are the most important, followed by Instagram, which is going through an algorithm focus change where video content will be given a higher priority."

Concept artist Livia Prima recommends using between five and seven pieces of the work that you're most passionate about in your portfolio, and tailoring the selection ➤➤

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

FIRST CONTACT

Ernanda Souza on how to go about pitching for work

Where should a graduate start their career?
Decide who you aspire to work for, and if you're not at their skill level yet, find companies that do the same type of work but are lower level. We all have to start somewhere and not everyone is that lucky to get their first job in a triple-A company.

Any portfolio advice?
Show the company that your work can fit in with their existing intellectual property. Each project will have its own aesthetic rules to look out for. To get work into comics, you need to know what you would like to do, whether that's covers, inking or colouring, and adapt your portfolio accordingly.

What about making contact?
Most companies have an ArtDrop email address for receiving portfolios – look for it on their website along with their instructions for sending in your work, and follow these carefully. If they don't have it, search for their art directors by name. Do not DM them unless they give you a free pass to do it. Instead, send your work to their professional email address.

Where should graduates go to get their work seen?
Art directors search for artists mostly on ArtStation, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, so make sure your work is out there and discoverable. And put your contact email everywhere!

A freelance character concept artist and illustrator from Brazil, Ernanda's many clients include Marvel.

artstation.com/ernandasouza

Spirit Tamer by Ernanda Souza. "I particularly enjoy the freedom freelancing can give."

➡ to the company you're applying to. "Choose the ones that represent your strong points and your style," says **Livia**. "Show the client that you're able to do a variety of things; for example, you could include full illustrations with background, some character designs and some environments."

Remember your portfolio is only as strong as the weakest piece in it. "It's really important to have work that's consistent – no art director wants to take a risk, so they're looking for people who have proven they can hit a mark over and over, and developing that consistency will get you further than anything else," says Stephanie.

It's a good idea to create pieces that look as though they belong among the output of the companies you want to work for; even fan art can get you noticed. "The more tailored your

Frog Princess by Stephanie. "Saying yes to diminishing-returns projects is a major pitfall."

> ❝ There's always the option to monetise your personal work if that helps motivate you to keep at it ❞

work is, the easier it is for an art director to see how well it suits their project," says Zara.

ADJUST TO THE INDUSTRY

Different industries have different norms for how to get a foot in the door. "If you're looking for film and concept art work, networking at live events is important, as the more pipelines a company has depending on each other, the more important organic relationships among colleagues are," says Stephanie. If you

want to do book covers or tabletop games, she advises going to book and game shops, noting the companies that use art similar to what you want to do and deepening that niche in your portfolio. "Avoid a compulsion to make a jack-of-all-trades portfolio," she continues. "Focus on the industry you want to enter. It's like trying to fish: there's no one net that will catch every type of fish, and the more vague it is, the less successful you'll be overall."

When you do get work and things get busy, it can be easy to neglect

Mother of Runes by Livia, who was asked to depict her own ethnicity and culture in this design for a card in Magic: The Gathering. Indonesian Batik and Javanese Script appear as graphic elements.

personal projects, but it's a mistake to let these slide. Most artists find that personal work is important for staying inspired and creative, and it usually leads to paid work. Stephanie recommends creating personal art in bodies of work or series, and setting deadlines. "Working in series lets you stop 'noodling' endlessly on any given piece," she says. "When there's another piece right after this one, who cares if you feel like you fell short?"

There's always the option to monetise personal work if that helps motivate you to keep at it. "I make a small income through doing personal work via prints and merchandise sales, both online and at events, as well as selling traditional art through events and galleries," says Zara.

If you really don't have time, Livia has this tip: "To reach a feeling of fulfilment, I always try to insert a part of myself into my client work. It may be a technique I'm currently loving, a costume design I want to paint, or a lighting or composition I want to try."

For Stephanie, the biggest mistake you can make as a new artist is to be overly aggressive with social media networking and get too caught up in the metrics. "Hide your follower count

Anisya by Livia Prima. The artist was commissioned by a scammer purporting to be from a major magazine – she was never paid for this image. Watch out!
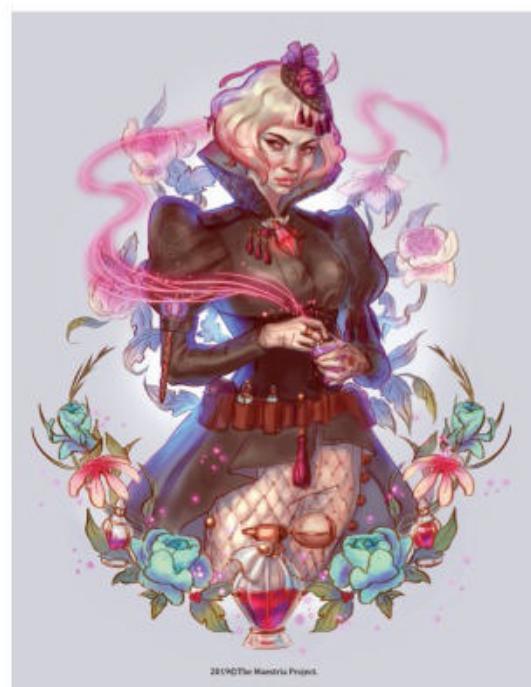
Perfumer Class by Ernanda. "When creating your online presence, you need to be consistent. Post new content once per week or more if you really want to grow your number of followers."

Veil of Protection by Justyna. "Your personal projects will allow you to grow faster and eventually result in better paid work that's tailored to your interests."

TAKE A BREATHER

Stephanie Cost explains how to manage your natural creative rhythm

It's crucial to recognise the inhale-exhale pattern of life as a creative person. You'll experience periods when you're inhaling – you're just taking things in and being inspired, reading all the time, watching TV, craving being in nature, and so on. Then there are periods of exhaling, when you produce good work.

It's hard to transition from being in school to being a freelancer, because that breathing pattern is now up to you to recognise and regulate. Identify what you loved best about the stage of your life you're about to leave behind, and replicate it. Did you love being a student and having structure? Make a syllabus. Did you appreciate having people give you feedback regularly? Seek out a peer group. You may not have loved your assignments, but you *had* them– in a similar way, you need goals you can put on your fridge when they're done. But most importantly, have faith in yourself, and remember to inhale when you need to.

from yourself. Use whatever version of Twitter won't automatically show it to you, as it will drive you so far off your path that you won't remember why you started drawing in the first place," she says. Focus on participating in the community, building relationships with your peers and meeting people at events in real life if you can.

NOT A SPRINT

It's important to acknowledge from the start that in seeking a career as an artist, you're signing up for a long journey and you need to be patient. "It will take years for your skills to be considered professional level and to get a good client list, but don't give up when you think you will never learn; you will!" says Ernanda.

"Artists experience failure far less often than they encounter the need to wait and have faith in their abilities," says Stephanie. "It's a game of endurance. Many artists work part- or full-time jobs to pay the bills, and that's fine. The sooner you congratulate yourself on your determination instead of berating yourself for your failure to move forward fast enough, the better you'll be – and the better your work will be." ⬤

Cursed Paramour by Zara. "I found Discord really helpful when I was starting out as it gave me a direct connection to other artists in the industry I was pursuing."

The Bright Queen by Stephanie. "Establish a presence on a lot of sites, but focus on only a few – otherwise you'll be stretched too thin for any of it to matter."

Mike Mignola reveals Sir Edward Grey: Acheron is him "trying to wrap things up and tie up loose ends."
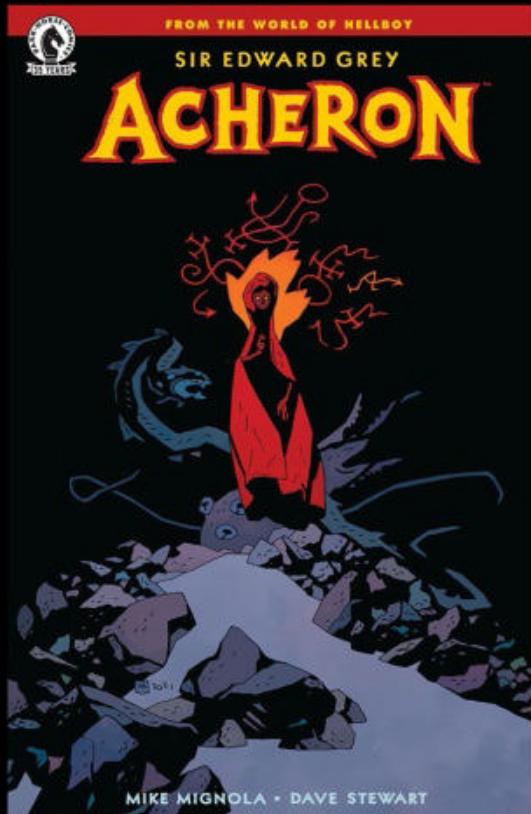
Mike worked with his usual creative team – Clem Robins and Dave Stewart – on the new comic.

Hellboy and Rasputin meet their fate, in a flashback scene from Sir Edward Grey: Acheron.

The devil's in the detail for Mike Mignola's return

Drawn back Mike Mignola revisits the world of Hellboy and continues the tale of the demon in the aftermath of The Devil You Know's devastating story arc

Iconic comic creator **Mike Mignola** returned to his Hellboy universe for the first time in five years when he released Sir Edward Grey: Acheron in December 2021. This was the next chapter in the incredible Hellboy Universe.

So why come out of Hellboy retirement to write and illustrate Acheron? "At this point, it's quite simple, I'm trying to wrap things up and tie up loose ends," says the artist, adding: "It's pretty hard to do, as I seem to keep inventing new loose ends. But I'm trying. There are a few characters I've created who are not yet where they need to end up."

This one-shot comic is the follow-up to B.P.R.D.: The Devil You Know, in which the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense fought off
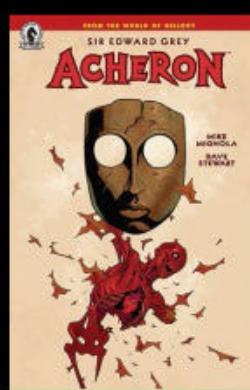
The variant cover of Sir Edward Grey: Acheron, by New Zealand comic artist Ben Stenbeck.

monsters on Earth long enough for humanity to escape underground.

Mike tells us it was easy coming back to the Hellboy universe as it's "pretty much all I've been drawing for more than 25 years now".

TEAM WORKS

The new one-shot also means Mike is back working with letterer Clem Robins and colourist Dave Stewart. He reflects on this relationship: "I hate to say it, but I probably take the lettering for granted. I just don't focus on it the way I focus on the colouring, as it doesn't touch on the actual drawing. At least, not the way the colour does. I'm sure I'd notice if it changed, but it's just one of these invisible things I count on to always be there, in the way we take breathable air for granted.

"Colour is a much bigger focus for me, and Dave and I still talk through every cover and every page. There is a collaboration between Dave and I that I just don't have with Clem. His sense of the way things should be done is just so natural after all this time

Is the mysterious figure behind the mask the eponymous Sir Edward Grey? We're not telling!

working together. Clem doesn't have to endure my very long phone calls."

It's interesting to hear Mike dissect his work, and he's more honest when we ask for advice to pass on. "Sage advice?" he asks himself. "I critique my own work... I just try to do my best, and have to try and live with the disappointment. The artwork is never going to be quite as good as what I have in my head. I just try to get as close as I can and keep moving."

You can buy Sir Edward Grey: Acheron now, from stores or direct from darkhorse.com.

> ❝ There are a few characters I've created who are not yet where they need to end up ❞

When coming up with the Draugr, Dela and his team started with basic undead Vikings and even explored options that were only made of bones.

All images © Sony Computer Entertainment

For God of War's Light Elf design, Dela wanted to evoke the feeling of a monk or spirit.

The Dark Elf is very organic in design; parts of their bodies and wings resemble elements from nature.

A day in the life of…
Dela Longfish

Game on The lead character concept artist believes in maintaining the work chemistry in his creative team

I'm usually up around 8:30am and then definitely need to get the coffee on, so I can get my day going. My wife Nikki and I share our plans for the day, then I jump into work.

I start work around 10am and I typically have a loose game plan on what I'm going to do that day. I try to have all my meetings in the morning, responding to emails and any other priorities or curveballs that have shown up overnight. I try to get as much done by 11am, so I can switch over to doing artwork.

I take my lunch break around 1pm and Nikki and I alternate cooking, ordering or going out. In the office, it was great going to lunch with the team. When I get back from lunch, I do artwork till 4pm and then I switch over to meeting with my team.

I meet with my team not only to see if they need feedback or clarity, and check how their tasks are going, but also to share ideas, brainstorm and try to keep the creativity and chemistry that we had in the studio going. Morale is really important, and working remotely can make people feel isolated from the project.

DOWN TIME

I'm typically off work by 7pm, depending on deadlines and crunch. After work, I try to do personal art, sketching anything that's the complete opposite of what I'm creating at work. Then we cook dinner, play games with friends, or just decompress and sketch while watching TV. We typically go to bed around 1am. My wife is also an artist, so her understanding the long hours, dedication and demands helps a lot.

I think something that people don't talk enough about for people starting out in the industry is how important communication and being able to work in a team setting is. Video games are very collaborative, so

being able to take feedback and working with other departments is very important.

Dela is a Native American concept artist living in Los Angeles, where he's worked on projects such as God of War and Star Wars: 1313. You can see more of Dela's art at artstation.com/delalongfish and etsy.com/shop/DelaAndNikki.
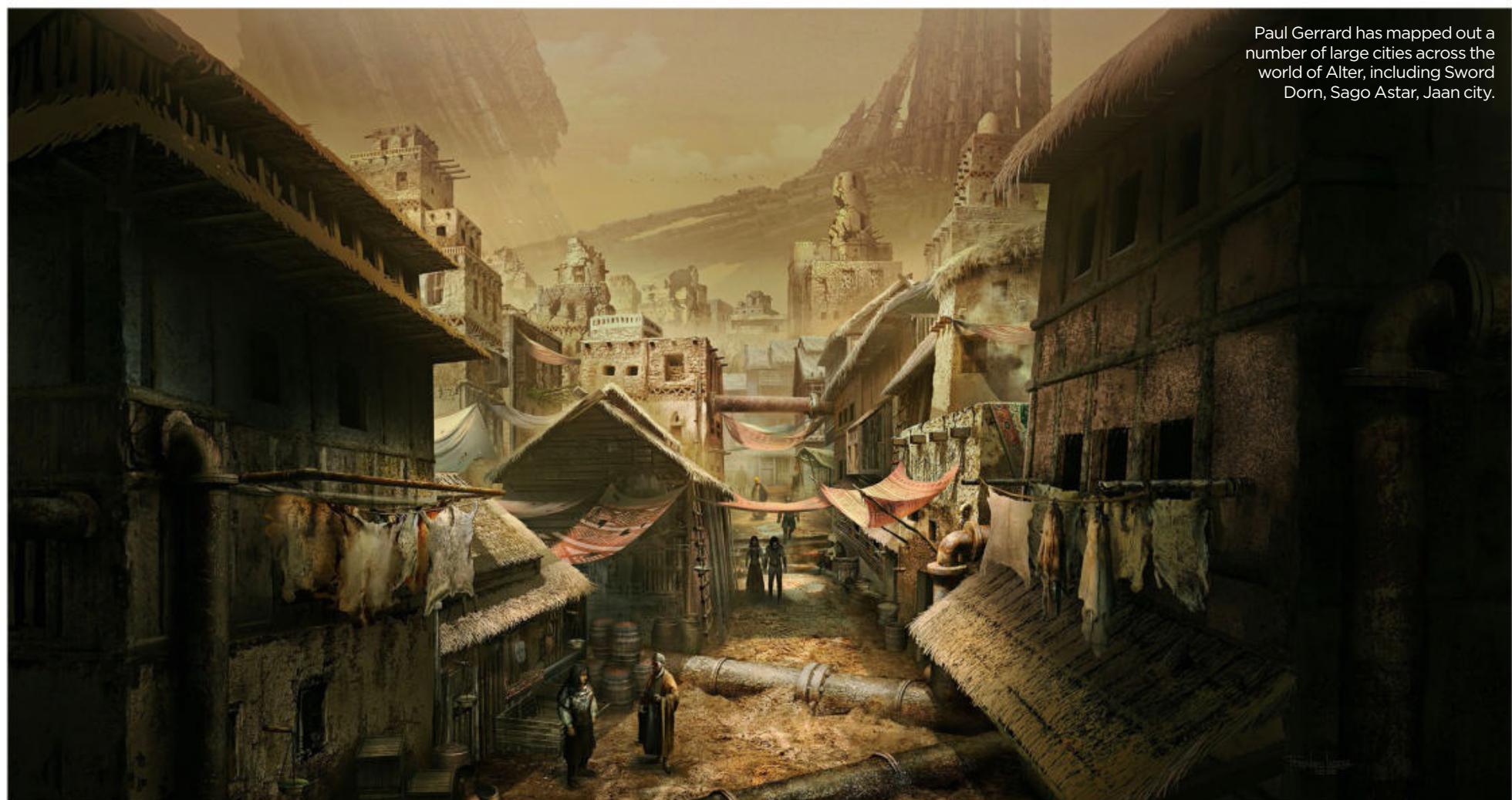
Paul Gerrard has mapped out a number of large cities across the world of Alter, including Sword Dorn, Sago Astar, Jaan city.

The art of world building

Think big To succeed, don't just create a world, create a universe, reveals **Paul Gerrard**, the artist behind an ambitious multi-channel project

Having taken four years to create, it's only natural that Paul Gerrard would feel bullish about Rivals, his graphic novel that depicts a brutal martial-arts fantasy world. Not only is this the first in a series of books the artist has planned, but a board game is also due this year, followed by a PlayStation 5 game pitch, and even a planned live action TV series.

"I decided," says **Paul**, "it's not enough just to do a script and a package, I want to do the whole thing, the whole George Lucas."

With a background in film and TV concept art, on Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Hellboy and Indiana Jones 5, Paul is no stranger to the demands of the industry or what it takes to create a new IP. He began on Rivals by defining his world: "post-apocalyptic [...]

medieval, with a kind of Mad Max overlay". From there he worked on mapping the history of the planet, then its factions, then its clans, and finally he whittled his way down to his characters and only then did he begin writing the story.

TEAM WORK

Rivals is co-created with writer and film director Mike Clarke, and comic artists such as Greg Staples and Dave

Kendall have joined to bring the graphic novel's pages to life. Paul is canny about bringing on board people he's worked with (Greg Staples was production designer on Hellboy with Paul), and he'd work through Rivals ideas with Mike Clarke because the pair were on set of the indie horror film Cali together.

Paul has a very specific style. His surreal dark fantasy creatures and character designs offer a distinct
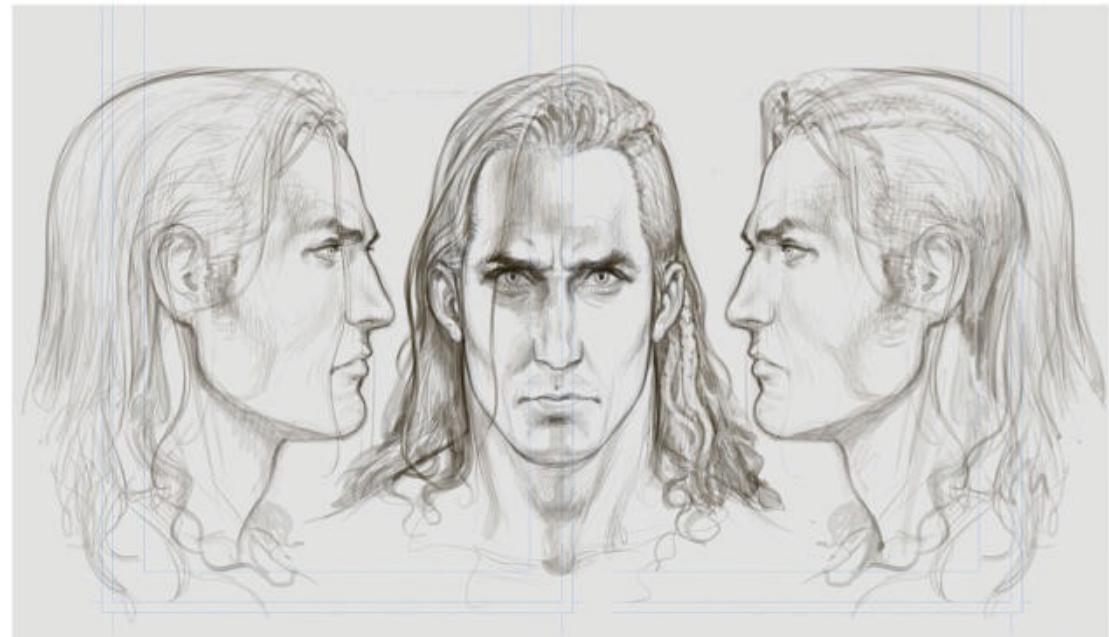
While Rivals is the vision of Paul Gerrard, film concept artists Ferdinand D. Ladera, Pedro Blanco and Richard Perez Torres are also involved with the project.

66 It's not enough just to do a script and a package, I want to do the whole thing 99

The Kaeru are ox-like creatures are native to the Kuran region of the comic's world.

These designs for Sword Maebure, one of the comic's main clan leaders showcase Paul's dark visual style.

This Rivals cover, called The Duel, was painted by collaborator Bayarmagnai Avirmed.
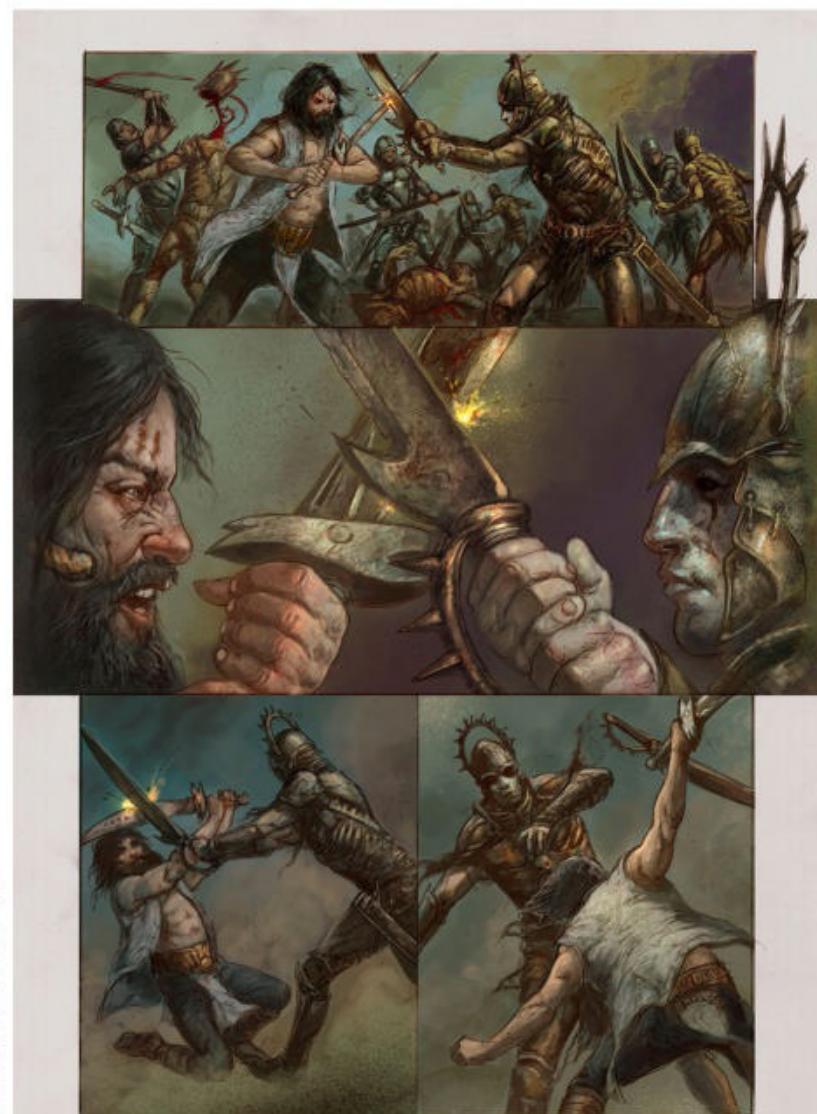
Set on the planet Alter the graphic novel tells the story of Sago Astar and his struggle against the body-horror inspired Gokin race.

world view. So was it hard finding like-minded artists to work with?

"It's been the opposite," Paul tells us, saying he chooses artists who think like him. "For example," he says, "there's a race of creatures called the Gokin, which have skin so thick they have no pain receptors, so the armour is welded into the skin [...] I gave this to Richard Perez, the comic artist, and he took it to a really extreme Hellraiser vibe."

FAMOUS FACE

As well as the comic art talent brought into the fold to help elaborate on Paul's design docs and script, he also found inspiration in an unlikely source: actor Gary Daniels. Initially Gary was

brought on to Rivals for the TV series pitch, with the actor playing the lead. But, says Paul, he's become a fan, offering script advice and ideas. "He looks the part," says Paul. "He's a real spiritual warrior in real life."

You may not be able to call on an Iron Fist champion as a muse, but Paul is proof that thinking big can pay off. *You can follow the Rivals project on Kickstarter at ifxm.ag/pg-rivals.*

MAKING YOUR OWN WORLD

Paul explains needing a business head, changing styles and how D&D affected Rivals

Do artists now need to have a business mind as well as a creative process?

"I think so. You need to have a business head, because there are millions of people trying to get comics published through the traditional channels. The way to go is through yourself and approach your project from a business standpoint. And you've got to plan years in advance if you want to be successful."

Have you changed your style over the years?

"I get pigeonholed as a horror artist, but I don't see myself as horror. My work was always a little monochrome or Giger-esque, and about a year ago I worked on Dungeons & Dragons. The production designer said it's gonna be a hard sell to get me on because they wanted vibrant and colourful art. I learned the hard way, and really quick, to push the colours to the extremes. Since then, my work has been like that. It's affected my work in a huge way. In a good way."

Did this affect Rivals?

"Yeah, after the project ended I carried on creating D&D characters and creatures, then melded them into the Rivals world. Once you're in the zone for something, don't just stop – carry on and keep it going."

So, has Rivals evolved over its four-year planning stage?

"Yeah. The world of Rivals and its technology has been affected by 'gulf storms' but you still have to design the world that came before, then the medieval world that came after. If I change something in the world's history, it affects the present; everything has to be reworked. Be careful what you change."

On my shelf behind my easel, I keep my small collection of skulls, antlers, horns, a bat skeleton, and some more dinosaur sculptures.

I have a scanner, a Mac, a Wacom tablet, and a Bose speaker setup. That's all I really need for the level of digital work I do – although it's all mostly used to watch horror movies while I paint.

Owen Weber

Dino art James Gurney, William Stout and issues of National Geographic jostle for space in this artist's family friendly studio

I've always been a painter who likes to work small. Most of my work is between 5x7 and 24x18 inches, so it makes sense that I'd have a fairly small studio. Essentially, all I need for my studio space are a computer (mainly for watching movies while I paint and occasionally for doing business things), an easel, a shelf (for attaching lights and displaying silly knick-knacks), a printer, a tabouret, a small scanner and a good chair.

In April 2020, we welcomed our second child, Einar, into our family, so I've had to figure out some makeshift babyproofing solutions. I have a yardstick that I can slip through the handles of one of my drawer units, and I have to turn my tabouret towards my easel every time I am finished painting, and then I tuck tall boxes in between the easel and the drawers to keep him from getting to my brushes and sharp things.

When my wife, Sarah, and I had our first child, Dagmar, I quit my day job and focused on being a stay-at-home parent and pursuing a career as an illustrator. From a very young age, we've made it very clear to our kids that the studio area is off limits, and for the most part, they understand. My son is still very curious about all of it, but as long as I let him turn my studio lights on and off 50 times a day, he doesn't seem to care too much about the rest of it.

BOOK KEEPERS

I have my most essential books next to my easel – books that I'm constantly inspired by, dinosaur reference books or landscape reference that I have gathered from old issues of National Geographic. No need to file my James Gurney or William Stout books away, because they're basically always open next to my easel.

> ❝ Because my studio is in our living room, I have to make sure everything is sealed ❞

More books in our living room. These are usually hidden behind toys.

My family is of Danish ancestry, so I love having this poster of one of our favourite Danish cities, Roskilde, over my desk.

I love dark things and my birthday is on Halloween, so I have art in my studio that reflects that. Demon characters, a Hand of Glory and a nice big poster of a horror classic, Let the Right One In.

I bought this puppet when my wife and I went to Prague. And you can just about see some of the books I keep coming back to – my favourite artists and other reference material that fuels my work.

I have two awards in my studio: a Best in Show I got in a hometown art show and a First Place in the Gen Con Art Show.

Many more art books and annuals are in other parts of my apartment. My wife has a master's degree in art history, so we've both accumulated many books of all sorts over the years.

Because my studio is situated in a corner of our living room, I have to make sure that everything is sealed in boxes or jars. I don't have anything open to the air, including my palette, which I have in a plastic palette box that I bought back in college. My family never complains about any smells, except when I have just varnished a painting.

Someday, when my kids are adults, I'll move my studio into the second bedroom. I'll have a grand setup, with lots more skulls and other creepy things that I love to collect, but until then I'm happy to make do with this. *You can see more of Owen's paleo art at oweber.com, where you can also buy one of the artist's many prints.*

I love LEGO Star Wars ships. I only allow myself as many as can fit on top of this bookcase. After a tough day, nothing relaxes me like putting LEGO bricks together in front of the TV.

I was inspired by a photo a friend of mine had posted on Instagram of a beach near his home in Maine, and I knew that I needed to try my hand at painting this muted, quiet scene.
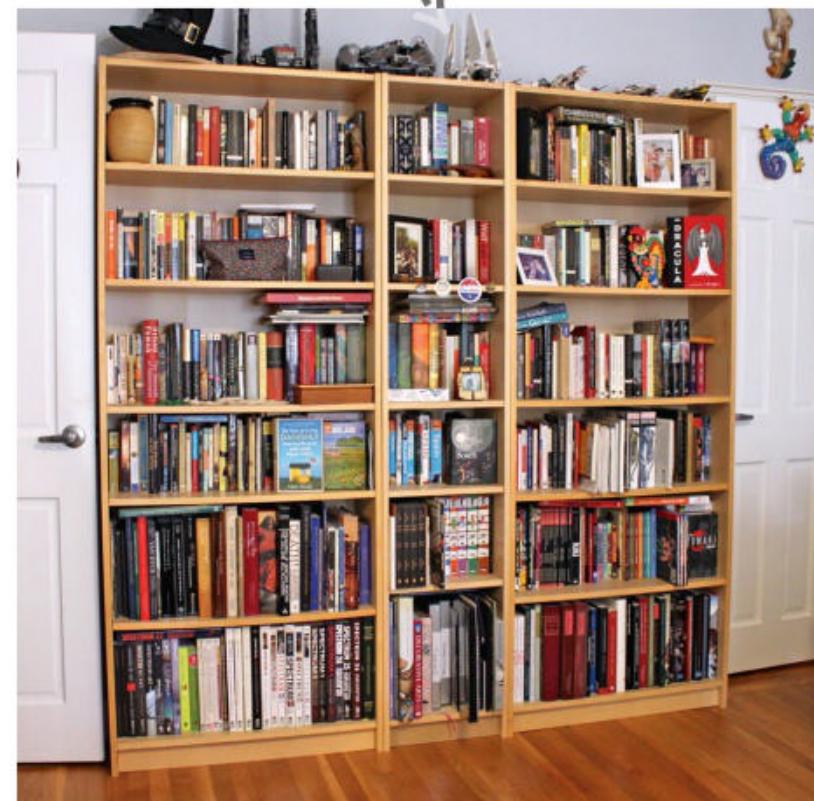
This is an assortment of some of the dinosaur models I've sculpted over the years using Super Sculpey. When I'm done photographing a model or referring to it while painting, I'll mash it up and use the Sculpey to build another dinosaur.

I'm lucky that in my neighbourhood in Queens, there are a few gingko trees, which are a species of tree dating back to prehistoric times. In the autumn, they turn this beautiful yellow colour. This was heavily inspired by a Dean Cornwell painting.
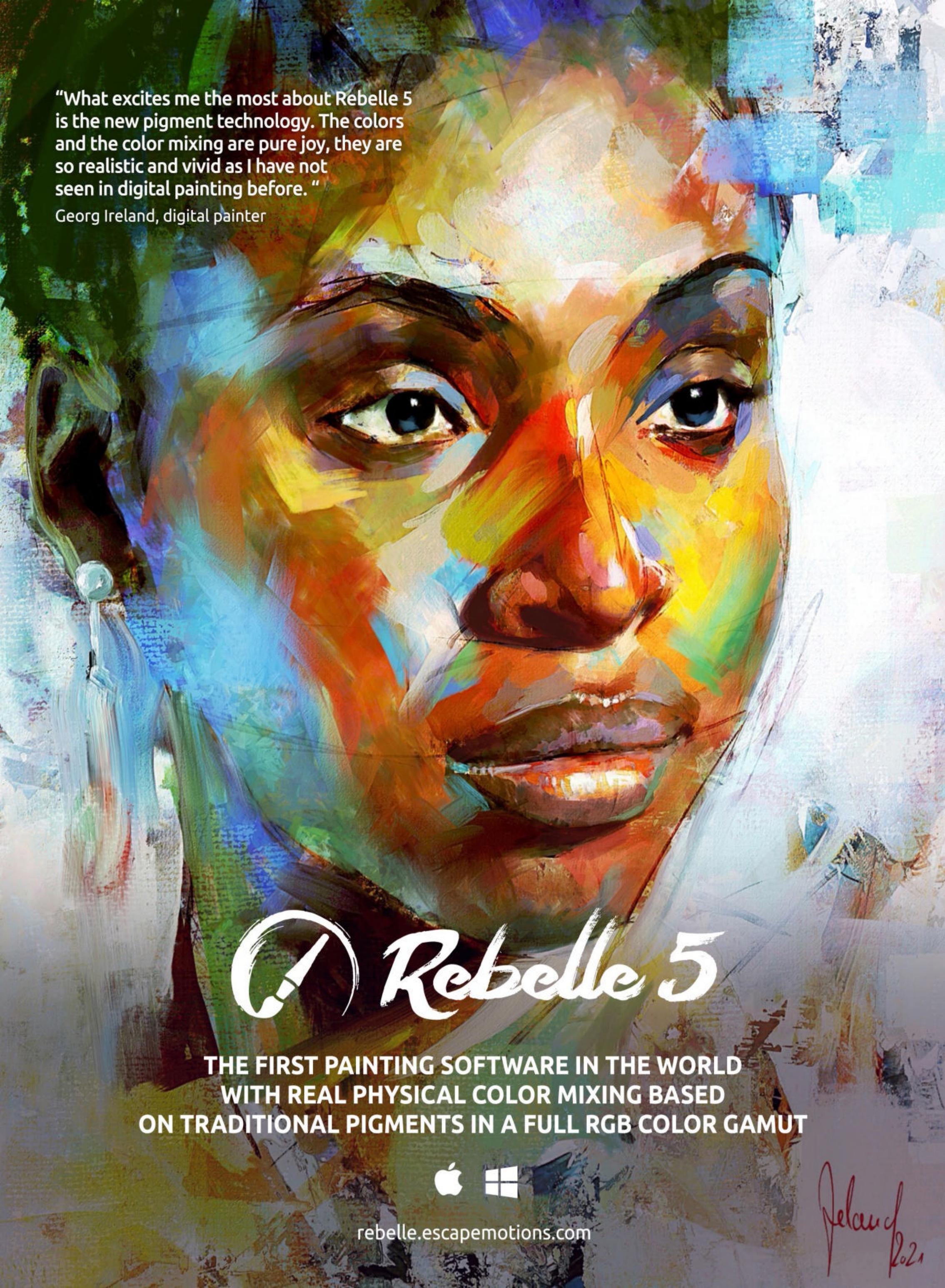
Letters
YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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Studio love

ImagineFX is one of the best, if not THE BEST magazine that I have read and I look forward to each issue, as I have for at least 20(?) years.

While all the artist's work and techniques give me inspiration, what gives me the most is turning to the "Artist in Residence" pages, which is the first thing that I read. I always find it fascinating to see what works for the various artists and how I can incorporate their ideas into my space, or how alike I am in designing my space with other artists.

I don't know if you have done this, but would you consider doing a special issue dedicated to showing a collection of various artist studios? I think it would be a hit.
Christopher Hoppner, via email

Ian replies *Hi Christopher, we love the Artist in Residence section of ImagineFX too. It's wonderful to see how the world's best artists live and work. Whether it's a newly refurbished Swiss Alps hideaway, the bridge of a tanker ship in the Atlantic Ocean or a spare*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 209 at **ifxm.ag/ single-ifx**.

Reader Christopher Hoppner loves the Artist in Residence section. Why not send us your studio photos for inclusion?

Our interview with Maya and the Three's Paul Sullivan impressed reader Sarah Robinson.

room overflowing with James Gurney books, skulls and ancient armour, each artist's sanctuary is unique. The ImagineFX special, Inside the Artist's Studio, sees us round up 21 fine workspaces. Find it on our magazine store: **ifxm.ag/artist-studios**.

NFT rebound

It's 2022 and NFTs are everywhere, more so than last year. I'm not a fan at the moment but it feels like NFTs are here to stay whether I like it or not. I feel like they're a fad, but everyone seems to be using them?
Mark Arnold, via email

Okay, I give in. If NFTs are never going away I may as well join the party. What do you guys at ImagineFX think?
Craig Lunt, via email

Ian replies *Hi Mark and Craig, whether you like them or not NFTs are here to stay. There are issues with the environmental impact each NFT generates, but there are carbon neutral and eco-friendly NFT solutions being adopted all the time, including Damien Hirst's use of Palm to create his NFT project. This year should see the release of Ethereum 2.0, promising a more ecological process to create NFTs on the blockchain.*

Manic for Maya

Thank you so much for the deep dive into the art of Maya and the Three in issue 209. I loved this show on Netflix so it was fascinating to read about how Paul Sullivan and the team approached creating the art behind the series. I particularly loved the passion for the culture the art is inspired by. Hopefully, more shows will promote the art and culture of the world in this way.
Sarah Robinson, via email

Ian replies *Hi Sarah, it was great talking to Paul about his art and process. The detail the team went to under the guidance of director Jorge R Gutiérrez was incredible. The imagination in every shot of Maya and the Three really lifts it above other animations.*

FRESH PAINT
New works that have grabbed our attention
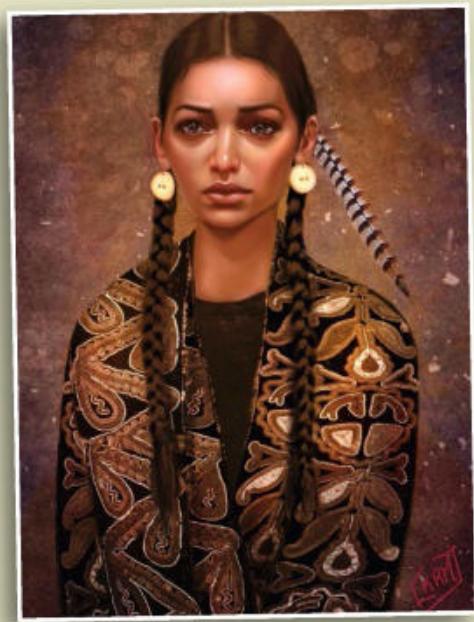
Kait Matthews @kaitmatthewsart

Emre Demiraslan @art.demiraslan.emre

Ellie Jordan @elliejayart

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

DRAGON KING
"The Dragon Kings are demigods who rule the four seas surrounding China."

RAGNAROK
"In The Endtimes the Norse Gods face off against the forces of Chaos and meet their foretold doom."

THE ART OF
JOHAN EGERKRANS

With a new book bursting with beautiful illustrations,
Ian Dean meets an artist who loves dragons...

Dragons don't need to make sense in a biological way," says Johan Egerkrans. After all, he reminds us, Smaug is a hundred metres long and has the wingspan of a jumbo jet, if you were to draw The Hobbit's fire-breather with any sense of realism. "You can't do it convincingly, it's a fantasy creature."

With that comment, Johan states his admiration for those artists who do create fantastical creatures from their imagination; he cites Terryl Whitlatch as an influence. "That vein of creature design has also crept in, of course," says Johan, "but I try not to make them as biologically sensible."

Johan's new book Drakar, or simply Dragons in its English translation, is out now in his native Swedish and an

> ❝ Dragons don't need to make sense in a biological way […] it's a fantasy creature ❞

English language edition is due this year. Drakar is the artist's eighth illustrated book, and follows others devoted to fantasy and mythology from a Nordic perspective. The book may move outside of Scandinavia to present dragons from folklore of Europe, the Middle East and Asia, but Johan's style and tone lends each creature a uniquely Scandi sensibility.

Inspired by the fantasy art tradition of his homeland, Johan's work is reminiscent of the classic troll illustrations of John Bauer and the ➤➤

→ work of 1970s fantasy artist Kay Nielsen. That, and the artist's background in role-playing game illustration, helps lend his dragon depictions a bold and whimsical style.

MIGNOLA-ISMS

Johan began his career in the Swedish role-playing industry, and was inspired by those artists. "That's where I got my start as a professional illustrator," says Johan, who reveals that the legendary Games Workshop artist John Blanche has written the foreword to Drakar. "You can't escape the Mike Mignola-isms in my work, either," admits the artist, "but he's one of those 'House Gods', as we say in Sweden."

The artist enjoys adapting his art to the subject he's painting. While his style remains consistent, he looks to embrace the detail of the subject. When painting dragons from around the world, he hints at the cultures they inhabit. If designing a Middle Eastern dragon, he looks to

> ❝ I don't like drawing buildings very much and I'm not interested in perspective ❞

include Babylonian influences and iconography. "Even though I skew it in various directions, you can always tell it's done by my hand," says Johan. "There's a certain flair to my art that sort of shines through."

He comes from the 'know the rules to break the rules' tradition. Johan's dragons are fantastical creatures that look elegant and energetic, but aren't built on real-world anatomy. Like the greats, he loves to paint unrealistic realism. Johan turns to the difference between Frank Frazetta and Boris Vallejo; the former would rarely use references while the latter would always paint from models. "A lot of

THE NECK
"This water fae from Swedish folklore lures people to a watery death with his otherworldly music."

Frazetta's muscles are made up, but it doesn't look like that. He paints what it *feels* like a body in motion looks like."

Johan jokes about the Frazetta connection. Like the legend, Johan likes to create his art from his imagination, but from a knowledge of anatomy and the real world. But also like Frazetta, he veers from painting things he simply doesn't enjoy doing. Frazetta famously disliked painting feet, while for Johan it's perspective.

"I don't like drawing buildings very much and I'm not really interested in perspective," confesses the artist. "I always build up my paintings like a stage, like layers on a theatre stage that disappear into the distance."

The artist says you "still need to challenge yourself" with your art and try new things, "But at some point," he says, "you have to realise what your strengths are." This intersection between an artist's skill or limitations and ideas can create a unique and interesting style. "Otherwise you'll just be drawing a photograph," adds

HYDRA
"The Lernaean Hydra is a serpentine monster from Greek mythology. For every head that was chopped off, two new ones would sprout from the stump."
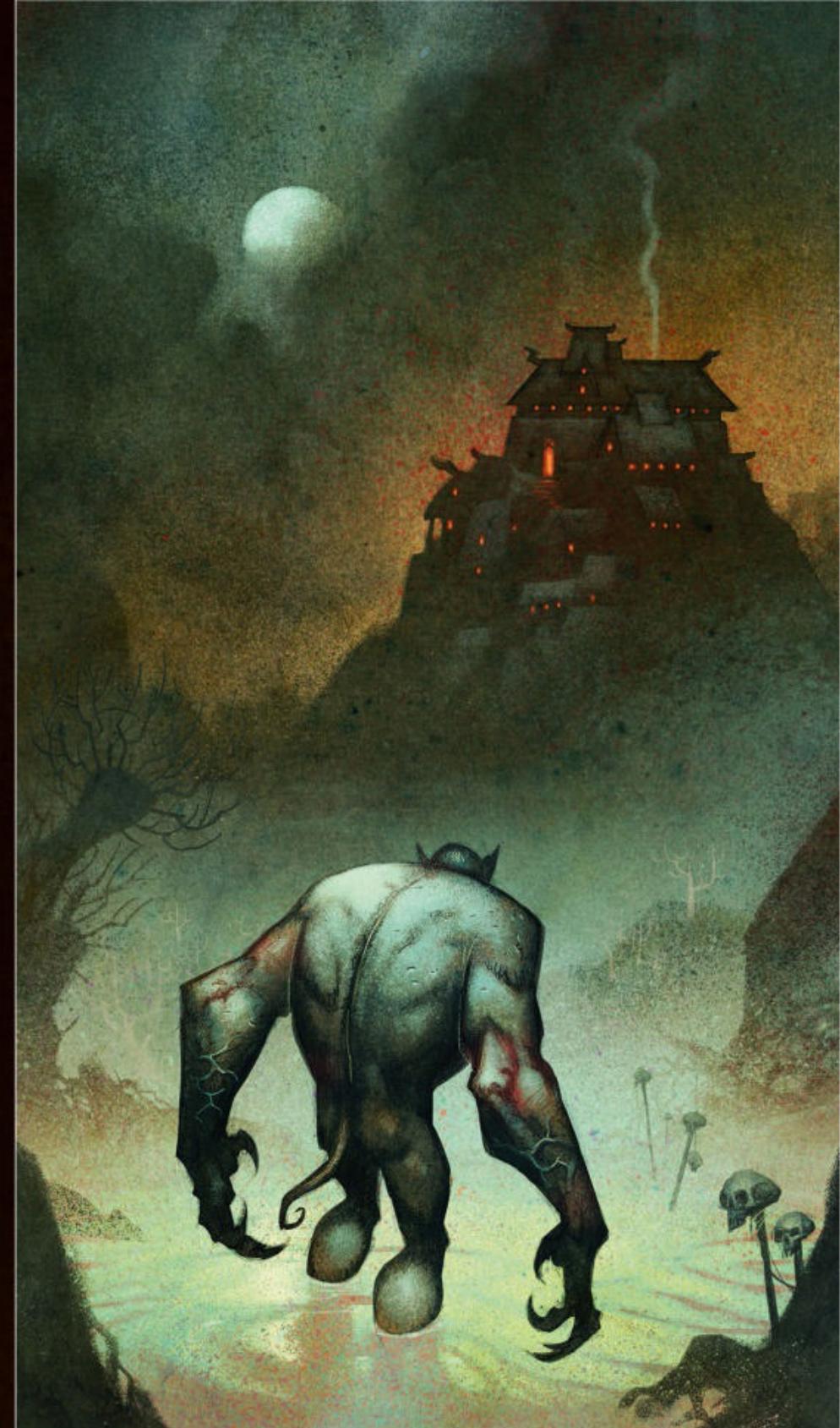
GRENDEL
"The monster Grendel is the main antagonist of the epic poem Beowulf. The illustration is a loving homage to Frazetta's classic Night Stalker."

Johan. "If you didn't have that intersection, there wouldn't be a disconnect between reality and the painting. You want style, you want wonkiness, you want stylisation, because otherwise it's not really art."

"We don't make mistakes," says Johan. "We only have happy accidents, as Bob Ross famously said."

FANTASTICAL NOT FANTASY

Drakar isn't a book about "Disney dragons", as Johan says. His dragons aren't distinguished by the rules of Dungeons & Dragons, ice and fire dragons and "fantasy tropes". He looks at where the inspiration for dragons comes from in different cultures as hybrid, chimeric creatures. "The dragons in my book are mythical and folkloric," says the artist, who draws in historical and cultural references to illustrate his creatures. "So, it's more about characterisation, rather than depicting a certain species of dragon."

"A Chinese dragon should look like a Chinese long dragon," explains Johan, "and not like a Western →

Artist PROFILE

Johan Egerkrans
LOCATION: Sweden
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: John Bauer, Simon Bisley, Mary Blair, John Blanche, Frank Frazetta, Mike Mignola and Claire Wendling
MEDIA: Photoshop, pencil, watercolour
WEB: johanegerkrans.com

KATO

"The knight Kato is the villain in Astrid Lindgren's beloved book Mio, My Son. He was portrayed by Sir Christopher Lee in the film, and I think a certain "Lee-ness" has crept into my take on the character."

HERE BE ADVICE ON DRAGONS

According to Johan, drawing horses is the key to all fantasy art...

Learn to distance yourself from stereotypes

"Role-playing games have made people think of dragons as a particular set of different species. And they're really not in a folkloric/mythical context. Most annoying is this strange obsession with wyverns – they're considered not being 'proper' dragons. A wyvern is just a two-legged dragon in heraldry, and in many languages like Swedish, which I'm writing the book in, you can't make the distinction between two- or four-legged dragons. They're all just dragons."

Any advice for designing dragons?

"Mix it up. You can't just base it on one creature. Dragons are chimeras – hybrids with features borrowed from lots of animals. Simply sticking bat wings on a T-rex will just look goofy."

Does studying real animals help?

"Yes, you have to draw a lot of animals to be able to draw a convincing dragon, or any made-up creature. But that doesn't mean the dragon, the individual parts, should just be ripped off different creatures and bolted on to a serpent's body. If you do that, do it in a medieval way, so it's a stylistic choice. Otherwise, try to blend it all together, so the creature looks like one organic whole."

Does knowledge of animal anatomy help?

"If you do a realistic drawing, you have to take the different attributes and blend them in a way to make it convincing. So, it's important to really know anatomy, then let go of that knowledge and make up new anatomy."

Is there one animal to master?

"If you can draw a horse convincingly, you can draw everything. I worked for a few years concepting the Star Stable computer game, an online horse riding fantasy game. So I ended up drawing lots and lots of horses, and that has served me well because you need to understand ungulate anatomy to make them look convincing. Because if you get it wrong, it'll just look like something else – a mutant dog or something. You have to capture that particular equine 'horse-ness'."

So, mastering anatomy lets us break the rules?

"Yes. All tetrapods have the same basic skeleton: it's just sort of skewed and mutated and warped. Head, spine, limbs with five digits, a tail. Some have lost limbs, like snakes and whales. Some have turned arms into wings, like bats and pterosaurs. But the basic body plan is the same. Once you internalise that knowledge, you can do the same thing evolution has done to tweak your fantasy creature's anatomy."

LONELY GIANT

"In Sweden, giants were viewed as an ancient race slowly dying out as man took over the land."

SEA SERPENT

"Sea serpents could use their body like a club, crushing ships and dragging them and the crew down into the depths."

➤➤ dragon, obviously. So I tried to bring in that but still do that in my style, and be respectful of which culture the myth comes from."

While our eye is drawn to the sumptuous and detailed illustrations, created digitally, the book has equally detailed written descriptions. Johan has picked culturally important dragons and researched – "lots of research!" says the artist – each to bring out the story behind the creature. St George and the Dragon is

❝ Dragons in a European context are generally villains ❞

the famous depiction he left until last because it required so much attention.

Usually, he argues, St George is seen as a medieval knight in heavy plate armour from the 14th century, fighting a red-skinned dragon, most likely attempting to save the life of a blonde princess. But research pointed to a new iteration of this famous dragon. "The thing is that George was a Roman soldier, a Roman officer, and the story takes place in AD 300, somewhere in Libya. So the princess was probably not blonde. I bring all those things in, so I go for Roman
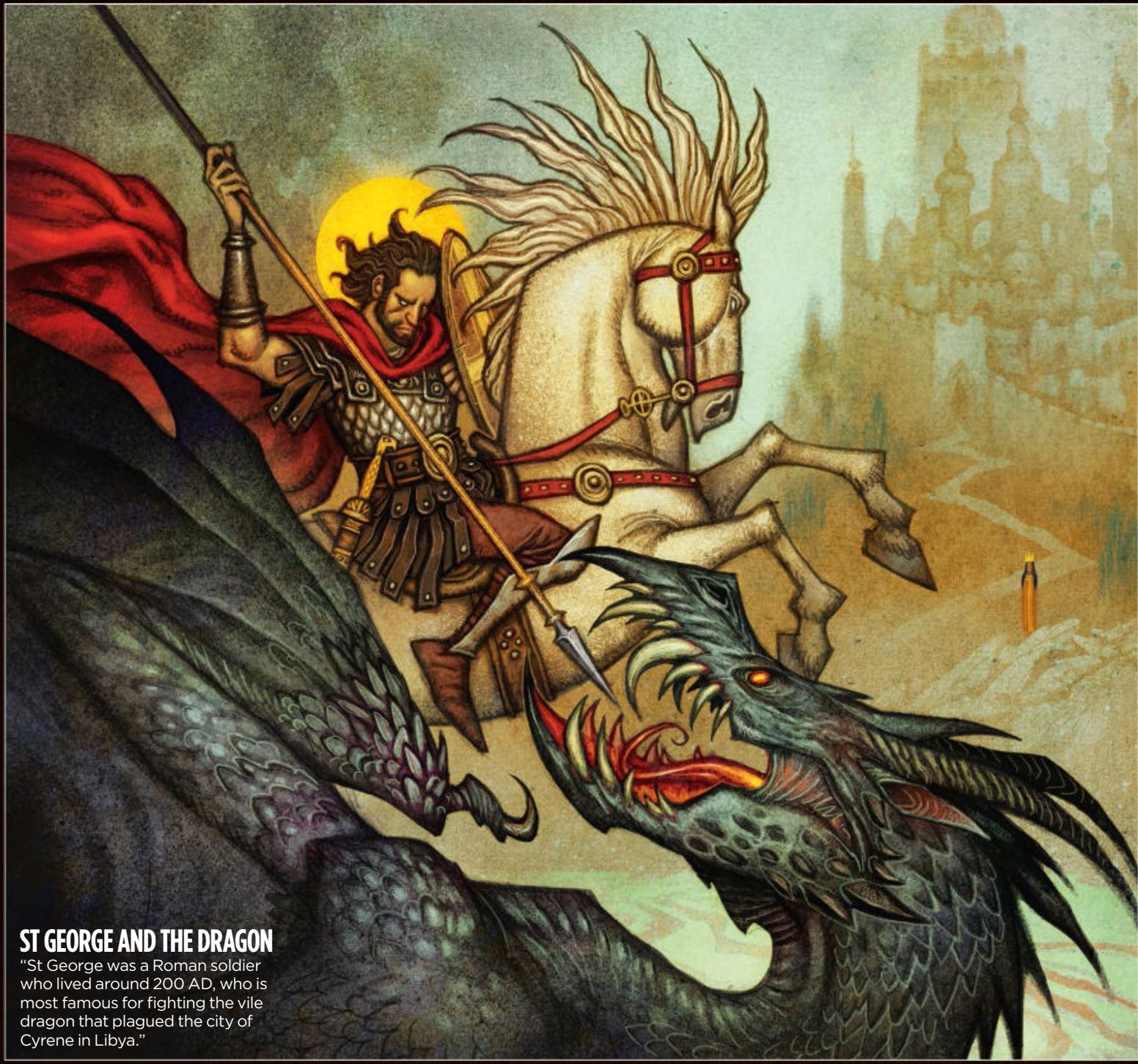
ST GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
"St George was a Roman soldier who lived around 200 AD, who is most famous for fighting the vile dragon that plagued the city of Cyrene in Libya."

PAINTING THE GHUL
Johan reveals how he illustrated a creature for his book The Undead

1 SKETCH THE BEAST
I do a sketch using an HB pencil on normal A4 copy paper (I prefer the slightly heavier 120g paper). I then scan this drawing into my computer.

2 UNDERPAINTING
I open up the sketch in Photoshop, set it to Multiply and create a masked layer group beneath. I apply a watercolour texture to the group and then on top of that I add shadows using blue-black set to Multiply.

3 RENDERING
I render the highlights in a greyish teal, to contrast with the planned orange-yellow background. I pick out the eyes in red and yellow.

KIRIN
"The Kirin or Qilin is a venerated mythical creature from Japan and China that shares similarities with both dragons and unicorns."
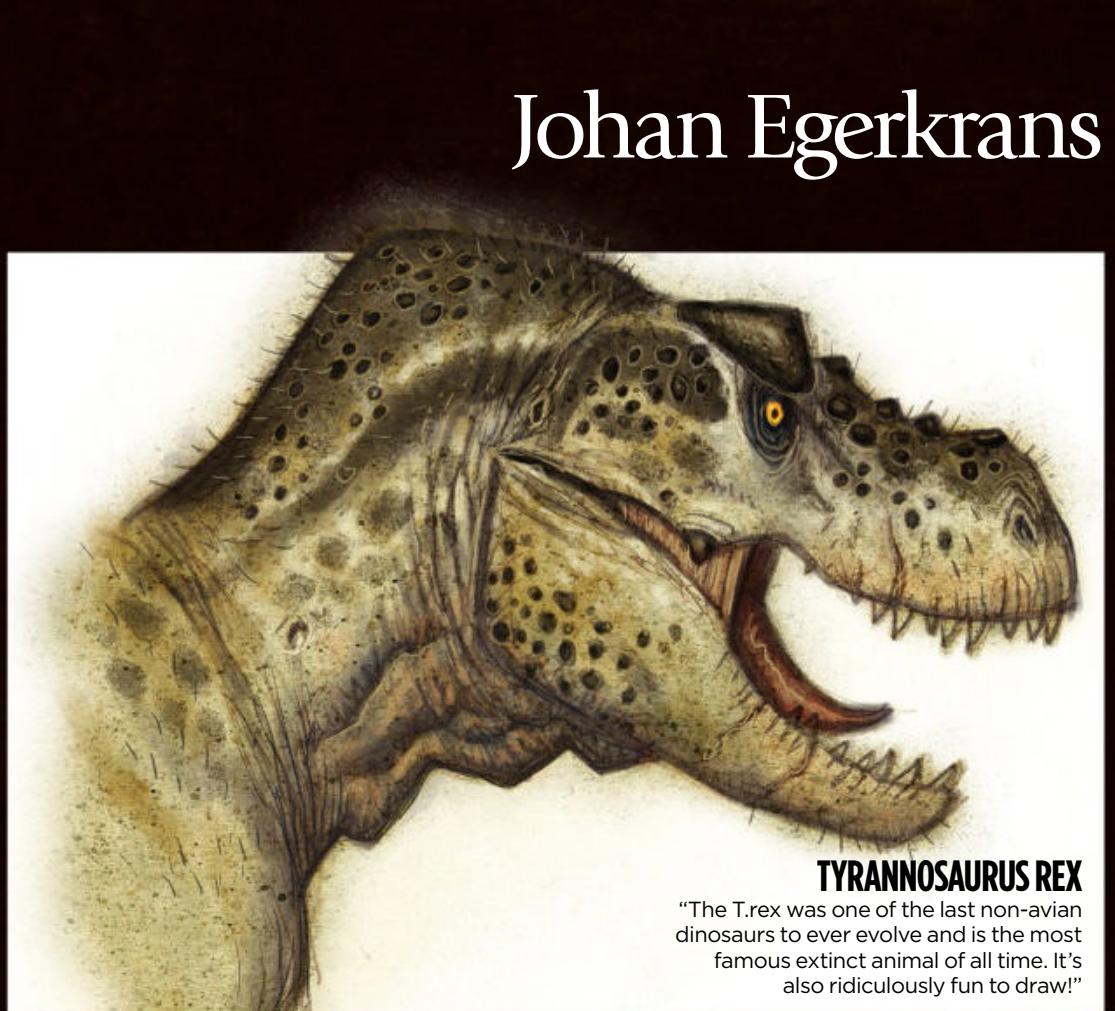
TYRANNOSAURUS REX
"The T.rex was one of the last non-avian dinosaurs to ever evolve and is the most famous extinct animal of all time. It's also ridiculously fun to draw!"

4 BACKGROUND AND FINAL DETAILS
Under all the previous layers I start blocking out the background using different masked texture layers. The piece is pulled together by an Overlay texture layer.

armour and he's got a Roman sword. So yeah, that's very much part of it."

EAST AND WEST

Researching the stories behind the world's famous dragons revealed a clear division to Johan between how the West and East view these animals. Dragons in all societies are seen as an embodiment of nature and nature's destructive forces or "the awesomeness of nature", as Johan describes it. In European cultures, this manifests as destruction, explains Johan: "Dragons in a European context are generally villains, and they're evil in a Christian context, equated with Satan." In Eastern cultures, dragons are still forces of nature, but they are to be admired and respected. "Still feared," says Johan, "but they're gods, and are awesome and the silhouette inspiring."

Understanding this division enabled Johan to design and paint dragons with greater clarity. Different colour palettes are one way the artist shows the difference between the two types of dragon, but form is also used. His European dragons are worm-like, have bat wings and horns. They look vicious and cruel. Eastern dragons in Drakar are elegant and fluid – they flow and wrap through the air.

Johan says drawing the tapering, twirling form of Eastern dragons was great fun. "It's almost like calligraphy," he says, wafting his hands through the air. "I have a lot of fun with the tails, because that becomes important, like a signature." He continues: "There's a reason why fantasy artists come back to this subject again and again. Because they're so fun to draw."

DINOSAURS OR BIRDS?

Johan has a background in paleo-art, with four books on the subject, so he begins with an artistic muscle-memory of reptile and bird anatomy.

He explains how his background influences his dragon art: "I try not to make them look like dinosaurs with wings, as some artists do, because I find that boring; instead I like to view dragons as more raptorial, like birds of prey."

He tells us he loves to draw dragons with eagle beaks and talons. "There's something about an eagle's talons that looks so mean and so vicious," he says, adding, "There's a mania to birds that I love. They can look so insane with their staring eyes. I try to include that in many of my dragons; a kind of wild mania."

You can see for yourself by picking up the Swedish language edition of Drakar, or waiting for the English version, which Johan says will arrive within months.

Y DDRAIG GOCH
"The Red Dragon of Wales battles the White Dragon of the invading Saxons."

Sketchbook

Warrick Wong

Studio Ghibli and Maori culture are just two of the many influences behind this illustrator's fantastical art

Artist PROFILE

Warrick Wong
LOCATION: Australia

Warrick is a self-taught freelance artist from Australia, who focuses on traditional brush pen drawings as well as digital illustrations and animations. His background in industrial design has enabled him to explore exploded diagrams and incorporate the knowledge into themes around the convergence of nature and tech.
warrickwong.com

ESCAPE II
"I was just mindlessly playing around with random shapes and it ultimately resulted in this drawing."

CONVERGENCE
"This piece was to show the merging of nature and technology. No matter how far we advance as a civilisation, humanity's primordial mind will always be a part of our nature."

MOKO
"I visited New Zealand and was fascinated by the Maori culture, especially the cultural significance of the tā moko. By implementing the moko in this drawing, I wanted to convey that despite the progression of technology in our day-to-day lives, culture and tradition will always connect us to our ancestors and family."

> The simpler face conveys the mask people put on in society to conform

FACADE
"I wanted to go all out with the details in this one. The over-complexity of the body compared to the simpler face was to convey the mask people put on in society to conform and blend in."

Sketchbook

VITO AND THE LION

"I was sketching out some ideas for a story I would like to illustrate for my son, Vito. It'll be based on a boy who's been gifted a special power by celestial beings."

MONONOKE

"Studio Ghibli has been a major source of inspiration since my childhood. Princess Mononoke impacted me the most with its stunning visuals, designs and storytelling. This piece was a tribute to the importance of the film in my development as an artist."

LIBRA

"I used the Zodiac signs as inspiration for this. I chose Libra and her power to control the balance of the universe, and in this moment she's harnessing the power of raw energy."

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**

MIND BLOWN

"I try to stay open-minded and learn as much as I can, and whenever I learn something new, which at times seems utterly incomprehensible, I'm mind-blown. This piece was to capture that moment."

" When you draw with a blank mind, you can come up with weird and wonderful ideas "

GENIE

"In fantasy stories, we see genies emerging from magical lamps, but in the distant future, genies may come to life in the form of super artificial intelligence. Whether or not this is a good thing, only time will tell."

ESCAPE I

"Similarly to Escape II, I was doodling random shapes when this piece came about. When you draw with a blank mind, you can come up with weird and wonderful ideas."

FROM
ARTIST
TO
AUTHOR

Tom Kidd is following in the footsteps of James Gurney and Tony DeTerlizzi, and painting his own page turner...

DULAC MANOR
"Once a mansion for a wealthy recluse, this manor is now a far northern outpost deep in the Bierstadt Mountains that acts as a refuelling/restoring station for airships and their crews."

PORT VIEW
"An aerial scene of one of the successful city-states of Lenoria. The Gérôme Township sits along an inlet of the Lehr Sea."
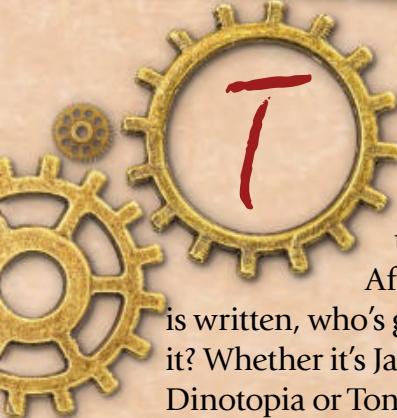
There's a saying that we all have a book inside us dying to get out. For artists, this is doubly true. After all, once a book is written, who's going to illustrate it? Whether it's James Gurney's Dinotopia or Tony DeTerlizzi's The Spiderwick Chronicles, artists are drawn to adding words to their art.

For **Tom Kidd**, a traditional illustrator, it's about focusing on the classic dilemma of what comes first: words or art? His book, Gnemo – A Novel Tale of Airships, Adventure & Exploration, is still in development. The paint is still wet on many of the illustrations. But Tom has exclusively shared his draft with ImagineFX, and it's a breathless blend of steampunk, fantasy and elegantly depicted scenes of airships and brassy worlds of steam and iron. In a few brush strokes, Tom takes us into his imagination. The words surround his art, a guide to this exuberant new universe.

WORDS OR PICTURES?

So what comes first? The words or the art? "It's very much a shared effort," says Tom. Although an acclaimed painter and illustrator, the artist has spent time writing, too. "I love coming up with stories," he says, clarifying he's "written dozens, even sold one short

STINGER
"A reptilian version of an aeros that has a poisonous tail not unlike a scorpion's."

Stinger

story to a collection and won a minor award for another".

Over the years, he's been commissioned to create art for other people's books and recently was asked to do a "Gnemo painting", but after the paint had dried, it struck him he'd illustrated the final panel of his own book, Gnemo, by accident. "Oh, ➤

66 **If you make me sit with my own thoughts, I look for a way to entertain myself with stories and pictures** 99

that's a much better, far more satisfying ending, I thought. I haven't written it yet, though. It's not even in my outline."

The real answer is words and images come in fits and spurts; each arrives in an odd order. But we're beginning at the end. Gnemo began decades ago as a way to fill time on a long commute on public transport. "If you make me sit somewhere with my own thoughts, I'm going to look for a way to entertain myself with stories and pictures," says Tom. "This quiet time worked particularly well in the 80s to 90s, when I regularly took a bus into New York City to turn in artwork to publishers. The ride back at night was an extraordinarily productive time."

EXPLORE THE MYSTERY

The influence of that time spent travelling in and out of New York City is evident in the pages of Gnemo. The city is Tom's star, but it's not a New York you'll be familiar with. Its timelines overlap and muddle, the history of his imagined Earth merges the promise of a future to come and the mythical past left behind. "Anything you find familiar is

> ## 66 The ride back at night was an extraordinarily productive time 99

only a ghost of what you know," writes Tom in the book's introduction.

Gnemo is a book about exploration through its narrative, the sumptuous art and us, the reader. "I'm particularly fond of the 'wow-I-want-to-go-there' or 'what-the-heck-is-going-on-here' type of illustration. When you see such art, you're driven to uncover the mystery, perhaps, even to read the book the art is on," says Tom. "When there's no book attached, my mind comes up with its own narrative."

Tom's desire to explore, his long and extended peregrinations into his imagination, ensure the 100-plus pages of Gnemo are never without interest. Traditionally, Tom has used oils for his art, but the need to quickly jot down inspiration as he experiences it means he's turned to Procreate and his iPad for quick studies.

He explains: "Whenever something interesting occurs to me, I draw it. Later, projects come up that need that art. My mind makes my path

SEGRELLES TREE
"An hypnotic tree that entrances people who spend too much time within its proximity."

OCEAN VIEW
"Gnemo looks down on the Lehr Sea, a landlocked ocean at the centre of the Lenorian continent."

ARBORESCENT AMBULANTS
"These are the walking trees of Deep Valley. They are propelled by the wind."

Top job
"Glazed in Manganese blue over Titanium white."

Dusky skies
"This evening sky is a mixture of blues, browns and greens. I semi-blend the warm and cool blues with alternating brush strokes."

Lunar surface
"Thick use of Titanium white and Flake white for the moon's texture."

Fissure finesse
"Oil paint used as watercolour (thinned with turpentine) to create cracks in the rock surface. Payne's grey over a mixture of Ultramarine purple and Burnt umber."

HOW MOUNTAIN PORTAL AROSE

Tom explains how to use the rules that govern art to create fantasy worlds

"Set the atmosphere," states Tom, as he describes how he painted Mountain Portal from his book Gnemo. "The first impression of any painting is the mood," says the artist. "Shadow, light, colour and values engender that emotional state."

Often overlooked is how tonal masses affect the viewer, he tells us: "A careful arrangement of masses can also help emphasise your important subjects."

Tom explains how the world divides colours into warm and cool, which can be used to sell the time of day or emotion of a scene. "This is more evident in mornings and evenings, when shadows take on the sky's colour and highlights have an autumn shift."

"As the god of your world, you can manipulate these elements to enhance your art," shares Tom. "Although the visual world has rules, if it makes your painting better, feel free to ignore them. You only need to nudge them to get what you want: add more particulates to the air to make things hazy; make the wind blow in the direction that works best; bounce light off an object 'off-camera' to fill shadows. You could even make the reflecting object a second or third moon if it's a fantasy or science fiction painting."

Air of mystery
"Warm mysterious interior denoting magical qualities (Alizarin orange and Indian yellow, with Flake white and Transparent white mixed in)."

Brushing up
"After the initial lay in, I mostly used Rekab brights as my brushes. At times I use old sections of fabric to move paint around or to soften a colour."

Verdant hues
"Most of the greens here come from a mixture of Payne's grey and Indian yellow, but there's some Bohemian green earth mixed in as well."

SZUKALSKI SCULPTURE GARDEN
"The garden is populated by monuments to torturous monsters that inhabit the minds of the insane."

WORLD BUILDING
Creating a universe requires the use of logic to fill in all the details

They say "write from experience", so it's no wonder the protagonist of Gnemo is an artist, using his skills to survive in the book's universe. "Gnemo is an exploration of an extraordinary world's natural and man-made wonders that is filled with all manner of exotic wildlife," describes Tom Kidd. "It chronicles how an artist near starvation uses his art to stay alive and find his way through a variety of adventures."

Building his world, Tom says he paints with "free association" to develop the ideas of his book's universe with a logical extrapolation. He explains: "If you have an almost entirely mountainous continent, what would be the best way to traverse it? Airships. Now, what would a world be like, what would it look like, that relied on lighter-than-air vessels for travel and commerce?"

➤➤ in life smoother by seeing the future and what I'll need for it."

EARLY INSPIRATION
The need to discover new things began as a child when he looked through his family's encyclopaedias. An astronomy painting by Chesley Bonnestell caught his eye. "It was of Saturn, as seen from Titan," he says. "I was intrigued by the artist's ability to see something unseeable, and I set about learning how to use my imagination similarly."

As a child of a US Air Force serviceman, Tom spent his youth travelling the world, learning local customs and speech patterns. "I enjoyed reinventing myself each time we moved," he tells us. "Travelling gave me a larger sense of the world."

Speaking with Tom, it's clear he was destined to be an explorer, but one

KROW-KWILL (DIGITAL)
"She is an aeros, one of the many six-limbed flying creatures of this world, and Gnemo's protagonist's companion on his adventures."

> 66 **Giving up on perfection is, by far, my greatest challenge and why Gnemo is still a work in progress** 99

who would navigate the sights of his own and others' imaginations. As an illustrator, he loves painting from the prose of other writers. He says: "Words turn into pictures as I read, and I see some spectacular things. The authors I work with regularly describe dramatic scenes with such elegant prose, they beg to be illustrated. Stories I read as a kid still conjure up fantastic ideas."

It's no wonder Tom has spent years building his own world inside the pages of Gnemo. It's also no wonder the protagonist of Gnemo is a young artist called Sketch, who draws the

world around him and finds adventure down every alleyway.

MAGNUM OPUS
Tom has learned many lessons over the years. His book has taken so long because he jokingly tells us he lacks focus. "Gnemo is my magnum opus and I want it to be perfect. It won't be. No art is ever without fault. Giving up on perfection is, by far, my greatest challenge and why Gnemo is still a work in progress.

While Tom has, and is, still learning the lessons it takes to become a writer

HICKMAN HANGAR
"After nearly 200 years of lighter-than-air flight, the airship mechanics of this world are experts at repairing these dirigibles. This hangar is famous for its aircraft engineers."

and illustrator, he has some sage words of advice for anyone who wants to follow suit. "First, have fun," he says. "If you're not enjoying the process, no one else will, either."

He continues: "Challenge yourself to do work you've never done before. More than likely, you'll need to go to non-traditional publishing to get it out there and do a lot of the grunt work, which is not fun, and do this legwork yourself, but it'll be worth it."

Finally, almost self-consciously, he says: "Listen to the advice of others, but feel free to ignore it politely." ●

OAKLEY AQUEDUCTS
"These are the aqueducts that feed McCay City. At the centre is a statue of the Artistic Liberty, lighting the way for the creative energy of the city."

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Workshops

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Advice from the world's best artists
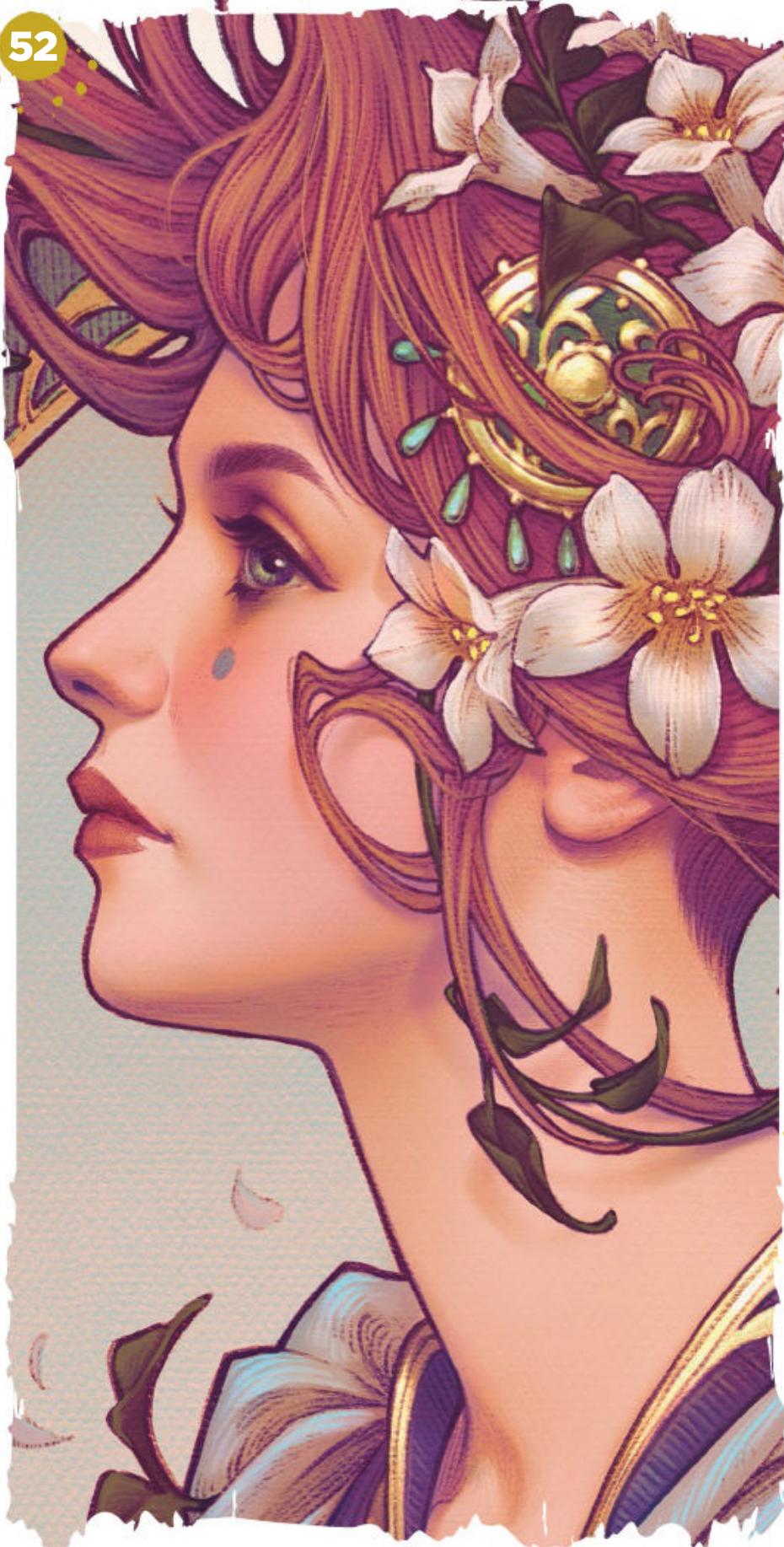
This issue:

Procreate
MASTER THE ART NOUVEAU STYLE

Illustrator **Maria Dimova** explains how being inspired by the natural world helps her to create female portraits with a traditional look

Artist **PROFILE**

Maria Dimova
LOCATION: Moldova

One of the inspirations behind Maria's art is feminine beauty, which she likes to embellish with floral details and fantasy design.
dimary.me

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

As an artist, I have a variety of techniques, tools and sources of inspiration for creating my artwork. I love exploring the beauty of the natural world and enjoy creating work that unites my passions for flora, fairy tales and vintage style.

One of the main inspirations for my art is feminine beauty, which I like to adorn in splendid clothes with floral detail and rich refinement. I'm greatly influenced by nature and I try to incorporate those features into my work.

There are so many ways to start an illustration. I'm going to take you through my complete illustration process for creating an Art Nouveau-inspired female portrait in Procreate. One of the reasons I like this particular art style so much is the balance of feminine beauty and natural forms, and Procreate enables me to create the wavy curves of plants and flowers naturally. I like the movement of the lines that give a sense of dynamism even to a static image. And my tutorial will demonstrate how to use these features and your imagination to create a colourful portrait with decorative elements. I'll explain my tips for creating clean line-art and present a step-by-step guide to my colouring process.

I hope you enjoy the process and the final result meets your expectations. Good luck and don't be afraid to use your imagination to create something beautiful!
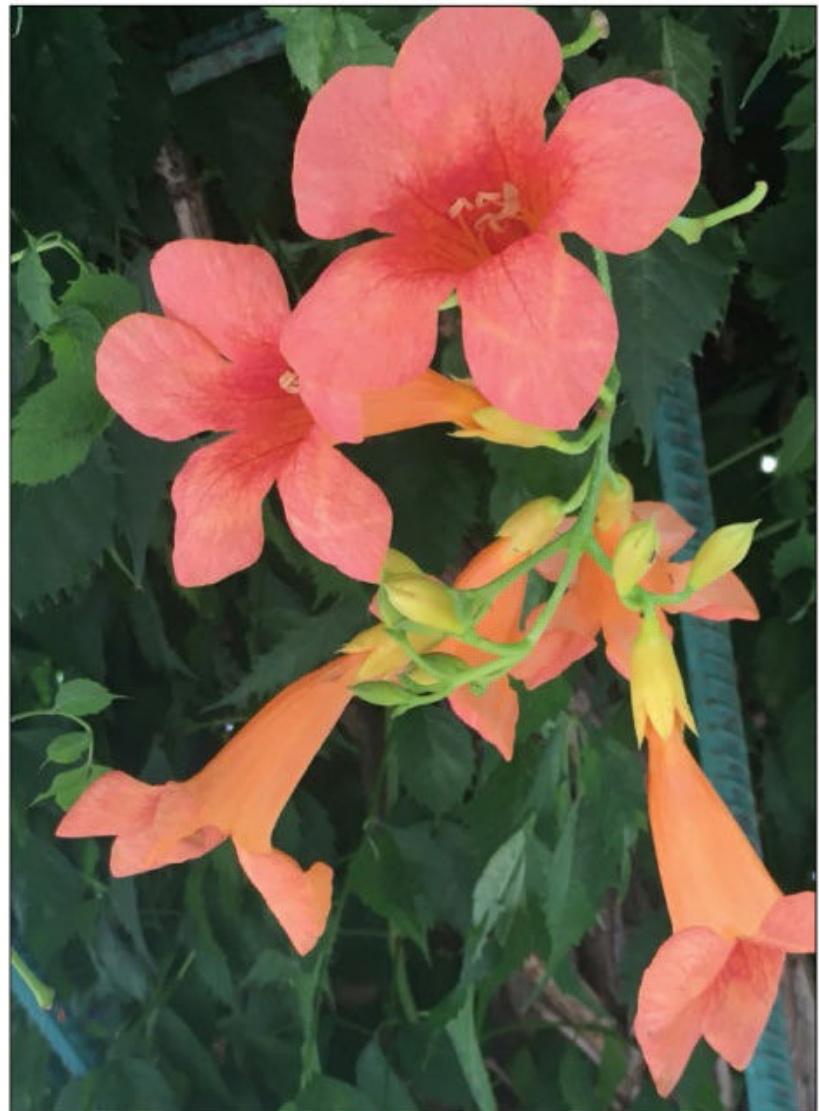
1 Gathering references for inspiration and making studies

I usually start by gathering reference materials and collecting images with some attributes inherent to the style I'd like to create. Before I start exploring my new idea, I usually make some studies of the natural elements to define the style and technique for the image. ➤➤
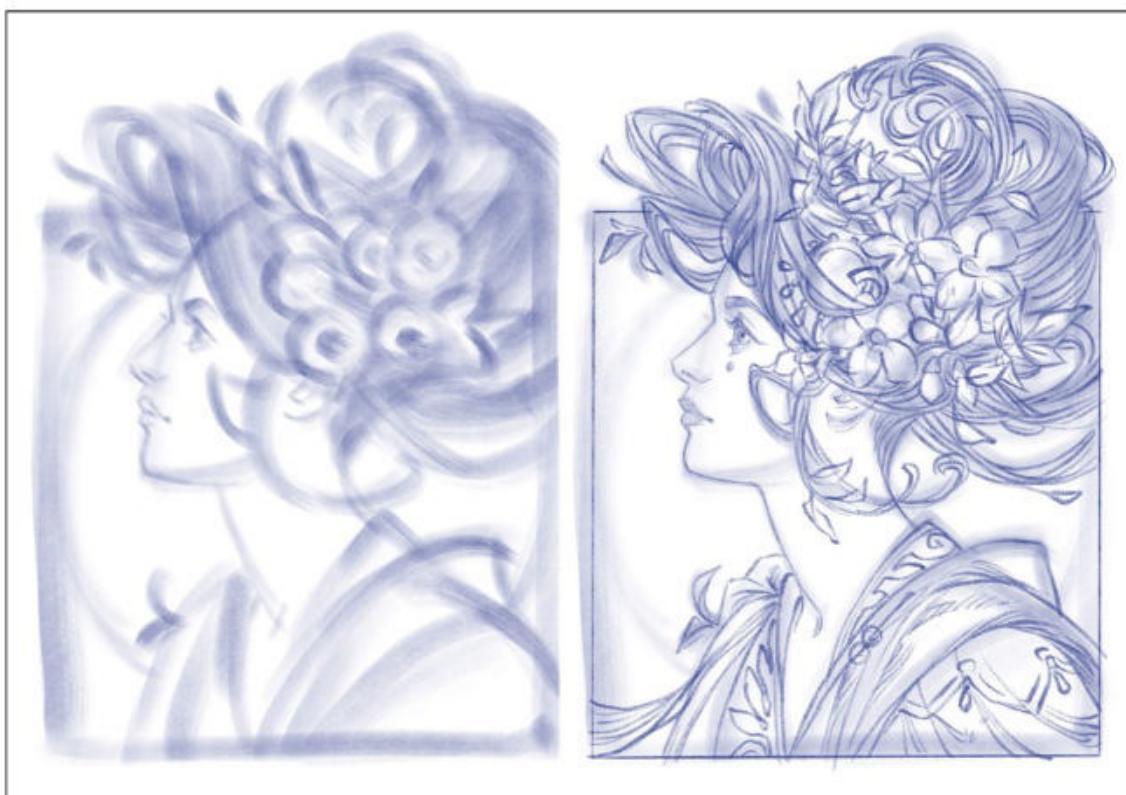
2 Composition and detailed sketch

To begin with, I draw a rough sketch using any of Procreate's large brushes. First, I'm looking for the silhouette and general composition. Working with the large brush stops me from focusing on any smaller features. When I'm happy with the general shape, I switch to a smaller brush. I've found the 6B Pencil to be perfect for refining and adding some more details to the sketch.

3 Framing and background shape

The framing and circle shape in the background help to centralise the silhouette and make the viewer focus on the character itself. Because this image is inspired by Art Nouveau illustrations, I create this kind of framing with decorative elements in the background. The easiest way to create a symmetrical frame in Procreate is to use the Symmetry tool. Just go to Canvas>Drawing Guide>Edit Drawing Guide>Symmetry.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

DEFAULT BRUSHES: 6B PENCIL FROM THE SKETCHING SET

This pencil is perfect for refining and adding detail to the sketch.

HEMP FROM THE ORGANIC SET

This textured brush is ideal for creating clean line-art and tiny details.

6B COMPRESSED FROM CHARCOALS

I like to use this charcoal brush for adding some basic colours.

SOFT PASTEL FROM THE SKETCHING SET

Great for soft rendering and creating traditional-looking textures.

4 Creating clean line-art

Once I'm happy with the sketch, I reduce its opacity and create a new layer on top for the clean line-art. I choose the Hemp brush from the Organic set for this. It enables me to work in more detail and gives a beautiful texture to the drawing. I draw smooth lines following the sketch, creating a variety of line weight to give more life to the drawing.
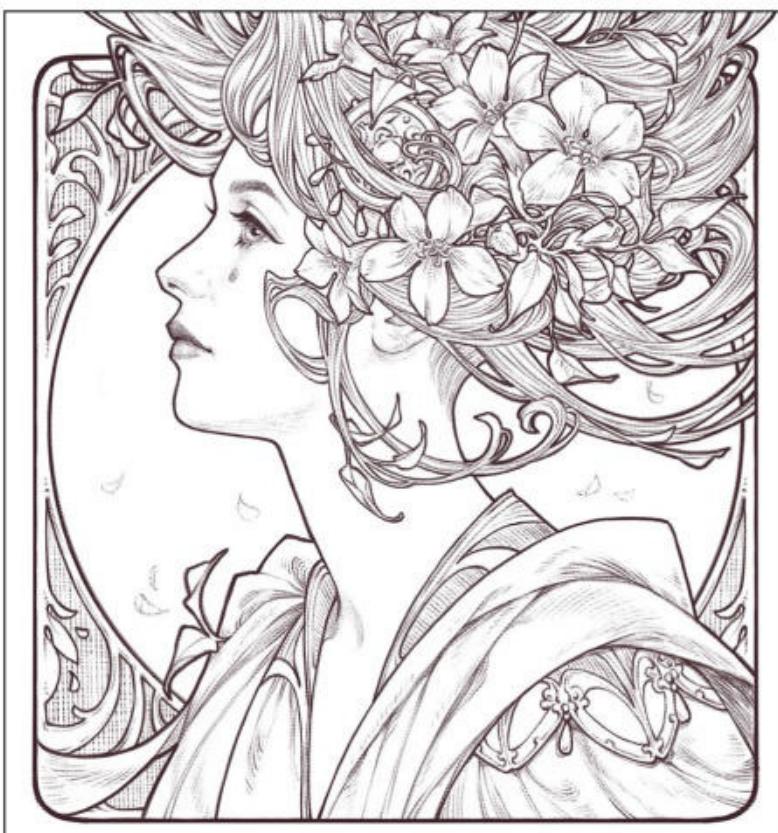
5 Drawing a thicker outline

After the thinnest lines are complete, I create background shapes using the Quick Shape tool on a new layer. I just draw a shape and keep holding with a finger before lifting away the pencil. I also add a thicker outline to the character, following the silhouette. Then I go through the image again and separate the inner elements with an outline as well. I finish this stage by adding some decorative elements to the frame.
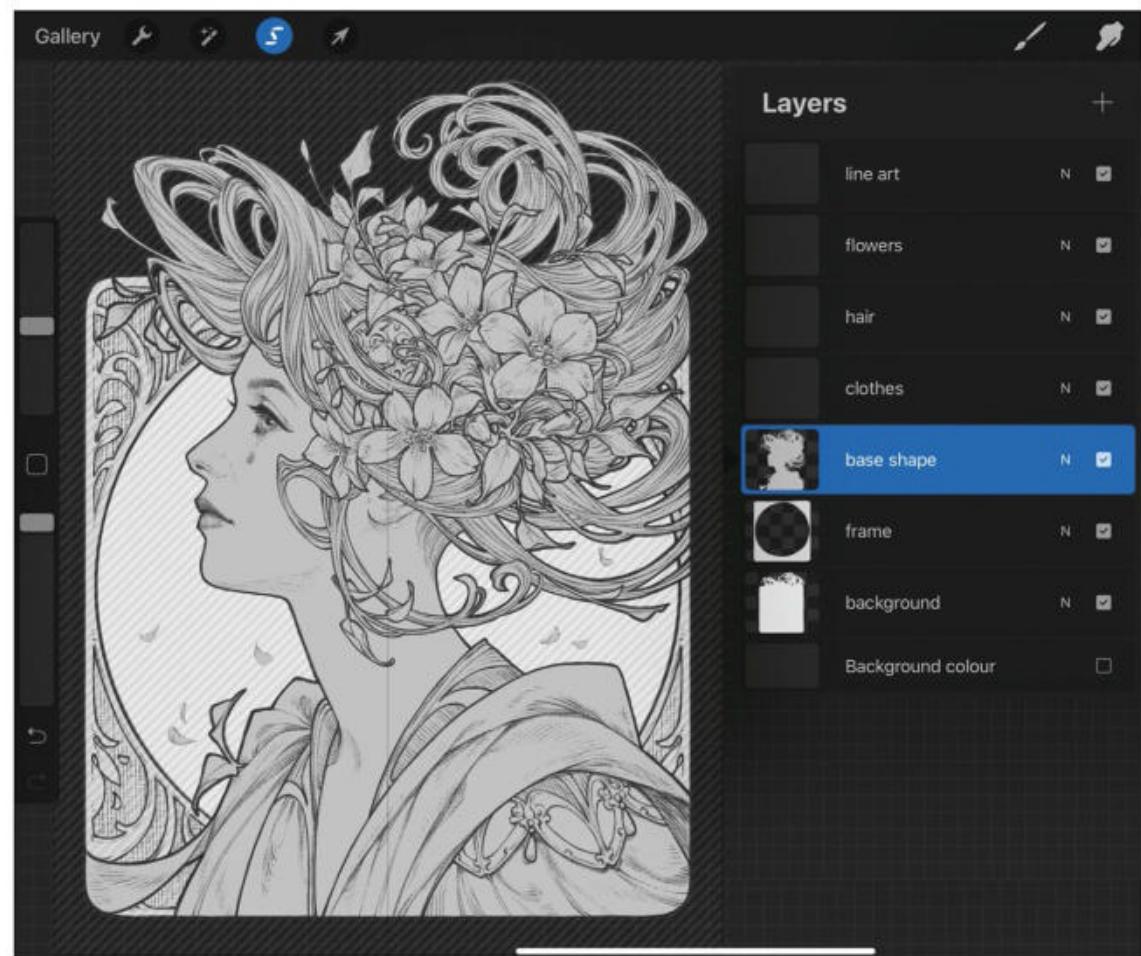
6 Blocking out the base shapes

Before I start filling the base shapes with colour, I merge all the layers with lines. I'll be working in greyscale mode, so I reduce the lines' saturation by going to Adjustments>Hue, Saturation, Brightness>Layer. I select the base shape following the silhouette, using the Selection tool with the Freehand option. Then I pick the 6B Compressed Charcoal and fill the base shapes with a few variations of light grey.
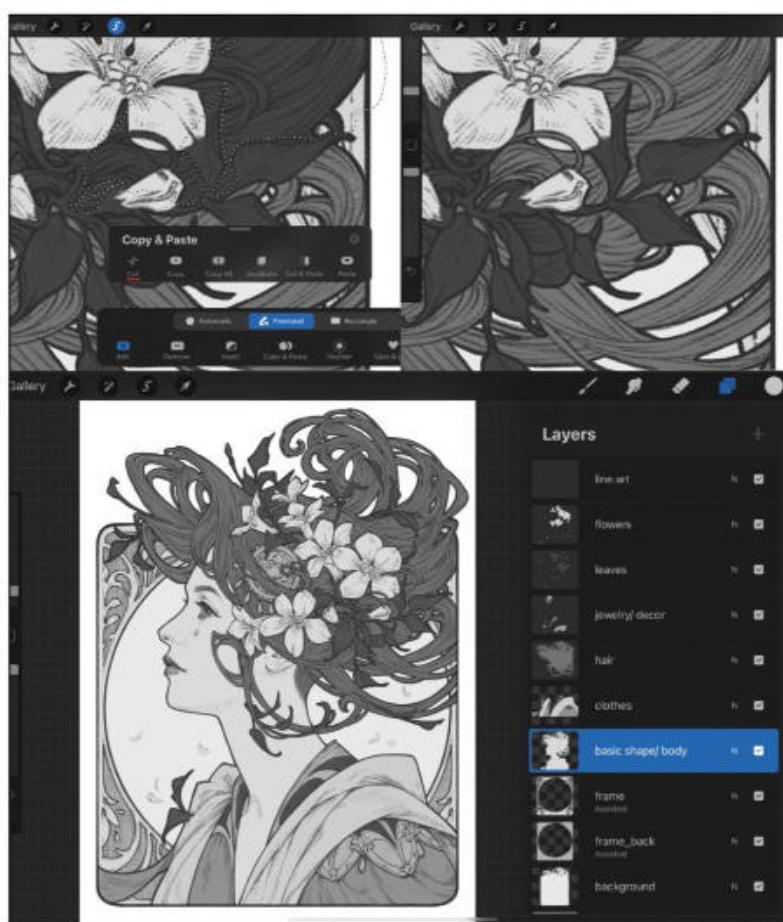
7 Bringing in elements separately

I create new layers for each group of objects, such as clothes, hair, flowers and so on, and organise them on top of the base shape. By selecting the base shape layer, I can then go to the object layer and fill it with colour. Then I clean the area outside of the object using the Selection tool. To create a good range of contrast, I use a different intensity of greyscale for each object.
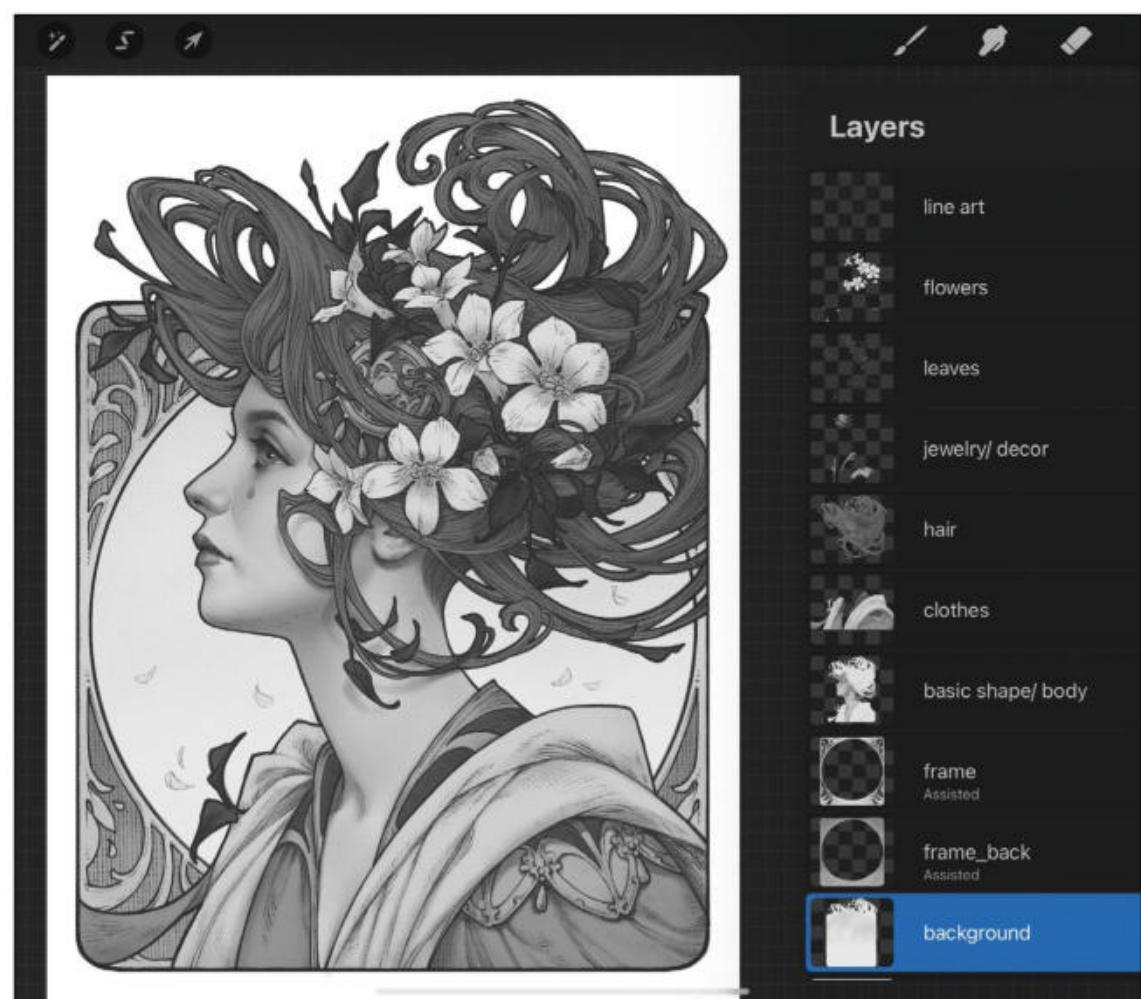
8 Adding shadows

Before adding some volume to the character, I activate the Alpha Lock for each layer, so I can paint inside the shape without crossing it. At this stage, I like using the Soft Pastel brush, because of the softness and texture it gives to the drawing. First I create subtle shadows, keeping in mind where the light source is. Then I add some contrast to the objects, which creates some deeper shadows. ➤➤

Breeze

Venice

Blaze

Neon
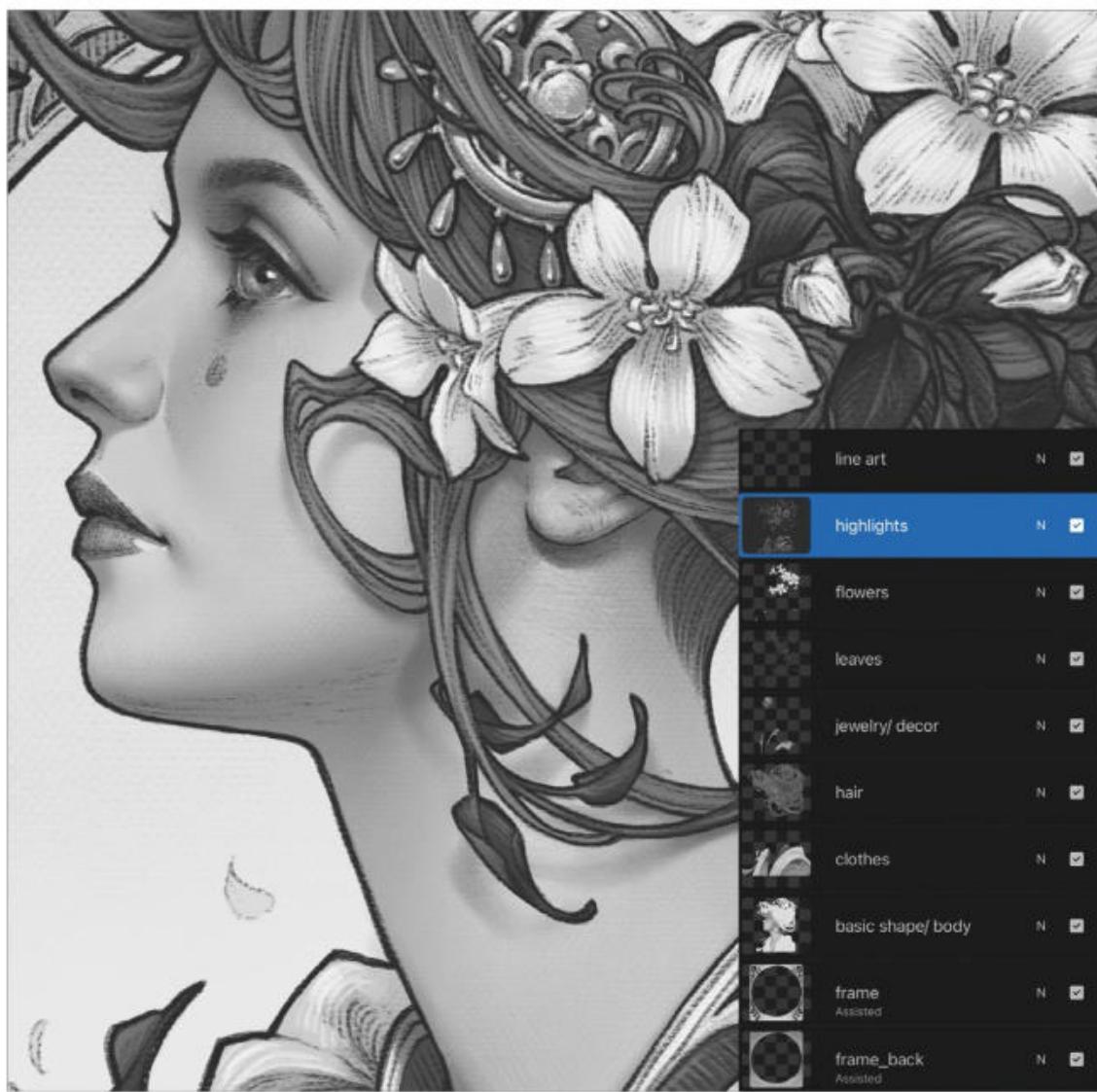
9 Introducing highlights and details

I add a new layer for the highlights below the line-art. I choose the Hemp brush here, to create textured strokes for the highlights and make the image look not quite so smooth and 'digital'. I use a range of the light shades of grey and work more on halftones to refine the image. Once I'm happy with the greyscale value, I merge all the layers into one.
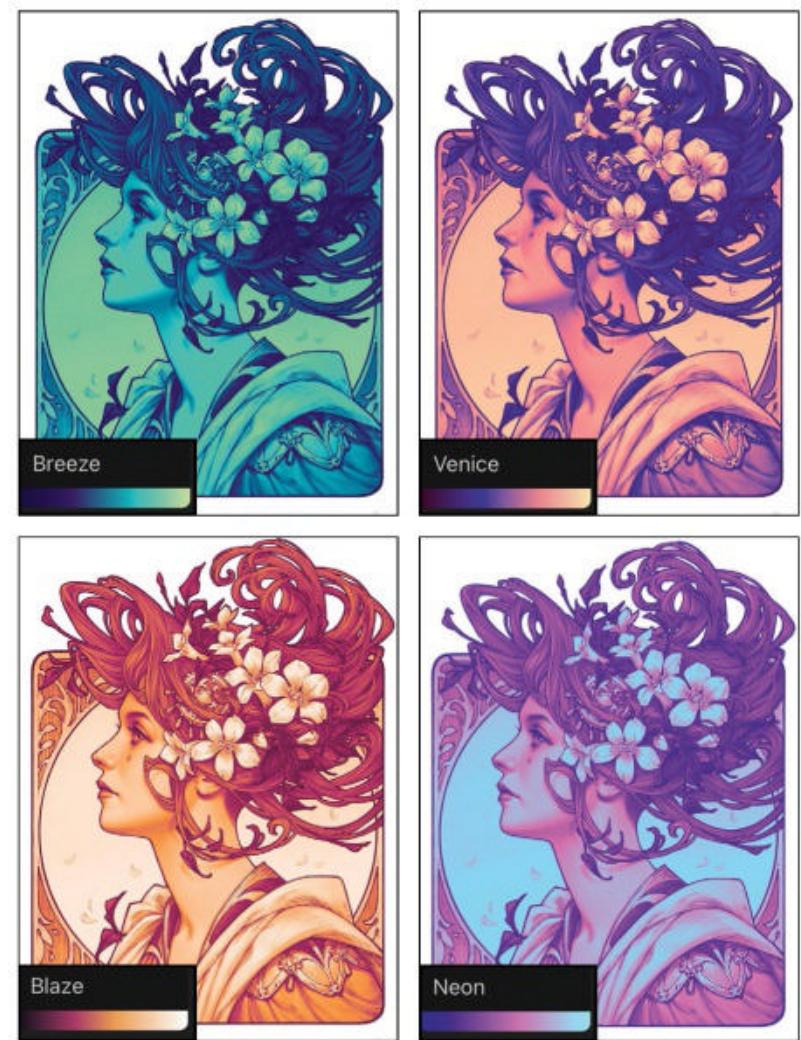
10 Experimenting with colour palettes

Now I'm going to establish a base colour using the Gradient Map. First I duplicate the greyscale layer; I'll work with the top one. Then I open the Gradient Library from the Adjustments menu to choose a colour combination. This method enables me to experiment with different colour palettes. I make a few different versions to compare them against each other quickly.

Gradient Map   Done
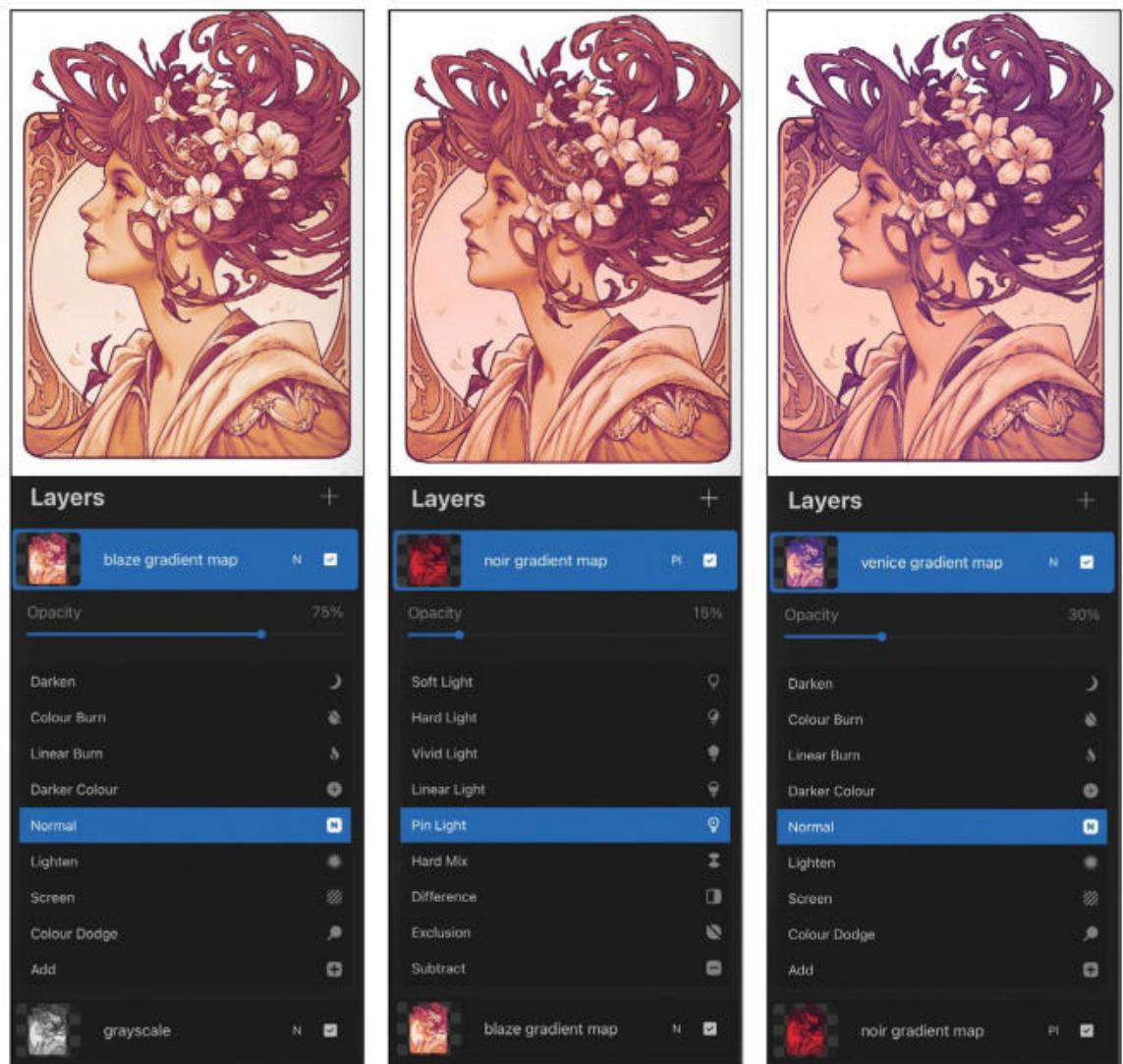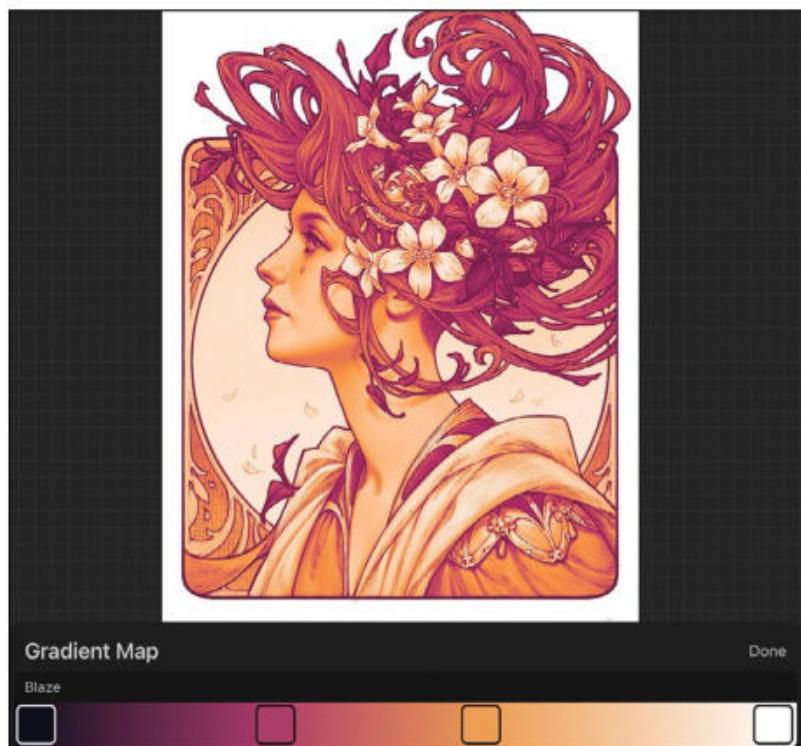
Blaze

11 Applying the Gradient Map

I end up choosing the Blaze gradient for the colour base of the drawing here. To make it look more natural, I reduce the Opacity setting of the layer to 75 per cent; this gives a nice vintage look to the image. To add some variation in colour, I decide to apply two more Gradient Maps: Noir and Venice. I then play with their blending modes and opacity until I get desired result.
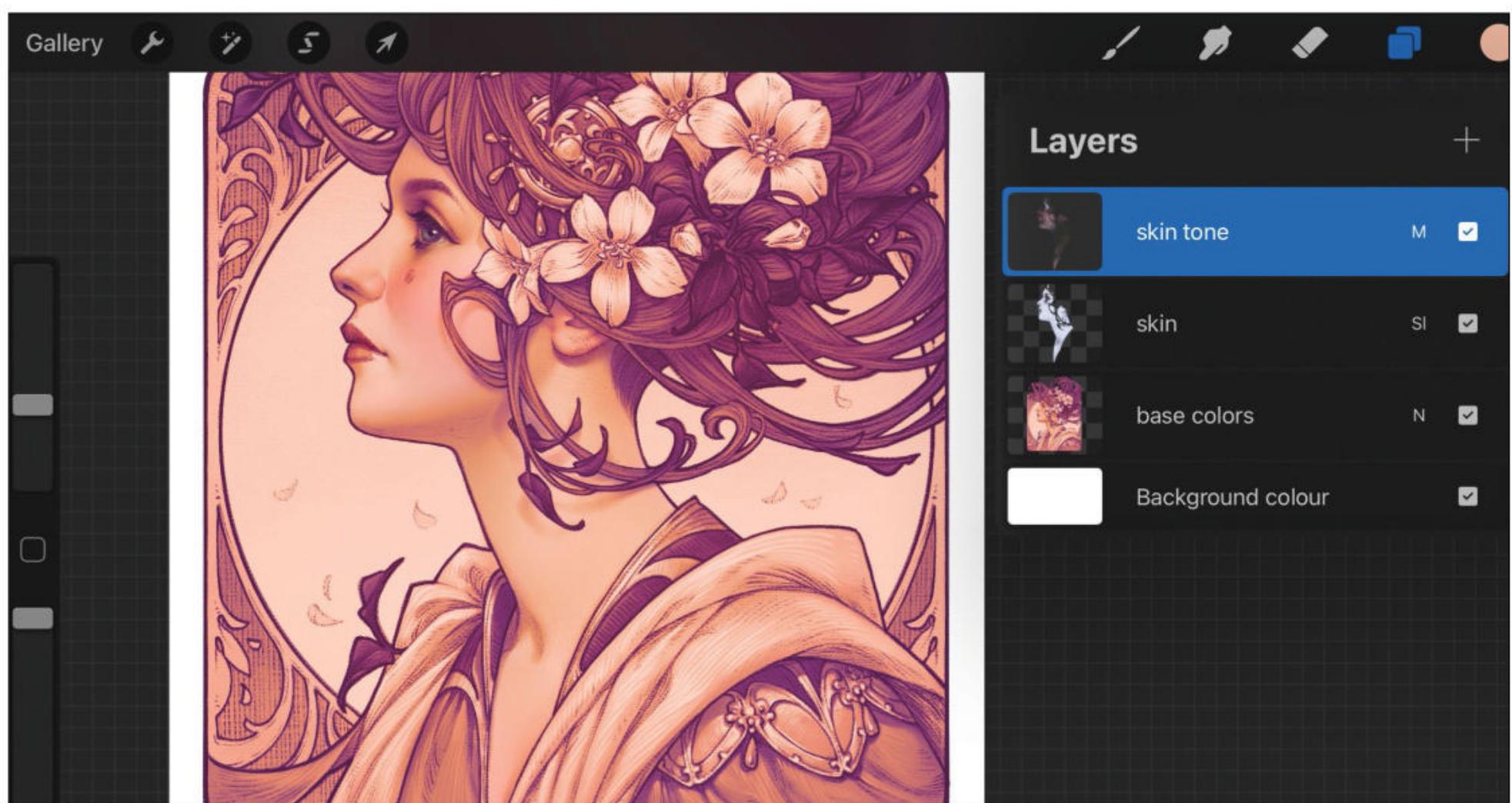
12 Working on a skin tone

It's time to add some different tones to the skin to make it look more natural. First I create a new layer set to Soft Light blending mode and fill the skin area with a very light purple. Then, on a new Multiply layer, I add some tones to the face: yellow to the forehead and neck; a reddish tone to the cheek, nose and ear; and blue to the eye and chin.
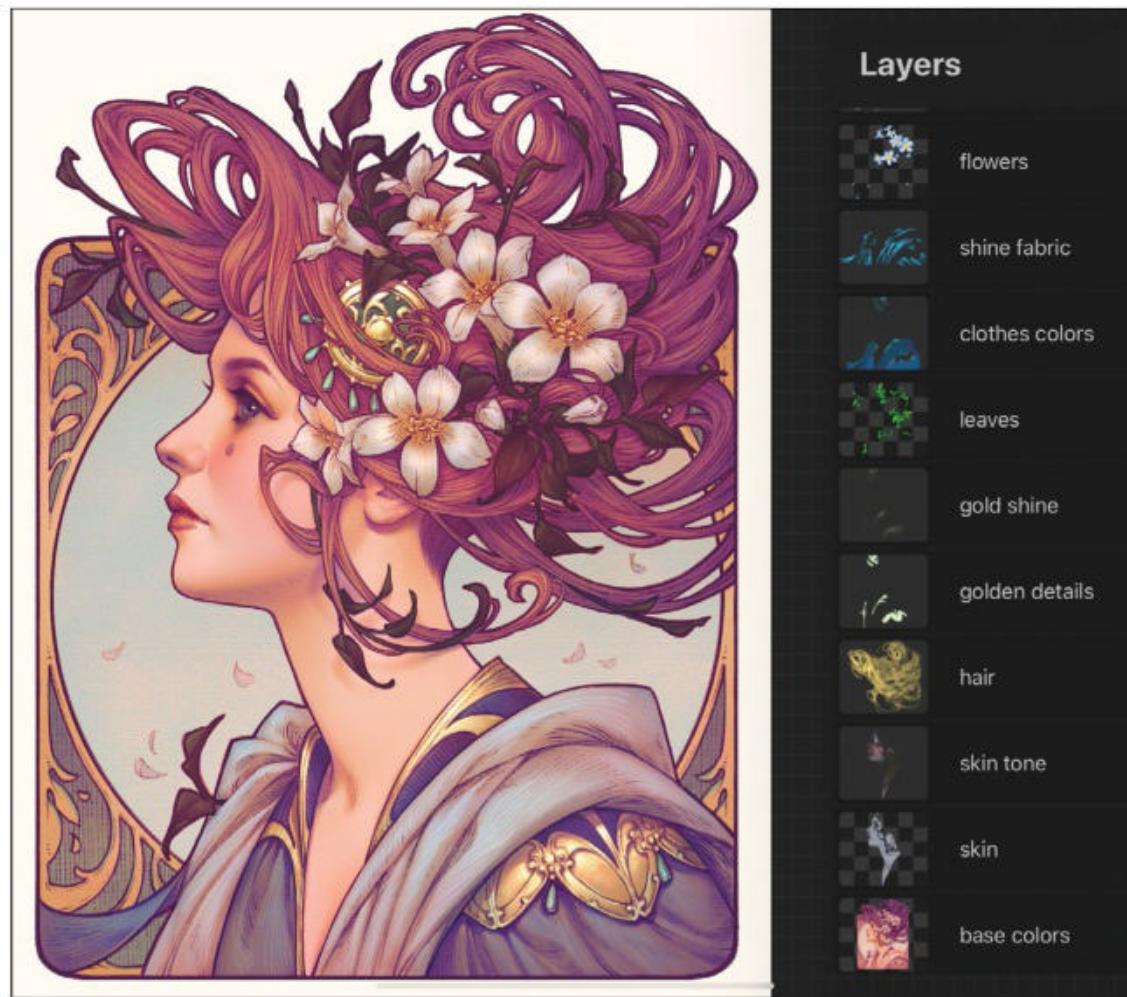
13 Painting individual colours

Much like in the previous step, I colour each group of objects. This is a very intuitive process, where I can experiment with different types of blending mode and opacity to achieve the desired result. I use Multiply and Darken modes for the dark objects; Soft Light and Overlay for the light objects; and Add for any shiny details. I also use the Color Balance tool to quickly make fine adjustments.
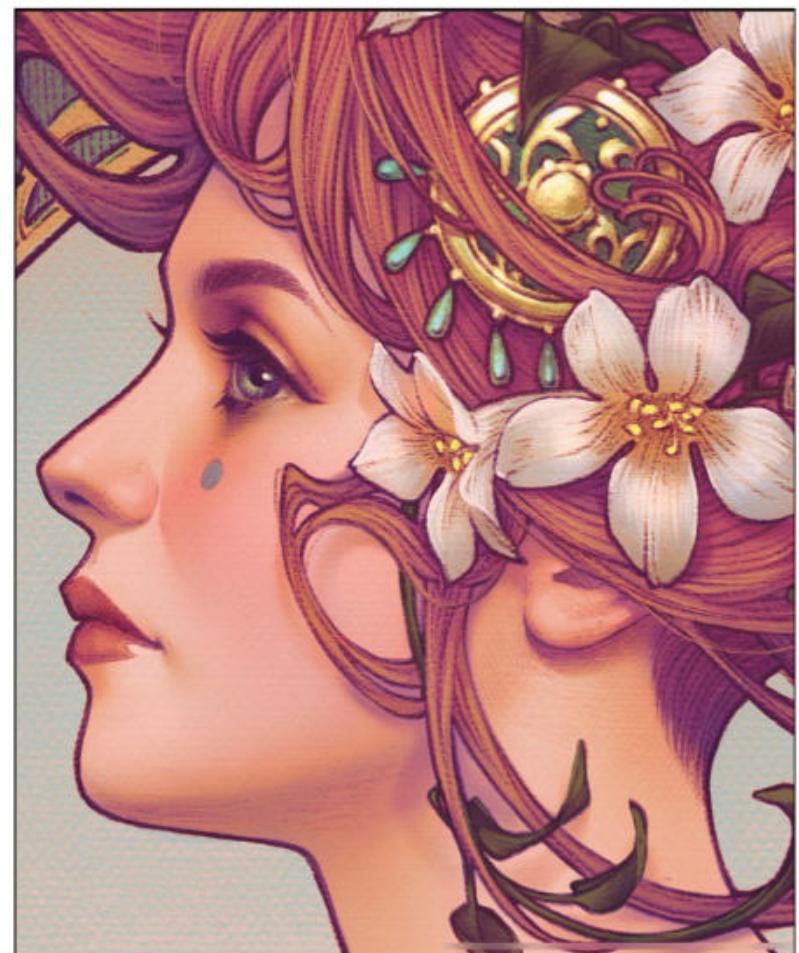
14 Final details and texture

I refine the image by adding details to the hairstyle, flowers and leaves with the Hemp brush. Finally, I add a nice texture to give the image more of a traditional look. I pick a light beige colour and cover the canvas with texture using the Soft Pastel brush. I set the layer to Multiply and reduce the Opacity to 25 per cent.

ArtRage Vitae
PAINT WITH BOLD BRUSH STROKES

Daniel Ibanez reveals how he creates custom brushes in ArtRage, before using them for realistic digital oil painting

Artist PROFILE

Daniel Ibanez
LOCATION: US

A traditional and digital artist, Daniel uses the same techniques found in his oil paintings for his ArtRage portraits, creating textured and lively art with a nod to the Old Masters.
danielibanez.net

ArtRage is the best digital oil painting software I've ever used. With my decades-long background in traditional fine art oil painting, I was ecstatic to find a digital painting tool that let me work in the same way as I do traditionally.

What I love about traditional oil paints is the brush work, the natural mixing of the paint medium on the canvas and the interaction of brush strokes to create new textures and colours organically. There's a sort of synergy between all of this combined with the thick three-dimensional paint, that piles up as you work it on the canvas. ArtRage enables me to get the benefits of all of these things as I work.

The Oil brush uses sliders instead of the stamp and texture method of other art software. These sliders enable you to create almost any brush and mark that you can imagine, and are simple to use.
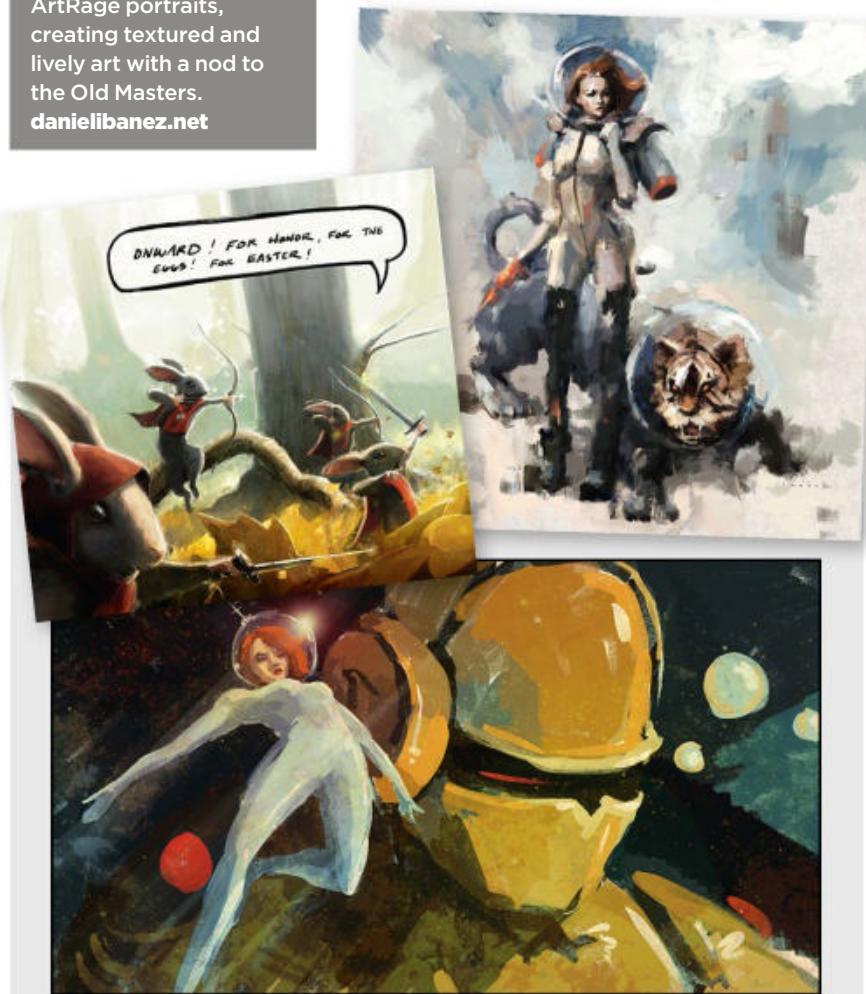
1 FIND YOUR STYLE

There are many ways to use the Oil brush in ArtRage Vitae - each painting shown above was done with the brush using different slider settings. ArtRage also has the ability to use stamp-based brushes, like those found in Photoshop. These can be adapted and created in the Custom Brush designer or with a Stamp tool. And while I love those brush settings and options. I still think the Oil brush with its sliders is the best tool of all of them.
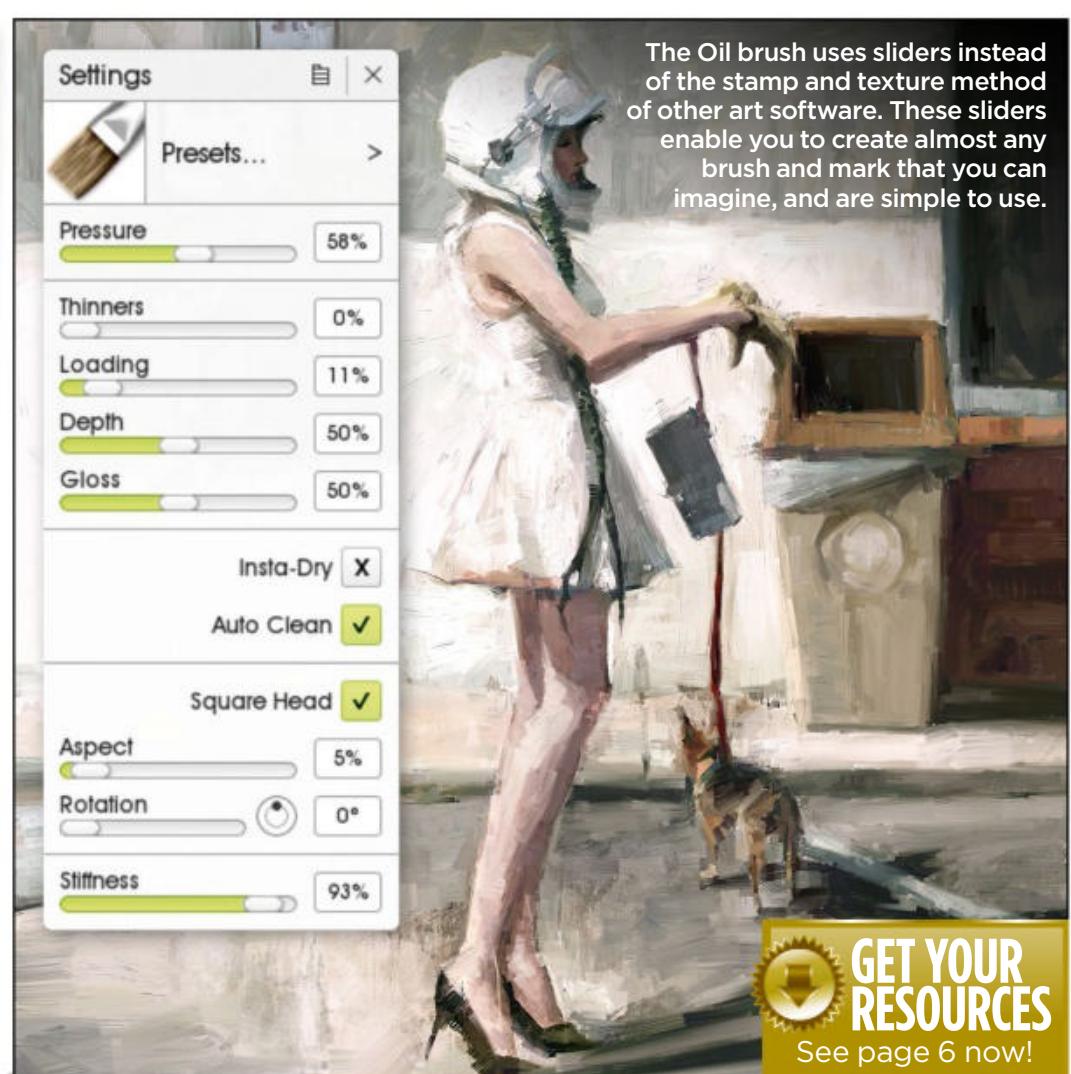
2 SIMPLE SETTINGS TO CREATE A BIG IMPACT

There's a long history of plein air and alla prima painters who use bold marks to simplify shape and subject. These traditional painting principles can be applied to digital painting since there are applications that can simulate the paint body interactions and brushstrokes as seen in ArtRage. There's a freshness when painting this way that will make your work distinct and impactful.

Whether a client is interested in a more traditional look but the deadlines and the budget won't allow it, or you're trying to find a way to make your paintings stand out, the combination of ArtRage and these techniques will help bring something very original and different to your digital work.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Settings

Pressure	100%
Thinners	0%
Loading	16%
Depth	52%
Gloss	53%
Insta-Dry	X
Auto Clean	✓
Square Head	✓
Aspect	0%
Rotation	0°
Stiffness	100%

Settings

Pressure	100%
Loading	22%
Auto Clean	✓
Lock Rotation	X

> ❝ **As my mentor used to say: 'Three looks, two thinks, one stroke'** ❞

3 DON'T FORGET THE KNIFE

The Palette Knife is a key partner for the Oil brush. It's the best blending tool when painting digitally, and can also be used for sharp and bold accent marks when the Loading setting is increased. When using this approach, use big, simple and descriptive strokes. As my mentor used to say: "Three looks, two thinks, one stroke". Make that one stroke bold and confident.

Settings — Thick Gloss Square

Pressure	50%
Thinners	0%
Loading	**60%**
Depth	0%
Gloss	**98%**
Insta-Dry	X
Auto Clean	✓
Square Head	✓
Aspect	100%
Rotation	0°
Stiffness	50%

Settings

Pressure	100%
Thinners	0%
Loading	**8%**
Depth	**53%**
Gloss	51%
Insta-Dry	X
Auto Clean	✓
Square Head	✓
Aspect	100%
Rotation	0°
Stiffness	50%

Settings

|	
Pressure	100%
Thinners	0%
Loading	**22%**
Depth	53%
Gloss	51%
Insta-Dry	X
Auto Clean	✓
Square Head	✓
Aspect	3%
Rotation	0°
Stiffness	**97%**

Settings

Pressure	100%
Thinners	**36%**
Loading	22%
Depth	53%
Gloss	51%
Insta-Dry	X
Auto Clean	✓
Square Head	✓
Aspect	3%
Rotation	0°
Stiffness	97%

4 DIVING INTO BRUSH SETTINGS

Here are the settings for some of my favourite brushes. Try experimenting with some of my recommendations and then modify them to suit your own style of painting. ➤➤

5 REAL COLOUR BLENDING

ArtRage has had real colour blending in its DNA since the beginning. The more loading you have on the brush, the more wet the paint will behave. This will create an experience just like painting with wet oil paints. Simply right-click the active colour on the Color Wheel (lower right-hand corner of the screen) and select Real Color Blending.
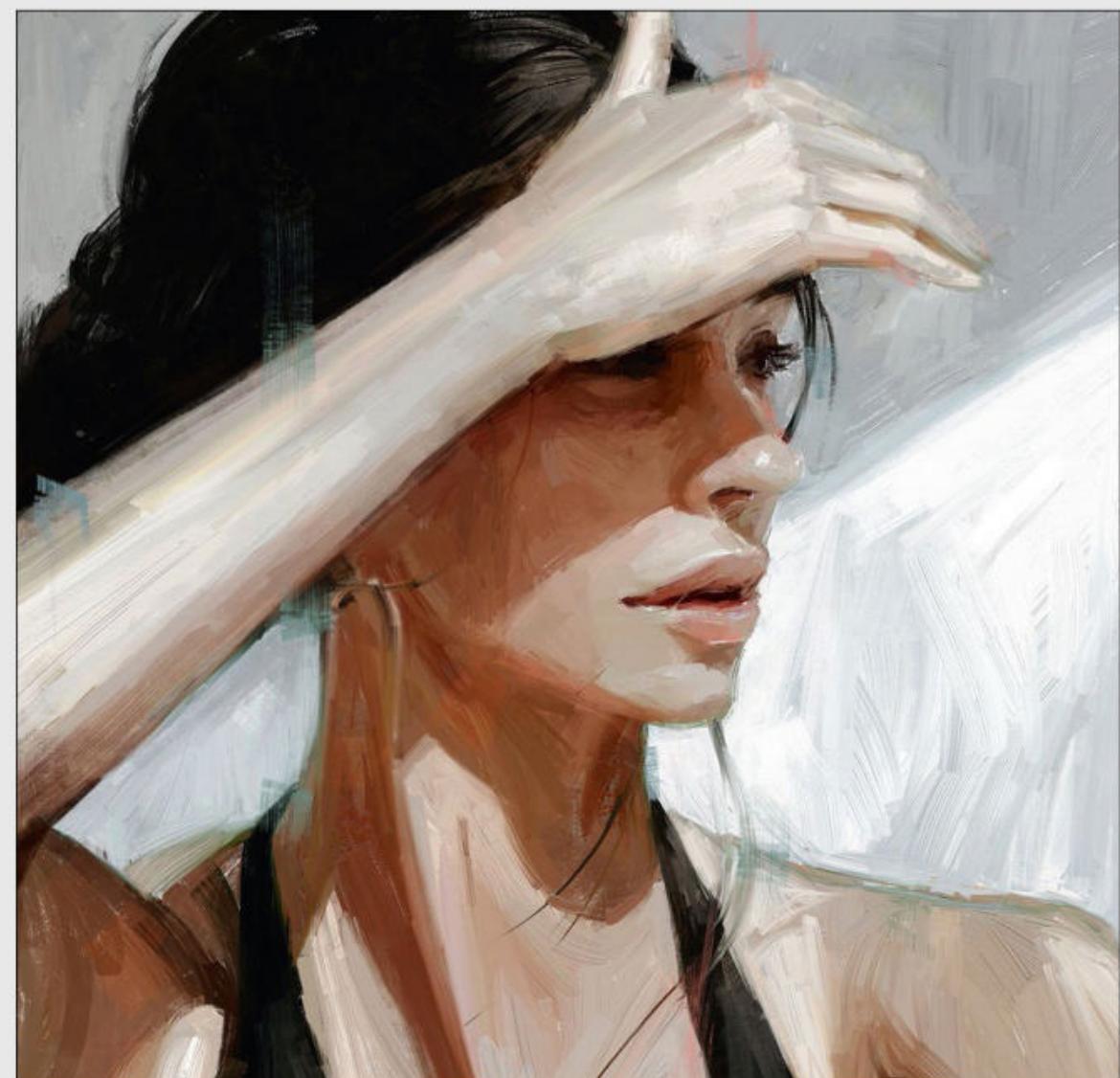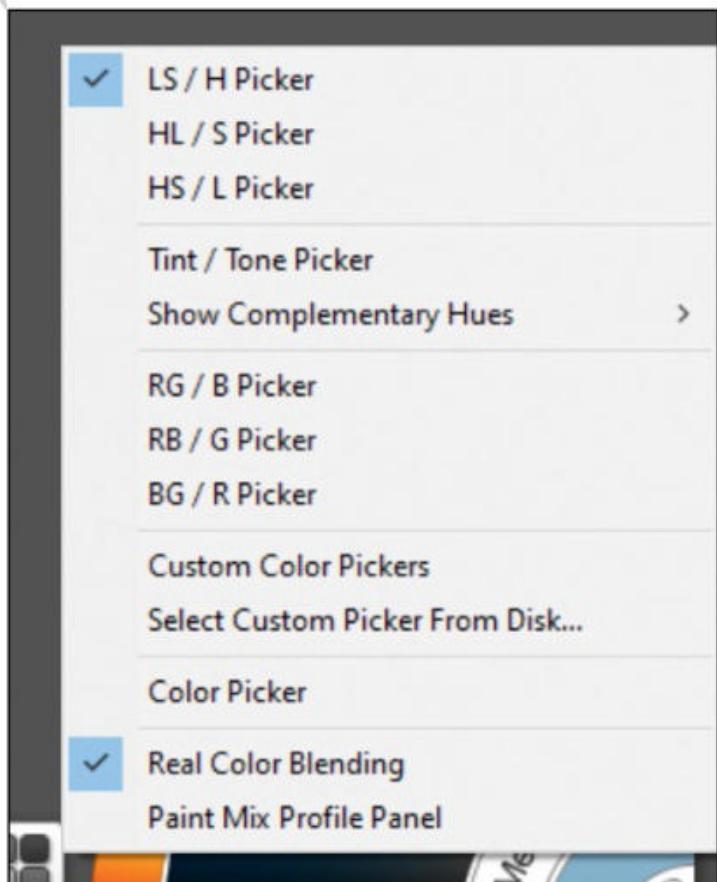

6 USING ARTRAGE TO FINISH PHOTOSHOP PAINTINGS

When I've created a painting in Photoshop, I need to give it that finishing touch to bring it to life. I select File>Import Image File and bring any already existing painting into ArtRage. I then simply create a new layer, set the blend mode to Multiply and then I take the preset for the Oil Brush called Square Varnish. I use this while painting with stroke directions that makes sense with whatever painting I'm working on top of.

You'll soon notice that the three-dimensional shadows and highlights of each individual stroke are all that will remain. Because of the Multiply blend mode, all other paint stroke data disappears. And you can simply add the illusion of a three-dimensional paint stroke on top of an already existing digital painting. I take this approach all the time with my Photoshop work. It's just one more way that ArtRage enhances my digital studio experience.

7 PUT IT INTO PRACTICE
It's time to get more from ArtRage Vitae's brush and canvas settings...

A **Identify interesting source material**
Find a subject you're interested in that has strong lighting. Loosely map in your subject with whatever tool you feel comfortable using. I like using the Oil Brush, Pencil or the Pen.

D **From dark to light**
Make yourself work fast, moving from the darker values first, toward the mid-tones and then finally the highlights using big, bold brush strokes. Block in your subject with that medium to dryer brush, and you should be able to grasp the rhythm of light and dark shapes.


B **Explore stokes**
Next, set the Oil Brush to one of the medium to dryer settings from the brushes that I've listed previously. Find one of the darker values in your reference picture and try some experimental strokes.

C **Use a larger brush**
Now make your brush larger than you would normally. Making yourself use a larger brush will enhance the focus on your brush strokes and mark-making, forcing you to work in a simplified fashion.

E **Stay focused when putting down strokes**
Now that you have local colour painted across the surface you can begin to refine and add detail. You may want to explore the Impasto brush or the dry brush technique. Whatever you do, make sure to focus on making individual strokes in your painting instead of scumbling your stylus in a thousand different directions.

F **Sculpt accurate light and dark values**
Remember that when we paint like this we're painting light, which means value. We're not worried about perfect colouring or even the perfect shape of our subject. We want to portray accurate light and dark values. When we paint these bold brushstrokes of light, dark and mid-tone we're sculpting the volumes inside of our picture plane. Let's sculpt confidently!

Artist insight
DEVELOP STYLE BY USING SHAPE

Illustrator **Harry Conway** shares his method for creating atmospheric images with an emphasis on using shape, silhouettes, form and texture

Artist PROFILE

Harry Conway
LOCATION: Ireland

Harry graduated from Ballyfermot College in 2018 and has gone on to work with Wizards of the Coast, IV Studios, Grrre Games and SMG Studios.
ifxm.ag/hc-illo

It's daunting giving art advice as someone who feels they've plenty yet to learn themselves. I've had the pleasure of working with some amazing clients over my relatively short career in the illustration industry, but have been plagued with imposter syndrome. I'm sure this is a feeling you're familiar with. That aside, I love what I do, although it can be challenging. I have to pinch myself every so often to be reminded that I get to do this as a job.

My art style has gone through many changes, some nuanced, some dramatic. What's been consistent is my love of drawing characters and telling stories to convey a strong sense of mood and atmosphere. I try to accomplish this by incorporating striking silhouettes and rich textures into my illustrations. To some, my approach might seem unusual from a technical standpoint, but I think it's important to experiment; to challenge yourself as much as possible in order to grow as an artist.

I'm going to show you some of my go-to methods that have proven to be beneficial in helping me develop my style. Hopefully they'll give you some ideas on how to break out of your comfort zone and take a more experimental approach to your art.

1 CREATE BETTER THUMBNAILS

Thumbnails are great for quickly mapping out illustrations in a loose and explorative way. I tend to draw ones that look more developed than your average sketchy thumbnail, but because solid shapes play such a significant role in my art, it's better for me to use shape from the off; a sketch wouldn't do as good a job at conceptualising my ideas. However, it shouldn't matter how developed your thumbnails are. They're purely for getting your ideas down on the page as quickly as possible, so leave perfection at the door.

2 SILHOUETTES ARE YOUR BEST FRIEND

For me, the silhouette is the foundation for creating visually rich and expressive characters. You're relying solely on shape to define who they are. This can be a great tool for communicating what you want your character to say from a purely visual standpoint. Try to think of ways to make your silhouettes stand out. Consider their pose – how they carry themselves. What are they wearing? Are they a good or evil character?
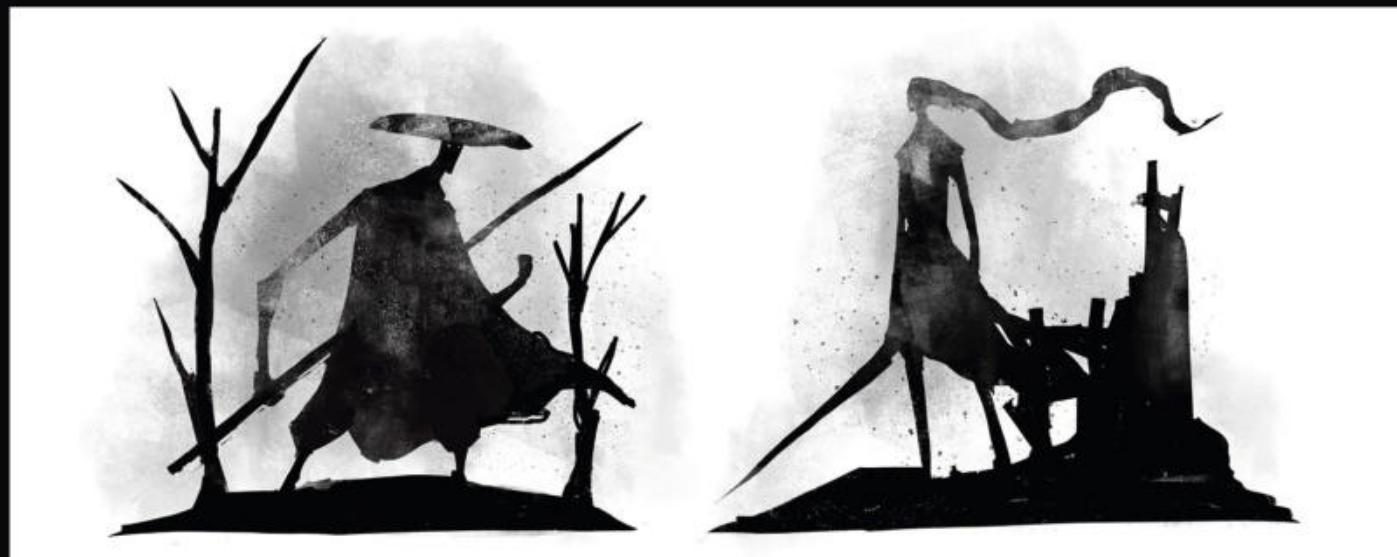
3 MOULD THE SILHOUETTE

You're not always going to come up with a perfect silhouette the first go-around, so it's important to keep working until it clicks with you. I don't redraw the silhouette over and over again Instead, I work on the same silhouette, continuously adjusting and refining it as if I'm moulding it into the shape I want. Once I'm satisfied with the overall shape, I go in with some details, and not a moment before.

66 Incorporating some of the natural world around you can really help your style feel more distinctive 99

4 APPLYING TEXTURE

I like the quality of my illustrations to have a rustic, gritty feel to them, so the brushes I use are usually based on traditional media textures such as charcoal, ink washes or paint splatter. Sometimes I look to textures that are inspired by the world around me, such as corroded metal or stonework to really get that organic feel I want. If you're like me and you want your art to look less 'digital', incorporating some of the natural world around you can really help your style feel more distinctive and unique. ➤➤

5 WHEN IN DOUBT, ADD WIND

A very simple but effective trick that can immediately make your silhouettes more interesting is to imagine a gust of wind blowing through the illustration. All of a sudden, hair, cloaks and flags are now playing a much more prominent role on the page, making something that might have been stagnant feel much more alive. This was a trick I applied to Strahd for the cover of issue 34 of Dragon+ magazine. His pose is very still, but the flowing hair and billowing cape are what add so much drama and movement to the piece. Thanks, wind!

6 ILLUSTRATING A DARK FANTASY CHARACTER
Designing Dagda from the fantasy card game Nidavellir, by GRRRE Games

A Block in the shapes
I start by blocking in a loose character silhouette, keeping things light and playful. I don't refine anything just yet; right now I'm just focusing on getting a general sense of the character and establishing their overall shape. Then I quickly sketch in some loose details over the silhouette to use as a guide for later.

B Refine and add details
Now I clean up and refine the edges. Once I'm happy with her shape, I open a new layer and carefully draw in the details over the sketch lines. With that done, I fill in the areas that will have the lightest tones, such as the skulls and bones, and her skin. While I'm at it, I add some texture to her clothing to break up the solid blacks.

C Add texture and colour
With a textured brush, I add highlights over the whole character, with more texture where the directional light is strongest. Then, on a soft light layer, I add colour on top of the character silhouette so the texture can show through the colour. From here, I add final details to the background and skin before calling it a day.

7 STUDY CINEMATOGRAPHY
Lacking ideas or inspiration? Study film. Some of the most beautifully composited frames in films could be paintings themselves. Strong silhouettes and dynamic compositions feature heavily in film and can be a great point of reference. If you find yourself starving for inspiration, take a frame from a movie you like and replicate it, as I did with this study from Se7en. This is a great way to learn about composition, colour, lighting, silhouettes and more.
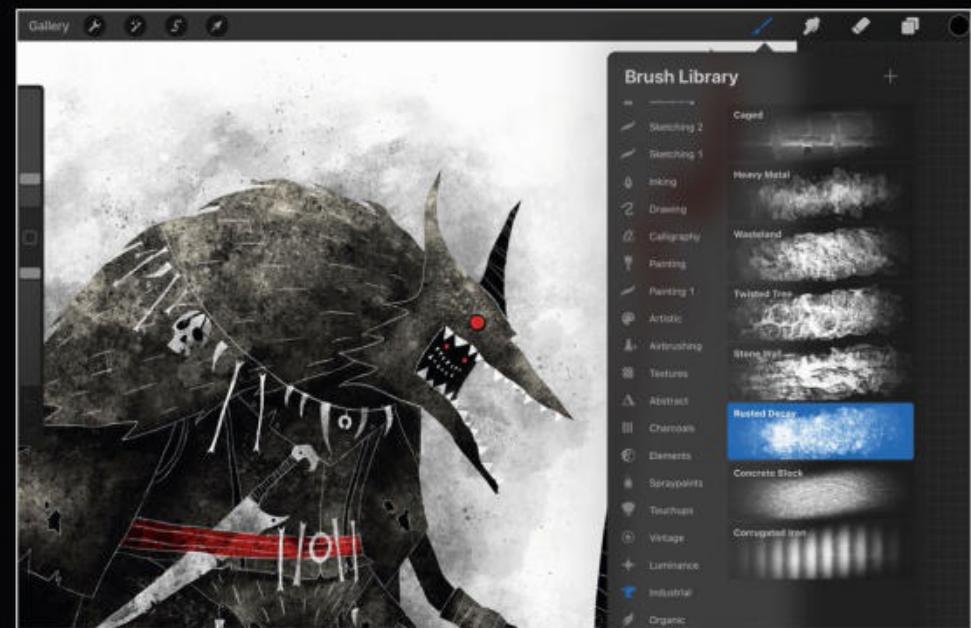
8 MIX IT UP
My preferred drawing software is Procreate; when it comes to adding texture, the Procreate brush library gives you a wide range of brushes to play with. I like to combine three or four different brushes that are quite varied, which can result in some distinctive textures. Try not to limit your mark making by sticking with one brush. You can use any combination of brushes to create something that's unique to you and your own style. Experiment, combine, play. You'll be amazed. ➤➤

11 GET SOME DISTANCE

Stepping back or minimising your screen is something I recommend you do regularly with every piece you work on. The purpose of this is to make sure you're keeping track of your drawing in its entirety, as it makes it difficult to balance composition and shape close up. If I can't quickly identify who my character is or what's going on within the illustration from a distance, it indicates that the silhouette or composition needs to be developed further.

9 USE TEXTURE AS A STORYTELLING DEVICE

Texture can play a powerful role in visual storytelling. In this sample comic page, it became important to visually represent the mood between the two characters. To emphasise this, I deliberately used textures that have a grungy and chaotic feel to them to communicate an unsettling and dangerous environment. Ask yourself how texture can best serve the story you're trying to tell. Consider the mood and the types of characters in play. Is the setting dark or light in tone?

10 KEEP ADJUSTING

There will be times during the process when something just isn't clicking. Maybe it's your character's pose, or their shape isn't captivating enough, maybe they need more detail, and so on. If you're stuck, try to think of the story behind the character. What's driving them? What's their background? Try to integrate the answers to these questions into your character designs to add more visual intrigue. For my Fallen Angel here, I included a red crescent moon and gave him a broken sword to add an extra layer of narrative to his character, so that it compels the viewer to want to know more about them.

12 USE THE WHITE BACKGROUND

A white or minimalist background can actually add to the strength of an illustration by creating a stark contrast between it and the main subject, focusing your eye on where it needs to look instead of being distracted by visual clutter. It's a simple yet effective way to make your illustration more eye-catching. The point is not to fear the white background, but to incorporate it into your art to alleviate the pressure of having to fill the entire page just for the sake of it.

13 PUSH YOURSELF

If you're more realistic and detail-orientated, maybe try something looser and more stylised, use colour palettes you wouldn't typically use or experiment with more dramatic compositions. Don't be afraid to push yourself beyond what you know – this is the key to growing as an artist. If you try something and it doesn't work out, that's fine. Give yourself permission to make mistakes. It's all part of the journey, embrace it! As the Irish writer Samuel Beckett said, "Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

> ❝ **Don't be afraid to push yourself beyond what you know – this is the key to growing as an artist** ❞

14 SAY MORE WITH LESS

One of the best ways of evoking an emotional response with illustration is by taking a minimalist approach. This is where using shape and texture can really play to its strengths. In this image, I wanted to convey the feeling of isolation. To do this, I stripped away unnecessary details to the core elements, placing the character in the corner of the page to communicate the oppressiveness of the world she's traversing, emphasised by using very dense texture. It's not necessary to saturate the page with detail if it doesn't call for it. Remember, less is more.
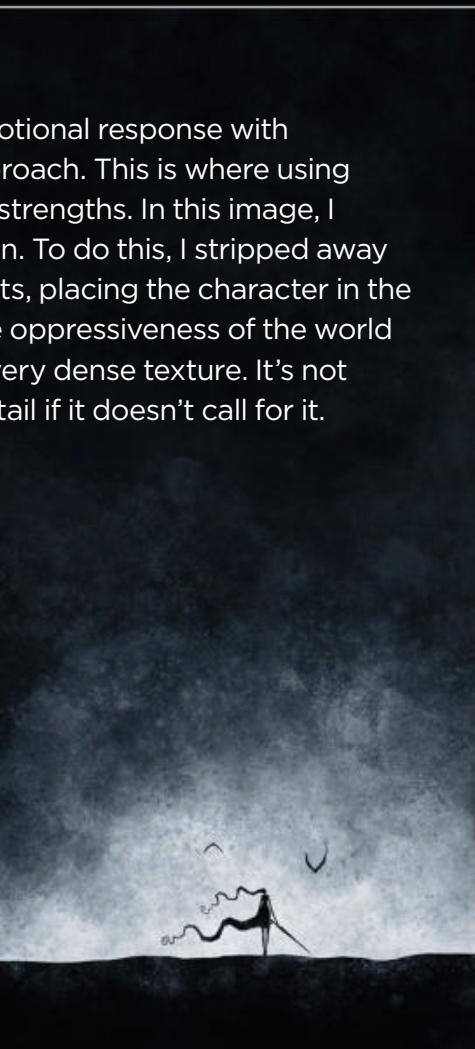
15 BEND THE RULES

While the rules for making art are important, you must also learn how to bend them. My style arose because I was getting bogged down with technicalities and decided to tailor my ability to my creative needs. I'm impatient and like immediate results, so I had to develop my process to accommodate that and focus on what mattered to me. If you hit a wall with your art, try a new approach. Explore different methods of telling a story in a way that pushes you out of your comfort zone. ●

SIMPLIFY FIGURES FOR ANIMATION

Following last month's workshop, **Jackie Droujko** reveals another collection of tips for creating captivating characters for animation

Artist **PROFILE**

Jackie Droujko
LOCATION: Canada

Sheridan animation graduate Jackie is a character designer working at Netflix on feature films. Her passion lies in creating simple and appealing designs that convey compelling stories.
**jackiedroujko.com**

Last issue, I took you through some basic tips to help you design a simple character that can be redrawn repeatedly. I explained how you need to keep as much information as you can while stripping your characters down to essential elements. Because animation is so time-intensive, the fewer lines you need to draw, the more streamlined the whole process will be.

This month I'm looking at figure design again, helping you to flesh out your illustrations and make believable characters by adding a sense of volume, exaggerating certain features and keeping your colour palette simple.

1 IMPLY VOLUME IN YOUR DESIGNS

It's easy to miss the importance of volumetric designs. I love creating flat and stylised characters, but I always make sure to suggest enough volume and directional lines so you can feel the weight and true presence of the character. In this example, you can understand the volume and perspective of the girls' bodies from how their bathing suits wrap around their forms. Since the bottom character's pelvis is tilted away from us, I make sure to curve the shapes to reflect that.
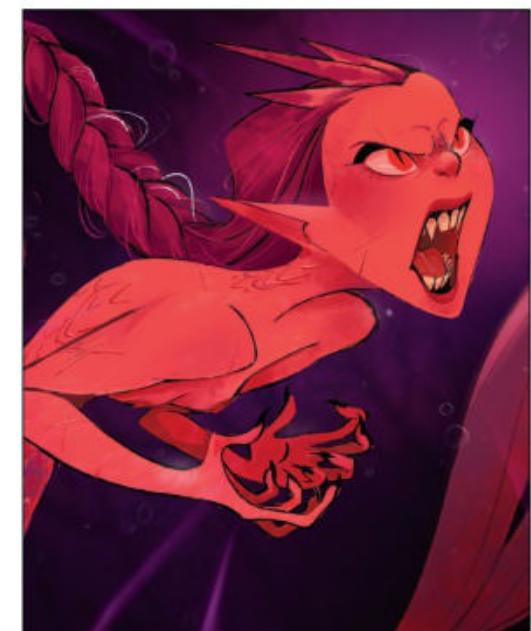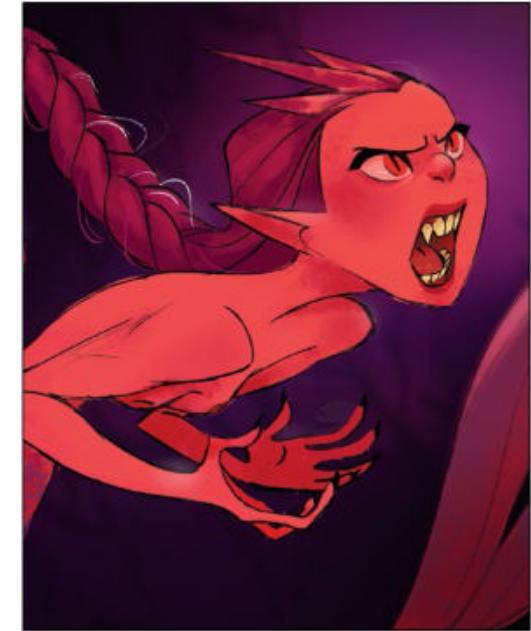
2 PUSHING THE ENERGY

I usually take a second pass at my first drawing when I don't feel the energy of the drawing. How can I emphasise how the character is feeling through their action? If my character is angry, how can she be *really* angry? I squish her brows down to show less white in her eyes. Then I add a downwards curve in her scowl and lengthen her mouth. I hunch her back over more and curl her fingers in. All these little changes really push her expression.

How can we make this silhouette clearer?

Take her arm out!
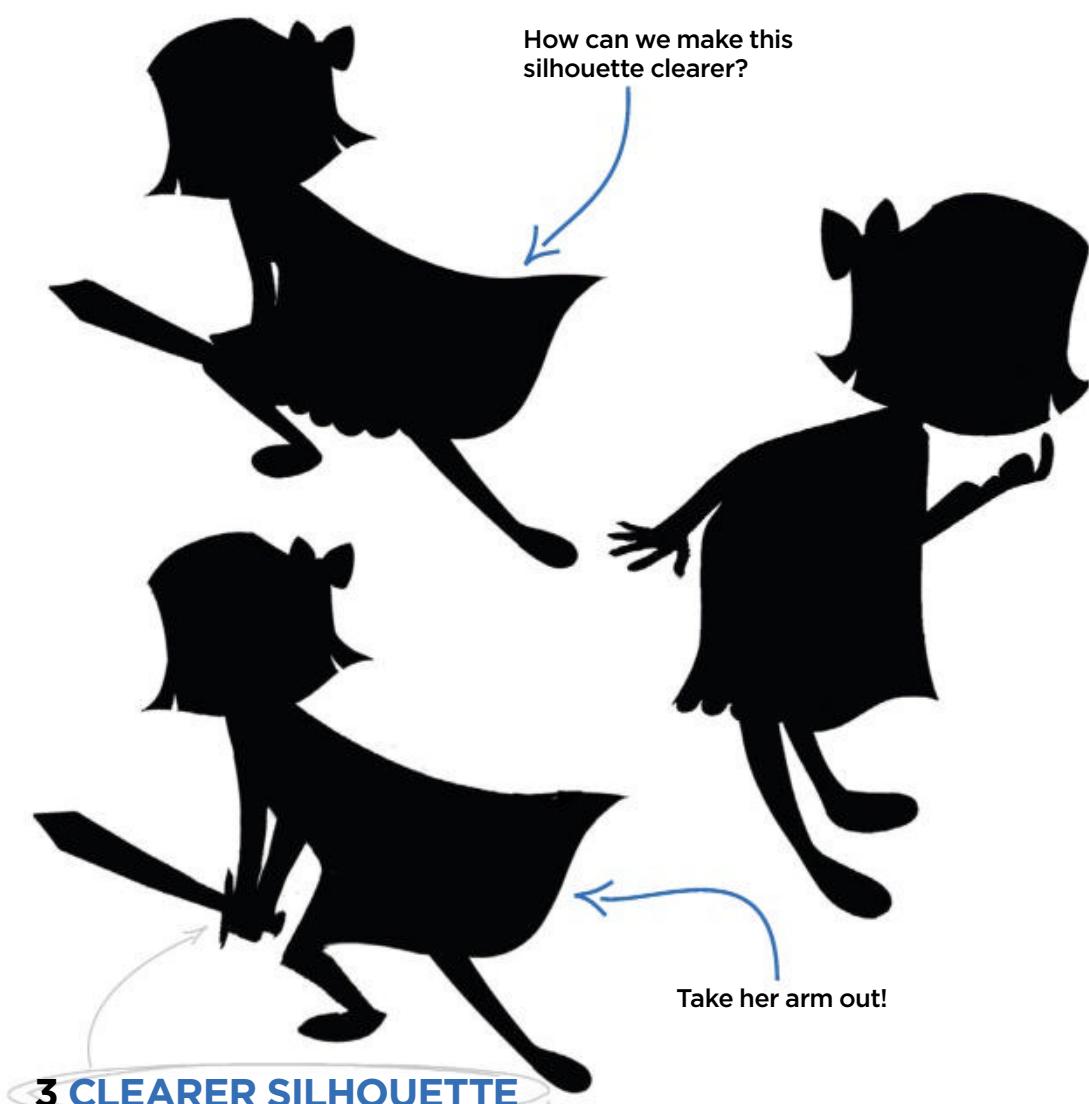
3 CLEARER SILHOUETTE

Filling your entire pose in black so you can only focus on the silhouette is a great way to see if the pose is clear. Sometimes it's as simple as taking a limb out of the silhouette to create a clearer action to the audience. Don't forget to think about the negative space. Keeping interesting negative shapes is just as important as the filled space.

X
- All proportions are even.
- Volumes are all the same thickness.

✓
- Proportions vary.
- Some volumes are thin, some thick.

Check out the size variations I've pointed out!

4 PROPORTION AND SCALE

When we talk about proportion, we're talking about the relationship between the size and scale of elements. When a character has varying sizes of elements, it makes them more visually appealing, by adding harmony and balance. Proportions aren't just for the overall body. You can break down each shape and analyse how they work proportionally with one another.

5 SQUASH AND STRETCH

A great way to give more life to your characters is to show their volumes through squashing and sketching. We squash for an anticipation of an action, and then Stretch for the action. It's important to keep the structure of the character and not to push the squash and stretch too far, or your character will no longer be recognisable. ➡➡

6 SIMPLIFYING YOUR CHOICE OF COLOURS
A limited colour palette helps to emphasise the tone of the animation piece
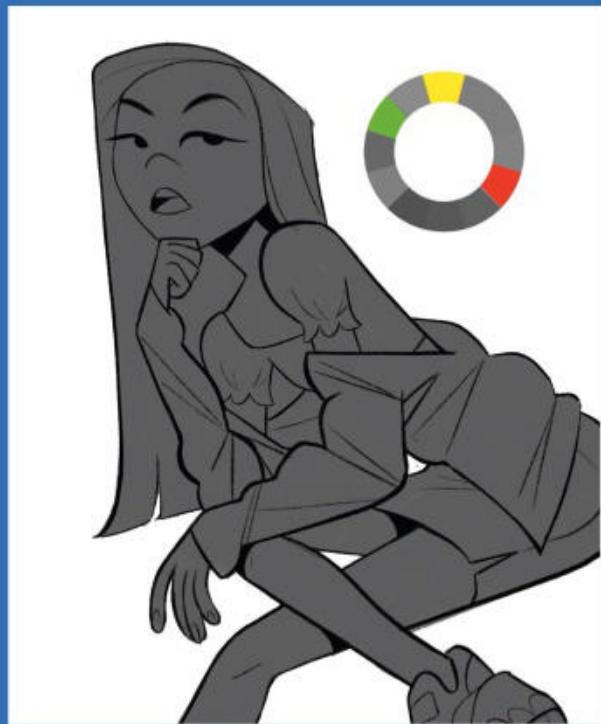

A **Colour selection**
After sketching and lining the character, I block out the shape in order to give me an idea of what the contrast against the background will be. At this point I choose my colour palette. I'm choosing a split complementary palette of green, yellow and red.

B **Visual interest and energy**
I fill in the background and skin tone, which gives me an idea of what the mood will be and if these wild colours will work together. The background and character blend nicely. Adding the red jacket makes the figure pop. The contrast of red is bold and adds visual interest and energy.

C **Adding red details**
Finally, I add details and sprinkle a bit of red on the shirt, nails, braces and socks to tie red more into the rest of the piece. I'm not using any colours out of my limited palette, which will make transferring this character into animation much simpler while keeping a very appealing design.

7 SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS CREATE SHAPES!

Remember when I said that the negative shapes are just as important as the silhouette shapes? It's the same for shadows and light. Shadows create shapes on your character, and you always want to apply appealing shape language to the shadow masses and even the light masses. Be sure that they're not too distracting and tie in with your character moment appropriately.

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

Issue 209
February 2022
We meet the production designer behind Netflix's Maya and the Three, and a whole host of other animation specialists. Plus: learn how to sculpt and paint character art, and master a range of animation art skills.

Issue 208
January 2022
We talk to the artists behind Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker and discover how they create the game's characters and worlds. We also show how to enhance your concept process, paint landscapes and design a boss!

Issue 207
Christmas 2021
Immerse yourself in the world of Dune, as artists, art directors and costume designers describe their work on the film, and the book's influence. Plus: paint fantasy environments, D&D card art and up the ante in your portrait art.

Issue 206
December 2021
Cover artist Christophe Young, Lauren Brown and Rafael Sarmento bring you insights on character design. We also talk to Spider-Verse artist Patrick O'Keefe, illustrator Iris Compiet and concept artist Karla Ortiz.

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ArtRage Vitae

ADD POLISH TO ILLUSTRATIONS

Artist **Chris Petrocchi** (aka Draw Juice) discusses the tips and tricks professionals use in the entertainment industry

Artist PROFILE

Chris Petrocchi
LOCATION: US

California-based Chris has been a pro artist for 25 years. His clients include Blizzard, Magic: The Gathering, THQ, Electronic Arts, Sony Online, Activision and Warner Bros. He runs an online course, Mastering the Art of the Portrait.
drawjuice.com

Have you ever been stuck at the beginning of the creative process and didn't know how to push through? Or maybe you got stuck in the muddy middle and abandoned the process, finding yourself unable to complete any projects at all.

Both these scenarios can leave you feeling hopeless and frustrated, and that's not good for us artists. Fret not, I'm here to help. I used to feel just like you, but after years working in games, TV and animation, I've learned how to overcome the common pitfalls artists face.

Wherever you get stuck, whether it be the beginning, middle or end, I will be sharing five powerful keys with you that will carry you successfully through the pitfalls of being a creative, like a ship on a stormy sea. They are: thumbnail, black and white comp, detailed black and white comp, colour rough and final image. This is referred to as a workflow, and following it can be the difference between success and failure. It's not magic, but there's magic in the process.

However, your inner artist might object: "I want to follow my artistic muse wherever she leads. I don't want to follow some cookie cutter process – that's no fun!" All right! Just hold on to your stylus and tablet and journey with me towards your new and courageous art horizons.

1 Quickly create a number of thumbnails

Thumbnails are small, rough sketches that convey bare-bones information about your idea. Although they can be done in both line and values, it's important that they show good proportion and silhouette, and not too much detail, because detail kills speed. These aren't pretty drawings, but quick sketch notes. The big advantage next to speed is that they can be quickly discarded for better ideas to come. "To increase your success rate, double your failures rate" is a good adage. Five to 10 thumbnails is a good number to start with. ➤➤
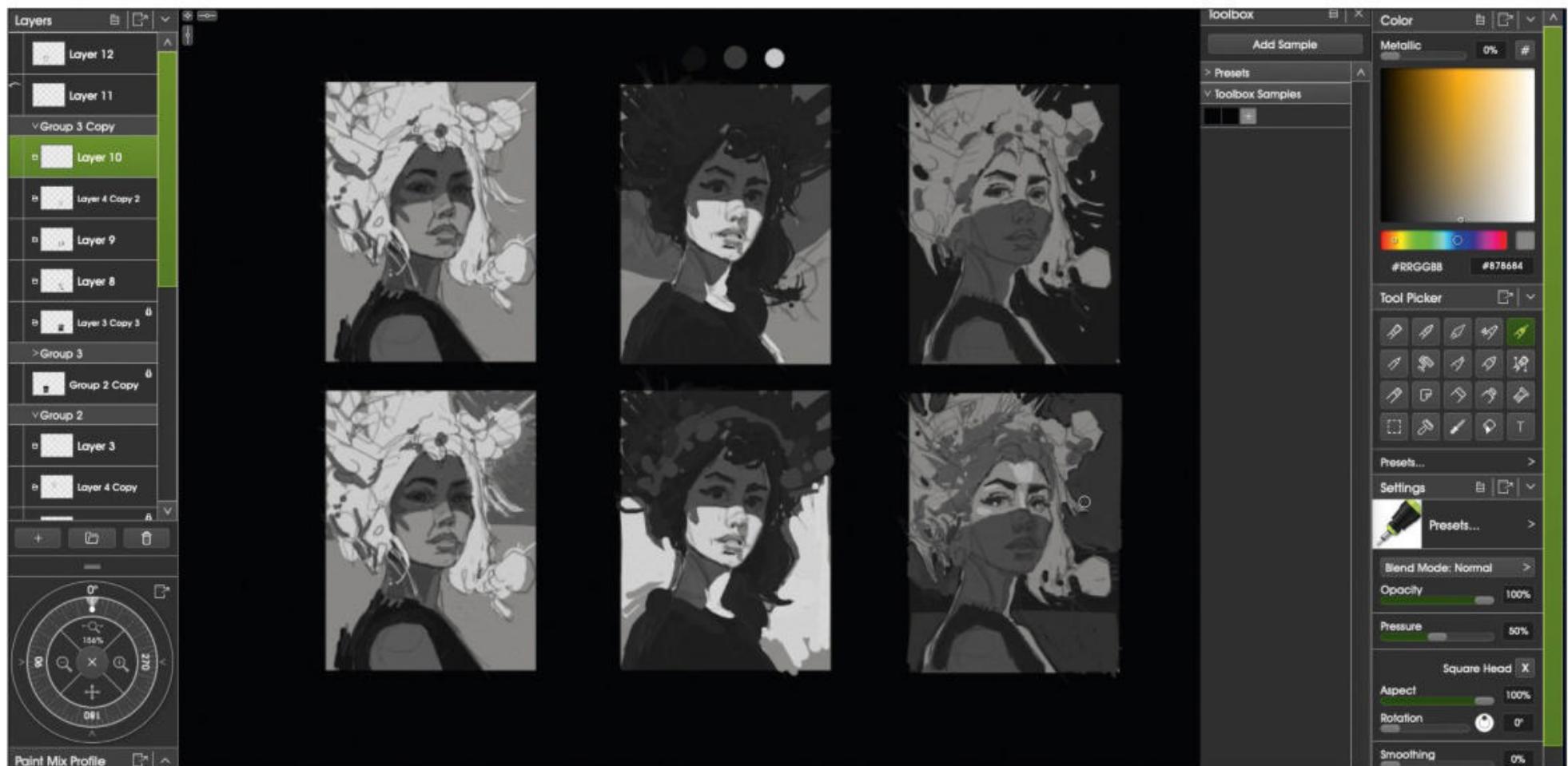
2 A note about materials

Computers have an obvious advantage here, giving you the ability to iterate with many colour combinations. However, all of these steps can be done on paper with pencils, watercolour and markers, so you don't need an expensive computer setup. It's your ideas that count more than the medium in which they're delivered.

3 Black and white rough comp

After fleshing out my ideas with quick thumbnails, I curate the images to find the best one and do a black and white value study. I keep the values flat and limit it to three: black, white and grey. This helps me establish the 'read' of the painting. Essentially, the read is emotional and it has to simultaneously ring true on a gut level and make the subject matter clear graphically. A good rule of thumb is to pick good shapes. Keep detail to a minimum.
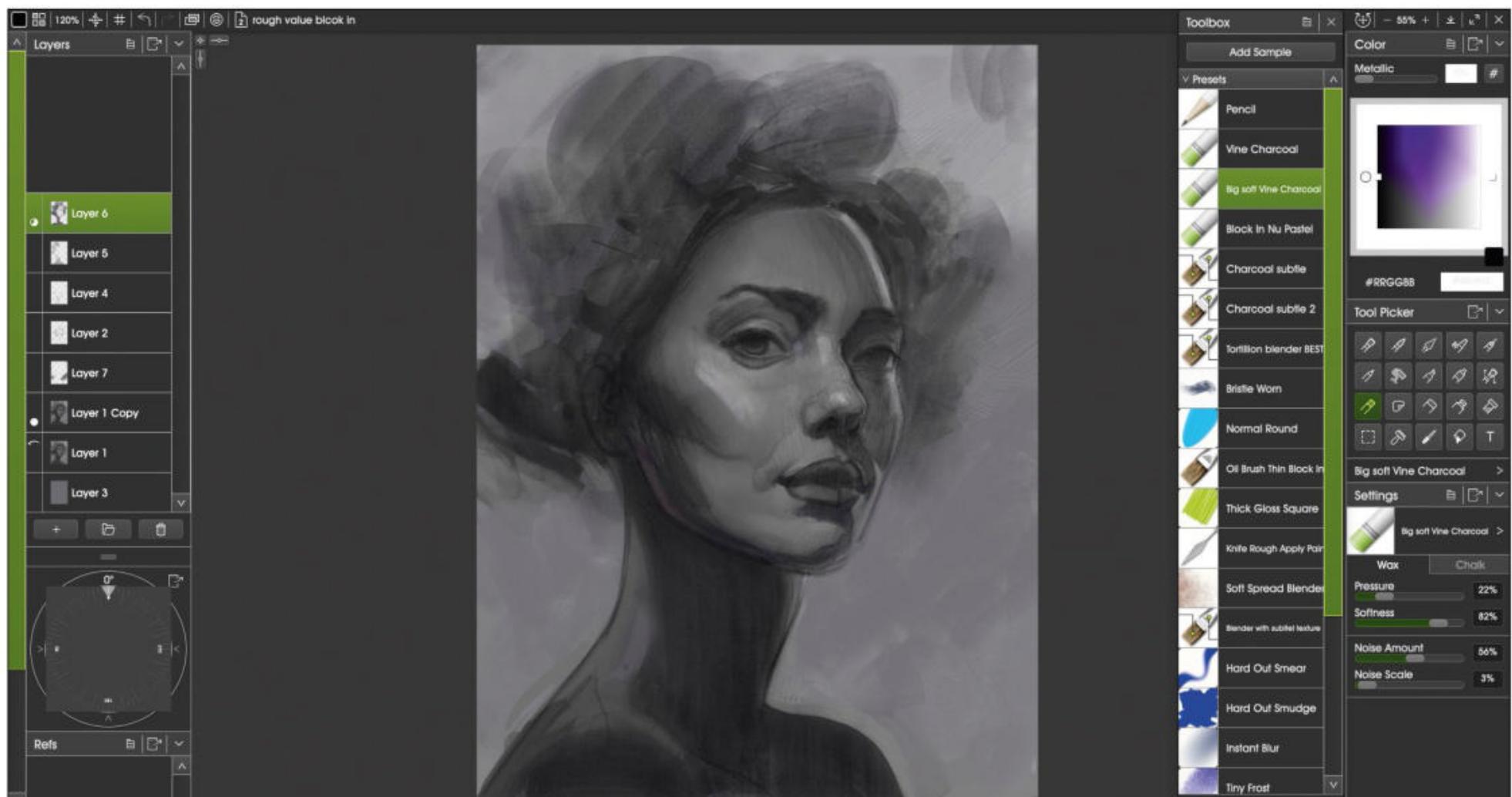

4 Detailed black and white comp

At this stage, it's not that difficult to bring in the details that are to adorn my carefully planned-out value shapes. Things can slow down, though, because details take time, which is why they're brought in later in the process. At this point, I bring in my reference. I remind myself that this isn't a finished drawing, so the details can be kept rough – another time-saver.
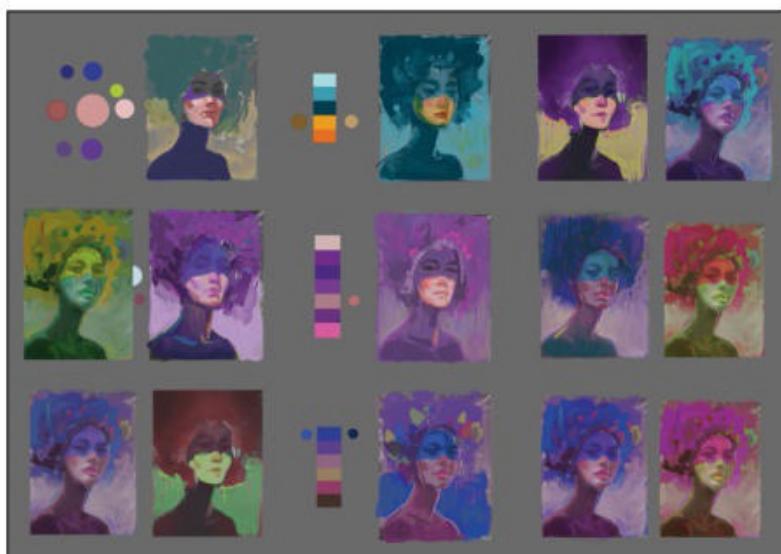
5 Colour rough

With the detailed black and white comp complete, I go back to the earlier thumbnails to do my colour roughs. Computers give me the maximum ability to iterate with colour; however, this can also be done on paper with coloured pencils, watercolour and markers. Since I struggle with colour, I enlist a handy online app called Dopely Colors, which generates colour palettes. It's super-powerful, so I recommend giving it a test drive. Pick a colour that fits the mood of your piece and then derive one or two other colours that harmonise with it.
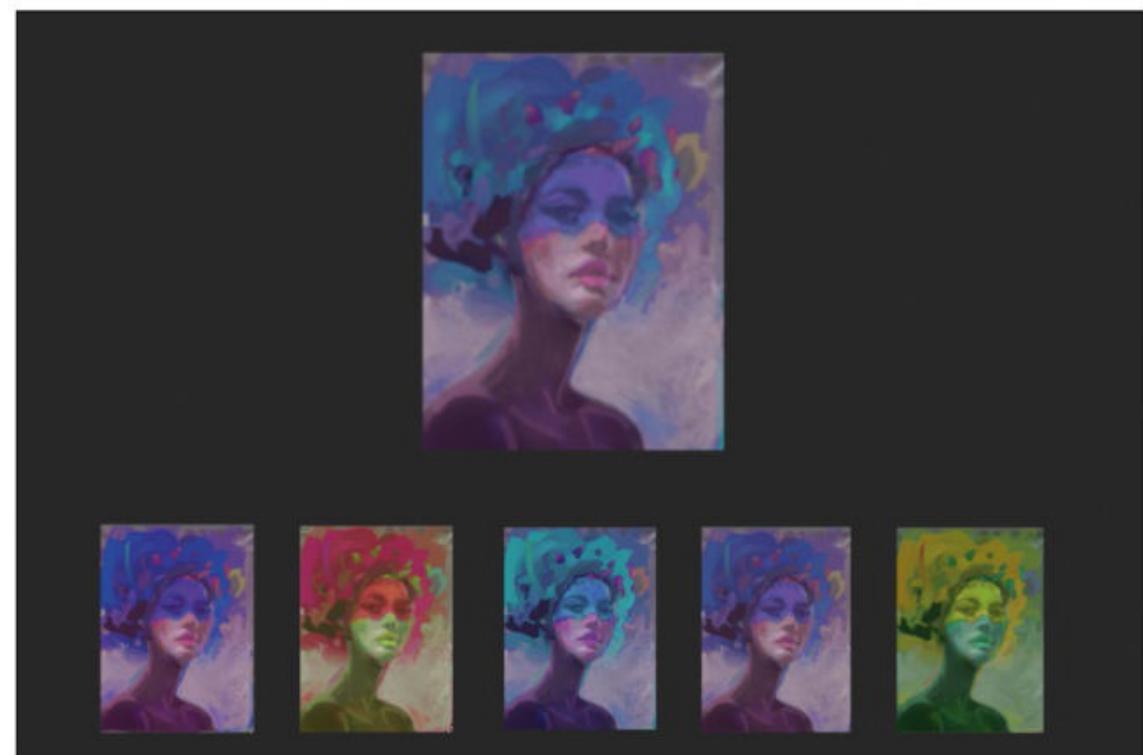

6 Colour curation

ArtRage has also helped me iterate almost a dozen colour combinations, which takes a while to curate and come up with the one I land on. Lots of coffee breaks here! I put them all up on screen and slowly whittle them down to three possibilities, and then finally one. When I get there, it's go-time, and I fire up ArtRage Vitae to help me get the painting done.
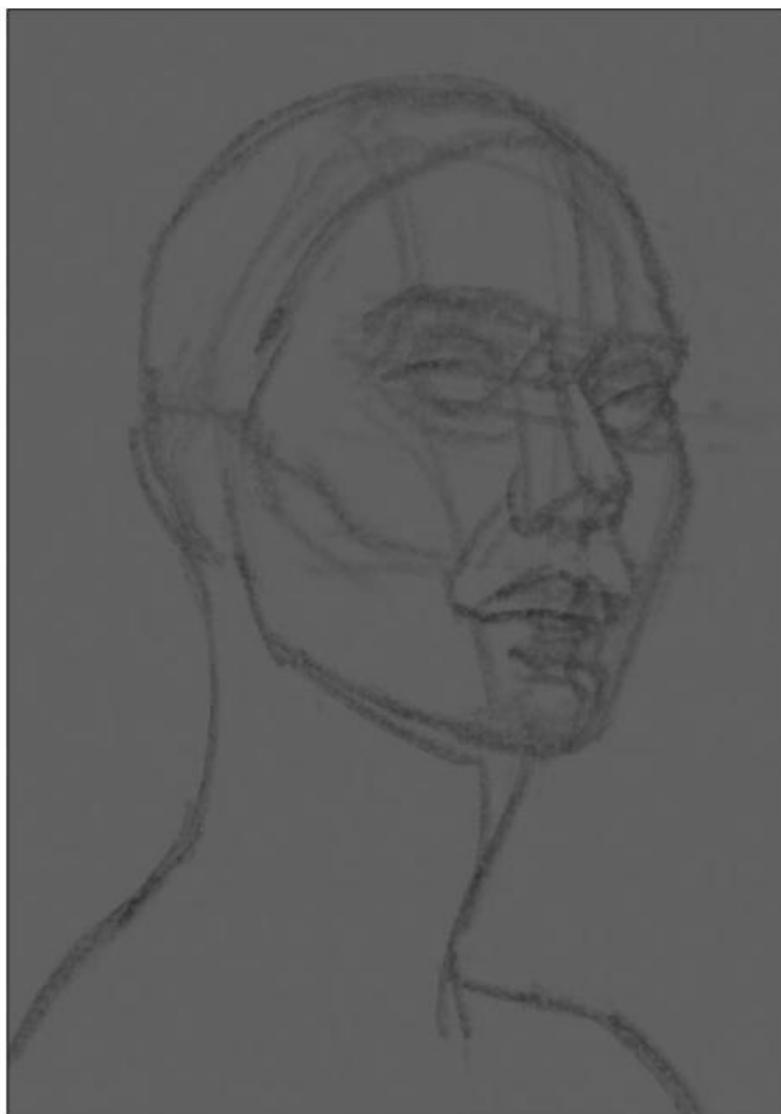

7 The block-in

I begin my linear block in of the portrait I'm doing according to my thumbnails and detailed comp. I think traditionally, as though I'm painting with oils, so I do a rough drawing with the Vine Charcoal brush that I've tweaked and saved in the Toolbox. Once that's spaced and placed, I grab a finer pencil and clean up the drawing. I'm getting excited as my plan unfolds.
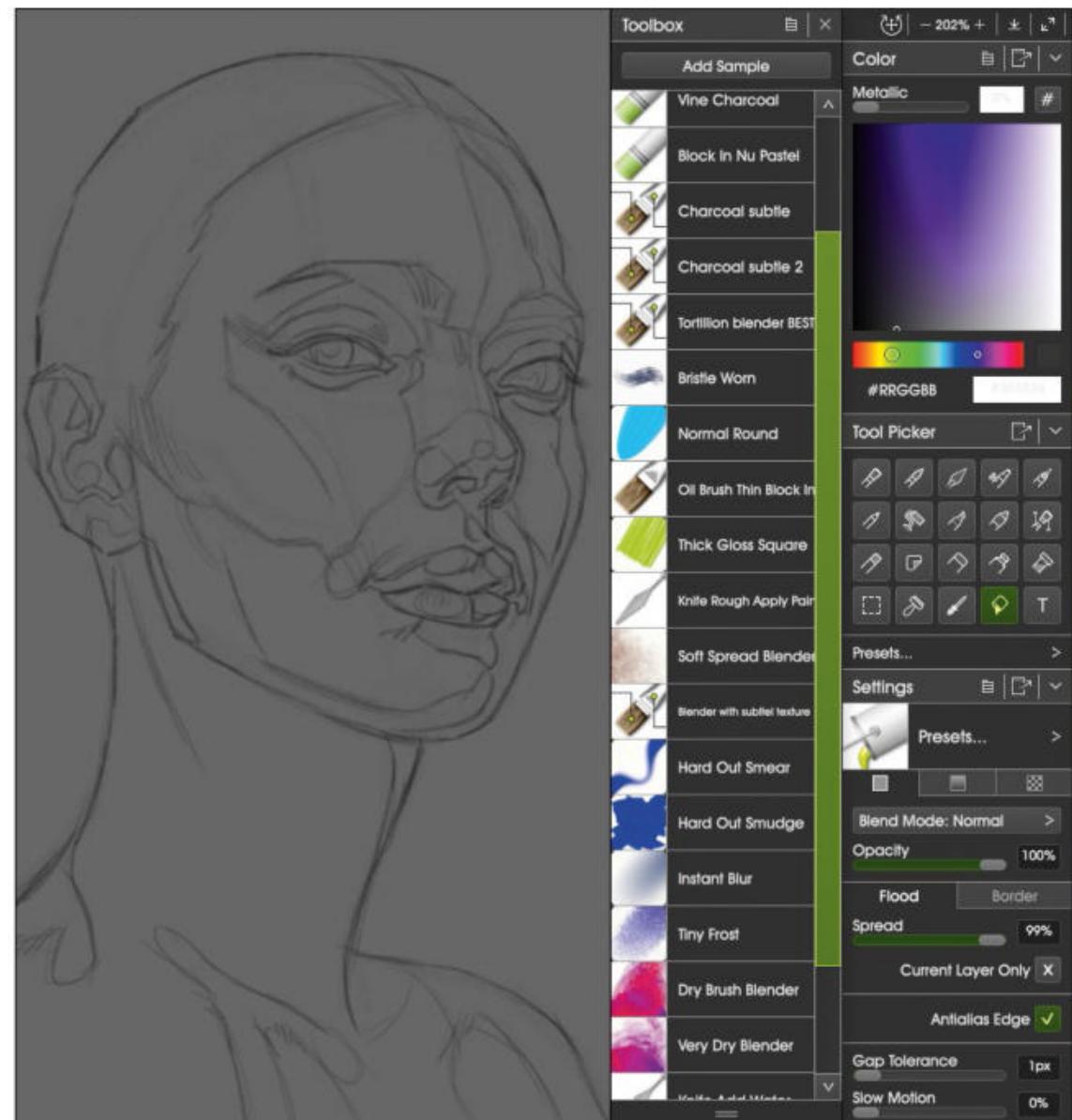

8 Fill in the darks

I complete a shadow map by filling in the darks with a 70 per cent grey. I keep it to a black and white 'yin-yang' statement, being sure to keep the darks and lights separated into their families. I can see my design more clearly now and if there are any mistakes, I can easily fix them, which is far better than fixing things in the middle or at the end. That's why I love this workflow so much. ➤➤
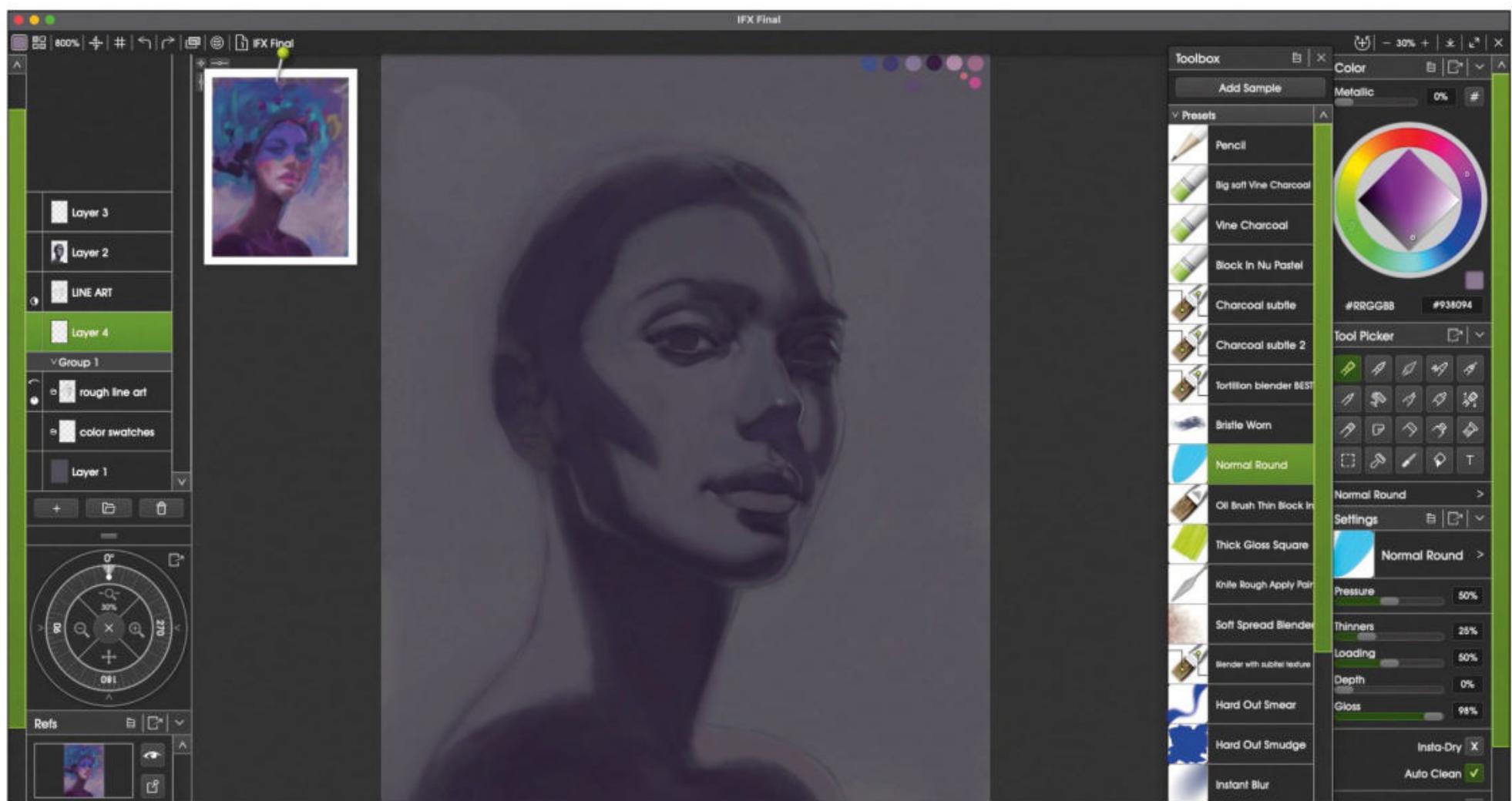
9 Put in the halftones

I begin drawing on a grey-toned canvas and other than that, everything is stock settings. The grey serves as the local value for the skin. With that in mind, I paint the dark halftones right next to the borders of the shadows. Next, I assess my edges across the whole piece and ask myself whether any one edge is hard or soft, and then use the Airbrush to make it so. Everything is going to plan.
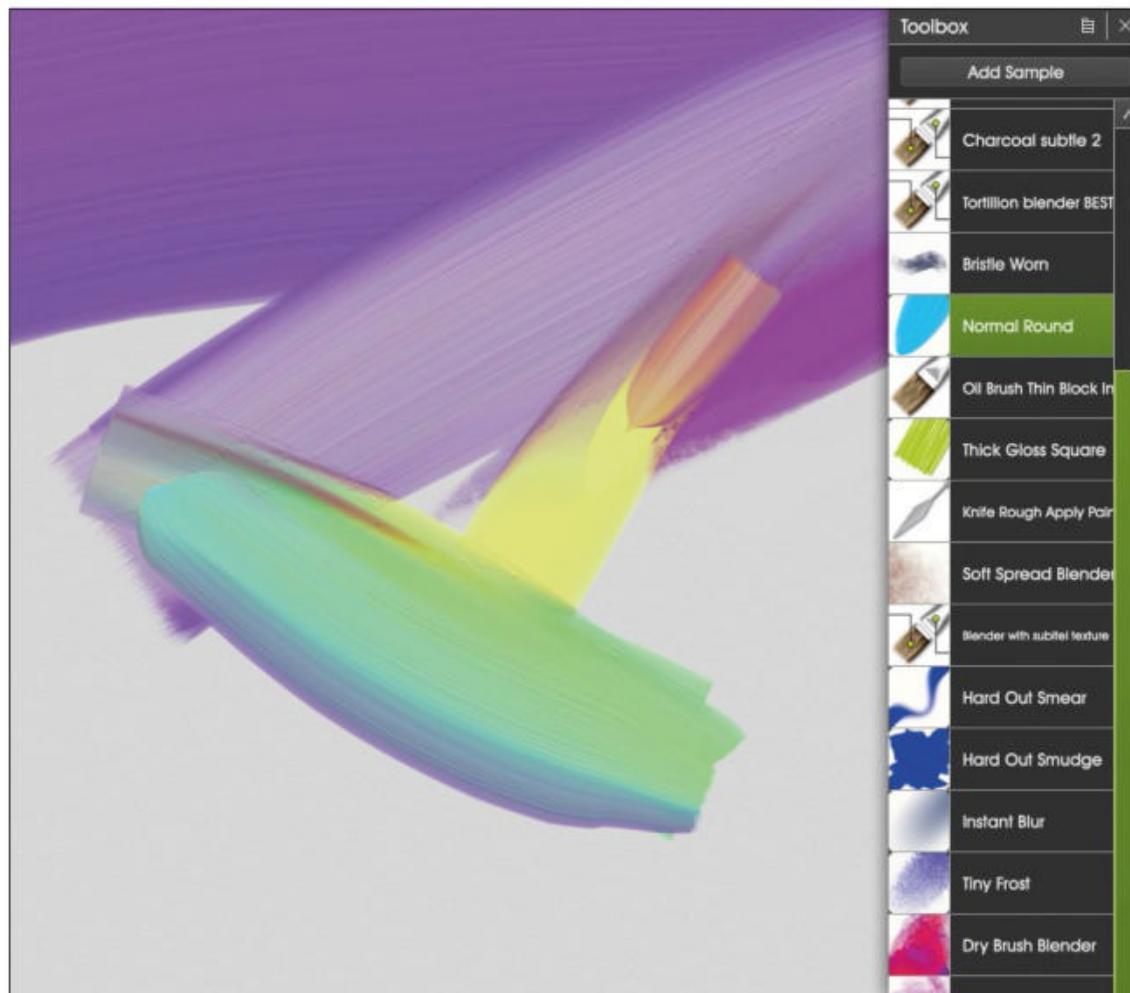

10 Ready for colour

This is where the fun begins. I've laid the tonal groundwork to begin taking this thing into overdrive with colours, and since they've been carefully considered, I do so with a mixture of nervous excitement and freedom. I have my toolbox of favourite brushes all set up. One of my best-loved brushes is the normal Round Oil brush. It's ideal for developing a lifelike, traditional oil painting look.
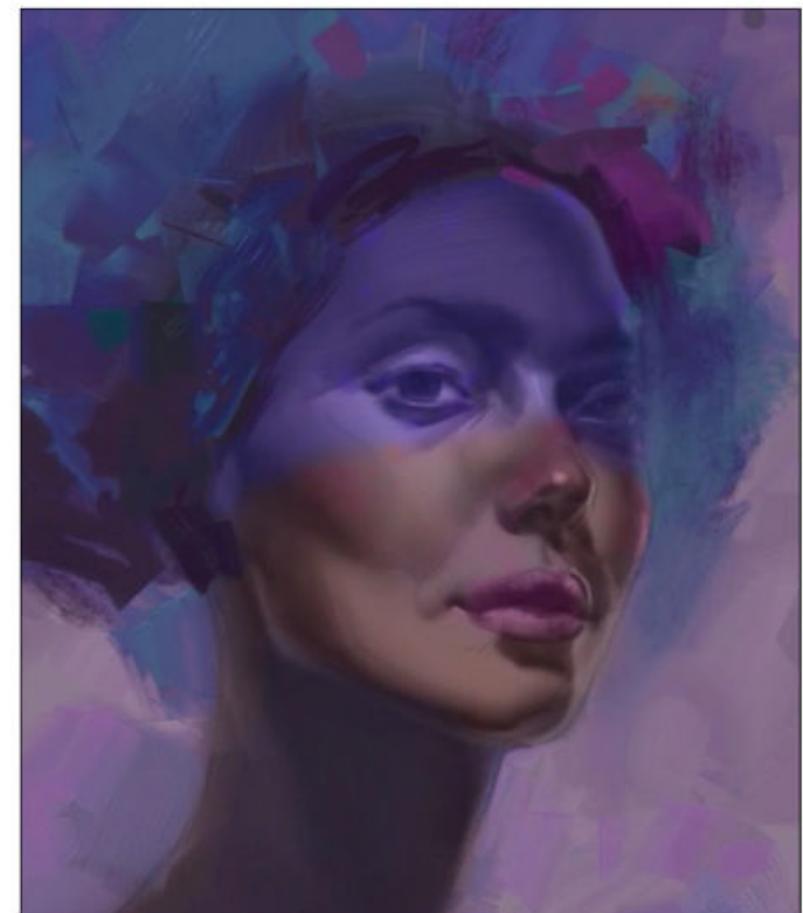

11 Colour block-in

When blocking in my colours, I bring in my colour rough, pin it up in ArtRage and pick colours from it. I try to keep each area to a flat local colour, so I use the Lasso tool to select the neck, keeping the edges clean, and, on its own layer, freely paint in the selection. I use the Knife Rough Apply brush for impasto strokes. The randomness suggests shapes and textures that I can capitalise on.
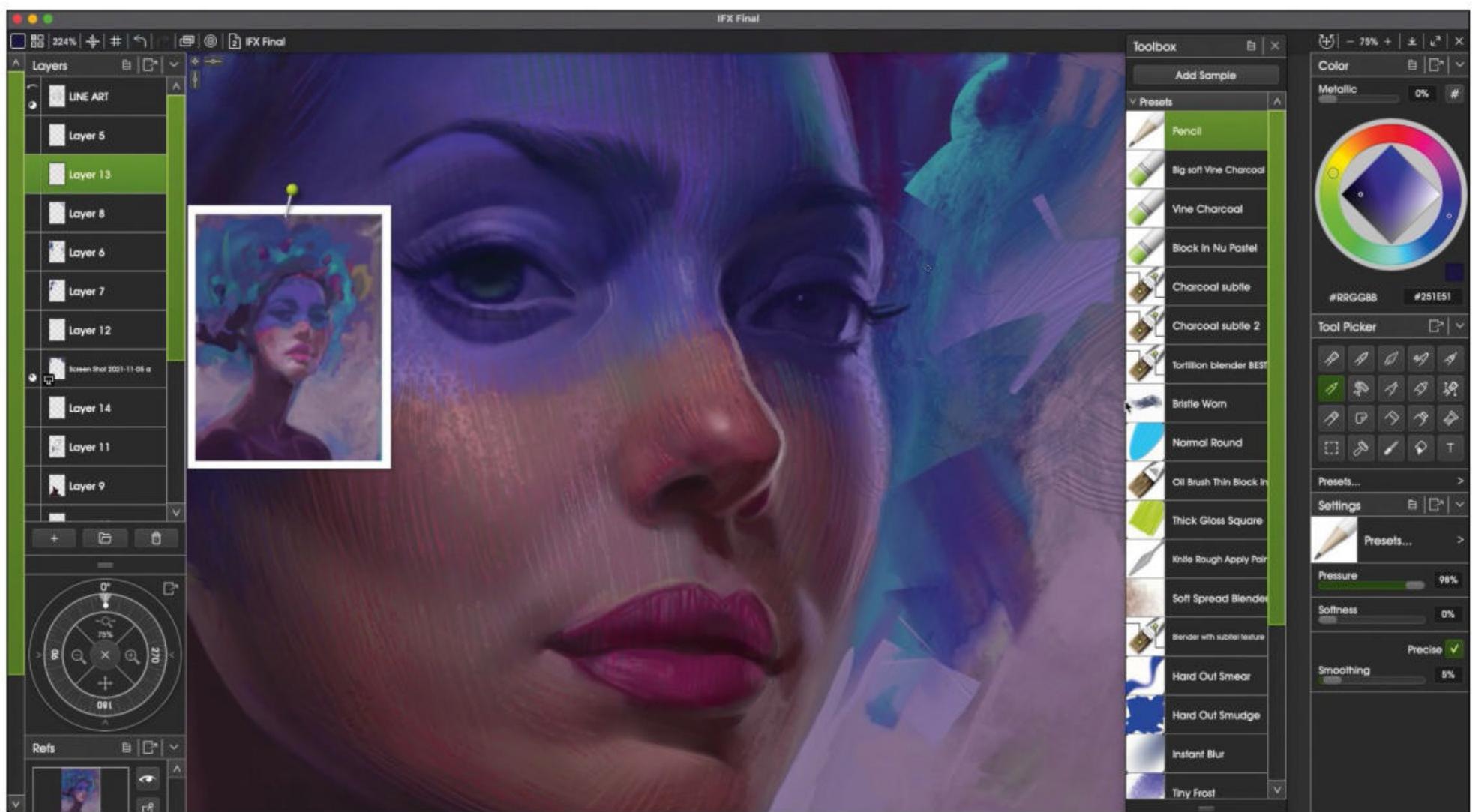
12 Working up and detailing the facial features

Things really slow down at this stage. It takes patience while I move around the whole painting, striving to bring every area up to a common level. I work on the features of the face one after the other, making them fit, look 3D and feel integrated into the whole head.
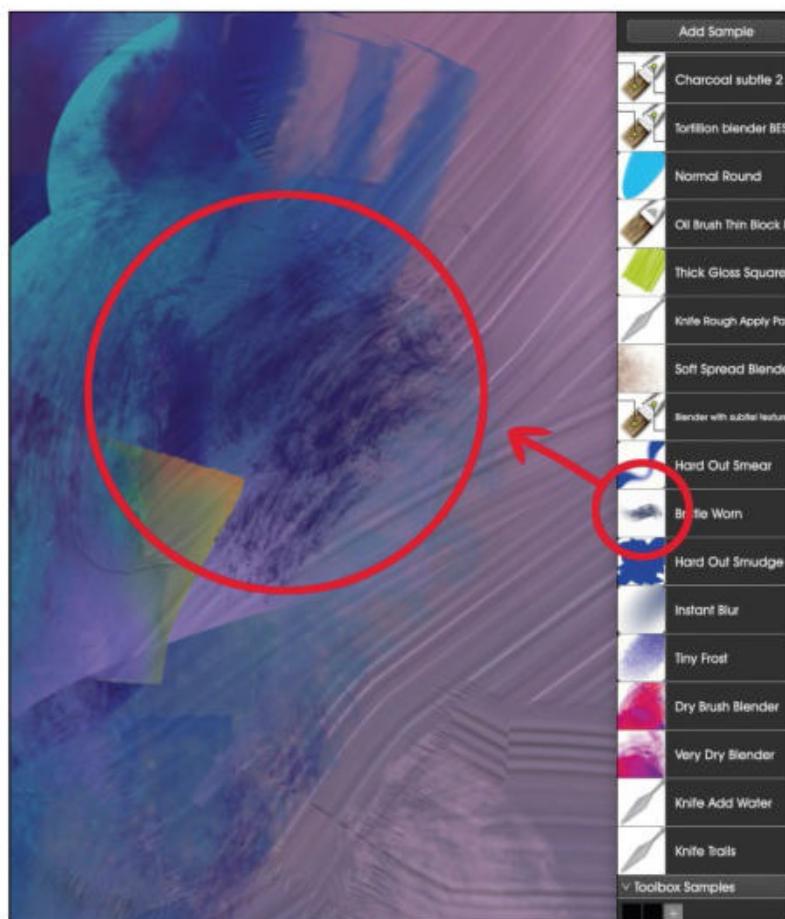
13 Textures and polishing

The final stage of the painting is adding textures, resolving things put off until the end, and rendering and polishing to a level I'm happy with. I like a painting that has loose passages in support of a tight area that serves as a focal point. So I alternate between a small Pencil brush for details and a Bristle Worn brush to add texture and brushy flourishes here and there.
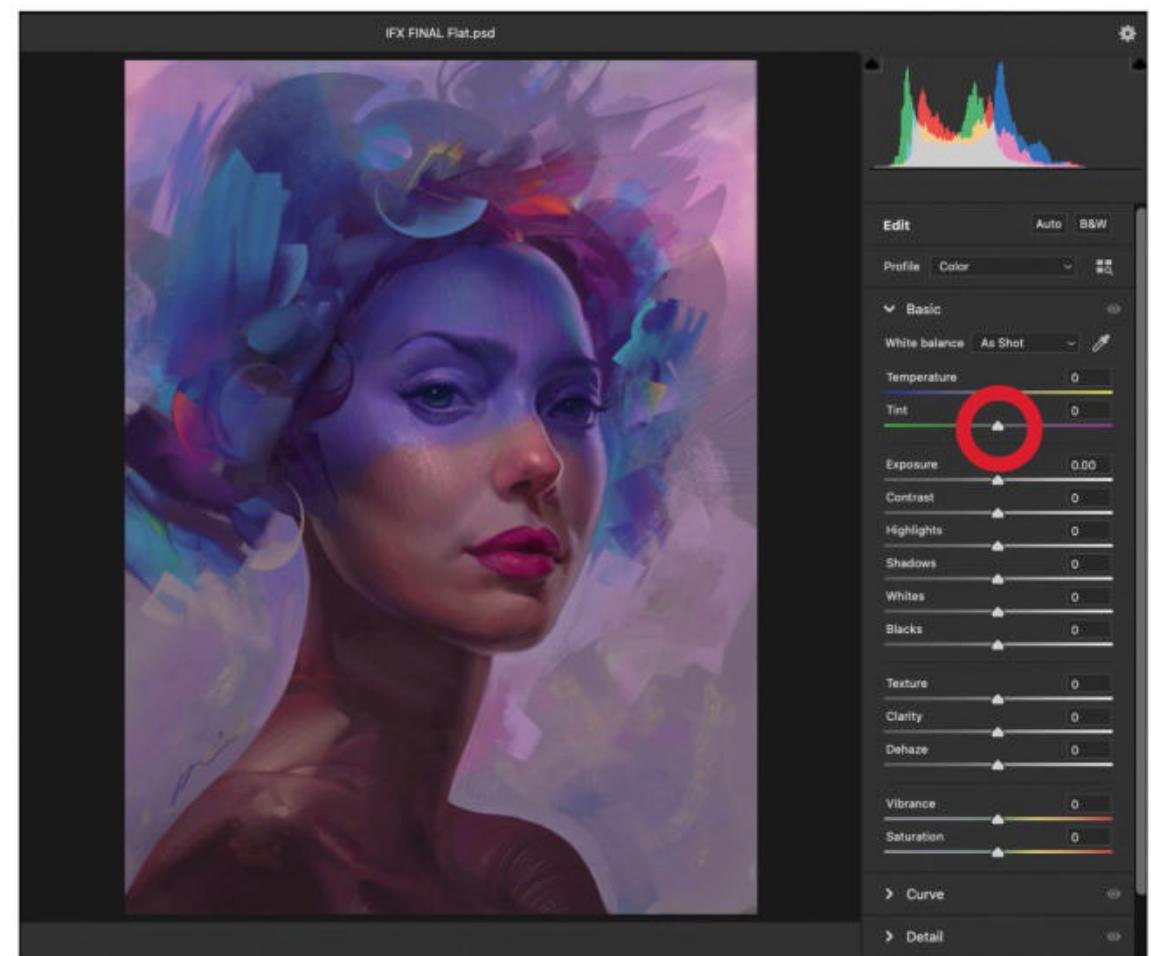
14 Post-processing the image in Photoshop

Just to bring the whole painting together, I import it into Photoshop for some final tweaks. I go to Filter on the menu bar and near the top I find Camera Raw Filter and click that. I then do a basic adjustment by giving the colours a warmer tint. I scroll down to the Effects tab and add a small amount of Vignette to keep the focus centred. The final touch is to add some grain to soften the digital look, giving the portrait that cinematic, natural appearance.

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Reviews

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…
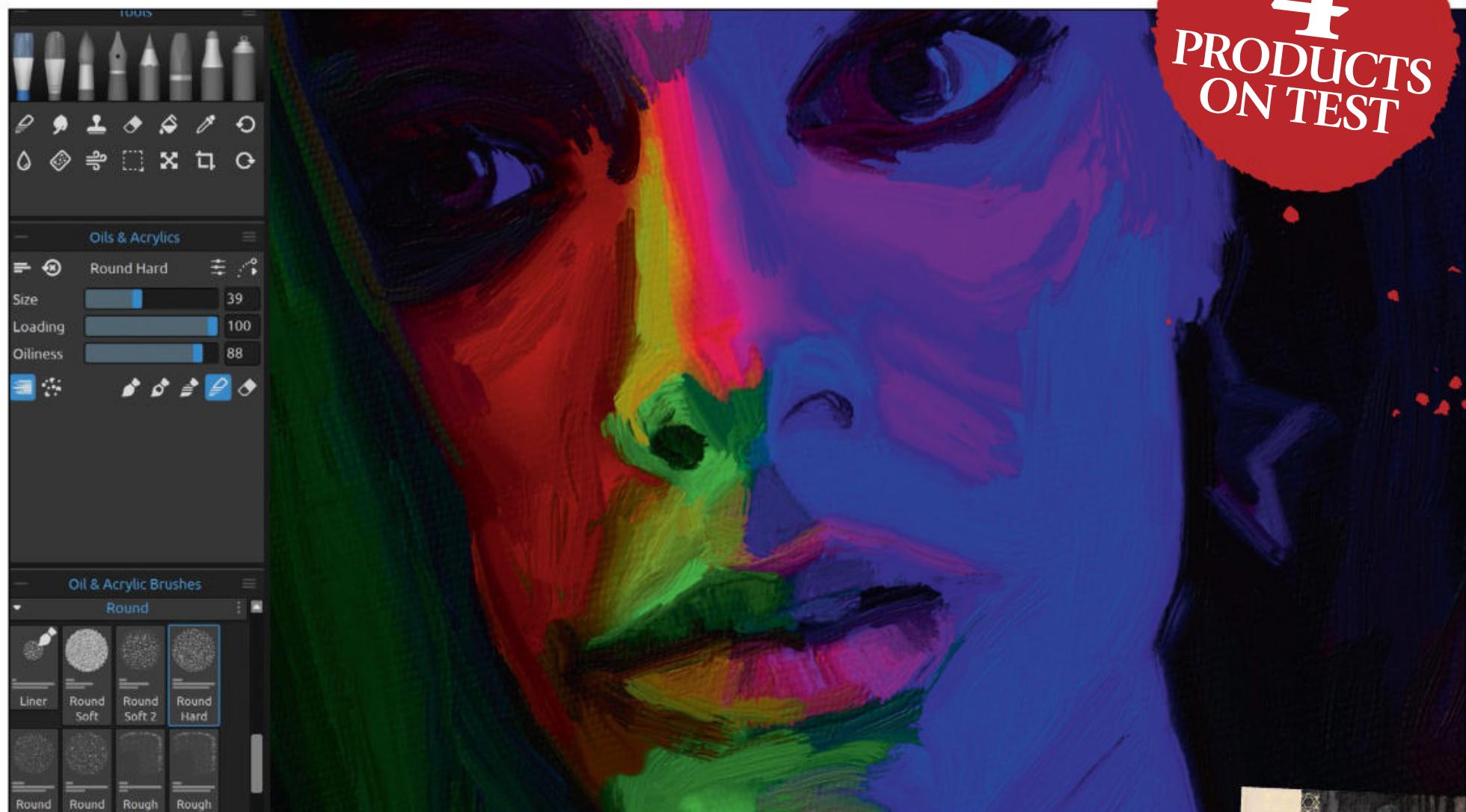
4 PRODUCTS ON TEST
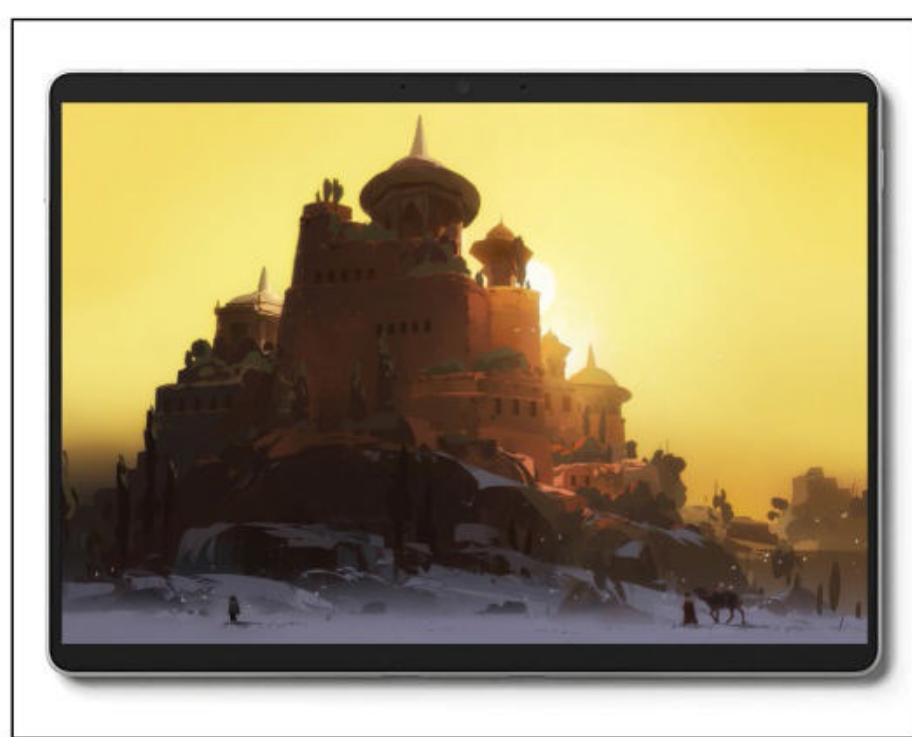
SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

80 Rebelle 5
Escape Motions' swish paint simulation software grows up. It's a stroke of genius.

82 Surface Pro 8
The power of a laptop inside a tablet – can this Surface Pro take on Apple's iPad Pro?

**BOOKS**

84 Witchcraft
An in-depth look at how witches have been depicted in art through the ages.

84 Sketching for the Absolute Beginner
There's a lot more to sketching than simply putting pencil to paper, as this book reveals.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent   ★★★★ Great   ★★★ Good   ★★ Poor   ★ Atrocious
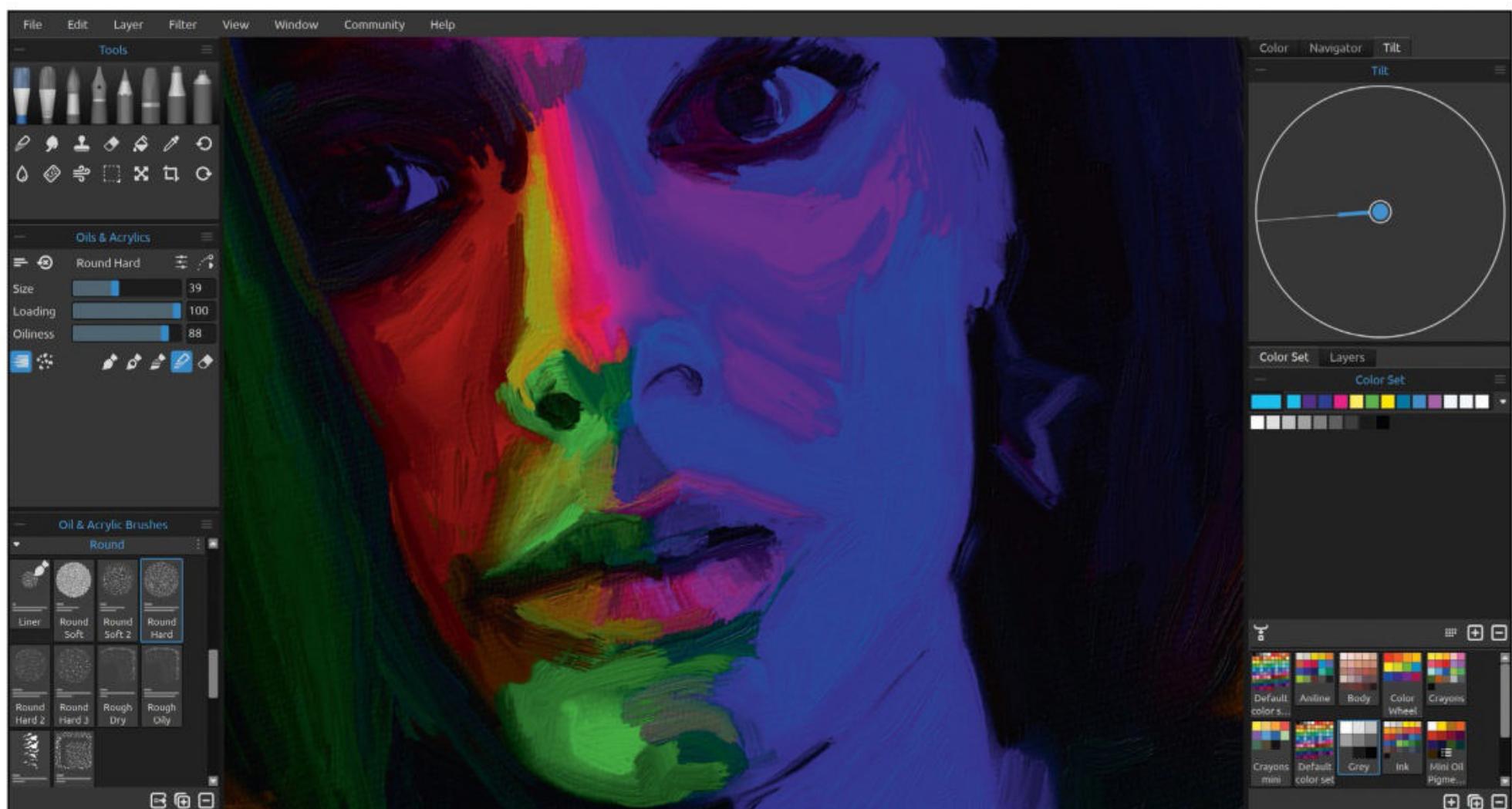
The real-world colour pigments really pop, as they're mixed in CMYK for added vibrancy.

Rebelle 5

REBEL, REBEL Escape Motions' swish paint simulation software grows up and chases the professional crowd. It's a stroke of genius

Price £90 (Standard) £150 (Pro) **Company** Escape Motions **Web** escapemotions.com

Sitting comfortably between the feature-laden package offered by Corel Painter and the more immediate ease of use of ArtRage, Escape Motion's painting software shouldn't be overlooked.

Rebelle 5 boasts one of the best paint and liquid simulations available. It offers physical colour mixing based on real-world, traditional pigments – Cadmium yellow, Alizarin crimson, Ultramarine and others are included. It means you can accurately blend and merge colours on the paper or canvas in a realistic manner. It opens the door for countless ways to express yourself using paint, brush strokes and the canvas texture below.

We particularly love the Palette Knife tool when used with wet oils to push and stroke the paint and colour about the canvas. The Dirty Brush is great, too, enabling you to retain paint pigments on the bristles and merge colours together for dramatic results. The option to clean the brush

Painting loosely and fast did present some slow-down issues on our ageing Wacom MobileStudio Pro; we recommend the higher spec suggested by the developer.

between colours is another example of how far Rebelle 5 goes to create a truly realistic simulation.

MIX AND MATCH

Watercolours are a highlight. The new simulation offers a realistic granulation effect as the paint dries into the paper, bringing every brush stroke to the surface. The DropEngine takes things a step further by creating a beautiful dripping effect of paint moving down the canvas – you can set the tilt angle of the canvas yourself to create longer or shorter drips of paint. And if that

isn't enough for you, the Blow Tool enables you to push the wet paint across the canvas, mixing and merging colours to create intricate and unusual accidental effects.

With so much colour splashing about, it's good to see that Escape Motions has refined its colour mixing and sampling palette. Colour blending is as easy as choosing and mixing pigments on a separate palette before applying to the canvas, offering total control over your paint tones.

You can also choose how light affects the colour, including options for transparent, opaque or semi-transparent mixing for watercolours. Handily, you can also test your colour profiles before exporting.

PRO-LEVEL TOOLS

While previous versions of Rebelle were aimed squarely at the amateur or semi-pro market, this edition aims to entice professional artists to its canvases. The addition of Express Oils instantly speeds up the painting
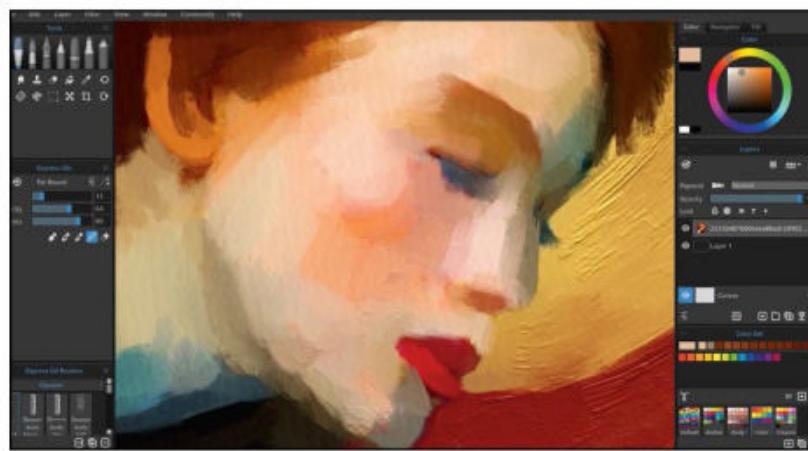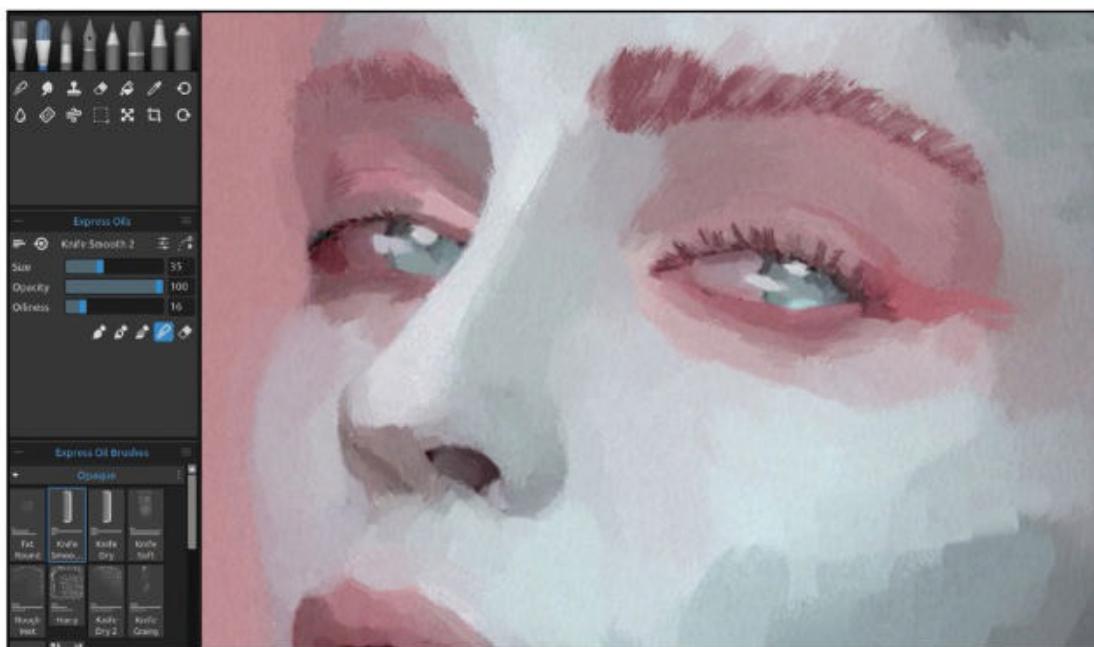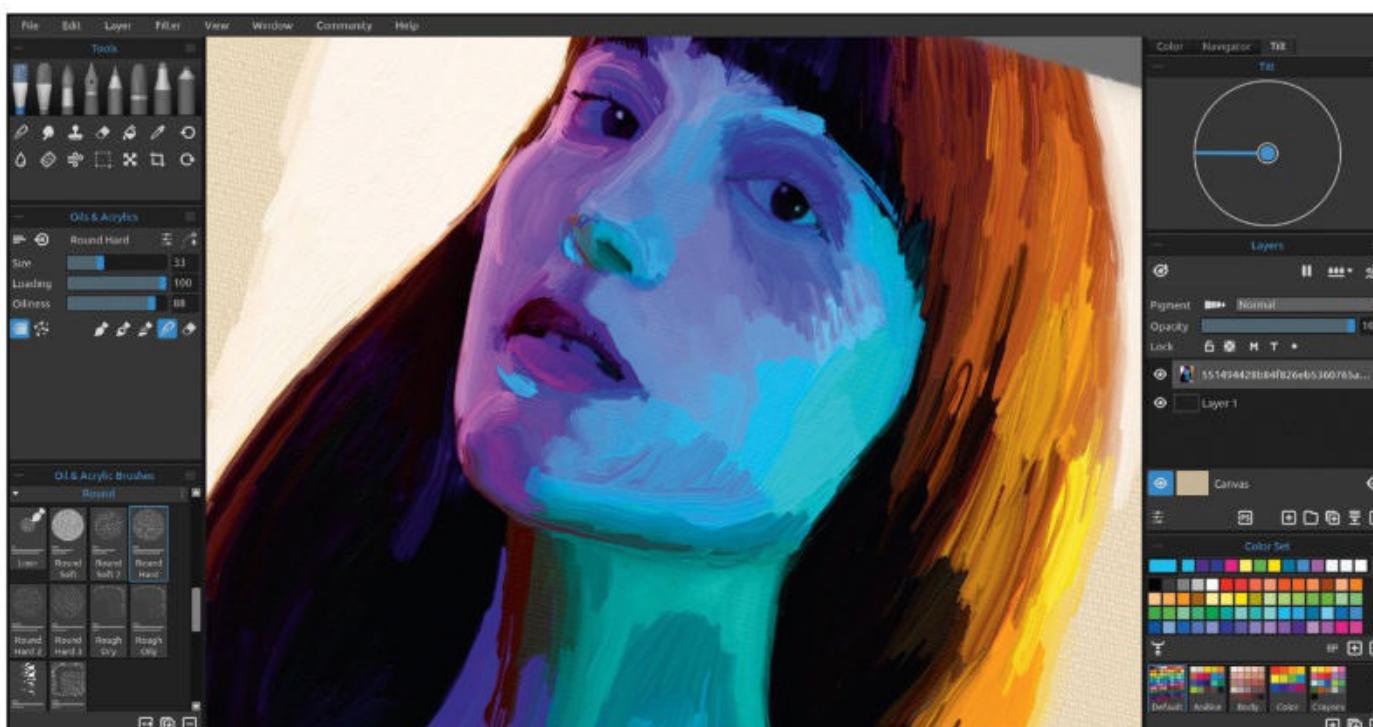
Oils and Acrylics are great fun to just jump in and begin pushing paint around the screen. The coverage can lag when used on large canvases.

The Express Oils lack the gloss of the standard oils but are smoother and faster in use – everything about Rebelle 5 is easy to use.

> ❝ With so much colour splashing about, it's good to see that Escape Motions has refined its colour mixing ❞

process and is a great inclusion for concept artists. The Express Oils tool is based on Rebelle's core oils simulations but aimed at making quick sketches, to prepare fast underlying paint and quickly cover the canvas.

Added to this is another new feature that gives you the ability to record your whole painting process and export your video as MP4 format – perfect for professionals looking to share or monitor their work.

Rebelle 5 Pro also comes with a handy Photoshop plug-in, enabling the sharing of layers between the two pieces of software. It's another sign that Escape Motions is looking beyond its established users to new professional areas.

Likewise, the NanoPixel tech is also only available in the Pro edition. This enables you to zoom into the canvas right down to the grain in real time, as well as export a canvas 16 times larger for easy upscaling.

We love Rebelle 5, but it does come with a couple of caveats. For instance, some of the new additions are only available in the Pro edition, though you do still get the core new features (Express Oils, colour mixing, watercolour simulation and time-lapse recording). If you can't afford the extra £60, you miss the connectivity to Photoshop, pigment colour mixing and NanoPixel tech, which is a shame.

Also, Rebelle 5 did occasionally stutter and slow down in use (we're using a Wacom MobileStudio Pro). Mostly, however, it breezes along smoothly, and its paint, colour and canvas sim never fails to impress.

DETAILS

Features
■ Time-lapse recording
■ Mixing palette
■ Express Oils
■ Watercolour granulation
■ Pigment colour mixing (Pro)
■ NanoPixel technology (Pro)
■ Photoshop plug-in (Pro)

System Requirements
PC: Intel i7 (6th gen or newer) or equivalent AMD chip, 16GB RAM, 2GB graphics card, Windows 10
Mac: Intel i5, 4GB RAM, 2GB graphics card, Mac OS X 10.14

Rating
★★★★☆
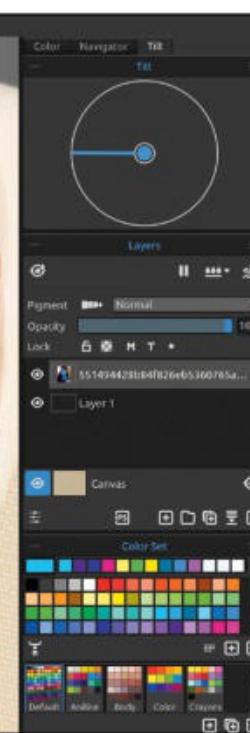
ALTERNATIVES TO REBELLE 5

Try these paint simulation tools that match up to the latest Rebelle

ArtRage Vitae
**Web** artrage.com/artrage
Price £80

A simple interface hides a complex paint sim, enabling you to create stunning pieces. Easy and intuitive, ArtRage Vitae is a joy to use. Turn to page 72 for a workshop on getting more from this pro-level illustration software.

Corel Painter 2022
**Web** painterartist.com
Price £160
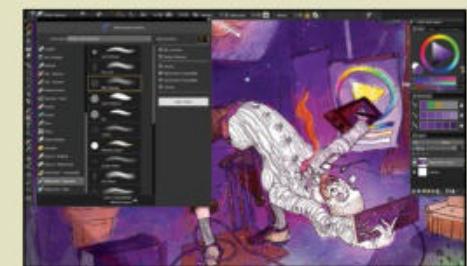
Crammed with features and tools for all types of art creation, Corel Painter 2022 is one of the best all-round art packages available. And with a history stretching back more than three decades, it's gained lots of fans over the years.

Procreate 5.2
Web procreate.art
Price £10
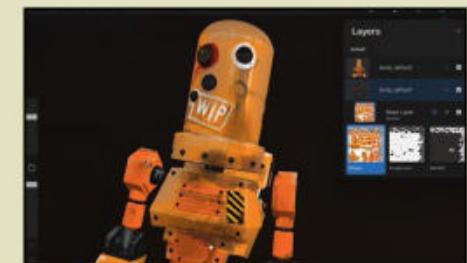
This fantastic app delivers accurate paint and drawing sims and is incredibly cheap, especially when you consider what's on offer. On the downside, it's only available for iPad, leaving PC and Mac artists out in the cold.

The Surface Pro 8's features include a 5.0MP 1080p front-facing camera and 10MP 4K rear-facing camera, and an impressive edge-to-edge screen with 120Hz refresh rate.

The Type Cover (which protects the screen and can be used as a keyboard and touchpad) is essential, but unfortunately is sold separately.
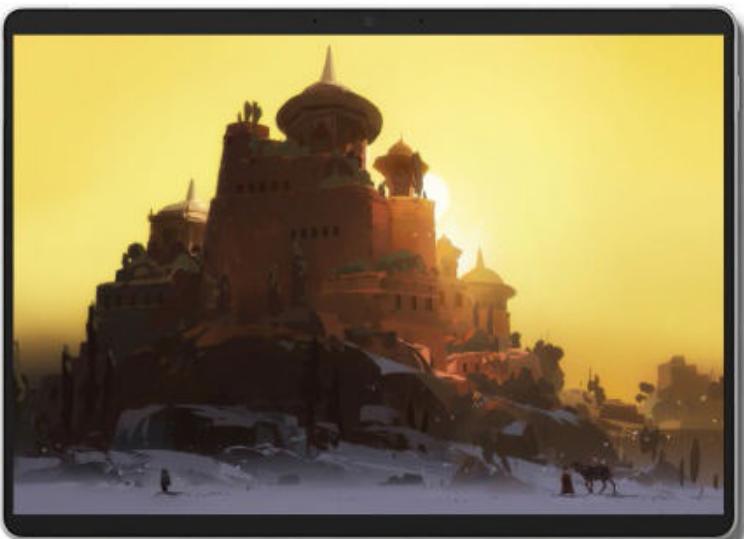
Surface Pro 8

SCREEN SAVER The power of a laptop inside a sleek tablet – can this Surface Pro take on Apple's iPad Pro?

Price From £999 to £2,460 **Company** Microsoft **Web** microsoft.com

Microsoft's latest Surface Pro is a stylish showcase for its software – the recently released Windows 11. This means that unlike iPads or Android tablets, which run mobile operating systems, the Surface Pro 8 isn't limited to mobile apps. You can run full Windows programs such as Photoshop, while still benefiting from the slim and light tablet form.

This makes the Surface Pro 8 ideal for digital artists who want something to do their creative work on while out and about. The Surface Pro 8 is much thinner and lighter than traditional laptops, but it's just as capable.

When it comes to the display, this new tablet trumps its predecessor. It comes with a 13-inch PixelSense display with a resolution of 2,880x1,920, and at this screen size, that leads to a fantastic-looking display with pin-sharp details.

On some models you can now boost the refresh rate from 60Hz to 120Hz. This results in a much smoother experience when watching films or scrolling through websites. Crucially, it makes using a stylus for painting even more responsive.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

The latest Surface Pro also supports Dolby Vision and will now automatically adjust the colour temperature of the display depending on the light conditions you use the Surface Pro 8 in, similar to how True Tone works on iPads and MacBooks. While the screen can't compete with the mini LED marvel found in the iPad Pro, it's certainly the best screen to grace a Surface Pro.

The screen isn't the only area that's been improved for the Surface Pro 8. It now comes with powerful 11th generation Intel Core processors that offer improved performance over the previous generation found in the Surface Pro 7 without making the Pro 8 too hot or affecting battery life.

With a choice of up to 32GB of RAM, this is a device that can handle most creative application. As you'd expect, Windows 11 runs well, as do the photo and video editing tools we

With an ultra-portable design, starting at just 891 grams, the Surface Pro 8 is one of the thinnest tablets around.

> 66 **The Surface Pro 8 is much thinner and lighter than traditional laptops, but it's just as capable** 99

Artwork by Bobby Chiu and Lynn Hye Ryoung Yang

The Surface Pen stylus is excellent, but is another key element that's sold separately.

The tablet features two USB-C with Thunderbolt 4 ports, as well as support for Wi-Fi 6 for ultra-fast bandwidth.

Surface Pro 8 Images © Microsoft Corporation

You'll need a keyboard because the Surface Pro 8 can run desktop programs not set up for touchscreen.

tried out, such as Photoshop and Premiere Pro. Being able to run these demanding programs on a tablet device continues to be impressive, but we do advise you use the Type Cover (or other keyboard) and plug in a mouse, because these are desktop applications and so not made for touchscreen only-inputs.

WORKLOAD CONSIDERATIONS

There's no dedicated graphics card, perhaps understandably considering this is a thin and light tablet device. However, that means that graphics-intensive workloads may suffer. Still, the integrated graphics of Intel's 11th generation CPUs are pretty good, with Microsoft promising 74 per cent better graphics performance than the Surface Pro 7. For digital art, as well as working with up to 4K video footage, this will do the job nicely. For complex 3D animations and game design, you may need to look elsewhere.

Battery life has also been greatly improved thanks to a combination of

the Surface Pro 8's new design and more efficient hardware. Microsoft promises up to 16 hours, which will get you through a work day, and in our own tests we found we could get over eight hours of medium to heavy use. The previous model was barely half of that, so these improvements are very welcome. The only downside is using it at 120Hz will drain the battery.

The tablet is priced to compete with the powerful 12.9-inch iPad Pro, but it's also worth pointing out that despite its high price tag, Microsoft continues to not include a Type Cover (which protects the screen and can be used as a keyboard and touchpad) or Surface Pen stylus. If you want either of these items (and we recommend you do) then it'll cost you an extra £160 and £120, respectively. This makes an already expensive purchase even more pricey.

However, if you want a capable tablet but don't want to switch to iOS or Android, then the Surface Pro 8 is a great choice for artists.

DETAILS

Features
- Size (WxDxH): 287x208x9.3mm
- Weight: 891g
- Processor: 3.0GHz Intel Core i7-1185G7
- Resolution: 2,880x1,920
- Screen: 13-inch QHD touchscreen
- Storage: 256GB SSD (PCIe, NVMe, M.2)
- Battery: Up to 16 hours

Rating
★★★★★

Artwork by Shan Jiang, Simon Baek and Dao Trong Le

Witchcraft

SPELL-BINDING Discover how witches have been depicted in art through the ages, in Taschen's third Library of Esoterica volume

Editors Jessica Hundley and Pam Grossman **Publisher** Taschen Books **Price** £30 **Web** taschen.com **Available** Now

Witches have appeared in cultures around the world for centuries. Bringing together a wealth of art and articles, Taschen's 520-page **Witchcraft** provides a fascinating overview of the female magic user.

The editors, with the help of academics and expert writers, cover aspects of witches and witchcraft in detail. Subjects naturally include their persecution in society, but also their appearance in literature and folklore,

Circe and her nymphs entrap Odysseus and his men, in this 1890 piece (artist unknown).

the nature of their spells, and how they've been viewed through the lenses of pop culture and fashion.

Accompanying these chapters are over 400 gloriously varied pieces of art. While there are a few photos and film stills, the majority of the visuals are paintings. The likes of John William Waterhouse and Francisco Goya rub shoulders with lesser-known but no-less-talented painters. There are finely detailed images of covens, dramatic encounters with demons, witches peacefully practising their craft, and more. The result is a cauldron that bubbles over with inspiration.

If your idea of a witch begins and ends with a woman in black, wearing a pointed hat and riding a broomstick, this book will expand your horizons.

RATING ★★★★☆
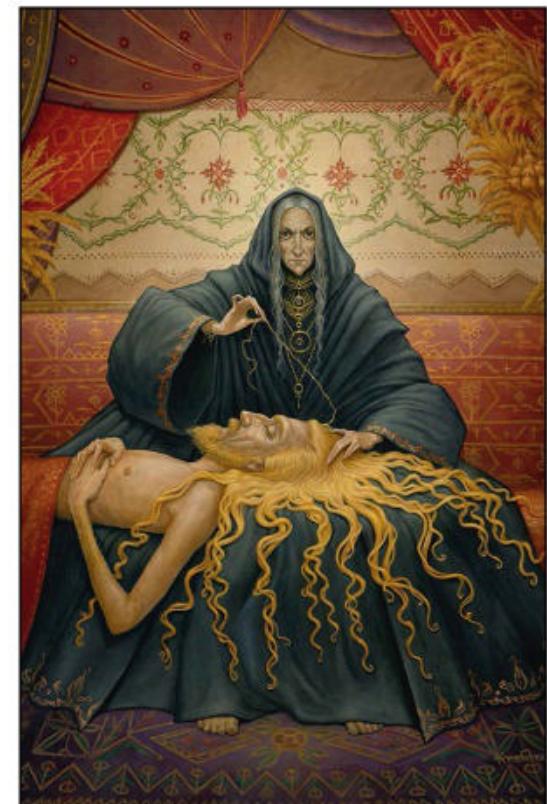
Kremena Chipilova's 2020 piece depicts the Finnish tale The Three Golden Hairs of the Old Man Vsévède.

Sketching for the Absolute Beginner

ARTIST'S IMPRESSION There's a lot more to sketching than simply putting pencil to paper, as this illuminating book reveals

Author Peter Cronin **Publisher** Search Press **Price** £13 **Web** searchpress.com **Available** Now

Are your sketching sessions coming up short? Then Welsh illustrator Peter Cronin's superb guide will help you get more from your time with a sketch pad.

Following a useful section on the main sketching media (pencil, pen, charcoal and watercolours), Peter explores various sketching techniques. These include scribbling, taking a line for a walk (drawing key elements in a
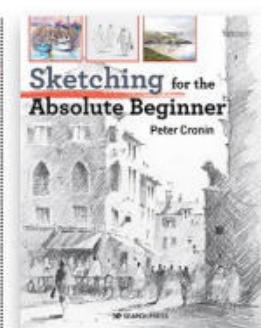
Peter captures a quiet part of Venice using pen and watercolour.

scene as a continuous line), and SET – shapes, edges and tones.

The latter lies at the heart of the artist's approach to sketching. By visually breaking down objects into these three categories, Peter can look beyond their real-world identity – a tree, say – and recreate their form on paper. SET is explained through numerous examples and exercises; the reader will be keen to put theory into practice and build on their art basics.

Elsewhere, Peter covers composition techniques, how to simplify complex scenes, varying the weather and more. The book packs a lot into its 146 pages, and while some might choose to overlook it for its 'absolute beginner' label, they'd be missing out on a wealth of knowledge and insights.

RATING ★★★★☆
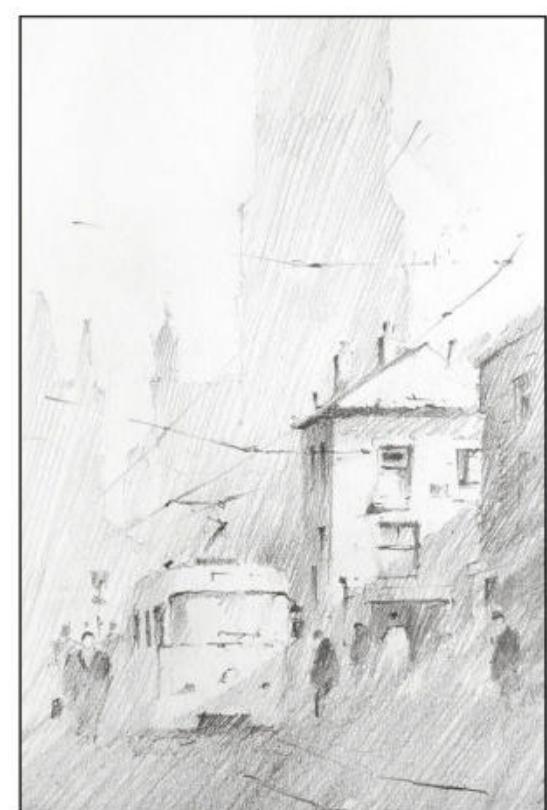
The angle of Peter's hatching helps to quickly convey the lighting in this Ghent street scene.

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:

FX**Posé**

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Carissa Susilo

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Acrylic paint, colour pencils, pastels
WEB: carissasusilo.com

Carissa is an Asian-Canadian illustrator who loves to bring stories to life, from ancient folklore to modern-day myth. Her notable publications include Society of Illustrators, Illustration West and American Illustration.

1 MADAME WHITE SNAKE
"This piece is inspired by the famous Chinese fairy tale Legend of the White Snake."

2 DONGFANG BUBAI
"Bubai is a transgender villain from the famous wuxia novel The Smiling, Proud Wanderer by Jin Yong."

3 CARMILLA'S KISS
"A piece specially created for Month of Love. It's inspired by Sheridan Le Fanu's novel, Carmilla."

4 CIRCE
"This piece depicts the Greek goddess of sorcery, Circe. She's notable for her knowledge of potions and herbs."
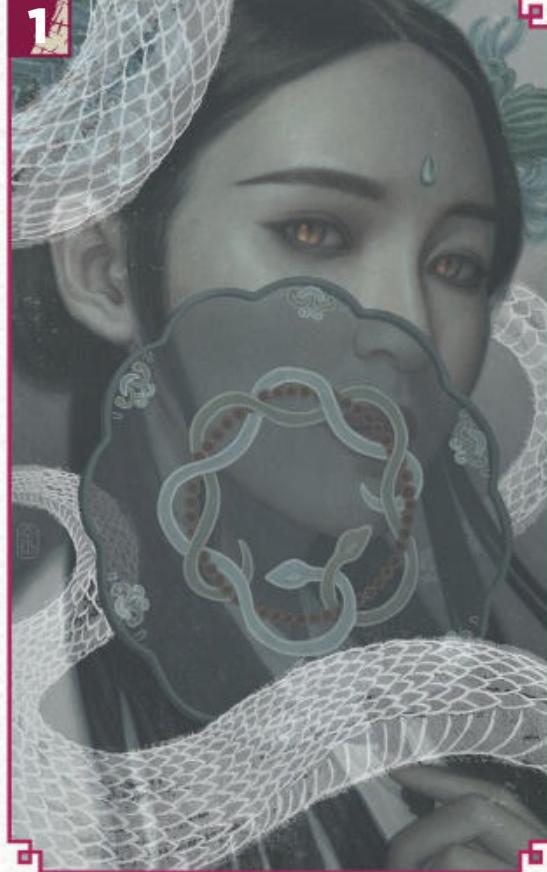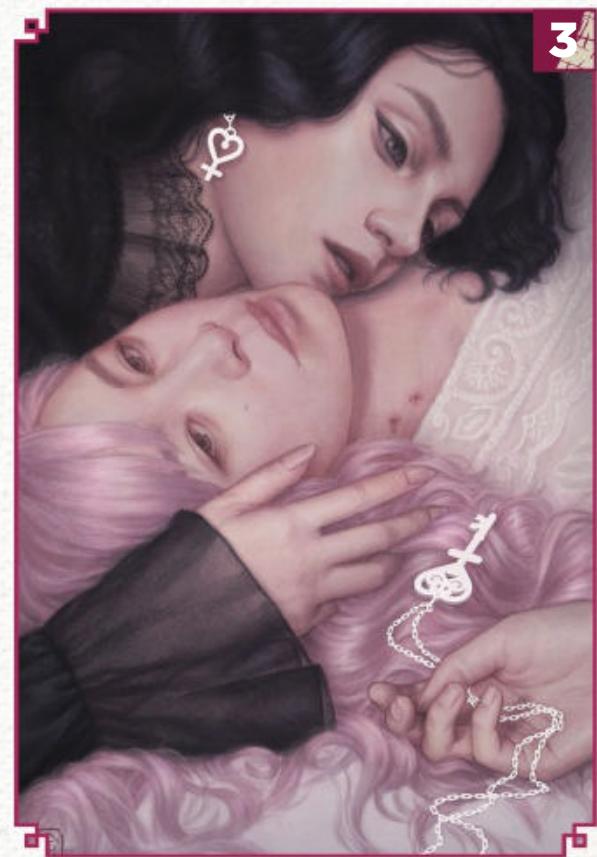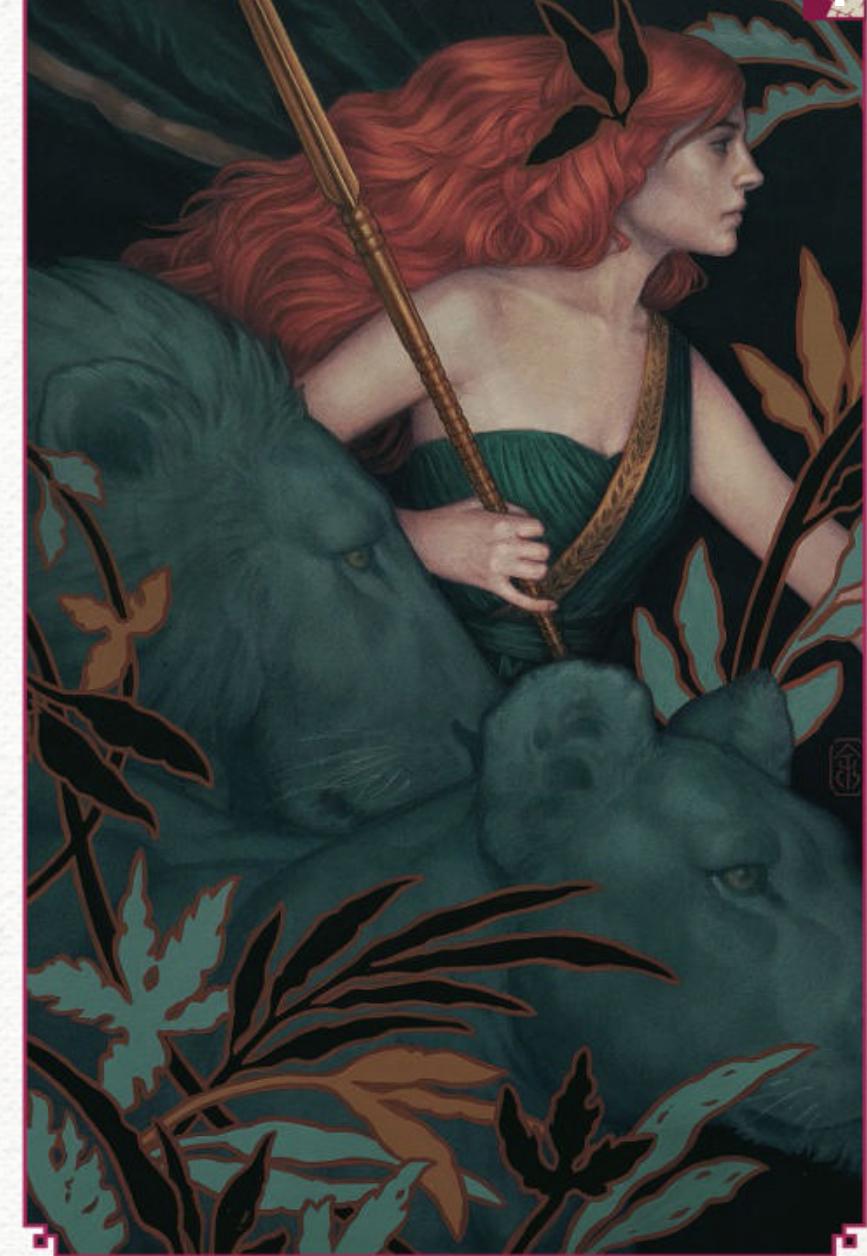
5 A MAGIC STEEPED IN POISON
"A piece of promotional art that I created for the novel A Magic Steeped in Poison by Judy Lin."

Traditional Artist FXPosé

Liesbeth Tatjana Poot

LOCATION: Netherlands **MEDIA:** Acrylic, gouache **WEB:** instagram.com/liesbethtatjana

Liesbeth Tatjana creates painterly, whimsical portraits inspired by history, classical fairy tales and nature. She hopes to create a highly saturated world, imbued with intense emotions of happiness, sadness and wistful longing.

1 ROSE AND TORN
"Seventeenth century clothing always gives me a fairy-tale feeling, even though I do research to ensure historical accuracy."

2 TESS
"Looking at a landscape fills my head with ideas. What happened here, either in an alternative timeline or a different world?"

3 WISTERIA
"This was painted on a 9cm diameter slice of wood painted for a client whose only request was for 'something purple'."

4 LESBIA AND HER SWALLOW
"This is my take on a classical painting by Sir Edward Poynter, painted in the early Edwardian period."

5 MOTHER OF THE FLOCK
"This is inspired by cold January mornings, with the last leaves clinging on to trees, watching the geese fly over the water."

Want to submit your work? Visit ifxm.ag/getinifx

ImagineFX 91

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!
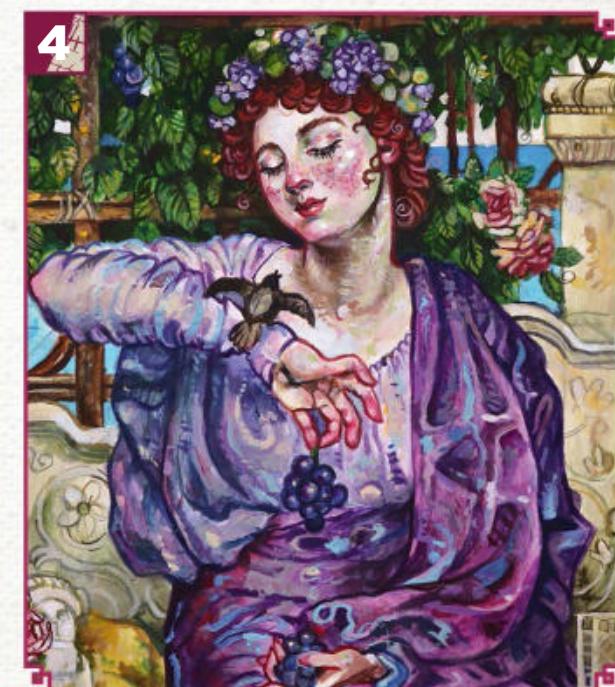
Ink

CREATE ART WITH EMOTIONAL IMPACT

FRANÇOIS GAUTIER explains the creative process he goes through when he brings his emotions to life using black and gold ink

A rt, in all its forms, is for me the best way to convey a message or an emotion. And in traditional black ink drawing, I've found the perfect way to convey my emotions is by playing with shapes and symbols, and by drawing on the imagery that surrounds me, such as cinema, comics, horror, tattooing, video games and much more.

I want to create a composition that evokes the sense of rebuilding oneself, despite wounds and sadness, and thus being able to move forward.

In this workshop, I'll teach you how I draw on one of my emotions, thoughts or even fears, and transform it into an illustration, enabling me to confront it.

I'm going to take you through the different stages that I go through, starting with the very first idea, the

MATERIALS

PAPER
■ Cason A4, 224g, natural white, fine grain

BLACK PEN
■ Mitsubishi Uni Pin Fine Line, 0.03/0.05/0.1

GOLD PEN
■ Mitsubishi Uni-ball Signo

VIDEO WORKSHOP

sketches, research, composition, shading, the final realisation and even the way I stage my drawings to take pictures of them. I'll also go into detail about some of my techniques, as well as the material I use to compose my works.

GOLDEN TOUCH

When making a drawing by hand, I work exclusively in ink, sometimes with a few touches of gold. I really like conveying emotions and messages through the symbolism of what I represent, as well as the composition and combinations that I give them, rather than through colour. I use gold ink to highlight certain details of my drawings and this bring a precious dimension to the whole.

Regarding the materials I use, for this composition I'll use black fineliners, mostly the finest possible

(0.03) to enable me to go into as much detail as I can.

Sometimes I even try my hand with a magnifying glass. The technique used here is hatching. It works really well with this kind of pen, and I feel it brings character to my artwork.

It also enables me to work delicately, to bring the volumes and textures that I want. My compositions are mainly based on symmetry and proportions. This means that I also regularly use rulers or even compasses, in order to place each element as accurately as possible on the sheet, and to offer something satisfying to the eye.

François works almost exclusively in black ink. He draws inspiration from metal music, horror, fantasy, manga and games. See more of his art at instagram.com/francois.gautier.art.

Traditional Artist Workshop

1 Birth of an idea

The very first step in my compositions comes from the desire to represent an emotion that I've felt. Very often, I write them down in notebooks, then bring them out later and try to bring them to life on paper. And for that, I use a lot of symbolism and vivid representations.

2 Development and research

After choosing the basic subject of the project and making some quick sketches, I look for symbols that can correspond to the theme in question. That could be insects, animals, shapes or materials. I also regularly revisit my notebooks to gain inspiration from past ideas that might work here.
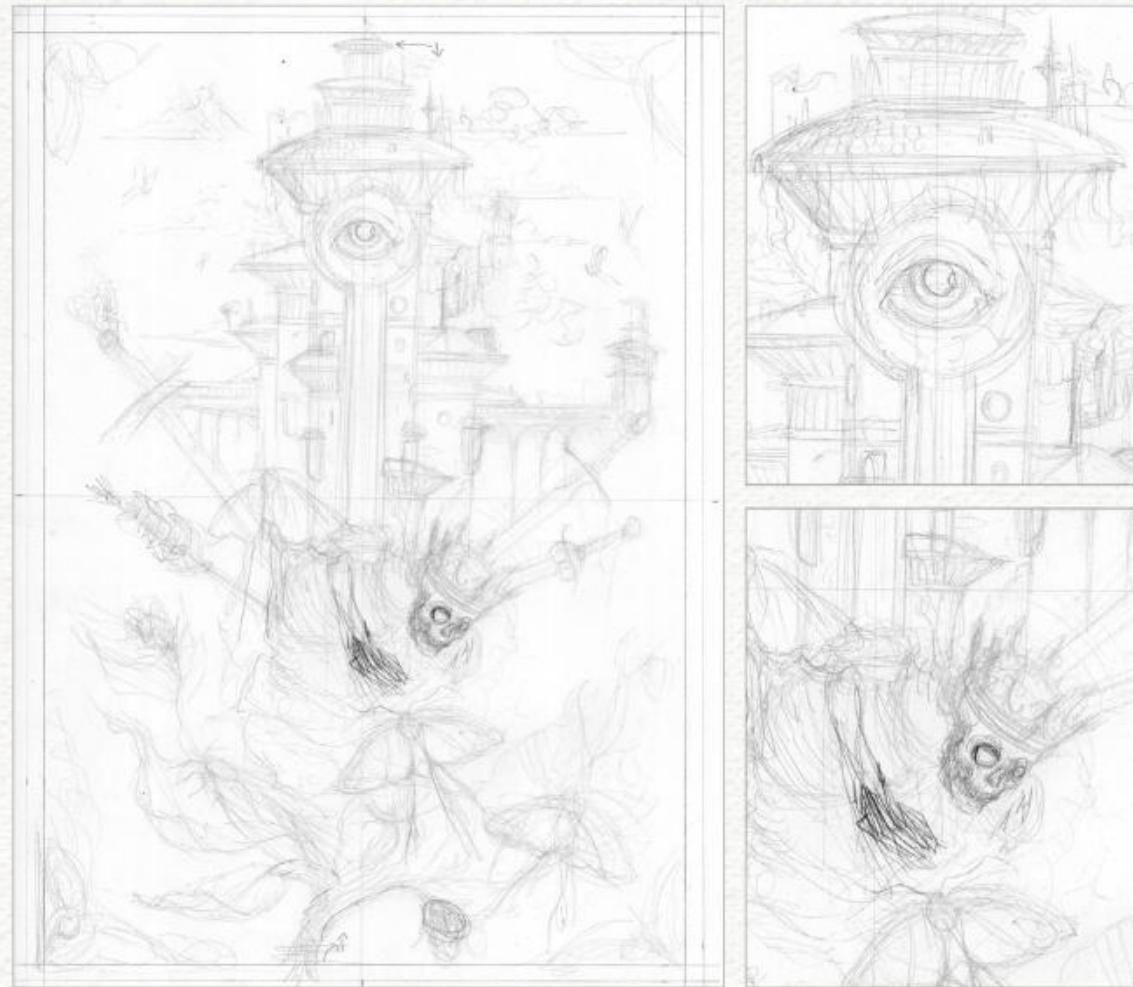
3 Exploring compositions

Once the different elements are chosen and the overall idea fixed, the moment comes to compose the realisation. The goal here for me is to work in symmetry, with volumes that are well distributed, and for the overall composition to be harmonious. I never embark on a final piece of artwork without having fixed the composition beforehand.


4 Refining the elements

When the bulk of the composition is fixed, I go over it more precisely and finely, in order to get into the details. The advantage of a pencil is that it enables me to draw lightly several times in the same place to create the exact shape I want to give to a line or a curve. Once this is perfect, I mark it more strongly.

5 *Frame and ornamentation*
I like to place my drawing in a frame; I find that it emphasises it and freezes it. I try to echo the main piece in my framing, by reusing similar shapes or objects. Here, for example, the butterflies are a perfect shape for angles, and are reminiscent of the butterflies that are present on the main drawing.

6 *Inking my line-art*
All the sketching steps are finally complete, letting me know exactly what I want to do, so I can start inking. I don't work on the same paper as the sketch, but on a new, thicker sheet. A light box enables me to trace my sketch, so my sheet is as clean as possible. I start with the main contours, using a 0.05 black fineliner.

7 *Varying the line thickness and black areas*
In my work, some parts are more important than others, and I like to highlight these. For this I use a thicker fineliner (here I've used 0.1) to bring them out. I also take this opportunity to fill in the areas that I know will be black, to see them as quickly as possible. ➥

8 Establishing the light source

Light is important when working in black and in a fairly realistic style. It enables me to create volume, to emphasise certain parts, and to give a sense of foreground and background. It's therefore at this point that I decide where my light source comes from, and when I settle on the main areas of shadow.

9 Details and textures

I really like details. This is why I use very fine pens. They enable me to create the most delicate of marks. I use my 0.03 fineliners – the finest that I've been able to find – for this level of detail. The fineness of the point ensures that I can work slowly and gradually bring out the textures of stones, small bricks, metals and so on.
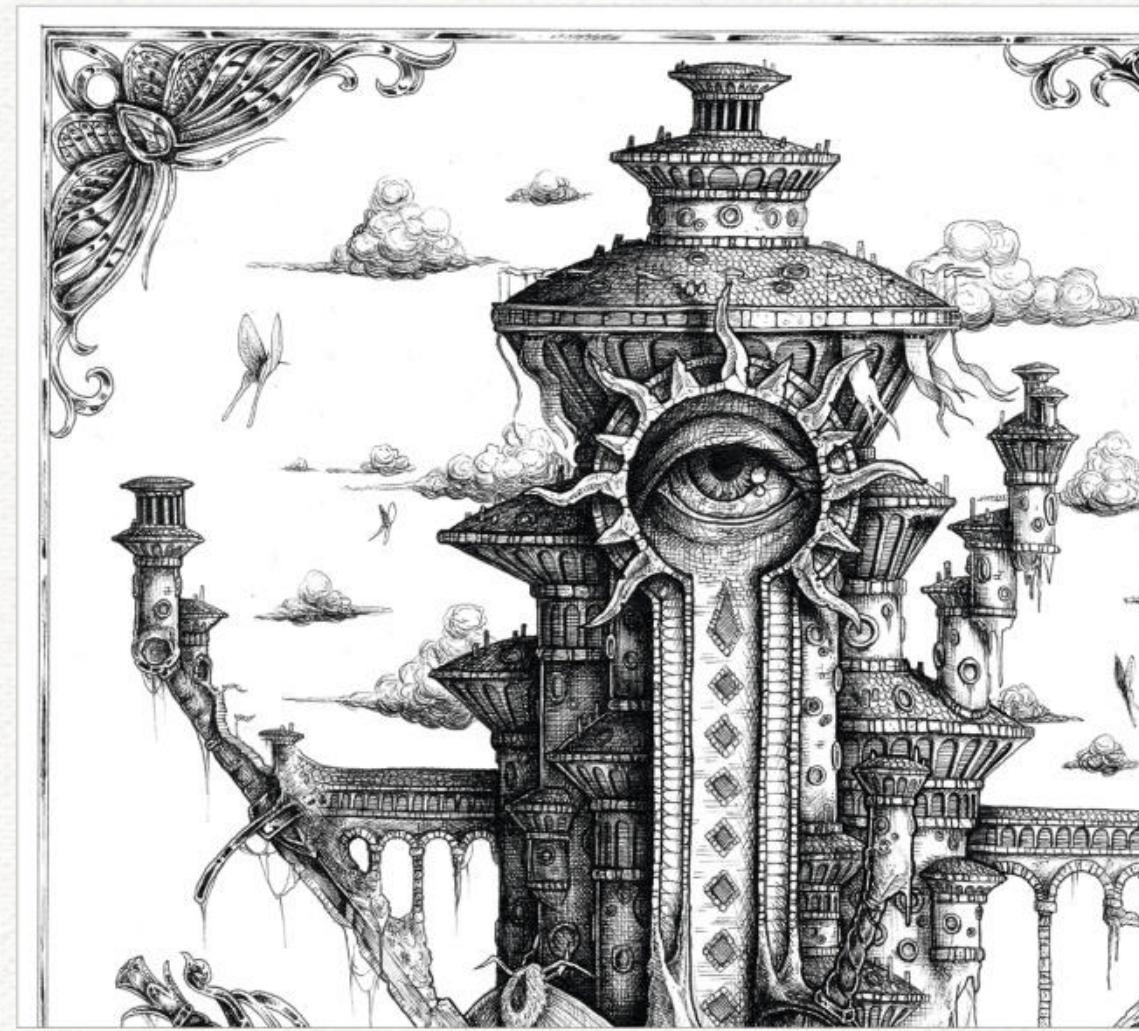
10 Frame and backgrounds

I often finish with the frames, the ornamentation, and sometimes the background, only to adjust these elements so that they work with the main image. Sometimes I apply a different texture to what I had initially thought, in order to lighten everything. Here I chose a metallic effect to mimic the sword blades.

11 Apply gold ink

I don't use it in all my artwork, but I seem to be working more and more with gold ink. It enables me to highlight certain parts of the composition, whether that's an important part, blood, golden pieces and so on. Here I want to highlight the tears, which symbolise sadness and nourish the flower that signifies rebirth.

12 Gold details and shadows

Once the gold ink has been added, it must integrate into the overall artwork. Gold ink added at the end of the process takes precedence over the black ink. And for that, you have to give it volume, shadows and sometimes even textures.

13 Preparation of the photo

The creation is finally finished, signed and varnished. Finally, we come to an important stage in my work: the presentation. For that I have a lot of objects linked to the recurring themes that I use in my drawings. I also use them for reference or as models sometimes.
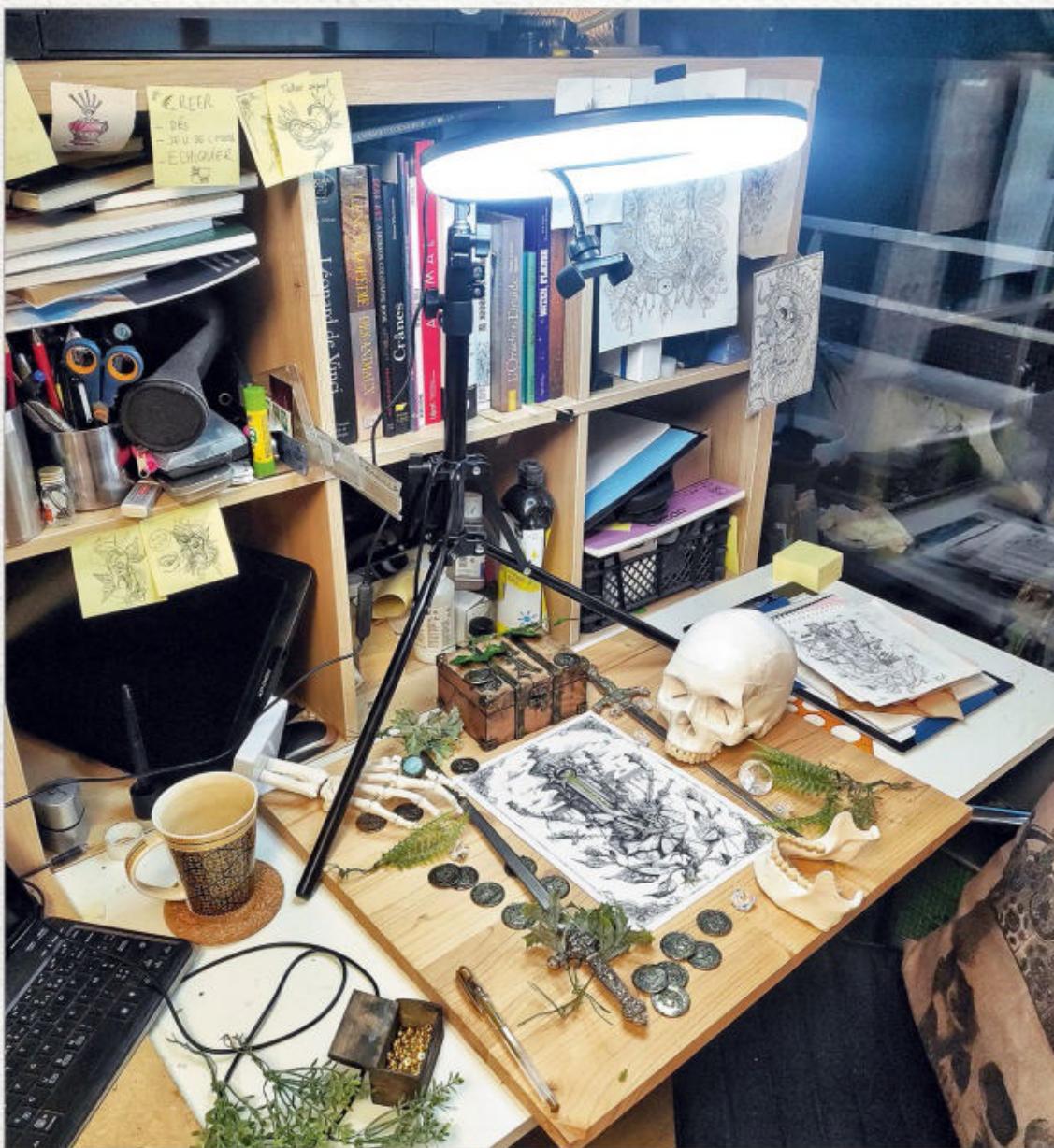
14 Set up the photoshoot

I don't have a very large workspace, let alone a photo studio. Working on small A4 formats most of the time, I just have a wooden board on my drawing desk. I then place my drawing on it, and build up the staging using different objects that I've chosen beforehand. These items evoke themes and elements that appear in the drawing itself.

15 The final picture

Photography is the very last step in my creative process, and one of the most important. It enables me to present my artwork the way I want it to be seen, as shown here, to highlight it, and to share my creations on my social networks. It is the attention I pay to this final step that made it possible for me to discover my world, and to make drawing my daily work. ◈

First Impressions

✵ Jeff Miracola ✵

Trees have been a fascination for this artist since childhood

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in a very violent part of a Midwestern town in the US. I seemed oblivious to most of the street violence as a child, but as a teenager it was hard to ignore. So I spent a lot more time indoors creating art to alleviate boredom.

You're a child, you see some art that changes everything; where are you, what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?
I'm 15 years old and in high school. A friend shows me the book The Fantastic Art of Frank Frazetta, and my entire future was mapped out with every page I turned. Once I saw Frazetta's Destroyer painting, I knew exactly what I wanted from my life: to be a fantasy artist.

Does one person stand out as helpful during your early years?
My mother. No matter what I drew, she encouraged me to continue creating art. In fact, she informed
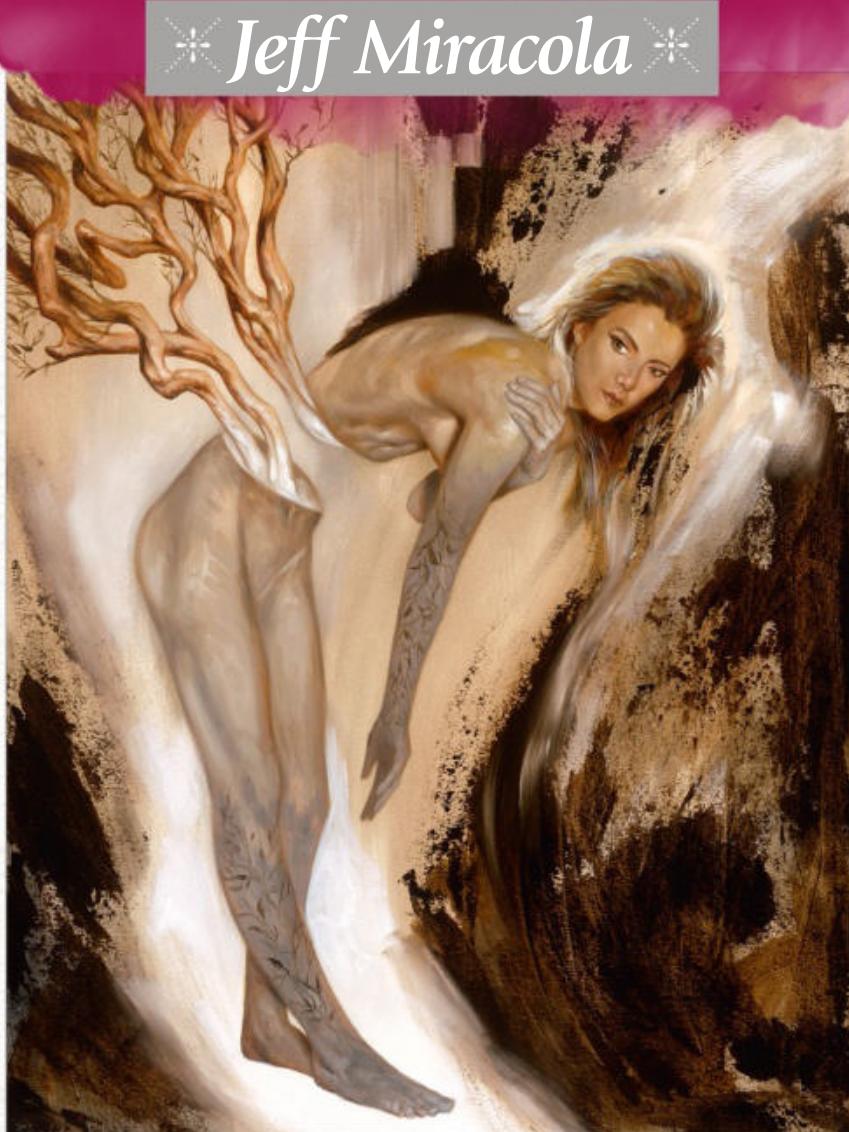
BROKEN
"This personal painting depicts a friend struggling with depression."

me of a high school specialising in the arts. I auditioned and got in.

Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
My first paid work was for a small, independent comic publisher. Early in my career, I thought I wanted to

> ❝ I drew trees so much that I can't look at a tree without thinking of my younger self ❞

work in comics, but that all changed once gaming companies began calling. None of my early work, which was raw and unrefined, is representative of what I paint now. I was still learning how to paint then.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
The most recent piece I finished is something for Magic: The Gathering

TRIPLE TROUBLE
"This is an acrylic painting I created for Cubeamajigs' products."

© Hit Point Press

that isn't published yet. Twenty-six years span between my first pieces for MTG and these new ones. I've got a better handle on my painting medium, process, composition and storytelling. But I love the energy of brush strokes in my early paintings.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?
Absolutely, but I say that realising I got involved with Magic: The Gathering in its early days and, thankfully, they keep giving me work. It's because of the incredible art directors I've had over the years, and the chance they took on me, that I have the career I do.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Take it all more seriously and always push yourself to get better. There was a period not long after I started getting professional work when I began to lose focus and my work suffered. Maybe it was burnout, who knows? I snapped back and began to excel again, but I lost a few years of artistic development.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
Anything with a tree. I know that sounds simple and silly. But trees have fascinated me since I was a child. I drew trees so much that I can't look at a tree, any tree, without thinking of my younger self. So, any day I get a chance to draw or paint a tree is a happy tree kinda day.

What does the future hold for you?
I'll never stop working on select client work, but I've reached the age when I want to start painting some of the images I've had floating in my brain for decades. So my future will involve looking into my past for inspiration and stories to paint.

Jeff is a world-renowned artist for Magic: The Gathering, D&D and more. He also co-owns Fantasy Art Workshop, maker of tutorial videos and in-person workshops. Find him online at jeffmiracola.com.

art by: instagram.com/raiffiesart

infos & videos: www.artrage.com/IFX

ArtRage