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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

WORKSHOP

12 PRO TIPS FOR GRADIENTS

Bring your colours to life with our guide from **James Gurney**

Dylan Teague shares his pro advice

NFTs

NON-FUNGIBLE MARKETPLACES

Get the lowdown on where and how to sell your art

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF 2000AD

Delve into the art and artists behind the classic Rebellion comic, with tips and insights from...

DYLAN TEAGUE

MIKE DOREY

ROBIN HENLEY

TOBY WILLSMER

MICHAEL DOWLING

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FUTURE
ISSUE 211

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new professional features added to the desktop version **artrage vitae** (macOS/Windows)
seamless tiling - custom color mixing - real-time collaborative painting - larger canvas

infos and videos
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Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

2022 is a big year for Rebellion, who are celebrating 45 years of their iconic comic, 2000 AD. Here at ImagineFX we are keen to join the celebrations, with our fantastic Judge Dredd cover. We also talked to a number of artists who have contributed to the enormous success of 2000 AD. They share insights into their work and thoughts on some key moments in the sci-fi comic's history.

Elsewhere this issue we have a range of workshops to help you learn new skills, from painting chilled cyberpunk scenes with Clip Studio Paint, to vibrant and colourful portraits in Rebelle. If you are looking for a more traditional portrait style then follow along with Lixin Yin, as he explains his process for painting in Photoshop and how he tackles any issues and pitfalls.

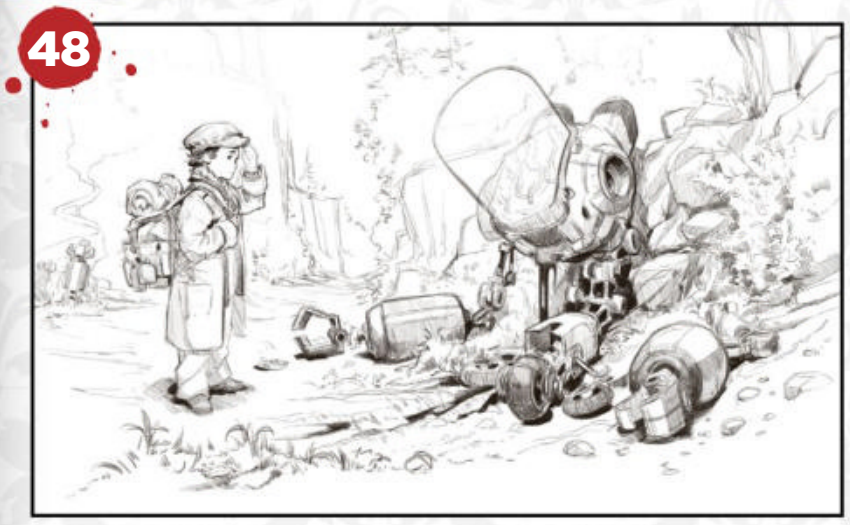
Sometimes it's all about choosing the tool for the job, so we test out the latest Affinity Designer to help you decide whether it offers all you need from your vector software.

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

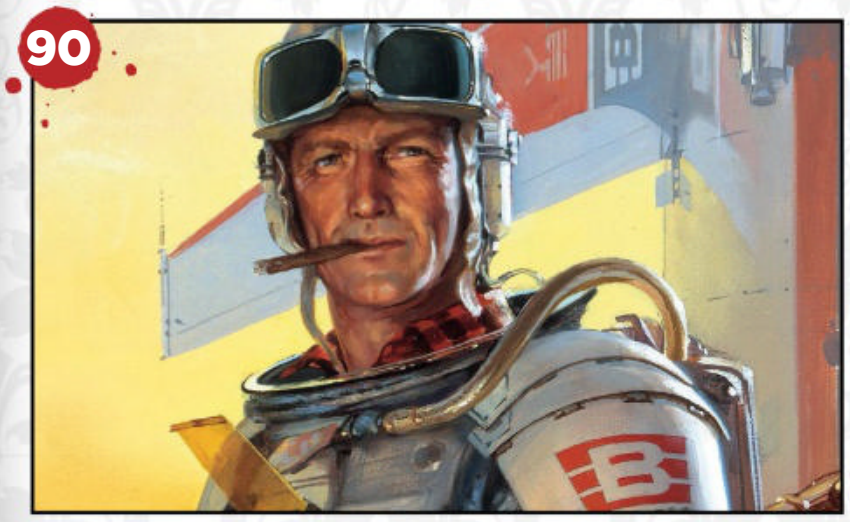
EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...

48



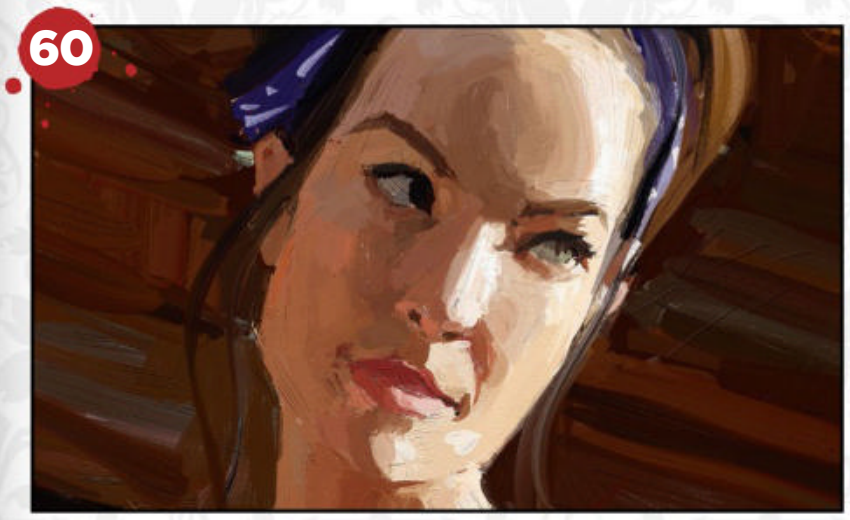
Sketchbook – Nabetse Zitro
The self-taught artist showcases his stunning character illustrations, where the story is at the core of the design.

90



Master painting gradients
James Gurney shares his top tips and demonstrates some handy methods for painting smooth gradients.

60



Top colour blending tips
Daniel Ibanez shows you how to simulate wet-on-wet oil blending techniques with ArtRage Vitae.

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The character artist at Cloud Imperium Games breaks down a typical working day.

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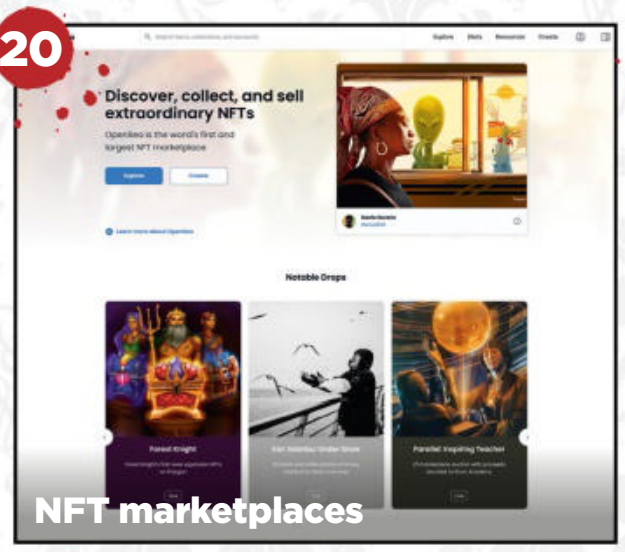
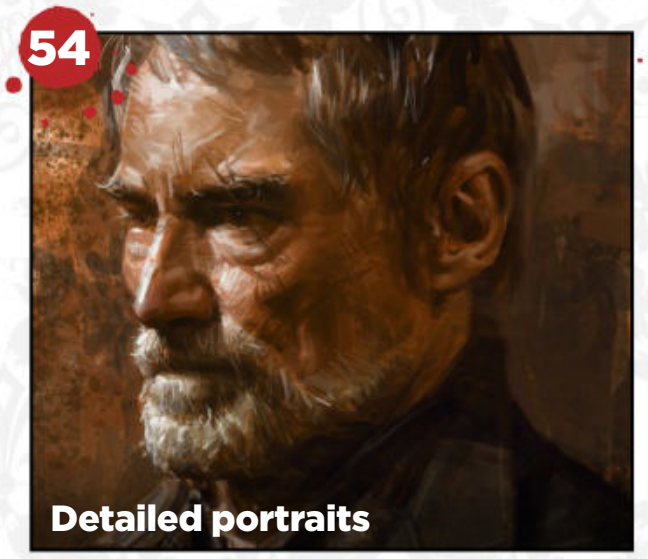
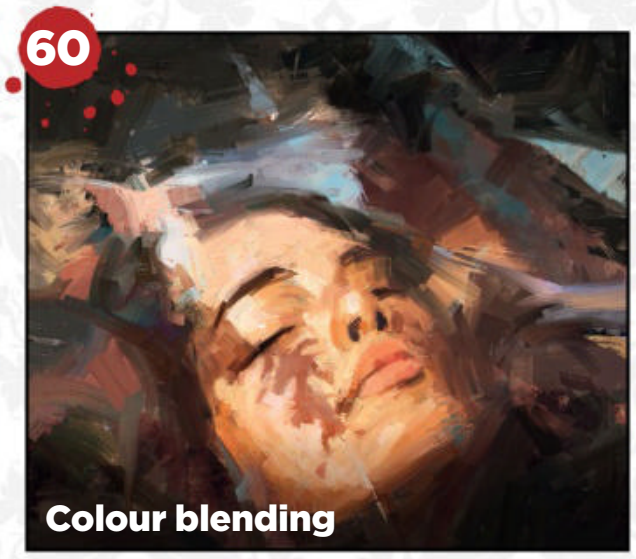






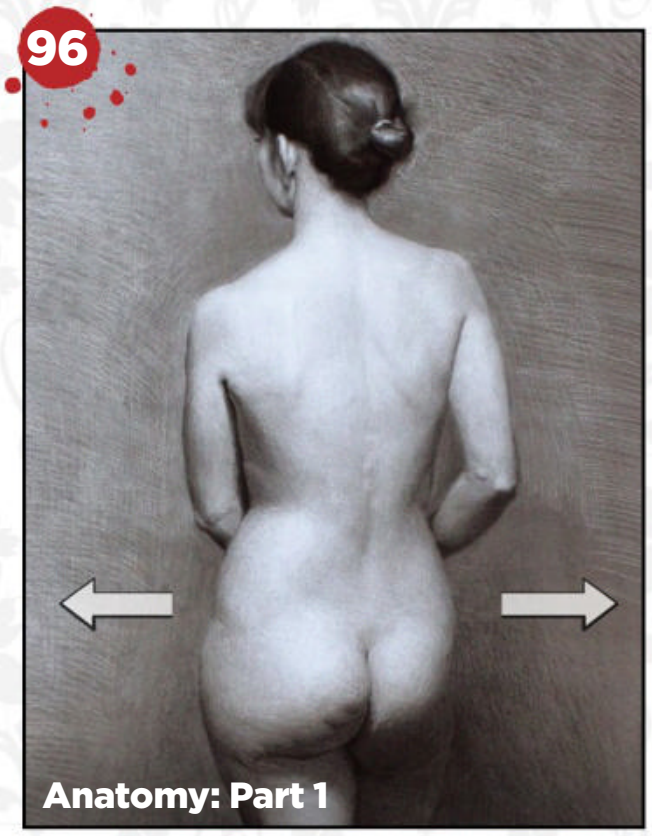
Workshops

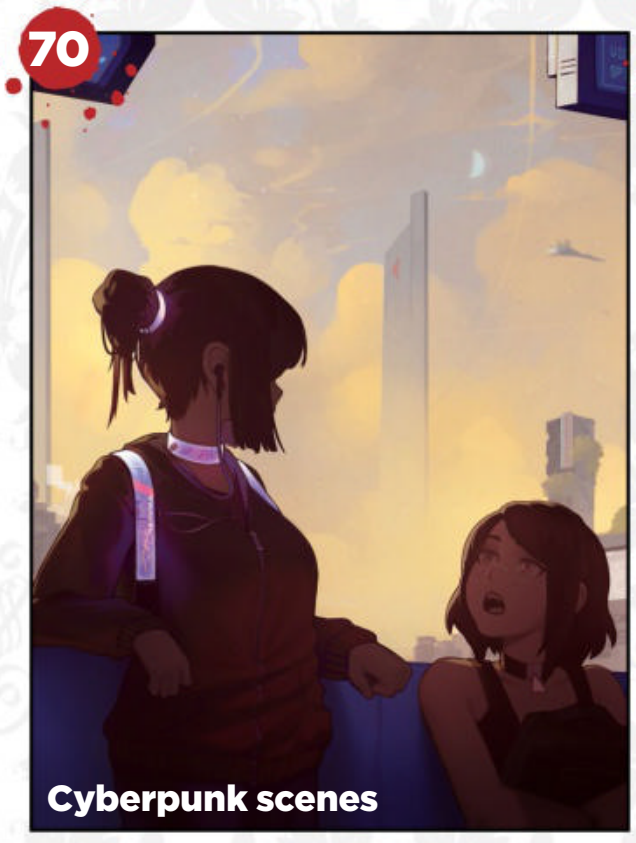
54 Master detail and tone
Lixin Yin takes us through his painting process in Photoshop and Rebelle.

60 Top colour blending tips
Use ArtRage Vitae's Real Color Blending features; Daniel Ibanez shows us how.

64 Paint vibrant portraits
Georg Ireland demonstrates his painting process in Rebelle 5.

70 Create a calm cyberpunk illustration
Learn aurahack's techniques for her beautiful cyberpunk cityscape.





Traditional Artist

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

90 Workshop: Gradients and how to use them
James Gurney demonstrates how to approach painting smooth gradients.

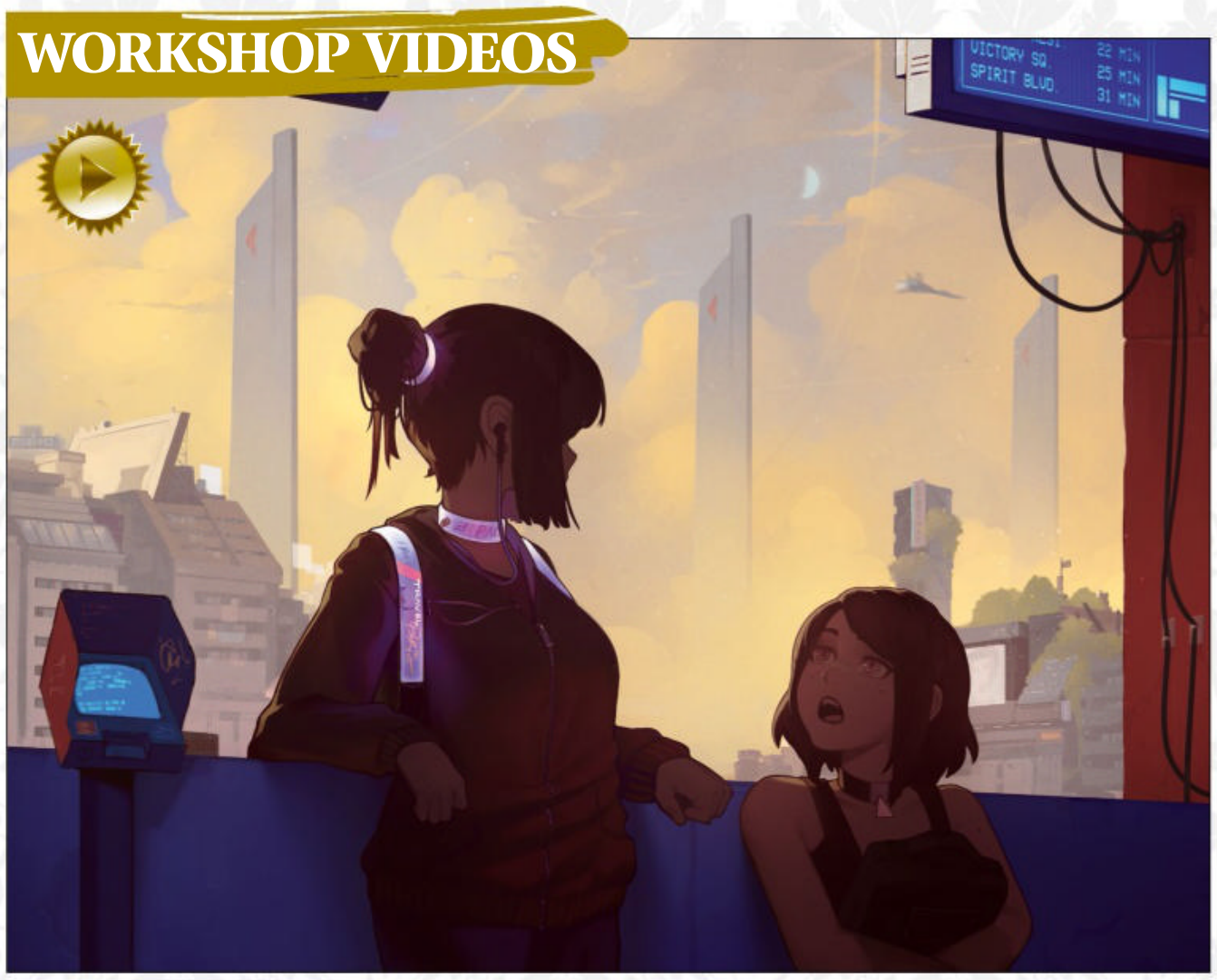
96 Workshop: Anatomy – Part 1 Draw male and female figures
A new 10-part series, this month focusing on male and female proportions.

98 First Impressions: Julia Lundman
How fantasy and folklore inspire this artist's work.

ImagineFX Resources

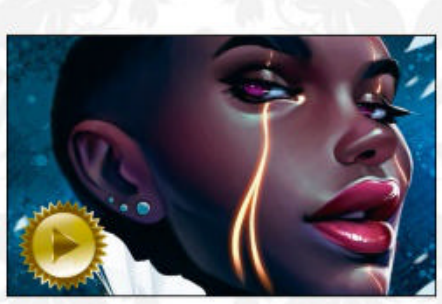
Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit: **https://bit.ly/IFX_2000AD**

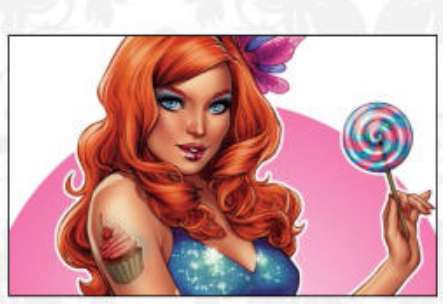
WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Create a calm cyberpunk illustration

aurahack demonstrates the key steps to her illustration process, from sketching and detailing buildings, to designing characters and adding LCD screens to clothing for that cyberpunk look.





ALSO! Learn from the pros with these video walkthroughs

Paint futuristic portraits with Mel Milton; watch Kim Jung Gi showcase his drawing process; and Elias Chatzoudis demonstrates how to create comic art pin-up characters.

PLUS 5 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

OIL PASTEL BRUSH
An oil pastel brush, which Lixin Yin uses for his line work when painting portraits.

EXO-M
aurahack's basic round brush, a slightly textured version of the default round brush in CSP.

SUBURBIA
A rectangular brush aurahack uses for her artwork, for blocking out shapes and painting.

ImagineFX

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Next month in...

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ImagineFX

Master anatomy

Next issue we delve deep into creating anatomical art!

Veteran artist Jama Jurabaev shares his expert tips and techniques for our stunning cover art.

Also in the issue...

Steelrising
Discover the wonderful art of the upcoming video game for PC and next-gen consoles.

Design unique characters
Andrei Riabovitchev shows you how to develop fun and unique characters.

Paint awesome fantasy beasts
Boost your skills for painting creature anatomy for fantasy art.

Perfect your body parts
Focus on individual body parts in our anatomy series by Charlie Pickard.

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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

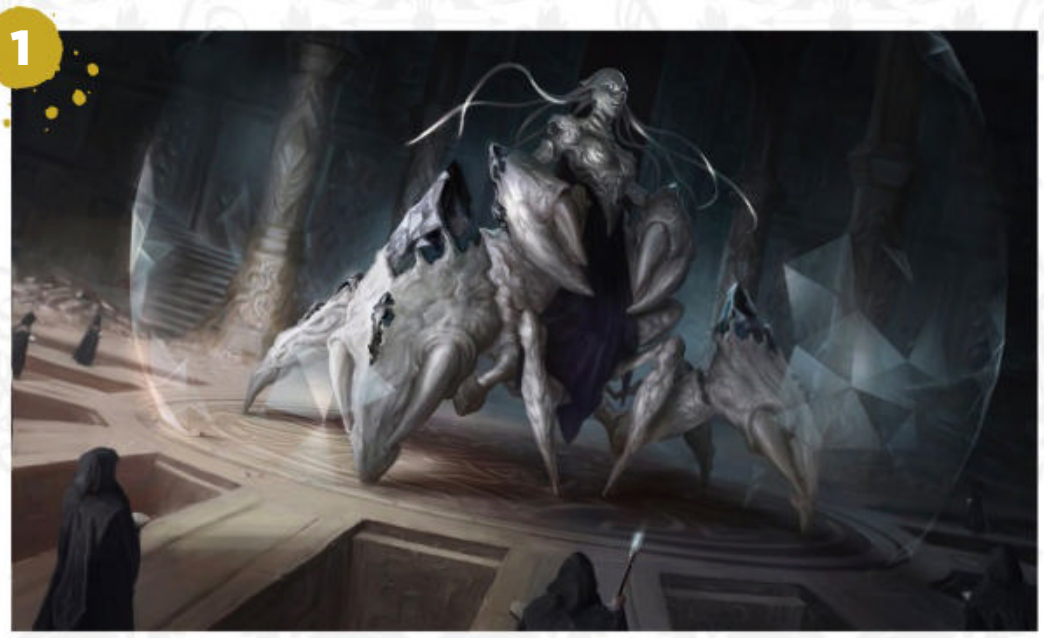
Andreia Ugrai

LOCATION: Romania **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/andreiaugrai

Andreia is a freelance artist who creates dark fantasy characters and illustrations. She has worked on card art and book covers for clients like Magic: The Gathering and Iron Helmet Games.

1 INDESTRUCTIBLE
"Worshippers pay their respects to a powerful creature that is impossible to defeat, which is trapped in a mysterious sphere."

2 SURVIVOR
"Despite the haze, heights and dangers, this determined man managed to survive 15 years in a doomed city."



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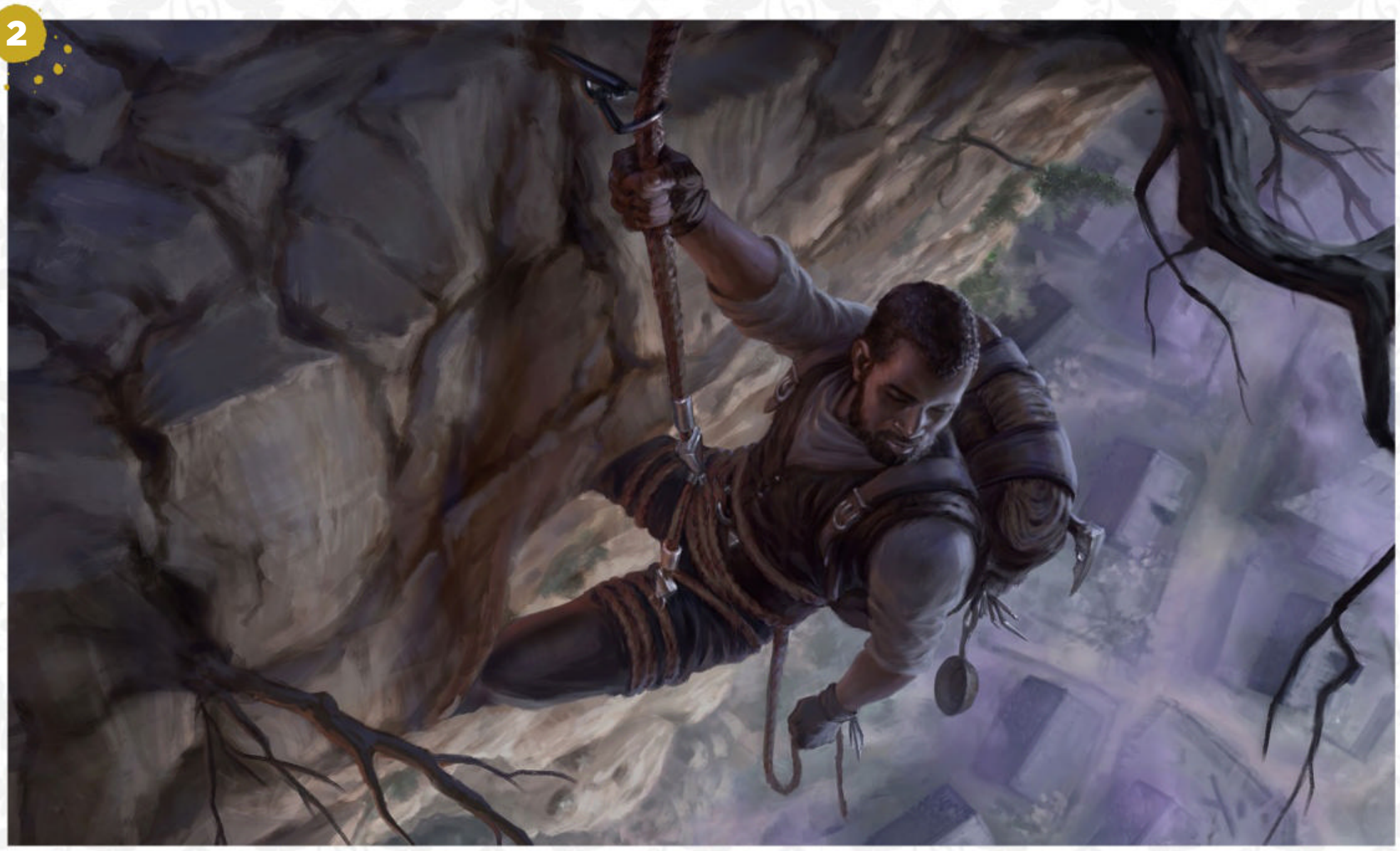

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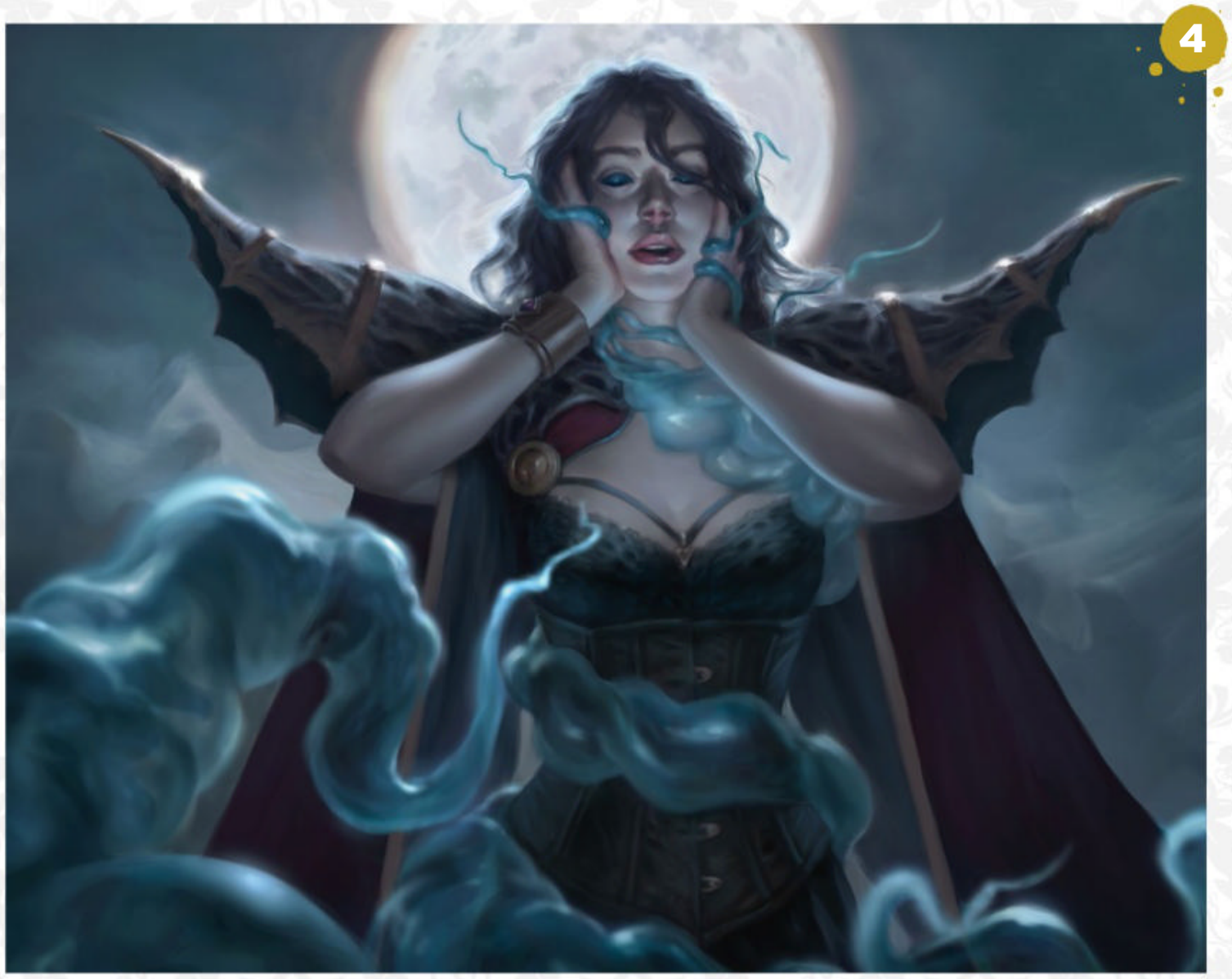


3 TOYMAKER
"The evil, deranged Toymaker. She has a wicked grin on her face and wide unsettling eyes working on a Marie O'Nett puppet."

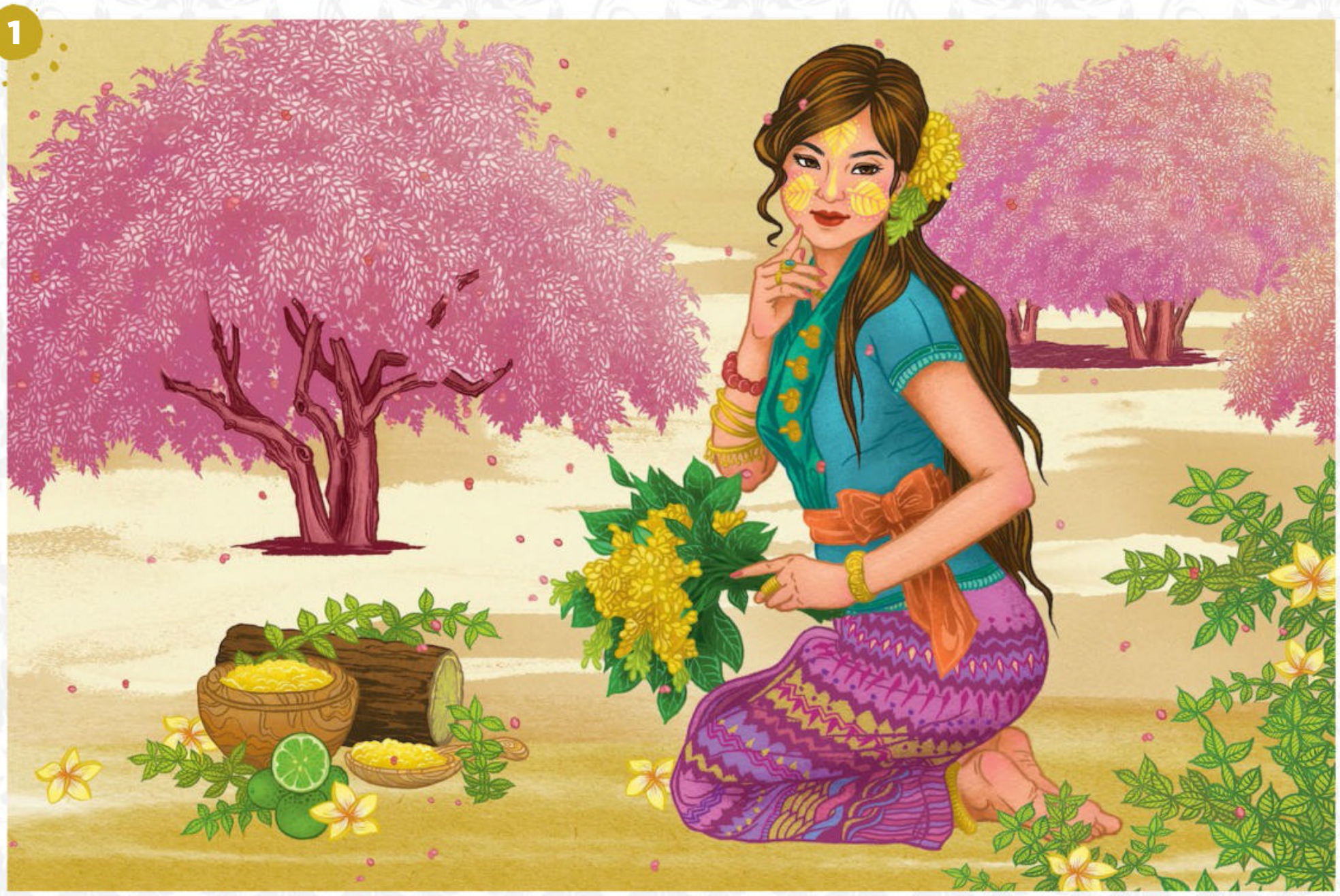
4 UNSTABLE ECTOPLASM
"Beware of the destructive influence of this strange, ectoplasm substance as it will audaciously devour and choke you."

Lora Lee

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.loraleeart.com

Lora is an assistant professor at Eastern Connecticut State University, and a freelance artist who combines digital tools with ink brushes. "I love exploring artistic styles, different cultures, and telling stories."

1



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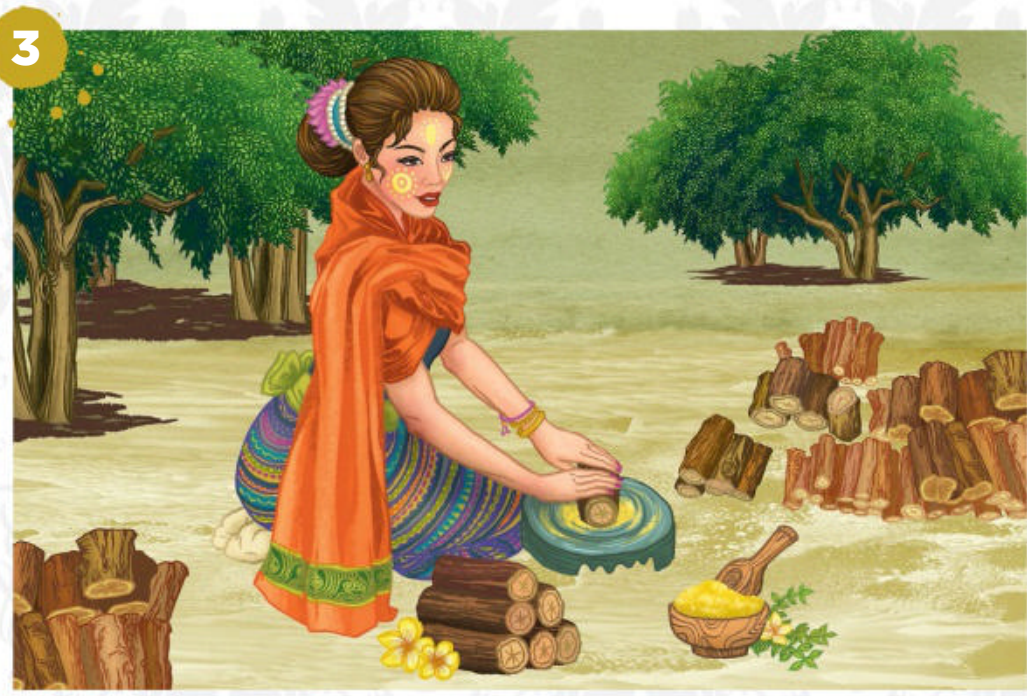

1 BURMESE GIRL
"Here, a girl in a beautiful traditional Burmese costume kneels with Thanaka in the shade of nearby trees."

2 MAP OF DRAGONS
"I've always been fascinated by dragons in European folktales, so I created this intricate map to tell their stories."

3 MAKING THANAKA
"This depicts the traditional process of making Thanaka, a cosmetic paste used by the people of Myanmar for over 2,000 years."

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Marco Marin

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/ulmo88

Marco is a fantasy and horror illustrator. He likes depicting worlds where the eerie and the fantastic come forward in a splash of light and colour. He enjoys hearing new ideas and adding a spice to them.

1 SPELLBINDING TERROR

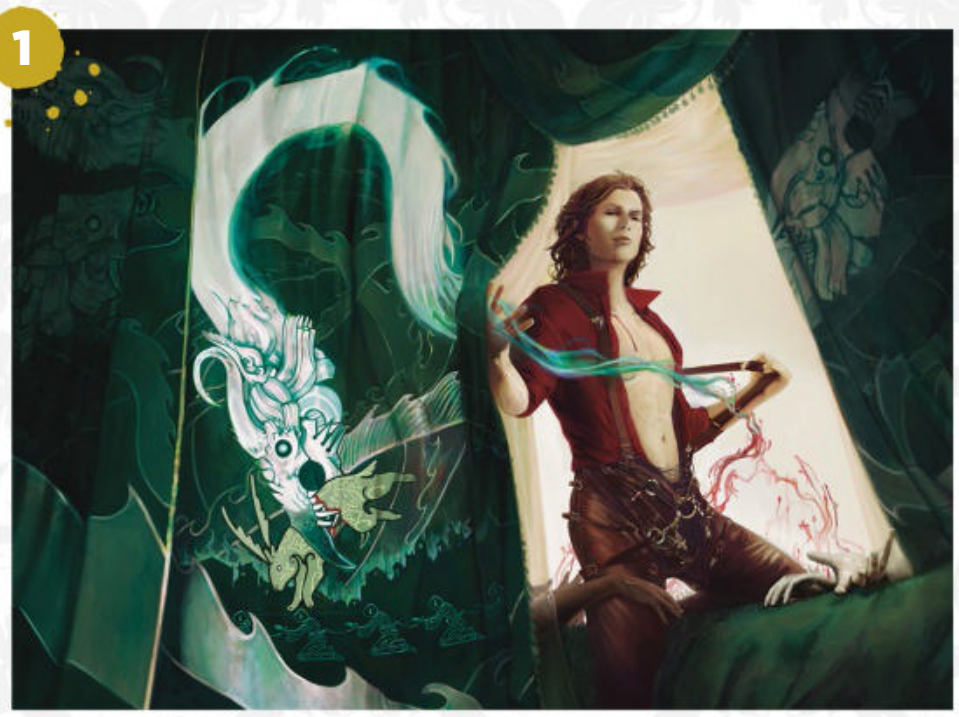
"Why is it that we are always lured by the forbidden? Is it the danger of it, or is it another form of persuasion?"

2 THE ALCHEMIST WITCH

"After attending sorcery school and making no progress, the young witch realizes with awe, her own unique and special magic."

3 GRAND NECROMANCER

"When you can raise your band members, an entourage will shortly follow. Let the concert of the dead spread all over!"



Felix Miall

LOCATION: UK **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** felixmiall.com

Felix is a freelancer working across fiction and game art. His recent work has appeared in Heart: The City Beneath, Blackbirds RPG, and The Mark of the Horse Lord. His specialties lie in all things Gothic and grim.

1 LASER-RITTER
"The swashbuckling player characters from Bad Quail Games' Laser-Ritter as they appear on the front cover."

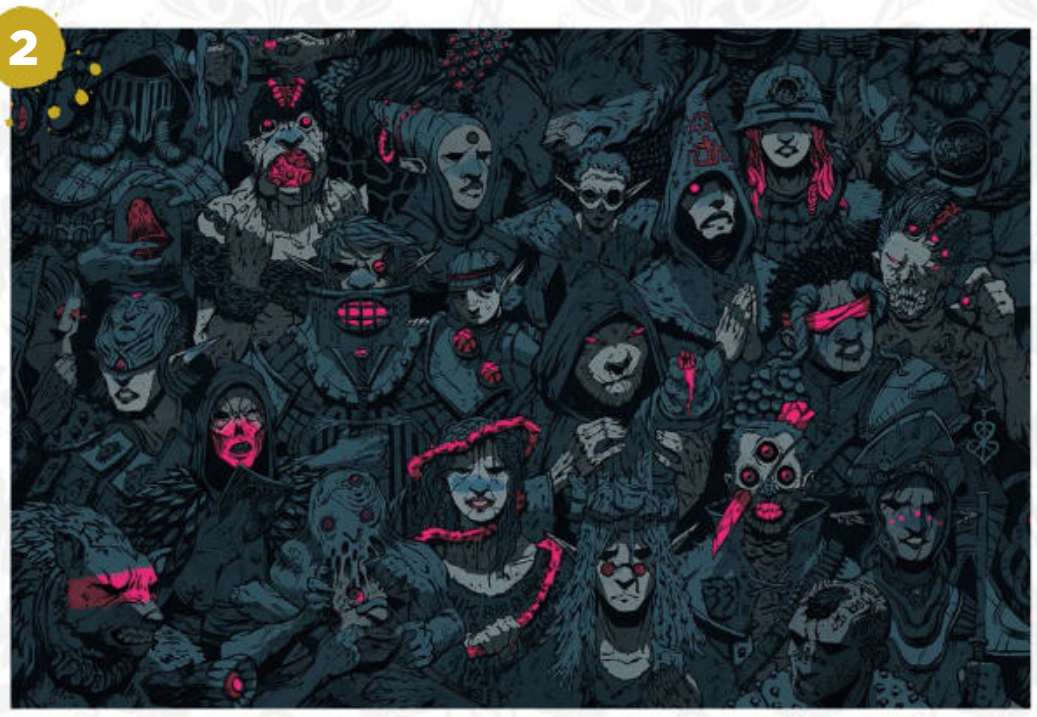
2 THE PEOPLE OF HEART
"Hounds, Cleavers, Vermissian Knights and Deadwalkers mingle with some less easily identified company – all people of Heart: The City Beneath."

3 THE TORTURER
"An inquisitor and his assistant settle into their grim work."

1

© Bad Quail Games 2021

2



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3

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Kristina Gehrmann

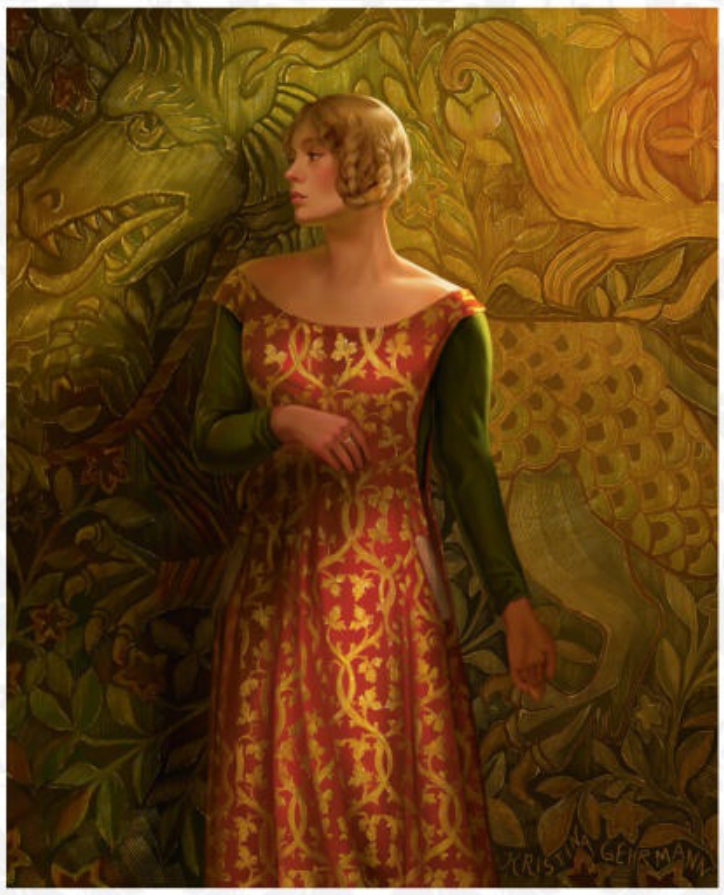
LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.kristinagehrmann.com

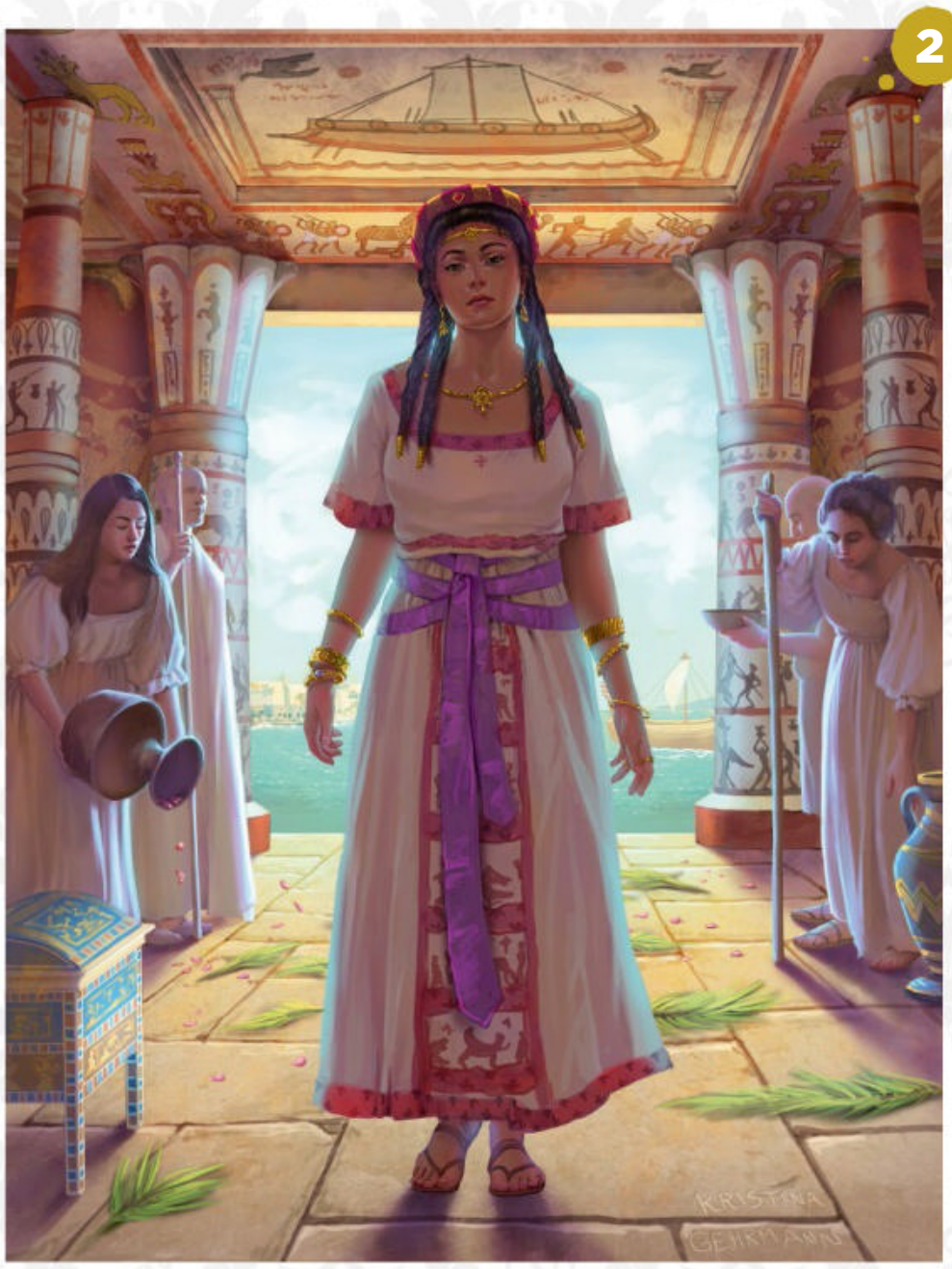
Kristina is an illustrator and graphic novelist who likes to explore historical and fantasy subjects in a detailed, painterly style. Her list of clients include publishers in the book and board games industries.

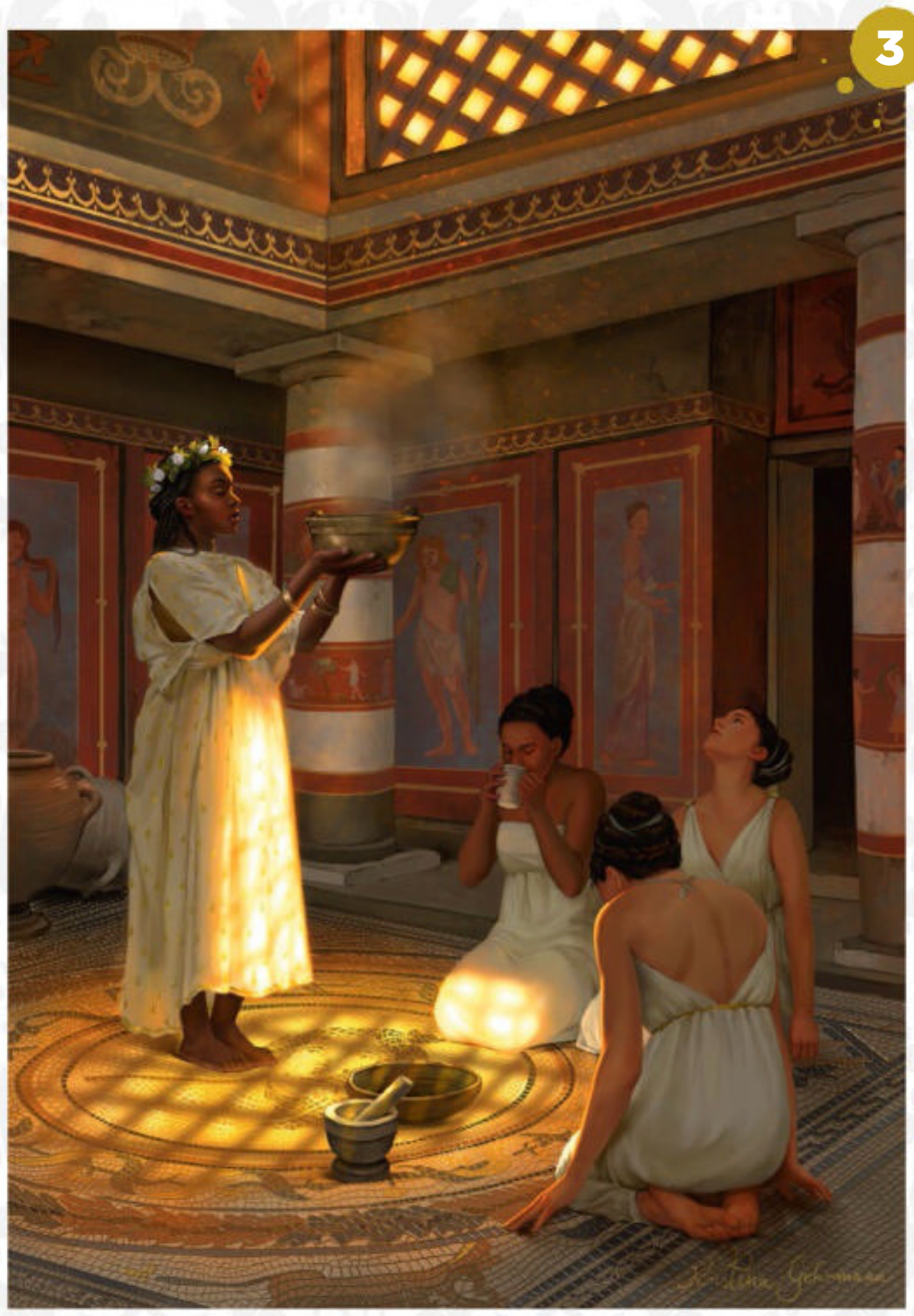
1 FOR LOVE OF TAPESTRY
"Two personal works in which I indulge my love for medieval/Renaissance tapestry and fashions, patterns, light and colour."

2 DIDO
"The legendary founder and queen of Carthage! It was a joy to research artifacts and styles from Phoenician culture."

3 IN THE TEMPLE
"This piece is a personal work where I wanted to explore light and colour, as well as themes inspired by classical antiquity."







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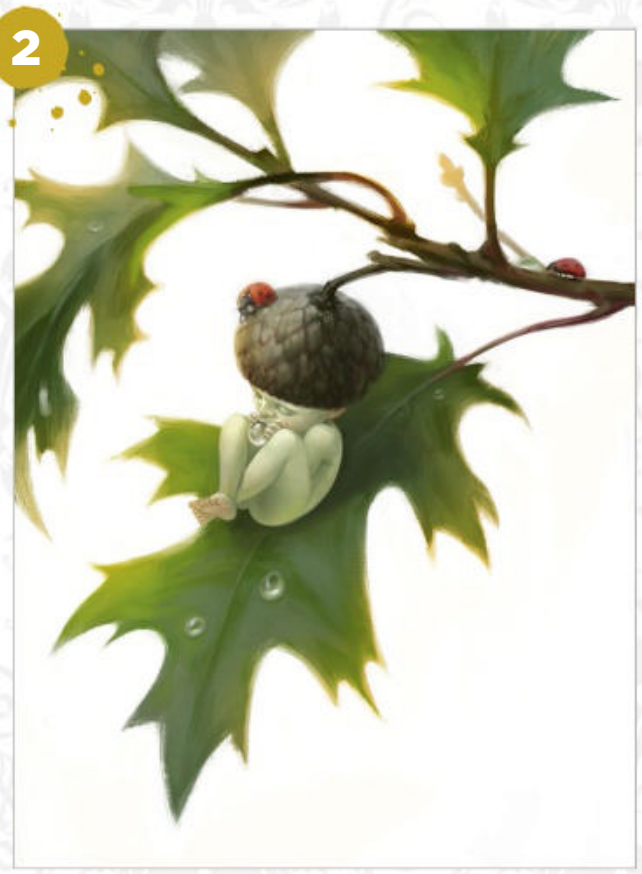
Veronika Fedorova

LOCATION: Sweden **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.veronikafedorova.com

Veronika is a fantasy illustrator and game artist whose clients include Thunderful Games, Hit Point Press, and Osprey Publishing. "I particularly enjoy imaginative realism painted digitally and realistic food illustrations."

1 THE MYTH OF PERSEUS BOOK COVER
"This piece is my first assignment for my mentorship with Dan Dos Santos. I wanted to go for a more graphical look than usual."

2 ACORN BABY
"I got this idea while hiking in a gorgeous Nordic forest. I was expecting a child and felt especially connected to nature."



© Lissa Bolts

3 'WISH MARKED' BOOK COVER
"This piece was made as a commission for Lissa Bolts, who is a self-publishing author."

4 CYBERPUNK NOIR BOOK COVER
"Made as one of the mentorship assignments for Dan Dos Santos. I find the mix of cyberpunk and noir very intriguing."

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

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

Michael DaCruz

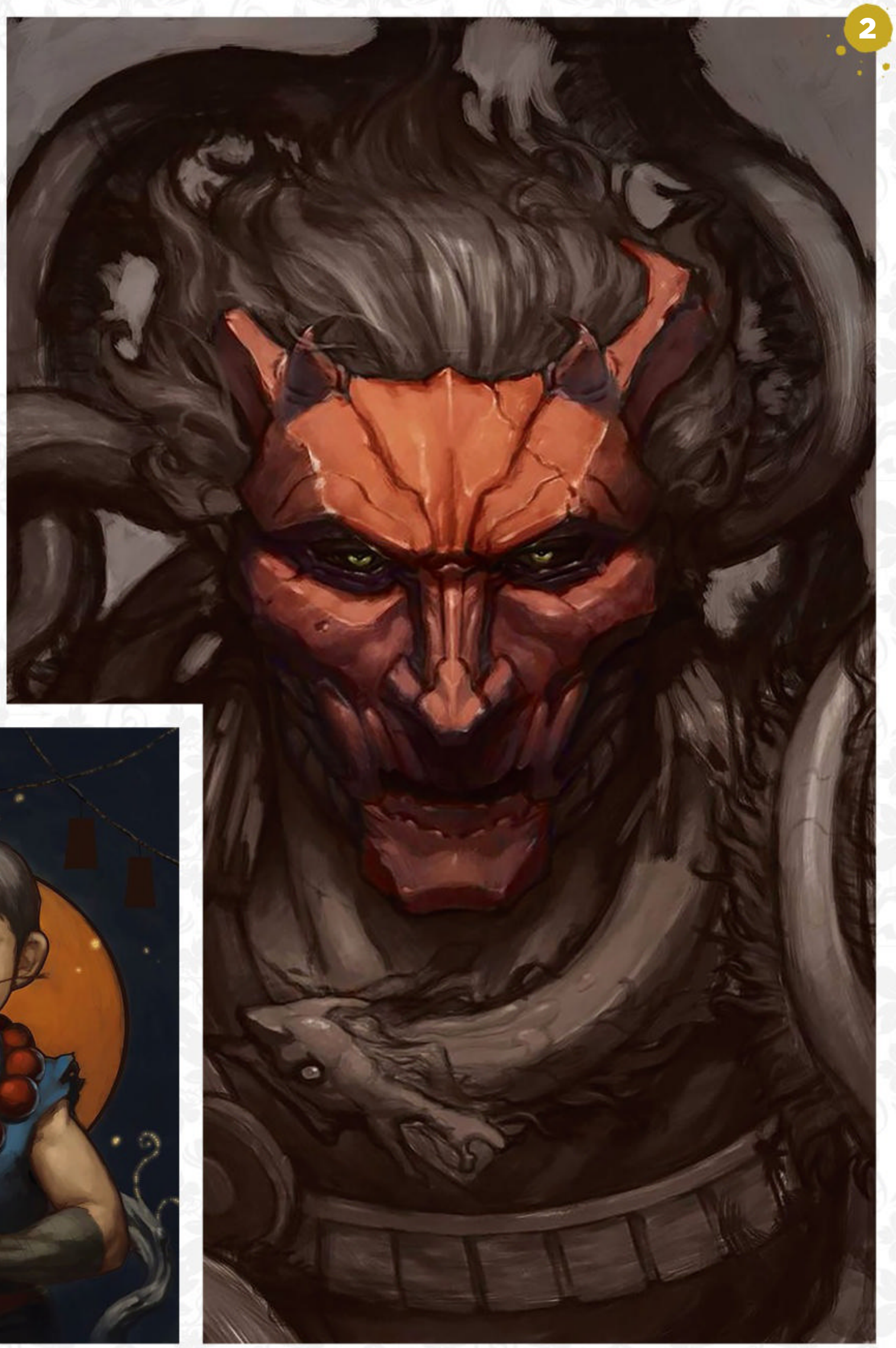
LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** artstation.com/madsamuri2240

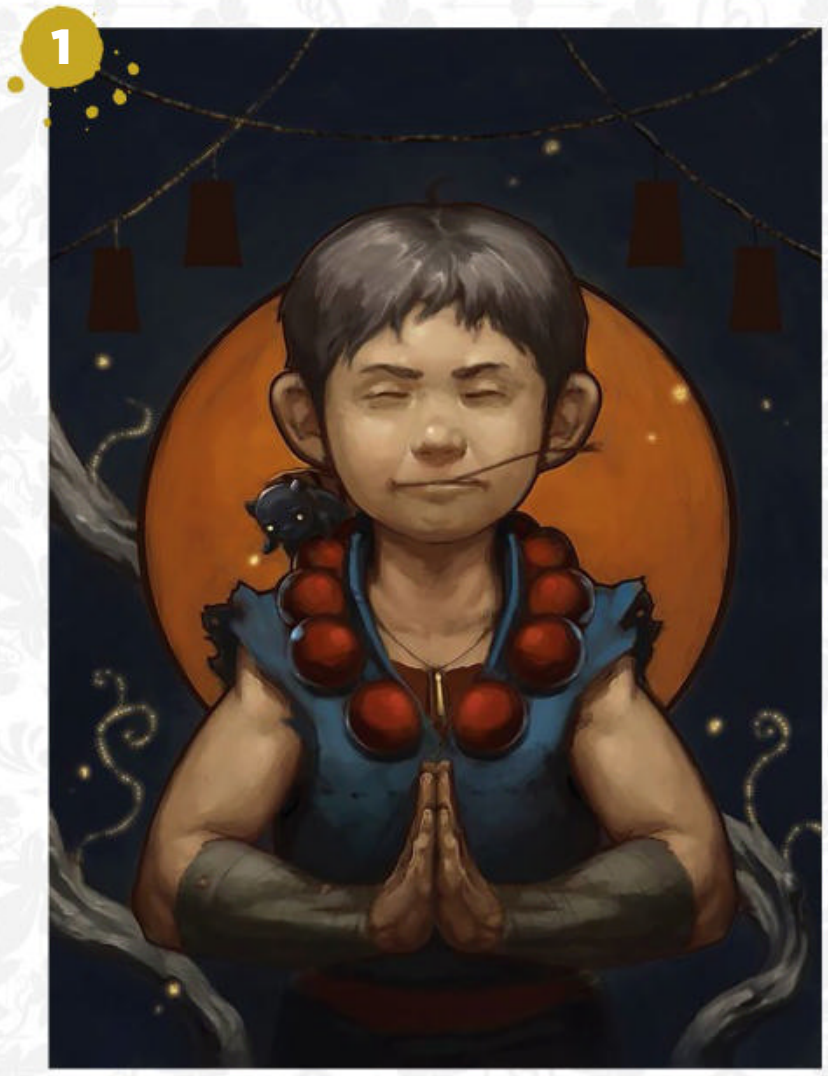
Michael has been on a bit of a hiatus, "but I am slowly working my way back on to the illustration wagon one drawing at a time, aiming to be a full-time illustrator working on my own narrative art."

1 MISHIMA
"A concept from my 99th Soul story, though I can't say much without giving away too much of the Shyamalan 'twist', other than he represents something better in the narrative."

2 99TH SOUL
"Down inside all of us sits a dark spot, but how should we feed the beast?" This is another concept from the 99th Soul story brewing in the background."

3 AHRIMAN
"A concept from an old comic I had been working on back in college, the story fell flat but I kept some of the designs and reworked them accordingly."





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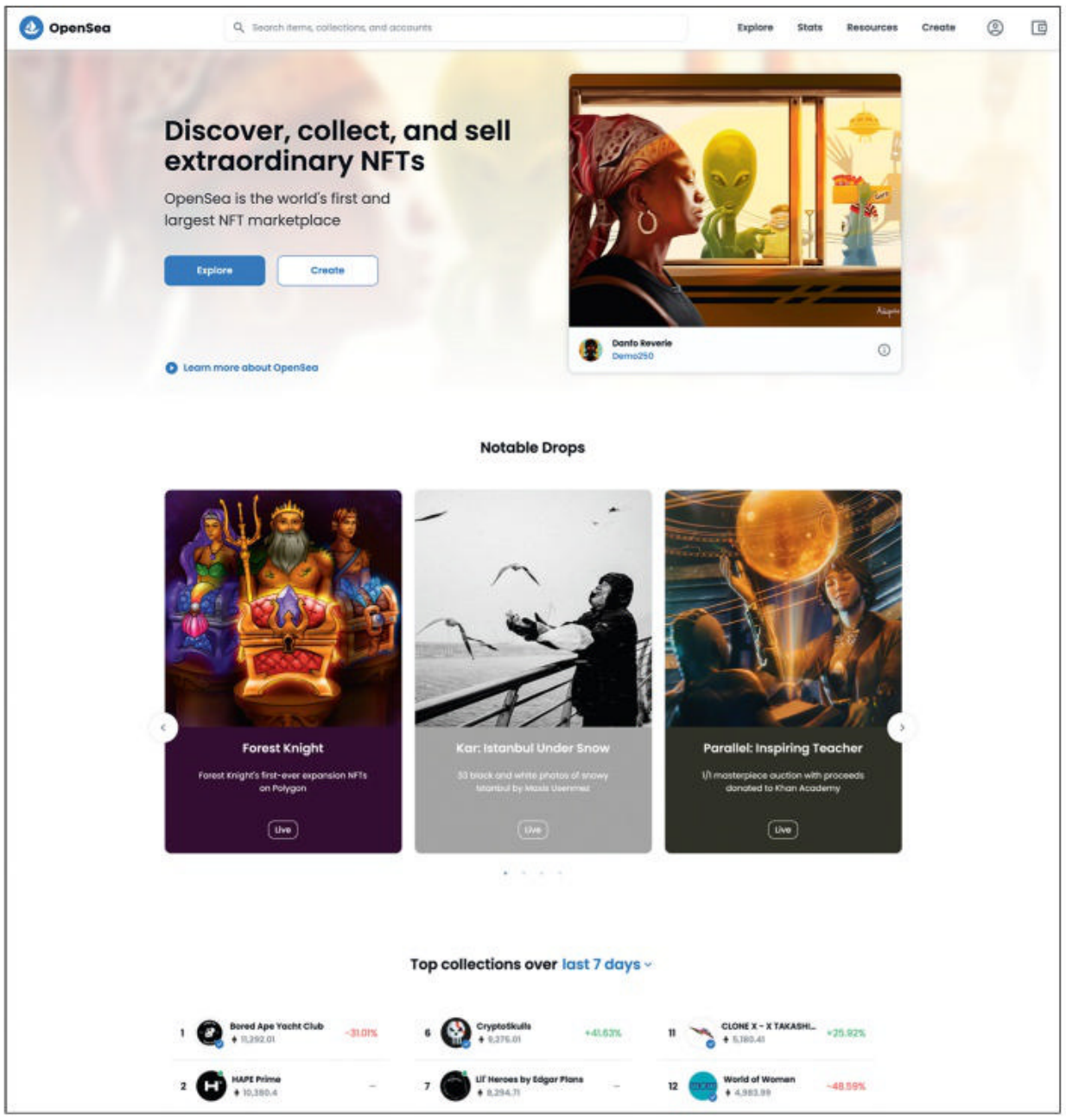
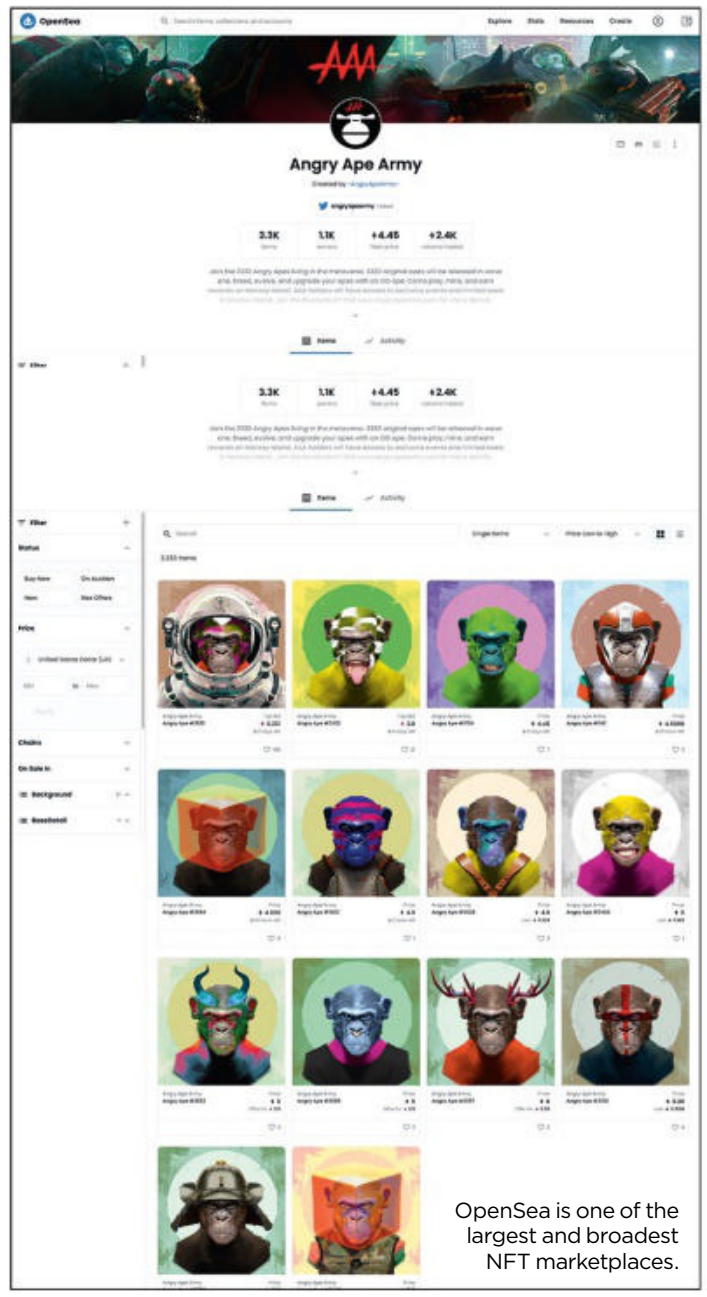
Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**





OpenSea is one of the largest and broadest NFT marketplaces.

Discover top NFT marketplaces

Digital trading **Ian Dean** helps you choose the NFT marketplace to suit your art with this handy round-up

Finding the right NFT (non-fungible token) marketplace is about more than just where to sell your art. You need to consider which platform best suits the type of NFT you're creating, how much of a fee the marketplace will take per sale, and which blockchain it uses. Most use Ethereum, but some are opting for the cheaper gas fees (the charge for creating the NFT) and better carbon footprint of newer blockchains.

Here, we've rounded up some of the best NFT marketplaces where you can create and sell NFTs or simply buy and collect new projects, plus some of the important factors to be aware of. So whether you're buying, selling, or perhaps just NFT-curious, one of these marketplaces will suit you.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the article are for general informational purposes only and are not intended to provide specific financial or investment advice or recommendations for any investment product. The article is only intended to provide general information and opinions about NFT marketplaces. The views reflected in this article are subject to change at any time without notice.

OpenSea
opensea.io

OpenSea is one of the oldest and most used NFT marketplaces. It hosts every kind of NFT, from art to music, photography and sports collectibles. Think of OpenSea as the Amazon of NFT marketplaces. It really is the do-all NFT platform. This is backed by its support of more than 150 cryptocurrency payment tokens. You can set up an account for free and start minting, selling and browsing in minutes.

What's more, OpenSea now boasts it's a gas-free NFT marketplace through cross-blockchain support. The marketplace now supports the Polygon cryptocurrency, which means you won't have to pay fees when making trades and artists can "fully earn their way into crypto for the first time," according to OpenSea.

SPECIFICATION

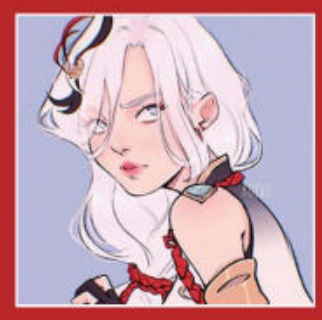
NFT type: Art, music, photography, collectibles, sports, virtual worlds, and more
Blockchain: Ethereum, Polygon, Klaytn

PROS
+ Buy and sell all types of NFT
+ Accepts over 150 cryptocurrencies
+ Now also uses Polygon blockchain

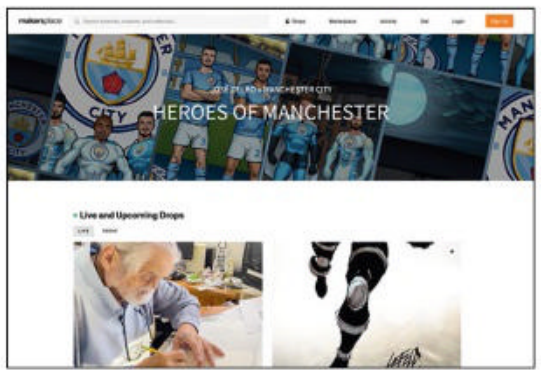
CONS
- No support for non-crypto currencies

CREATURE CONCEPTS
Character artist at Cloud Imperium Games, Ashley Stegon, walks us through a typical working day, and shares how she remains motivated.
Page 26

PERSONAL SPACE
Visual artist Emma Black gives us a glimpse into her art studio, in which she surrounds herself with her favourite things as a form of inspiration.
Page 28



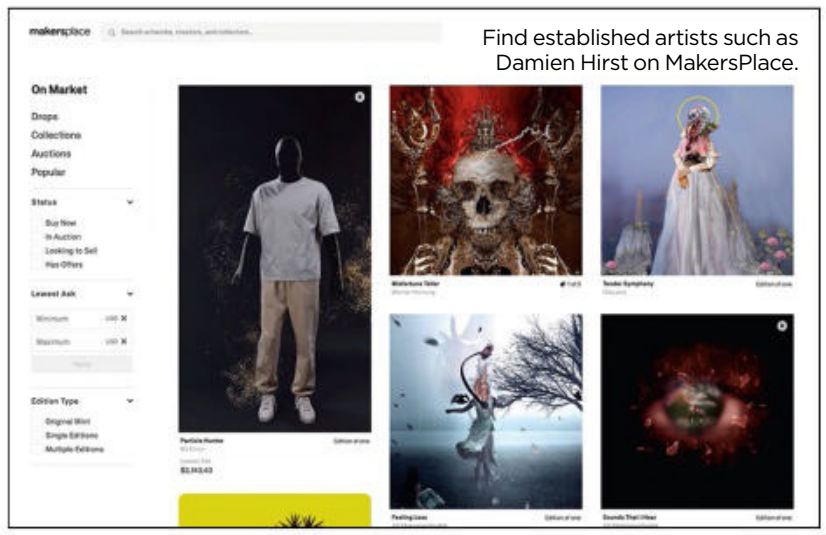
YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART
Readers write in with their art news and opinions on what we've covered in ImagineFX. Plus we feature art that's caught our eye on social media.
Page 33



MakersPlace
makersplace.com

MakersPlace is where you'll find established artists, galleries and institutions offering NFTs of their work. Join up and you can expect to be bidding on new NFT art from the likes of Damien Hirst, Christie's Auction House and comic legend Robert Liefeld.

Artists on MakersPlace digitally sign their art which is recorded on the blockchain, only a limited number of authentic editions are minted creating scarcity, and buyers get full ownership of the artwork. Even if the art is copied, it won't be authentic or carry the artist's digital signature.

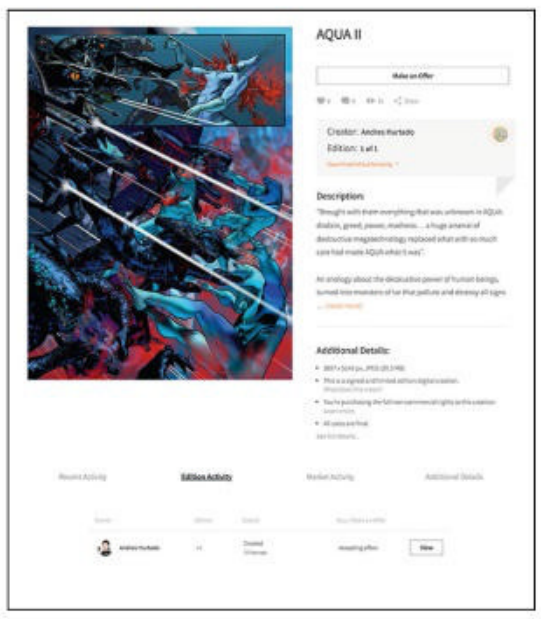


Find established artists such as Damien Hirst on MakersPlace.

SPECIFICATION
NFT type: Commercial and fine art
Blockchain: Ethereum

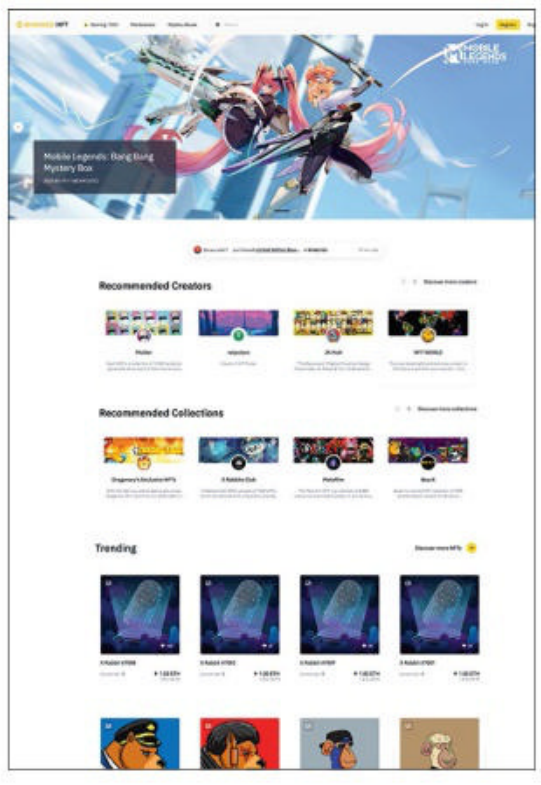
PROS
+ Buy NFTs from established artists
+ Good mixture of impressive art
+ Scarce and rare NFTs

CONS
- Can be expensive



Binance NFT
www.binance.com

Binance NFT is one of the largest marketplaces around, and is supported by its own blockchain; it is one of the largest crypto exchanges. For these reasons, Binance NFT is seen as one of the most future-proof NFT marketplaces. Its size and scale mean it can offer exclusive partnerships and events others may envy. If you have Binance tokens (BNB) accessing the marketplace is even easier, and you can use ETH, BNB, and BUSD to bid.

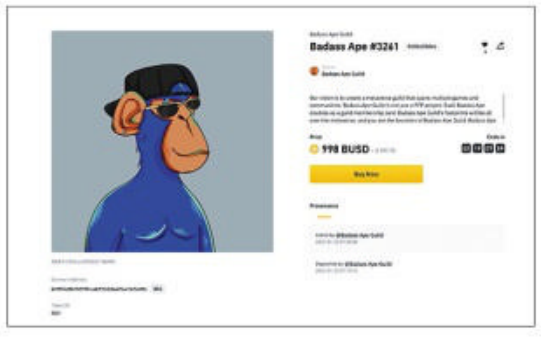


SPECIFICATION
NFT type: Art and game assets for pay to earn games
Blockchain: Binance Smart Chain, Ethereum

PROS
+ Low fees, just 1%
+ Large and secure marketplace
+ Cash-out using Fiat

CONS
- Not artist-friendly

Binance NFT is one of the largest centralised marketplaces.



> **Binance NFT is seen as one of the most future-proof NFT marketplaces**

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Get to know some of the key factors in buying/selling NFTs

There's a lot of new jargon to learn when it comes to NFTs, plus some important factors to be aware of. Below are some need-to-know answers to common questions.

What are gas fees?
This is the charge you need to pay on the Ethereum blockchain to perform a function, in this case creating an NFT. Gas fees are measured in gwei, and these can go up and down depending on how heavy the use is. On average you'll be charged 0.0042 ETH per transaction. You can find lower fees early in the morning, between 1am and 3am (UTC) or late at night, between 9pm and 11pm (UTC).

Can I avoid gas fees?
Yes, some NFT marketplaces are offering gas-free minting. This essentially places the gas fee on the buyer not the creator, so it will show in the sale (think VAT). There are some blockchains that have none or lower fees, such as Polygon on OpenSea, or Immutable X on Mintable. Before minting or buying, look into the fees and which blockchain is being used.

What is minting?
Minting is the term given to creating your NFT on a blockchain, usually Ethereum. This records the data in a public ledger that is unchangeable and tamper-proof, and can follow and track the NFT across further sales. Minting costs a fee, but some marketplaces are getting creative as to how, for whom and when fees are charged.

Continued from previous page…

What's a blockchain?
Investopedia describes a blockchain as "a distributed database that is shared among the nodes of a computer network." The strength of blockchain tech is it guarantees security and trust without the need for a third party, speeding up data transactions. The data entered is irreversible, ensuring it's permanent – for NFTs that means artists can always get percentages of future sales.

Do I need a crypto wallet?
Ideally, yes. Most NFT marketplaces require you to create a crypto wallet to mint and trade NFTs. A common one is MetaMask, though Coinbase is another secure wallet. Some newer NFT marketplaces, such as Nifty Gateway, allow the use of Fiat currency (dollars, etc) via credit and debit cards, making access to NFTs easier.

Can anything be an NFT?
Yes. Any kind of digital file can be stored as an NFT. Most marketplaces are set up for digital artwork, but more are now supporting video, game assets, and music. Physical items are also now digitised as NFTs, for example physical limited edition Nike trainers. Expect NFTs to exist on and between the digital and physical spaces in the future.

Are NFTs controversial?
Yes. You can't escape the fact Ethereum minting has a high carbon footprint. Ethereum 2.0 is aiming to solve this issue, and is due this year.

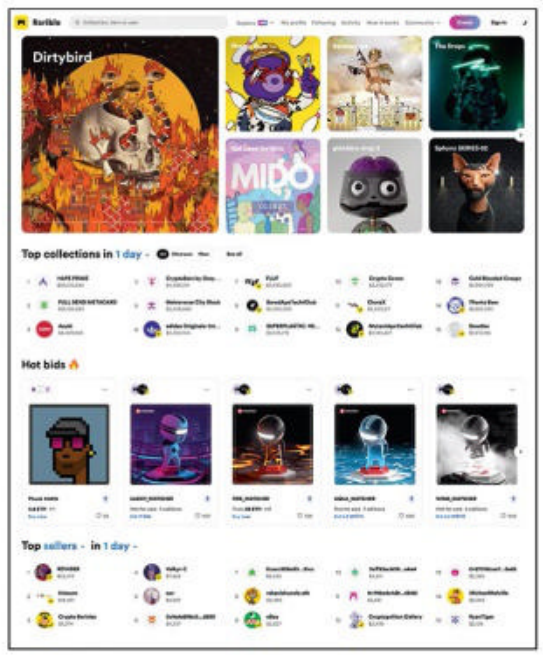
Are there energy-efficient blockchains?
Yes, and NFT marketplaces are offering alternatives to Ethereum with better carbon footprints. These include Flow, Tezos, and Polygon. New blockchain Solana boasts at being carbon-neutral. Check on your NFT marketplace which is being used, and opt for one that suits your conscience.

Rarible

rarible.com

Rarible is an NFT marketplace designed to sell both single pieces of art and collections. It attracts sports, gaming, and media brands as well as artists releasing collections of works. Rarible is community-owned and promotes decentralisation. The platform uses its own token, RARI, and users get to vote on any platform upgrades and take part in moderation.

As well as Ethereum, Rarible uses Flow and Tezos blockchains. You choose at minting which token you'll use, and can share search options with OpenSea. Which blockchain you choose is interesting. Ethereum is the most used for NFT minting but its carbon footprint and gas fees are high. Tezos gas fees are low (around $0.50) but it's geared towards artists releasing collections. Flow uses what's called 'lazy minting', which means creators pay near-zero fees plus it's a 'proof-of-stake' blockchain which offers a far lower carbon footprint than Ethereum.

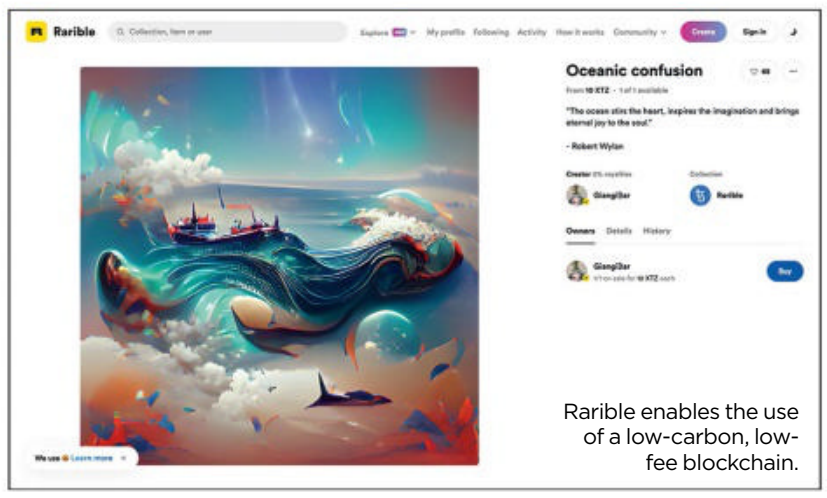


SPECIFICATION

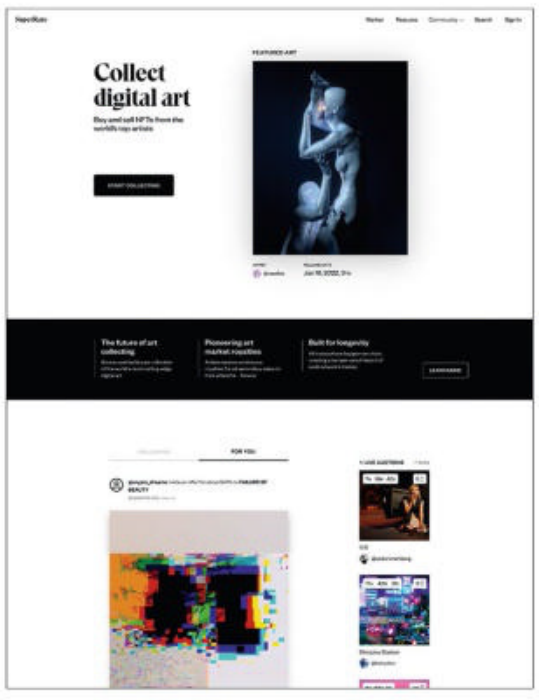
NFT type: Art, photography, games
Blockchain: Ethereum, Flow, Tezos

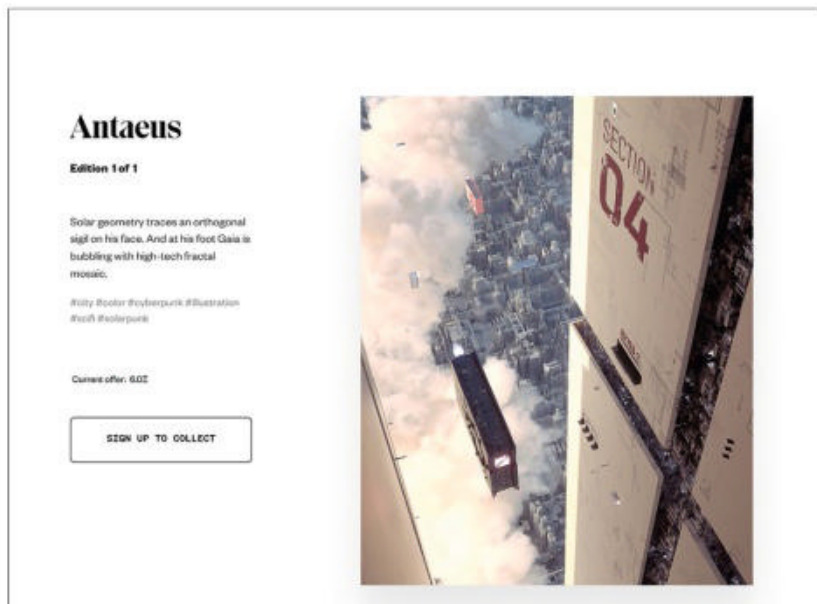
PROS
+ Choose from three blockchains
+ Community-owned
+ Can offer low carbon and gas fees

CONS
- Can be dominated by big brands



Rarible enables the use of a low-carbon, low-fee blockchain.





SuperRare offers a traditional gallery approach to NFTs.

SuperRare

superrare.com

SuperRare brings gallery attitude to the NFT space. It's an art-first marketplace that places emphasis on credibility and artistic intent, as well as a focus on the social aspect of art collection. You won't find SuperRare filled with celebrity NFTs; it reportedly only accepts 1% of all artists who apply, which might sound snobbish, but it also means that you get a catalogue of highly curated and interesting artworks.

This approach makes SuperRare feel like a high-end gallery, and is further enhanced by only enabling its artists to mint one of their originals – no Editions here. This creates scarcity and as the name suggests, rarity. SuperRare is for serious art and artists, and is backed by a must-read editorial blog.

SPECIFICATION

NFT type: Digital art
Blockchain: Ethereum

PROS
+ Curated and rare artwork
+ Has a fine gallery mood
+ Fantastic editorial blog

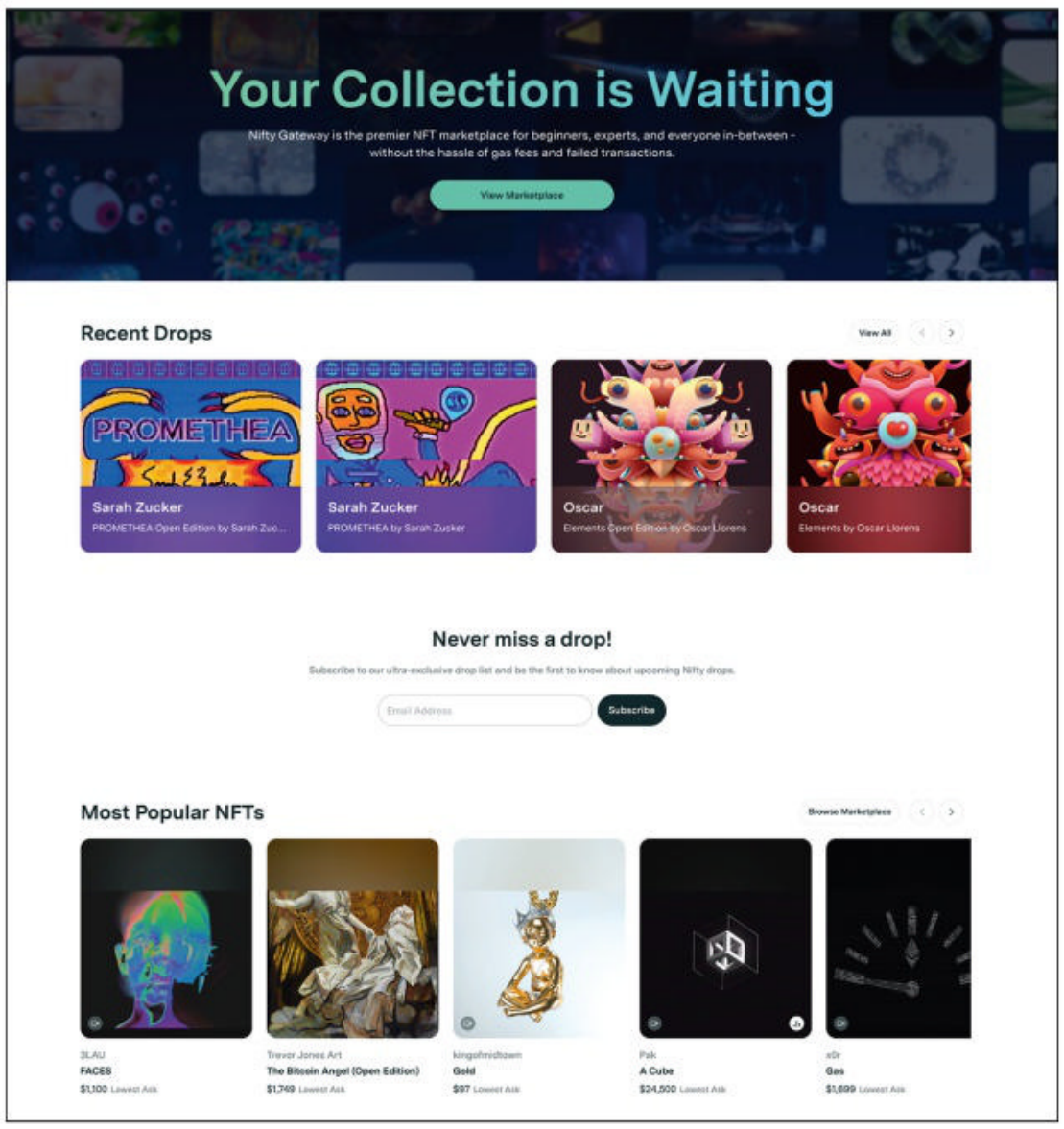
CONS
- Accepts low number of applicants

Nifty Gateway

niftygateway.com

Nifty Gateway is the place for eye-catching NFT sales. The marketplace boasts two of the biggest-selling NFTs, ever; it was where Beeple sold CROSSROAD, and in December 2021 digital artist Pak sold The Merge for US$91.8 million – the world's most expensive NFT (at time of writing!).

This is the platform loved by the Twitterverse and draws in celebrity NFTs. But don't let that put you off. Nifty Gateway has a couple of standout points. First, it makes use of 'open editions'; an unlimited number of editions are created for a limited period of time, and are sold at a base price. Once timed out, no more NFTs are issued, ever. This leads to scarcity and a strong market in secondary sales. Second, Nifty enables collectors to buy NFTs using Fiat (government-issued currency), which means you can make purchases using credit cards and not cryptocurrency. This means it's a good in-road for anyone not used to crypto wallets.



Nifty Gateway enables you to buy NFTs with Fiat currency.

SPECIFICATION

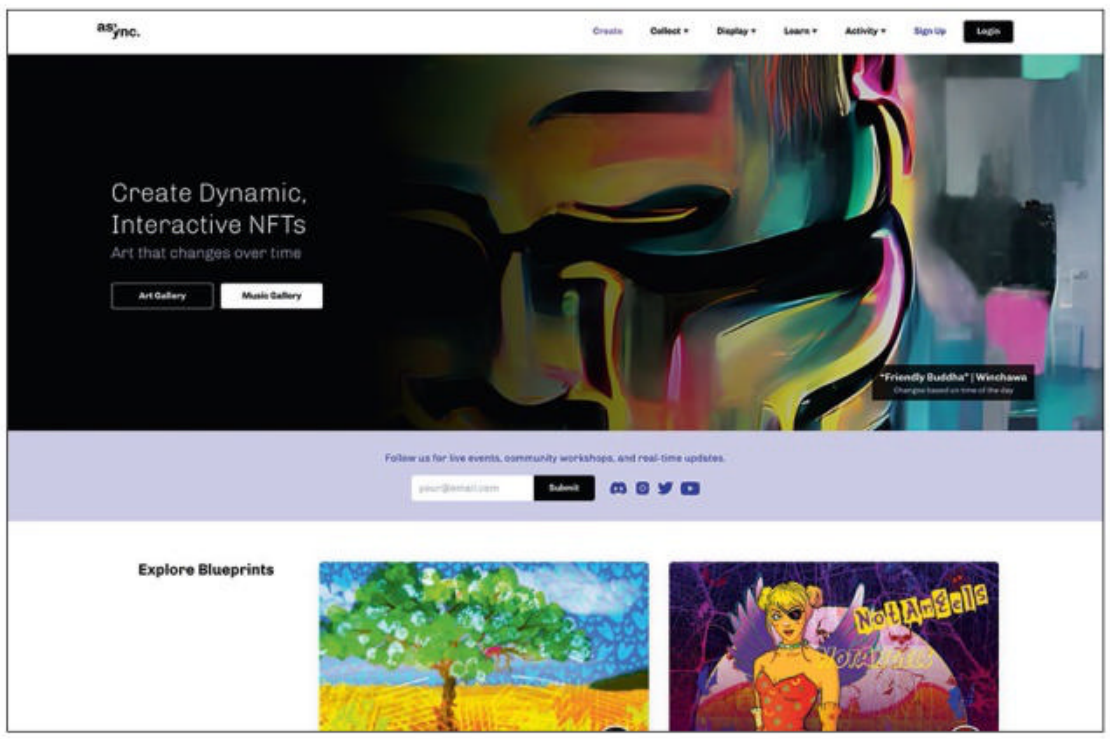
NFT type: Digital art, verified and curated drops
Blockchain: Ethereum, backed by Gemini

PROS

+ You can buy with Fiat currency
+ Makes use of limited Open Editions

CONS

- Dominated by celebrity NFTs



Async Art

async.art

Async Art is an NFT marketplace known for 'programmable art'. Each work of art is made up of a Master and Layers; Masters are the entire NFT while Layers are separate elements that make up the art, and can be altered. Everything is 'Tokenized' meaning different artists can own different layers, and contribute to changing the artwork.

Programmable art is at the forefront of digital art, enabling multiple creators to alter an artwork over time, and it's a kind of NFT art that can't be shared on more traditional gallery platforms such as SuperRare. Async Art has recently launched Blueprints, enabling artists to create generative projects in the vein of Bored Apes.

> "Everything is 'Tokenized' meaning different artists can own different layers"

On Async Art NFT market, you'll find dynamic, interactive and programmable art.

SPECIFICATION

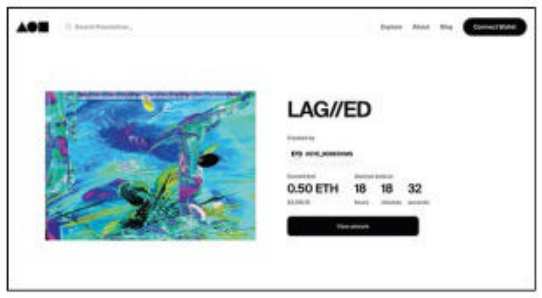
NFT type: Programmable art
Blockchain: Ethereum

PROS

+ Forward-looking digital art
+ Supports multiple creators and owners
+ Blueprints offers a new opportunity

CONS

- Some advanced NFT knowledge needed

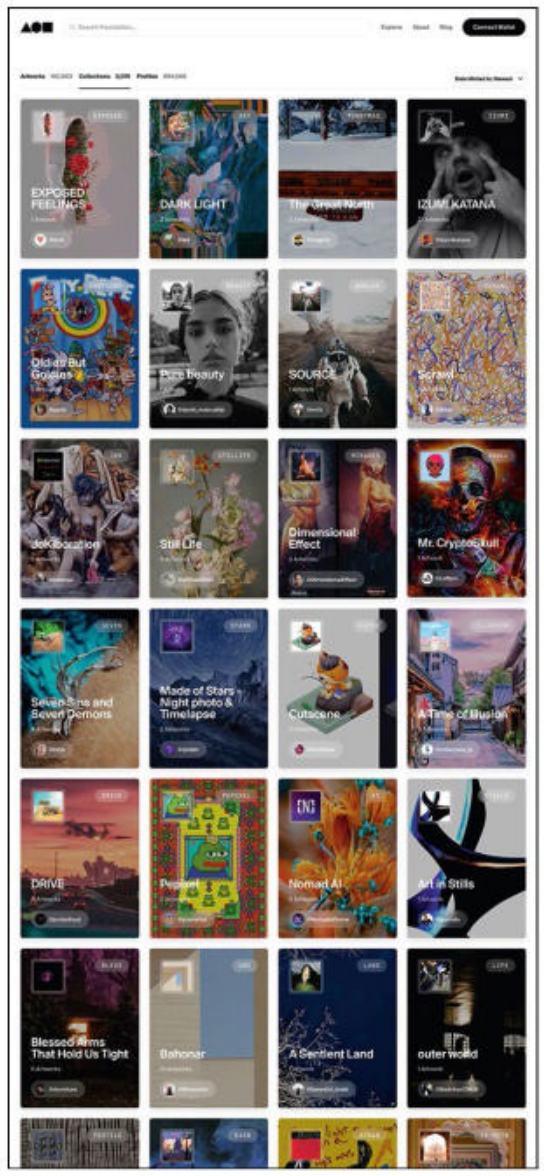


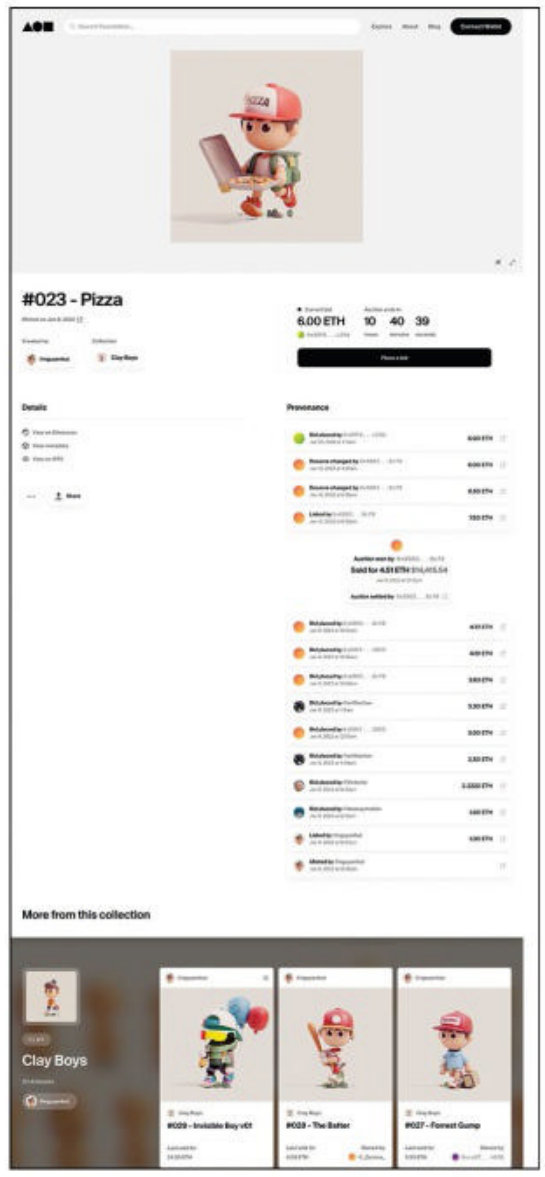
Foundation

foundation.app

Foundation is run like an artist's club you may never get an invite into; it's a community-curated platform run by a select number of artists. To join Foundation you need an invite from a current artist, and each artist only has one invite to use. This creates a sense of exclusivity, and yes, rarity. But it's a unique one, created and run by artists.

Selling an NFT on Foundation earns the artist 85% of the value, and secondary sales earn 10%. This is lower than some other NFT marketplaces, but you'll find NFTs on Foundation are priced higher on average and hold their value. Creators tend to be more authentic than you may find on other marketplaces.





Foundation is a very select, artist-led NFT marketplace.

SPECIFICATION

NFT type: Fine art, digital art, photography, 3D art
Blockchain: Ethereum

PROS

+ Curated and limited NFTs
+ Artist-run NFT marketplace
+ High-quality art and projects

CONS

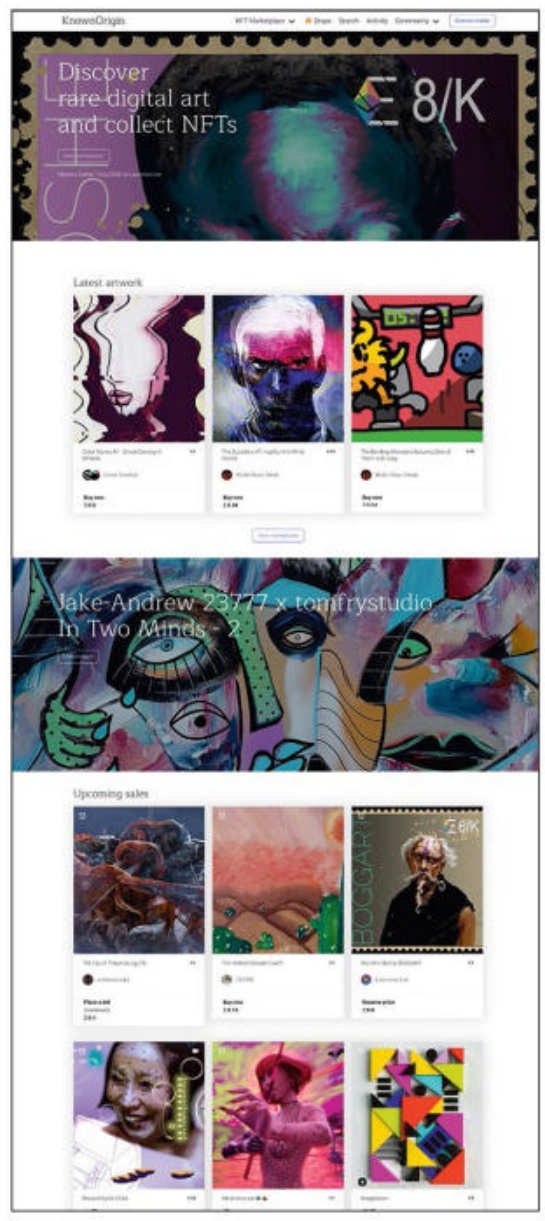
- Limited and exclusive creator list
- Fees could be lower

KnownOrigin

knownorigin.io

KnownOrigin is one of the oldest NFT marketplaces and is focused on offering rare and collectible artworks. KnownOrigin specialises in timed-release events, known as drops, such as Seth Tillett's Jean Michel Basquiat photo collection, that enable artists to control the number of copies released. This can create scarcity and ramp up prices. Artists need to apply to join and must be vetted.

This marketplace uses Ethereum to mint, so you may want to consider the fees and carbon footprint when bidding. KnownOrigin does also support collaborations on NFTs and makes a big effort to support community messaging and offer advice around drops and sales, including making secondary sales clear in a separate marketplace.



KnownOrigin is one of the most established NFT marketplaces.

SPECIFICATION

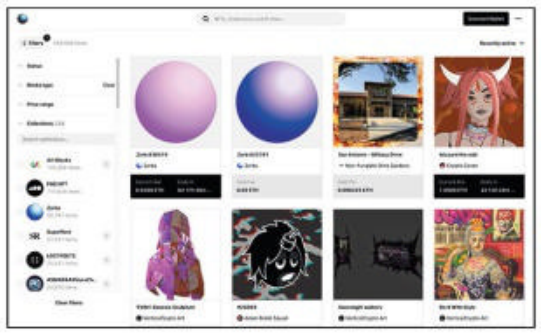
NFT type: Art, photography
Blockchain: Ethereum

PROS

+ Limited NFT drops
+ Curated NFT editions
+ Easy-to-use platform

CONS

- Can be expensive

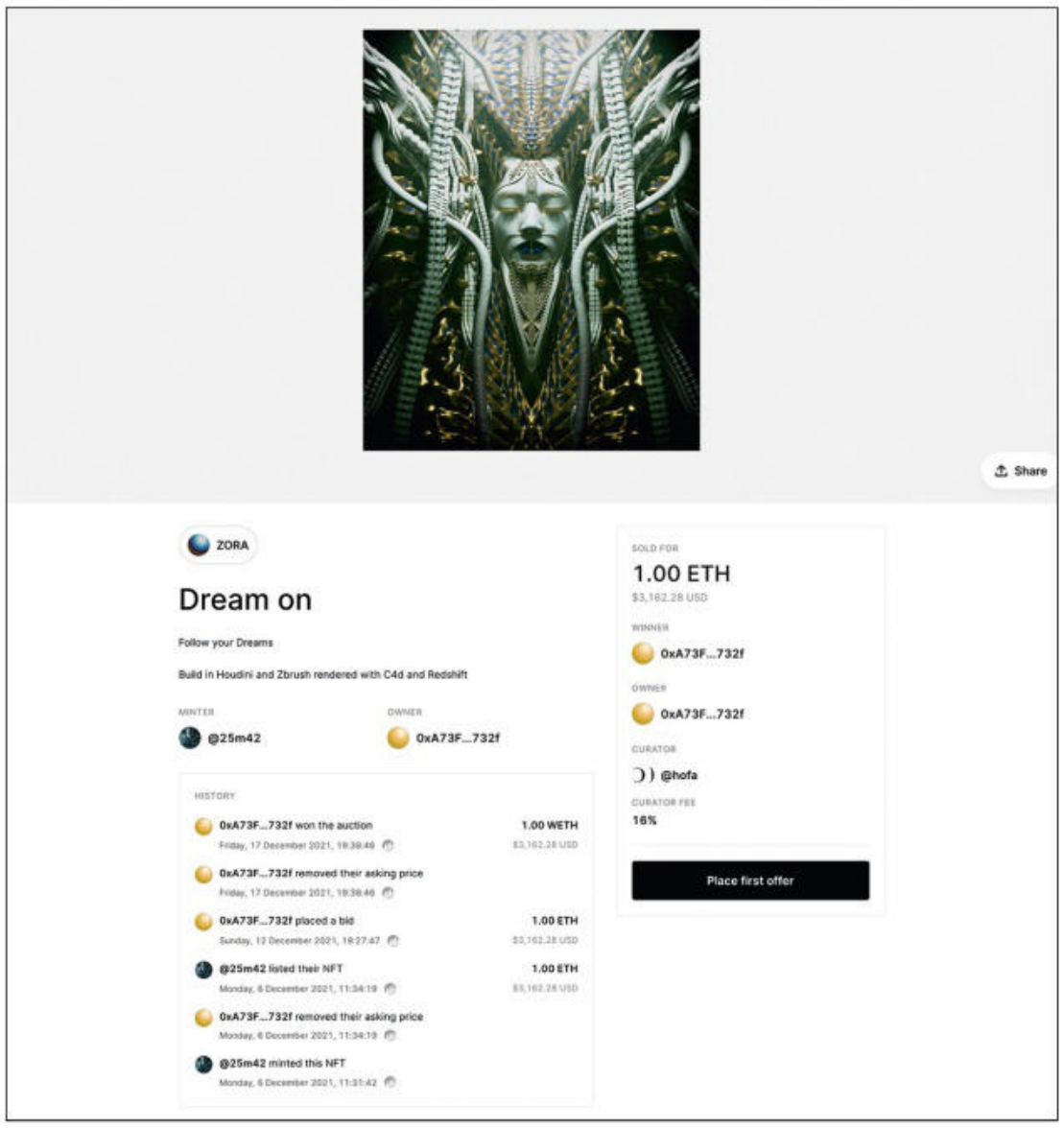


Zora

zora.co

Zora is known as an easy-to-use marketplace that enables perpetual bids, so anyone can bid in any currency. It's devoted to giving artists and creators more ownership and power over their art.

This marketplace has evolved into a good space for music NFTs and a platform that bridges the real and digital worlds. For example, Zora auctioned off digital and physical copies of RAC's Boy album on cassette. In this vein, Zora is becoming the marketplace to find physical items sold to super-fans, such as Nike designer Jeff Staple who sells limited-edition trainers on the platform.



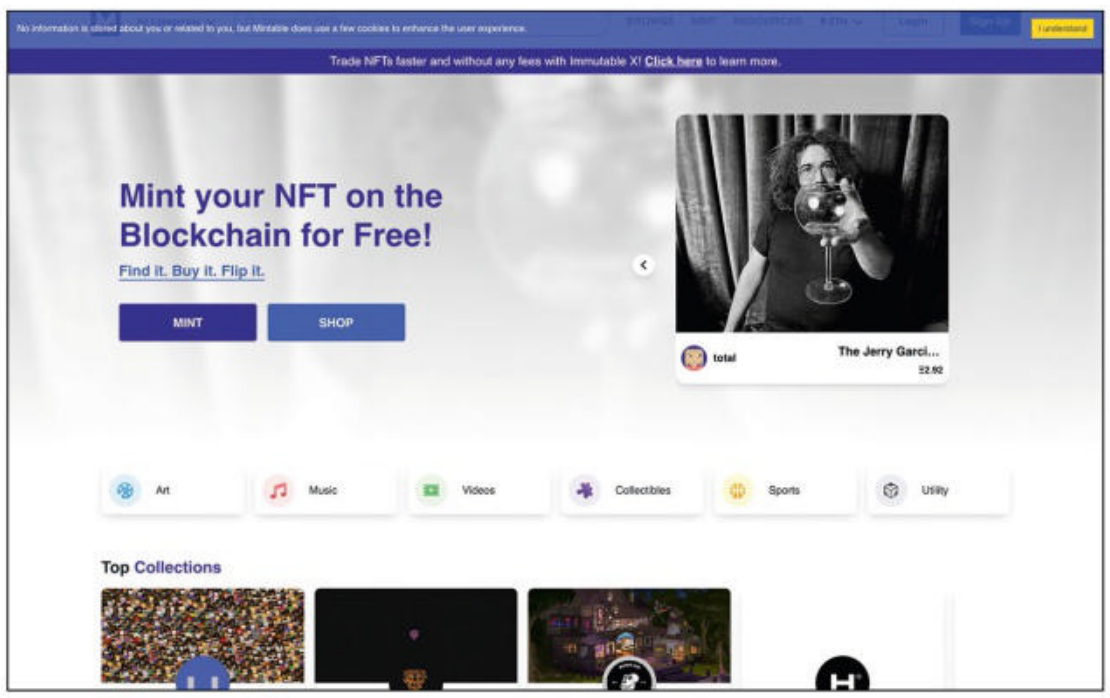
Zora enables creators to sell NFTs of physical items as well as digital.

SPECIFICATION

NFT type: Art, music, animation, web, text, media
Blockchain: Ethereum

PROS
+ Supports artists and creators
+ Run your own auction house
+ Buy NFTs of real world collections

CONS
- Can feel complex



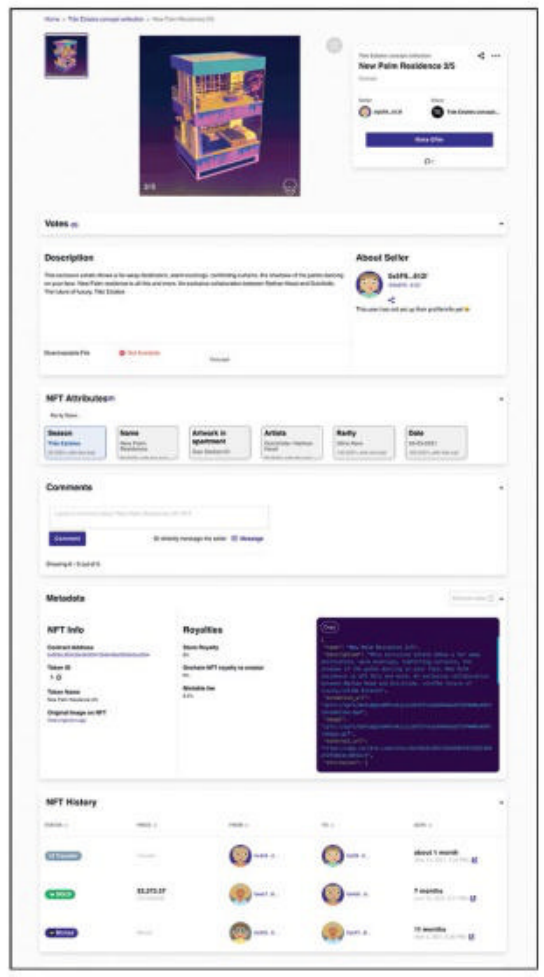
Mintable

mintable.app

If OpenSea is the Amazon of the NFT platforms, then Mintable is Etsy. This newcomer to the NFT marketplace is backed by billionaire Mark Cuban and aims to offer broad content and be easy to use.

In practice this means you can create an NFT from nearly any digital file – image, gif, video, audio file, text document and more – and add it to your store on the platform. It's very easy to use and requires little knowledge of NFTs, crypto wallets or blockchains. While Mintable supports Ethereum as standard, you can also mint using Immutable X for free gas fees. Making life even easier, Mintable University is a free resource available on the marketplace featuring handy video courses to help give you a headstart into the world of NFTs.

> "Mintable University is a free resource featuring handy video courses"



Create an NFT from almost any digital file on Mintable.

SPECIFICATION

NFT type: Art, music, animation, games, video, media
Blockchain: Ethereum, Immutable X

PROS
+ Very easy to use
+ Broad and varied NFT selection
+ Free Mintable University courses

CONS
- The quality varies wildly

The derpy Niburu, a once-powerful spirit, and Kanji the Oni.

A day in the life of…

Ashley Stegon

Creature concepts The character artist at Cloud Imperium Games talks us through her busy day

I wake up at 7am, make coffee, and sketch in my kitchen for myself while my brain is off. It helps me stay inspired and motivated throughout the day. Then I get ready and head to the computer around 8am. I'll spend the first couple of hours working through my task list, like going through emails, any bugs I've been assigned, or anything I didn't wrap up from the day before.

At 10am we have standups where we check in with the team and share what we're working on and receive feedback from our team leads. After that meeting, I work for a couple of hours before lunch. Working consists of taking a piece of concept art and making a high-resolution sculpt, working in Marvelous Designer on clothing, fixing topology, or texturing. It's all things that are more muscle memory for me, so I'm able to listen to audiobooks or to hop in my art Discord server where I can watch my friends draw live and chat. I take lunch around 12pm and since we're working from home, I'll cook, eat, clean, and then spend some time finishing up sketches from the morning.

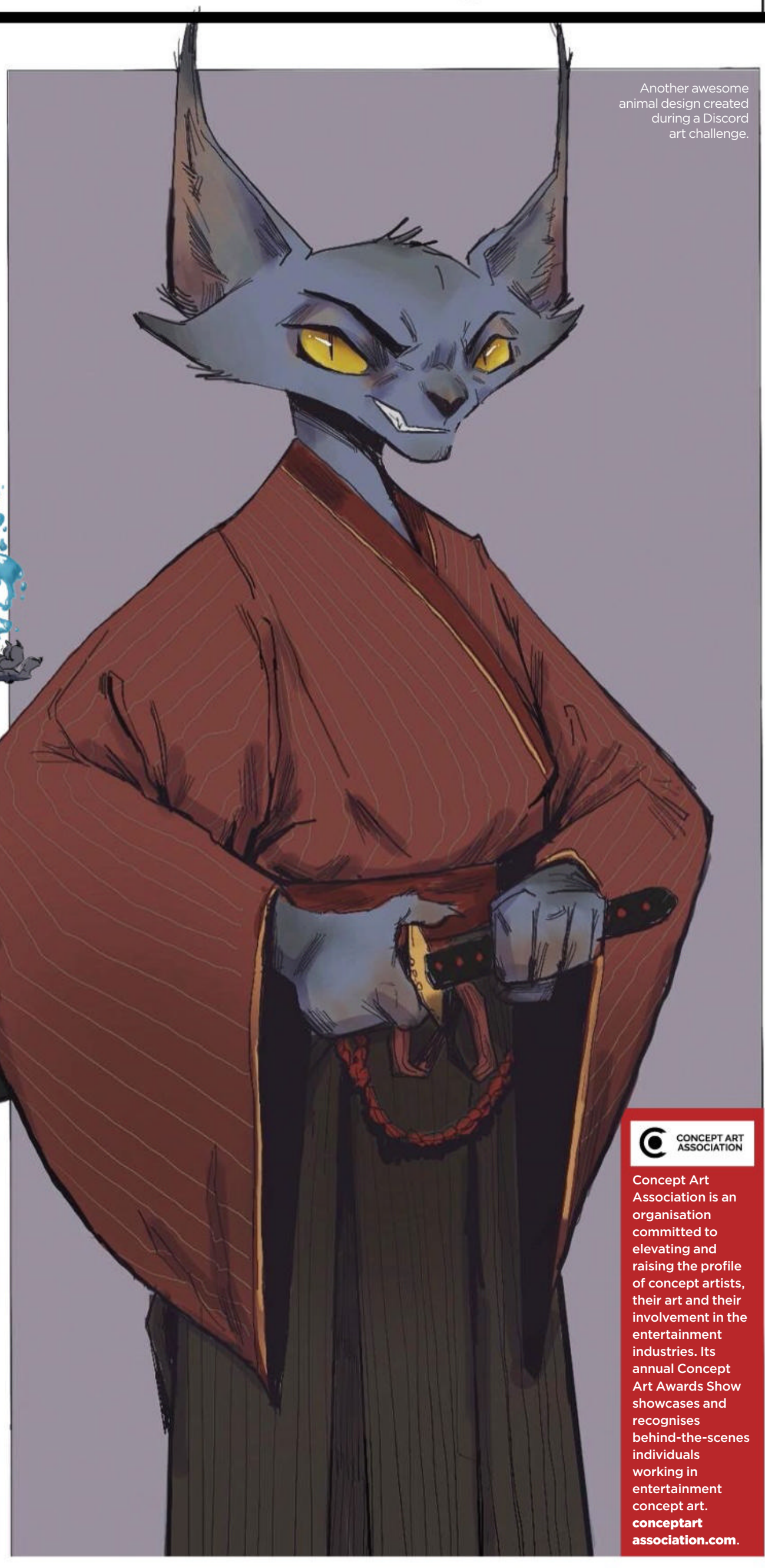
KEEPING ACTIVE

I get back to work around 1:30pm. I'll usually jump into meetings or focus on fixing high-priority tasks like bug fixes that have come in, and then head back to whatever tasks are assigned to me. I'm off of work around 4pm when we're not in crunch, and I'm very physically active, so I will head straight to my CrossFit Gym where I'm doing Olympic weightlifting. It's very social for me, all of my friends are there. After CrossFit, I'll head to the climbing gym and will climb until around 8:30pm when I head home. Some nights I eat out, some nights I cook, but after dinner I'll usually shower and have a tea while reading manga or working on a personal project. I'm usually in bed around 11:30pm and then start it all again the next day.

One of the beastly creatures Ashley created during a 30-day challenge on Discord.

> **"If you're not having fun with whatever you're working on, you're going to get burnt out pretty quickly"**

Ashley's portfolio is a showcase of incredible character designs bursting with personality.



Another awesome animal design created during a Discord art challenge.

My biggest piece of advice is to have fun. If you're not having fun with whatever you're working on, you're going to get burnt out pretty quickly. Prioritise making time for the things that inspire you.

Ashley is a character artist currently living in Los Angeles, where she's worked on projects like The Mandalorian, Shape of Water and Avengers: Infinity War. You can see more of Ashley's art at www.artstation.com/ashsteg.

CONCEPT ART ASSOCIATION

Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art. **conceptart association.com**.

The Hunger. The butterflies represent memories – it's for us to decide if they will be cherished and grow, or if they will instead eat us away.

Emma Black

Personal space The visual artist gives us a peek into where she creates her surreal nature mash-ups

I moved into a three-story house a few years ago and converted the whole middle floor into art studios, so I'm lucky that I don't have to go far for work!

I've painted most of the walls dark throughout my house as I love a gloomy look, but my studio is the one room where I've allowed the walls to stay white to help with the natural light. I have lamps throughout to help me paint although natural light is always best, so I work mainly through the day and have my desk positioned underneath the largest window.

A lot of my art is autobiographical so I find it helpful to surround

I have a couple of Wacom tablets that I use for sketching and planning paintings, a Cintiq + Photoshop is my favourite combination.

I particularly loved Pokémon, Polly Pocket and My Little Pony as a kid. None of these ones are my original toys, just things I've randomly picked up second hand. Now they keep me company while I work.

Rough ideas, mock-ups, print samples, and deadline reminders – they all go on the wall. It's almost like a very large (and messy) mood board, to help me organise my thoughts.

My Mac computer will be ten years old this year, but it's somehow still going strong. I use it every single day for emails and orders, and my studio would not function without it.

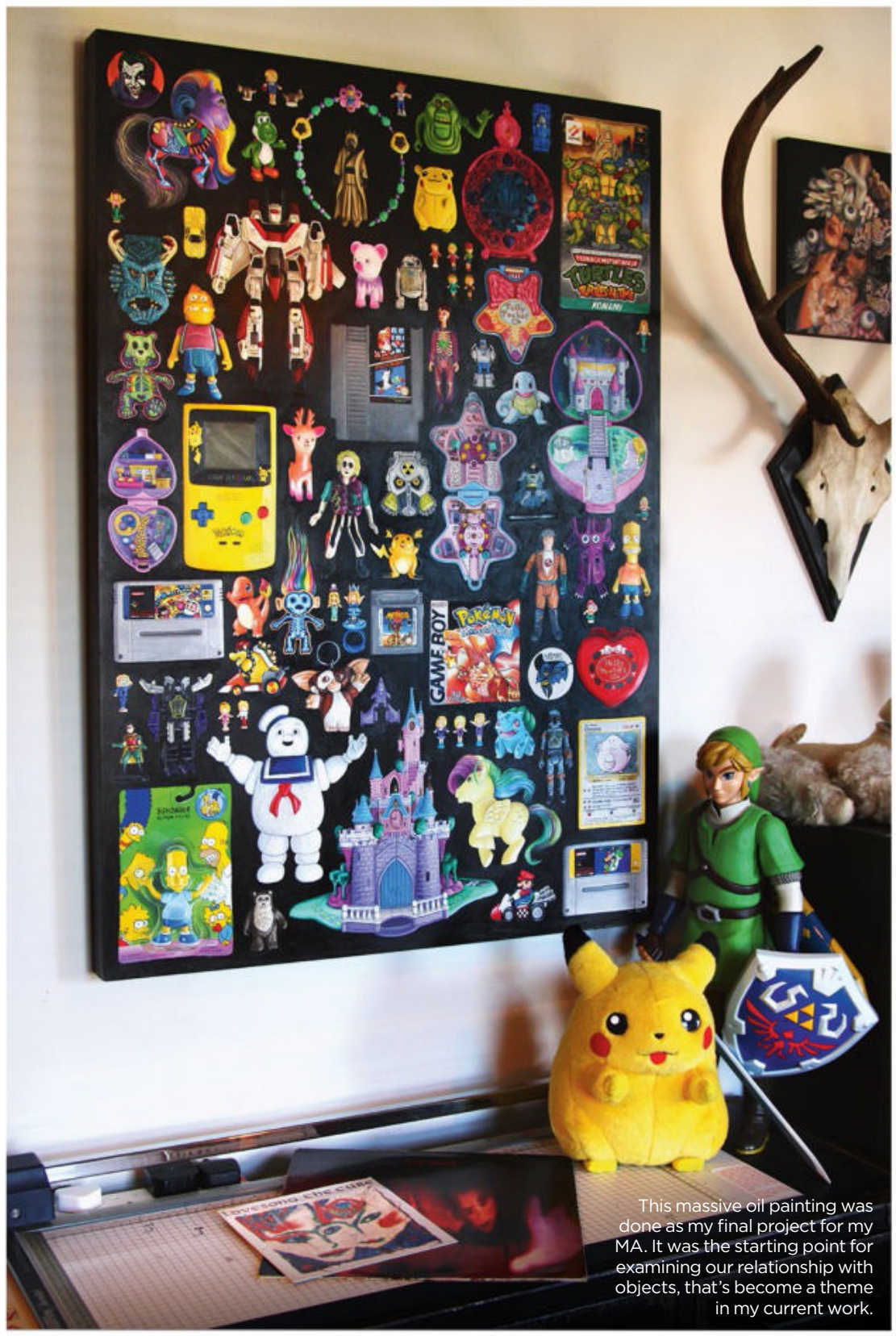
You're never too old for a fun pencil case! I genuinely love this Furby one I bought a few years back, it reminds me of when I was a kid in the 90s.

Moleskine sketchbooks are my favourite for drawing. I love how smooth the paper is, allowing you to fit in lots of tiny crisp details.

I find it useful to have a second screen sometimes, so I have a 12.9" iPad Pro. It's especially handy when I'm sat at my easel, as I'll put it next to me to display my mock-up so I have a guide to work from.

I love books and like to keep all my graphic novels/manga/art books together for inspiration. I really love works by Junji Ito, Daniel Clowes and Charles Burns. Last year I rearranged them in colour order – not the most convenient, but it looks nice!

Hide In The Dream. I always think sunflowers seem like such a happy flower, so I put them in my paintings when I want to represent positive emotions.



This massive oil painting was done as my final project for my MA. It was the starting point for examining our relationship with objects, that's become a theme in my current work.

myself with my favourite things for inspiration, both old and new. I love hunting round car boot sales and second-hand shops, resulting in me accumulating probably too many random toys and figures! But I think it's important to make your creative space feel personal and fun, especially if you spend a lot of the day in it.

MY WORK PROCESS

The main body of my art is my oil paintings, although I'll first create rough pencil sketches and digital mock-ups using my Wacom so that I can plan them out. Once I'm happy with my mock-up I'll print it out at life size to check the scale, and get a feel for how the final piece will look. I often have tight deadlines so it's vital that I nail the composition before I start, to avoid any awkward corrections at the end. I paint on wood which I'll sand and gesso to prep a smooth textureless surface. Winsor & Newton oil colours are my favourite, and I love tiny, round-pointed brushes for details and Filbert brushes for blending.

> **"I think it's important to make your creative space feel personal and fun"**

With smaller paintings I'll sit and work at my desk, although for big pieces it's necessary to switch to my easel to get a better view. All my oil brushes and paints are mobile on a trolley, so I can easily wheel them between the two spots as needed. I have an iPad that I use mainly to check references – or watch Netflix during long painting sessions! Music, podcasts and audiobooks are also frequently on, as when I'm painting I find it easier to work in long stretches without breaks and these help keep me focused and motivated. But time usually flies when I'm painting anyway.

Emma is a visual artist and freelance illustrator from rural England. Using mainly traditional media her work is a surreal mix of flora and portraiture with autobiographical themes. emma-black.co.uk

I have my easel facing a window, although I find that throughout the day the light can shift, so I sometimes end up dragging it round the room to get that perfect spot!

I have an old inherited stereo that I use for my records. My current favourites to listen to while painting are Salem, Ghost and The Cure.

I like to keep a selection of wooden boards and new/vintage frames in stock at all times.

A little piece about thoughts, how they can fly away or bloom into something new.

Sometimes I'll scan in drawings from my sketchbooks, and use them in illustrations or as a starting point for my mock-ups. I love being able to switch between traditional and digital!

I often like to photograph my own plants and put them in paintings, the Monstera in this is a little one that lives in my bedroom.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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Pro access

I wanted to write in to thank you for the great magazine. I'm a new artist and it was a joy to find somewhere I could find help with my own art. It really is great to be able to learn from professional artists who I would never get to ask questions of in real life. I bought the magazine for the first time after seeing the cover on the shelf and realising I could see how it was made.

Anna Birch via email

Rob replies *Thanks for the kind words. It's so lovely to hear from artists, at any stage of their artistic journey. It's even better to hear that you are learning from the artists we work with and I hope you'll learn more from future issues. Fernando Peque did a great job there and so glad you gained some skills. Please do tag us as and when you start sharing your work online. We would love to see what you have learned.*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 210 at **ifxm.ag/single-ifx**.

Fernando Peque's cover tutorial in Issue 209 is a fine example of how readers can learn from the pros.

Digital content?

I've been a fan of the magazine for a long time and one thing I always liked was having files on a DVD to accompany the articles in the magazine. Is there any plan to reintroduce these?

Guy Readman via email

Rob replies *Thanks for getting in touch and glad to hear that you've been a long-time fan. The DVD offerings stopped some time ago but don't worry. We still provide regular files for our readers. Head to page 6, where you will find all the details for our downloadable content.*

Awesome talents

What an amazing insight you gave us into Mitchells vs the Machines in Issue 209. When my copy dropped through the door I had a quick flick through and at first I thought it was mostly stills from the movie, but then realised so much of it was concept art. So good! I now want to hang up my drawing tools and become a plumber. Those guys are awesome talents.

Kris Curzon via email

Rob replies *Thanks Kris. I'm really happy to hear you enjoyed that feature (and hopefully the rest of the mag). You are quite right. The team behind Mitchells vs the Machines are certainly one talented bunch and it was great to discover how closely the final product matched the concepts and designs of the art department.*

But don't be put off by the skills of these veteran artists. Just take inspiration from them and if you feel like you need to brush up on your own skills (no pun intended) then head over to our workshops section each month. We regularly feature some of the best artists in the industry, who are happy to share insights into their thoughts, techniques and processes. I can't think of a better way to learn from the best.

Just take a look inside this issue where we have everything from painting chilled cyberpunk scenes to various portrait and anatomy workshops.

Then there's a scattering of really valuable tips threaded through our 2000 AD feature, where comic art rockstars share some of their professional insights.

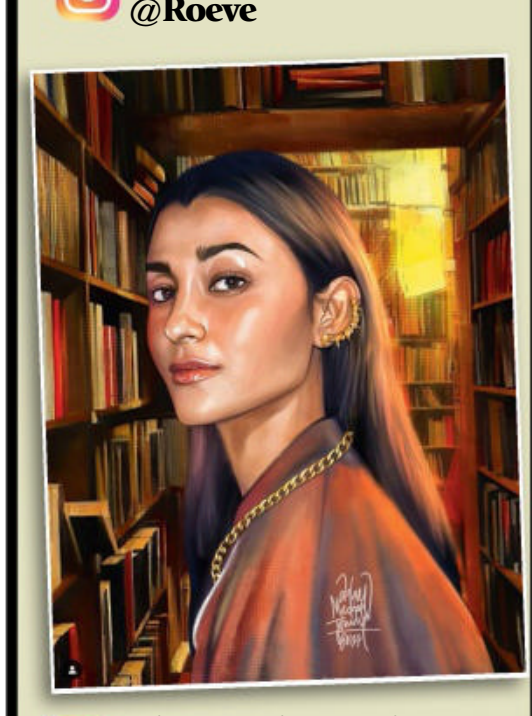
Concept art from Mitchells vs the Machines is top-class inspiration for artists of any level.

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention

Rebecca Feneley @rebeccafeneley

Roeve @Roeve



Adam Medrian Johnny @adammedrianjohnny

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

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF 2000AD

We've collected an all-star roundup of illustrators of the legendary sci-fi comic to answer our questions and provide an inside look into the world of comic art

DYLAN TEAGUE

Tell us a little about yourself as an artist, how you got started, and a bit about your career so far.
I've drawn for as long as I can remember. Around the age of 14/15 I got really into comics and started to draw my own. At about 19 I started to send off samples to 2000 AD and Marvel UK. I got some okay feedback and about a year or so later got my first job for 2000 AD.

Since then I've done the bulk of my comics stuff for 2000 AD but have also worked for DC Comics, Marvel, Delcourt and Kennes Editions. Outside of comics I've done some story boarding and magazine illos, and currently I do a lot of design work for Sky TV.

What's your relationship to comics and 2000 AD specifically? Are there any key characters or stories that you feel epitomise what 2000 AD is all about?
I've always been a big fan of 2000 AD, I started by collecting the old Titan reprints. I've loved the artwork, sci-fi ideas and black humour that 2000 AD produces, I think it has a uniquely British sense of humour. This is probably a big reason why Dredd has never really been a success with the Americans. Dredd really sums up what 2000 AD is about.

It's 2000 AD's anniversary. Is there a single highlight you could pick out from over the years? (This can be something you have created.)
It's been brilliant to get to draw for 2000 AD, my school exercise books used to be full up with pictures of Dredd, so much so that I'd often have to pay for new ones! My highlights are stories like Block Mania and City of the Damned in Dredd, and I was

> "My school exercise books used to be full up with pictures of Dredd"

JUDGE ANDERSON
Cover artwork by Dylan Teague, featuring the telepathic law enforcer.

> My favourite artists tend to create believable and imaginative worlds, which is what I love about comics

also a big fan of Rogue Trooper and Zenith.

Name any favourite writers or artists that inspire or entertain you, and tell us what it is about them that you love.
I was a big fan of Dillon, Gibbons, Wilson, Bolland, Yeowell and McMahon. All brilliant artists with amazing imaginations and drawing skills. Outside of 2000 AD, I really like Moebius, Bilal, Serpieri, Altuna, Gimenez and many others, always hard to narrow it down.

What is it about comic art that you enjoy most, as both a consumer and creator?
My favourite artists tend to create believable and imaginative worlds, which is what I love about comics. I think it's a thing that comics can do almost better than any other medium. This is also what I love about drawing them. I love designing characters and environments whilst thinking up little backstories for them while I draw.

Tell us about what you see as the future of comic art. Any thoughts on how they might be published and consumed?
In terms of quality I think comics are going through one of their best periods. There are so many incredibly skilled artists producing extremely detailed work. I think computers have aided this with many artists now able to pencil ink and colour themselves. I hope comics will go from strength to strength, but there is a lot of competition for people's attention these days so we'll see.

MIKE DOREY

Tell us a little about yourself as an artist, how you got started, and a bit about your career so far.
The comics I read as a child were the Sun and the Comet (both featuring action stories). Drawing was never a problem for me and I would enjoy copying some of the artists of the day and learning how to frame the pictures. So when the time came to work professionally I was already familiar with what was required.

After being thrown out of Brighton Art College it was necessary to get a job, so I took some samples of my work to Fleetway Publications (soon to become IPC). They advised me to get an agent – so I did.

My first regular strip was for DC Thomson in a girl's comic named Diana. But a year later I worked for both Victor and Warlord. I worked regularly on these two for about 20 years. Pat Mills, who worked for IPC, had seen my work and asked me to draw Hellman of Hammer Force for a new comic – Action. From there it was but a small leap to Battle and 2000 AD.

In the early nineties I discovered the exciting and very remunerative world of film and TV storyboarding. But it is only recently that I became aware of the interest that many have for the old comics, and for that I am very grateful because I now remember how much I enjoyed drawing them.

I am currently working on stories for Rebellion and various TV adverts and computer games.

What's your relationship to comics and 2000 AD specifically? Are there any key characters or stories that you feel epitomise what 2000 AD is all about?
I can't remember the first story I drew for 2000 AD. It may have been Invasion, Ro-Busters or Rogue Trooper. I was asked if I would draw some Judge Dredd but, having then an aversion to drawing what I thought would be a sci-fi space story, I said I wasn't interested! Judge Dredd is obviously the main reason for the success of 2000 AD but the stories I liked best, probably because I worked on them, were Invasion and Mach Zero.

Name any favourite writers or artists that inspire or entertain you, and tell us what it is about them that you love.
Favourite writers were Gerry Finley-Day and Pat Mills. Gerry wrote a lot of the war stories I drew but Pat wrote Ro-Jaws Memoirs, which had not only pathos but also a lot of humour too.

TOP TIP
My top three tips for creating comic strips are: 1. Read the script carefully and work out the number of frames per page. 2. Decide which deserve more space and shuffle the frames per page. 3. Start with a big, dramatic picture. Vary frames between close ups and wider shots.

What is it about comic art that you enjoy most, as both a consumer and creator?
The thing I most enjoy about comic art is the telling of a story by

ROGUE TROOPER
Illustration of the genetically engineered soldier by Mike Dorey.

TOP TIP

The best advice I can give any aspiring artist is don't be disheartened by rejection. If your work is any good it will eventually be accepted by someone. The main thing is your subject should be either exciting or relevant to contemporary life. So don't give up.

pictures. My favourite script writers were those that gave the least description and kept their words to a minimum. This not only allowed the artist more scope for interpretation but less text meant more room for the drawing. Although I admire some artists for the great deal of detail they put in their drawing, I think this can often get in the way of the action; so I do find that I prefer simpler, more open work.

Tell us about what you see as the future of comic art. Any thoughts on how they might be published and consumed?

The work I now do for comics seems to be reprising the stories I did years ago. Rebellion have reprinted a lot of my stuff and have, in fact, commissioned several new stories. Having recently attended several comic cons I do get quite a few commissions from fans, which is very gratifying and has made me remember how much I enjoyed drawing for the comics.

As regards the future of comic art, I think it's pretty healthy. The number of graphic novels being printed seems good and the internet has provided artists a way to have their work shown, who would never have had the opportunity in the past.

How I create... INVASION'S BILL SAVAGE

1 Initial frame

Pencil a rough of the frame; this needs to be accurate because however highly finished the picture might be, it is no good if the initial drawing is wrong – or, as the old artistic axiom has it, 'you can't polish a turd' (although some say you can sprinkle it with glitter!).

2 Linework

Decide where the light is coming from so you know where the darks/ shadows will fall. Bill Savage was a rough, tough character so it is necessary to show that; lots of coarse line and brush work. Although I use a computer for adjustments and sometimes colour, I still prefer to do the pencil and inks by hand.

3 Drybrush

With the drybrush now applied the picture has come together; it has achieved the requisite grim look suitable for Bill Savage. I could leave it like this, but I will add some grey tone.

4 Tone

Well, here it is with tone added but I think it looks better without it. Fortunately now, thanks to software like Photoshop, it is possible to go back to the black and white version. When I worked in comics in the old days I would either have to redraw it or just live with it. Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint etc are wonderful for making changes.

XMAS SPECIAL WRAPAROUND COVER ART
As this was to be a wraparound cover there was plenty of room to have a lot of different dynamic parts within the overall composition. It's always fun to be given free rein to conjure up characters; I love coming up with their individual characteristics, from the way they move, to their weapons and quirks.

TOBY WILLSMER

Tell us a little about yourself as an artist, how you got started, and a bit about your career so far.
I produce digitally painted 2D artwork that has a traditionally painted look and feel to it. I initially discovered digital painting when a friend of mine showed me a small A5 tablet he was using around 1999. I had a break for a few years between 2000-2007 when life got in the way. Then my wife bought me a cheap drawing tablet she found in a supermarket and after plugging it in, I fell back into wanting to make a go of art again.

I started digital painting for myself again in 2008, went full-time in 2019 and set about getting myself out there in the market as a freelance illustrator. Not easy, as anyone will tell you, but by then I had a solid, consistent style that people recognised when they saw it. I was doing commissions for people and selling my work as fine art prints when I heard of the Artstars Competition that 2000 AD were running. I went in for it with the Robo-Hunter piece and won! Shortly after that I spoke to the editor of 2000 AD and showed him some work I had done. He liked it and offered me my first cover for 2000 AD. Since then I've continued to do cover artwork for 2000 AD and hopefully for many years to come.

TOP TIP
Comic art should be able to tell a story, whether it's a single image for a cover/ splash page or some sequential art. With sequential art it's easier to do this as you are following a narrative and setting scenes in smaller panels to tell the wider picture as you go along. I like the challenge of doing the story telling in a single image, getting the viewer's imagination firing and leading them into wanting more.

> **"2000 AD embraces evolving visions for their characters… each artist puts in their own stylistic touches"**

Inspiration for me comes from many different sources, music is a huge one along with any raw energetic imagery regardless of genre and mountains! I live in New Zealand, so cool scenery and mountains are never far away. I listen to music a lot when I draw up ideas as it really gets the creative brain cells firing.

What's your relationship to comics and 2000 AD specifically? Are there any key characters or stories that you feel epitomise what 2000 AD is all about?
My dad bought me my first comic in the mid '70s. It had the Hulk in it and I was blown away by the imagery at that young age. I've had a love of comic artwork ever since then.

2000 AD has always embraced the evolving visions for their characters and this is clear with each artist putting in their own stylistic

MEAN MACHINE

One of my favourite characters from the Judge Dredd universe and over the years there have been many cool interpretations of him. The whole "Goin' ta 4" Mean Machine ethos was what I wanted to capture in this montage splash page.

touches to the characters they draw. I love the fact that Dredd has been drawn in so many different ways over the years by artists but it's still Dredd. For me this is why 2000 AD has stayed the course as one of the innovative leaders in the comic industry, by making trends rather than following them. Whether you buy it just for the art, the stories or just want to escape for 20 mins, 2000 AD still has 'that thing' whatever your buzz is.

It's 2000 AD's anniversary. Is there a single highlight you could pick out from over the years? (This can be something you have created.)
I'm a big fan of painted comics, they have a raw energy to them that never gets old. So for me it has to be the era of the early '90s. The painted work 2000 AD put out then really floats my boat to this day and sticks in my memory. Also the first cover I did for them was a great moment for me and one off my bucket list.

Name any favourite writers or artists that inspire or entertain you, and tell us what it is about them that you love.
The list could go on and on here. Not in any order, but here are my top picks that have left a lasting impression on me over the years: Frank Frazetta, he captured movement perfectly and tells a story in every piece; Ralph Steadman, I love the perfect blend of

TOP TIP

Capturing dynamics, movement and depth is something that comics have always been king at. I tend to go through the image in my head, figuring out how the movement would be and what would interact with it in the surroundings to capture the moment. Pushing things into the background with little or no real details for 'depth' and adding details for the main focal parts for 'pop'. This helps with setting out composition, story flow and where you want to lead the viewer's eye too.

TOP TIP

Viewpoints, perspectives and angles are real visual cues in comics. Viewpoints can be used very effectively. For example, in setting scenes from afar or when used from high up looking down over something giving the reader the wider picture. Personally I have always loved the low angles and enhanced perspectives for viewpoints, as they are viewpoints that you would not normally see from a person's everyday point of view.

really tight technical pen lines, architectural elements and then the controlled chaos in the loose marks and splats; Simon Bisley, who has redefined so many characters in his own vision over the years; H.R. Giger, a true master of his medium; and Martin Emond, his work is like being at a Sex Pistols gig, tons of energy and so much to look at every time.

What is it about comic art that you enjoy most, as both a consumer and creator?
From a creator's point of view I love the dynamic aspect of comic art, over extended limbs, energetic poses, foreshortening, capturing movement and depth in a 2D format. It's something I've always been visually into. I love the way comic art can capture a snapshot of a moment in time that happens too fast for someone to be able to take in all the moving parts. The aim is to grab the viewer's attention and get them really engaged in the image, wanting to see more and more.

JUDGE DEATH
Originally this Judge Death piece was supposed to be in colour, but as I inked it the image looked stronger in black and white.

> "When I read a comic I go over every page and panel individually first, soaking up all the details"

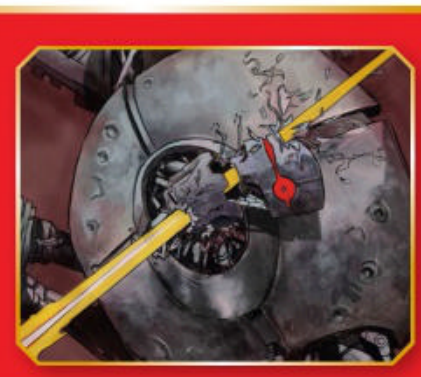
Looking at comic art from a consumer's point of view, I see it as a glimpse into another world where you can totally lose yourself in any way you want. When I read a comic I go over every page and panel individually first, soaking up all the details and cool imagery. Then I go back to the start and read the story. Even then, pausing and looking into parts of the artwork again and again. I really enjoy doing that.

Tell us about what you see as the future of comic art. Any thoughts on how they might be published and consumed?
I'd like to think that comic art will always evolve regardless of medium and there will always be a place for either digital, traditional or a blend of both. I still love flicking through the actual pages of a physical comic, there is still something special about doing that. I tried a digital comic reader app once. I found it never really did the comics justice in that format, but for others that format really works for them. Personal preference and all that!

Like it or not, the Metaverse will probably be something that comics will be consumed in at some point, with VR giving the user a fully immersive experience when reading them. It'd really give depth to the 2D format. Wide city shots and action splash pages/panels would look amazing, coupled with actual sound effects etc but… at that stage would it stop being a comic to read and more a type of user-controlled comic instead? I guess we will find out?

How I create... ROBO-HUNTER ROBOTS

1 Basic forms
For this robot I wanted the metal armour to look well worn in places and with some obvious dents from the likes of bullets etc. I start by using random brushes at large sizes to add some basic shapes, colours and forms, breaking up the shape first.



2 Spray brush
As this piece of armour was curved, I'll add in some shadows to define the overall shape. I use spray brushes a lot to add non-uniform shaded areas. I'll also use the spray brushes for random non-metal colours as these define a metal catching colour from its surroundings.

JUDGE DREDD MONTAGE COVER ART
I had the idea to capture several moments in this cover, both action and non-action. I used a combination of Dredd's stoney face and the reflection of the MegaCity in his visor for the non-action background, then the explosive, guns blazing, Lawmaster chase scene as the main dynamic focal point in the foreground.

3 Shadows
Next I'll start to think about where any lighting will fall and where shadows might be cast. I'll use a default dry paintbrush and a smudge brush. I flick between the two brushes the same way I would a normal brush and my finger for smudging the paint.

4 Details
Now the overall painted metal is looking as I'd like it, so next I'll define the bullet holes more and add more surface detailing.

5 Highlights
From here on it's all about adding some highlights and any extra details – remembering that the bright white highlights would mostly be on the exposed metal edges for the armour, unlike the shiny smooth surfaces of the pistons in the arms.

ROBIN HENLEY

Tell us a little about yourself as an artist, how you got started, and a bit about your career so far.
Like most artists, I've been drawing since before I can remember. Around the age of 12, I recall being unable to decide whether I'd like to be a writer or an artist when I grew up, and then realising that making comics would be the perfect compromise. However, despite having such a clear idea of what I was aiming for, my career has taken a few detours. After finishing school at 16, I went to art college, and then got a degree in Illustration at university. Straight after graduating, I moved to London and got a job as an illustrator/graphic designer working in house at a studio specialising in drinks packaging. After a couple of years, I decided that working full-time in commercial design wasn't for me, and I've been a freelance illustrator and comic artist ever since.

What's your relationship to comics and 2000 AD specifically? Are there any key characters or stories that you feel epitomise what 2000 AD is all about?
For me personally, 2000 AD represents my big break into working more or less full-time in comics. In autumn 2019 I entered and won a talent search at Thought Bubble Festival, run by 2000 AD, and judged by Leah Moore, Mike Dowling and Frazer Irving. After the competition I was hired to draw a future shock for the Prog. I was then approached again a few months later by the team at Rebellion to draw a longer strip for that year's Misty & Scream special. I think that eagerness to work with Britain's emerging comics talent epitomises for me what 2000 AD is all about. So many of my favourite artists and writers got their start at, or have worked at some point with, 2000 AD.

> "I enjoy comics' ability to tell a story in a unique way, like no other medium"

TOP TIP

Go out for a walk and observe the world around you. Find out what leaves look like backlit by the sun and observe the way people walk, gesticulate and do their hair. Make a mental note of the way elbows bend and facial expressions are made. Comic artists have to be able to potentially draw anything and everything, so you need a big visual bank to draw from.

It's 2000 AD's anniversary. Is there a single highlight you could pick out from over the years? (This can be something you have created.)
My favourite 2000 AD story, by a country mile, is The Ballad of Halo Jones. Written by Alan Moore and drawn by Ian Gibson in the '80s, Halo Jones is both a truly original piece of post-apocalyptic science fiction, and a quirky, well-scripted social drama about a woman trying to make her way in the world. It's also one of comparatively few female-focused stories in a comic that is historically quite male centric, both in terms of content and creators.

Name any favourite writers or artists that inspire or entertain you, and tell us what it is about them that you love.
Outside of 2000 AD, and a few serialised works that I keep up with, such as Brian K Vaughan and Fiona Staples' Saga, most of my comic reading comes in the form of graphic novels. Some stand-out favourites include The Black Project by Gareth Brookes, The Nao of Brown by Glyn Dillon, and The Motherless Oven by Rob Davis. I am drawn to graphic novels for the same reason that I'm drawn to prose novels, I want to read a well-written and original story that gives me something to think about.

HALO JONES
Halo Jones is one of my favourite comic characters of all time. She is a multidimensional character, free of the tropes that female characters tend to fall into in science fiction. I drew this portrait of her around the time I entered the talent competition in 2019.

What is it about comic art that you enjoy most, as both a consumer and creator?
I enjoy its ability to tell a story in a truly unique way, like no other medium. There are things that can be done with comics that could never be achieved in prose or on film.

Tell us about what you see as the future of comic art. Any thoughts on how they might be published and consumed?
Although I'm aware that plenty of people enjoy reading comics digitally, I remain a fan of print media. I struggle with the amount of screen time involved in my work, so I don't feel that I need any more in my leisure time. Unfortunately, comics are very labour intensive, and horrendously underpaid for the man hours involved in creating them, regardless of how they are published. I hope that we are able to find better ways to pitch graphic novels and comics to adult audiences outside of existing comic book fans. I don't understand why a reader who enjoys a good novel wouldn't enjoy the right graphic novel.

FUTURE SHOCK
The first work I did for 2000 AD after winning the talent search was a future shock, written by Liam Johnson and lettered by Jim Campbell.

MICHAEL DOWLING

Tell us a little about yourself as an artist, how you got started, and a bit about your career so far.

I always lacked the patience to draw comics. I drew all the time as a kid and occasionally I would start drawing a comic – I would labour over one page then completely lose interest. The commitment and patience needed was beyond me. I never made it past the second page. Later I went to Art School and studied painting. I was mostly working from life, out in the landscape, making big oil paintings. After Art School I was unsure of where to go with my art – I'd had some success in painting but I really needed something to work towards, something to push me on. At the same time, a friend was making a no-budget sci-fi film and asked me if I'd do the storyboards. I'd recently had my interest in sequential art rekindled by reading Hellboy and thought it would be an interesting challenge. This led to me drawing a promotional comic for the finished film. That was it for me, really – I was all in. I had the patience to commit myself to drawing comics.

What's your relationship to comics and 2000 AD specifically? Are there any key characters or stories that you feel epitomise what 2000 AD is all about?

I can't remember when I started reading 2000 AD, it was just always about. My older brother would bring comics into the house and I'd pick them up after he was done. This was back when you could pick up American comics in most newsagents, so as well as 2000 AD we had a bunches of Marvel books too – mostly Spider-Man. When my brother moved out, I realised I'd have to buy my own 2000 ADs. I was also steadily digesting classic 2000 AD stories through the graphic novel reprints.

2000 AD contains so much it's hard to think about it as a single entity. All the wild, diverse stories add up to an amazing, well-rounded reading experience. And like all comics, the simplicity of the medium, of words

(ABOVE) JUDGE DREDD, CLOSET

Matt Smith, 2000 AD's editor, got in touch to ask if I would be interested in drawing a Judge Dredd story. The script I received, about a closeted young gay man and his discovery of an underground gay nightclub, was a surprise. Closer reading revealed a story that dealt with the subject with real compassion and humour.

How I create... COVER ARTWORK

1 Rough sketch

This is a cover I did recently for 2000 AD. The editor, Matt Smith, suggested the cover "might include tentacles". I drew up two rough ideas – Matt went with A. My feeling was the image should be simple and graphic – no more than three colours, strong shadows – something that would pop on the shelves.

and images, will make you aware of how these things work on you, how they tell you a story with just lines on a page. It's an ideal medium for creators – the directness of creating and reading something like 2000 AD is unparalleled.

It's 2000 AD's anniversary. Is there a single highlight you could pick out from over the years? (This can be something you have created.)
A real highlight for me from 2000 AD's past was the politicisation of Dredd that became explicit in the Democracy stories – America, Tale of the Dead Man and the final Democracy referendum. I had been reading Dredd for a few years by the time those stories started – I'd been

> "The directness of creating and reading something like 2000 AD is unparalleled"

reading out of sequence, reading some of the more absurd early outings and some of the more naturalistic, later stories. The Democracy stories just crashed in and brought it all to a head. All the problems of Dredd being the hero and villain of 2000 AD and the mad structure of Mega-City One, how the people lived in this terrible city, it all came under examination in a bunch of really great stories.

Name any favourite writers or artists that inspire or entertain you, and tell us what it is about them that you love.
I'm a big fan of Mike McMahon's art. His stories brim with energy, and they're often beautifully designed too. I tend to think of the backbone of 2000 AD art as Mike McMahon, Brian Bolland and Cam Kennedy. They're quite different in approach but there's such consistency and integrity to all their pages, it's really amazing.

Reading The Dark Knight Returns by Frank Miller when I was 14 or so was an incredible experience. I put the book down in awe whilst I chewed over what Miller had done. I think I'm still trying to figure it out!

Recently I read SuperMutant Magic Academy. I heard someone describe it as the best New Mutants/Gen X book ever and that's true. It's a fantastic book and it points to the kind of stories that aren't limited by genre or readership demographics.

What is it about comic art that you enjoy most, as both a consumer and creator?
Comic art is this weird alchemy between words and pictures that, if put together right, can create something amazing. Trying to find that perfect connection between words, or narrative and imagery, either in your own work or others, is what it's all about.

Tell us about what you see as the future of comic art. Any thoughts on how they might be published and consumed?
Comics have changed a lot in the last couple of decades – there's a lot more diversity and there isn't really such a hard distinction between 'art' comics and 'mainstream' comics anymore. It feels like anything is possible.

TOP TIP

Don't be afraid to use reference. The world is a complex place – forms tend to be more intricate and fascinating than you imagine. Light falls differently than you might expect. Go out and look at the world – it will bring something of the real into your art, even if your art is not about realism.

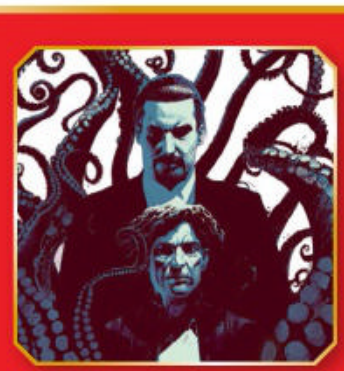
TOP TIP

Planning your time is super important. You're unlikely to have as much time as you need, so figure out how to best use your time. Make a plan and stick to it. The unending stress of being late with deadlines is best avoided.

JUDGE ANDERSON, DEAD END
Much as I loved Dredd, I was always interested in drawing his sometime partner/friend/thorn in the side and conscience, Judge Anderson. In this story all the pages are inked with Japanese Saji nibs.

2 Pencils
Matt sent over some reference for the two main characters, so I worked up a pencil drawing from the reference and then started looking for pictures of tentacles...

3 Inks
The next stage was inks, and I went straight into inking the tentacles – they're the sort of thing that's fun to just bash out without too much hesitation. The faces needed working up some – I used an app called 'Handy' to figure out the light and shade. It allows you to move lights around a 3D model of a head. Of course, it won't tally exactly with the head you've drawn, but it can help.



4 Colour
The image is pretty much finished once I've added the colour and midtones (more help with the shadows from the Handy app here).

5 Finishing touches

The final pass adds some glows and highlights here and there. It also adds fades to the big colours. They're small additions to the image but I wonder if they're too much – sometimes, if you're aiming for simplicity perhaps you should stick to your guns...

LEIGH GALLAGHER

Tell us a little about yourself as an artist, how you got started, and a bit about your career so far.

I've been a Merseyside comic artist for 18 years or so (yeesh!). I was the 'talented art kid' in school that everyone knew, but then I was humbled by the real world! Took me a looooong time to get my first break in comics, going to UK conventions year after year, getting nice encouragement and the odd audition from kind editors who started remembering my face. I gave myself until my 25th birthday to get my first comics job, otherwise I would try and go into something like games design instead. One week before that deadline I got an email from The Mighty Tharg offering me my first short story! I owe him a lot. I took that as a pretty definitive sign. Since then I've worked for DC on a couple of series including Lego Bionicle, but for most of my career I'm proud to serve 2000 AD co-creating series like the zombie hunter Defoe with Pat Mills, Aquila with Gordon Rennie, the rebooted Hook-Jaw with Alec Worley, and now back on Kingmaker with Ian Edginton which is pitched as an alien invasion of Lord Of The Rings.

What's your relationship to comics and 2000 AD specifically? Are there any key characters or stories that you feel epitomise what 2000 AD is all about?

I'm a child of the '80s – the greatest era for comics, toys and cartoons. You couldn't fail to have your tiny mind blown. I started off with the cartoon-based comics like M.A.S.K, moved onto EAGLE, then the incredible and short-lived SCREAM (my biggest influence). From there it was a natural progression to 2000 AD. My first issue was prog 546 in 1987 which I still have. What I can't believe even now is that some of the people who inspired me as a kid way back then in that prog, I'm actually really good friends with now, like the amazing John Higgins.

There are better, more eloquent people than me to decipher 2000 AD. But it is legendary. The connections it weaves throughout pop culture are never ending, influencing countless creators, musicians and actors like Simon Pegg. Obviously Dredd is the stand-out character – his life-sized standee looms over me as I work.

It's 2000 AD's anniversary. Is there a single highlight you could pick out from over the years? (This can be something you have created.)

It's hard to pick one. I'm ridiculously lucky and proud to have co-created various series for Tharg over the years. I'm tempted to say it was the zombie hunter Defoe with the legendary Pat Mills. But then it could be Kingmaker with Ian Edginton which is the first

> "I love that comics can show you anything the imagination can dream of"

(ABOVE) KINGMAKER TRADE COVER
This was my double spread cover for the first two series of Kingmaker collected in one book. Pitched as an alien invasion of Lord Of The Rings, it's fun mashing all these elements together in one big image. I think at this time I'd recently changed from Photoshop to CSP and was still trying to get a handle on it. Series 3 is running in 2000 AD right now!

series I've had control over the colouring too. But I'm going to say it was when I was called "The Most Handsome Man In Comics" in my credit box on a story.

Name any favourite writers or artists that inspire or entertain you, and tell us what it is about them that you love.
The late José Ortiz whose work inspired me back when I was a kid reading SCREAM. He drew the gorgeous horror strip, The Thirteenth Floor, stories for CREEPY and EERIE, later going on to draw Rogue Trooper for 2000 AD. Beautiful loose inking style, sometimes a lot more detailed with the cross hatching depending on the project – that trait ended up being a curse of mine on Defoe. But I loved his work so much that one night I ended up using all the ink in John Higgins' office printer, photocopying all his stories to study. He was my main influence when I started working on Defoe.

What is it about comic art that you enjoy most, as both a consumer and creator?
As a creator, it's getting a script for the first time, taking out a piece of A4 copy paper, and figuring out how I'm going to bring this to life. I love figuring out compositions, panel layouts, acting out the emotions of the characters, choreographing an action scene. If you're on deadline, the whole bit in between is stressful, but if in those moments you've created something you're proud of, it's worth it.

As a consumer, for me it's the nostalgia. Being an adult is bloody hard, so to have this link to my childhood, a time when I first felt all these sparks flashing in my brain, is essential. I love that comics can literally show you anything the imagination can dream of, and not be restricted by budget. I don't have time to read them as much now, but they're part of my DNA forever. I'm reliving it all again watching my son get excited by all the same things I did. Cue Elton John singing Circle Of Life…

DEFOE ZOMBIE BABIES COVER
One of my earliest covers for 2000 AD. Of course we couldn't refer to them as zombie babies, and Tharg wanted me to make them a bit demonic so as not to offend! At this time I'd been teaching myself Photoshop colouring thanks to the Dave Gibbons tutorial in ImagineFX! Can't believe I coloured with a mouse back then...

Tell us about what you see as the future of comic art. Any thoughts on how they might be published and consumed?
I'm mostly old school. I can't read digital comics. I need to feel the paper in my hands, turn an actual page. I'm sure both will always live in harmony though. I'm mostly traditional with the creating comics too. I still do pencils and inks on Bristol board, and just colour in Clip Studio. BUT… I know and totally understand that as the years go by, creating comics will primarily be digital. It's faster, and can easily mimic traditional tools now. One of the main reasons for sticking with traditional was the option to sell the original art, but if digital increases your productivity, go for it. But this week I learnt the hard way about an over reliance on tech, when my Huion drawing display broke down right before a deadline. I ended up having to buy a new one straight away as I just didn't have the time to jump through hoops getting it fixed.

DREDD HEAD
Nice and simple. This is my 10-minute Dredd sketch that I do whenever I attend conventions. I'm showing it off because it has the looseness that I want, but always fail to achieve in my final pages.

TOP TIP
Keep moving your camera around the scene to keep it visually interesting. Imagine a drone flying around to pick the best angle.

TOP TIP
Don't be afraid to use photo reference. I still set up my camera to taking embarrassing photos that no one will EVER see.

How I create... COVER ARTWORK

1 Rough sketch
Here's the rough pencil for this cover image, scanned in. I worked out the cape flow digitally.

2 Ink
Usually I would ink traditionally, scan into CSP, adjust contrast, brightness and binarization for pure black and white. But time was an issue so I inked digitally on my pen display.

3 Add flat colours
Simple flat colours in CSP, easy to isolate using the auto select tool.

4 Shading
Finally, select another raster layer to shade with grey tones. I usually use one or two more layers for extra darker shading and textures, a glow dodge layer for highlights on the sword, and an overlay layer for lighting elsewhere.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook

Nabetse Zitro

The self-taught artist showcases his stunning illustrations, with storytelling being at the core of each character design

Artist PROFILE

Nabetse Zitro

LOCATION: Paraguay

Nabetse is a self-taught illustrator from Paraguay, South America. He loves storytelling and capturing the look and feel of traditional drawing in his digital works. He admires artists like Norman Rockwell and Gil Elvgren. He works as a freelance illustrator doing comics and illustrations for books, board games and video games.

nabetsezitro.com

THE UNICORN

Two shapeshifter dragons. The girl, Auva, lost one horn in an accident. Her brother, Altair, became very protective of her; he doesn't like it when she's called "unicorn". They belong to another story in progress.

AVOCADO

I'm working with my girlfriend, who is a writer, on a story set in a far-west-like universe and these three kids are characters from that story. The angry avocado is important for the plot, trust me.

THE WITCH AND HER ASSISTANT

I tend to think about witches as wise and clever women, that's why I often draw them surrounded by books. Here, I was showing this witch's 'workspace'.

THE BOYS

Nat and Gus, characters from IronRoads, the story I mentioned before, are two very different boys but their lives are marked by the love they felt for this woman. That's why we see her facing us: she is important.

GOOD FRIENDS

With this illustration I wanted to show movement and elegance at the same time. When I draw, I imagine my characters doing things and that makes them feel alive.

VAL

She is one of my favourite characters, also from IronRoads; I draw her A LOT. I guess I have a thing for girls with short hair.

FRIEND

Here, my intention was to show that 'something has happened' and raise questions to the viewer. Did the girl find the robot already destroyed? Did the robot protect her with its life? She's ready to keep going; we'll never know.

> **"When I draw, I imagine my characters doing things and that makes them feel alive"**

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook

CROSSING THE RIVER

I love the work of artists like Gil Elvgren and the pin-up girls' aesthetic. Here, well... I just wanted to highlight a nice leg.

JET

Jet, one of the main characters from IronRoads, is a boy that went through a lot. Here I wanted to show him in a happy moment, surrounded by things he likes. Did anyone say angry avocado again?

IRIS AND GHOSTY

Iris, the witch – yes, also from IronRoads – lost a dear friend when they were kids and I wanted to show them together again. This river is a very important location in the story; it's life and it's also death.

"Even if I'm just practising faces, I remind myself that every character has a story"

FACES

Storytelling is the most important thing for me when I draw. Even if I'm just practising faces, I remind myself that every character has a story behind them. Every character is the protagonist of their own story.

WORKING

Here again I wanted to combine elegance and movement, including the elements that identify the character. Suddenly I've noticed that I'm drawing Iris a lot too. Who can resist dangerous women with books anyway?

THE BOOK

One of the first drawings of Iris. The book is important: it ties her story to another character mentioned here. If you're curious, you can go to my website and find an illustration called "Here, boy. Let me show you".

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**

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

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A step-by-step guide to aurahack's illustrative methods.

Photoshop & Rebelle

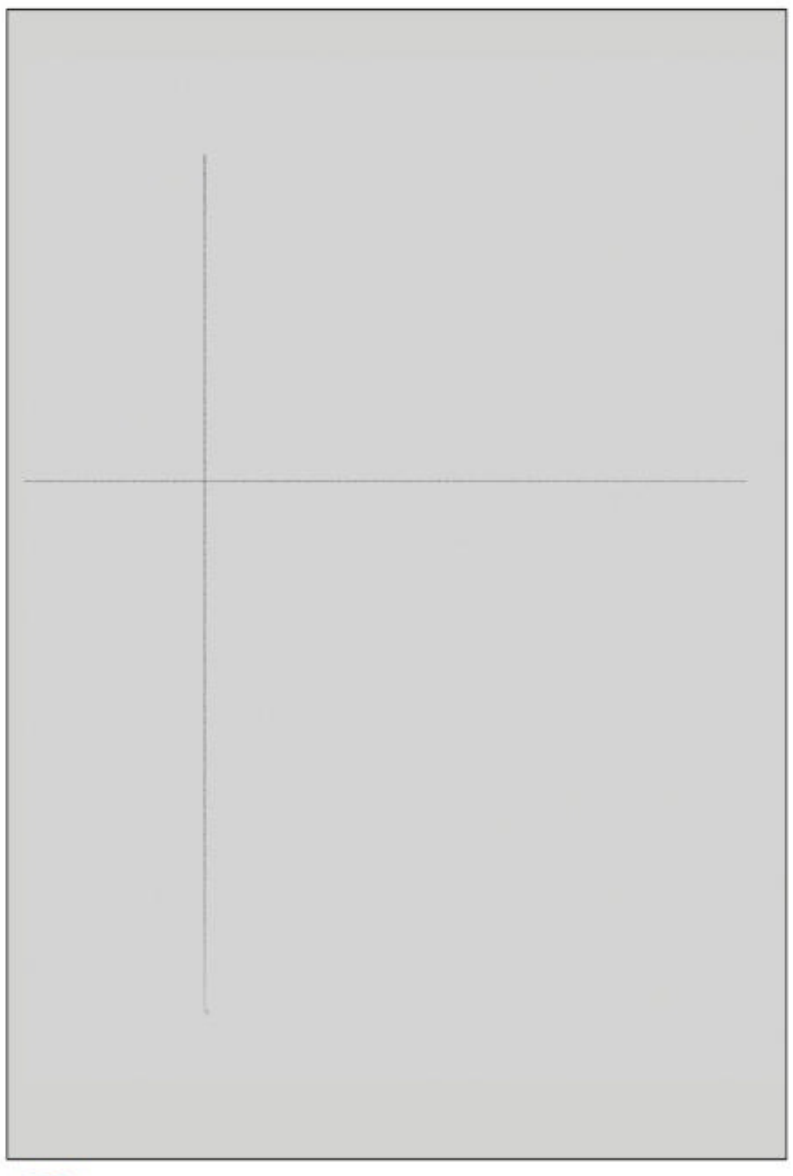
MASTER DETAIL AND TONE

As he paints a portrait, **Lixin Yin** shows his process and explains how to solve different problems at each step

This workshop will demonstrate how I paint a portrait from start to end. I will explain how to use lines to define composition, proportion, and facial structure.

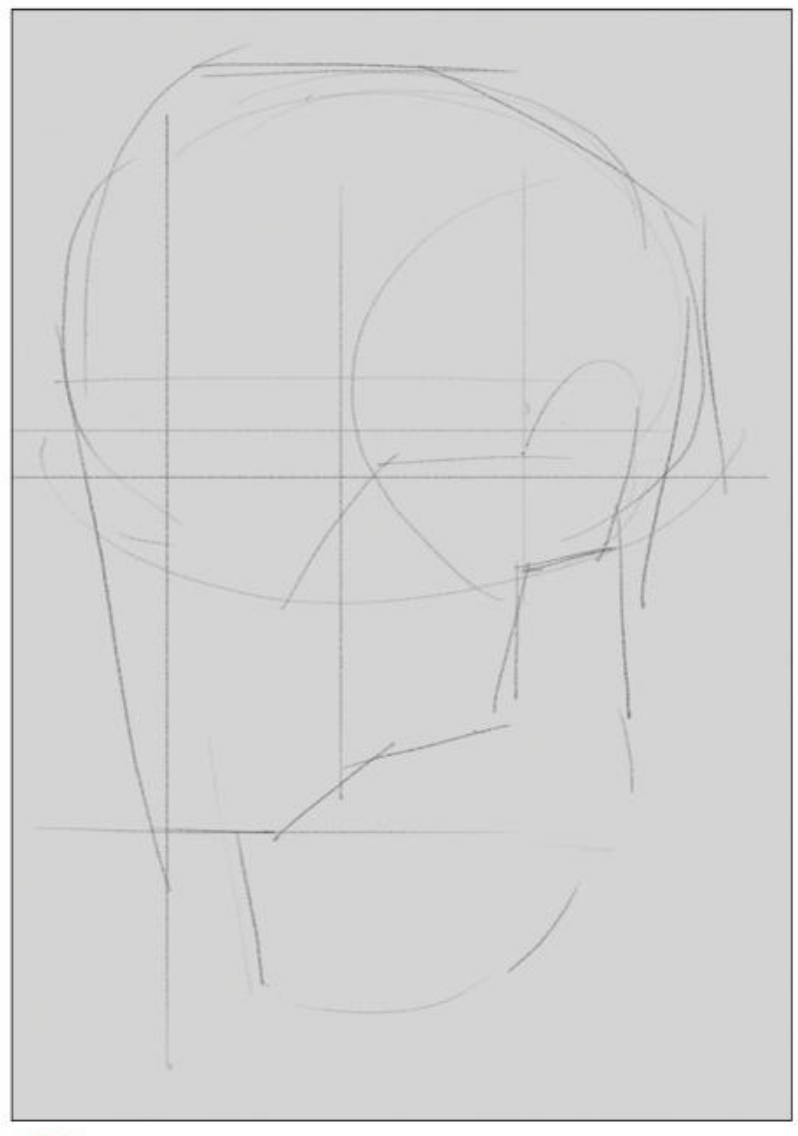
I will also illustrate how to set the tone at the beginning, then add details, highlights, and so on. In this process, you will see very clearly the enhancement of light and the gradual increase in details. We will take a look at how I deal with different areas of the portrait, such as hair and clothes, and the face. By the end of this workshop, you will learn about the problems I solved in each step, and know which parts need to be handled carefully.

Please note that many of the steps are not required to be mapped out. Usually, I keep some steps in my mind when I paint a portrait, especially the earliest steps. If you are a beginner or a student, please spend more time on the early stages. It will help you to improve the quality of your work and avoid many repetitive problems. Okay, let's get started!



1 Proportion

At the very beginning, the most important thing is proportion. I use two lines. The vertical line represents the centre of the face, and the horizontal line determines the approximate position of the eyes. By using these two lines, we will roughly determine the position of the head.



2 Shape

Next, I will use an ellipse to define the entire width of the head, then determine the distance from the top of the head to the jaw. After this, define the position of the ear, jaw, eyebrows, cheekbones on the face, and the neck. Basically, in this step we have solved the proportion problem with a few shapes.

Artist PROFILE

Lixin Yin
LOCATION: US

Hello, my name is Lixin Yin, I'm a concept artist, keyframe artist and illustrator working in the film and game industry. My clients include Marvel Studios, Disney, MPC Film, DreamWorks Animation, Axis Animation and more.
www.lixinyin.com

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RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

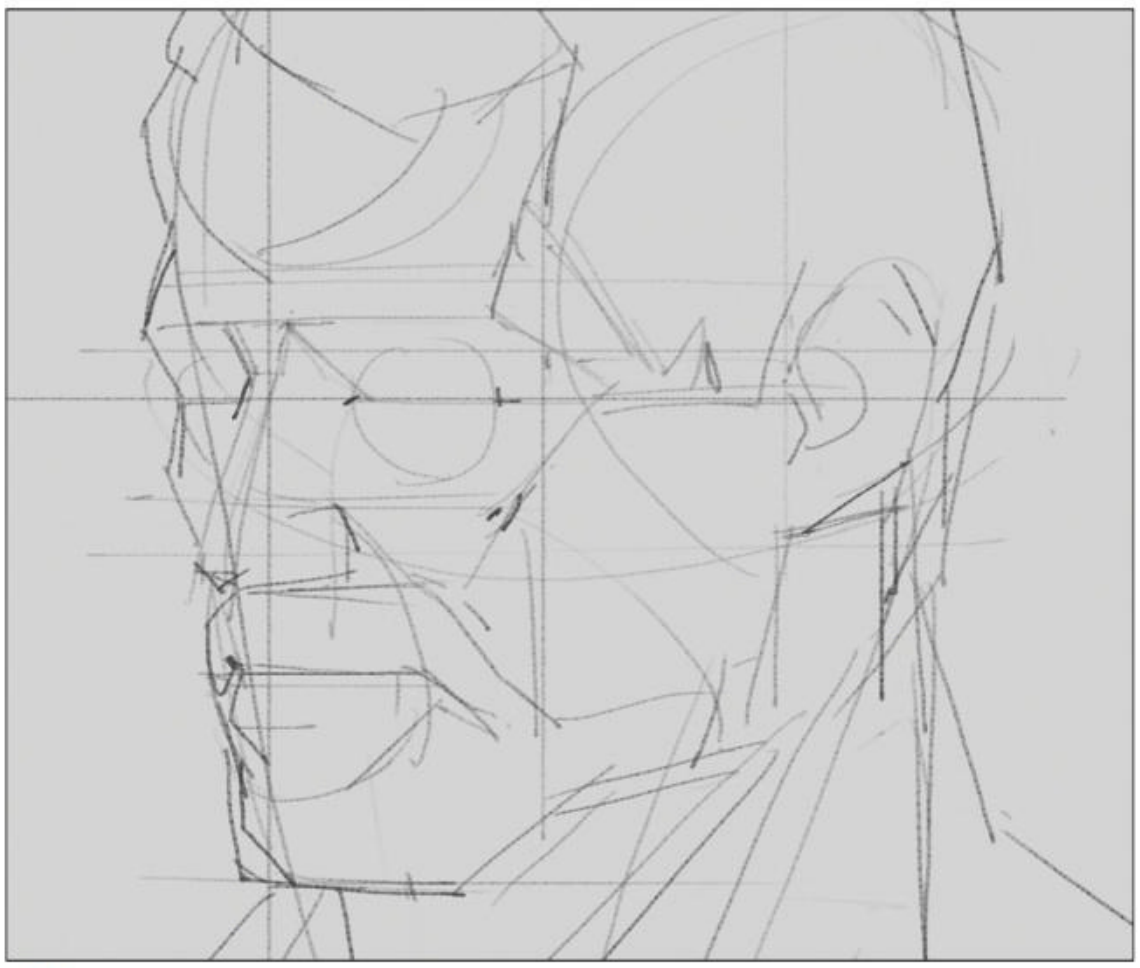
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: OIL PASTEL BRUSH

An oil pastel brush, which I use for my line work.

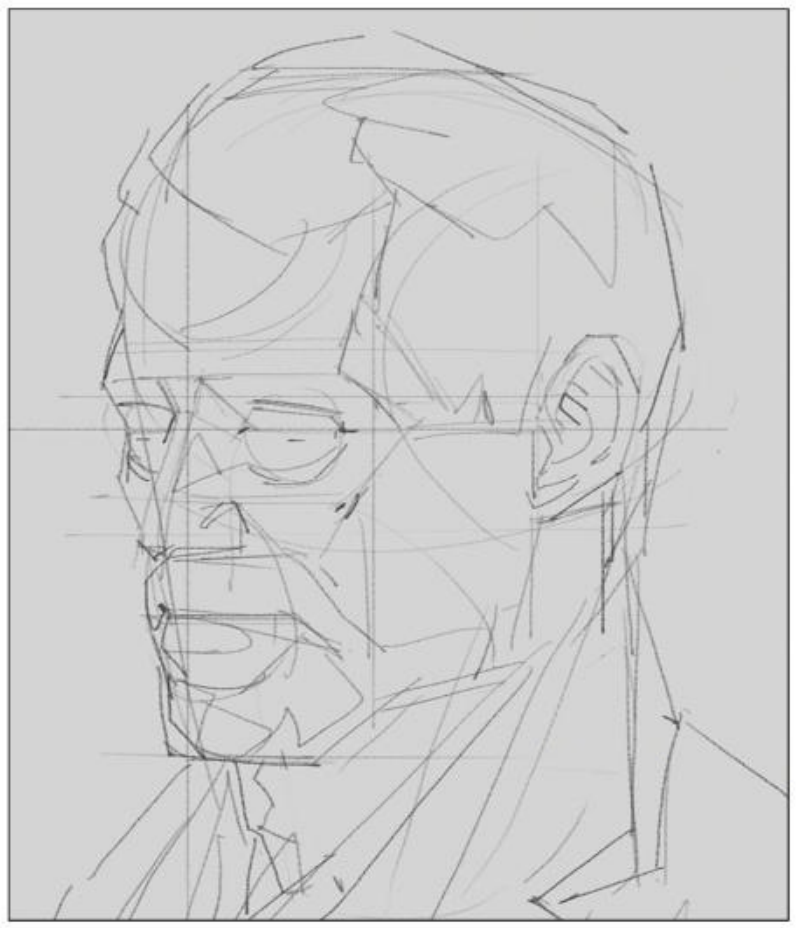
HARD ROUND BRUSH

Handy for almost everything when it comes to my portraits.



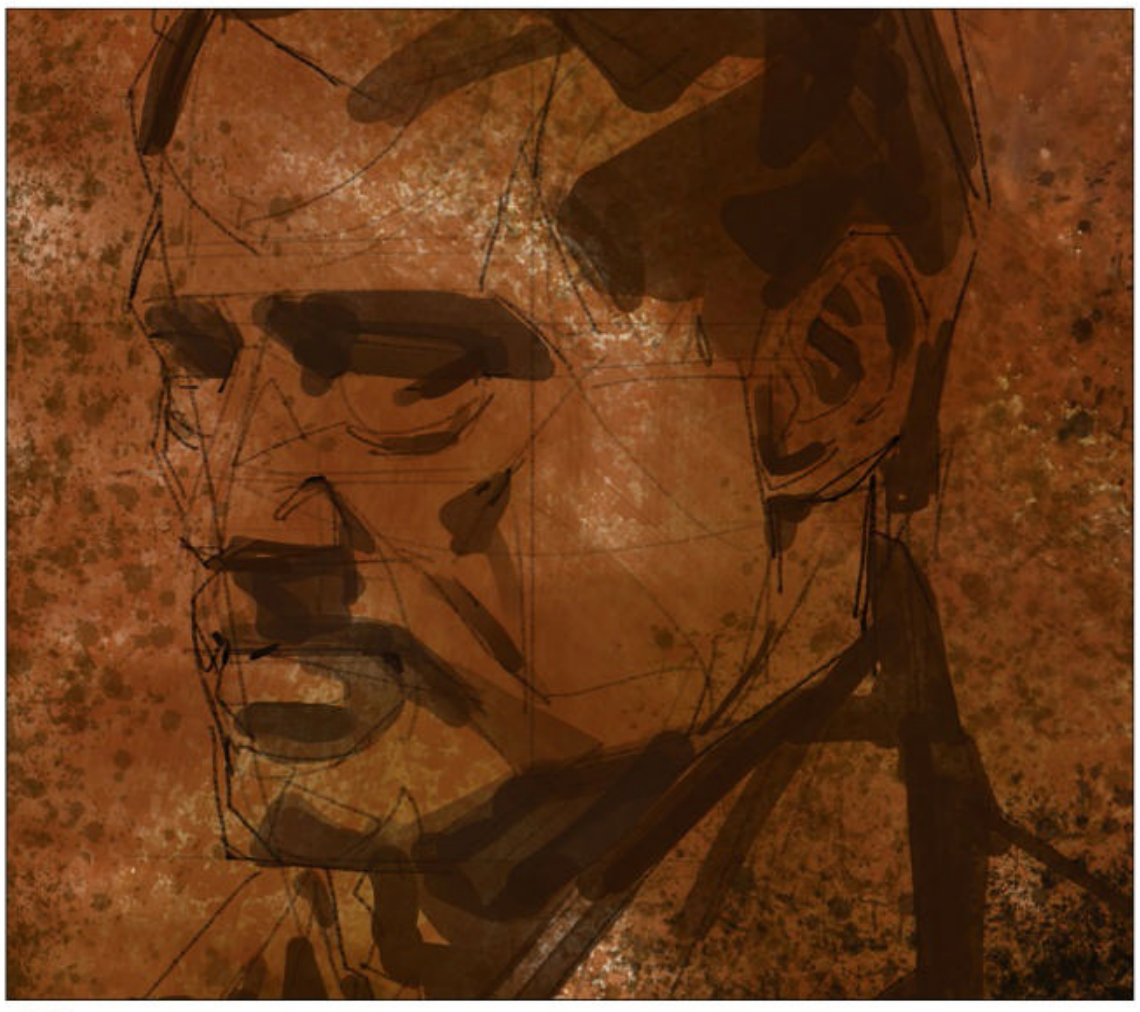
3 Facial structure 1

In this step, I start to add more details, namely the position of the five senses, such as the position and size of the nose, the eyeballs, mouth and so on. For this part, you will need some anatomical knowledge, importantly the shape of the skull, and some basic facial muscles. These will help you to refine the details of the face more precisely.



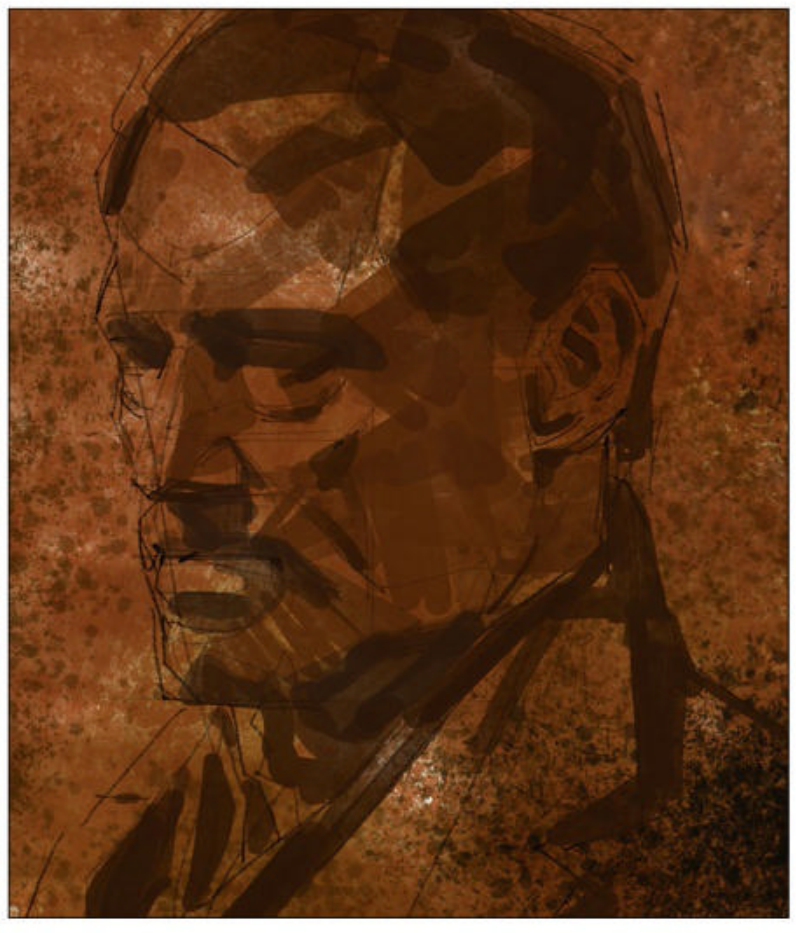
4 Facial structure 2

Continuing on from the previous step, we also need to add some marks for the hair, clothes, and other important elements we wish to illustrate. For example, we will need to consider the position of the collar and think about how the hair is distributed. You can also continue to add more details to the face at this stage.



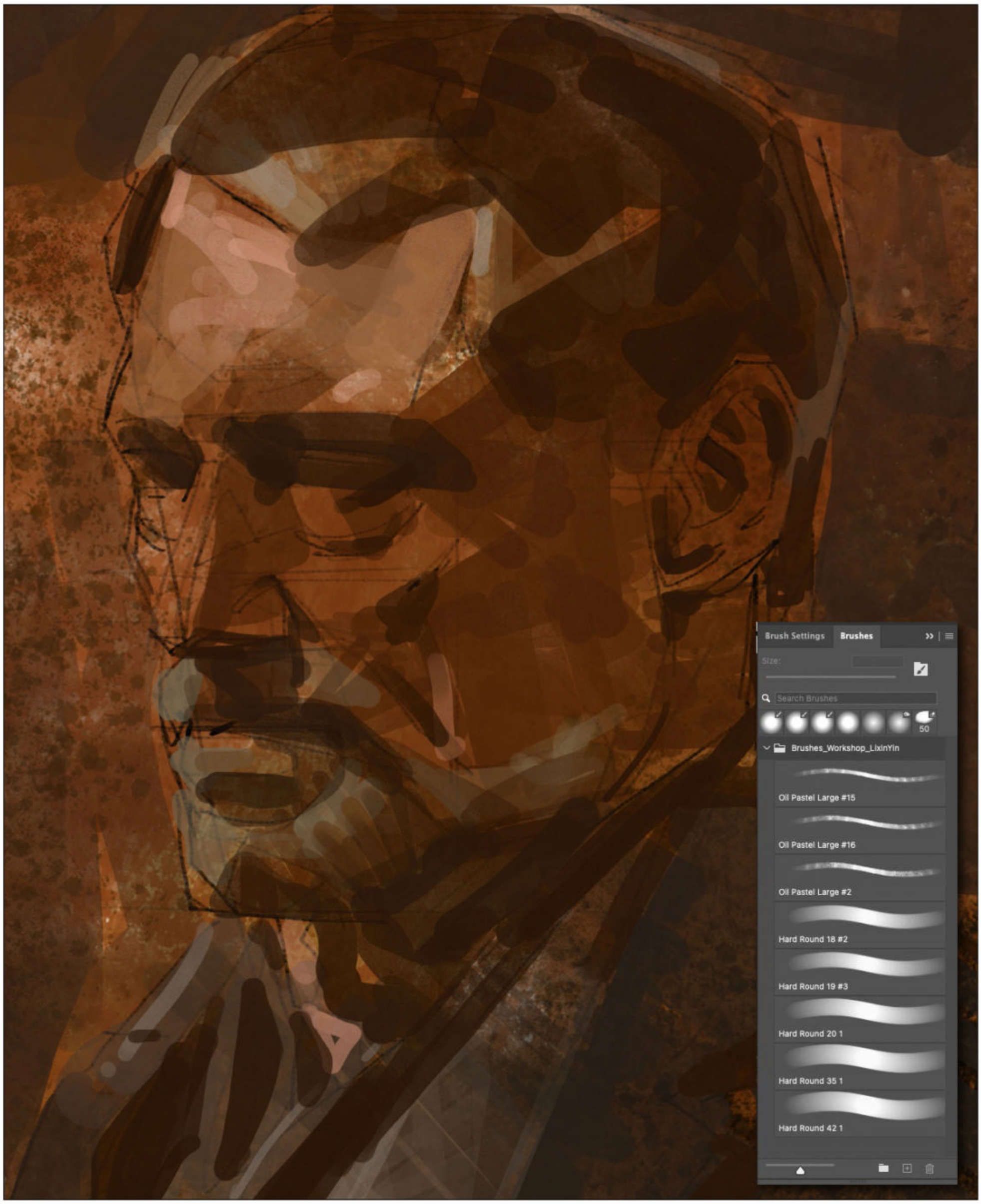
5 Define the darkest tone

Next, I analyse some of the darkest areas and mark them on the canvas. Please note that sometimes it's difficult to generalise these areas. This requires you to have a deeper understanding of the anatomy of the head. For the background, I used another software (Rebelle) to paint the texture. Sometimes I will download a texture image for the background.



6 Add another tone

This tone shouldn't be the darkest tone; it will be lighter than the first tone we have, and it will help me distinguish the different parts of the head. Just like making a sculpture, we are taking a scraper and sculpting a head. We can see the left side and the right side, and even the top and bottom. It gives the head a sense of space and dimension.



7 Local colour and background

I defined the local colours for the beard, clothes and hair, and added some details for the background. This will help me distinguish the colours in different areas. Remember, do not mark the highlights. Painting the highlights too early will ruin the tone of the painting.

8 Bright areas

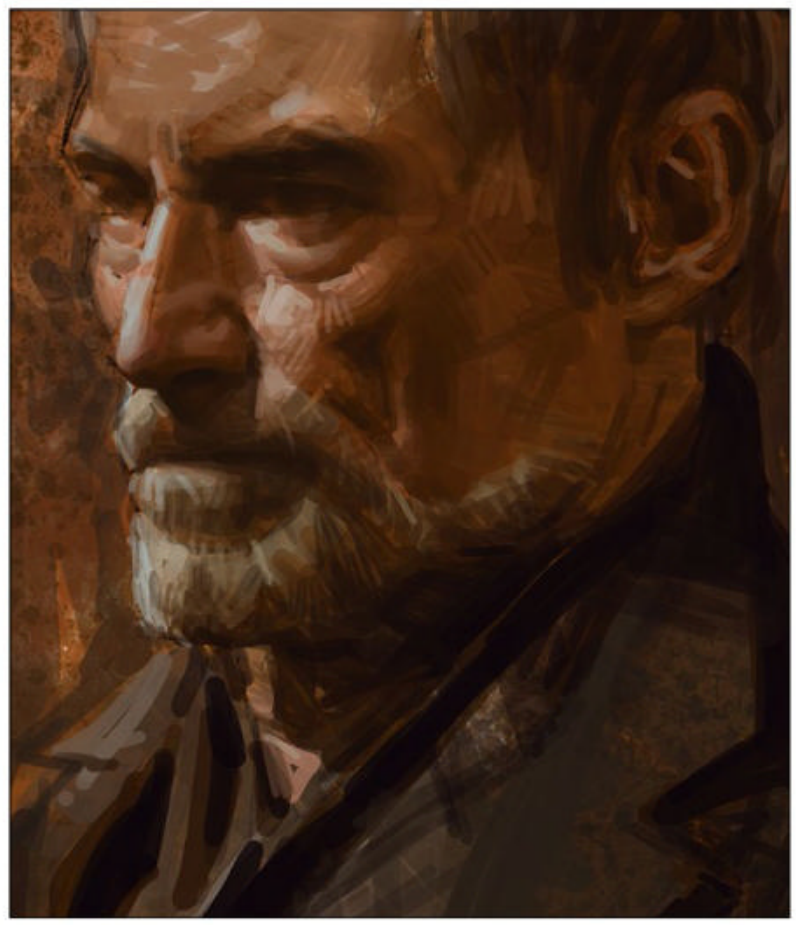
Like in the previous step, at this stage I start to handle the bright areas of the face, but note that these areas are still not highlights. At the same time, I handle the hair area carefully. The colour of the hair area is similar to the area where the forehead meets, so for this reason, I need to be careful with it. Otherwise, I will have value issues.

9 Volume and contrast

I now add another tone and emphasise the volume and structure of the face. It will make the face look fuller. This step also depends on how much knowledge of anatomy you have, so be sure to brush up if necessary. I darken the colour of the clothes because I don't want the head to look too 'heavy'. As an artist, we always need to think about this; it is about contrast and balance.

10 Add details to the hair

I started to add more details to the hair, to organise the layers and to distinguish the different directions. We can think of the hair as a banana peel, which also has volume and thickness. Make sure to consider how the hair grows.

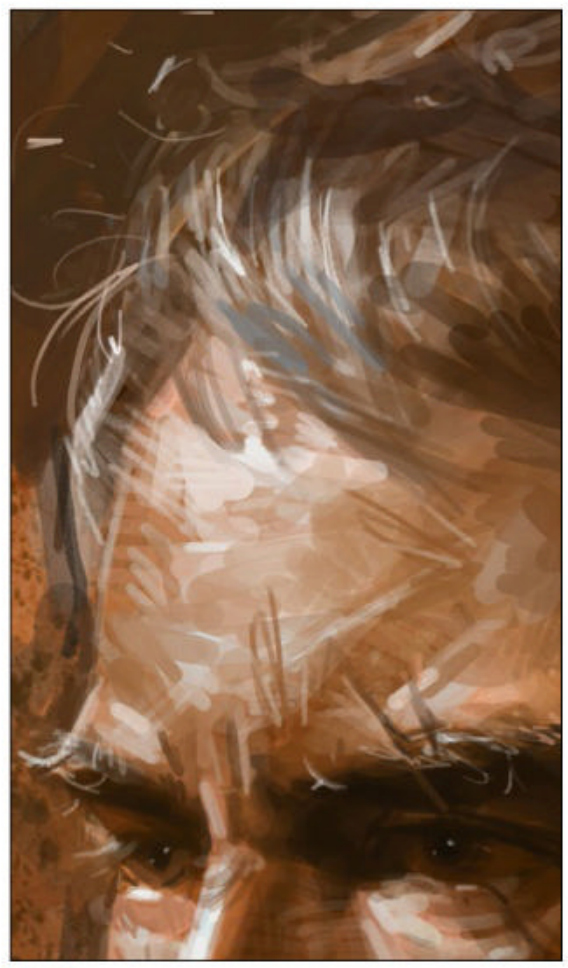


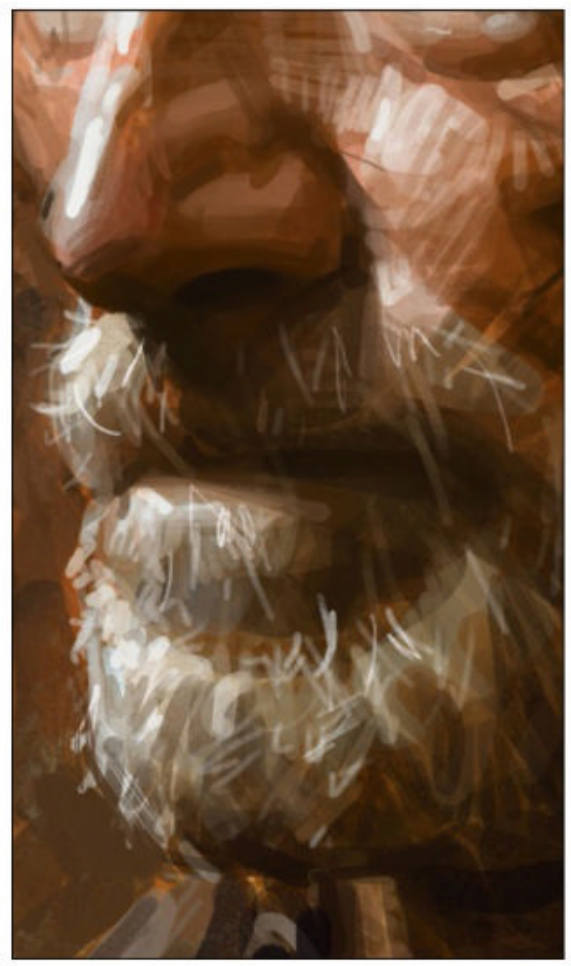
11 Refine the face

At this moment, I realise that the face needs more details. I spend a lot of time painting the face, eyes and beard, and adding some extra refinements to the clothes. When you paint a head, please pay attention to the proportions at all times. Many beginners easily lose proportion when adding details.

12 Highlights

Now I start working on the highlights of the face, especially the eyes and eyebrows. You will need to be very careful in these areas, including the nose, mouth, and beard. Regarding the clothes, be careful with the brightness – due to the different materials, the clothes will not be brighter than the face.





13 Final tweaks

Almost done! Concentrate on painting the hair and the beard. Add more details, small structures, and highlights. Just like the eyes, let's bring these areas to the same level of detail as the eyes. Take a closer look at the proportions, structure, colours, and details. As I mentioned, it's all about balance and contrast; you will need to make your own judgments regarding whether or not certain elements need any further tweaking or refinement.

ArtRage Vitae

TOP COLOUR BLENDING TIPS

Daniel Ibanez details how to use ArtRage Vitae's Real Color Blending features to simulate wet-on-wet oil painting

Artist **PROFILE**

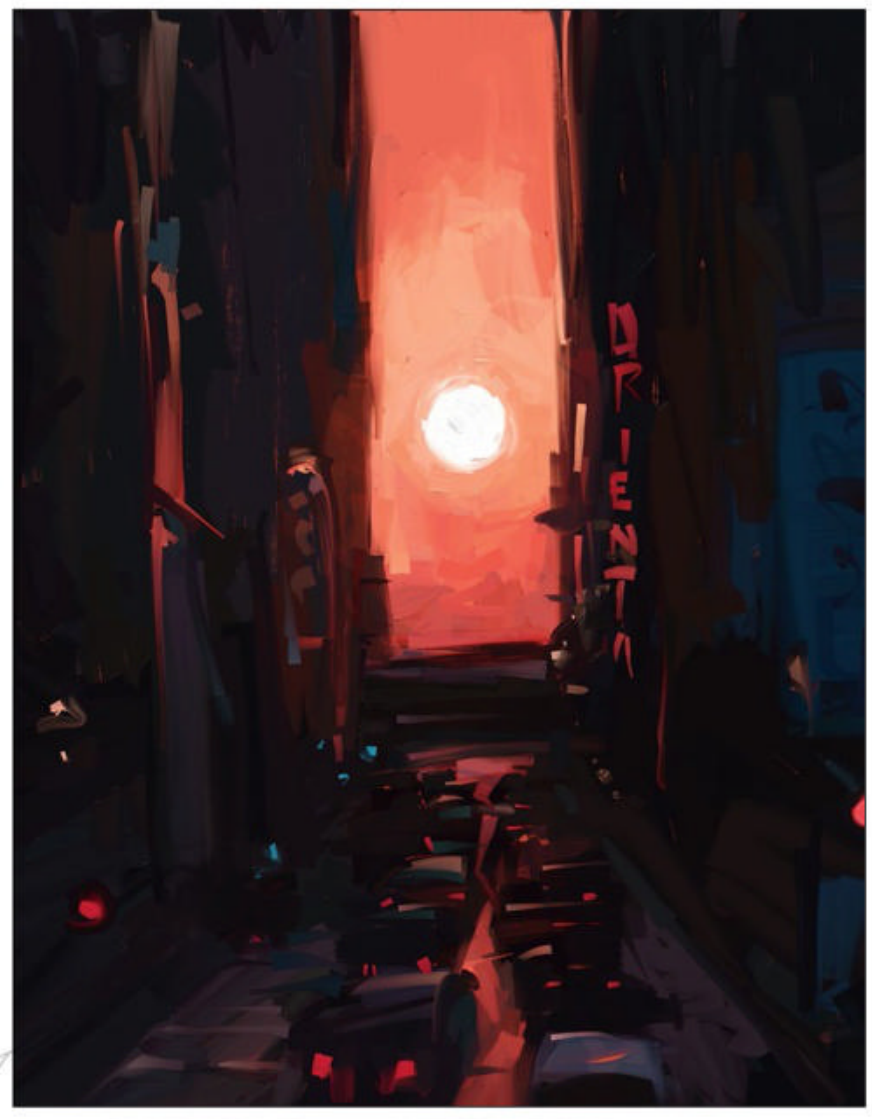
Daniel Ibanez

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.

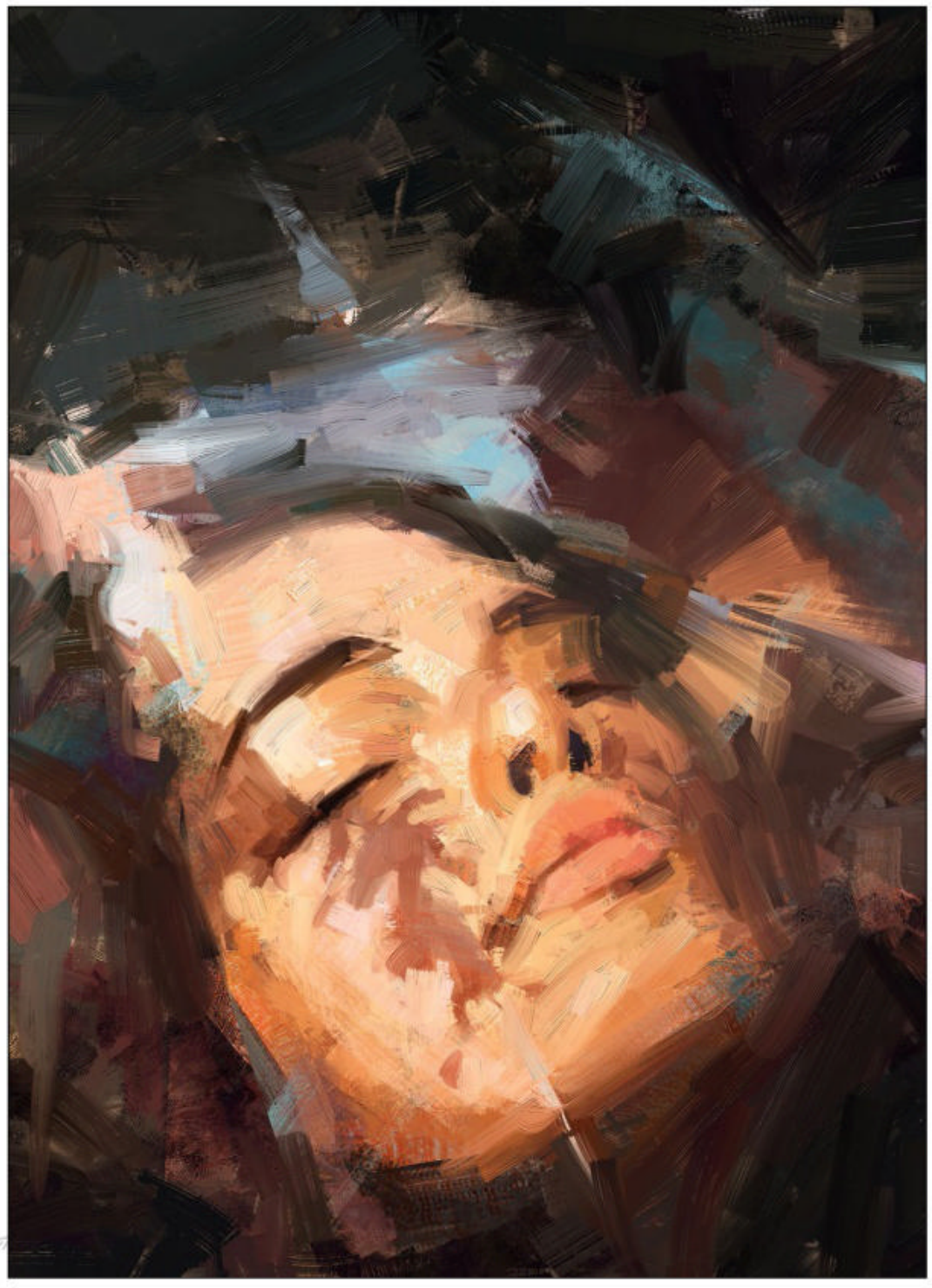
danielibanez.net

Unlike many other digital painting applications, ArtRage allows for on-canvas paint interaction in a way that is very accurate to real oil painting. ArtRage lets you simulate this wet-on-wet painting technique with thick impasto or smooth brushwork. Today I want to show you some of my favourite tools for wet-on-wet oil painting in ArtRage.



1 FIND THE COLOUR IN THE LIGHT

Have you ever seen an artist that uses just white to lighten and black to darken? The highlights get chalky and the blacks feel flat. Not good! As I said before, I love to look for colour in the shadows and the highlights.

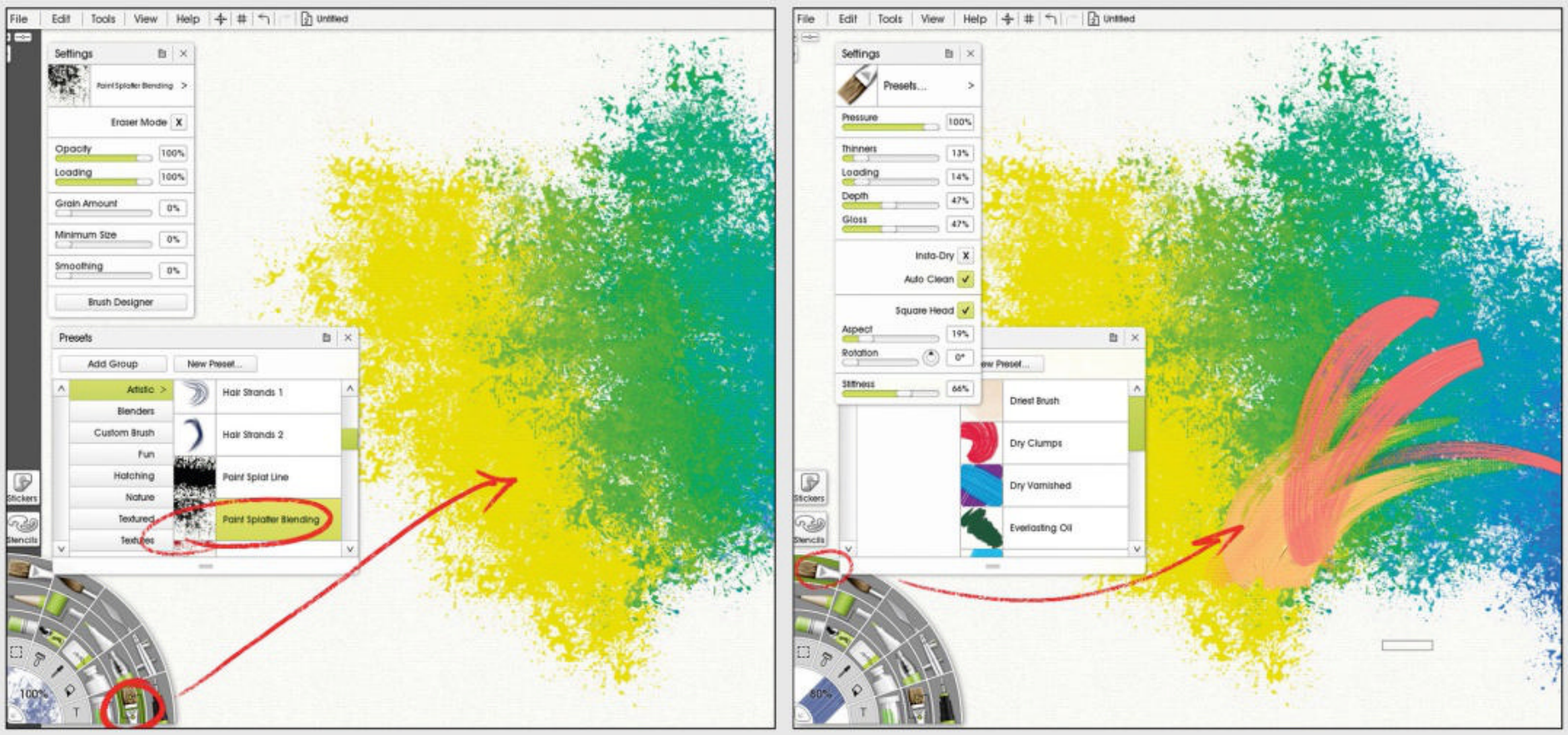


2 COLOUR INSPIRATION – SOROLLA

When I stood in the Joaquin Sorolla Museum in Madrid, I was standing in one of my art Meccas. I have loved studying his paintings since I was very young. I love how much colour he finds in the shadows. His use of colour across his entire canvas, through shadow and light, fills me with excitement to paint. There's something else about his paintings that grabs attention, and it's the same thing that grabs me when I look at a John Singer Sargent or Vincent van Gogh canvas. It's the quality of the paint. It's the way that the paint crashes into other paint strokes and the intermixing of tone and hue in surprising and beautiful ways... The paint comes alive!

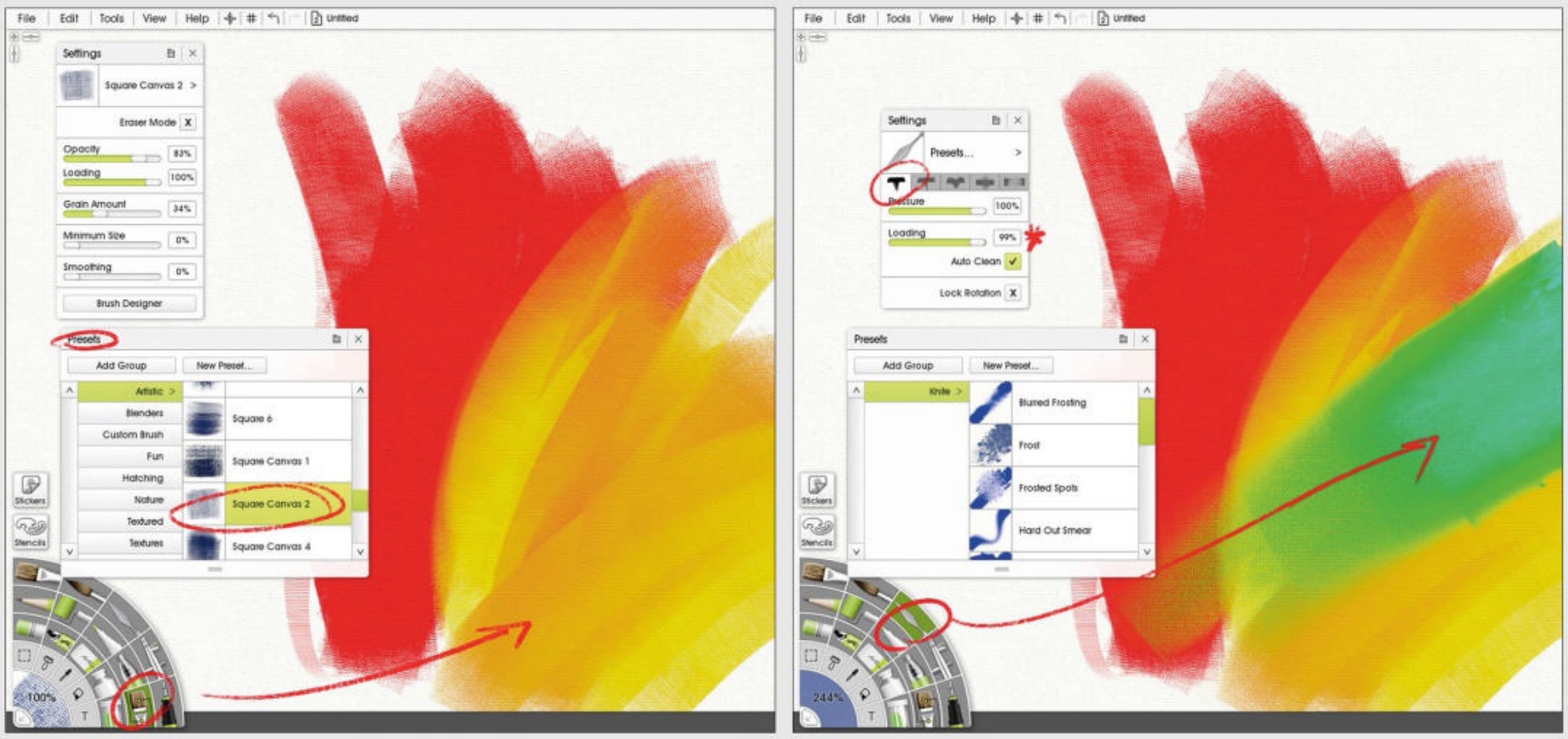
3 TOOLS THAT BLEND!

The default oil brush is great for crashing paint strokes into other paint strokes for interesting interactions. You can play with those default settings or with some of the settings I shared in last month's tutorial. You can also check out my YouTube channel for a bunch of different options for various effects. Here are some other great tools for naturalistic colour blending in ArtRage Vitae:



A Paint Splatter Blending

The Custom Brush tool is exclusive to the desktop version of ArtRage. It is a fantastic tool. In addition to allowing you to create your own brushes, the software comes packed with a lot of useful options and presets. The first of these I want to highlight is a preset called 'Paint Splatter Blending' (find this under the Artistic category in the Presets panel). I love to use this tool as an underpainting layer. It seamlessly merges disparate colours effortlessly. I like to coat the canvas with the base layer of this brush, then apply oil brushstrokes directly on top. The paint blending with this tool and the oil brush creates a strong effect. Try adding oil paint strokes on top!



B Square Canvas 2

Another tool in the Artistic presets is the 'Square Canvas 2' brush. This is a must-use brush! Give it a try and explore the way the colours merge and blend. You can pull soft and hard edges by simply varying pressure and stroke size... You would be missing out if you are not using this tool! You can also try adding a 'loaded' palette knife on top.

4 CANVAS TEXTURE MATTERS

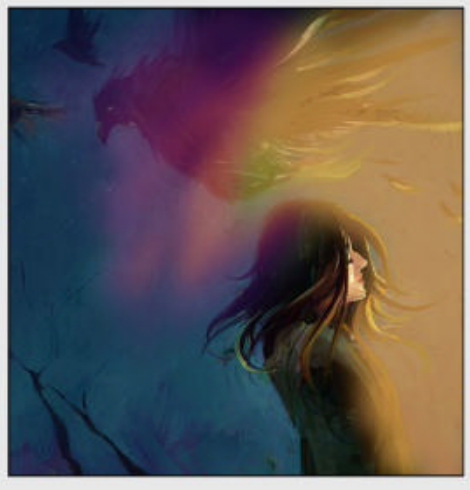
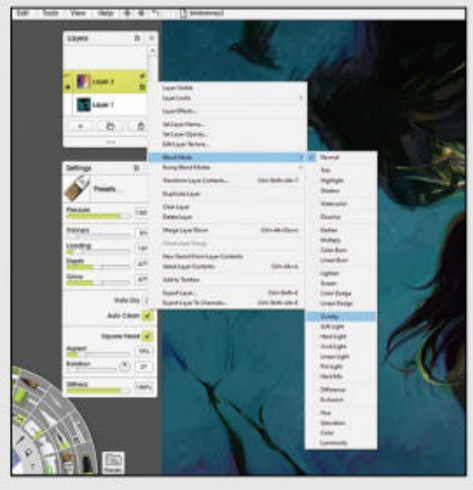
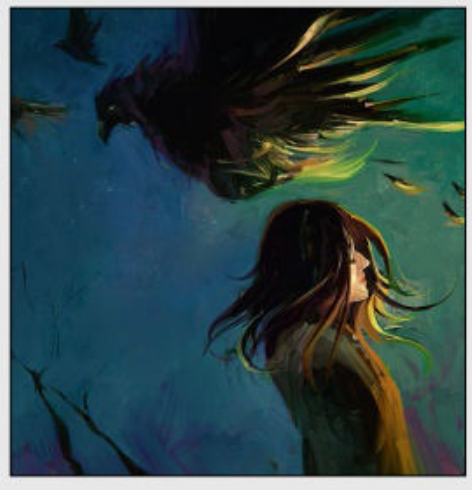
Canvas settings in most digital software allow you to change resolution or size. But in this software program we can also adjust canvas texture. This is very powerful because the simulated texture of the canvas directly changes the way your tools will record a mark. The more textured the canvas is, the more bumpy or textured your brushstroke will be. Depending on the specific texture you choose, you will be incorporating that texture into every stroke you put down. You can set individual textures to individual layers, you can change textures mid painting, and you can alter the scale or roughness of a texture.

My favourite texture is the 'rough paper' texture, and my second favourite is the 'smooth canvas'. I find that these are the most versatile surfaces to work on, and they look the best for my style of painting.

> "You'll be incorporating that texture into every stroke you put down"

5 ADD COLOUR WITH BLEND MODES

One of the fastest ways to enhance colour and lighting is through the use of blend modes. I will almost always use a blend mode or two to properly finish a painting. I like to use blend modes for no-risk experimentation and strategic exaggeration. When I use a blend mode it's for the purpose of exaggerating the light – the feeling, intensity and colour of light.

Enhance the composition

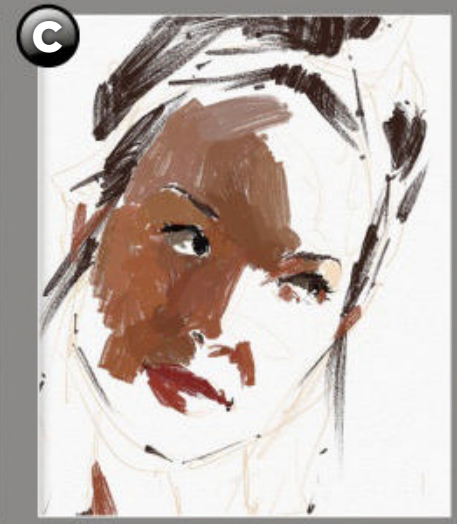
Here you can see my paint application when the layer is set to Normal; when the layer is set to Soft Light; and when the layer is set to Overlay. I will cycle through these blend modes first. But I will also indulge a few other options before deciding what to do. Lastly, I will use the Opacity slider to adjust how much of this effect is going to be present in my final painting. Using blend modes like an adjustment layer in Photoshop is a fun way to enhance a compositionally sound image. I would never try to play with adjustment layers or blend modes as a way to fix a painting that doesn't work – but I definitely use blend modes to enhance an already functioning composition.

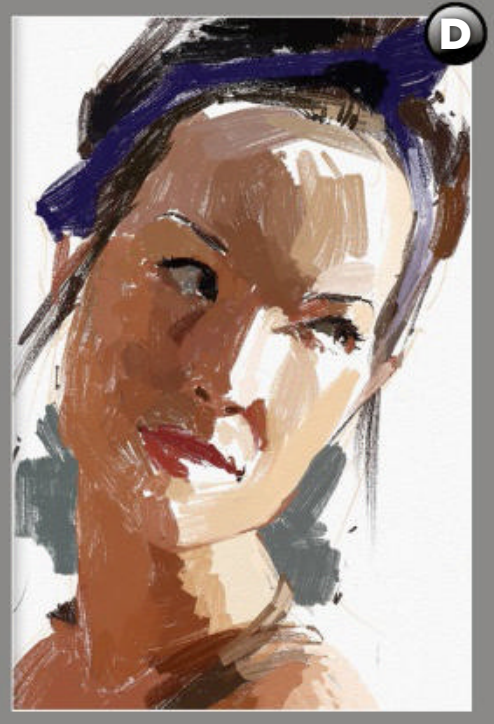
6 PORTRAIT PAINTING FOR MOBILE

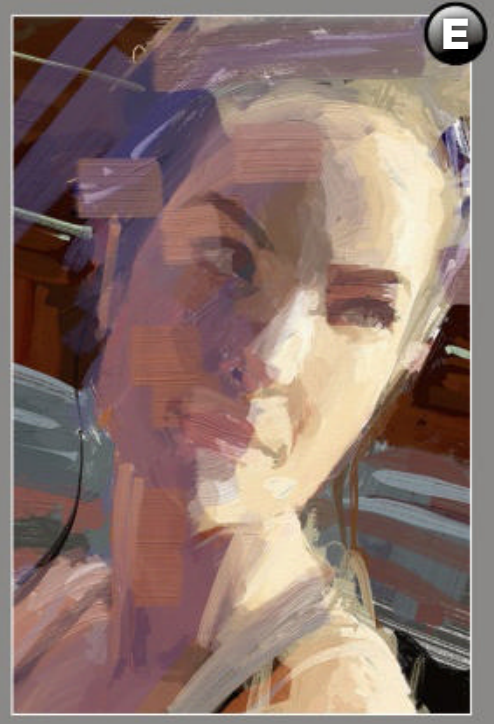
Let's put some of these concepts to work in a quick portrait painting!

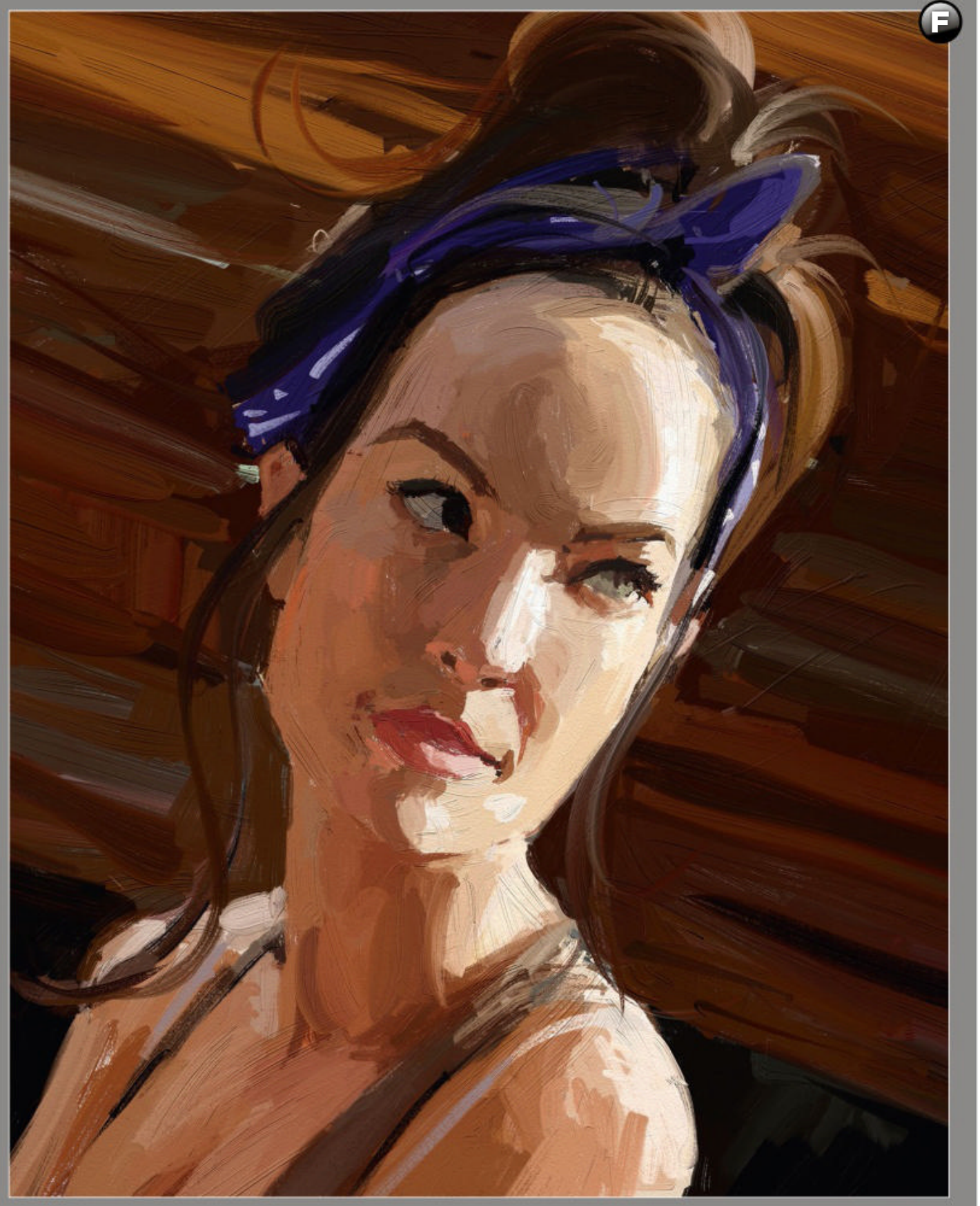
Many of these features can also be used in the mobile version of ArtRage Vitae, so here is a step-by-step portrait painting done on my iPad Pro.

(**A**) Create a canvas with a nice paper texture. (**B**) Lay in the big shapes with simple, angular lines and begin to block the dark values. (**C**) Work towards covering the canvas with local colour. (**D**) Block in the lighter values as you finish with the darks and midtones. (**E**) Add a new layer, drop the opacity to around 50% and paint in colourful light and shadow on top of your portrait. Now change the blend mode of that layer to Overlay. (**F**) Finalise the painting!









Rebelle

PAINT VIBRANT PORTRAITS

Get to know the new Rebelle 5 as **Georg Ireland** paints the composer Puccini in the style of Spontaneous Realism

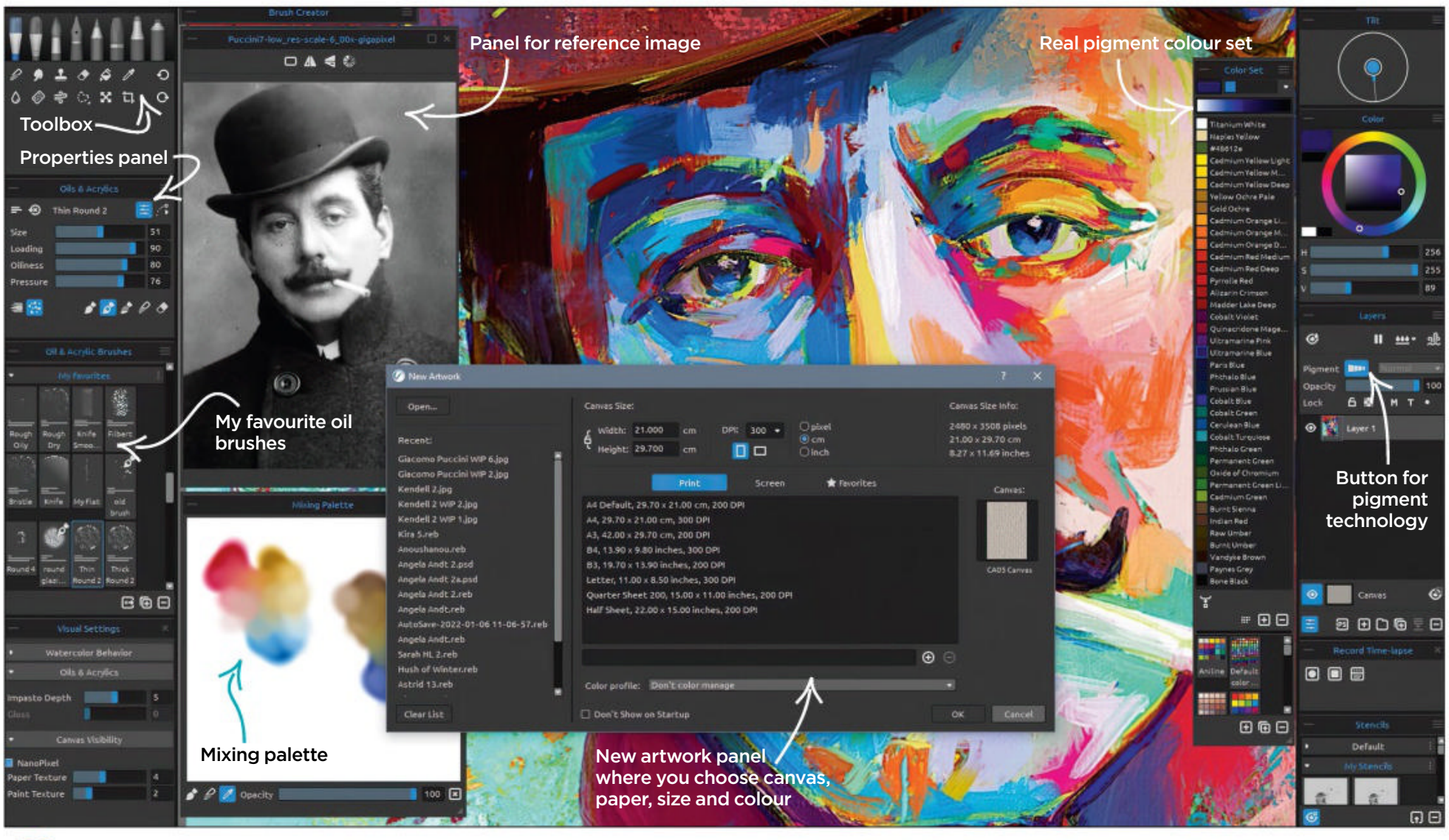
Artist **PROFILE**

Georg Ireland
LOCATION: Germany

Georg Ireland is a freelance artist who discovered digital painting for himself a couple of years ago. Since then he tries to transfer traditional painting techniques into the digital medium.
www.georg-ireland.de

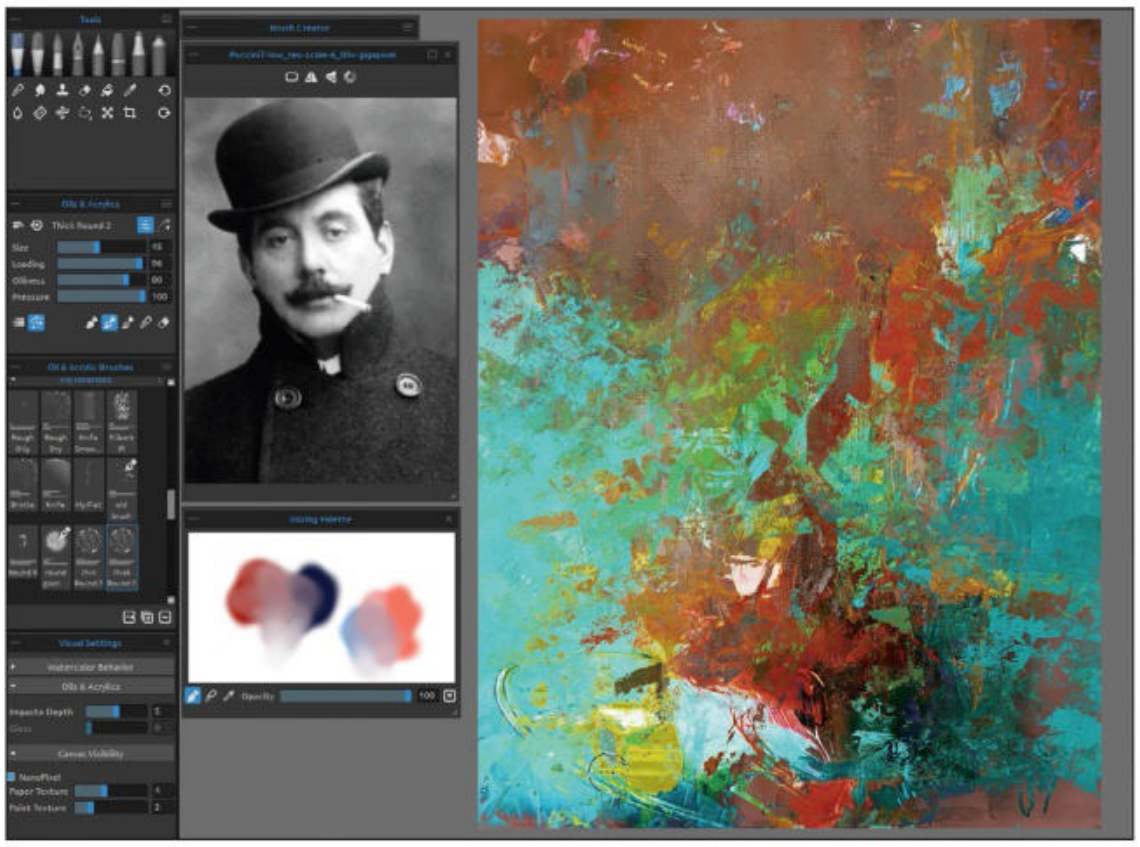
When you open Rebelle, you have a complete art studio in front of you with all the possibilities to let your creativity run wild. All media and tools are ready, whether it's watercolour, oil or acrylic, or dry media tools. You just have to select the appropriate surface, choosing between different canvas textures and papers, hot or cold pressed, rough or fine, handmade or exotic. With the right brushes and tools that you can customise to your needs in many ways, you're ready to go, the paint never runs out.

Over the years Rebelle has become more and more my go-to software when it comes to digital painting. With the new Rebelle 5, Escape Motions has managed to set a milestone in digital painting with its new Pigment Technology. Until now, in Rebelle as in any other painting software, I had the problem that when mixing colours, they tended more and more to grey; the images ended up looking grey and dull, and I then had to use filters and effects to try and freshen up the colours. I think this is a problem that every digital painter knows. With the new Pigment Technology in Rebelle 5, mixing colours is pure joy. The colours blend as you would expect in traditional painting and are brilliant and vibrant. Even mixed greys are bursting with energy and vibrancy.



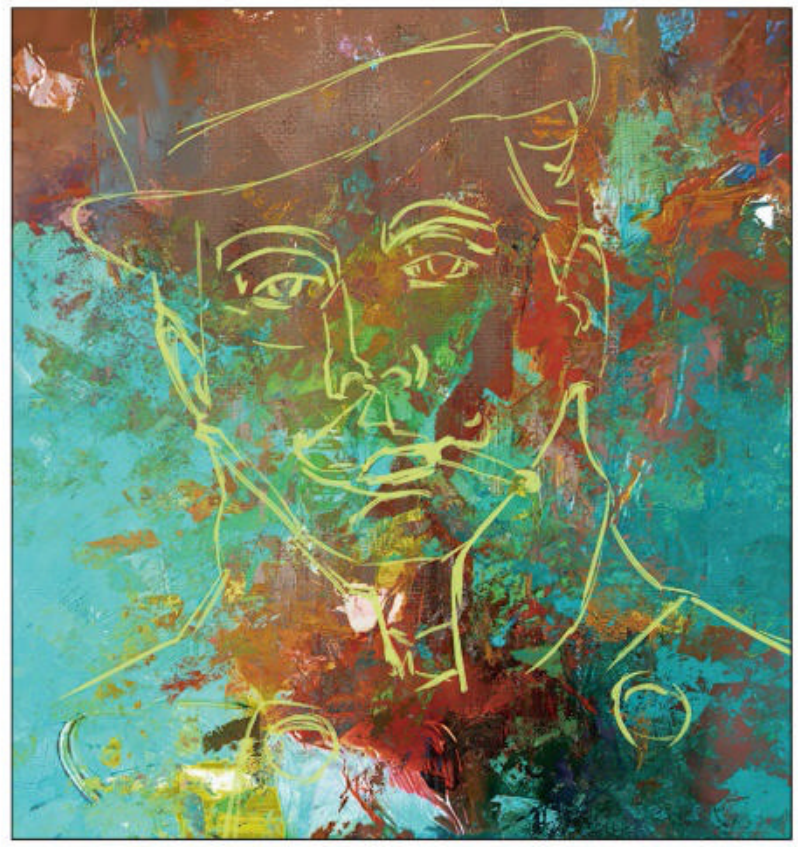
1 My settings in Rebelle 5

In digital oil and watercolour painting, I use the standard brushes in Rebelle almost exclusively, with quick access to my favourite brushes in a separate category. I usually just change the parameters in the Properties panel on the fly to achieve variations in the brush stroke. The new Pigment Technology is enabled and the Real Pigment Colour Set is open.



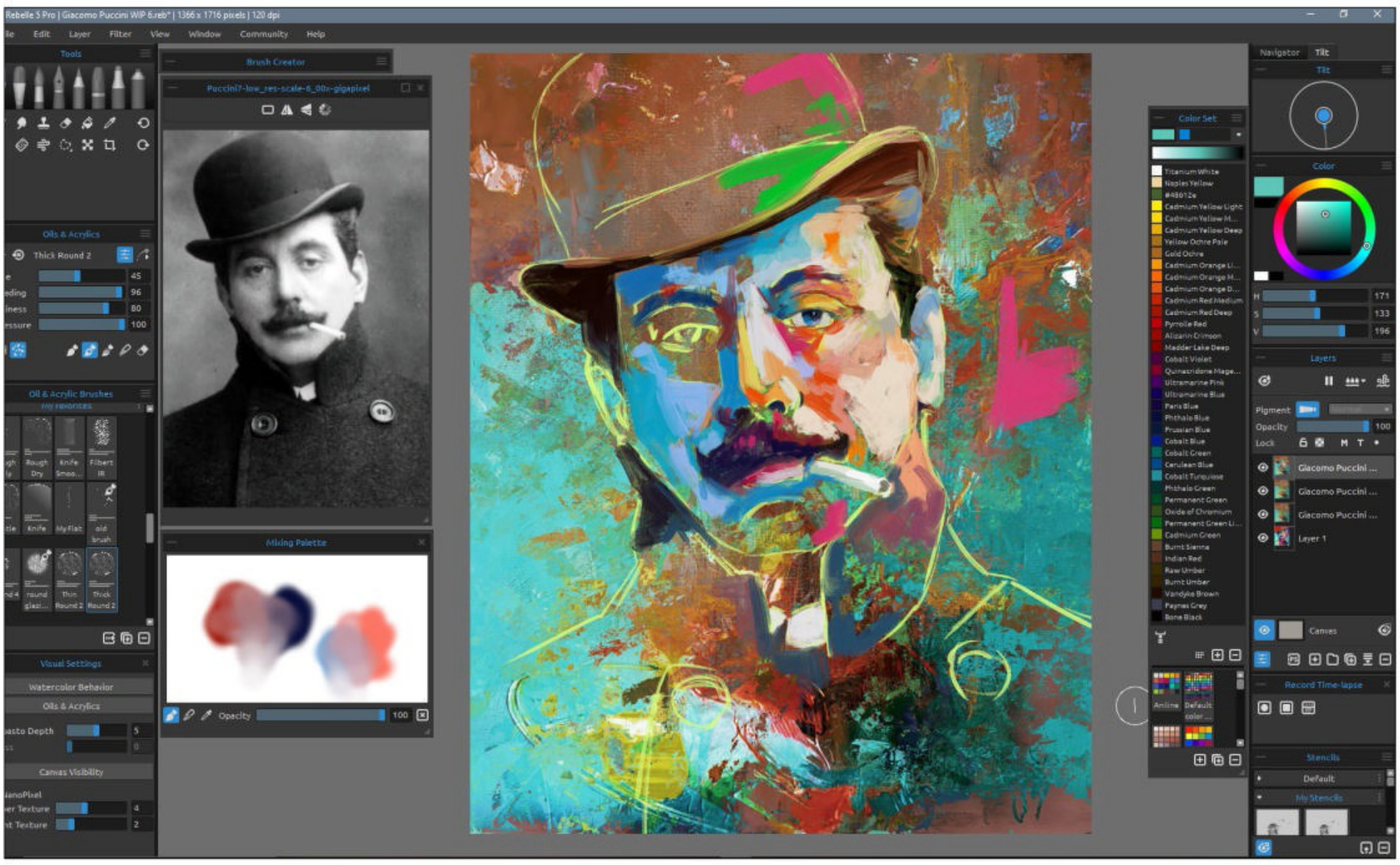
2 Crazy canvases

My paintings in the so-called Spontaneous Realism ('suddenly', 'without conscious thought', 'following an inner impulse' or 'often surprising for the environment') start with one of my 'crazy canvases'. These are prepared canvases that often arise when I try new brushes or techniques. Instead of deleting them afterwards, I prepare them and save them to reuse later on. You can download some of them for free from my blog on my website.



3 The sketch

For sketching, I like to use a round oil brush (Thin Round 2), which paints very fluidly and allows you to vary the brush stroke (thinner or broader) depending on the pressure. Here I have painted the sketch purely by observation, but for more complicated work I also use the tracing paper tool.



4 The fun part begins

In Spontaneous Realism paintings in particular, I only use black and white photos as reference images. This way I avoid the temptation of trying to paint realistic skin tones and it gives me freedom in the choice of colour. I don't really proceed with deliberation, but purely by feeling.

5 Shapes begin to emerge

At a very early stage, I liked how the bowler hat was defined only by the curved underside and a line at the top left. I decided then not to elaborate on the hat, but let it merge with the background. This and the implied coat collar will give the facial features support in the chaos.

6 Cleaning and tidying up

Now it's a matter of bringing everything together, clearly defining the facial features and painting over unwanted areas. At the same time, I try to create visual interest with colour blobs, patterns and drips, working with watercolour and oil brushes. You get amazing textures in Rebelle if you apply oil paint first and then watercolour on the same layer. Try it!

7 Are the values correct?

I have learned that it doesn't matter what colour I use in a portrait. Even the most exotic colour variations look 'realistic' as long as the light/dark values are right. That's why I always switch back to greyscale mode to check whether the light and shadow values are correctly readable. Just hit 'G' on the keyboard to enter greyscale mode and again to return to colour mode. At the end, I regularly have to force myself to stop, so as not to get lost in the details and overload the work.

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CREATE A CALM CYBERPUNK ILLUSTRATION

A walkthrough of **aurahack**'s art process, sketching, blocking out and polishing this beautiful illustration of a cyberpunk future

Artist PROFILE

aurahack
LOCATION: Canada

Former game developer-turned freelance artist that draws a lot of neat stuff and plays a lot more Final Fantasy XIV.
aurahack.jp

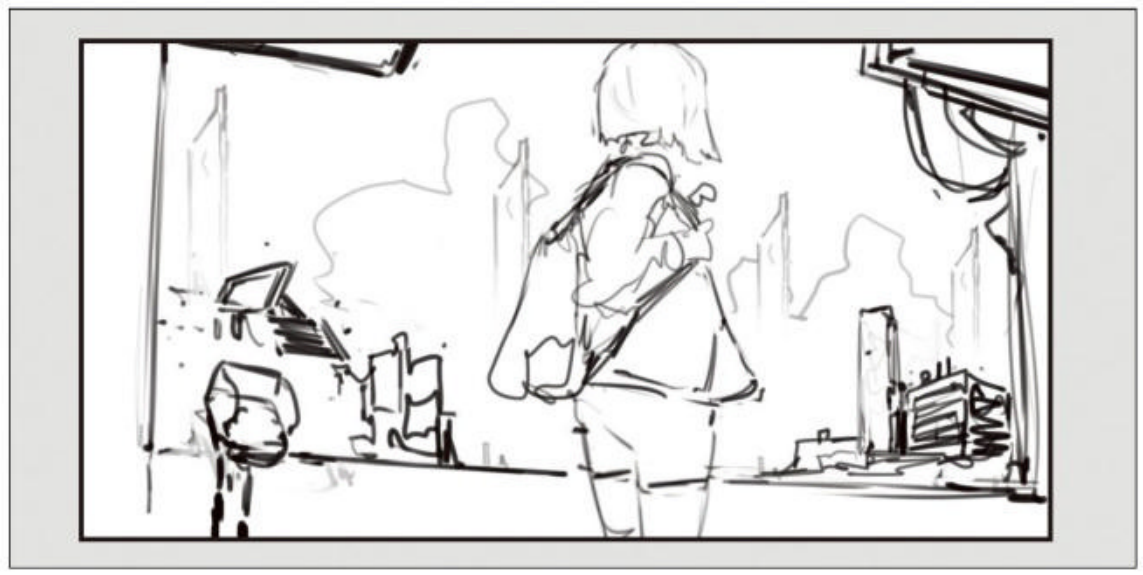
GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Hi! I'm aurahack, and I mostly draw girls, cityscapes, and abstract art of both. My process is largely self-taught and freeform, and I'm colour-blind with a background in strict illustration, so this guide will let you see how I sketch out my scene, how I approach colour, how I design cityscapes and characters, illustrate them, and make the scene work together to emphasise the 'sense of place' that I think is important to the art I make.

My style of illustration and process isn't especially technical – I don't use a lot of magic tricks or quick shortcuts – so this tutorial will be more about my thought process from start to finish than strict technical tricks. Most of what I paint, I accomplish with the same two basic brushes (included with this tutorial) and it's more about letting inspiration and improvisational painting carry me to a concise and finished piece. I also often feature characters as the focal point of my art, sort of as a cipher for the viewer, to enable them to imagine themselves in that space. It's a different approach to rendering what is generally very flashy subject matter, but my hope is that insight on this perspective will enable you see a new approach to making digital art/cityscapes, and will inspire you to explore new ideas.

1 Sketch it out

My sketching process is haphazard and can take anywhere between an hour to a day or two. Sometimes it just takes a while to feel out what you're going for. Focusing on your goals is key. I want a focus on the character, the view to feel like I'm 'in' the scene, and for the scene to breathe.

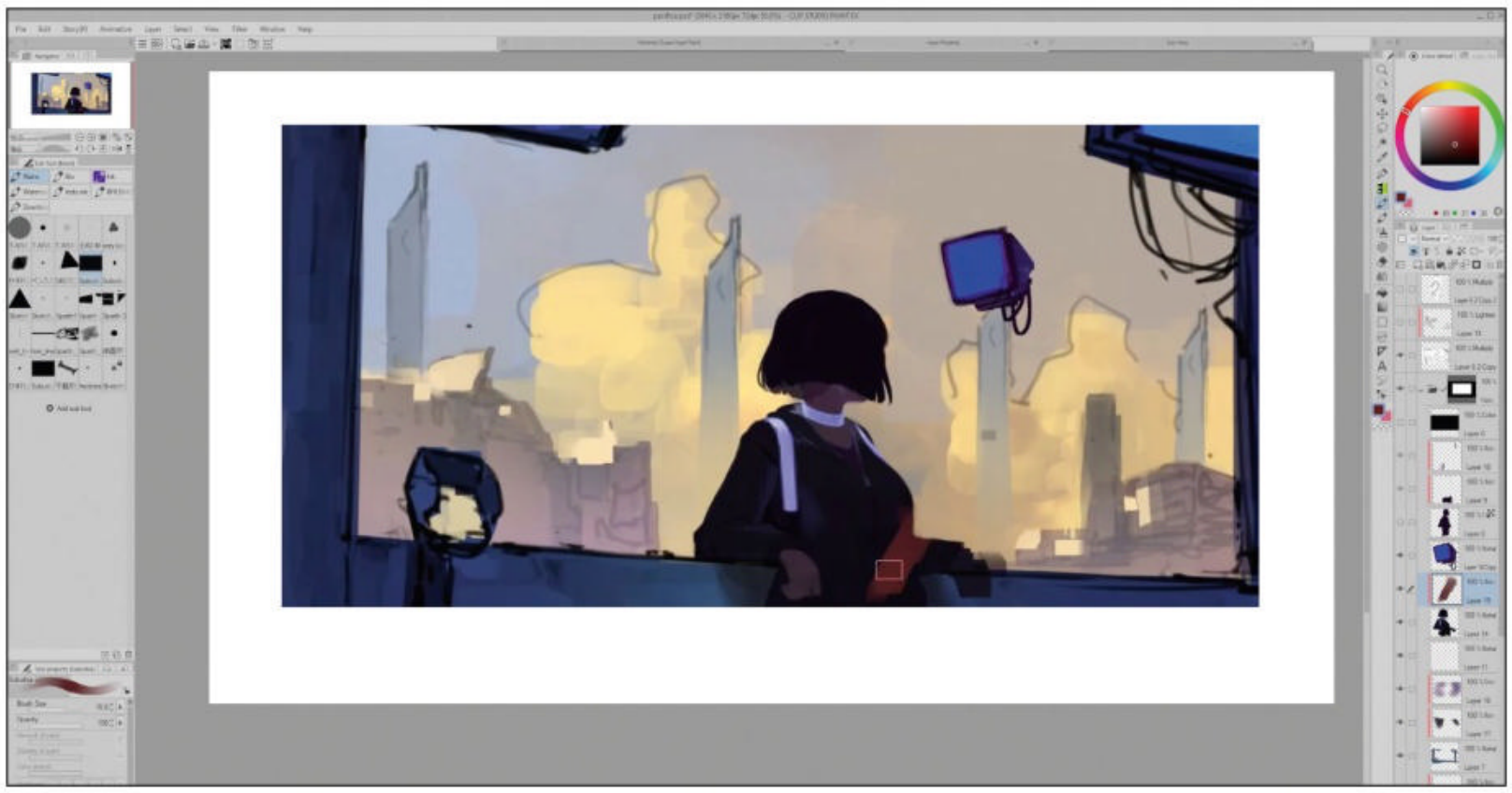


2 Commit to it

Don't be afraid to ditch what you have and start over. Sometimes, that's just the process. Here, I form a clearer idea of what I want and even with lineart, you need to trust your gut and know which sketch is 'the one'. I sketch at a lower resolution here to not get lost in detail.

3 Build the mood

Next I think about colours and contrast. What mood am I aiming for? Something sunset-like, implying the world is winding down? Or dawn, portraying the world getting ready to go for the day? Detail isn't important right now; I block it out roughly with a simple square brush.



4 Colour in the details

My process for this is a little weird but I go at random and trust my instinct. Colour theory helps a lot and so does the blocking out stage. When I start thinking about details, I splash in random colours. If it visually works, I build from it. If not, I undo and try something else.

RESOURCES
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

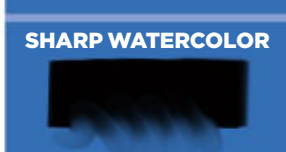
CUSTOM BRUSHES: EXO-M

My basic round brush. It's just a slightly textured version of the default round brush in CSP.

SUBURBIA

A rectangular brush I use for blocking out shapes and painting.

SHARP WATERCOLOR



A smear brush I have mapped to Ctrl for when I'm doing quick smearing of paint/linework.

5 Flash of inspiration

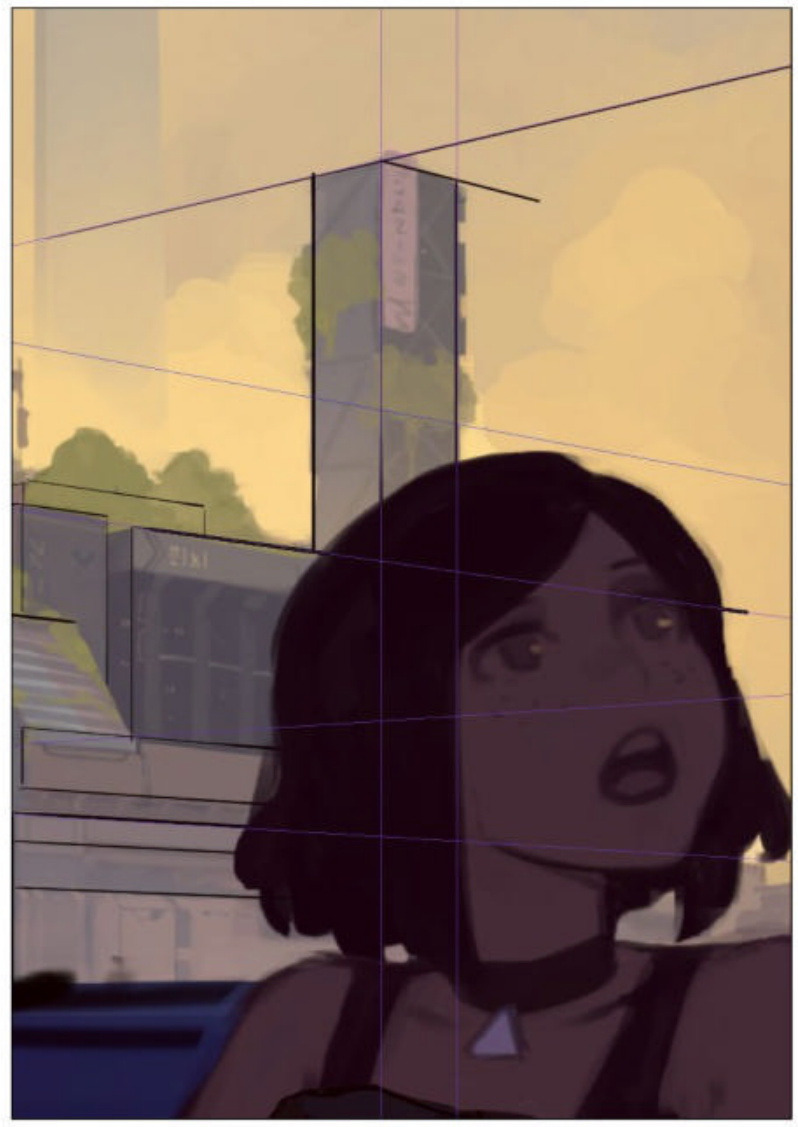
Sometimes a great idea just shows up for you. I got coffee over lunch with my wife and saw two girls outside the shop, one sitting down next to the other. It was the exact feeling I wanted in this painting, so I swap the robot out for an actual friend for our girl.

6 A little sketch details

Now that I'm happy with what I want the scene to look like, I start detailing a bit more. I'm still working at a lower resolution, but I want to get a bit more detail and ideas in about particular shapes and what details to think about later.

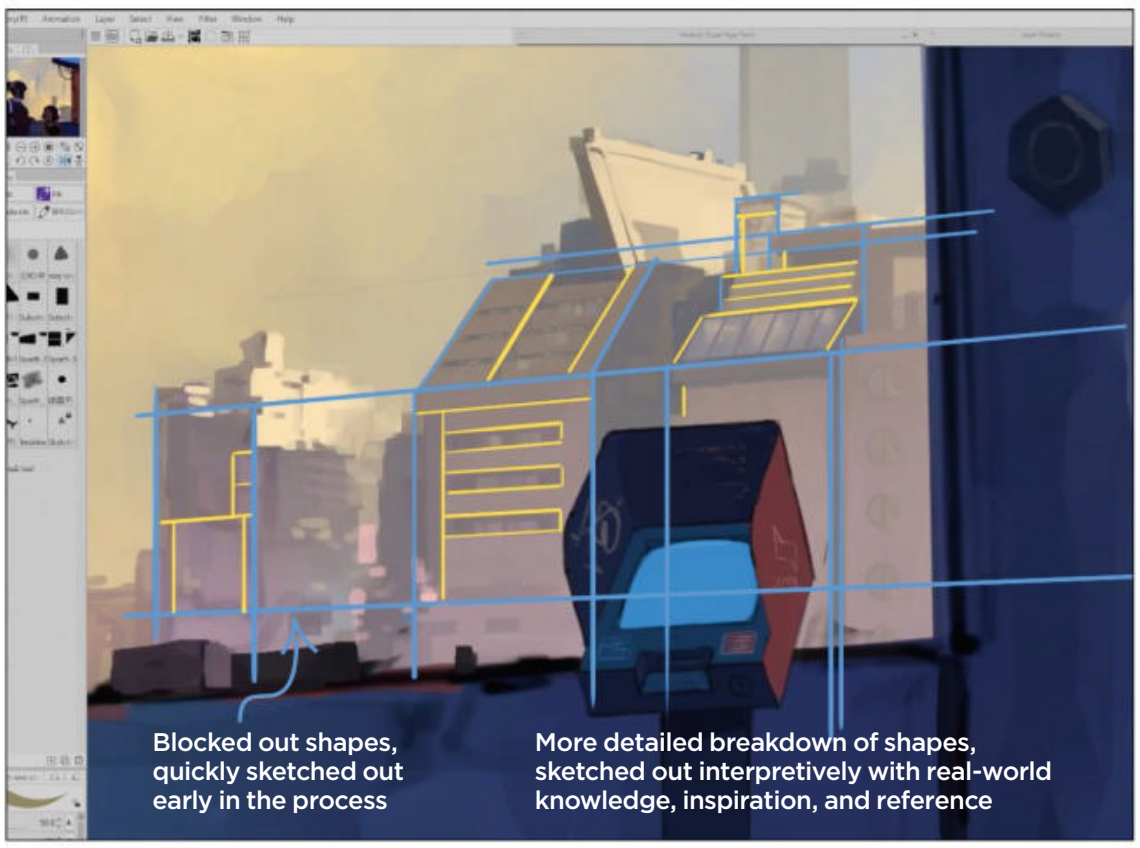
7 Actual illustration time!

Now that I'm happy with the sketch, I scale it up to its full resolution and start painting. I try to get lost in the process here. I put on good music and let the painting carry me to get into that good 'zen' mode of painting.



8 Deciding what to paint

I break down the scene's elements into blocks. Sets of buildings, backgrounds, railings etc. Sometimes I chip away at one and swap to another for a bit, sometimes I do one from start to finish. I use Clip Studio's built-in Perspective Tools when I need help and use reference if I'm unsure about something.



9 Interpretive buildings

Doing futuristic cityscapes can be challenging because, well, it's not really supposed to make sense. I used to live in Japan so I try and channel a lot of my old neighbourhoods and balance that against what shapes seem interesting or feel 'right' for the scene. Like colouring inside the lines, but with architecture.

10 LCD wear

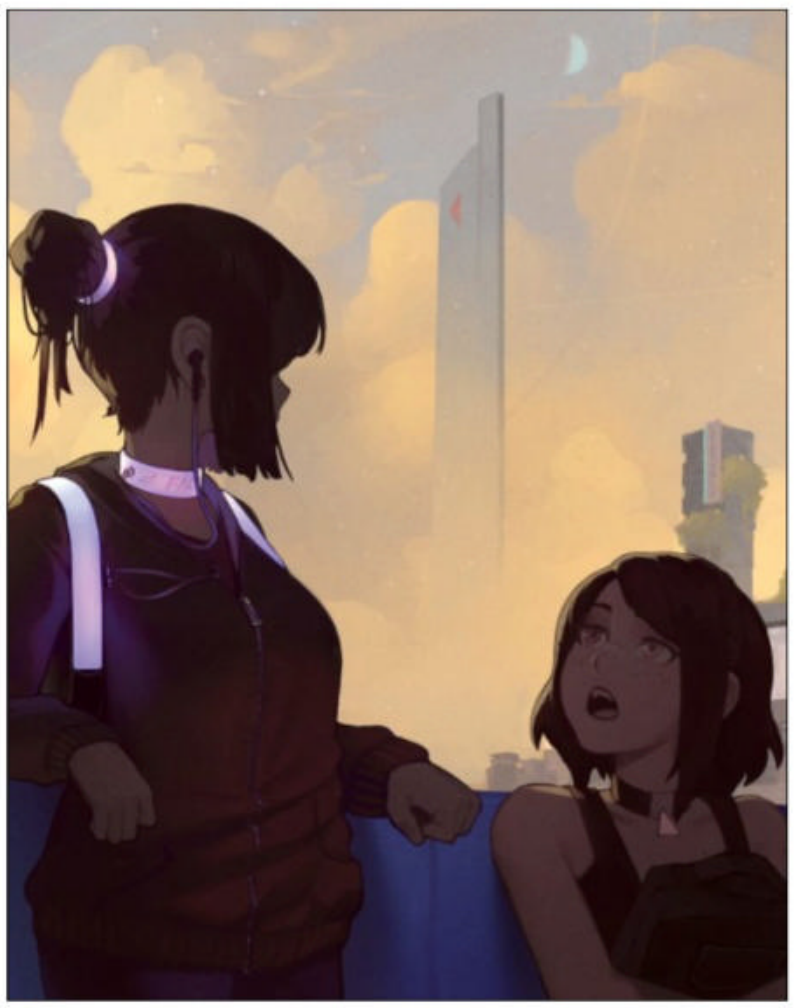
I love putting screens on clothing, it's a fun pseudo-futuristic look. Rendering it isn't difficult but it requires an understanding of how LCD panels work in real life. How do they look up close, and at different viewing angles? Use perspective warp tools to bend an RGB/LCD pattern to the desired shape and using bright light/glow layer styles to replicate the light bleeding through the material, making the LCD display unviewable at low/extreme angles. Early 'curved screen' smartphones (where the screen would bend over the edges on the side) have this effect and are a good source of reference!

11 Final details

With most of my scene finished, I think about the smaller things. Signage, ships, debris, contrails in the sky – things that make the world seem like it moves around my characters. Too much of that can overwhelm the focus of the painting though, mood is still the key element here.

12 Feedback

With the illustration almost done, I try and sit on it and sometimes ask for feedback. Just sending it to a friend might make something jump out at me and go "oops, gotta fix that".



13 Post-work

With the illustration part finished, I bring the artwork into Photoshop to do final touches. Things like contrast adjustments, glow, colour balancing, noise, sharpening. I skew it all to look a bit like a photograph since it helps sell the 'sense of place' I want to capture.

14 Finish!

We're finished! I try to take a step back and let it sink in. I usually sleep on it before posting to SNS since I always catch a last-minute fix. The best part of all comes next, which is people getting to travel to another world for a little bit and seeing their reaction to it.

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

Images: Serif Artwork by Mister Lemonade

Affinity Designer 1.10

AN ARTIST'S SUITE How does Serif's affordable vector drawing app, Affinity Designer, currently fare for your print and digital design needs?

Price £47.99/$54.99 **Company** Serif **Web** www.serif.com

Although Serif has been making software since the 1980s, Affinity Designer has only been around since 2014, when Serif decided to refocus its effort on a few core design programs. Its steep trajectory since then has shown no discernible lag and this vector-based illustration and design tool remains the main industry rival to Adobe Illustrator.

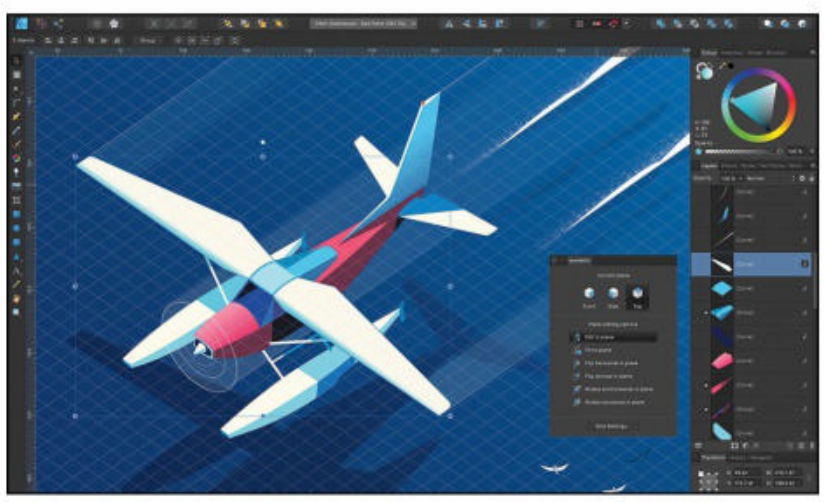
Affinity Designer remains affordable, too; at £47.99/$54.99 – a one-off payment for Windows or Mac – it costs less than many other graphic design software alternatives, especially those with a subscription model. Serif has been no slouch in terms of offering a very capable version for iPad, too. Couple that with the ability to work between both Affinity Photo and Affinity Publisher, and you've got a very substantial yet compact suite for designers and digital artists.

SNAPPY PERFORMANCE

Since the 1.10 update, performance has been the main focus, with Affinity Designer now capable of dealing with highly complex and heavily layered documents with ease and smoothness. Purported to be ten times faster than the 1.9 update, and able to render at 60 frames per second, it certainly seems capable of zooming and panning a document, with objects in the thousands, without any noticeable lag. Its capability of zooming over 1,000,000% means its precision and speed is ideal for large CAD-related documents, for instance.

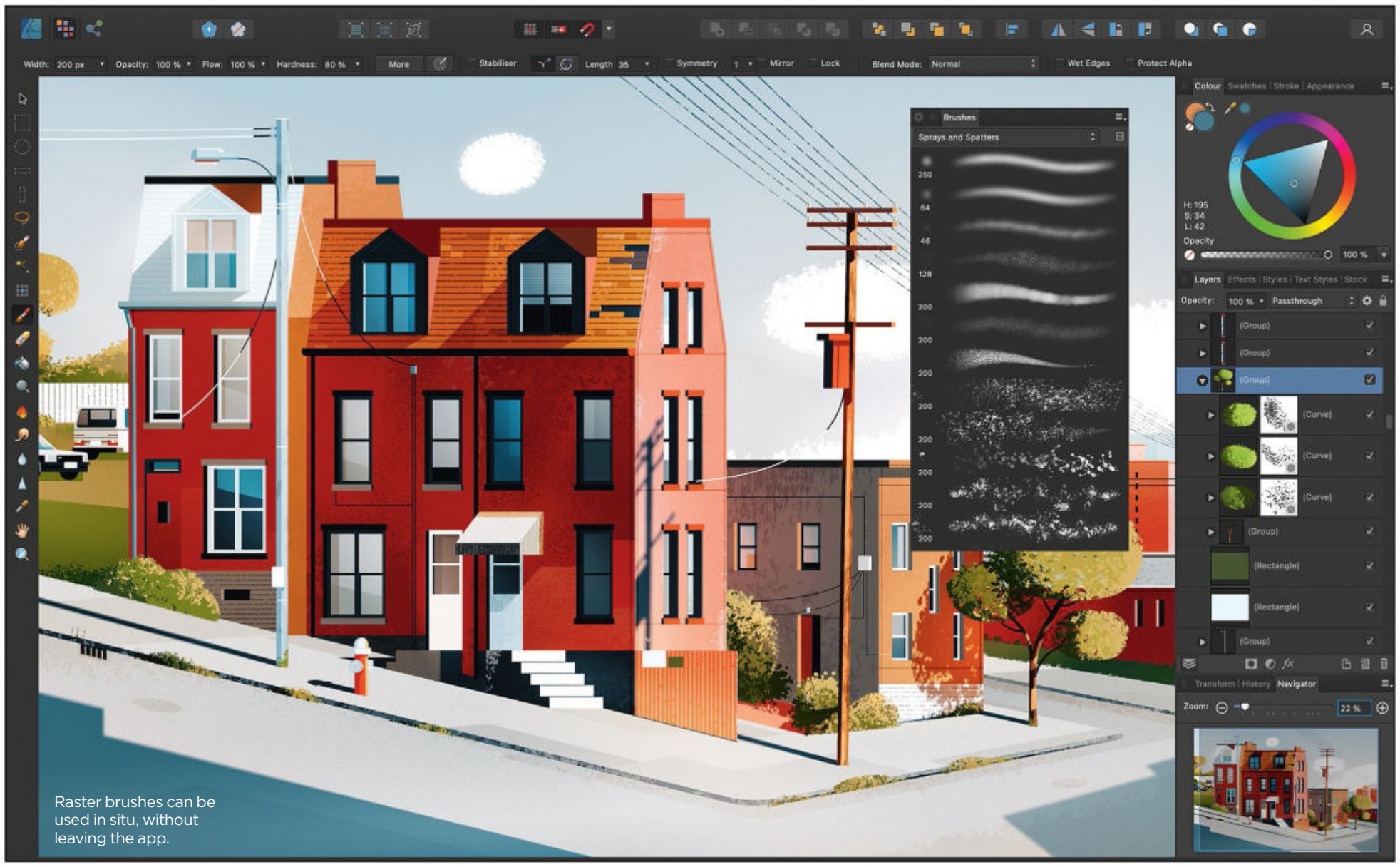
Even if you're not creating or importing huge documents, the way Designer reacts and moves to commands and actions is clear and makes the experience much smoother. As a Mac user not running on a M1 machine, Illustrator, for example, can be more of a game of devout patience. Affinity Designer feels a lot snappier.

Affinity Designer is certainly not as expressive a program as Corel Painter, but its vector brushes are not to be sniffed at. The ability to tweak, edit and reassign different brushes to



Comprehensive grid and smart snapping options with the Isometric panel.

Artwork by Peter Greenwood



Raster brushes can be used in situ, without leaving the app.

Artwork by Maciek Blazniak

strokes gives you more than enough wiggle room, so to speak. Of course this all becomes a lot more fun and expressive with the use of a stylus and drawing tablet. The ability to manipulate pressure sensitivity and gestural mark-making give you more control in variance and tone.

Although not a new feature, the ability to switch 'personas' in Affinity Designer only adds to the smoothness of the app, and arguably the whole suite's usability. While in Affinity Designer, you can switch from the Designer persona (vector) to the Pixel persona (raster/bitmap) without changing apps. Not only does this help with your workflow, but with the raster brushes in situ, it also enables you to add that much maligned texture or 'noise' otherwise missing from vector art.

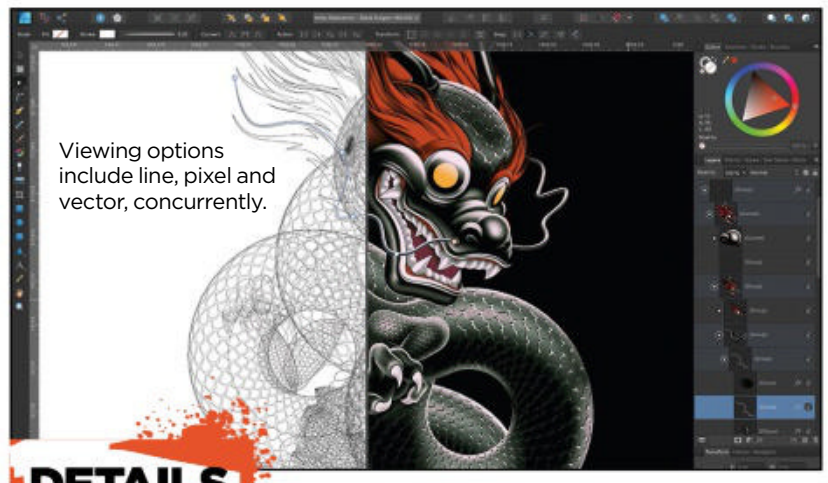
Although there haven't been many additions in terms of tools, for versions 1.10 onwards, users will no doubt notice its increased speed, even in launching the app, and its ability to relaunch any accidental closes where you left off. What it still misses, and this is only really relevant if you're used to Adobe products, is there's no object warping, or image tracing. There is a slightly more round-about way of blending objects and mesh gradients, though.

1.9 updates included being able to select multiple objects by colour, type, stroke weight, transparency and more; and a nice touch where you can rotate the document canvas with CMD/CTRL+mouse scroll wheel.

> **Affinity Designer is now capable of dealing with highly complex and heavily layered documents with ease**

IS IT WORTH BUYING?

Affinity Designer is a capable and reliable piece of software. Like similar apps, it does have a learning curve associated with it, but the sheer quantity of easily accessible tutorials should have you creating stunning vector art in no time at all.



Viewing options include line, pixel and vector, concurrently.

Artwork by Ierko Radovancic

DETAILS

Features new to version 1.10

- Alt/Option-dragging files gives placement options via Place Images panel

Improved performance with:

- Heavily layered documents
- Embedded documents
- Low-memory conditions

Resource Manager improvements:

- Relink multiple missing 'same folder' images in one operation
- Turn on/off columns
- File Type column
- EPS files can be linked

Rating

★★★★★

Aside from Illustrator, Affinity Designer still has little competition, though there are a few Illustrator alternatives worth mentioning. There's Sketch, a popular tool which offers a relatively cheap subscription, though is native to the Mac only; Inkscape is free and open source but lacks the pro speed and depth of Affinity Designer; and CorelDRAW, packed with features but a step removed from the usability of Illustrator and Designer.

The appeal of Affinity Designer is thus: it's slightly simpler than Illustrator, less cluttered, way more affordable, easy to get to grips with, and is a high performing piece of design software open to general users and professionals.

The comic is full to the brim with gorgeously illustrated, exhilarating action sequences.

Batman ’89

INTO THE BURTONVERSE Discover an action-packed story set in Tim Burton’s version of the Batman universe

Writer Sam Hamm **Artist** Joe Quinones **Publisher** DC Comics

There are plenty of ‘What if’ questions in the history of superhero blockbusters, and one of the biggest centres on what could have happened if Tim Burton had continued helming Batman movies (as was the original plan with 1995’s Batman Forever).

New six-issue miniseries Batman ’89 doesn’t exactly answer that question, but it does pick up the story of the Michael Keaton version of the character for more darkly Gothic, action-packed heroics. It also finally pays off the Burton movies’ setup relating to ambitious DA Harvey Dent (played by Billy Dee Williams), who here becomes the focus as his quest to reform Gotham turns him into the villainous Two-Face.

Three issues in, it’s fast-paced and frequently enjoyable – especially with its new version of Robin, here portrayed as a black teenager from a run-down neighbourhood – but what’s strange is how, well, un-strange it is. The script, from Sam Hamm (who wrote the original screenplay of the 1989 movie), does a good job of capturing familiar characters, tech and locations from the Burton films (including the return of Michelle Pfeiffer’s Catwoman), but the campier, more grotesque edges of Burton’s vision have been largely excised.

Follow the adventures of Michael Keaton’s version of Batman in this six-part series.

> **Plenty of action and twists, but only a light dusting of stylised weirdness**

Instead, the tone is more realistic and character-based, packing in plenty of action and twists, but only a light dusting of stylised weirdness. Batman ’89 remains a lively, entertaining read, enhanced by Joe Quinones’s energetic art – but it does feel more like a reboot instead of a proper continuation of Burton’s bonkers approach.

RATING ★★★★☆

The story adds a supernatural twist to the horrific realities of World War 2.

Out

Writer Rob Williams
Artist Will Conrad
Publisher AWA Studios/Upshot

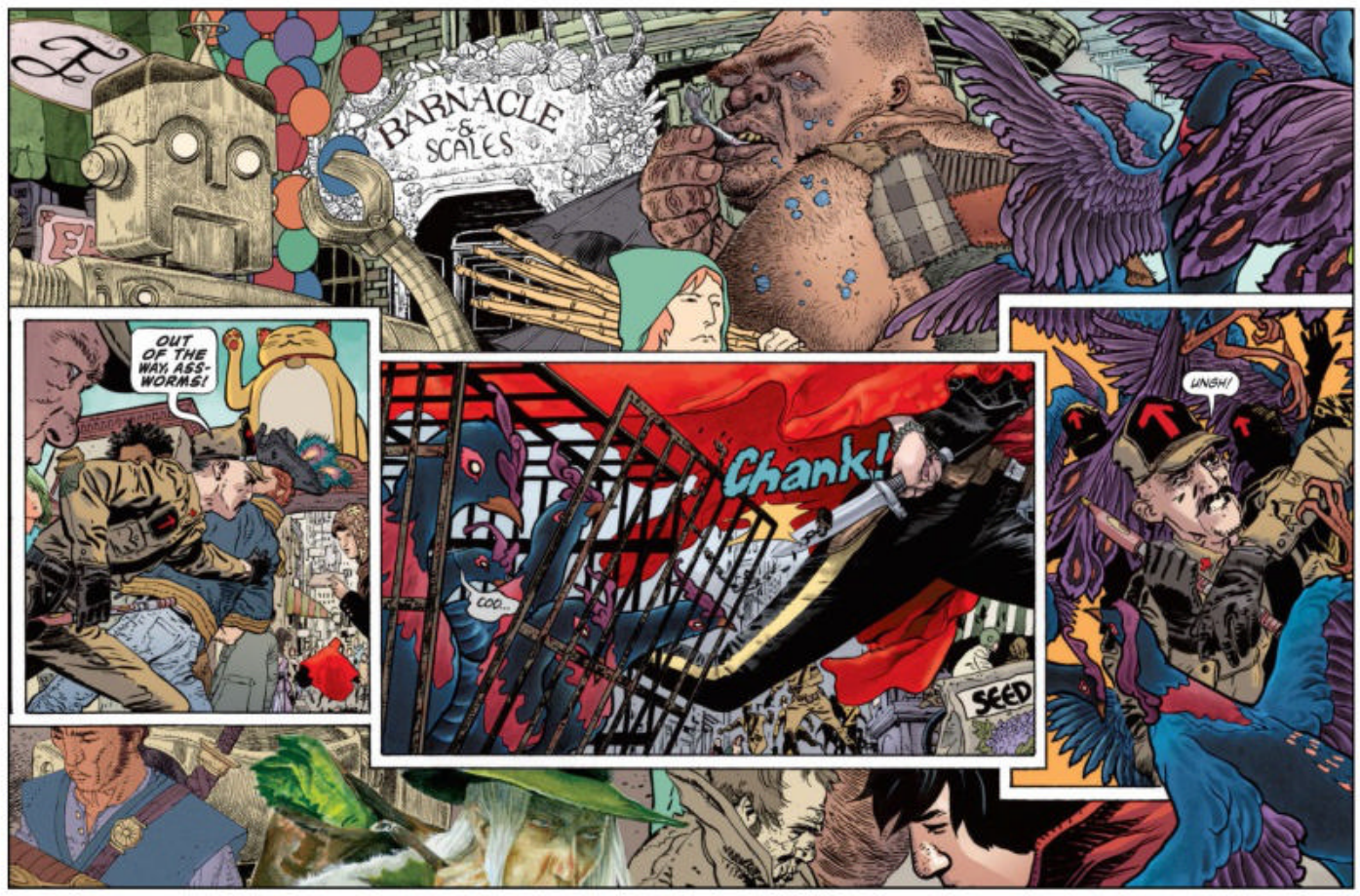
With its title's multiple references to either the release of an ancient vampire-esque creature, the imprisoned Second World War soldiers' attempts to escape from their mountaintop prison camp, or even main character Nocona's repressed sexuality, this enthralling horror thriller works on many levels.

A Comanche code-talker, Nocona makes for a refreshingly different central protagonist, as his ability with languages not only allows him to communicate with the nefarious creature – which Nazi Kommandant Ludin has imprisoned in a supernaturally charged pit – but also alienates him from his fellow POWs, who suspect him of being in league with the Germans.

Set in Czechoslovakia during the final months of the war, the book gradually ratchets up tension over the first three issues. You get a sense of the world closing in, in more ways than one, as the Nazis resort to desperate measures to combat the rapidly approaching Allied forces. Meanwhile the British and American soldiers bicker among themselves, constructing an escape tunnel that in the series' final two instalments will surely lead them somewhere terrible.

Enhanced by Marco Lesko's evocative colours, Will Conrad's detailed, expressive art has an aptly classical feel. In this war comic, the worst horrors are not only human.

RATING ★★★★★



Echolands

WIDESCREEN Feast your eyes on the dazzling, immersive visuals as you delve into the full-throttle adventures of Hope Redhood

Writers JH Williams III, W Haden Blackman **Artist** JH Williams III **Publisher** Image Comics

This new ongoing series hails from writer/artist JH Williams III, who's spent most of his career upending traditional comic-book visual storytelling with his painterly, detailed art. Promethea, Batwoman and The Sandman: Overture all showcased Williams' wildly experimental approach, with the action portrayed almost entirely in beautiful, inventively designed double-page spreads.

Now Williams (along with his Batwoman co-writer W Haden Blackman) is telling the story of Hope, a Red Riding Hood-esque thief in a mixed-up realm where technology, magic and mythology all live side by side. Having stolen a mysterious gem from an evil wizard, Hope is forced on the run, and these first three issues barely pause for breath between eye-opening action sequences and bursts of grisly violence.

What makes Echolands unique, however, is the publishing format, with each issue presented in a horizontal 'landscape' style. Williams' epic double-page spreads give the story a broad, cinematic sense of widescreen

scale that few other comics have attempted. Combined with this is Williams' dazzling visual design and his method of giving each character a distinctive style of their own: from the '50s horror comic look of the vampires to the Jack Kirby-influenced design of Romulus and the Transformer-esque inhabitants of Metamaru Mountain.

If there's a downside to this visual banquet, it's that it occasionally ends up drowning out the story. The full-throttle pacing doesn't give us much of a chance to properly get to know the characters. Plus, there isn't yet a clear narrative hook that would make this an immediate must-read without the opulent eye candy.

> "Echolands is a gob-smacking experience and gorgeously inventive"

Even with these flaws, Echolands is a gob-smacking experience and one of the most gorgeously inventive comics to be produced in years.

RATING ★★★★☆

Artist Pepe Larraz does a particularly fantastic job on the explosive action sequences.

X-Men

TEAMING UP A refreshing new roster of mutants assemble to save Earth from intergalactic threats

Writer Gerry Duggan **Artist** Pepe Larraz **Publisher** Marvel Comics

After founding their own living island nation Krakoa, the Merry Mutants have hardly settled down, terraforming Mars and now establishing a New York branch in a treehouse in this latest relaunch of their flagship title. And as soon as they've (quite literally) put down roots in Central Park, they're off to Kansas in #2 to battle an alien incursion, before the High Evolutionary arrives in #3.

Featuring a roster selected by reader vote, the line-up refreshingly mixes old and new, ranging from original members Cyclops and Jean Grey to classic new X-Men Sunfire and Polaris, to more recent recruits Synch and Laura Kinney's Wolverine. But with so many references to past continuity, it's difficult to shake the feeling that there are bits of the story elsewhere that we're missing. While new writer Gerry Duggan's script is punchy and action-packed, he lacks the vision of outgoing Head of X Jonathan Hickman, although a subplot involving the X-Men's resurrection technology being revealed to the public does appear promising.

> It's difficult to shake the feeling that there are bits of the story we're missing

The series' line-up features a mix of original members and newer recruits, including fan-voted additions.

Moodily coloured by Marte Gracia, Pepe Larraz's impressive art brings to mind Jim Lee's X-work; he combines dynamic linework with some imaginative layouts. So while perhaps not an ideal jumping-on point, the series should make for interesting reading once it builds momentum.

RATING ★★★☆☆

Juggling superhero responsibilities with single motherhood is guaranteed to result in chaos.

M.O.M: Mother of Madness

Writers Emilia Clarke, Marguerite Bennett
Artist Leila Leiz
Publisher Image Comics

The debut comic from Game Of Thrones actor Emilia Clarke takes cues from complicated women like Jessica Jones, but unfortunately isn't half as abrasive or compelling.

The first issue introduces us to Maya, a quirky single mum with superpowers and a painfully obvious backstory (her scientist father created an experimental medication that altered her DNA). The interesting snag is that Maya cycles through various special abilities whenever she's on her period. This leads to funny shenanigans, but robs Maya of any signature superpower.

After an exposition-heavy first act, the second issue is stronger, with a major storyline about Maya going after a secret sect of human traffickers. But while the comic's breezy and tongue in cheek, it's never that funny. And for a story so fixated on empowerment, it feels oddly retrograde for a beautiful light-skinned woman to be the main character while her black, disabled friend is relegated to a side role.

Girls do often feel like freaks when puberty hits, and M.O.M. deserves a look for paying homage to that and aiming to normalise female bodies in a light-hearted way rather than weaponising or fetishising them. But it's never as challenging, or as interesting, as it strives to be.

RATING ★★★☆☆

Volume One (of two) features 288 pages of colour and black and white strips.

UFO Comic Anthology Volume One

Writers Dennis Hooper, Alan Fennell **Artists** Various
Publisher Anderson Entertainment

As Gerry Anderson's first live action show and the sole original Anderson strip in TV Century 21's 1971 successor Countdown, UFO is an intriguing choice to launch this new reprint line. The pulpy stories neatly reflect the creepy, Cold War atmosphere of the TV series, although it's the excellent art by the likes of Brian Lewis and Martin Asbury – with John M Burns to come in volume two – which is the real star in this fantastic-looking book.

After Jon Davis's black and white opener – faithfully reproduced right down to the puzzles that are annoyingly incorporated into some pages – UFO was mostly granted either a centre or cover spread from #2 to #37, allowing Gerry Haylock's sumptuous art and often experimental layouts to appear in glorious full colour.

Like the majority of his fellow artists, Haylock neatly captures the likenesses of characters like Ed Bishop's Colonel Straker and George Sewell's second-in-command Alec Freeman, and also impressively depicts the eerie UFOs and aliens themselves.

Featuring comprehensive articles by Anderson expert Shaqui Le Vesconte and even a Dinky toy advert, the UFO Comic Anthology is an immaculately produced collection.

RATING ★★★★☆

The dark and moody artwork matches the story's tone perfectly.

Moon Knight

NIGHT PROTECTOR Without the god Khonshu as his guiding force, Marc Spector takes on a new mission as defender of night travellers

Writer Jed MacKay **Artist** Alessandro Cappuccio **Publisher** Marvel Comics

With his multiple identities and eye-catching costume, Moon Knight has always been more than just a second-rate Batman.

Now, after the Avengers have incarcerated his Egyptian god Khonshu, he's struck out on his own, setting up the Midnight Mission in one of New York's less salubrious neighbourhoods and charging himself with defending all those that travel at night. As we see in the first issue's opening moments, that includes a quartet of newly turned vampires. He subsequently takes one of them, ex-vegan Reese, under his wing.

With shades of The Sopranos, Jed MacKay intersperses the action with scenes of Mr Knight being interrogated by Dr Andrea Sterman, a superhero therapist who delves deep into his dissociative identity disorder. However, apart from a few flashbacks to Marc Spector's mercenary past, none of his other alter-egos (like taxi driver Jake Lockley) or his previous supporting cast (including ex-lover Marlene) have so far made an appearance in this new streamlined setup. And while the lunar god is indisposed, Spector learns that he's not the only Fist of Khonshu, as #3 pits him against his sinister counterpart, Hunter's Moon.

> Dr Andrea Sterman delves deep into his dissociative identity disorder

MacKay's taut script emphasises Moon Knight's spookiness, especially in a spine-chilling sequence in #2 – deftly illustrated by Alessandro Cappuccio – where he resembles Marvel's answer to the Spectre rather than the Caped Crusader. Aided by Rachelle Rosenberg's subdued colours, Cappuccio depicts Moon Knight purely in black and white, imbuing him with an otherworldliness. It's a long overdue return for this Dark Knight.

RATING ★★★★☆

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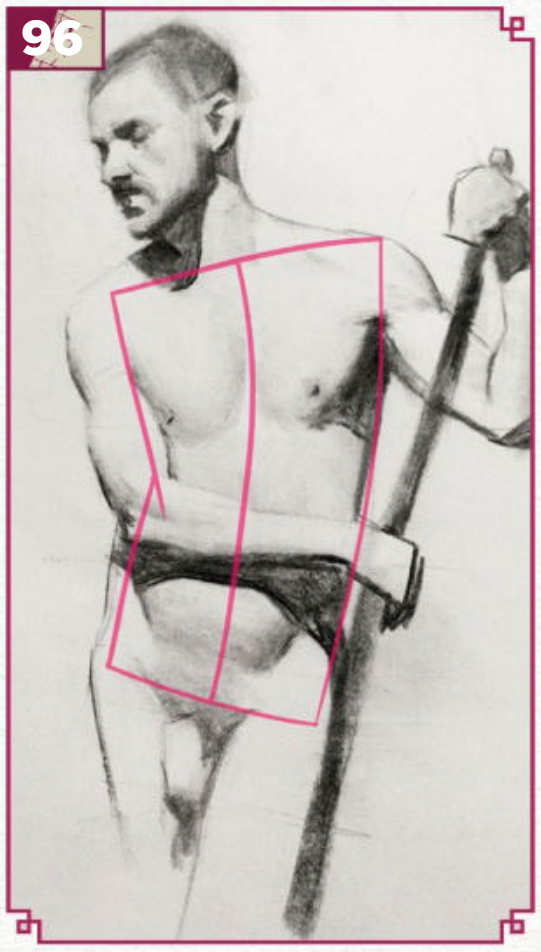
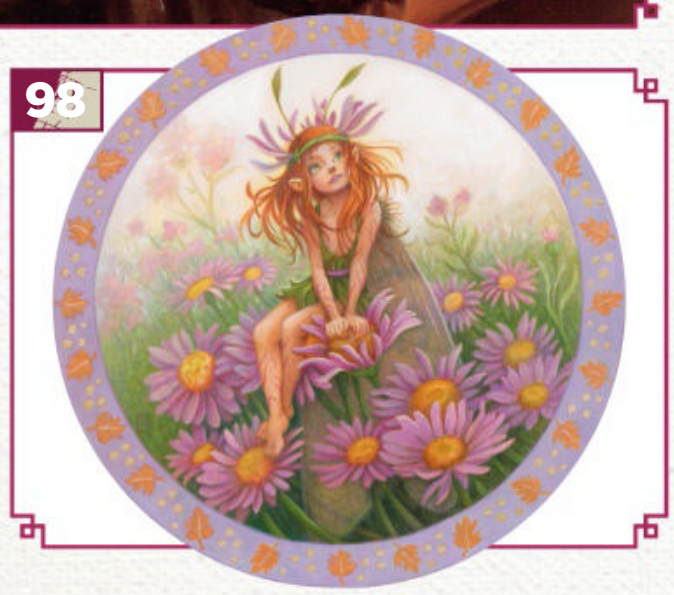
Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists





This issue:

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

90 Workshop: Gradients and how to use them
Learn how to paint smooth gradients with James Gurney.

96 Workshop: Draw male and female figures
Part 1 in a new, 10-part anatomy series by Charlie Pickard.

98 First Impressions: Julia Lundman
This artist's gorgeous works are inspired by folklore and fantasy.

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Alexandra Verhoven

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Oil paint, graphite, charcoal, pastel, gouache, ink, watercolours

WEB: www.alexandraverhoven.com

Alexandra creates oil paintings and mixed media drawings, giving form to concepts such as goals, dreams, and feelings of hope and longing.

1 BIRTH OF A STAR
"This woman's ability to wield something as insubstantial as light is meant to instill in the viewer the feeling that anything is possible."

2 CONJURE
"This piece was inspired by the act of collecting fireflies as a child. The figure summons guides to show her the way."

3 HECATE
"This interaction is open to interpretation by the viewer; is the triple goddess revering or stealing the moon? You decide."

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

4 WILL-O'-THE-WISP
"A benevolent interpretation of the Will-o'-wisp; a spirit creating hope for someone who feels lost. The figure was left bare in order to represent how we feel vulnerable when asking for guidance."

5 STARDUST
"I wanted this piece to have a timeless elegance. Warm toned paper and mediums were used to create a sort of pretend provenance, as if this were an old photograph."

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

Anna Ierusalimskaya

LOCATION: Moscow **MEDIA:** Watercolour, foil, graphite pencil **WEB:** www.artstation.com/veensa

Anna is a graduate from Moscow State University of Printing Arts, who prefers to use traditional media because she claims it is meditative. "Old gods, myths and mysterious tales are my favourite subjects to draw."

1 LOST TREASURES
"In this piece I tried to do more painting. I let the water flow (literally!) through the whole sheet. Gold flake sticks wherever it wants."

2 ETERNAL GRACE
"Piece I did for an art contest in 2020. The theme was 'undead creature, eternal'. My subject was some kind of old, forgotten tale."

3 KNIGHT IN A BLACK WINGED HELMET
"Piece painted for The Witcher fan-zine. My friends tell me that it looks like a Soviet style illustration, and I agree with them."

4 TIGER BRIDE
"Artwork for an art-zine, inspired by Japanese culture and an ode to the kimono collection that my friend owns."

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

4

Traditional Artist Workshop

Space Jockey, oil. Note the gradient from warm to cool in the sky and from light to dark on the side of the ship. There are many other smaller gradients throughout this composition.

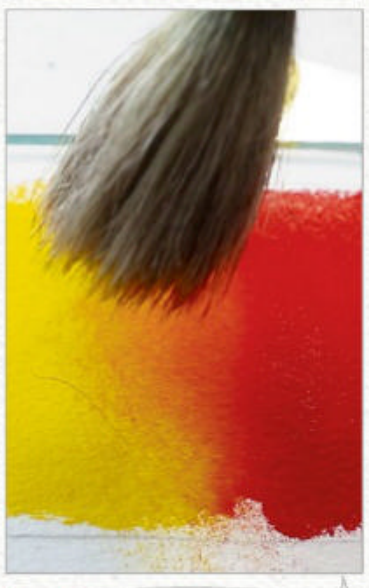
Watercolour *Acrylics* *Gouache* *Casein*

GRADIENTS AND HOW TO USE THEM

JAMES GURNEY shares his top tips and demonstrates some handy methods for painting smooth gradients and applying them to practical uses

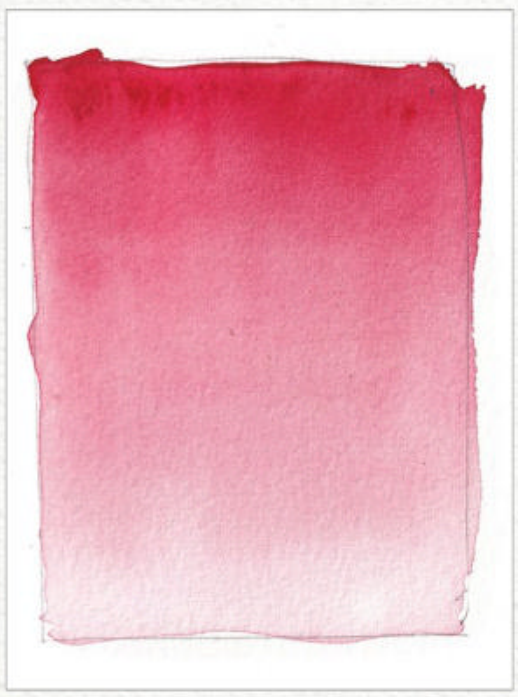
We're often asked to paint flat swatches in art school, but colours really come to life when they change gradually from one note to another. Unfortunately, smooth gradients aren't that easy to paint. I'll share a few different approaches and show how I apply them in specific paintings. The idea is to encourage you to try controlled experiments in the studio and then apply what you've learned in the field or on the job. I'll be using watercolour, gouache, casein and acrylic, but the painting insights shown here are universal and will benefit oil and digital painters as well.

James Gurney authored Color and Light, How to Paint What Doesn't Exist and Dinotopia. He has 450k YouTube subs, 224k on Instagram, and has published over 5k posts on the GurneyJourney blog. jamesgurney.com



1 Make a simple watercolour gradient

Use heavy watercolour paper and a soft brush. Dampen the entire surface with water, without pooling. Tilt it to even it out. Load the brush with paint and start at the top. Pigment should travel. Add water to dilute the mixture while removing excess liquid from the brush with a rag. Tilt the paper to get pigment to flow in the direction you want. Remove excess buildup of water at the bottom of the painted rectangle with a thirsty brush, to avoid backruns. Try it with various pigments to see what they do.



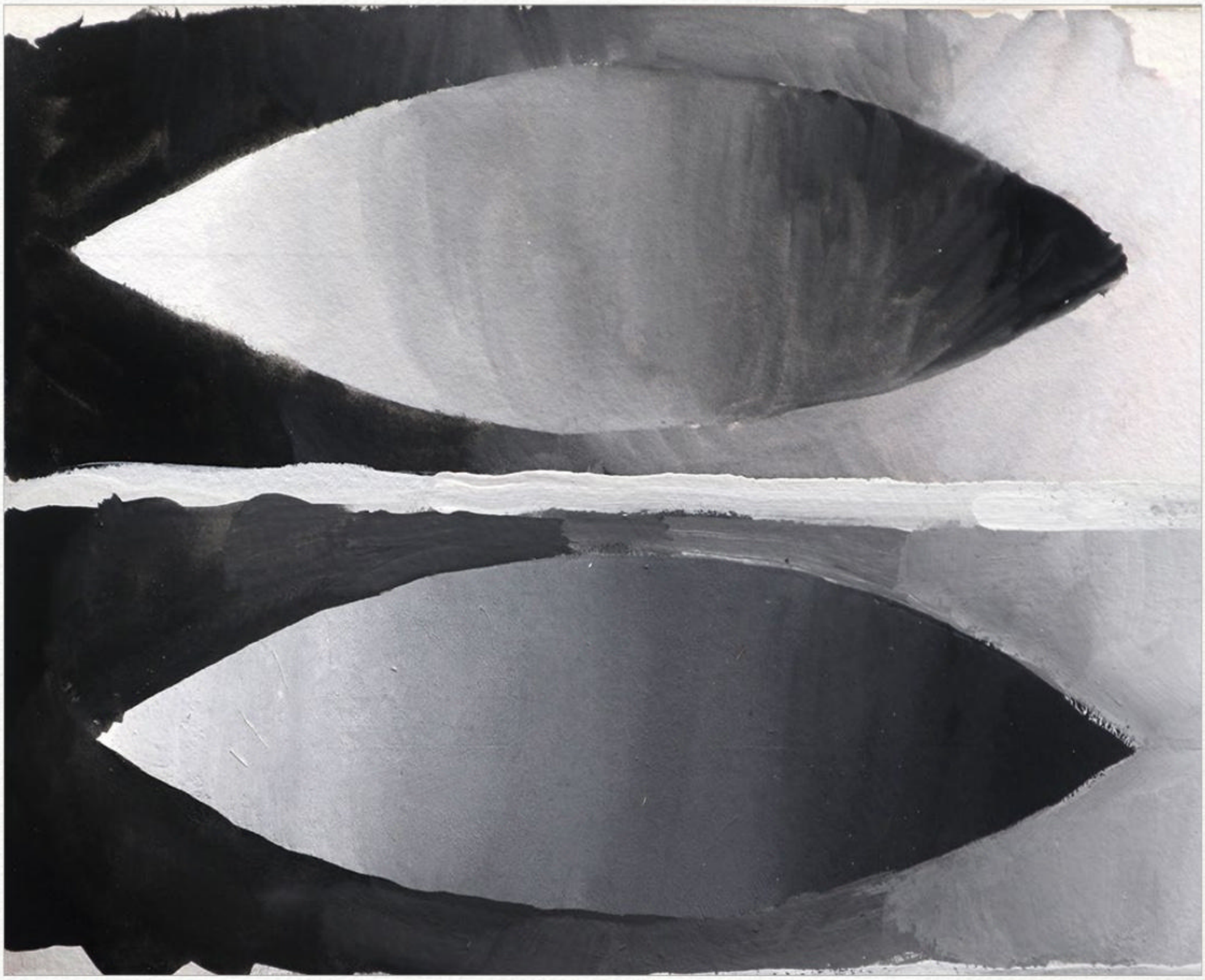
2 Try stippling

This is an old-school method used for matte paintings, murals, and landscape painting. Use at least two brushes: a badger blender and a soft round brush. Dampen surface first. Loosely and thickly brush in the stripes of colours. Rapidly tap the surface with a badger hair blender or other flat-tipped soft brush. The brush will carry little dots randomly around to blend the areas. For large, smooth gradients, use a separate blender brush for each transition. A stipple gradient is easier in oil than it is in gouache, acrylic or casein because oil dries so much more gradually, allowing more working time.

"For large, smooth gradients, use a separate blender brush for each transition"

3 Brushed gradient, background first

Using a ruler, or freehand, start by drawing a horizontal rectangle. Create a leaf shape within it – this can be done freehand or by using a compass or dinner plate. Next, you need to lightly dampen the paper to make it receptive. Paint a brushed gradient, starting with the background and painting the 'leaf' second. Change the mixture of paint as you move across an area. Remember what's in the brush at a given time. Use a clean brush if you need pure white or pure black.



4 *Foreground first, then background*

Paint another leaf shape below that. Use a stipple gradient on the leaf first. Paint the background second, cutting the edge of the shape from the outside in. Materials include: pencil, compass or dinner plate 9" or 10" (22 to 25cm) in diameter, brush, ivory black and titanium white gouache, water cup, rag, ruler. If you do this exercise and the one before, it will help you practise making shapes with the foreground first, then the background and vice versa.

5 *Paint leaves on an overcast day*

These densely crowded fern fronds on an overcast day appealed to me for studying soft gradients of light and shadow. The local colour was fairly uniform on the ferns. As a result, the changes in value were the result of changes in the angle of the forms in relation to the sky, and also the degree to which they were overshadowed or occluded by fronds above them. Look for a similar grouping of leaves or ferns, and as you analyse the changes in tone, paint it with transparent gradients or brushed or stippled opaque gradients.

6 Parallel gradients

When two colour sets move together in the same direction, I call it a parallel gradient, such as in this banded cylinder. The red and blue bands and the white cylinder all move from light/warm to dark/cool. Draw the cylinder on watercolour paper freehand or use a large ellipse template. Draw the edges of the bands going around the cylinder. Paint the base tone of the cylinder quickly, blending the gradient from light to shadow. Then paint the red band and the blue band, changing the colour from light to shadow in the same way that you did for the 'white' base colour.

> Paint the base tone, blending the gradient from light to shadow

7 Create an in-brush gradient

An in-brush gradient takes place within the width of a single brush. Use a 1" soft, flat brush for this exercise. Use two additional brushes, one for each of the colours you'll be blending. Mix the two colours and place them adjacent on the palette. Using the large brush, pick up one colour with one side and the other colour with the other side of the brush. Pull the stroke slowly, letting the gradient happen between the two colours. Turn the brush in your fingertips as needed. Always remember which colour was on which side of the brush.

8 Paint cloud shadows in a landscape

Start by painting a bird's eye view of clouds moving over a landscape, casting soft-edged shadows on the ground below. Inside the patches of light, everything is a little warmer and higher in value. That shift happens both to the green grass and the lighter grey road. Try to paint the transitional gradients as simply as possible, using large brushes and moving quickly. Use an in-brush gradient if you can. On a cloudy day the patches of light transition smoothly into shadow.

9 *Prime a surface*

A brayer gradient gives you one of the smoothest transitions with physical paint. Use water-based block printing ink for the right sticky consistency, but mix in some acrylic paint to get the paint layer to seal when it dries. The purpose here is to prime a page of a sketchbook or a smooth panel with an underpainting for gouache. To get good coverage, blend the paint with the brayer on a piece of glass. Make sure to use fairly smooth paper, as if the paper is too rough there will be white spots not covered by the paint.

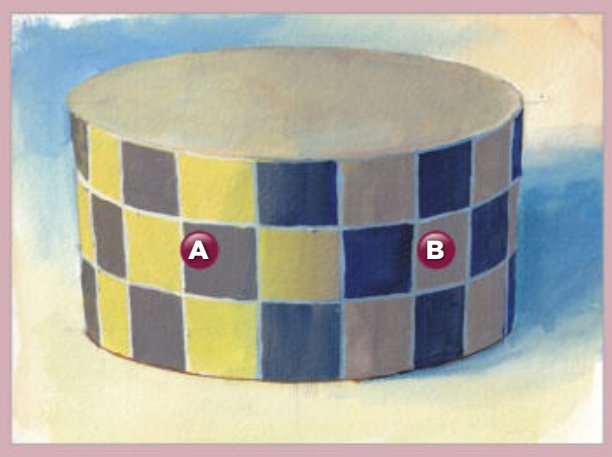
10 Step by Step: Create the checkerboard cylinder illusion

1 PAINT THE LIGHT TONES

First, draw the cylinder with pencil on watercolour paper. When you're ready to paint, use the following colours: cobalt blue, ultramarine blue, cadmium yellow medium, raw sienna, red oxide, quinacridone red, ivory black, titanium white, and neutral grey (about equal to Pantone 424C). Paint the gradients for the light tones first. While painting the cylinder, paint the background tones and cast shadow, too.

2 WORK ON THE DARK SQUARES

When those passages are dry, it's time to paint the darker squares. The cylinder appears to be lit from the left with a warm light and cool shadows. The light yellow squares become darker and cooler as they transition to the shadow side, becoming a neutral grey. The dark squares also become darker and cooler as they go into shadow. In the light they become that same neutral grey.



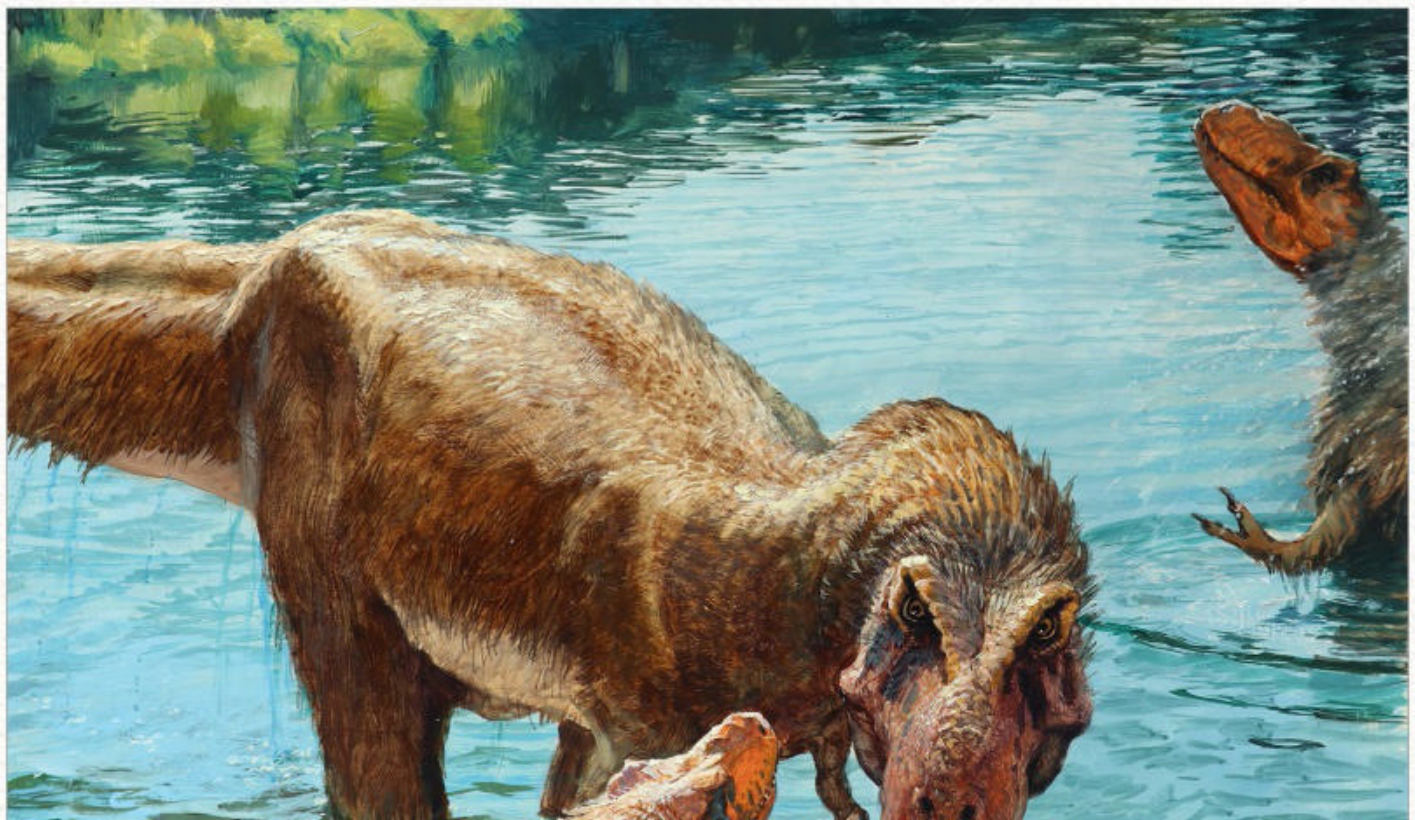
3 ADD ACCENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

If you want, you can add a thin white line between the squares. In the finished checkerboard cylinder the dark square in light (**A**) is the exact same colour as the light square in shadow (**B**). Even though you previously painted it with the same mixture of paint, it's hard to believe – this is because our visual system is trying to correct for what it believes to be changes in lighting environments.

11 *Use a global gradient for a city scene*

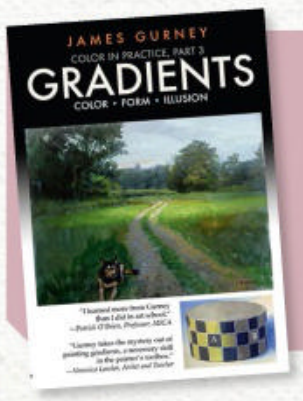
This plein-air study uses a brayer gradient as the priming colour under everything else. The gradient shifts from blue at the top to warm grey at the bottom. It's a reminder that the upper elements in a picture are more influenced by the cool sky, and the bottom elements are influenced by the warm ground. After carefully measuring my drawing, I block in the big shapes with a long, flat brush and gradually refine the details. The priming colour influences all the colours that I place over it, even though the top colours are opaque.

"The gradient shifts: blue at the top to warm grey at the bottom"



12 *Look for interrupted gradients*

In water, there's often a gradient that goes from light at the top to dark at the bottom. That large gradient is interrupted by wave action. Using oil paint, I set up the base colour gradient to represent the front planes of the wavelets, the parts of the waves more perpendicular to my line of vision. Then I paint the planes on the backside of each wavelet so that those planes are a little lighter. While all the strokes are wet, I soften a lot of the edges to make the tones flow into each other.



James Gurney's newest video tutorial from Gumroad is called Gradients: Color, Form, Illusion. It walks you through the making of all the art that appears in this article. Angela Sung (VisDev & Art Direction) said: "I never knew gradients could be accomplished simply... I cannot wait to try out these techniques and experiment with my future landscapes."

gurneyjourney.gumroad.com/l/ElCti

Pencil

DRAW MALE AND FEMALE FIGURES

CHARLIE PICKARD begins a new 10-part series of quick tips on anatomy. This issue, a fast and simple way to differentiate female and male figures

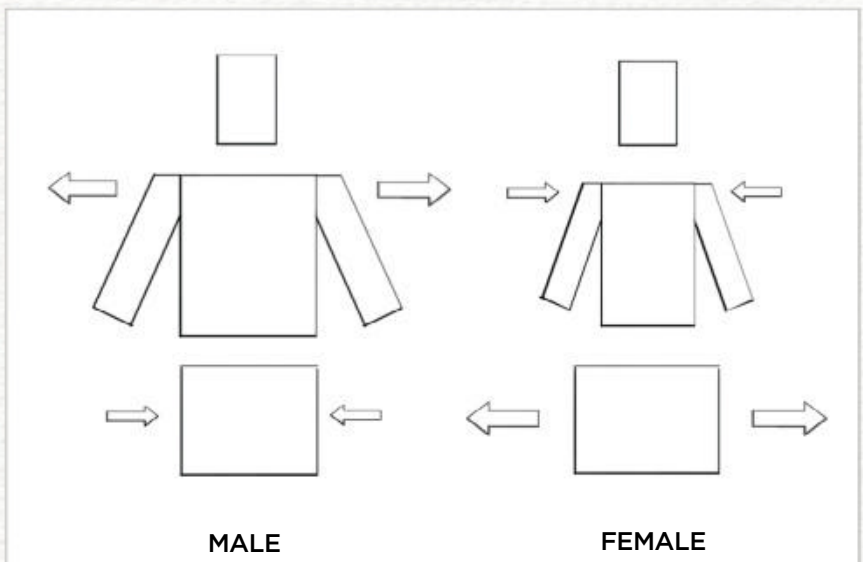
ANATOMY – PART 1

One of the most common early difficulties of students beginning their figure drawing journey lies in being able to clearly communicate the sex of the model they are trying to depict. This can feel like a frustratingly difficult problem when we don't understand the visual cues that separate the two sexes.

Now there are, of course, the more obvious differences of the breasts and genitals that many people will jump to when asked to describe the differences. However, these differences are largely superficial. We, of course, most often see the figure in full clothing, and with these areas covered it nonetheless remains clear to us that there are distinct differences.

There exists a less often considered but deeper proportional relationship in the torso that communicates the sex of the model to our eye. I describe here what I have found to be the most consistently useful in my own work, this being the relationship between the width of the shoulders and the width of the hips. Let's take a look.

Charlie Pickard is a classically trained fine artist and illustrator. Recently awarded the Philip de László Award for excellence, Charlie continues to work, exhibit and teach out of his studio in London. www.charliepickardart.com

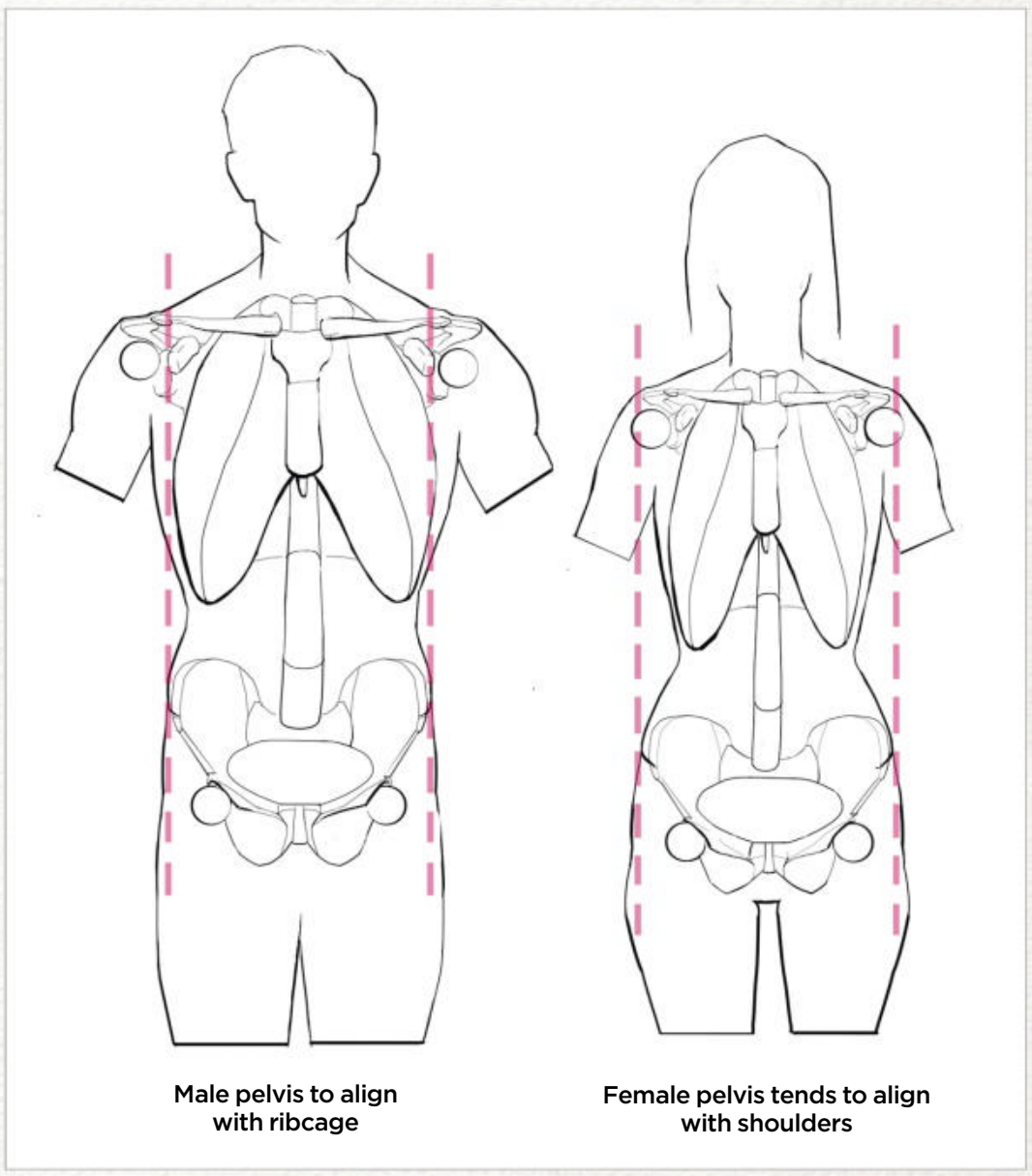


1 *Understanding shoulders*

In general, male shoulders will be wider and female shoulders narrower. As we can see, even in an image as simple as this, we can clearly tell which set of boxes is male and which is female, purely through the use of this proportional relationship in simple boxes.

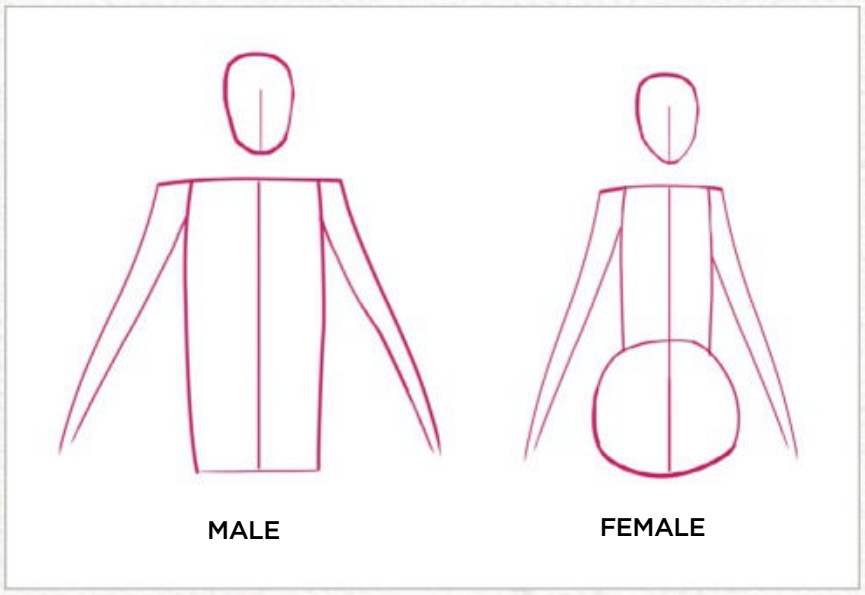
2 *Learn the skeleton*

This relationship comes from a deep proportion in the skeleton and is, in reality, a relationship between the pelvis and the ribcage. This difference develops in adolescence and has functional causes. Men develop wider ribcages to allow for more space to build muscular mass and women develop wider hips to allow for childbirth.



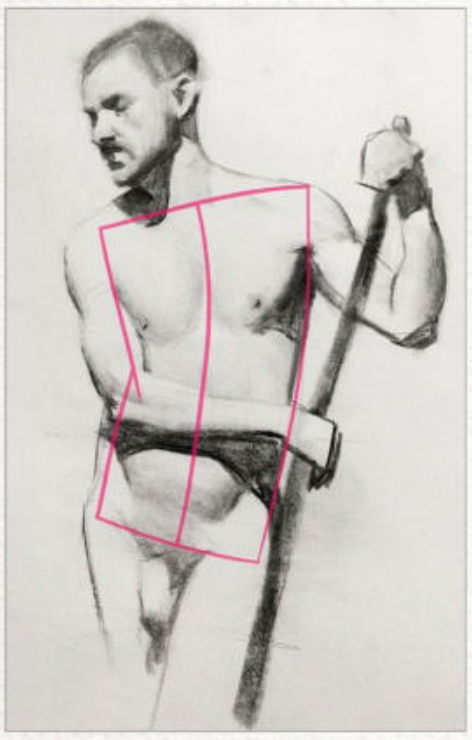
Male pelvis to align with ribcage

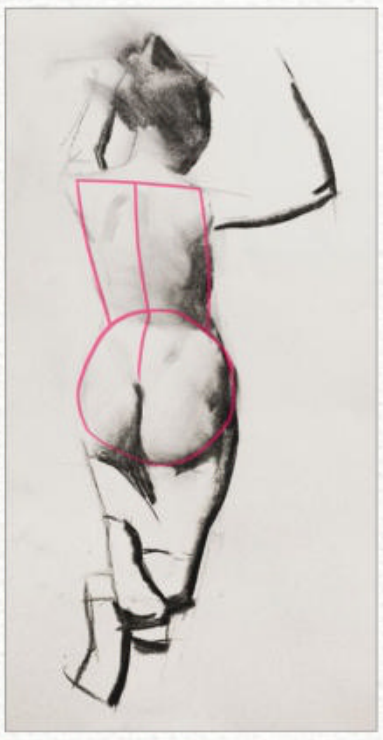
Female pelvis tends to align with shoulders

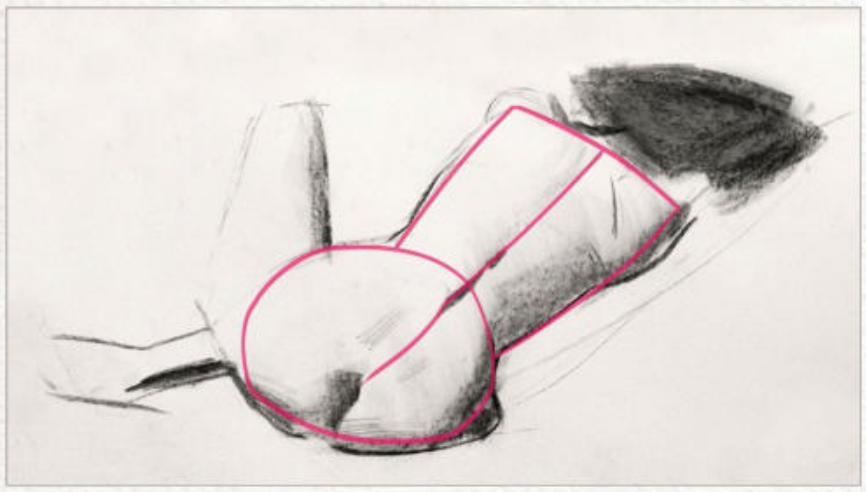


3 *Master simple graphic guides*

As with all technical art information, this needs to be made practical. How can we use this quirk of proportion to quickly and effectively communicate what we want? Seen above is a construction I find helpful. Since the male torso is fairly evenly proportioned, we can initially treat it as a simple rectangle, to which we add the width of the arms. For the female, we can treat the hips as a separate, oval-like shape, with the upper half of the torso a simple rectangle emerging out of it (think of an exclamation point).

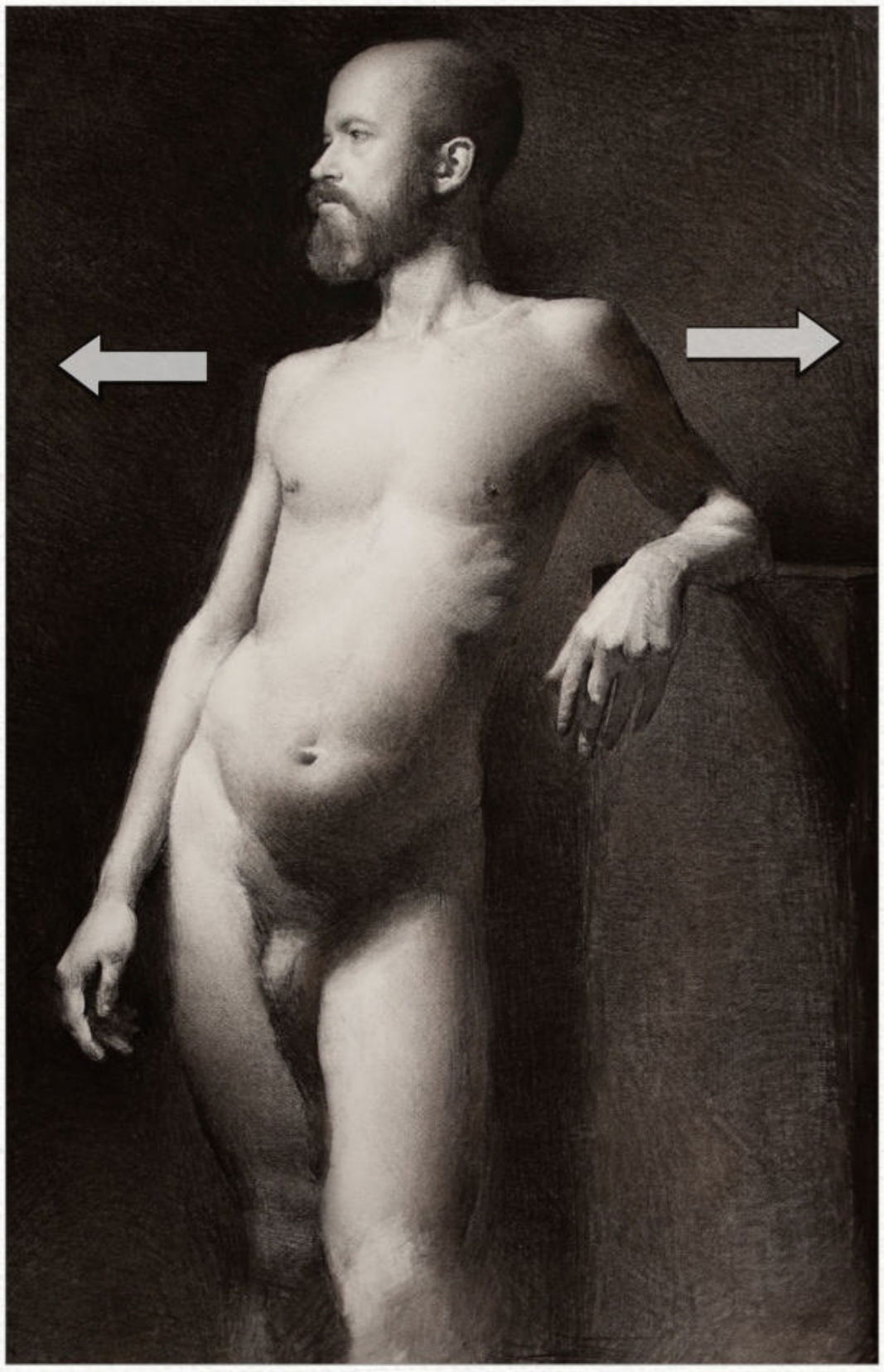


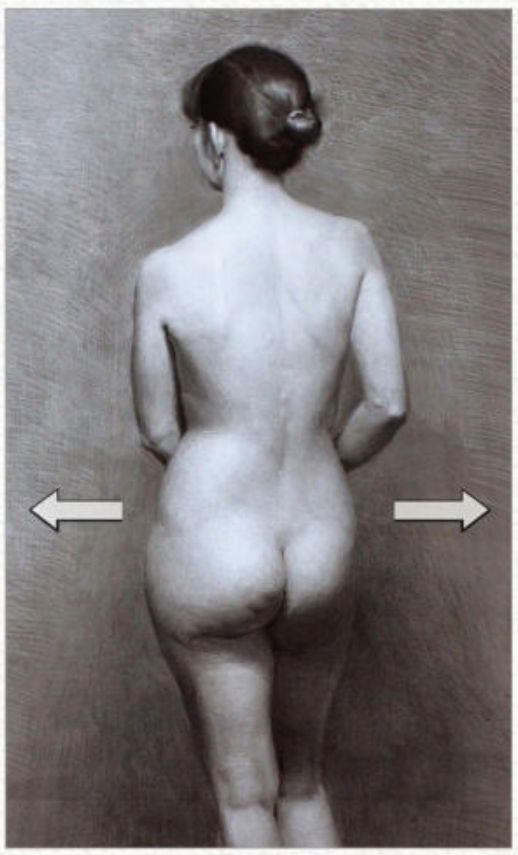




4 *Practise quick sketches*

Where these constructions are most helpful is in quick sketches. In poses no longer than ten minutes we can clearly see their application. Try to find these big shapes in the model before you move onto more subtle details.





5 *Master the big shapes*

Since we have little time to get all of the information down, initially working from these big shapes allows us to start focusing on the larger, more important proportions more quickly. Give this a shot for yourself – as with any artistic lesson, the main thing is that you give these tips a go on your own drawings, so please try it out.

Of course this idea, as with any other anatomical information, can only ever be a general guide and a useful start. Bodies, after all, come in all shapes and sizes. I would encourage any artist to focus on observing the wonderful variety we are always presented with when working from life. It is an endlessly fascinating study.

First Impressions

Julia Lundman

Faeries and fantasy have inspired this artist since childhood

How did you get into art and a love of fantasy?
When I was ten, the army awarded my dad with a full scholarship to the University of Chicago, where he studied medieval literature. It was during this time my interest in folklore and history began, especially after visiting museums and listening to my dad talk about what he'd learned. I started to expand my reading interests into folklore and myth around that time, read all about King Arthur, Vikings, faerie lore, magical tales of all sorts, and became obsessed with the C.S. Lewis Narnia and Tolkien books. When I discovered Mad Magazine and comic books, my tiny little mind pretty much lived full time in an imaginary world.

Do you have a defining childhood moment that inspired you?
There was also a Toulouse-Lautrec exhibition that my grandmother, Lara Koop, took me to at the Art Institute of Chicago that I thought was really interesting. She was also a painter and loved French artists in particular. I remember her explaining that drawing on cardboard, as Lautrec did, was something she wanted to try. So we collected some and I drew all sorts of fairies and imaginary creatures on bits of cardboard for a while.

AUTUMN FAIRY
"With my personal art, I can make 100 per cent of the decisions about what I want to explore or ideas that I find inspiring. I like to experiment with techniques, too."

> "I have been waking up at 5:30am every day so I can sketch in my sketchbook"

THE UNICORN RESTS IN THE GARDEN
The Unicorn Rests in the Garden from the Unicorn Tapestries made an impression on Julia as a child: "I begged my parents for a poster of it. I thought it was the most beautiful unicorn I'd ever seen."

Do you pep yourself up to create your art?
I would simply say to myself, "don't worry, I love you no matter what you draw". And that is the hardest thing to say of all. I spent a long portion of my life feeling like my interests in fantasy subjects were not good enough, or ideal enough to be taken seriously. The shame that exists around what we make is so real. I don't understand it. I think it comes from our culture having a lot of opinions about what we do as artists, what is 'real' art and what is 'low' or 'high' art, what is legit or not legit, who likes our work and who doesn't, all of it. So again, I would simply say to myself to turn off that noise, just draw, and continue to explore that place where the ideas are lurking. To do otherwise is a disservice to myself.

Is there a painting you identify with the most?
The character or scene I identify with the most is 'Death of the Sun'. This is a painting that I am planning to expand into a larger series. It is representative of the mysterious, emotional night time world, when the darkness 'kills' the light and all the daily obligations most of us experience. I've always been fascinated about how differently I think during specific hours of day; in the middle of the afternoon I feel productive and industrious while in the middle of the night I feel more imaginative, my thoughts more emotional. For the past few years, I have been waking up at 5:30am every day so I can sketch in my sketchbook as a way of connecting myself to the ideas of the night. That's how 'Death of the Sun' came to mind, in my sketchbook one early morning.

What subject do you love painting the most?
The subject I love to paint the most is fairies. I also find it a really difficult subject to paint as it is actually quite culturally loaded. I've learned that people have certain expectations about fairies as they've been a trope for centuries, perhaps longer. And then technically speaking, messing around with the proportions is really challenging. Are they creatures? Are they tiny humans? I feel like my fairy explorations are still very much a work in progress with much more ground to cover.

Check out Julia's beautiful work and online shop over at julialundman.com

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