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THIS COVER
IMAGE!

MASTERCLASS



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Get started with our top tips and handy guide

DESIGN AND PAINT FANTASY BEASTS

Bring your creature concepts to life

INSIGHTS

TOUR ROBERT HUNT'S
BESPOKE WORKSPACE
HOW TO WORK WITH
DARK THEMES
CUSTOM BRUSHES
IN ARTRAGE

WORKSHOP

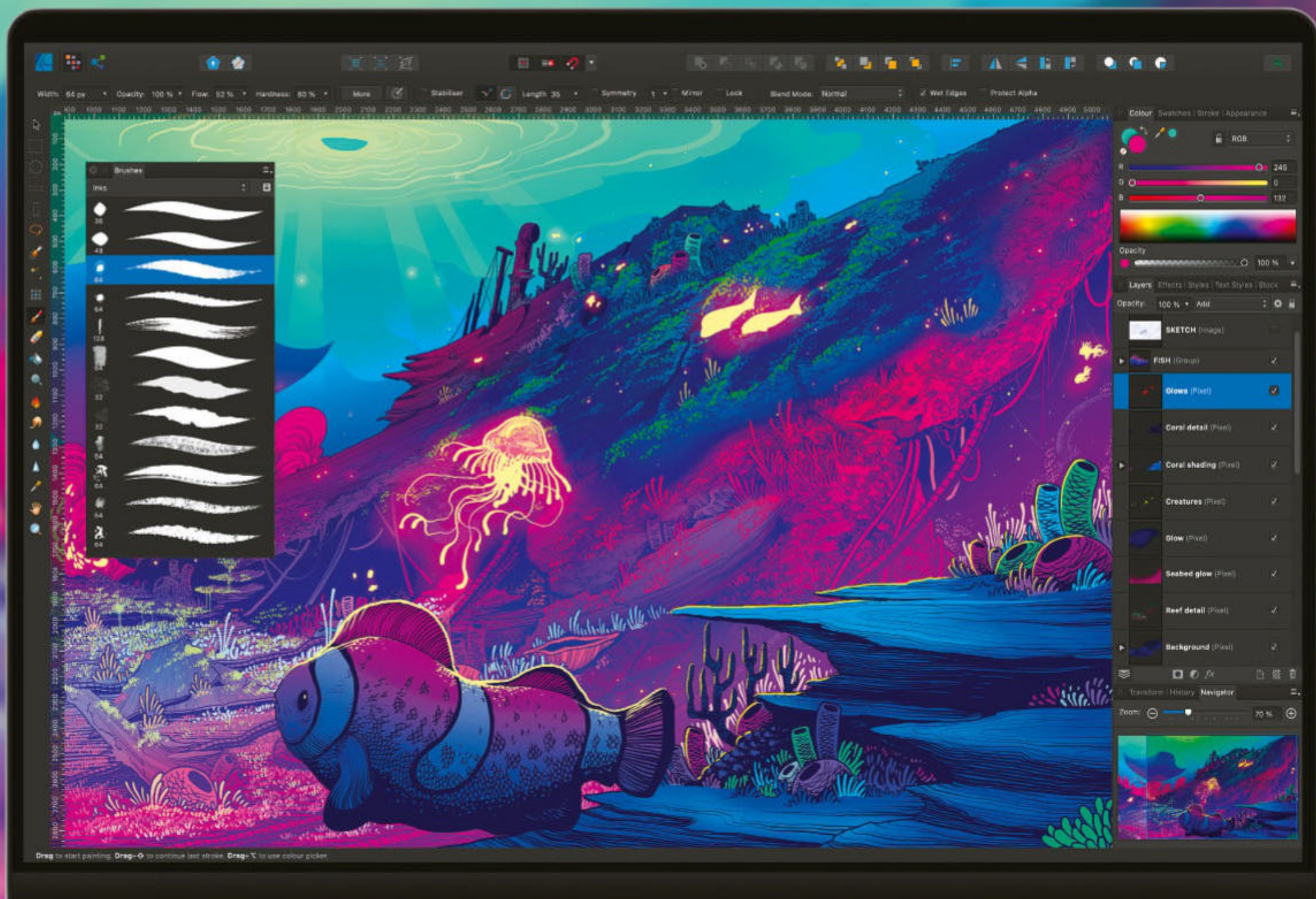
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FUTURE
ISSUE 212

DOFRESH! THE SCI-FI CONCEPT ARTIST SHARES HIS INSIGHTS AND INSPIRATIONS



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



This issue we take a good, hard look at one of the key artistic cornerstones: anatomy. For many artists, a solid grasp of anatomy is fundamental to everything they do as, with possibly the exception of matte painters, most art centres (at least in part) around characters, and even fantastical characters and beasts need the creator to have an understanding of anatomy.

You can follow along with our in-depth training to recreate an image like our wonderful cover art, or learn to paint fantasy beasts with Procreate, in our workshop section. We also have the latest instalment of our anatomy course.

If its insights into artists that you prefer then we have a fascinating interview with Dofresh where he talks about his projects, with a glimpse at what is to come. On top of that we take you on a tour round the workspace of Robert Hunt.

Sometimes it can be really helpful to know what's new on the market and where to invest your money. This month we highlight the latest tech and art books to assist you with your next purchase.

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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Paint fantasy animals with Procreate

Xiao shares her process for creating beautiful fantasy beasts in her walkthrough workshop.

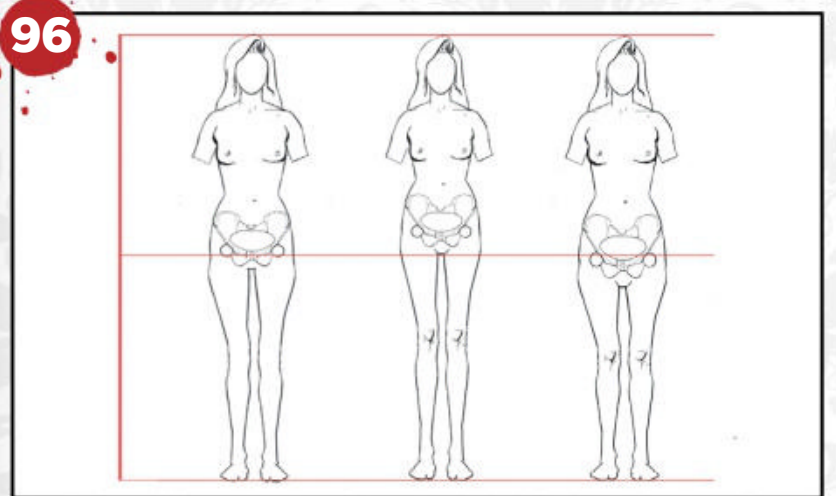
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Sketchbook - Daniel Bolling Walsh

Discover the sublime artwork as the artist shares pages from his wonderful sketchbook.

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Master proportions

Charlie Pickard's latest instalment focuses on how you can nail proportions for your anatomical work.

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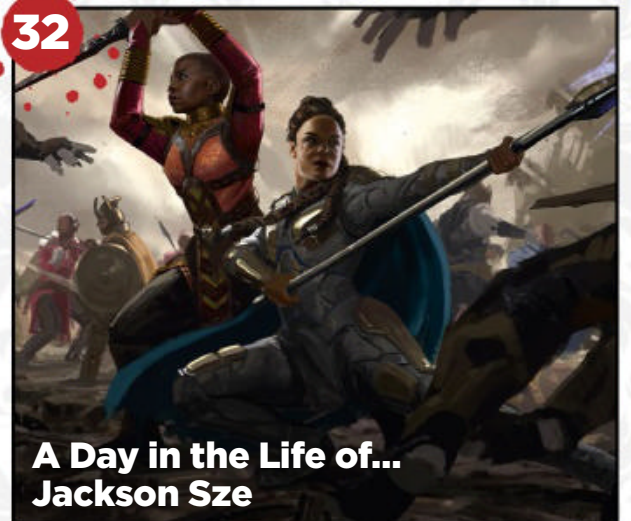
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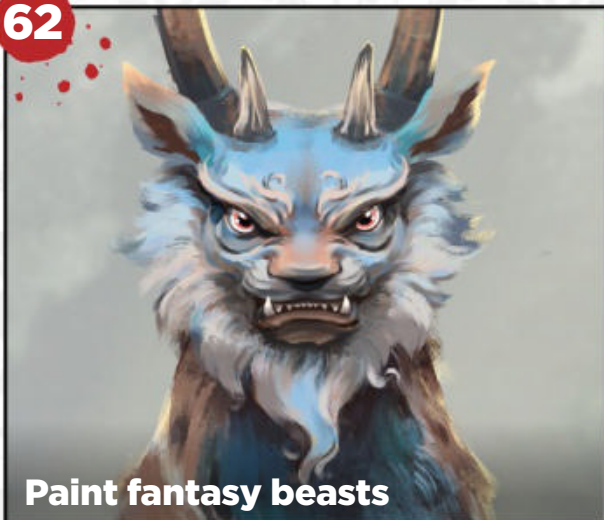
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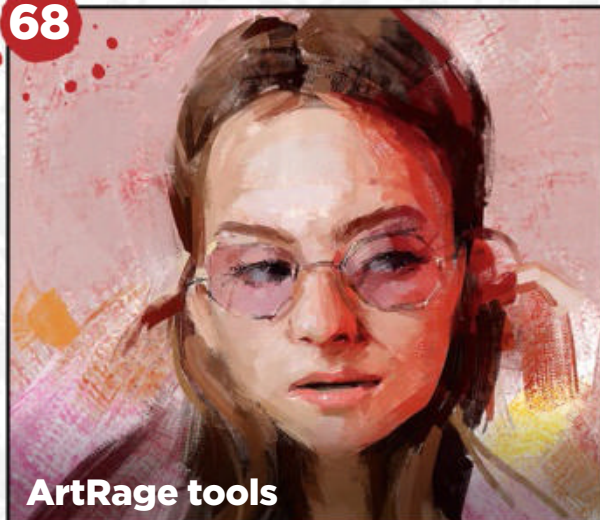
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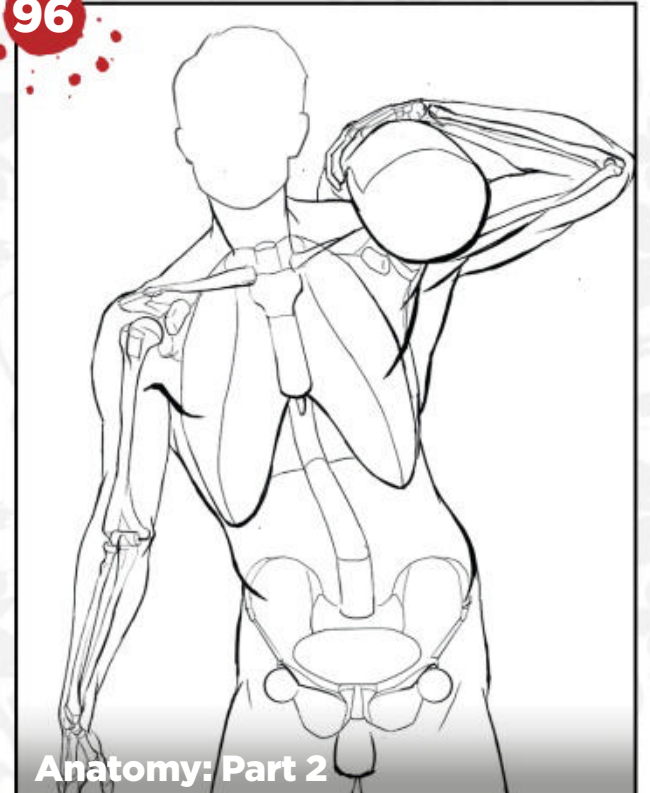
Rebekka Hearl takes us through the process of producing an engaging comic.

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Paint Norse knotwork

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Charlie Pickard continues his anatomy series; this issue, focusing on proportions.

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We interview the fine artist about his key artistic influences.



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Resources

Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit: <https://ifxm.ag/anatomy>

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Follow along with Glen Southern's Nomad Sculpt guide; discover procedural animations in Houdini; and find out how Pietro Chiovaro created a ceramic material in Substance Designer.

PLUS NIKOLAI LOCKERTSEN PROCREATE BRUSHES

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ImagineFX

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Next month

Next month in...
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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Go deep into the world of
fantasy with top D&D artists

**ISSUE 213
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Also in the issue...

Create futuristic Japanese cities

Tom Foster shares
his techniques for
creating stunning
futuristic scenes.

Paint stylised portraits

Artist Lawrence
Mann on his
method for painting
stylised portraits.

Paint dragons with trad tools

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The artist's sketchbook

Alexandra
Tudvaseva shares
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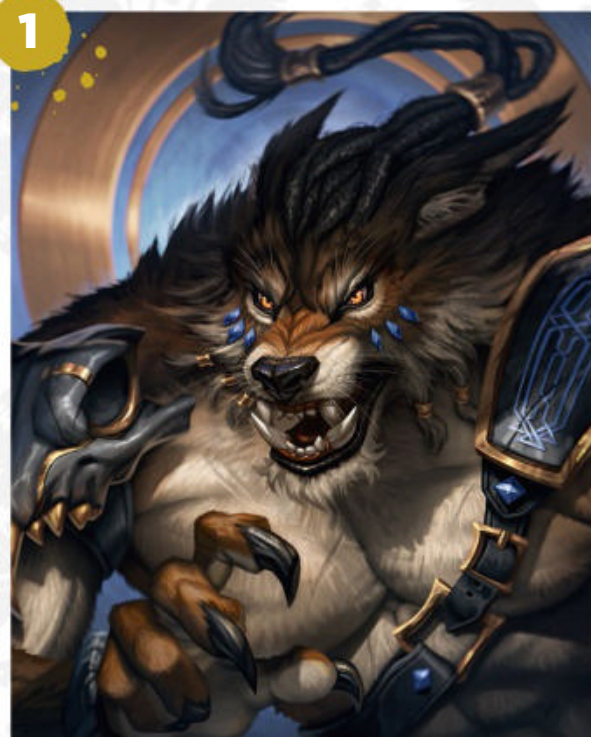
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Stephen Sitton

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender, Maya **WEB:** www.artstation.com/stumpyfongo

After graduating with a BFA in illustration, Stephen created artwork for the marketing side of the entertainment industry with clients including Disney/Pixar, Activision, EA Games, and Hasbro.



1 WEREWOLF GOD

"This was based on a challenge to only use complementary or opposite colours. Limiting the scope of what we create can yield some interesting and unintended results!"

2 DANI'ALLIAH BRIGHTBLOOD

"This is a World of Warcraft inspired character commission depicting a High Elf Monk. My goal was to create a bold sense of movement, drama, and foreshortening."

3 NIX

"This is an original character design inspired by cyberpunk and vaporwave aesthetics. Nix is a powerful sea elf mage that works as a bouncer at a high-end nightclub."





Grant Griffin

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.ggriffinart.com

Grant creates key art for games, publishing, and advertising. He enjoys the challenge of illustrating across genres, from fantasy to sports, and being able to design characters as well as covers.

1



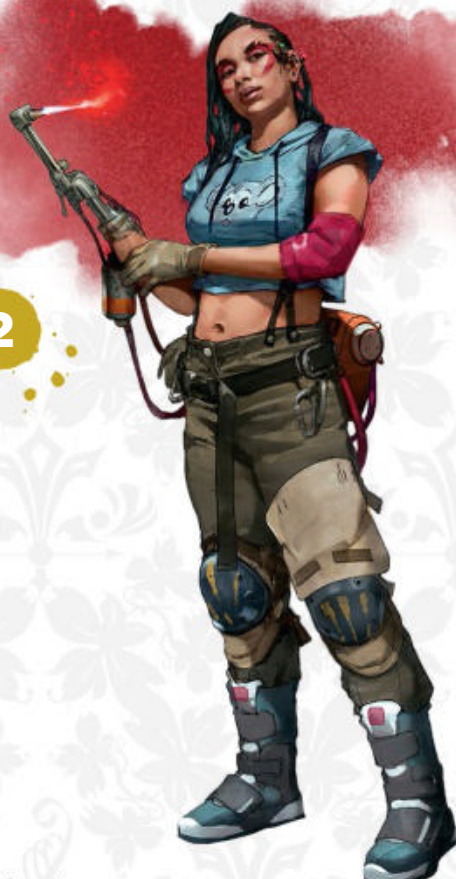
1 THE ROGUE

"Whenever I am designing a character, I create a backstory. You want to hand the viewer just enough information so that they can tell their own story."

2 THE MECHANIC

"Design is only half the battle; the trick to characters is creating a receptacle which the viewer can transport him or herself into, and escape."

2



3 CLAN CHIEFTAIN

"I love paintings that still contain the artist's fingerprints. I attempt to build off each stage of the painting in a way that not only shows through, but also holds together for a finished look."

3



4 FORGE OF DARKNESS

“The challenging aspect of covers is creating a character that grabs the viewers’ attention while maintaining enough mystery to keep them curious and crave the story behind the cover.”





Nathan Birchall

LOCATION: UK **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, Blender **WEB:** www.artstation.com/nbirchall

Nathan is a freelance illustrator and concept artist who focuses on fantasy-realism. After switching from an IT career, he now works with publishers and on TCG and TTRPG projects.



3



4



1 SHIPPING PORT

"Assassin's Creed is one of my favourite series, so I just had to create my own concept art inspired by the games."

2 CYBER STREETS

"This is a piece of photobashed concept art created to convey a dystopian, futuristic city."

3 WANDERING WIZARD

"Loved the process of creating this one! A young mage is venturing through an ancient forest with his companion."

4 KNIGHTS APPROACH

"Here I pushed a 3D blockout (created by Michaela Wartbichler) into an illustrative direction focusing on mood."



Elena Grishchenko

LOCATION: Russia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/legri

Elena is a 2D illustrator with a love for Sir Terry Pratchett's Discworld. "Its magic and spirit give me inspiration and plenty of material to work with." Her main focus is conveying a character's personality.

1 SATOR SQUARE

"This is an illustration for Terry Pratchett's Guards! Guards! which comprises two scenes: Sam Vimes and Lady Sybil fleeing from a Noble dragon, while Errol has it out with the beast."

2 EARLY MORNING VISIT

"An illustration for Unseen Academicals, where Glenda Sugarbean barges into the Patrician's office to challenge his decision."

3 MR. NUTT

"A character from Unseen Academicals, the learned Orc and one of the most appealing characters I've ever known."







Gustavo Rodrigues

LOCATION: Brazil **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/gustavopelissari

Gustavo is a fantasy illustrator with a background in animation. His main influences are Frank Frazetta and N.C. Wyeth, and he has worked with clients such as MCDM and DreamWorks Animation Television.



1 FISHING THE SUN

"This personal work represents the constant struggle of seeking knowledge and evolution. This 'cross-hatching' style brings a kind of warmth I enjoy."

2 FIRE IN THE SKY

"This clash between two armies was the cover for MCDM's Kingdoms & Warfare. It was one of the most challenging pieces I've ever done."

3 A HUNTER AND HER PREY

"This was the cover for the first issue of MCDM's magazine Arcadia. It portrays a beautiful world and its dichotomy with danger and death."

4 THE ABSENCE OF TIME

"Another one for MCDM's Arcadia. This represents the end of time and hope for a character that is cursed to be a monstrous beast for the rest of his life."

2



3



4





Anna Moshak

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/aizelkonart

Self-taught fantasy artist Anna is obsessed with unseen magical worlds, and tries to depict all the things she sees every night in her dreams. Anna draws her inspiration from classical paintings, Slavic folklore and medieval themes.

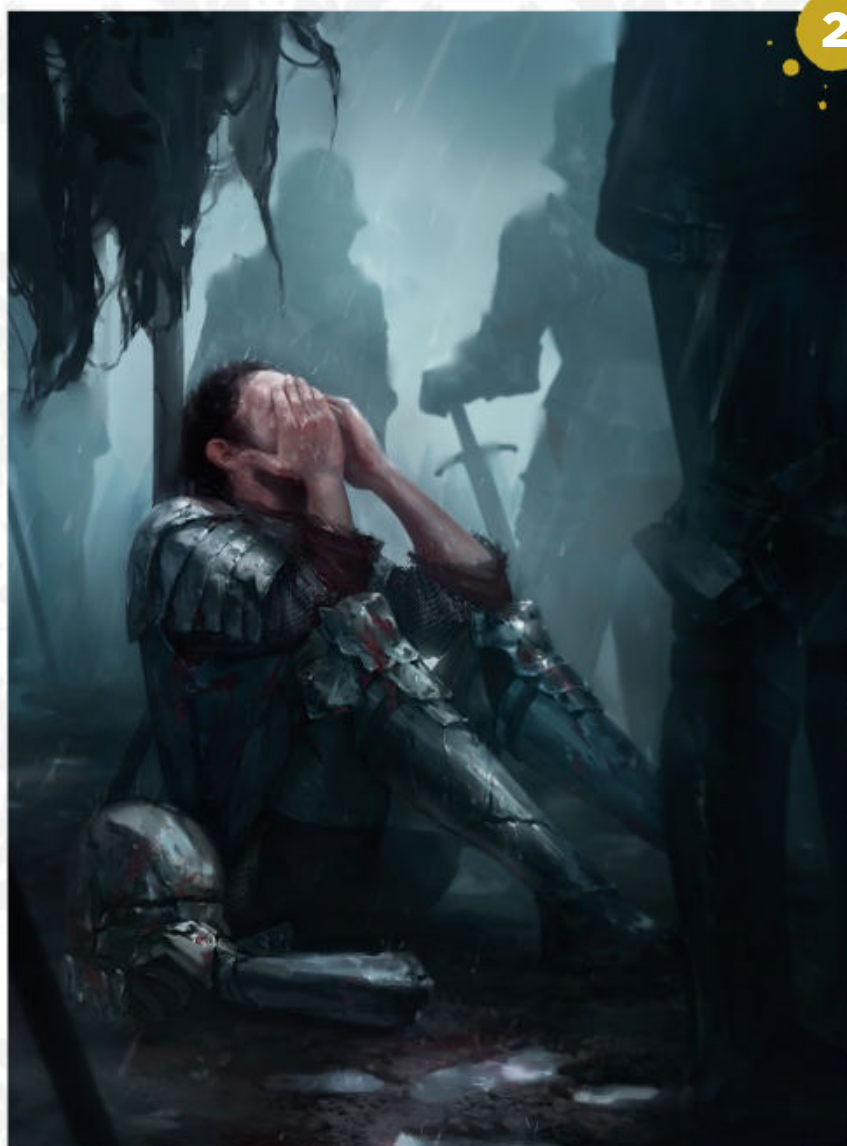
1 A LADY IN LEAF CROWN

"A little warm-up sketch that evolved into a monochrome portrait of a fantasy character - as it always does."



2 THE WAR IS OVER

"The war is over, my Knight. You can go home."



3 GERTA

"Gerta is the protagonist of my novella, which I started writing in college. She's a perky 14-year-old girl always looking for adventure."

4 BIG CATCH

"The stormy sea was howling. Something big got tangled in the fishing nets..."



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



ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

Jeff Simpson gravitated towards a red, white and blue colour palette for this image. "I think those colours feel the most dramatic and impactful; I found it to be an easy way to elicit a kind of primal sense of danger and mystery."





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 31**



SUPERHERO CONCEPTS

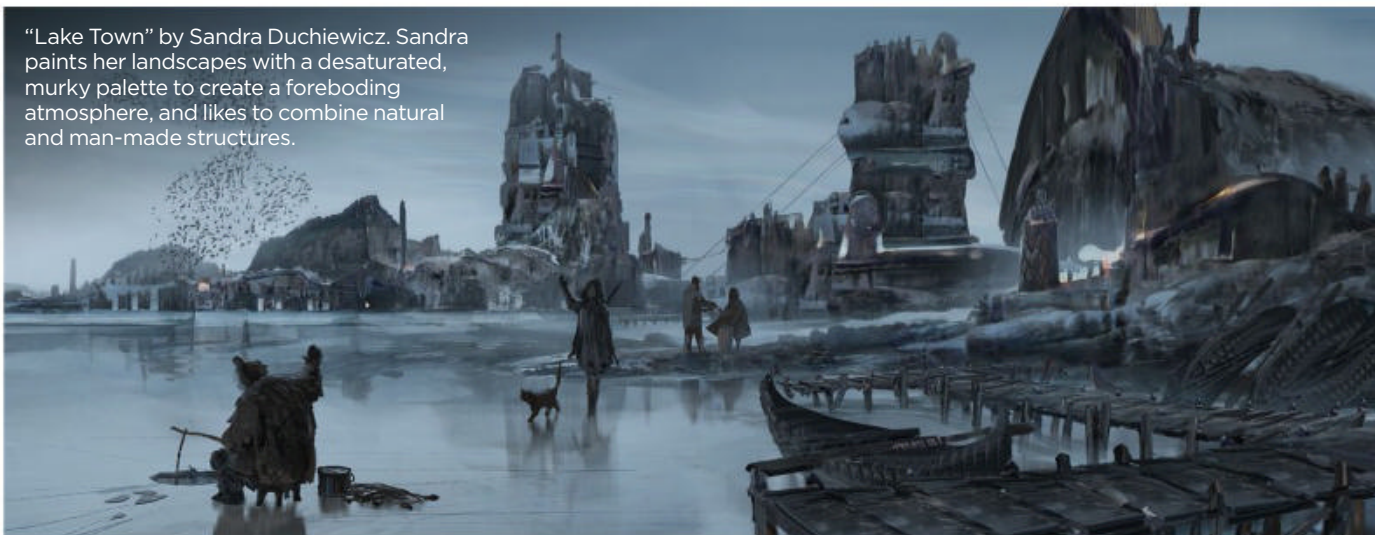
Visual development supervisor at Marvel Studios, Jackson Sze, gives us a rundown of his day-to-day role and showcases some of his stunning concept art. **Page 32**



BEAUTIFUL AND BESPOKE

We were excited to be given an inside look into the studio of award-winning illustrator Robert Hunt, who talks us through his ever-evolving career. **Page 34**

"Lake Town" by Sandra Duchiewicz. Sandra paints her landscapes with a desaturated, murky palette to create a foreboding atmosphere, and likes to combine natural and man-made structures.



Drawing the darkness

Aesthetic choice Tanya Combrinck meets four artists whose mysterious characters are often perceived as sinister or malevolent

Whether it's just a hint of doom in an otherwise uplifting image, or a portrait of an arrestingly hostile character, working with dark themes is a rewarding area of exploration for any artist.

Concept artist and illustrator **Jeff Simpson** creates work that evokes a sinister ambience, but he



doesn't identify himself as a dark artist. "Like any creative person I try to find elements of reality, nature or people that I find interesting or mysterious and worth exploring," he says. "When we put a magnifying glass up to any subject, it tends to amplify its complexity and our idealisations and expectations tend to be challenged. If this process makes things feel 'dark' to most people then so be it, I suppose!"

CHARACTER PERCEPTION

Jeff's mother was an art teacher and he grew up looking through her art history books. "I would try to copy the usual masters from across the eras. I was drawn to the drama and the significance the paintings held in their day. Maybe I've always wanted to



"Holo Fairy" by Sandra Duchiewicz. Sandra is inspired by the dark and mysterious tales of Slavic folklore.

convey that sense of wonder, fear and fascination with my own work."

For Jeff, creating a portrait with a substantial presence begins with imbuing the character with a sense of respect or honesty. "Even if it is an animal or creature, it needs to have a sense of being, and not be just a cartoon or symbol. It should feel as if its life was lived in a way we can relate to somehow."

He considers what the motivations of his characters might be, and looks at the villains of history and how they presented themselves. "A character can always present themselves as ➡

“Even if it is an animal or creature, it needs to have a sense of being”

INDUSTRY INSIGHT FOLKLORE AND MYSTERY

Sandra Duchiewicz reveals the thinking behind her characters and some of her key thematic inspirations

When did you first start creating dark or sinister art, and what drew you towards the dark path?

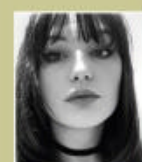
It is always surprising to me when people mention that my art looks creepy, sinister or dark. It happens quite often, even when I don't intend it to be scary! I don't see my characters as evil or very dark. I envision them as strong, independent entities with their own agendas and wants, and their own value structure and logic.

What are your influences?

I am from Poland, and dark and mysterious tales are common in Slavic folklore, so as a child I started picking up those darker and sinister themes. Later on when I started reading more fantasy fiction, especially Tolkien and Sapkowski, I knew that this would be a fascination and recurring theme in my art for years.

Have you ever worked with lighter themes?

Of course! I also enjoy painting innocent and cute characters, especially if they embody a plant or spirit or motif. They are my guilty pleasures, and I use more vibrant, colourful palettes to create them. But for whatever reason, even though they are intended to be cute, some people still find them sinister, evil or creepy. I think I do these things subconsciously!



Sandra Duchiewicz is a concept designer working in games, animation, VFX and motion pictures.

www.artstation.com/telthona

"Gilbert the Ghost Crow", by Nicole Altenhoff. "The Crow and the glowing butterflies form a symbiosis, maybe forever depending on each other. A creature like this can't be evil, if its body is home for precious glowing life, can it?"



➡ sinister or scary but that is a guise, a role. No one sees themselves as the bad guy, so why would someone pretend to do so? Why is the person trying to look menacing? What are their goals? What do they fear? How do they want society to see them, and what do they want their role in society to be? Can an animal even be sinister if it has no comprehension of the idea? I don't need to answer all these questions, but asking them always helps me to keep the character a bit more grounded."

When assessing the overall tone of his image, Jeff is looking for the 'eye of the duck', an idea that David Lynch

Jeff Simpson created this image at a time when he was experimenting more with integrating traditional elements into his digital work.



“ I always look more towards the underdogs of stories than to the heroes and their heroic actions ”

came up with. "As he puts it, 'The eye of a duck is in the perfect place: if put around the feet it would get lost, in the body it would be too central. It's a little jewel that the eye goes to instantly and all else just fits into place.' This analogy breaks down if given too much thought, but the idea of somehow finding a bizarre logic to a work makes sense to me. There needs to be a hierarchy of elements."

For artists who feel called to the darker path, Jeff has this advice: "Don't worry about labels. Allow yourself to discover and imitate a variety of artists from across the spectrum. Consciously or not, you will mix them together and regurgitate it

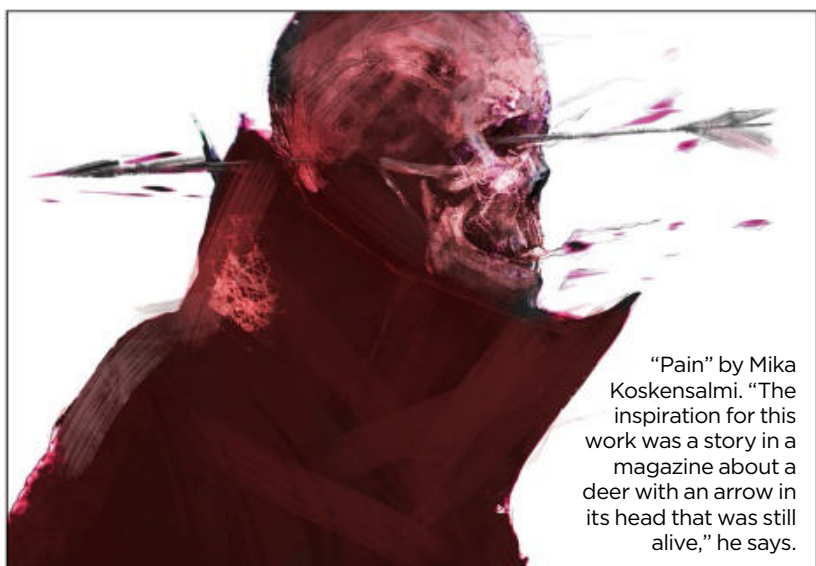
as something of your own. Just try to do what you think looks interesting in terms of patterns, shapes, colours and forms. Don't worry about narrative; people will always be more than willing to apply their own."

CHALLENGING EXPECTATIONS

Like Jeff, graphic designer and illustrator **Nicole Altenhoff** was influenced by the art her parents



exposed her to as a child, and she can remember being drawn to fantasy and dark themes at primary school age. "The hallway of my parents' flat was decorated with posters of heavy ➡



"Pain" by Mika Koskensalmi. "The inspiration for this work was a story in a magazine about a deer with an arrow in its head that was still alive," he says.

Artist news, software & events

"This artwork shows the love for something you can't keep or even catch. It is the contrast of freedom and captivity, and since both are not real, it is nothing but an illusion. The character appears as fragile as the moths and also concerned, as if someone could take away the treasure" – Nicole Altenhoff.



➡ metal bands' artwork, and I was fascinated by the surreal look, the colours, and the atmosphere of 'something is about to happen'. It influenced my own art as soon as I started drawing. My art is not exclusively dark, but there have always been dark accents."

Many of Nicole's dreamy and ethereal artworks are about characters from a fantasy novel she is working on. "It fulfils me to create worlds that break the rules of our own," she reveals. She likes to use tones that give her "a feeling of nostalgia for a memory I never had", and prefers ambiguous characters that are not easily understood. "Whenever I want to show death, there is also life. I play with innocence and guilt, destruction and tenderness, love and pain."

Rather than good, evil or sinister, her characters are "human, in all their extremes". Nicole likes to use small details and symbols to ignite the viewers' curiosity. "I am easily captivated by artworks that play with my expectations and let me perceive a twist or a secret," she says.

Illustrator and concept artist

Mika Koskensalmi specialises in



images that use a sense of scale to create an awe-inspiring, sinister effect. Realistic landscapes and natural elements are

mixed with enormous ogres, warriors and giants that loom over tiny human figures in the foreground. Sometimes he incorporates photographs into his



"Yunja and the ravens", by Nicole Altenhoff. "Characters in my artworks are often tied to flowers, trees and animals, as they are bonded to nature."



An orc sketch by Jeff Simpson. Jeff works as a concept artist for film, TV and games, and is currently at Marvel Studios.

work to create a realism that contrasts with his fantastical creatures.

As a young artist he drew comics, his style only developing into a darker tone when he studied to be a graphic designer. "I like all kinds of characters, warriors, creepy creatures and so on. Movies, games and music inspire me, and I get lots of inspiration from great artists like Adrian Smith or Chris Cold."

INSPIRING WORLDS

Concept designer **Sandra Duchiewicz**



remembers being intrigued by sinister, mysterious themes as a child; a fascination that escalated when she

discovered the fairy tales of Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. "I had a very beautifully illustrated book of Brothers Grimm tales, and I

think those books inspired me deeply," she explains. "I also gravitated to anything that seemed mysterious and old. I read a lot of history books, and loved reading Greek, Celtic and Norse mythology."

Sandra enjoys the complexity of her fantastical creatures, and often finds herself empathising with the supposed villain of a story. "I always look more towards the underdogs of stories than to the heroes and their heroic actions – breaking into a dragon's lair, and slaying a dragon that didn't do anything," she says.

Bleak, foreboding landscapes feature heavily in Sandra's work, which she paints with a desaturated, gloomy colour palette. "I like painting in opposite structures: organic (mountains, rocks, clouds, fog etc) vs man-made," she says. "I try to envision how humans would attempt to tame the landscape that I am painting, and I always put in man-made architecture to hint at the presence of humans."

She counts as her greatest successes the pieces that have inspired others to come up with their own creations. "I am sometimes approached by fellow creatives who tell me they wrote an epic piece of music inspired by my artwork, or they based an entire D&D campaign on an illustration I did. When an artwork takes new forms of life like that, it is the best thing that can happen to a creator," she says. ●

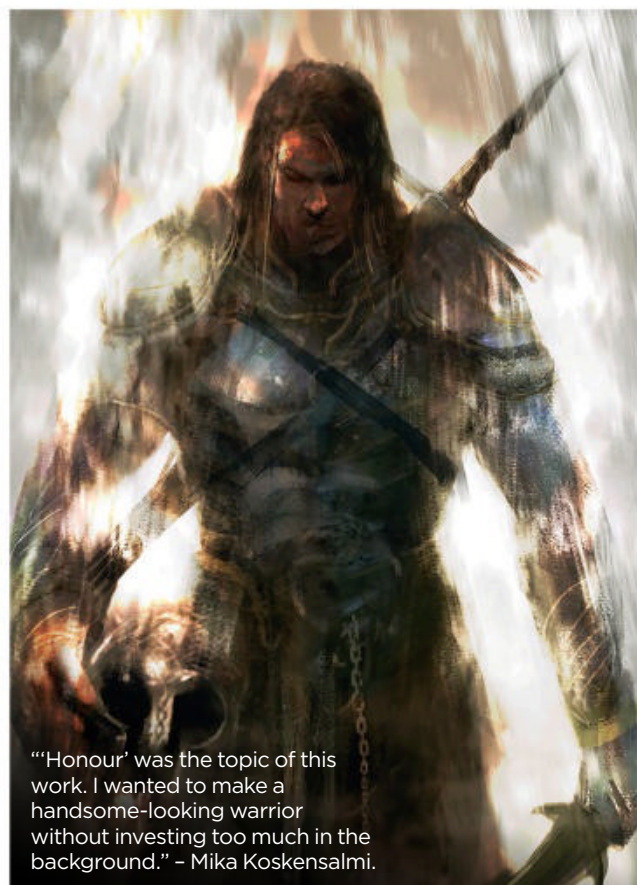
“It fulfils me to create worlds that break the rules of our own”



"Back from an errand", a key shot from Sandra Duchiewicz's beautiful Lake Town project.



Concept artist Sandra Duchiewicz's incredible "Succubus" design.



"Honour" was the topic of this work. I wanted to make a handsome-looking warrior without investing too much in the background." – Mika Koskensalmi.



"Flowers and wind", by Nicole Altenhoff. "I wanted to show a playful character in a transition into responsibility and duty."



"Undead giant" by Mika Koskensalmi. Mika created this intuitive artwork in just one hour, using some photographs to add realism.



The Sony Talent League aims to help foster young talent through the collaborative process of mentoring.

Get involved in Trojan Horse Was A Unicorn's Sony Talent League

Collaboration We interview **Kris Pearn**, a mentor for Sony Talent League, about the importance of supporting new, young creatives



Animation director and producer Kris Pearn is also a mentor for this year's edition of THU's Sony Talent League. Here

he answers our questions on why he loves to help foster and develop new creative talent...

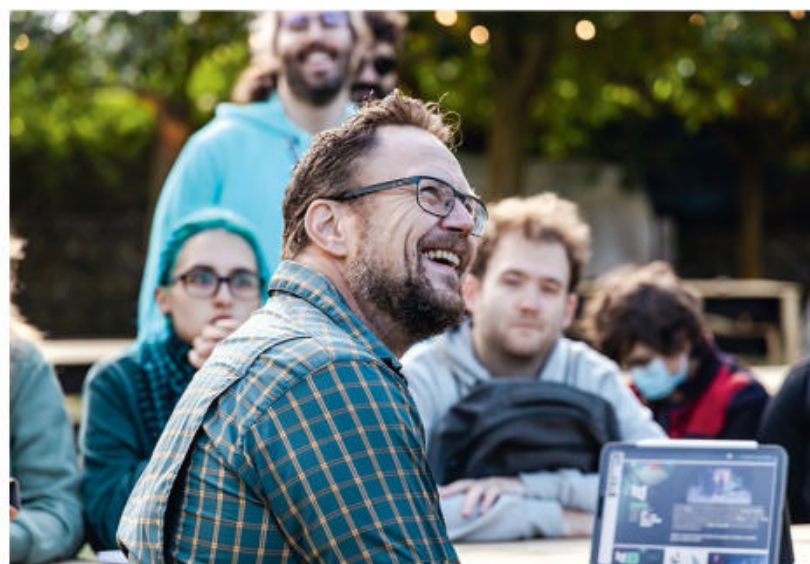
What is the Talent League and why did you get involved?

Sony Talent League is an initiative to help young artists develop their ideas with support from industry professionals from diverse sectors (VFX, animation, gaming, tech etc). It's a supportive environment with the goal of empowering young artists from around the world with the knowledge and tools to make their visions a reality.

Talent League is about mentorship and giving support to the artists who need it. Can you talk about why that is important and how you can benefit from that as much as the artists? Why are you involved?

Winners of this year's Sony Talent League will be announced 25 March, 2022.

I've been lucky enough to have had a great run in my career in film – going on 30 years now (says the balding man in a rocking chair). Over those years I've had many moments where I was mentored and I will forever be grateful for that knowledge. My whole family works in the trades, and I look at animation and filmmaking in general as a trade – knowledge is passed on through the process of 'doing'. I think the opportunity to offer support, perspective and



practical advice is not only important for the industry (fostering new talent) but incredibly important for the connecting of generations and spreading ideas in both directions – the way things *were* done and the way things *can* be done better as technology and storytelling evolves. It's a conversation.

I find it so helpful to communicate – to step out of your head and explain a process has a way of challenging and reinforcing skills. It's one thing to 'do', and another thing to 'share'. Also, there's always new ideas that come from the mentee that inform and evolve the job – efficiencies, language, and skills that are new to me coming from their lived experiences, that's SO valuable. It's humbling.

I love the puzzle of making stuff too, and when there's trust in this relationship, we break down the titles (mentor and mentee) and just become collaborators. That's how it felt last year with Dilruba Tayfun and the Togather team. What they were making was so different than my normal day-to-day process. (As a writer, story artist and director, I've never made tools before. It was so fascinating.) They got me seeing the

world differently. In the end, I think the experience was so rewarding for the way it opened my mind, but also validated some of the notions I've been developing over the years in regards to story and storytelling. Working with passionate, talented and hungry young artists is such a wonderful way to expand creative horizons. Air things out. Once we got to a place of trust, we played and that's how the best stuff gets made. Such a rewarding experience.

The prizes are very generous. The winners get not just cash but a mentor for an extended period, as well as the support of the community, which is a thriving and vocal one. Can you tell us a bit about why you think the THU tribe is such a special group of people?

The tone of THU is set from the top. Andre and his team all care about the tribe they serve. The mission to share and help each other is so wonderful and of all the festivals and conferences I've attended, that spirit of collective growth is absolutely unique.

You make friends for life with the tribe because there's no hierarchy during the event: we all eat, dance, debate, draw, and share experiences together. It's magical. Everybody there *wants* to be there and there's a spirit of helping that feels genuine and honest. In my experience, these connections end up travelling beyond the event itself into the real industry. Making movies is a collective endeavour and THU captures that spirit, during the live event and beyond. It is really a tribe.

What is it about the creative community that is important to you?

I love playing. Puzzles. Telling stories. Hearing stories. Drawing. Laughing.

SONY
TALENT
LEAGUE

BY: THU

THE PRIZES

Three finalist projects get all of this...

TEN WEEKS OF REMOTE MENTORSHIPS

You will have the chance to learn from some of the most brilliant minds in the creative industry, who will help you develop your idea, encouraging and guiding you through the process.

+

UP TO 10,000 EUROS IN FUNDING (PER SUBMISSION)

The goal is to help finalists support living expenses and stay committed and focused on developing their projects.

+

THE SUPPORT OF THE THU COMMUNITY

Our Tribe includes creators from all backgrounds and parts of the world who will accompany your creative process, offer insights, and see your idea come to life.

+

In addition, the winner also gets...

FULL-RIDE TO THE NEXT THU EVENT

Including travel, accommodation, ticket, and meals. The winner will also have the chance to present and promote the project during the event.

Providing a safe space for creatives to share their ideas is invaluable for their growth and for the community, and is one of THU's core goals.



The events are all about collaboration, forming connections, and supporting each other's development and growth.

“The mission to share and help each other is so wonderful... that spirit of collective growth is absolutely unique”

Making others laugh. Being part of a creative community taps into the social need we all have to share ideas. Having a safe place to be silly or vulnerable with other artists is how ideas grow, improve and develop. What's the point of telling a story if there's nobody on the other side to hear it? Or vice versa. As I type this I'm sitting at home looking at all the bad news in the world and really missing my friends in Portugal. It is how the creative well gets replenished... being with other creative buckets. I think that metaphor makes sense. Ha!

Part of the prize is also an all-expenses trip to the next THU main event. What do you see as the benefits to the community at an event such as THU?

I think the Talent League is not only a place to foster talent but also a mission to MAKE STUFF. For the Talent League participants, coming to the event and sharing the thing that *they* made with an audience of friends and strangers and strangers who become friends... it pulls the whole experience together.

One of the highlights for me in 2021 was going on a hike with Dilruba and

her team with a group of THU attendees to collect natural objects to make brushes. Seeing Dilly's vision in practice with people engaging and participating brought so much joy to my heart. It was a beautiful thing seeing the support and curiosity and engagement for the creative process from creative people. It took the concept I had watched her develop and made it *real*. That was so cool. Having spent months getting to know Dilruba on Zoom and seeing how hard she worked to realise her vision, to be there in person and go painting, life drawing, dancing and hiking... It reminded me how important it is to be 'human' in the business of making stuff. I can't express how much that meant to me, and I'm sure for all the teams who got to share their work, it's wonderful – on an emotional level, but also on a practical. They all *made* something. Something really cool. And seeing that connect with others was very moving.

Sony Talent League by THU aims to foster and promote young talent by providing funding, mentoring and more. Found out more about this year's edition at <https://bit.ly/36Intlp>. Read more about the next THU event at www.trojan-unicorn.com.



SONY
TALENT
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BY: THU

Partnered with

SONY

EMPOWER YOUR IDEAS

Get mentorships with creative
legends & funding to take
your projects to the next level.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Rob Redman, on mail@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England



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www.instagram.com/imaginefxmagazine

NFT coverage

An article on NFT marketplaces? Really? Not listening to your readers and the countless responses on social media about how they don't want this? I guess not. This is meant to be a magazine for artists. Subscription cancelled. Unfollowed.

Clare, via twitter

NFT bubble

I can't think of a single positive thing to say about #NFTs and neither should you. They are bad for artists and the environment and are a bubble that will eventually burst, costing people lots of money.

Keith, via twitter

Early days of NFT

Thank you for giving some coverage to NFTs that ignores the social media bashing. For a long time, the term 'starving artists' often comes to people's minds, undermining art as a valid occupation that brings in good income. Since the new trend of NFT, artists are now being more valued for their skillset



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 211 at ifxm.ag/single-ifx.

Last issue we ran a feature highlighting some of the platforms where artists can market their own art.



NFTs have caused a stir but many artists (and unfortunately some con-artists) are doing very well.

and are becoming more in demand, to a point where companies are now willing to hire artists remotely just to be able to deliver good-quality work as NFT collections. While people argue that NFT has no real value since there is no physical product being sold and bought, I'd like to shed light on the fact that people have been buying digital goods since a long time, such as videogame character skins, weapon loot boxes or even subscription packages, which were all made by underpaid artists working for companies!

Just like cars were an environmental hazard in their early phases, we see companies now producing eco-friendly automobiles. NFTs are still a new-gen tech based on its first generation of use and bound to include loopholes, but we should not solely base its creation on the negative impacts only. Until then, we can contribute to developing NFTs to become a more secure way for artists to sell their work and become a more eco-friendly future option for currency.

Dahlia, via email

Rob replies NFTs are very clearly a contentious issue, as can be seen by the sheer volume of argument on social media especially. I can see both sides of the argument, and I totally understand some of the ecological concerns, but I believe it's too early to condemn, or otherwise, the whole NFT system as good or bad.

By highlighting some of the services out there for artists we aim to help our readers make the most of the community and industry. Hopefully as more artists take up NFTs as an outlet for their creativity, things will settle. Yes, there has been theft of art and that should not go unpunished, and systems need to be adjusted to lessen this, but that isn't the fault of NFTs themselves, even if the newness of the technology has enabled it to some extent.

It seems clear to me that NFTs are here to stay in one form or another, so we will be keeping a close eye on it, reporting the good, the bad and the ugly.



New works that have grabbed our attention



 **Yorsy Hernandez**
[@yorsy_hernandez](https://www.instagram.com/yorsy_hernandez)



 **Sourav Nandi**
[@nandikushal](https://www.instagram.com/nandikushal)



 **Scott Connick**
[@scottconnick](https://www.instagram.com/scottconnick)

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



A day in the life of... Jackson Sze

Concepting heroes We find out about the jam-packed daily schedule of working on Marvel productions

Jackson Sze is a concept designer for film, games and TV, and is currently a visual development supervisor at Marvel Studios.

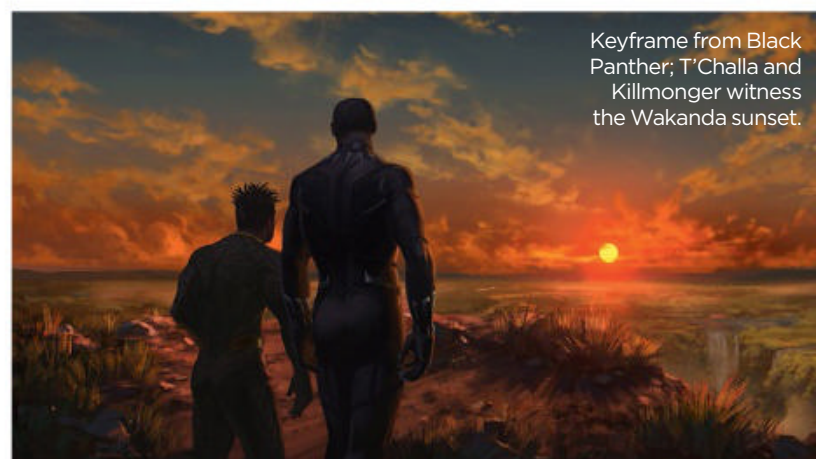
“I wake up at 7am and go for a swim. I try to work out and get cardio in the morning because I end up sitting the rest of the day. After that, I shower and get ready for work. I sit down to my computer around 9:30am and the first thing I do is check my emails. Marvel has so many ongoing shows, that even though the show I’ve supervised has gone into production and is shooting, they might have urgent questions that have tight turnarounds. Those types of questions are usually because of script or story changes and they need help figuring them out visually. Then I’m able to shift back to the shows that I’m supervising that are currently

in pre-production and don’t have as quick deadlines.

After emails are sorted, I spend a lot of time in individual Zoom meetings, reviewing art or assigning artists new tasks. That can go until lunch around 12pm. Most of the time I go and get food for lunch, because I do need that break, especially working from home. I come back to work around 1:30pm, since a lot of artists send me work at lunch, I end up connecting with them around 2pm to give them feedback, and then I’m able to get into my own work.

Since I’m a supervisor now, my role has been different. I need to see what artwork is being created for the bi-weekly meetings we have with producers, and then I fill in the gaps to round out the presentations with

“It’s very important to make sure you have a variety of interests and hobbies that don’t overlap with your work”



Keyframe from Black Panther; T'Challa and Killmonger witness the Wakanda sunset.



Concept design of Xu Wenwu, portrayed by Tony Leung; Jackson states that he grew up watching Leung's movies, and it was an honour to design his character's look.



Avengers: Endgame concept art of Okoye and Valkyrie fighting side by side as weapon masters and leaders of their respective armies.



different versions or directions that my team members didn't take. I do have characters or keyframes that I take on, but it's more about the big picture of the range of art that we're showing every other week.

TAKING A BREATH

I work until 7pm and have dinner – I usually go out and get food or delivery, sometimes make some quick and easy food. Delivery helps me maximise my time, so I end up doing that a lot. It's a very demanding job, so I'm back at work after dinner, especially from Tuesday-Thursday before a presentation on Friday. When I'm not working late, I'm watching TV or playing video games – anything that is not superhero genre! Even when I'm playing games, I'm on Discord talking to people who are not in the entertainment industry, so I can get out of my bubble. I end up going to bed around 12am and then start again.

I think it's very important to make sure you have a variety of interests and hobbies that don't overlap with your work, like doing traditional art instead of digital, to make sure that your creativity is replenished."



Jackson is a senior illustrator currently living in Los Angeles, where he's worked on projects like Avengers: Endgame, Black Panther and Thor: Ragnarok. You can see more of Jackson's art on Instagram @jwsze or Twitter @JacksonSze.



An early WandaVision keyframe, illustrating the concept of the Hex and the transition between two worlds.

Concept design for Death Dealer, from Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings.



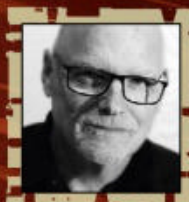
Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art.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



The 'production' side of my studio where I work. There are always many projects in progress. Keeping everything organised is a never-ending battle.

Robert Hunt

Creative space We take a tour of this beautiful bespoke workplace, where function is key



My studio is 100 feet from my house in Northern California, in a building that was converted from a three-car garage by my brother-in-law and me back in 1989-1990. We had moved into the house one day before our daughter Victoria was born in 1986.

My wife Lynn and I wanted to move to a more rural environment from San

Francisco, where I began my career. I wanted a studio at home, where I could focus on my work, but be away from the studio when I was in the house with my family. To save money, much of the building material was scavenged from a local medical building that was being remodelled.

The four sides of the studio are laid out according to four functions: light, research, storage and production. ➔

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



I try to find time every day to do a 20-minute painting. I highly recommend doing this. Some of them are disasters, but sometimes they work out.



A number of small props and reference sculptures, and the cover logo of the most recent Diana Gabaldon book.



I have a fairly large collection of art books. Whenever I start feeling complacent about my work, or just need a little kick in the backside, all I have to do to bring a little perspective to the situation is to look at the awesome artists of the past.



Note the fireproof trash can – every studio needs one of these.

This is one of a series of personal paintings I made by superimposing patterns on dancers.



My pull-down green screen, ideal for my reference photography.

I have a large collection of frames waiting for the right painting. I bought many of them from a frame shop that went out of business.

My current computer system consists of a trash-can Mac Pro. Much of my computer system has been repurposed for online teaching during the pandemic.

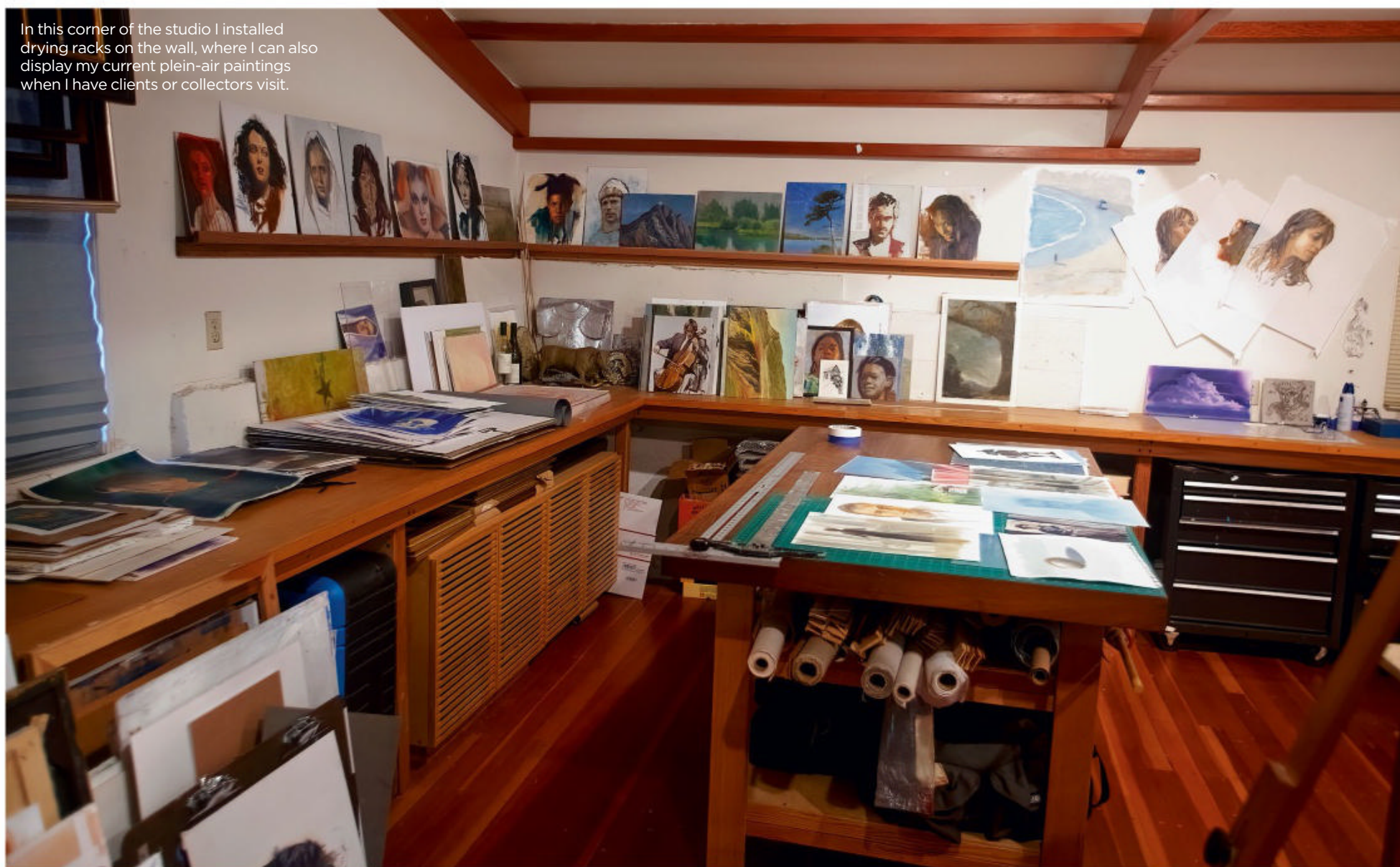
The model house on the table is a mock-up I made of the trademark of Random House publishing company, which was a prop for an animated motion logo I made for them.

Over the years I have had many drawing tables, some are reassigned to new duties. I could never get rid of them.

“ Every day I wake up and cannot believe how fortunate I’ve been to have the career I love ”

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

In this corner of the studio I installed drying racks on the wall, where I can also display my current plein-air paintings when I have clients or collectors visit.



➡ The front of the building is a wall of large windows (facing north). One side is dedicated to reference, photography, props, etc. The back wall is designated for storage (primarily of work in progress), and the other wall is the 'production' side – the part of the studio where I do almost all my painting and drawing.

The space is flexible. Everything in the room can be moved around so I can rearrange the space to accommodate whatever I may need to do. I can shoot reference photos, build



I have a pull-down 8x8' green screen for isolating models and props in my reference photography.

sets, paint and draw models, even entertain the occasional visitor.

100 feet away, in the house, there is a library filled with books and storage of paintings, and an office where Lynn deals with much of the business side of things. There seem to be paintings stored in every available nook and cranny of our home – though we have very few up on our walls.

AN EVOLVING CAREER

My career as an illustrator has been long and varied. I began working locally in San Francisco but soon made a transition to being essentially a New York illustrator living in California, as I began what eventually would be hundreds of book covers. Over time my work evolved to include a wide range of illustration. Parallel to all this, my personal work includes landscape paintings and sculpture.

Every day I wake up and cannot believe how fortunate I've been to have the career I love, and being able



Next to my drawing board I have an ever-changing array of pencils and other drawing equipment...

to work where I do. To me the studio is a special environment, and I know I am very fortunate to have such a beautiful and bespoke workplace – I am excited to share it with you.

Robert Hunt is a Professor at the California College of the Arts. He is an award-winning painter and illustrator, having worked for numerous film, book and magazine clients on covers, logos, editorial illustrations, advertisements and much more. Discover his work at www.roberthuntstudio.com.

“There seem to be paintings stored in every available nook and cranny of our home”

Artist news, software & events



I have made cover art for several hundred books over the course of my career, these are just a few of them. I try to look at each project as a stepping stone on a path. I still look forward to seeing where the path will lead me.



I have a small woodworking shop, stocked with tools I inherited from my grandfather. I am learning to make quality frames for my landscape paintings.

Photography has always been a part of my work – over the years I have amassed a number of cameras and lenses, here are a few of them...



My drawing board is made from a Bieffe Italian drawing table, I cut the feet off and mounted it horizontally on my countertop, then reversed the cam system and mounted the board upside down. The result is a fully adjustable drawing board that can rotate 45 degrees. The surface is the same board I have had since art school in 1981. Traces of everything I have ever done are on that board.



UTOPIA #02

An image made for a KitBash3D illustration challenge. The topic was 'utopia'. I therefore chose to depict a very bright and sunny scene, with humans, machines and nature living in harmony.

**SLAVES**

In the future, everyday people need to wear masks, but not the wealthy whose bodies incorporate anti-virus nanomachines.

THE ART OF DOFRESH

Rob Redman interviews the freelance concept artist, who shares his love of sci-fi and unveils his latest projects



We chat to the France-based freelance illustrator known as Dofresh about his inspirations, favourite artists, how his passion for sci-fi began, and the importance of focusing on creating what you love...

What do you love about painting sci-fi inspired scenes and visuals?
I've always loved sci-fi, since my childhood. I remember spending hours closely observing book covers

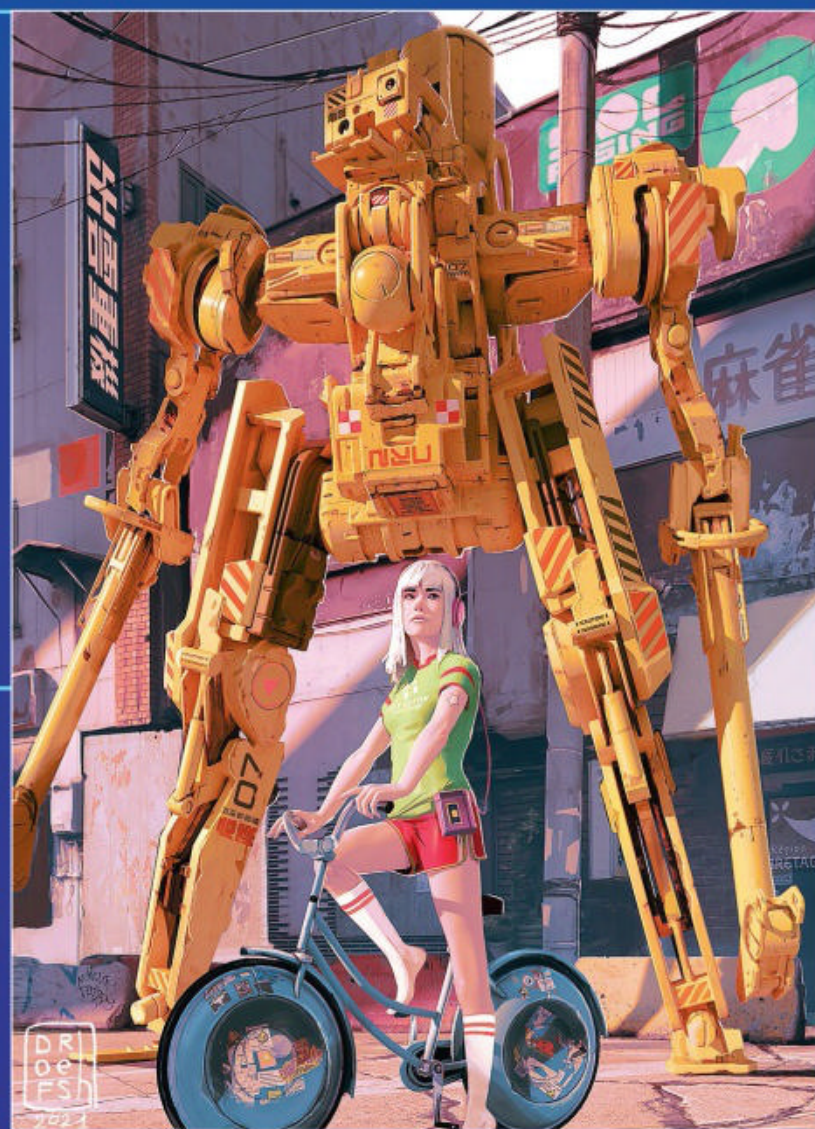
and comics made by the golden age masters (Moebius, Syd Mead, Chris Foss, John Berkey, to name a few). What I love the most about sci-fi is the ability to explore possible trajectories for mankind, not just on technological levels, but also political or sociological.

Do you have a particular approach to your art?

I prefer to convey feelings, to be able to somehow tell a story without words. I also use my memories and my everyday experiences in order to reinject them into my illustrations (in my personal work, anyway). At the end of the day, I do images that I like, not images that I think will be trendy or grab attention. For me, this kind of cynical process would lead to disaster.

What do art directors look for? Has this changed over the years?

Based on my experience, I would say there are two types of art directors.

**MARCH OF ROBOTS 2021**

An image made for the 'March of Robots' annual challenge. The idea was simply to play with vibrant colours and contrast between the girl and the mech. Very anime inspired, of course.

The 'pyramidal' kind has a (more or less) clear vision of what they want. They just hire an artist to produce a clean and polished version of their ideas. Most of the time, this kind of collaboration just leads to dull results and can be very frustrating for both parties involved.

The 'collaborative' kind is very different. This kind of art director hires artists because they love what they do, and are open to new ideas and new approaches. The creation process is like a discussion, with ideas ➡

Artist PROFILE

DOFRESH

LOCATION: France
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Moebius, Syd Mead, Peter Elson, Enki Bilal, Masamune Shirow
MEDIA: 3ds Max, Photoshop
WEB: www.artstation.com/dofresh



THE UNION

Image made for an ArtStation challenge. I wanted to give a very epic, baroque and highly detailed render of the illustration.

➡ running back and forth. This will give much better and original results, in my humble opinion.

How has working in different sectors, like video games, publishing and film, helped you to develop as an artist?

This will probably sound weird, but the medium doesn't really matter, I think. Each of these sectors has different needs and limitations, but in the end it's all about providing nice imagery. But in terms of developing as an artist, by working with many different clients, I realised that I was able to quickly adapt myself to

different situations and resolve problems, and somehow that's rather reassuring.

How much fun was creating the art for Love, Death + Robots? What was challenging, and did you need to rethink how you worked?

It was a very fun project. I was hired by the people of Unit Image to help them designing the sets, vehicles and some keyframes for the Netflix show. They were very open to fresh ideas and gave me almost total freedom to explore and try things. It was a very rewarding process. And the final result they delivered is absolutely fantastic. I am

“What I like the most is the beginning of an image, looking for a composition, a lighting, a mood”



SENT BY THE GODS

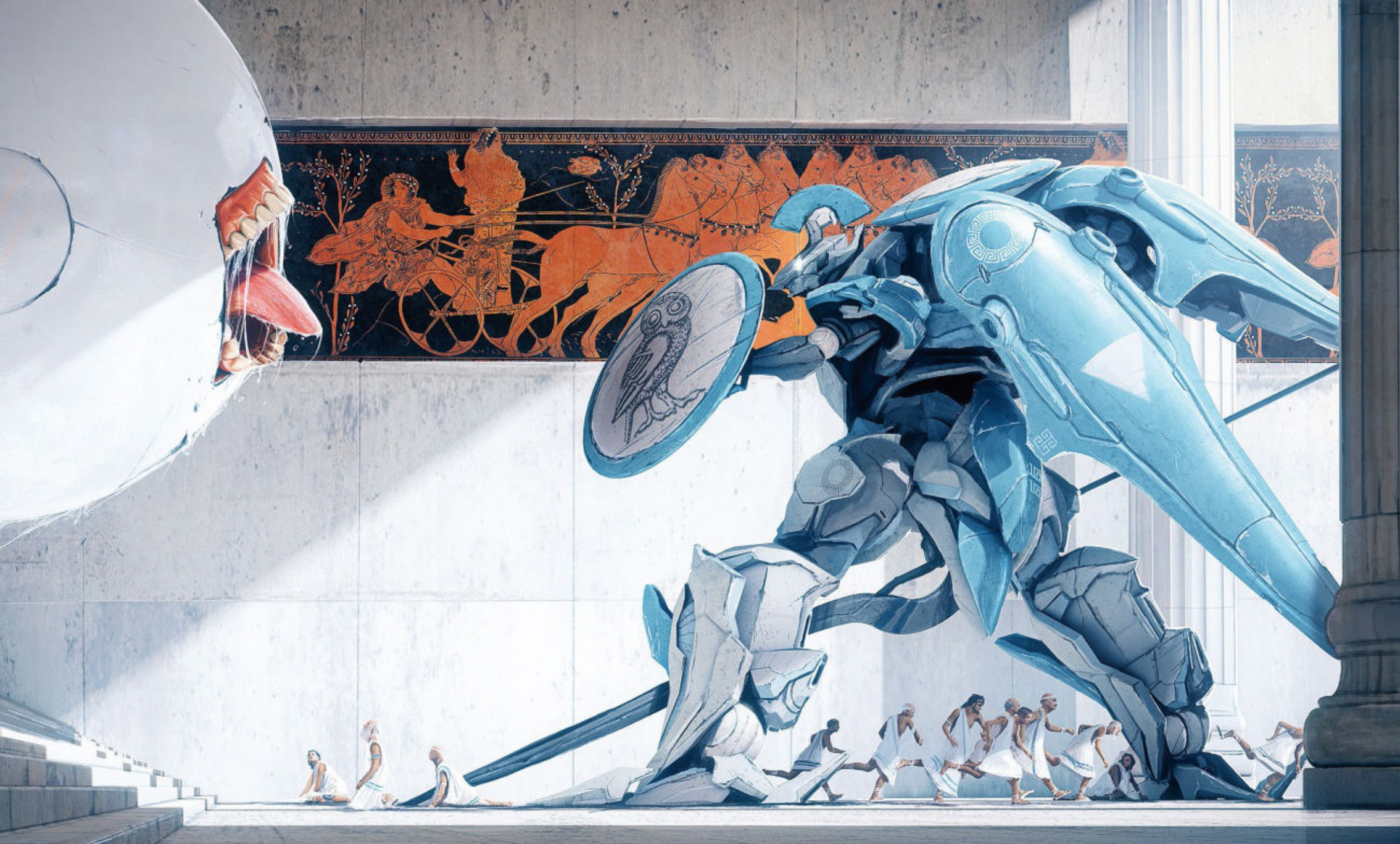
Dofresh takes us through the process behind the creation of this unique sci-fi concept

It was a very fun piece to produce. I wanted to explore a mix of sci-fi and Ancient Greece. I had already designed this mech in static positions but this time I wanted to depict it in action. The composition of the image is very diagonal, the framing and the light are used to show the confrontation between the mech and the 'weird' sphere. The human characters fleeing the temple are here to give a sense of scale to the scene. What I like the most in this piece, I think, is that the design of the sphere (a mix of flesh and metal) makes the viewer a bit uncomfortable. Because of this, I hesitated a bit before publishing this illustration. Frankly, I thought it would be a flop.



THE REST

Personal work. It is some kind of uchronia, with an imaginary jet seaplane vaguely inspired by the A-10 warthog. As usual I also wanted to add bright colours. Some say this image is very dieselpunk.



proud to have been a small piece in such a great project.

Do you have a philosophy for your art?

Like I said before: do the art that fits your taste. Do not waste your time copying what's trending, just make your own stuff. Your art is an opportunity to explore your obsessions, just dig in.

What part of your day job do you enjoy the most?

What I like the most is the beginning of an image, looking for a composition, a lighting, a mood. The preliminary steps can be done very

quickly, and it allows me to explore many ideas. I also love it when a 'happy accident' occurs, something unexpected which happens to be much cooler than the original intentions I had for the image.

Can you remember the first time you knew you wanted to be an artist?

It is something I have dreamt about during my whole childhood and youth. I do not come from a family with an artistic background, therefore this kind of career sounded very strange and almost naive to my relatives. But they were very supportive, and allowed me to find my way. I will never thank them enough.

SENT BY THE GODS

I love the mech genre. This image (part of a series) was an opportunity to make a personal and hopefully original version of this very common subject.



You were hired to make illustrations and renders for the MMO video game Infinite Fleet. The style is unique – 80s anime with a modern twist – how hard has this been to get right? Are you aware projects like this come with die-hard fans who love the source material, and is this an added pressure?

The 80s look of the game was a request of the client, and with the game being currently under development the art direction is also still evolving. But it's a very fun style to explore, and Wayne Wong-Chong, the art director of the game, is a very nice guy to work with. We are both very aware that there are some hardcore fans when it comes to this kind of aesthetics or universe. But even though I love anime and sci-fi, I wouldn't call myself a fan of this genre. The fans tend to become a bit problematic, a bit fanatical indeed; I try to stay away from the drama.

Do you have any advice for readers wanting to paint sci-fi art?

Read books. The best ideas remain to be illustrated, there are dozens of great novels craving to find an illustrator to depict their universes. We tend to all look to the same movies and TV shows, which leads to a uniformisation of our imagination. Books are a great tool to muscle up your visual creativity. Reading is a ➡



MECHANIZED INFANTRY

I love the idea of uchronic robots. In this image it was the opportunity to show a revisited Vietnam War scene. After all, it was a hyper technological conflict. Plus, I love the colour smoke grenades.



THE GRID

This was an opportunity to explore another cyberpunk vision, where human limbs and body parts are replaced by branded cybernetics components.



Interview

➤➤ process that requires an active role from the reader, and it activates very different areas of your brain. Also, try not to focus on sci-fi only, explore other genres and universes.

You take part in a lot of online challenges, what do you get out of these?

I like the idea of having a deadline to produce personal work (it forces me to finish things in a tight schedule). And I also love to see many artists working on the same subject and ending up with very different results. It's fascinating to see how multiple minds and techniques end up creating all these different options. And I do it for the glory, of course.

Can you offer five tips for 2D artists looking to start in 3D? (What apps to start with, how to think about 3D, etc).

1. I would use Blender: it's free, it's powerful, the community is great, and there are tons of tutorials available to help you get started.
2. It's important to remember that 3D is a tool, not the goal.
3. The learning curve in 3D is harsh,

“The cyberpunk writers of the 80s basically predicted the world we live in”

and you will plateau often. Try not to become discouraged, and keep going.
4. Try to find a mentor, someone who will take you through the key functions and recommended workflows within the software.
5. Use 3D for even greater liberty and artistic creativity in your work. Experiment with different camera angles, try out some strange lighting, and so on.

Which artists have inspired you, and why?

There are so many. I have already quoted Moebius. Most of my heroes come from the comics or movie industry. They all have a strong personal style.

I would therefore add to the list: Enki Bilal, Marvano, Masamune Shirow, John Carpenter, Neill Blomkamp, Olivier Vatine, James



BEYOND THE HIGH WALLS

Exploration of contrasts: both graphical and social. It was also a way to depict a dystopian world, but with a paradoxically warm and bright palette.

Cameron, and Kow Yokoyama. You will probably know some of these names, I strongly encourage you to discover the others.

Has COVID or lockdown affected your approach to work, life, and your art?

Remote working is not new to me; since I became a freelancer a few years ago, this is how I work. This worldwide shift to remote working was therefore not a big change for me. Also, a lot of studios had to rethink and change their policies about contractors

working remotely, so I think it will open many new opportunities for freelance artists.

On a more general plane, I think this crisis has shown us all that our societies, our civilisation, could collapse pretty quickly. This kind of situation has been told so many times in so many sci-fi stories, it would be nice to remember that the genre is not only made to have fun. Whether you like it or not, sci-fi is the most political and engaged genre. The cyberpunk writers of the 80s basically predicted the world we live in. Perhaps it might

**BSOD**

I wanted to give a feeling of chaos, violence and movement. The scene is also filled with cyberpunk Easter eggs.

MAINTENANCE BOTS

A sort of homage to the golden age of sci-fi illustrators, with bright light and vivid colours, giant spaceships, and an overall sense of optimism.



be time to hear the authors and explore new, desirable futures.

What does the future hold for you, what's the next project?

I have several long-term projects running in parallel (including Infinite Fleet). I should also work again for the United Nations very soon, creating posters for a communication campaign. And the most important project for me, I will try to publish an artbook compiling personal works. It will be a crowdfunded project, of course. Stay tuned! 🌟

**THE OWL**

At first this was a test for the mech design, but I finally added a lot of details around it. And it was also the first image of a series set in the same universe.

Daniel Bolling Walsh

The concept artist showcases his portrait studies and talks us through the techniques he experimented with whilst sketching

Artist **PROFILE**

Daniel Bolling Walsh

LOCATION: Denmark



I have always enjoyed drawing and computer games while growing up, and Warhammer was also a big hobby. I grew up in

Sydney but moved to Sweden when I turned 21. I decided to pursue concept art and illustration, and I learnt a lot from studying at the Swedish Academy of Realist Art. I've worked as an illustrator on Warhammer novels and Lucasfilm. I currently work as a concept artist at A44 Games.

www.artstation.com/danielbolling

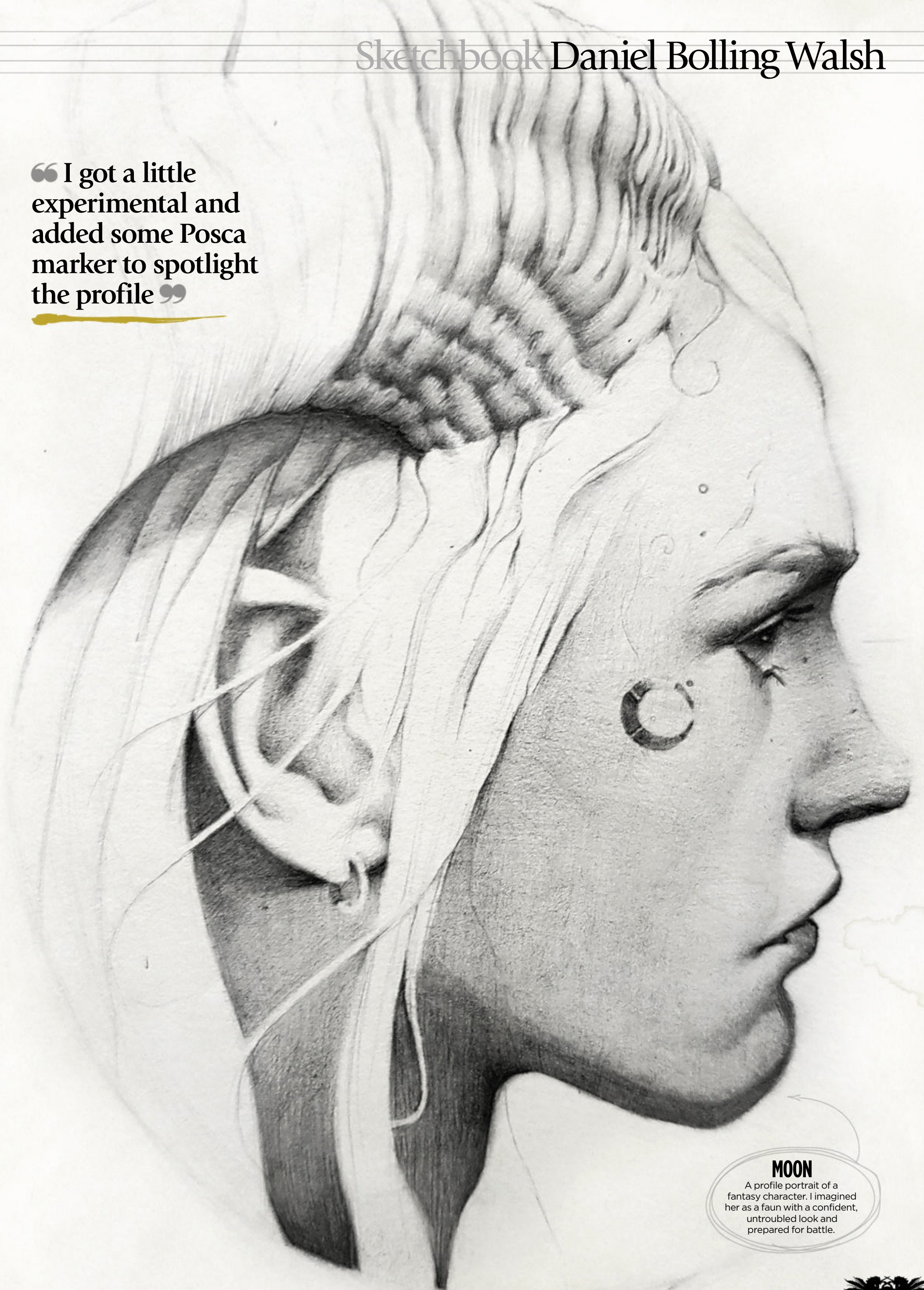
POLKA DOT

A portrait study practising lineweight and accents. I got a little experimental and added some Posca marker to spotlight the profile.

BREEZE

Here is a portrait where I played with some more graphic ways of shading certain elements like the hair and neck, and leaving the details to the face.

“I got a little experimental and added some Posca marker to spotlight the profile”



MOON

A profile portrait of a fantasy character. I imagined her as a faun with a confident, untroubled look and prepared for battle.

“Attempting to draw the features at different angles was good practice”

FACE STUDIES

A set of anatomy studies of the face that I did as a series. Attempting to draw and line up the features of the face at different angles was good practice.



GOLD FISH

Expressions can be really difficult to get right, here we can see the fish is not as happy.



MIRROR

These are some sketches done using Procreate on my iPad; I love this app and its pencil texture type brushes. Here I'm playing with some hatching style and using the pen on its side to control the thickness of the pencil stroke.

EARRINGS

I played around with linework in this one, making it much more expressive. You can also see some of my structural linework in the nose and the circular lines to construct the head.



Sketchbook



SOFT LIGHT

In these (particularly the right one) I found the anatomy to be much harder to draw as the lighting is much softer, it's harder to find landmarks to compare distances between details.



“In Photoshop I love to experiment with the colours to fit the mood of each portrait”

FLOOFS

Here are a mother and cub floof, maybe more. They are curious of what they see. If they want to hide, they fold their ears downwards and hide amongst the mossy rocks.

Sketchbook Daniel Bolling Walsh



GRAPHIC SKETCHES

These are some sketches done in Photoshop, where I love to experiment with the colours to fit the mood of each portrait.

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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Advice from the world's best artists

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This issue:

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your anatomy**

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beast concept**

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own comic**

Learn the basics of comic design with Rebekka Hearl.

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3D-Coat & Blender

3D SCULPT YOUR ANATOMY ART

Artist PROFILE

Jama Jurabaev

LOCATION: England

Tajikistan-born Jama graduated as an aerospace engineer in 2004, but decided to pursue his dream to become an artist. He has worked as a concept artist on blockbuster films including Ready Player One and Avengers: Age of Ultron. www.jamajurabaev.com

Jama Jurabaev transforms his 2D sketches into a 3D anatomy study



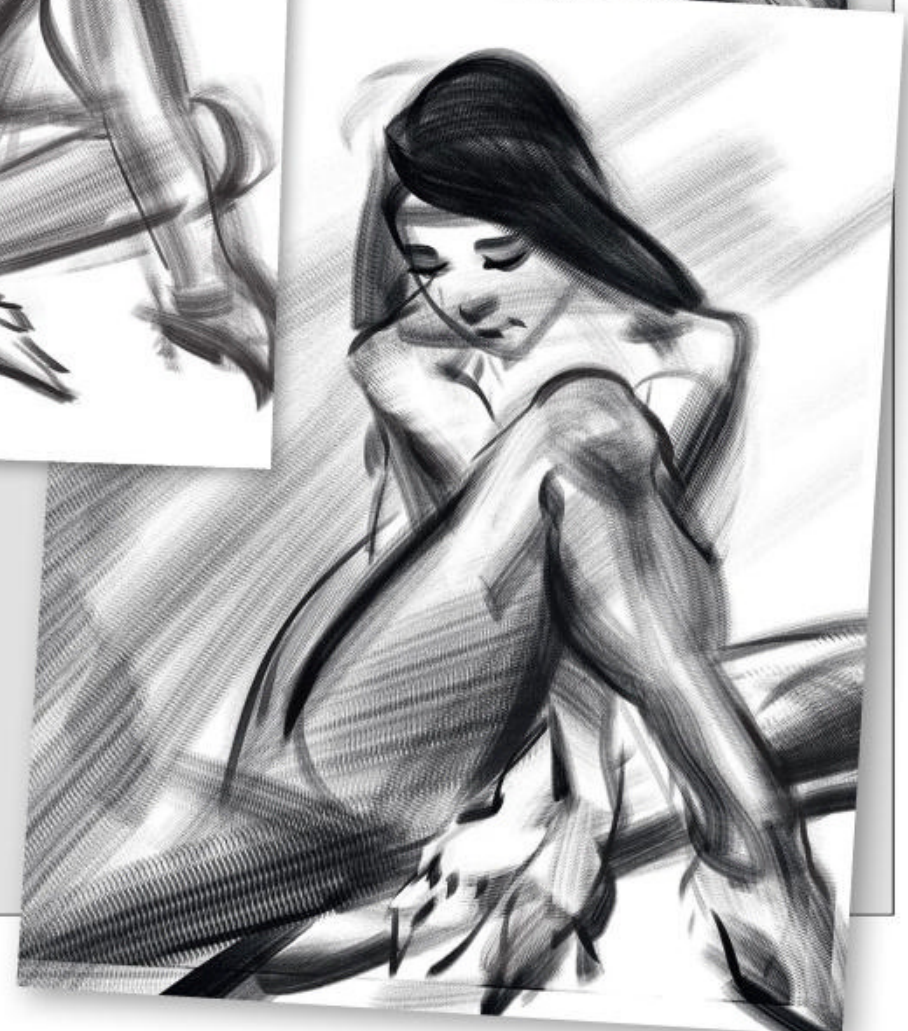
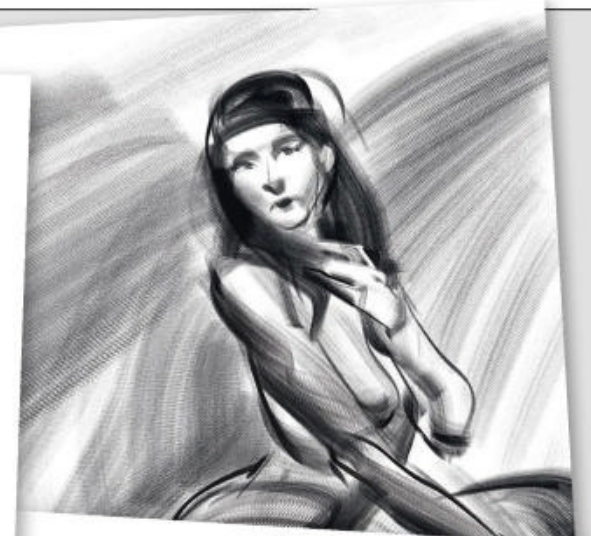
Mastering anatomy is a never-ending process – there is so much to learn, so many little nuances, and many pitfalls to be aware of. Human anatomy is very complex indeed.

For this workshop, I took on the challenge of producing a female

anatomy study, which starts off as an initial sketch and is then sculpted in 3D-Coat, and rendered in Blender. I'll provide some quick tips for how I undertook this process, focusing on the key elements of posing, action and forms, as well as my thoughts on using real life references, to ensure the details are right.



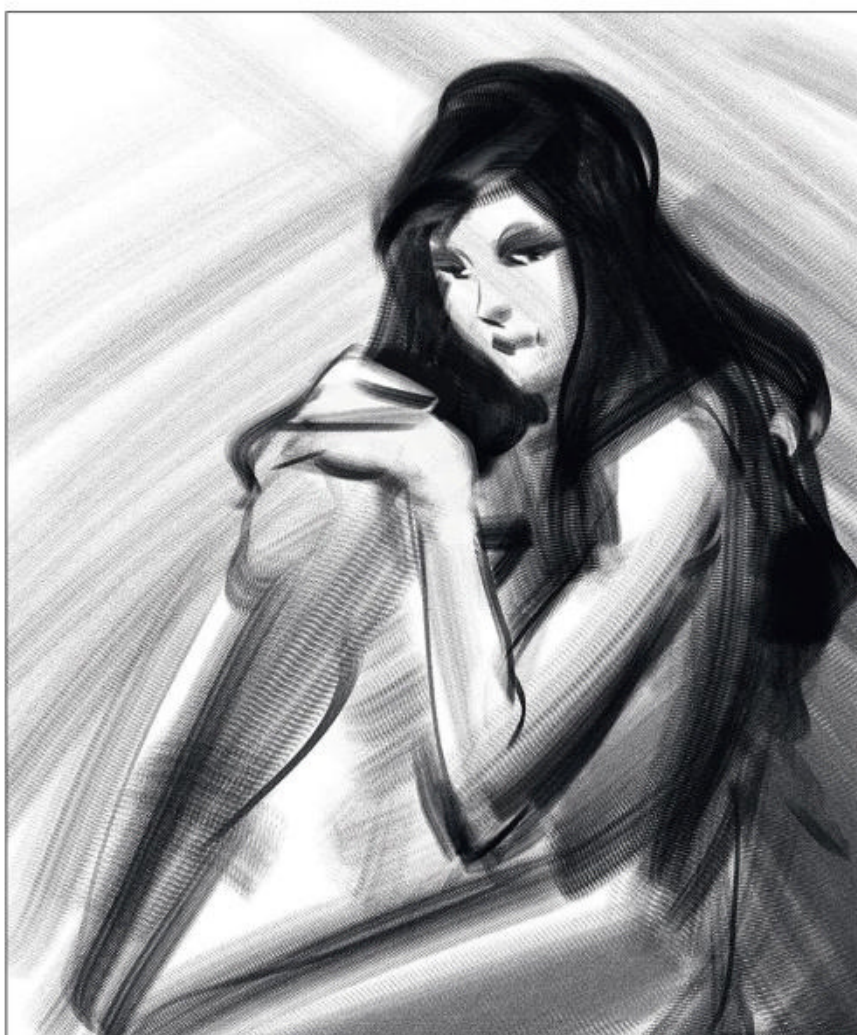
TOP TIPS



Initial sketches

Back in the day, I used to do a lot of life drawings. Some of my two or five-minute poses looked much better than the drawings I spent a longer time on; short-timed poses forced me to focus on action rather than fine details, which is practically impossible to capture in such a short amount of time. No matter what I'm working on, I always start with action. In this case, the aim was to make a sitting pose, but I wanted to try different options and see how far I could push this pose. Again, if you look at these sketches, the anatomy is not perfect in any way. However, most of them have a good sense of action and that is what I'm looking for in my first pass of these sketches.





Focus on the action

I'm a firm believer in action, movement and gesture. Humans, animals, creatures, robots... they are all in constant movement. Even if we pick a very static pose, it is still a frozen moment of a moving organism. So, if I can get the action right, all the additional details will complement that action. And the opposite is also true; if there is no clear sense of action or movement, no matter how detailed your sculpture or drawing is, it will look stiff and forced. As much as I love working on dynamic poses, I wanted to raise the bar and try out something a bit more grounded and calmer. So, I decided to continue with this pose for this piece of work.



Capture the primary forms

At this stage, the most crucial principle is simplification. Here I am blocking out the primary forms. Again, I'm not following my sketch precisely as I still want to have some room for changes as I go. Even if I had a reference in front of me (which I don't have at this point in the process), I would still try not to copy it exactly but to capture the feeling of the pose. And this eventually allows me to reinforce the gesture I had in my sketch. As I progress, I tweak some proportion issues.

Check the proportions

At this stage I wasn't very happy with the pose, especially the way her head was positioned, and being an anatomy study I wanted to double-check if everything had the right proportions. I realised that a lot of elements were not aligning with the anatomy. On top of that, my clay shaders work much better on a dynamic pose. With this being a very relaxed pose, I just couldn't justify all the muscle details I was introducing, so I had to tone down all the clay effects.

Clay shaders

As I mentioned at the beginning of this workshop, I prefer a rough and lively gesture over a stiff, highly detailed sculpture. That is one of the reasons I use clay mimicking shaders for my sculptures, as it reinforces this sensation of being a sketch.

Adding the details

Even at this stage, I'm not religiously following the reference in front of me. As I'm introducing the details, I'm still simplifying some forms and maintaining that initial gesture. The focal point is the most detailed part of the sculpture. In this case, I spent quite some time on her face, making sure it was detailed enough as it was my primary focal point. The hands and feet are pretty simplified as they act as secondary focal points.

Materials and rendering

This is something I love about 3D. Once my sculpture is finished, I can start playing with different shaders to achieve a particular look for my final image.

Natural curves

I find it so much easier to sculpt monsters or robots because you can get away with so many rough edges and forms. However, sculpting a female character is another challenge, as any wrong bump would look weird and unnatural. So, without any hesitation, I asked my wife to pose for me, so I can introduce those details.



Procreate

PAINT A FANTASY BEAST CONCEPT

From developing ideas to painting methods, illustrator **Xiao** introduces her process of bringing imaginary creatures to life

Artist PROFILE

Xiao

LOCATION: UK

A Somerset-based illustrator who focuses on character design and explores storytelling with comics and book illustration.
<https://ifxm.ag/xiao>



GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!



When it comes to character concept design, it doesn't matter whether you're designing for a given brief or a piece of personal work – you will naturally draw inspirations from your own memory and experiences, things you've seen, read and felt. And consciously or not, you will channel your personalities and aesthetics into your work. So your

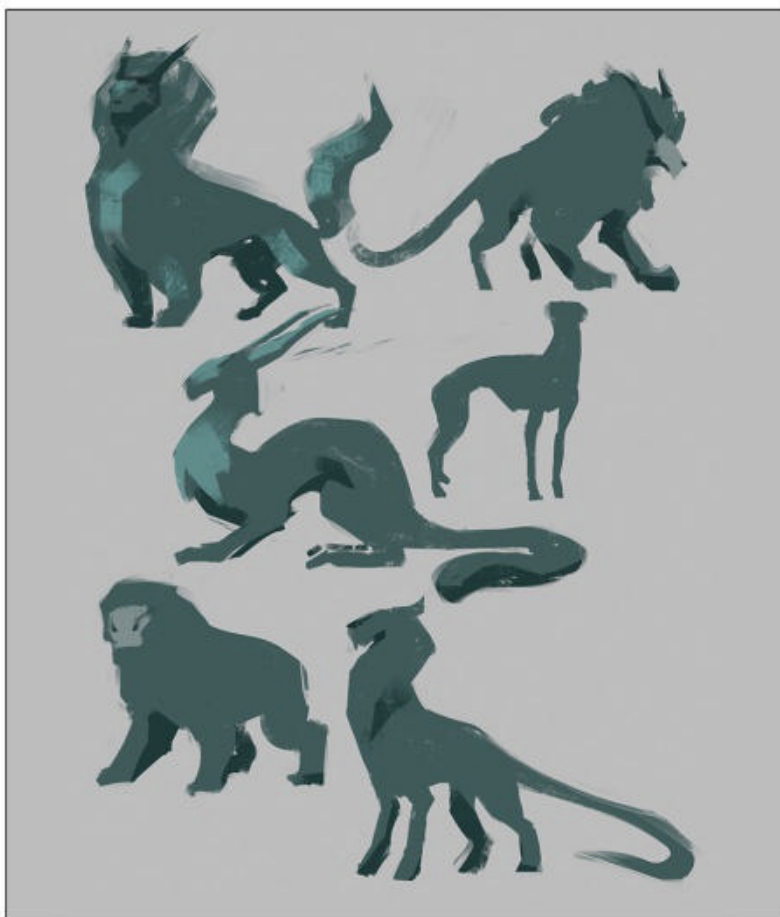
concept character is like a reflection of yourself.

In this workshop, I would like to summon my spirit animal, designing a fantasy creature from start to finish. I will offer advice for each stage of the process, and will share my main painting methods.

There are some key guiding principles to be aware of when doing concept work. First off, your design's silhouette is essential, as it makes

your creature recognisable. Secondly, a good understanding of anatomy is important, as it helps your creature feel real. And third, do not add details before the fundamentals are done. These principles aren't laws, but they are great pieces of advice, tried and tested by many!

Let's take a look at my character concept design process, from initial concept sketches, to the final, detailed piece.



1 Clarify concept and sketch thumbnails

I normally start with asking myself some simple questions to narrow down my ideas, like is this creature big or small, does it live in forest or grassland, does it have any fur or scales, does it look robust or elegant? This process helps me to build a description of my creature, and generate a few ideas. I visualise them by drawing thumbnails. Sketching is like an extension of thinking. For that, I only need to draw silhouettes or outlines.



2 Arrange composition

I roughly know what my creature looks like now. I consider an initial concept drawing as a portrait, it should show the character's key qualities. So I let him take the central position and I present him in full length, in a neutral pose and with natural lighting. ➡



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES BY
NIKOLAI LOCKERTSEN:
RULL BRUSH



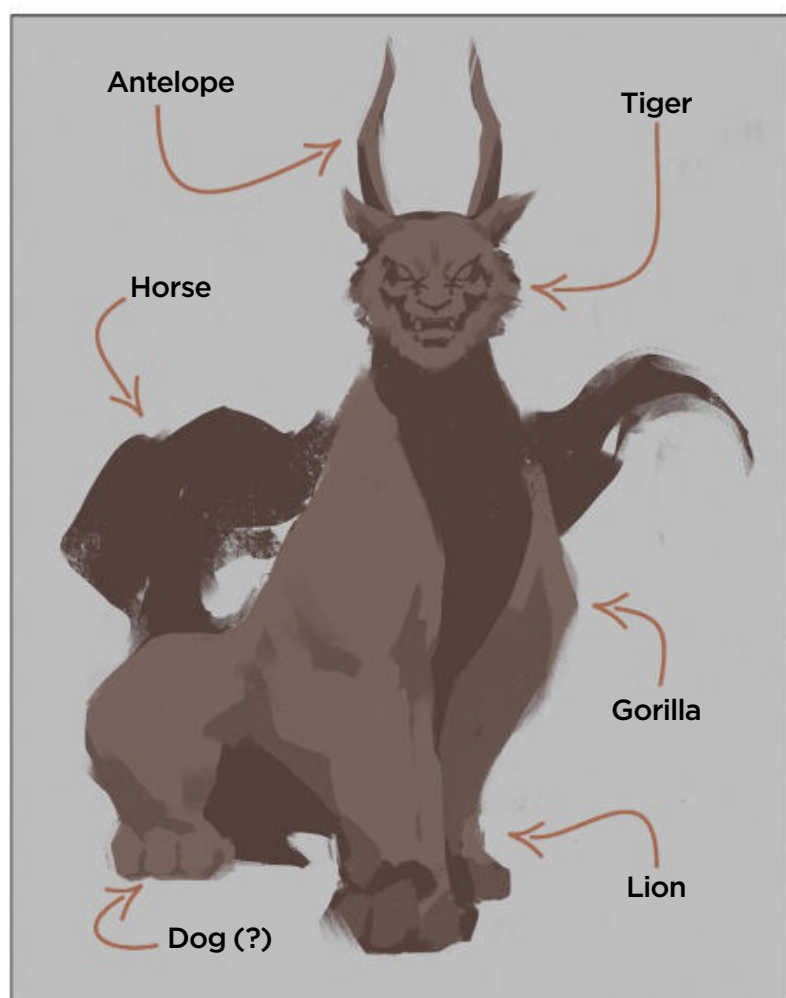
This brush is similar to Nikko Rull, but is more sensitive.

EGG ROUND BRUSH



A round brush with some textures. I use it as a felt tip pen.

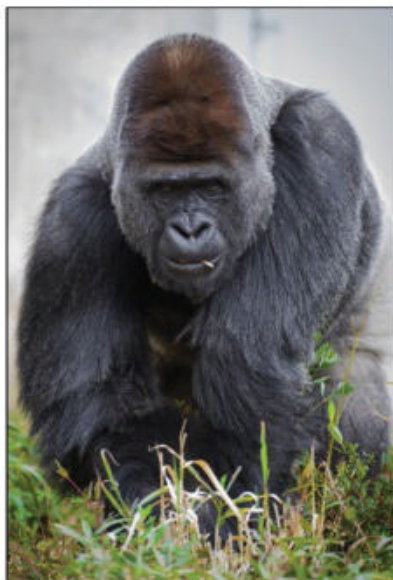
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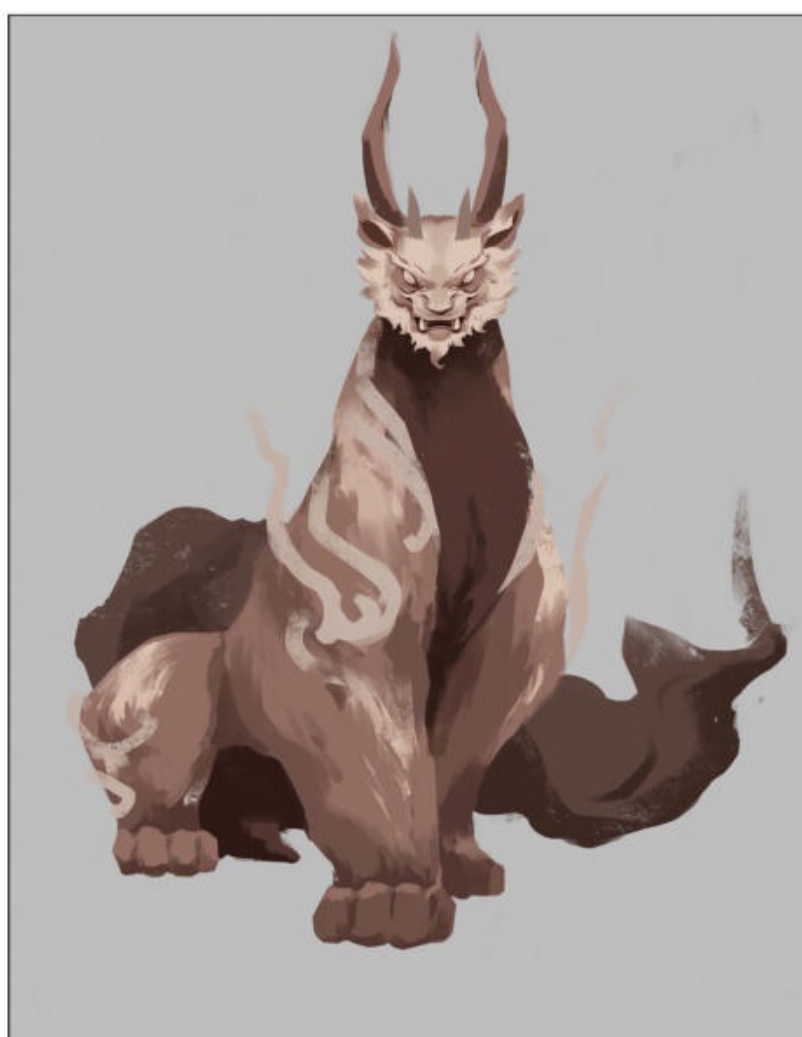
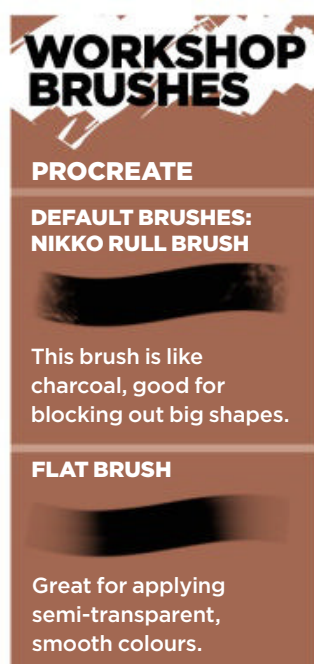


3 Understand anatomy

I imagined my creature based on animals I know. This is how he is composed, horns of an antelope, face of a tiger, neck of a deer, body of a gorilla, tail of a horse, etc. A believable anatomy could really increase the creature's credibility. I try to keep a picture of his structure in mind.

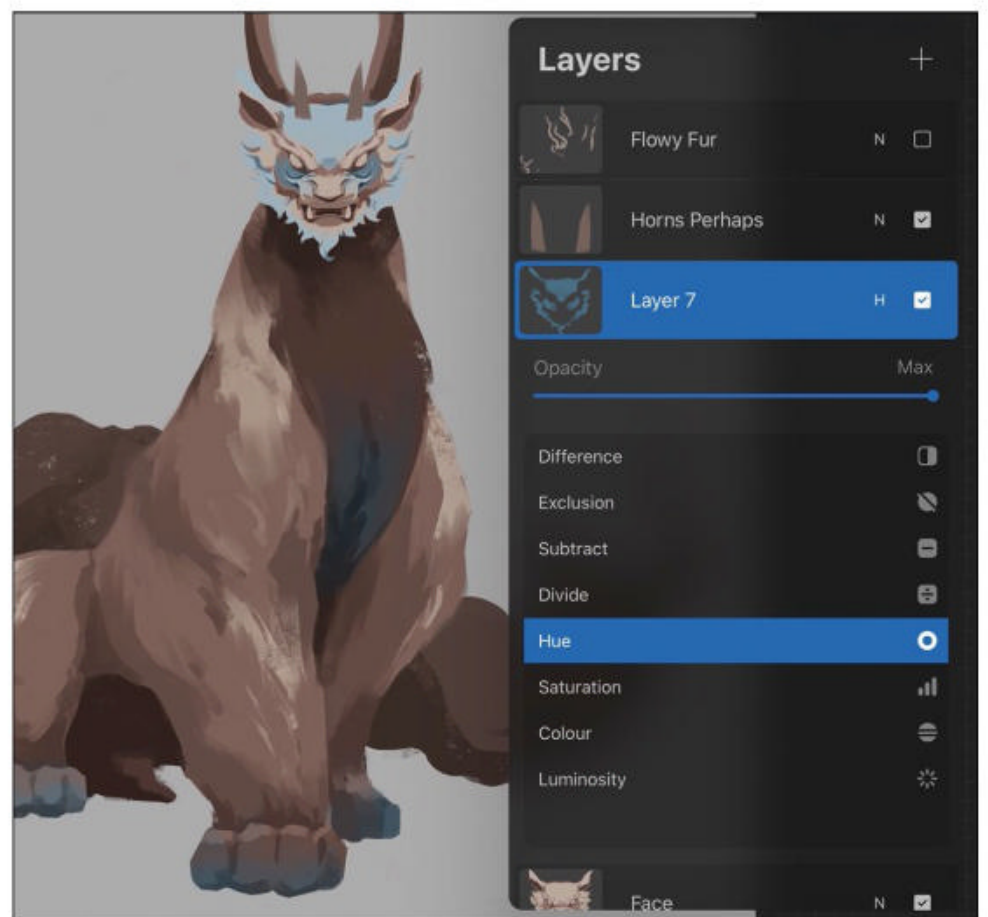
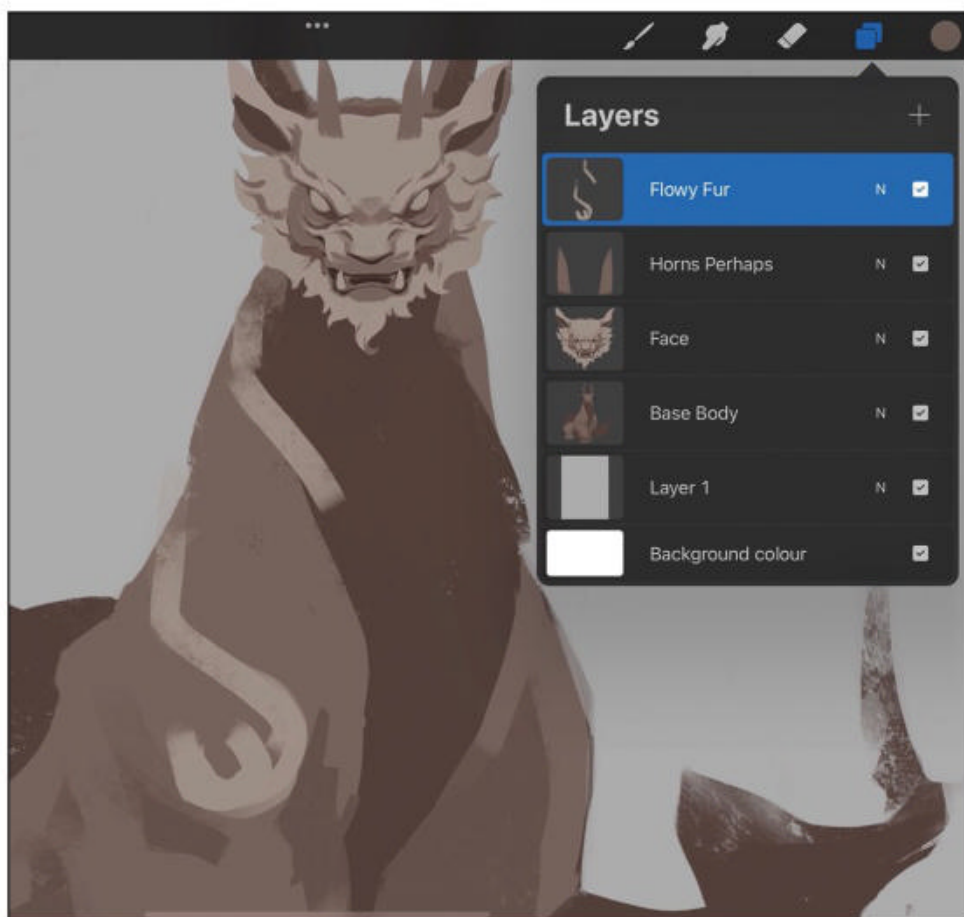
4 Find drawing references

I am gathering images of wildlife, sculptures and artefacts which are directly relevant to my creature. I know what a tiger looks like, but I admit I can't draw a tiger accurately from memory. I will need support for those images.



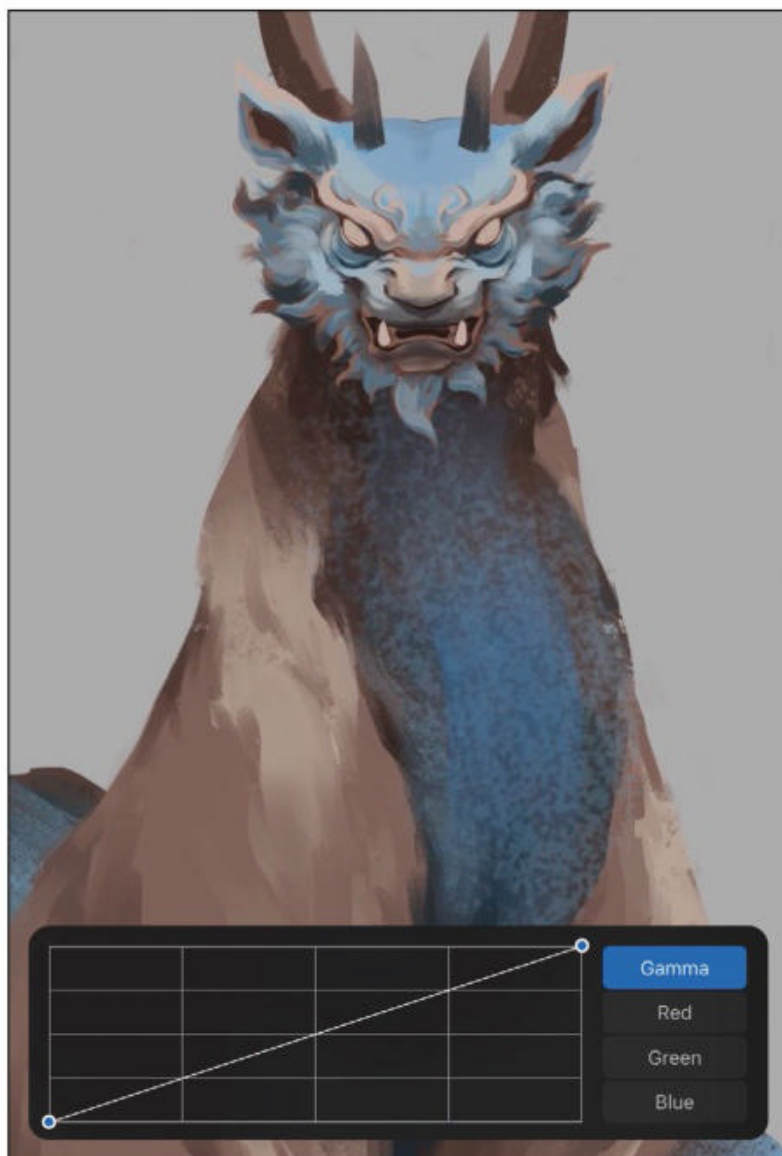
5 Define the silhouette

Next I am drawing mostly by using shapes (I swapped to Rull brush here). If I do a line sketch, it's practically impossible not to draw details. The more details, the harder it will be to make changes. As I am still working on refining its overall profile, it's better not to be restricted.



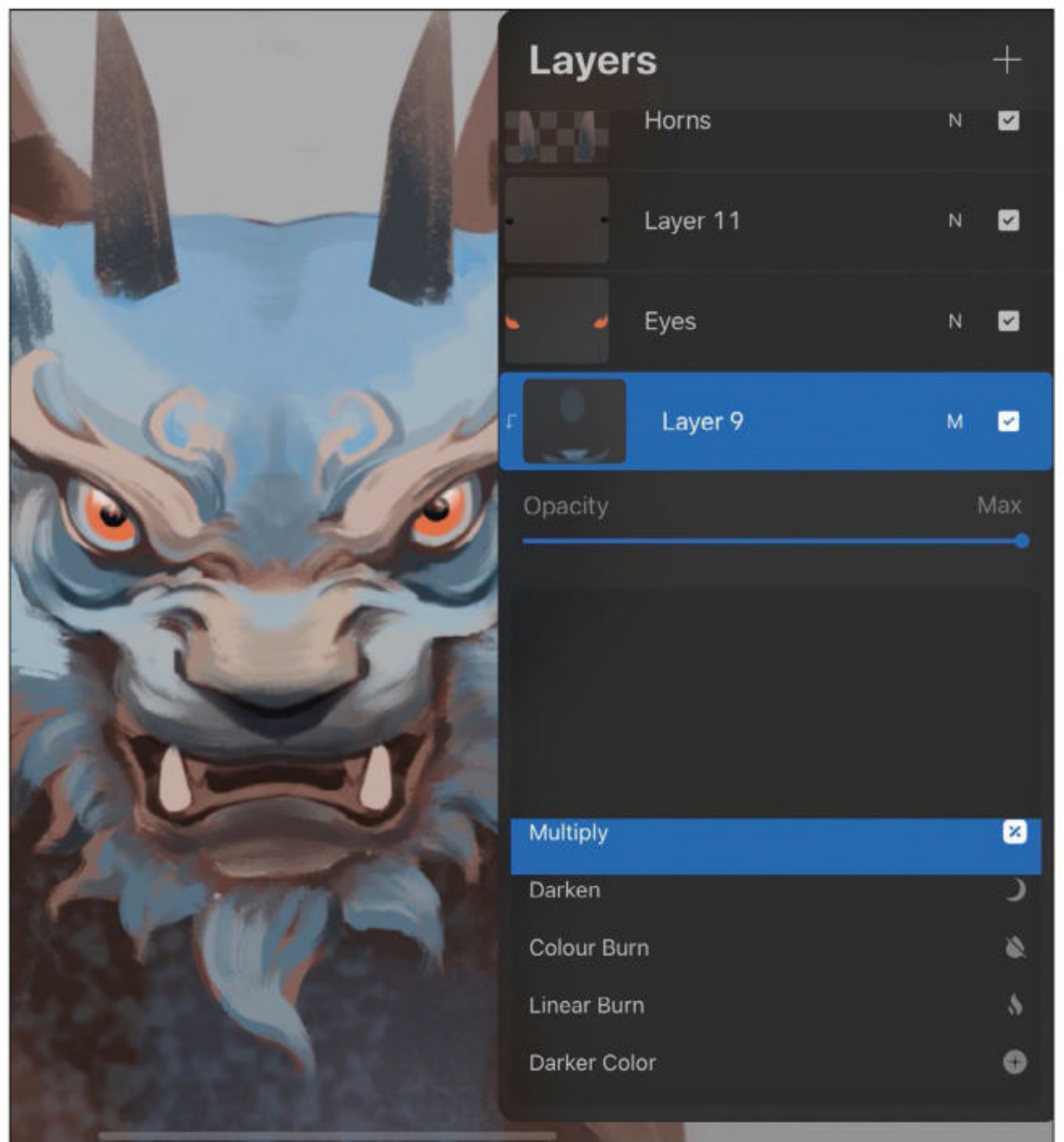
6 Introduce colours

I separate parts of the creature (head, body and tail) into different layers. For the body and tail, I will paint directly on top. For the head, I want to be more precise where I apply colours, so I create a new layer and set transparency to Hue, this way I can brush in more carefully.



7 Adjust with Curves

All the colours are on, and I use the Curves tool under the Adjustments menu to tweak the colour value. Now I have an underlying colour tone. This is the colour scheme I will be working with later. This sketch might not look too exciting yet, but let's keep going!



8 Add the face

The face will bring this creature to life. To avoid making irreversible errors on the base sketch, I am creating new layers (trying different layer transparencies) to work on, and they can be merged together later. ➡➡



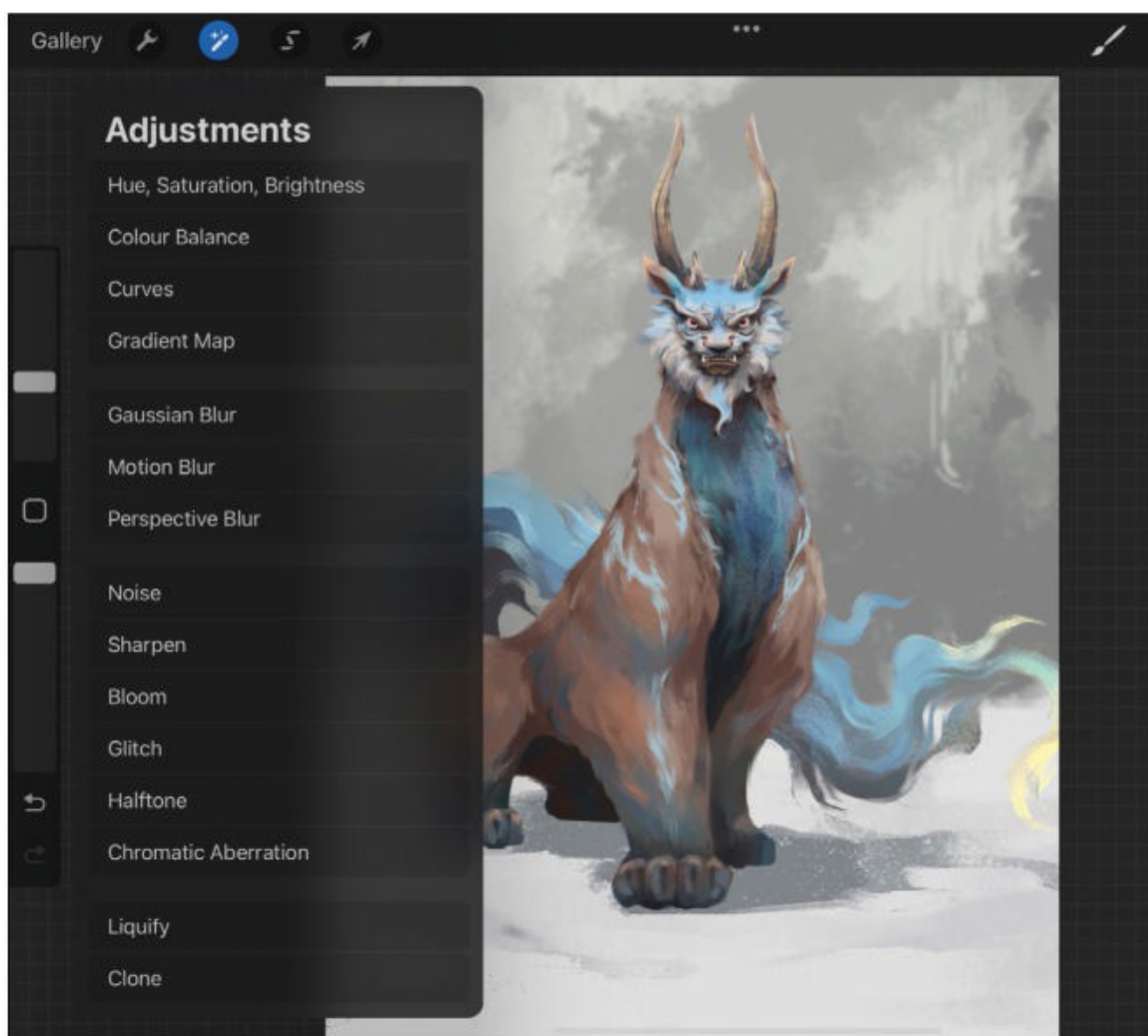
9 Consider small features

At the beginning I thought I'd like to give the creature some floating, feather-like fur, but now I think I would rather have some patterns instead to maintain a realistic feel. I will build up shades of colours for the fur and horns too.



10 General editing

Now I have the main details in position, I can start making small adjustments. I am balancing the colour saturation level and enhancing colour contrast. The goal is to enable all the elements to support each other better.



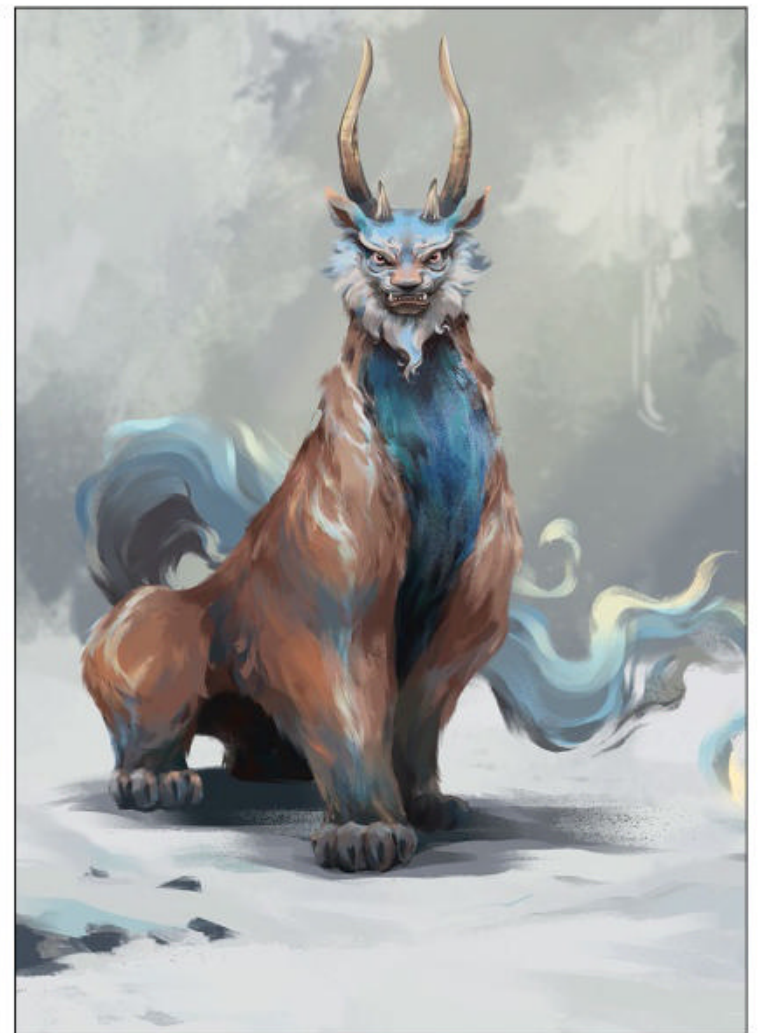
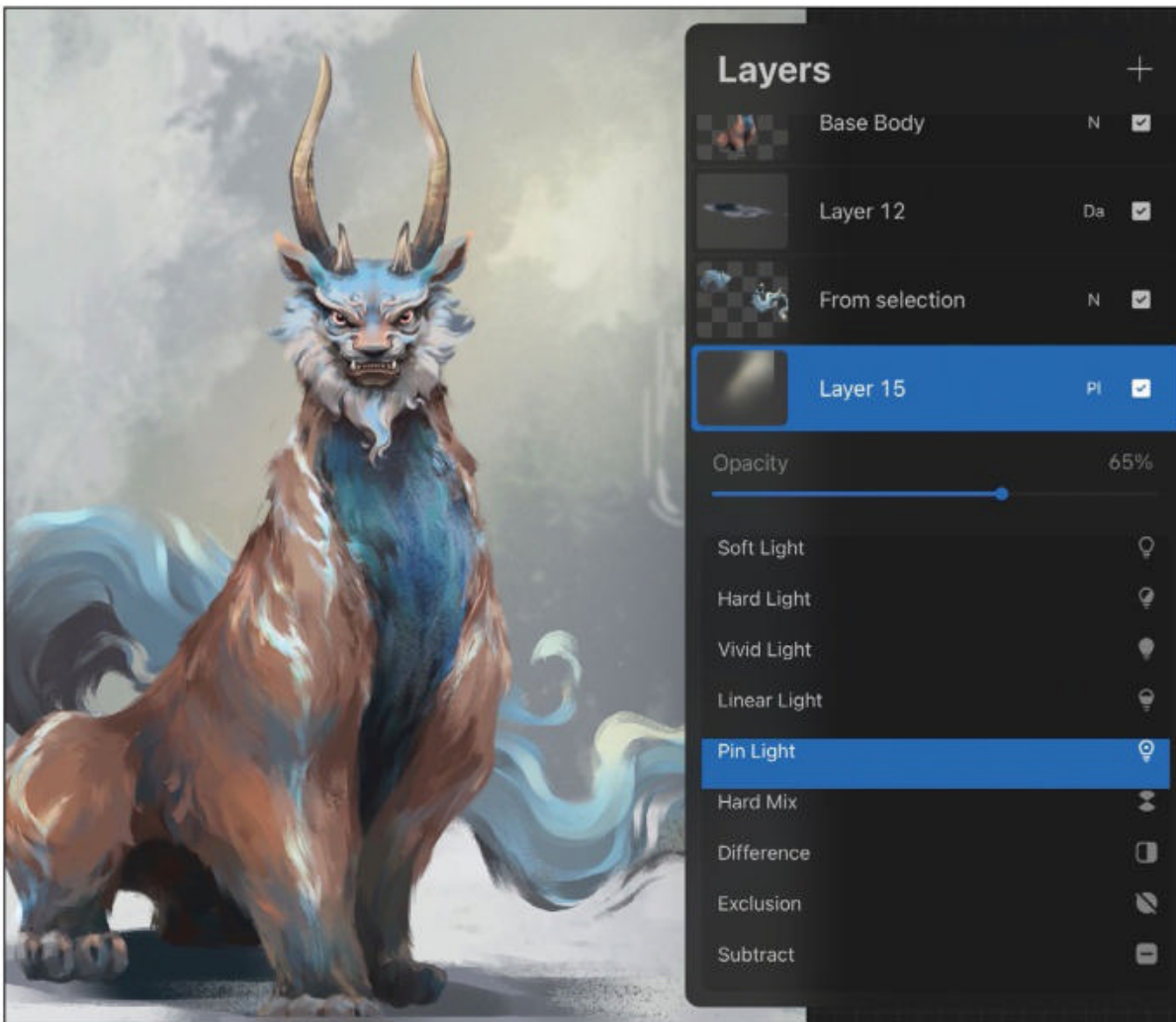
11 Create a simple background

Because I took ideas from the Siberian tiger, a snowy scene seems fitting. I am loosely painting a background to represent a winter mountain setting. Then I am using the Gaussian Blur tool to visually push it back to suggest a distant landscape.



12 Fine tune and add detail

I have a long look over the image to find anything that isn't in harmony. I add soft, warm colours to the fur around the face, deepen the nose colour, soften the tail texture, put more shadows in, and give the background a greenish hue, until I am happy with the results.



13 Additional lighting

I don't think the creature stands out enough; some additional lighting should give him a lift. I use the Flat brush, glazing over some warm, light colour with big strokes. I Gaussian blur it slightly, then change layer transparency to Pin Light. Finally, I touch it up with highlights.



ArtRage is well known for its ability to simulate wet-on-wet oil painting. For that reason, traditional subjects like this are intuitive to produce.

ArtRage Vitae ENHANCE YOUR DIGITAL SKETCHES

Daniel Ibanez details how to make the most of ArtRage's unique toolsets, from customising brushes to utilising the selection tool

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.
www.danielibanez.net



This month's ArtRage tutorial will show you how I create and use custom brushes to give my ArtRage sketchbook an original aesthetic.

I will also detail how almost every Photoshop painting I do gets finished in ArtRage. It is an essential part of my digital painting workflow, even when I am using other software to get the job done.

I also demonstrate how to paint with the selection tool – a great way to force yourself to paint through seeing shapes of value.



I created a set of custom brushes to experiment with portraiture. The Custom Brush engine is a very powerful tool.

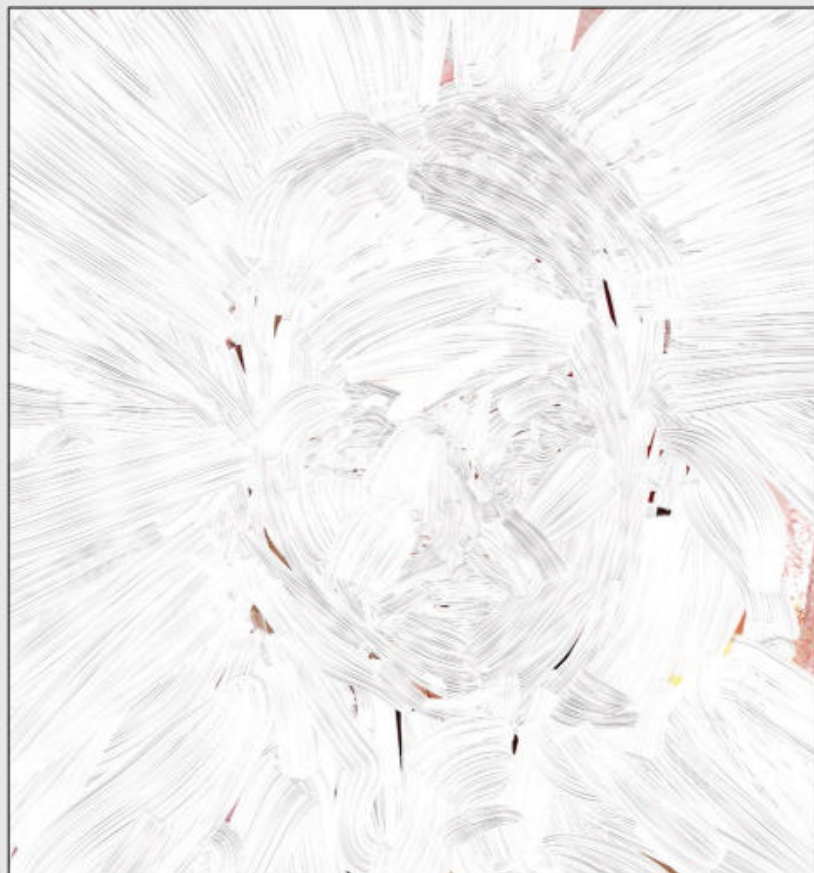
1 FINISH A PHOTOSHOP SKETCH IN ARTRAGE

As you know from Issue 210's tutorial, the default Oil brush is great for adding the illusion of paint strokes into an already finished Photoshop painting. The question is, what else can be done to a painting when imported to ArtRage? Well, in my opinion, a lot! I often finish both quick sketches and full Photoshop paintings in ArtRage. Here is a quick look at some of my go-to techniques:



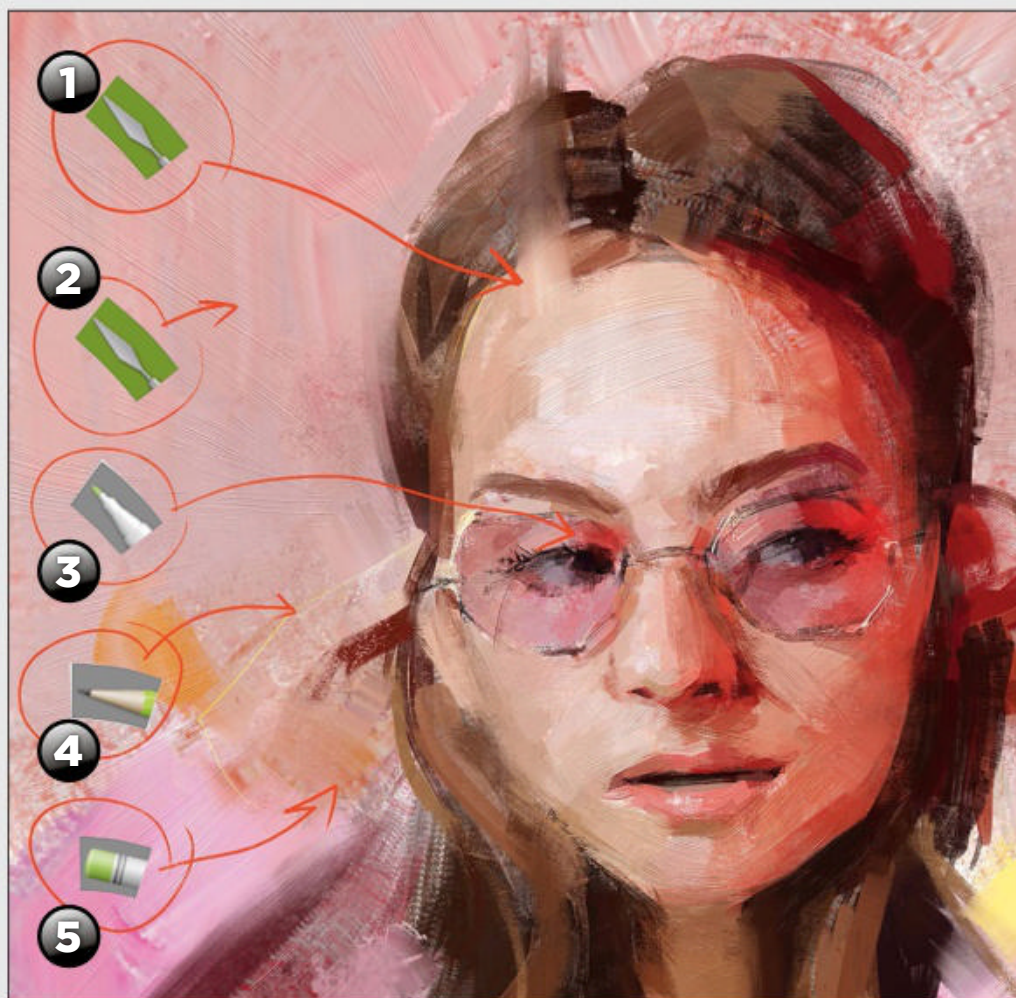
A The initial image

Here is a raw Photoshop sketch. This was a fast and loose painting with no focus on finish. It is a pure sketchbook practice.



B Tweak the paint strokes

I have imported the painting into ArtRage and added a new layer. I get pure white paint and the Oil brush, then I add white paint strokes over the entire canvas. When done, I change the layer's blend mode to Multiply and see the realistic paint strokes emerge.



C The best tools

Here you can see the tool icons for each of the techniques I like to take advantage of.

1 The Palette Knife is used to blend and soften the background. This tool does this job better than *anything* Photoshop has to offer.

2 The Palette Knife again is used for blending; this time, the tool is used to add a distressed and textured mark. I like to drag the knife across many coloured areas to take advantage of the real colour blending. This is, again,

something that you cannot do in Photoshop. Even the Mixer brush fails to do this so naturally.

3 I use the marker to add a naturally transparent accent colour to the coloured lenses of the glasses. Easy.

4 The pencil or pen tool is great for adding strong line and colour accents that bring some graphic interest to the sketch.

5 The Chalk Pastel tool is a great blending tool for creating soft edges and even smoother blending than the Palette Knife.



D Finishing touches

You can see what a few minutes in ArtRage did for this painting. I took a raw sketch and quickly added a lot of finish and visual punch with very little effort. This is just one small example of how I bring a little extra life to my Photoshop work with ArtRage.

The best part about this process is that these techniques are intuitive and fun, and they are different enough that they add something unique to your work.

Workshops

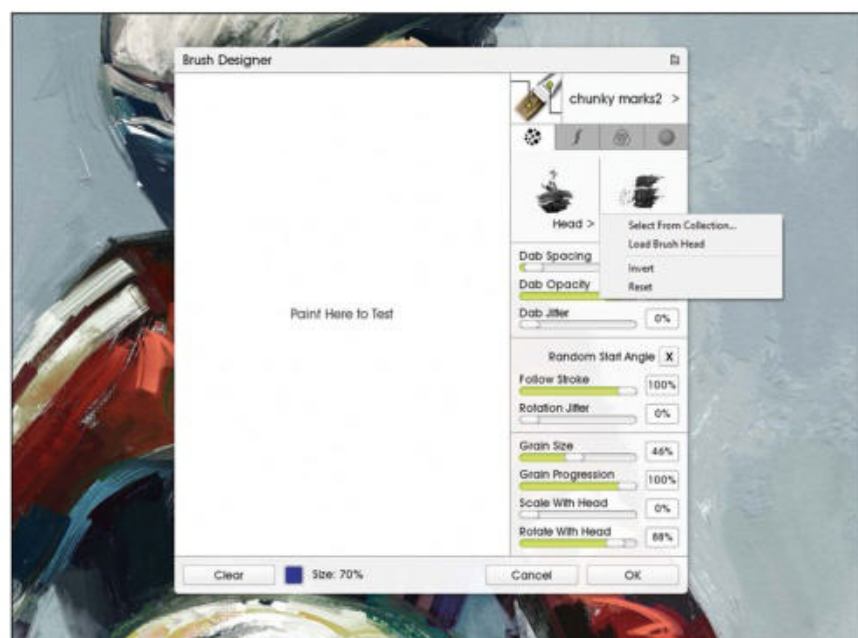
2 GET CREATIVE WITH ARTRAGE'S CUSTOM BRUSH DESIGNER

I love making my own digital painting brush sets. ArtRage has an intuitive and powerful brush engine that allows you to make your own great brushes. These paintings were done as a quick example of the kind of strokes I get with my Daniel Ibanez Oil brushes. The way the tools mix paint in a realistic way make it a lot of fun to keep tinkering and try to build the perfect brush.



A Locate the tool

The Custom Brush tool looks just like the Oil brush, but it has small little nodes on it. These nodes imply that we can customise the tool. And when the settings for the Custom Brush is open, we see the button for the 'Brush Designer'.



B Load in a texture

When you click on Brush Designer you get an interface that looks like this. Here we can load in any black and white PNG/JPG for use as a stamp or texture. Make sure the black portion is the part you want to use as an image for both (as seen in the above example).

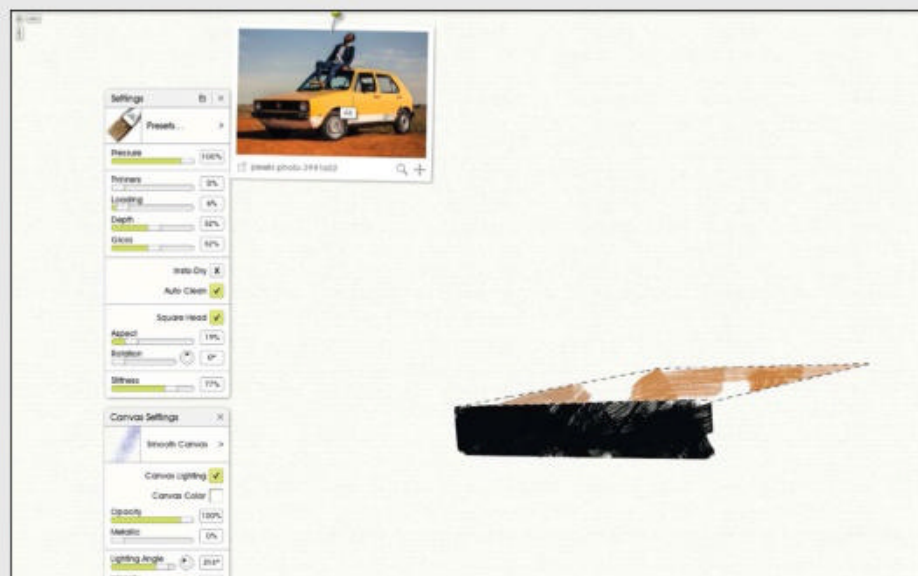


C Test out your custom brush

The panel to the left allows you to test your creation in real-time. I would recommend diving deep into each of the four panels to see what kind of brush you can create. Note: Performance is not as good as the standard tools. If your brush is rendering slowly, try reducing the Dab Spacing.

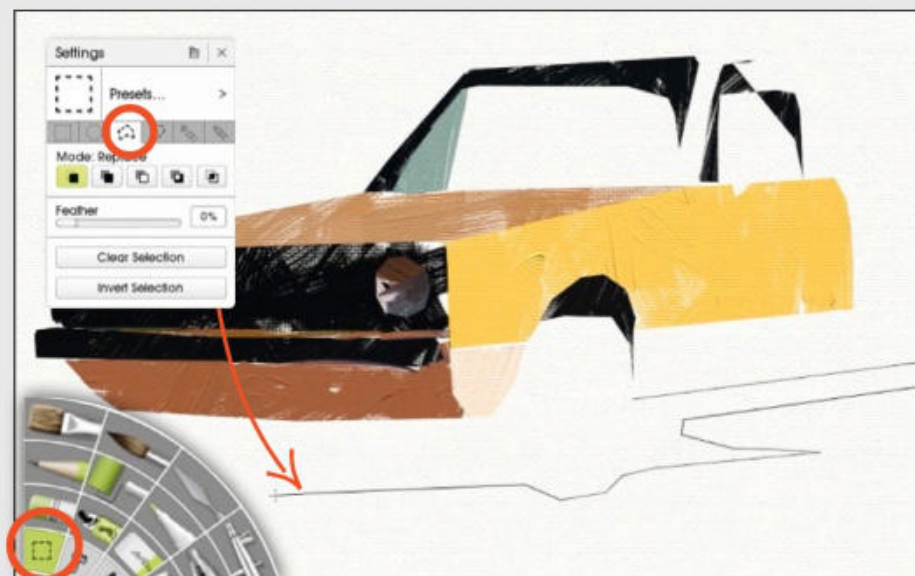
3 PAINT WITH THE SELECTION TOOL

Train your eye to see shapes of shadow and light by painting with the selection tool.



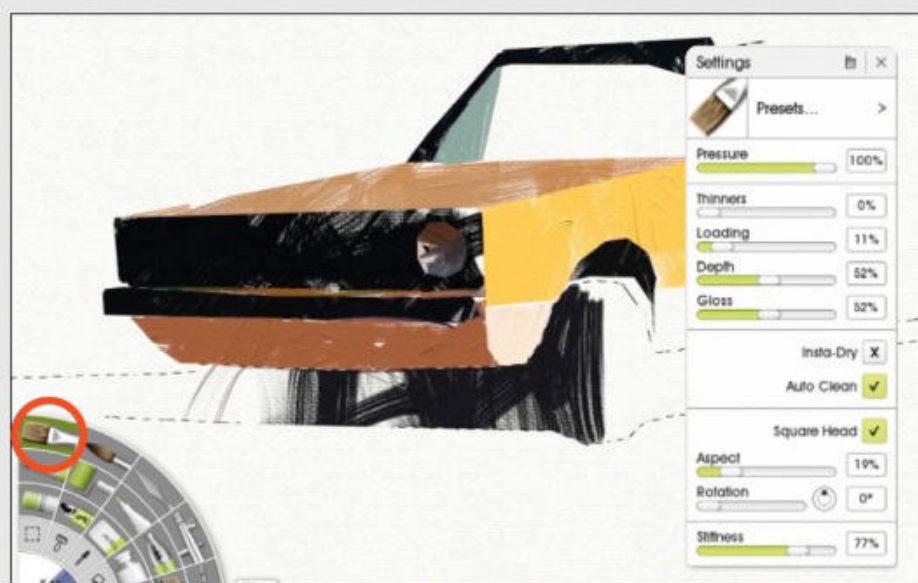
A Set up

Once we import our photo reference and set up our canvas, we can begin to find the rhythm of this technique. You can already see the evidence of our first loop here.



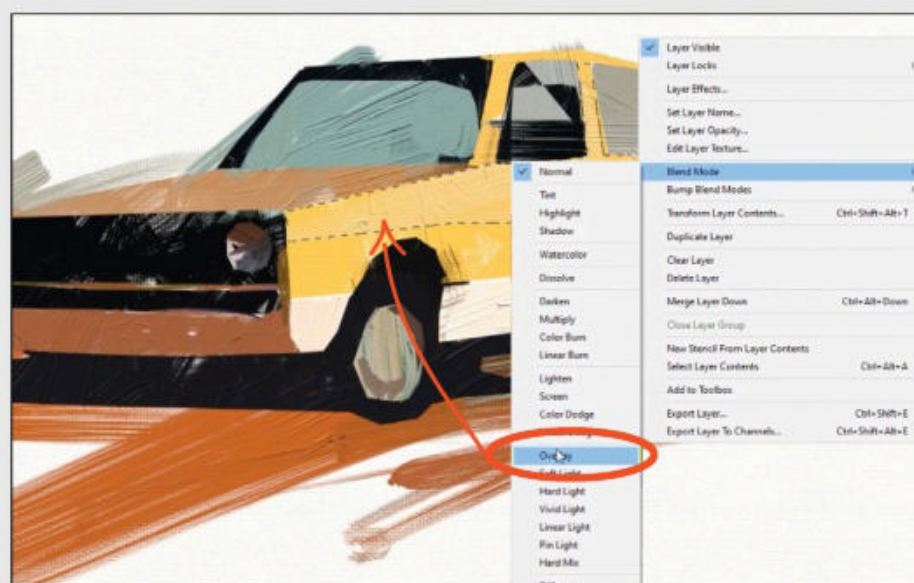
B Find the shapes

Connect as many similar values into one large selected shape. In this case, we are selecting all the dark shapes that create the tyres, cast shadows, and the undercarriage.



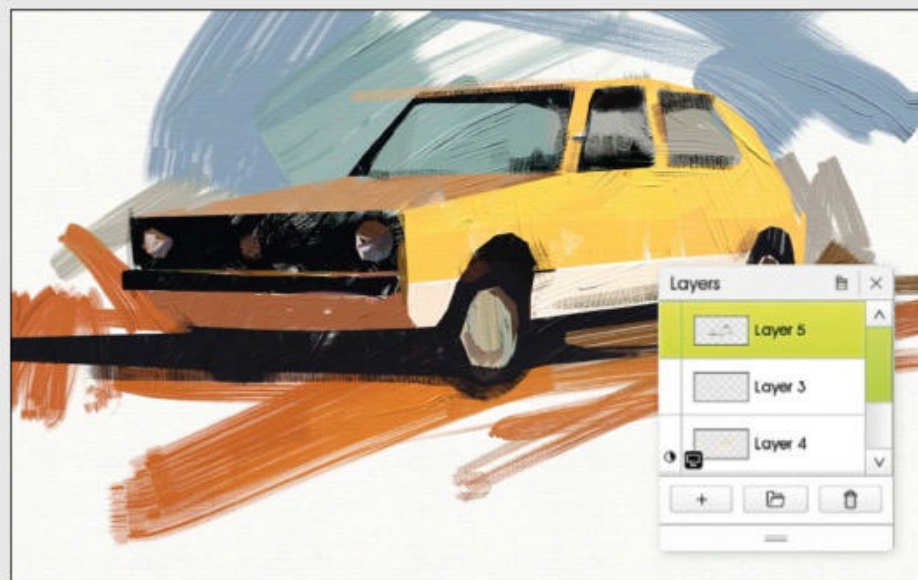
C Fill with bold marks

Once the block of shapes is selected, use the Oil brush tool (the bigger the better) to brush into the selection with loose and bold marks. Use this technique to block every value in the picture.



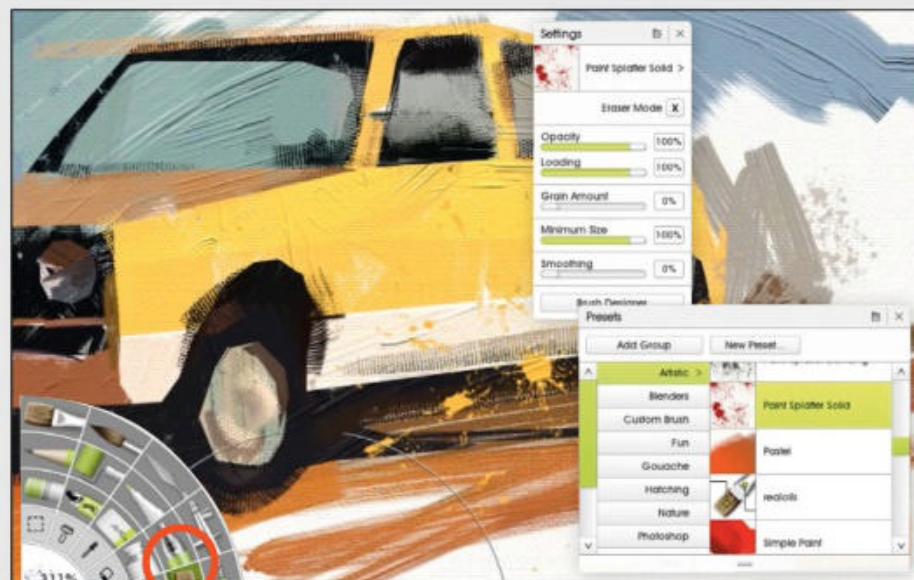
D Add layers

Add a new layer and set the blend mode to Overlay – you can manipulate the colours by changing these blend modes and adding layers of selections as you see here, creating a lighter tone.



E Complementary tools

Now let's begin to add some spice to the painting; create a new layer, and on this new layer we are able to add interest through the pencil, sticker, and Custom Brush tools.



F Soft edges

Use the Square Canvas 2 brush (from the Custom Brush Presets) to add some softer marks to balance out the hard edges. Spray on some big, bold splatters to add some randomness.

Clip Studio Paint

CREATE YOUR OWN COMIC

Digital artist **Rebekka Hearl** teaches us the basics of producing a comic series, for web and for print, in Clip Studio Paint

Artist PROFILE

Rebekka Hearl
LOCATION: UK

Rebekka is a digital designer and illustrator living in the south of England. She sells her merchandise online and at comic conventions around the country, while working on her webcomic *Monster Boy* in her spare time.
<https://linktr.ee/ParaParano>

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

DEFAULT BRUSHES: DARKER PENCIL

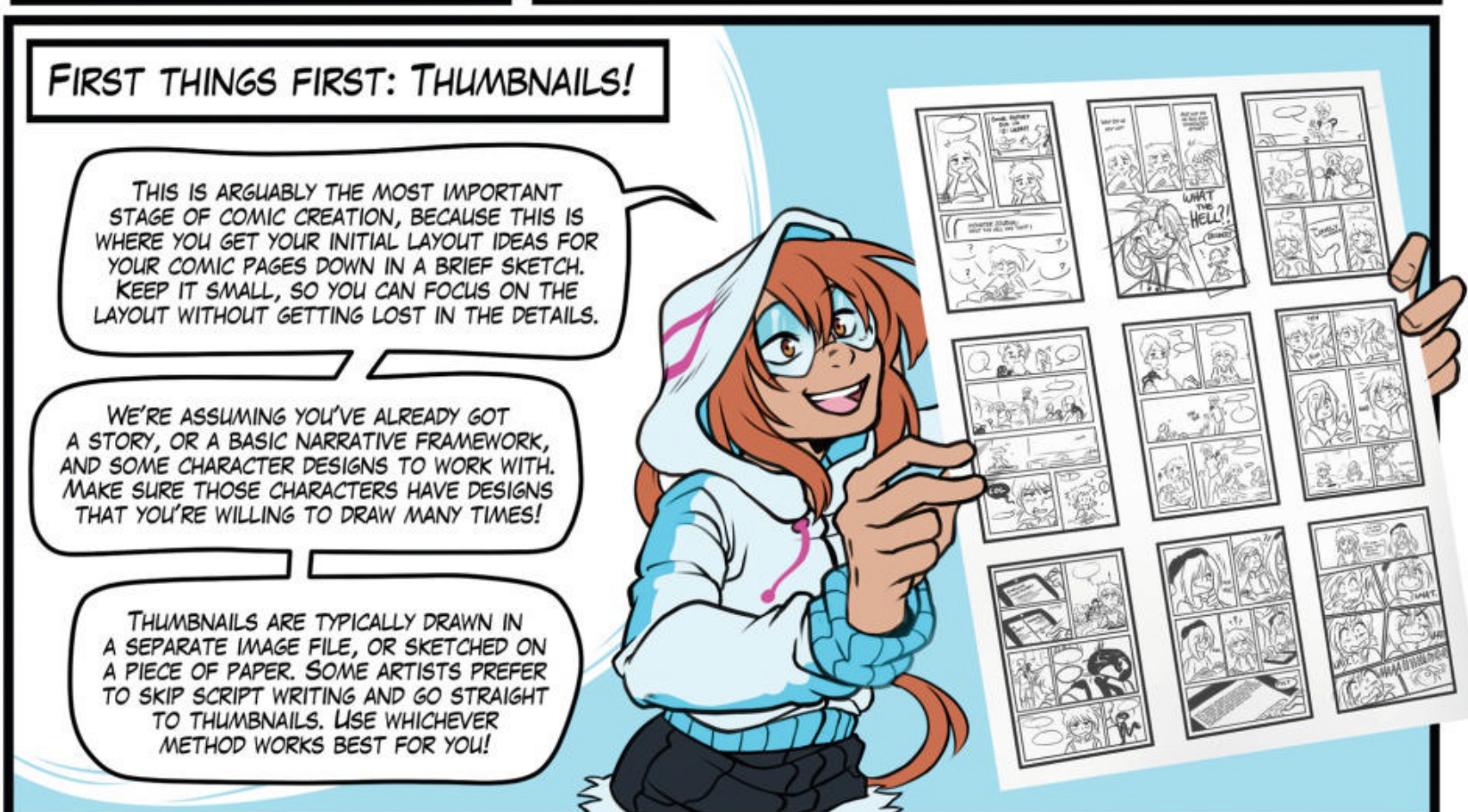
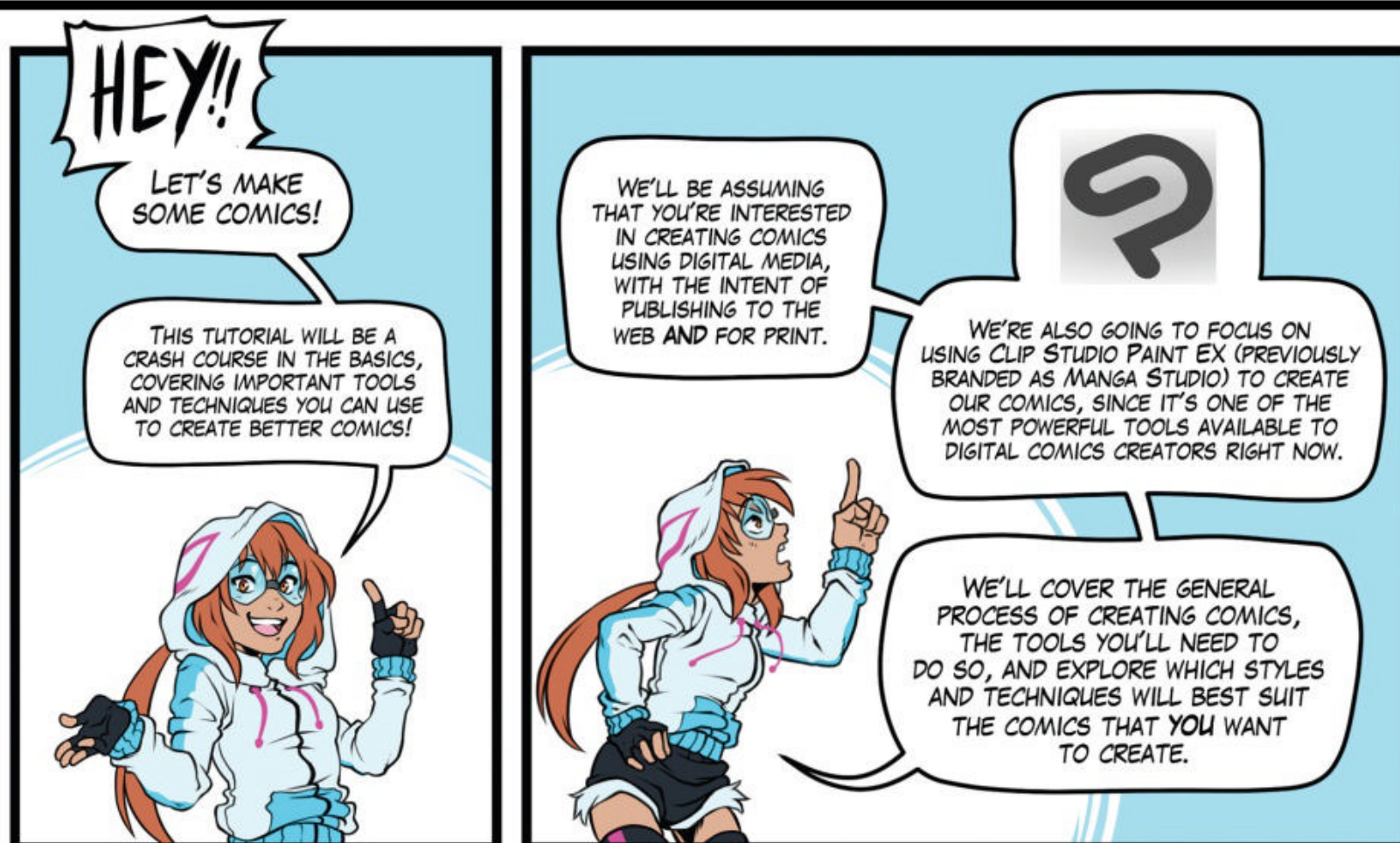
A moderately soft brush that offers a lot of control. I like to ink more painterly works with it.

MAPPING PEN

My favourite inking pen! The amount of control you can get out of this brush is crazy.


OPAQUE WATERCOLOUR

I love CSP's watercolour brushes. I often use this instead of the blur/smudge tools.



NEXT, WE'LL LOOK AT HOW TO USE PANEL LAYOUT TO ASSIST IN NARRATIVE CLARITY.

HOW MANY KEY NARRATIVE STEPS, OR "BEATS", ARE NEEDED TO CONVEY THE STORY TO THE READER? IF YOU'RE DRAWING FROM A WRITTEN SCRIPT, IDENTIFY KEY MOMENTS IN THE DIALOGUE AND DIRECTION. HOW MANY PANELS WILL IT TAKE TO CONVEY TO THE READER WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SCENE?


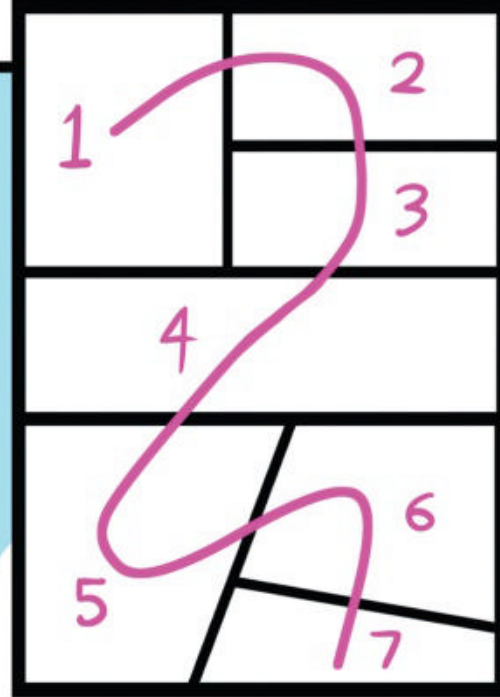


TAKE FOR EXAMPLE: A CHARACTER LOOKING FOR SOMETHING. FIRST WE SHOW THEM SEARCHING-

SECOND WE SHOW THEM NOTICING SOMETHING-

THEN WE SHOW THEM PICKING UP THE OBJECT, FOR THREE PANELS TOTAL.

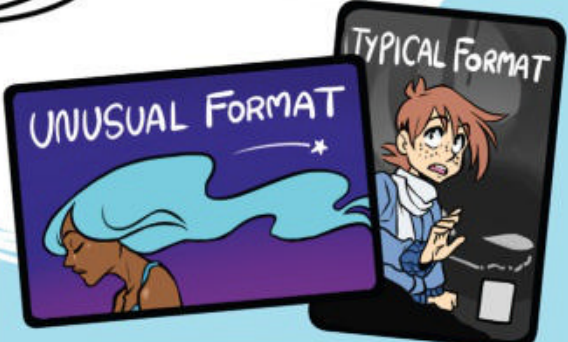
WHAT IS THEIR REACTION? WHAT DOES THAT TELL THE READER, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT THE READER TO FEEL?

IS IT OBVIOUS WHICH PANEL SHOULD BE READ NEXT? MAKE SURE THERE'S A CLEAR READING ORDER, OR PANEL FLOW, TO GUIDE YOUR READER'S EYE ACROSS YOUR PAGES!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN WORK ON YOUR COMIC PROPER, DECIDE ON A PAGE FORMAT!

DO YOU WANT YOUR COMIC TO BE PRINTED IN UNIVERSAL DIMENSIONS (A4, A5 ETC), OR UNUSUAL DIMENSIONS (HORIZONTAL, ETC)?



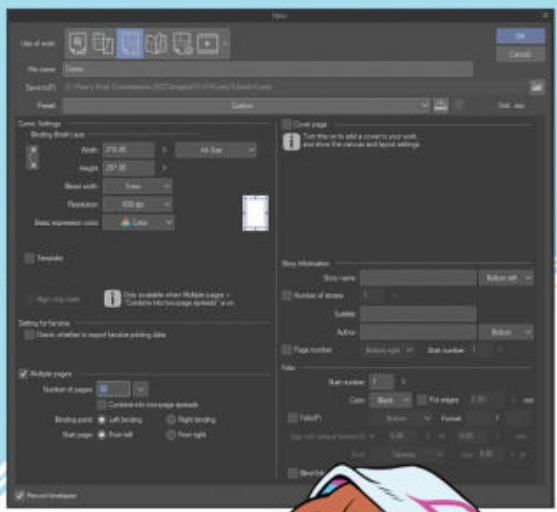

IT'S BEST TO CONSIDER THIS DURING SETUP, SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO MAKE ANY MAJOR CHANGES TO YOUR COMIC PAGES LATER.

NEXT IS DOCUMENT SETUP!

WHEN CREATING A NEW FILE, SELECT "COMIC" UNDER "USE OF WORK". NAME THE PROJECT AND SELECT WHERE IT'LL BE SAVED ON YOUR DEVICE. TO SET YOUR COMIC'S PAGE DIMENSIONS, YOU CAN SELECT A UNIVERSAL SIZE FROM THE "PRESET" DROPDOWN, OR ENTER IT MANUALLY UNDER "BINDING SIZE". PAGES ARE AUTOMATICALLY SET TO 5MM BLEED AS STANDARD.

IF YOU WANT TO PRINT YOUR COMIC, PLEASE SET THE PPI TO AT LEAST 300!


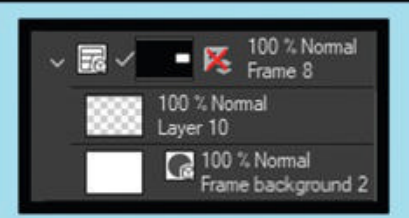
"BASIC EXPRESSION COLOUR" IS YOUR COMIC'S COLOUR SETTINGS. IF YOU'RE WORKING WITH A BLACK AND WHITE OR GREYSCALE COMIC, SELECT EITHER "GREYSCALE" OR "MONOCHROME" RESPECTIVELY.

USE THE CREATE FRAME TOOL TO DRAW COMIC PANELS, LIKE THIS ONE, QUICKLY AND EASILY.




THIS CREATES A FOLDER WITH A MASK AUTOMATICALLY APPLIED - MEANING YOU CAN'T ACCIDENTALLY DRAW OUTSIDE THE FRAME. VERY USEFUL!



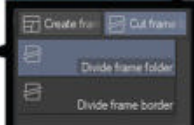



DIDN'T GET THE FRAME SHAPE RIGHT ON THE FIRST TRY?

USE THE OBJECT ARROW - UNDER "OPERATION" - TO RESIZE FRAMES BY PULLING AT THE CORNER VERTICES.

VERY HANDY IF THINGS FEEL TOO CRAMPED INSIDE THE PANELS!

USE "DIVIDE FRAME FOLDER" TO CUT AN EXISTING FRAME, CREATING A NEW PANEL FOLDER.

NEXT UP: DRAWING!

USING YOUR THUMBNAILS AS REFERENCE, START LAYING OUT YOUR PAGES!

COMICS WILL REALLY TEST YOUR DRAWING SKILLS. ANATOMY, EXPRESSIONS, BACKGROUNDS, PERSPECTIVE, VISUAL COMMUNICATION - COMICS ARE A GREAT TEACHING TOOL!

THERE ARE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU LEARN THE ROPES, SUCH AS GOOGLE SKETCHUP: A COMPLETELY FREE 3D MODELING RESOURCE. IT'S SIMPLE TO USE, AND GREAT FOR GETTING THE CAMERA ANGLES YOU NEED FOR YOUR COMIC PANELS!

MAKE SPACE FOR YOUR SPEECH BUBBLES AS YOU DRAW. UNLESS USED FOR EFFECT, YOU GENERALLY DON'T WANT SPEECH BUBBLES TO BE TOO CLOSE TO YOUR CHARACTERS - THEY BOTH NEED ROOM TO BREATHE! CAN YOUR IDEA BE CONVEYED IN FEWER WORDS? PLEASE BREAK UP PANELS AND SPEECH BUBBLES OFTEN, OR ELSE YOUR READER WILL LOSE INTEREST, AND YOU'LL RUN OUT OF ROOM. OKAY THAT'S WAY TOO CLOSE

SIMILARLY, CONSIDER CHARACTER PLACEMENT WITHIN FRAMES, AND THE EFFECT IT HAS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE LAST TWO PANELS HAVE LOW INTENSITY-

BUT USING ZOOM-INS, ANGLED FRAMES, AND DETAILED CHARACTER DRAWINGS CAN INCREASE INTENSITY!

HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD SAVE INTENSITY FOR APPROPRIATE NARRATIVE MOMENTS. AFTER ALL, INTENSITY CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED WHEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO CONTRAST WITH SLOWER, CALMER MOMENTS.

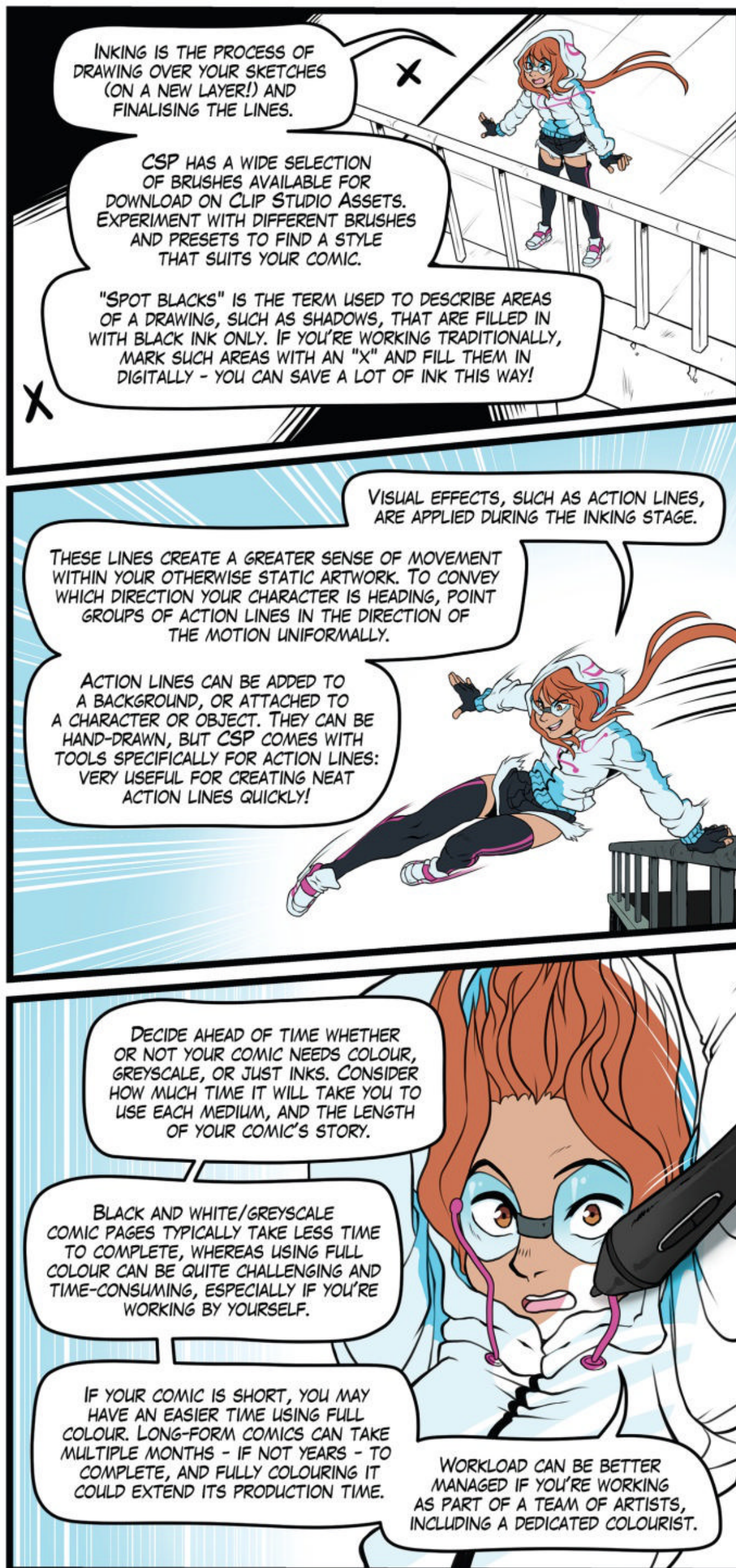
SO NEVER FEEL LIKE USING UNIFORM FRAMES IS BORING OR UNCREATIVE! TO REALLY DELIVER ON AN IMPACTFUL MOMENT, IT'S BEST TO FOCUS ON NARRATIVE CLARITY...

-AND STRIKE WHERE IT COUNTS!!

USING PANEL BREAKS, AND CHARACTERS OVERLAPPING PANELS, CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO SELL THE INTENSITY OF A SCENE TO THE READER. ACTION AND FIGHT SCENES IN PARTICULAR BENEFIT FROM THESE TECHNIQUES.

IT CREATES A LOT OF VISUAL INTEREST, AND REALLY "WAKES UP" THE READER AND MAKES THEM PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT'S HAPPENING.

ACTION SCENES CAN BE PARTICULARLY DEMANDING OF AN ARTIST'S SKILLS. CLIP STUDIO PAINT'S POSABLE 3D CHARACTER MODELS CAN BE A GREAT HELP, ESPECIALLY WITH PERSPECTIVE AND FORESHORTENING.



INKING IS THE PROCESS OF DRAWING OVER YOUR SKETCHES (ON A NEW LAYER!) AND FINALISING THE LINES.

CSP HAS A WIDE SELECTION OF BRUSHES AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD ON CLIP STUDIO ASSETS. EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT BRUSHES AND PRESETS TO FIND A STYLE THAT SUITS YOUR COMIC.

"SPOT BLACKS" IS THE TERM USED TO DESCRIBE AREAS OF A DRAWING, SUCH AS SHADOWS, THAT ARE FILLED IN WITH BLACK INK ONLY. IF YOU'RE WORKING TRADITIONALLY, MARK SUCH AREAS WITH AN "X" AND FILL THEM IN DIGITALLY - YOU CAN SAVE A LOT OF INK THIS WAY!

VISUAL EFFECTS, SUCH AS ACTION LINES, ARE APPLIED DURING THE INKING STAGE.

THESE LINES CREATE A GREATER SENSE OF MOVEMENT WITHIN YOUR OTHERWISE STATIC ARTWORK. TO CONVEY WHICH DIRECTION YOUR CHARACTER IS HEADING, POINT GROUPS OF ACTION LINES IN THE DIRECTION OF THE MOTION UNIFORMLY.

ACTION LINES CAN BE ADDED TO A BACKGROUND, OR ATTACHED TO A CHARACTER OR OBJECT. THEY CAN BE HAND-DRAWN, BUT CSP COMES WITH TOOLS SPECIFICALLY FOR ACTION LINES: VERY USEFUL FOR CREATING NEAT ACTION LINES QUICKLY!

DECIDE AHEAD OF TIME WHETHER OR NOT YOUR COMIC NEEDS COLOUR, GREYSCALE, OR JUST INKS. CONSIDER HOW MUCH TIME IT WILL TAKE YOU TO USE EACH MEDIUM, AND THE LENGTH OF YOUR COMIC'S STORY.

BLACK AND WHITE/GREYSCALE COMIC PAGES TYPICALLY TAKE LESS TIME TO COMPLETE, WHEREAS USING FULL COLOUR CAN BE QUITE CHALLENGING AND TIME-CONSUMING, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE WORKING BY YOURSELF.

IF YOUR COMIC IS SHORT, YOU MAY HAVE AN EASIER TIME USING FULL COLOUR. LONG-FORM COMICS CAN TAKE MULTIPLE MONTHS - IF NOT YEARS - TO COMPLETE, AND FULLY COLOURING IT COULD EXTEND ITS PRODUCTION TIME.

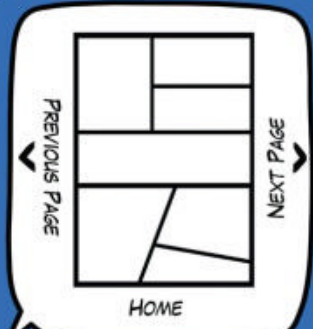
WORKLOAD CAN BE BETTER MANAGED IF YOU'RE WORKING AS PART OF A TEAM OF ARTISTS, INCLUDING A DEDICATED COLOURIST.

SIDENOTE: WEBCOMICS

THE WORLD OF WEBCOMICS HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE 90'S AND EARLY 00'S. NOWADAYS, WEBCOMIC ARTISTS HAVE A MULTITUDE OF COMICS PLATFORMS TO CHOOSE FROM, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GETTING PUBLISHED OR SELF-PUBLISHED ARE MORE NUMEROUS THAN EVER. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR COMICS ONLINE, IT'S WORTH CONSIDERING THE FOLLOWING BEFORE HITTING THE SHARE BUTTON:

FORMAT

PRESENTING A WEBCOMIC ONE PAGE AT A TIME HAS BEEN STANDARD UP UNTIL RECENT YEARS.



IT'S NOW VERY COMMON TO FIND WEBCOMICS THAT ARE GEARED ENTIRELY TOWARD MOBILE DEVICES.



PAGES ARE PRESENTED AS ONE LONG, UNBROKEN IMAGE, WHICH A MOBILE READER CAN EASILY SCROLL THROUGH.

WOULD THIS FORMAT WORK WELL FOR YOUR COMIC, OR WOULD YOU PREFER TO STICK TO THE STANDARD ONE-PAGE-AT-A-TIME FORMAT?

WHAT ARE THE MAXIMUM IMAGE DIMENSIONS YOUR CHOSEN PLATFORM ALLOWS? BEFORE YOU CAN UPLOAD, YOU'LL LIKELY HAVE TO RESIZE YOUR COMIC PAGES TO FIT. DON'T FORGET TO REDUCE THE PPI TO 72, AND TRIM OFF THE BLEED AREA - WEBCOMICS DON'T NEED THEM!

CAN YOUR COMIC'S TEXT BE CLEARLY READ ON SMALLER MOBILE SCREENS? BE SURE TO TEST THIS OUT AND MAKE ANY NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS BEFORE POSTING!



Workshops

ADDING SPEECH BUBBLES AND TEXT

SPEND SOME TIME SHOPPING AROUND FOR FONTS THAT WILL SUIT YOUR COMIC. COMICBOOKFONTS.COM AND BLAMBOT.COM ARE EXCELLENT RESOURCES!

CLASSIC COMIC STYLE FONT!

For a cute, handwritten look!

A BAD IDEA.

WILL YOUR COMIC INCLUDE SOUND EFFECTS? CONSIDER WRITING THEM BY HAND FOR EXTRA DYNAMISM.

nyooooom

SOME ARTISTS PREFER TO WRITE ALL OF THEIR COMIC'S DIALOGUE BY HAND. THIS CAN ACHIEVE A LOVELY PERSONAL FEEL, BUT LEGIBLE UPPERCASE HANDWRITING IS A MUST!

CSP'S SPEECH BUBBLE TOOLS MAKE THE CREATION OF TEXT BALLOONS VERY CONVENIENT.

USE THE ROUNDED AND ELLIPSE BALLOON TOOLS TO DRAW A BUBBLE WITH ONE STROKE, OR USE THE CURVE BALLOON TOOL TO DRAW ONE BY HAND.

USE THE OBJECT ARROW TO RESHAPE THE BUBBLES, AND CREATE A TAIL USING THE BALLOON TAIL TOOL.

MAKE USE OF CREATIVE BUBBLE SHAPES TO CONVEY DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPEECH TO THE READER. FOR EXAMPLE:

THINKING

SHOUTING!

WHISPERING

AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, TRY TO AIM THE END OF THE TAIL TOWARD THE SPEAKING CHARACTER'S MOUTH.

PLEASE DON'T EAT THE BUBBLE TAIL.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO USE BUBBLES FOR ADDED EFFECT. FOR EXAMPLE, OVERLAPPING SPEECH BUBBLES LIKE THIS-

IMPLIES THAT A CHARACTER HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED BY ANOTHER.

BUT OVERLAPPING SPEECH BUBBLE TAILS CAN CONFUSE THE READER.

AGAIN, BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR BUBBLE PLACEMENT!

DECIDING WHEN TO BREAK UP A SPEECH BUBBLE CAN HELP TO CONVEY WHAT THE CHARACTER IS FEELING. NATURAL BREAKS LIKE THIS, AT A COMMA OR A FULL STOP, IMPLY CALM SPEECH.

BREAKING IT UP

UM-

A LOT-

LIKE THIS-

IMPLIES NERVOUSNESS.

...AND THAT ABOUT COVERS THE PRACTICAL BASICS OF CREATING COMICS!

LASTLY, WE'RE GOING TO TOUCH ON SOME GENERAL CREATIVE ADVICE, SO I'M GONNA JUMP OVER TO THE NEXT PAGE REAL QUICK-

EXTRA TOUCHES:

DYNAMIC PANNELLING, PANEL BREAKING, MAKING USE OF THE BACKGROUND/PRINT AREA - THESE ARE JUST A FEW WAYS TO USE THE MEDIUM OF COMICS TO GREATER EFFECT. YOU CAN - AND SHOULD! - EXPERIMENT WITH YOUR OWN IDEAS. SO LONG AS LEGIBILITY IS MAINTAINED, YOU CAN GET AS CREATIVE AS YOU LIKE!

CONSIDER BALANCE BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE. SOMETIMES, WORDS ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR COMMUNICATING THE NARRATIVE TO THE READER - AND SOMETIMES, THEY AREN'T NECESSARY AT ALL.

"A PICTURE SAYS A THOUSAND WORDS" AND ALL THAT!

CONSIDER STYLE

WHAT TYPE OF STYLE BEST SUITS THE STORY YOU'RE AIMING TO TELL WITH YOUR COMIC? WHAT IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND WHICH STYLES WOULD APPEAL TO THEM MOST? THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMICS OUT THERE: SUPERHERO, POLITICAL, NEWSPAPER STRIPS, MANGA, GRAPHIC NOVEL - AND SO MANY MORE, ESPECIALLY IN WEBCOMIC SPACES. YOUR CHOSEN STYLE WILL INFLUENCE EVERY PART OF YOUR COMIC-MAKING PROCESS!

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND IMPROVE AT EVERY PART OF THE PROCESS, BE IT HUMAN ANATOMY, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, ACTION, VISUAL STORYTELLING, BACKGROUNDS AND PERSPECTIVE - DRAWING COMICS WILL PUSH YOU TO IMPROVE IN MANY AREAS, SO NEVER FEEL THAT YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO START MAKING COMICS. THE BEST WAY TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE COMICS, IS TO MAKE COMICS.

KEEP GOING!

AT SOME POINT WHILE MAKING YOUR COMIC, YOUR ART WILL IMPROVE TO THE POINT THAT YOU FEEL AN URGE TO GO BACK AND RE-DO THE EARLIER PAGES - IT'S OKAY, MANY COMIC ARTISTS GO THROUGH THIS - BUT PLEASE AVOID IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

CREATING A COMIC, AND SEEING IT THROUGH TO ITS COMPLETION, IS A MARATHON: IT WILL TAKE A LONG TIME, YOU WILL NEED TO PACE YOURSELF, AND SOMETIMES YOU WILL NEED TO TAKE BREAKS - AND THAT IS ABSOLUTELY OKAY! CREATING COMICS CAN BE UNEXPECTEDLY DEMANDING, IN TERMS OF BOTH WORKLOAD AND TECHNIQUE.

FURTHER READING

THE SUBJECT OF COMICS IS A BROAD ONE. HERE IS A SELECTION OF PUBLICATIONS THAT COVER THE CREATION OF COMICS IN GREATER DETAIL:

UNDERSTANDING COMICS AND MAKING COMICS BY SCOTT MCCLLOUD
VANISHING POINT: PERSPECTIVE FOR COMICS FROM THE GROUND UP BY JASON CHEESEMAN-MEYER
MANGA IN THEORY AND PRACTICE BY HIROHIKO AKI
STAN LEE'S HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY BY STAN LEE

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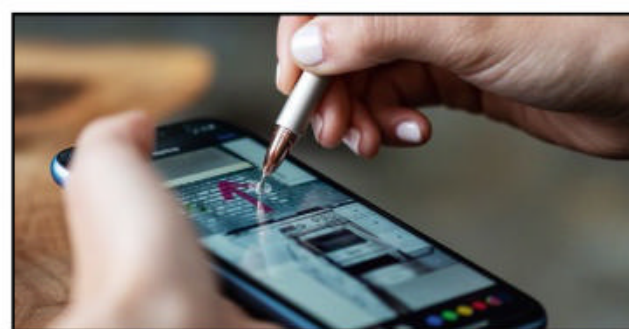
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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

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

5
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



HARDWARE

80 Adonit Note+

Got an iPad but looking for an alternative to the Apple Pencil? We test out this offering from Adonit to see if it's up to par.

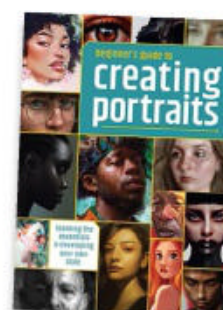
81 Adonit Pro 4

We put this stylish, no-frills stylus to the test and determine how it fares against other, similarly priced options.

BOOKS

82 Tech Noir: The Art of James Cameron

Featuring some excellent commentary from the filmmaker himself, this gorgeous book is sure to delight any fan.



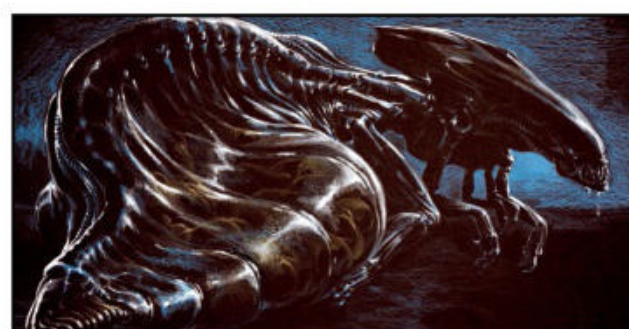
83 Beginner's guide to creating portraits

Hone your portrait skills with this comprehensive guide.



83 Jurassic Park: The Ultimate Visual History

Go behind the scenes of the iconic movies, featuring rare production photos.



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

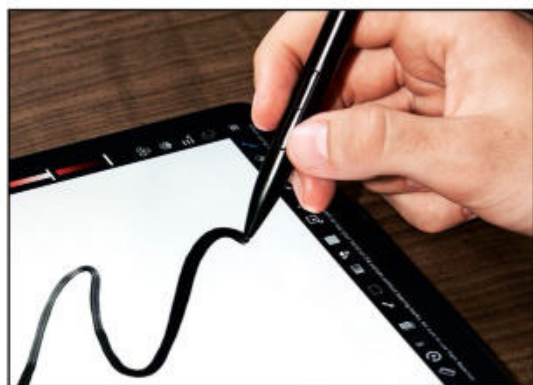
Adonit Note+

APPLE ALTERNATIVES Adonit's mid-range, multi-use stylus has pressure sensitivity, palm rejection and more – but how well does it perform?

Price £55/\$70 **Company** Adonit **Web** www.adonit.net

The Adonit Note+ is aimed at iPad users as a cost-effective alternative to the much sought-after Apple Pencil; however, it only works with a handful of tablet models. It boasts a couple of programmable shortcut buttons, palm rejection and pressure sensitivity, the latter perhaps sparking the interest of digital artists in the making.

The Adonit Note+ is compatible with a number of note-taking and art apps for the iPad, but seems to be only fully compatible with some – i.e. pressure sensitivity works with Concepts and MediBang Paint, but not with Procreate. The Adonit Note+ is significantly cheaper than a 2nd generation Apple Pencil, and you



The stylus, annoyingly, needs to be paired individually with every compatible app.



could surmise that it's less capable, but of course this all depends on what you need it for.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO USE?

The Adonit Note+ is a nice-looking stylus, is lightweight, comfortable in the hand, and comes with a fine point plastic nib. Usually a stylus comes with a few replacement nibs, but these are for some reason omitted here. The nibs aren't cheap either, and as the Note+ is mid-to-high price in Adonit's vast range of styluses, you may wonder why a few replacements aren't included.

What the stylus does come with though is a USB-C charger. The port sits on top of the pen and although Adonit says you can still use the stylus when charging, what is immediately obvious is that the cable is far too short for this to be true.

A quick test in Notes confirms the pen is lovely to write with, and palm rejection is native in this respect, also. It's the same in Procreate; the stylus is accurate and responsive, though as

The Adonit Note+ has a nice design overall, being lightweight and comfortable – though the charging cable could be longer.

already stated pressure sensitivity doesn't work here. Pairing the Adonit Note+ in Procreate using the 'Connect legacy stylus' option does mean the tilt recognition works.

This stylus' main four features – shortcut buttons, palm rejection, pressure sensitivity and tilt function – only work in unison on a few of the suggested apps, which often cost money to download. The main highlight for anyone into drawing would be the pressure sensitivity. This works on a few of the free apps. Trying out Concepts, MediBang Paint and Infinite Painter all confirm that

“It could perform better and more consistently across the apps it is compatible with”

DETAILS

Features

- Dimensions: 153mm x 10.5mm
- Weight: 15g
- Charging time: 1hr
- Continuous use: 10hrs
- Material: plastic (PC+ABS), metal
- 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity
- Replaceable tip
- Programmable shortcut buttons
- Type-C USB charger port
- LED indication light
- Natural tilt support
- Natural palm rejection

System Requirements

iPad: iPad Air (3rd/4th generation), iPad mini (5th generation), iPad (6th/7th/8th generation), iPad Pro (11" all series, 12.9" 3rd/4th/5th generation)
iOS: 13.3 or above

Rating

★★★★☆

yes, the pressure sensitivity does work, though leaves a lot to be desired. 2,048 levels is pretty standard for an all-rounder stylus like this, though it seems a little jittery and uneven at times, but only for more nuanced drawing and painting.

AN AFFORDABLE OFFERING

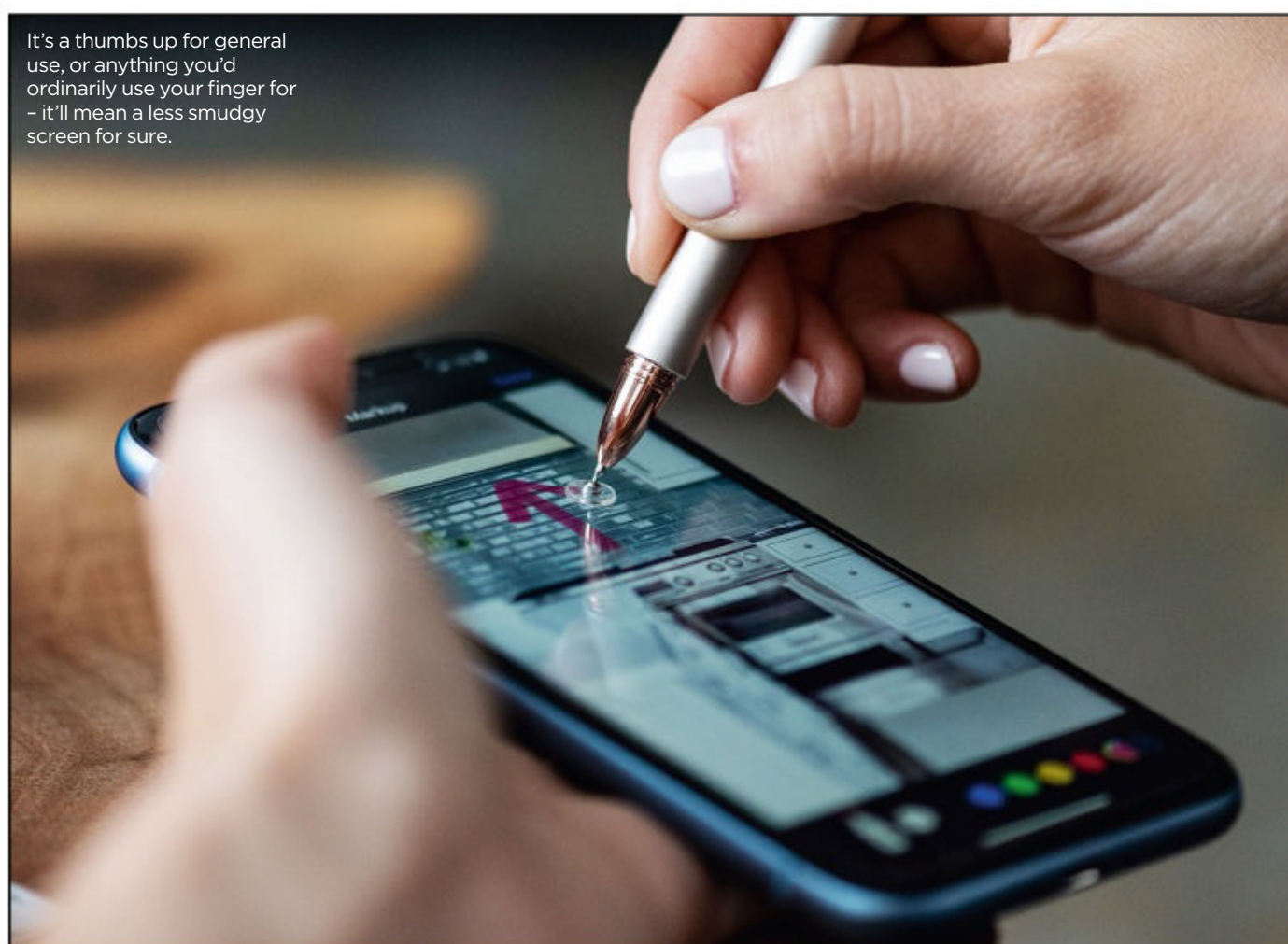
At present, you can purchase the Adonit Note+ for around £55/\$70, which doesn't seem unreasonable. It's totally dependent on what you need it for, though. For general purpose, it's fine, but be sure to check the compatibility with your iPad on the Adonit Note+ webpage. Similar offerings come in the guise of a Wacom Bamboo Sketch, another all-rounder, though priced more steeply.

Overall, the Adonit Note+ looks and sounds the part, and is tempting at the price, though it could perform better and more consistently across the apps it is compatible with. This is a good option for all-round use, rather than for serious digital artists.

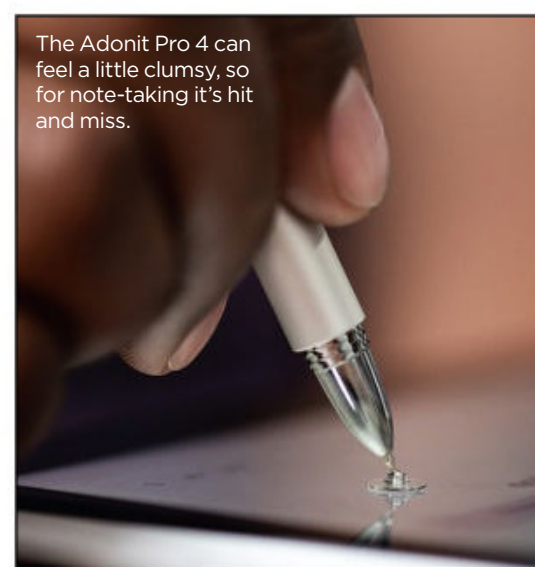


Pressure sensitivity works with the majority of apps the Adonit Note+ is compatible with.

All images © Adonit



It's a thumbs up for general use, or anything you'd ordinarily use your finger for – it'll mean a less smudgy screen for sure.



The Adonit Pro 4 can feel a little clumsy, so for note-taking it's hit and miss.

All images © Adonit



The pen comes in three different colour combos and can slip stylishly into a bag or shirt pocket with its pleasingly curved clip.

Adonit Pro 4

A SIMPLE NOTE-TAKER Is the no-frills Adonit Pro 4 stylus merely style over substance? We give it a thorough test to find out

Price £22/\$30 **Company** Adonit **Web** www.adonit.net

The Adonit Pro 4 is a passive, non-Bluetooth stylus that works on any device. There's no need to charge it or pair it; this stylus is good to go, handy for scrolling, liking, sharing, note-taking, and perhaps sketching, but we'll come to that in a moment.

It has a good weight and certainly looks the part, but the Adonit Pro 4 may lack a few features compared to similarly priced offerings. For instance, there's no pressure sensitivity – a useful feature for the more serious note-takers and sketchers, and for around \$30, you can get the STAEDTLER Noris Digital, which boasts 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity, plus palm rejection (though it's Android only).

For general use, the Adonit Pro 4 seems fine, at least for anything you



would usually use your finger for. The stylus is purported to be an 'all-rounder' i.e. for note-taking and even drawing. However, when testing it out for note-taking and sketching on Notability and Autodesk's Sketchbook, as Adonit suggests on its website, it seemed more than a little lacklustre in both respects.

PUTTING IT TO WORK

The stylus seemed to suffer from a margin of parallax, meaning the nib and line don't quite match up. It's not a great deal, no more than a millimetre or two, but when I tried to highlight something in a written doc it highlighted just above the text, even

The Bluetooth and battery-free Adonit Pro 4 sports an elegant design, and it weighs just 22g.

though I had the nib in place. It's a small thing but more than a little off-putting if you're trying to concentrate. It also makes writing a little more difficult than it should be.

The lack of pressure sensitivity really means that this stylus isn't an option for drawing, and the lack of palm rejection is always apparent. It could perhaps serve for very casual sketching at the most.

For a casual all-round, general use stylus, you could certainly do worse than opt for the Adonit Pro 4, but it is verging on the expensive for what it delivers in terms of performance. Basic note-taking and rough sketching are okay but could be a lot smoother, with the stylus generally feeling a little clumsy for these uses. However, if you want a stylish, well-formed little stylus to replace your finger for general browsing and app use, then this will do the job just fine.

“It is verging on the expensive for what it delivers... basic note-taking and rough sketching could be a lot smoother”

DETAILS

Features

- Diameter: 9.25mm
- Length: 124.7mm
- Weight: 22g
- Body: aluminium
- Fine point precision
- Soft touch precision disc
- Streamlined pen clip

System Requirements

All capacitive touchscreen devices

Rating



Preliminary art for the Alien Queen in the 1986 film Aliens.



A horror comic drawn by James Cameron when he was in eighth grade.

Tech Noir: The Art of James Cameron

SCI-FI ARCHIVES Feast your eyes on this glorious art collection, with fascinating commentary from Cameron

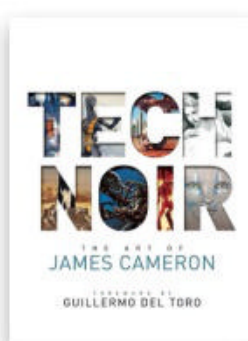
Author James Cameron **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £55/\$75 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Tech Noir – a term James Cameron coined to nail the aesthetic of *The Terminator* – raids the filmmaker's personal archives, from his self-made eighth-grade comic books to blockbuster concept art.

The child is unquestionably father of the man: Cameron's early work reveals a teen prodigy whose imagination is soaked in science fiction and horror,



Tech Noir © James Cameron

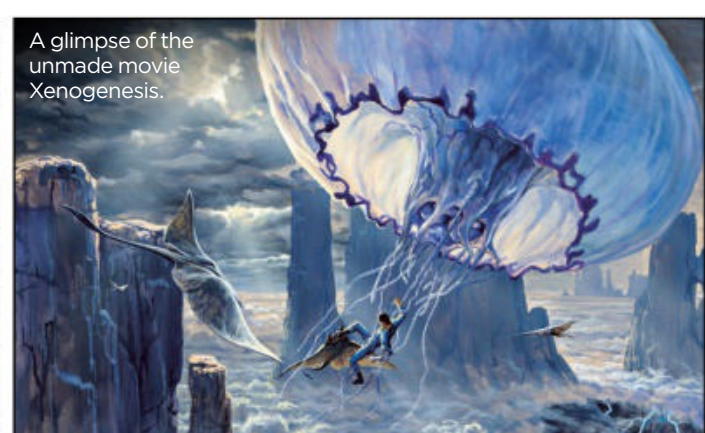


Cameron's original concept for the T-800. This book is brimming with concept art, personal work, early sketches, unrealised projects and more.

with the clear talent to claim his own place in those genres. You might almost mourn the comic artist he could have been.

"The important thing was just to put the dream down on paper," says James Cameron, and that's very much a statement of intent for this book. Chapters are themed according to Cameron's lifelong preoccupations – other worlds, alien life, nuclear holocaust, the interface of flesh and machine: "I have three or four good ideas and I just keep working 'em," he says surprisingly refreshingly. He supplies a fascinating commentary, too, which functions as a loose autobiography. Cameron's an autodidact who studied the craft of

“A teen prodigy whose imagination is soaked in science fiction and horror”



A glimpse of the unmade movie Xenogenesis.

effects while churning out posters for a low-rent VHS company; revealingly, he celebrates a knock-down drag-out fight with a client.

Offering glimpses of unmade projects, from space opera *Xenogenesis* to *Spider-Man*, this is a glorious exploration of Cameron's dreaming, exposing the creative endoskeleton of one of Hollywood's less approachable geniuses.

RATING ★★★★★

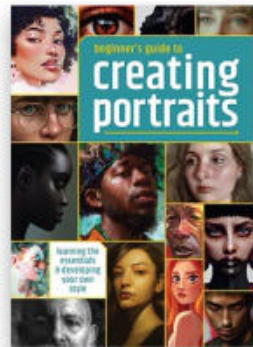
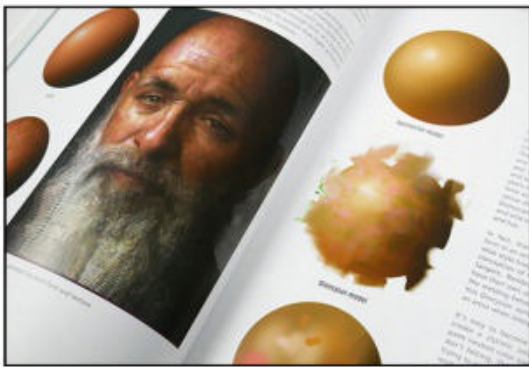
Beginner's guide to creating portraits

BEGINNER'S GUIDE Learn how to paint portraits in varied styles with this jam-packed handbook, filled with lots of technical help and artist tips

Authors Various **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £25/\$33 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

The title of this guide may suggest it is just for beginners, but the reality is that artists of any level will be sure to find some useful nuggets in this comprehensive book on creating portraits.

If you are looking to enhance your portrait painting skills then this offering from 3DTotal will prove invaluable. It covers all the bases from using references, planning and



As well as featuring detailed step-by-step tutorials, there are also guides to working in different styles.

sketching to in-depth tutorials on full pieces of finished portrait art.

The content is clear and detailed, breaking down topics into manageable chunks, so if you want to focus on adding tattoos, scars or jewellery, you can. The layout and flow of the book is fantastic and, while it is clearly aiming to help portrait artists, it will benefit any type of work – much of the content covers important elements like different stroke types and replicating various styles.

This variety is one of the keys to the success of this book, as there is something for everybody. The technical elements and the full tutorials cover a wide range of styles so, no matter what your own particular aesthetic, you will find something that appeals to you and will ultimately help you better your own art.



A number of artists have come together to make sure this book covers all the bases.

Littered around the pages of this book are many useful artist tips, pointing out not just technical nuggets of help but some useful insights to aid in the practicalities and mentality of painting portraits, to really help you hone your skills.

RATING ★★★★★

Jurassic Park: The Ultimate Visual History

DINOS UNEARTHED A must-have for fans of the original movies, offering exclusive behind-the-scenes access and insight

Author James Mottram **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £45/\$70 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

This brilliant behind-the-scenes book may not contain instructions on how to clone dinosaurs, but it does tell you everything else you could ever want to know about Jurassic Park and the pre-Jurassic World sequels.

Film journalist James Mottram assembles an impressive collection of talent – from original director Steven Spielberg to designers and



Gorgeous early concept art painted by David J Negrón.

cinematographers – to give a captivating guided tour of Isla Nublar and its dinos.

Mottram expertly plots Jurassic Park's journey from Michael Crichton's hit novel to being (for a few years, at least) the most successful movie of all time. Despite the presence of all the key players, the book avoids toeing the company line, fully acknowledging the sequels' flaws. Meanwhile, the story of stop-motion dino effects making way for famously groundbreaking CG technology is page-turning stuff.

As for the artwork, the impressive selection of rare production photos, concept art and unused posters makes for spectacular icing on a satisfying cake. In all respects, a book worth roaring about.

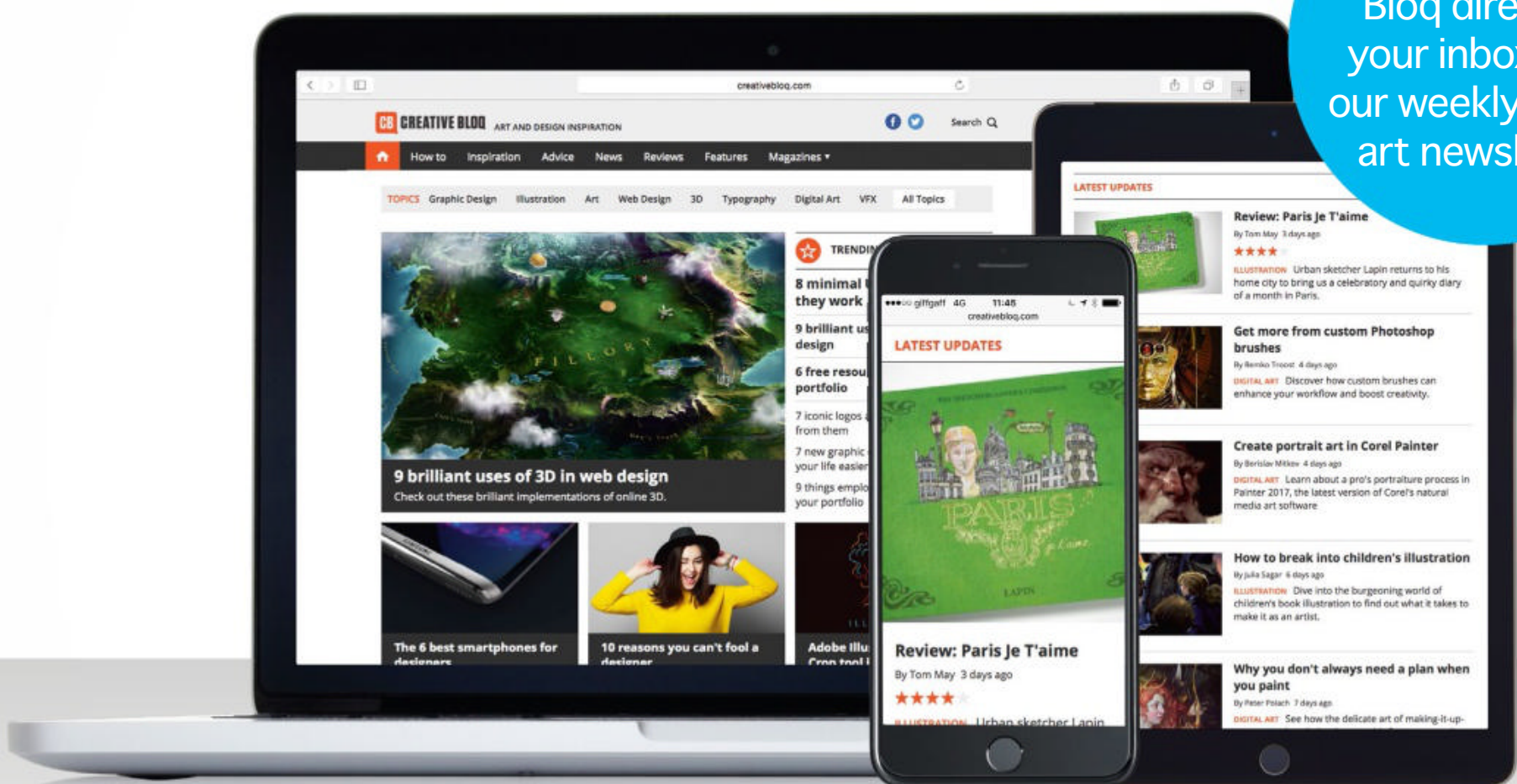
RATING ★★★★★



Costume design for the character of John Hammond, CEO and creator of Jurassic Park.

The number one destination for **digital art** news, views and how-tos

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art newsletter



Graphic design

Art

Web design

3D

Digital art

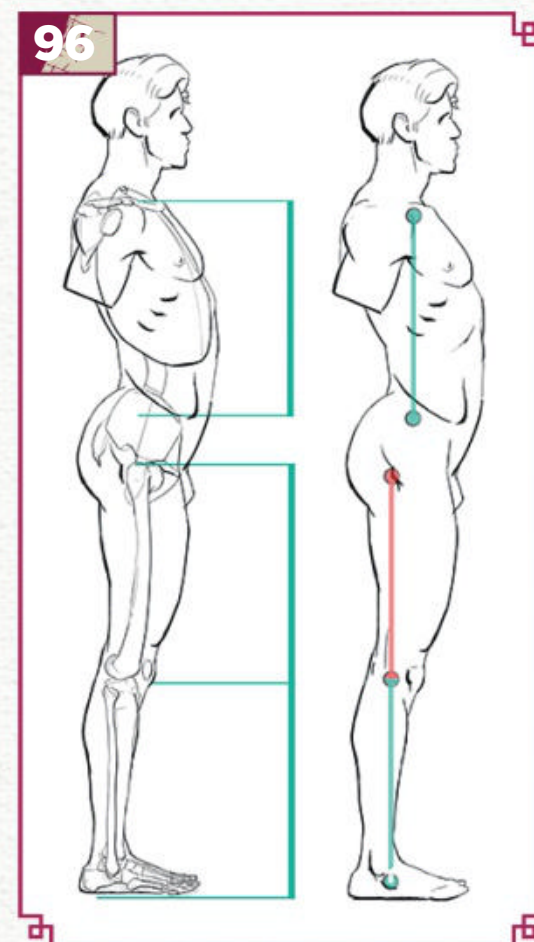
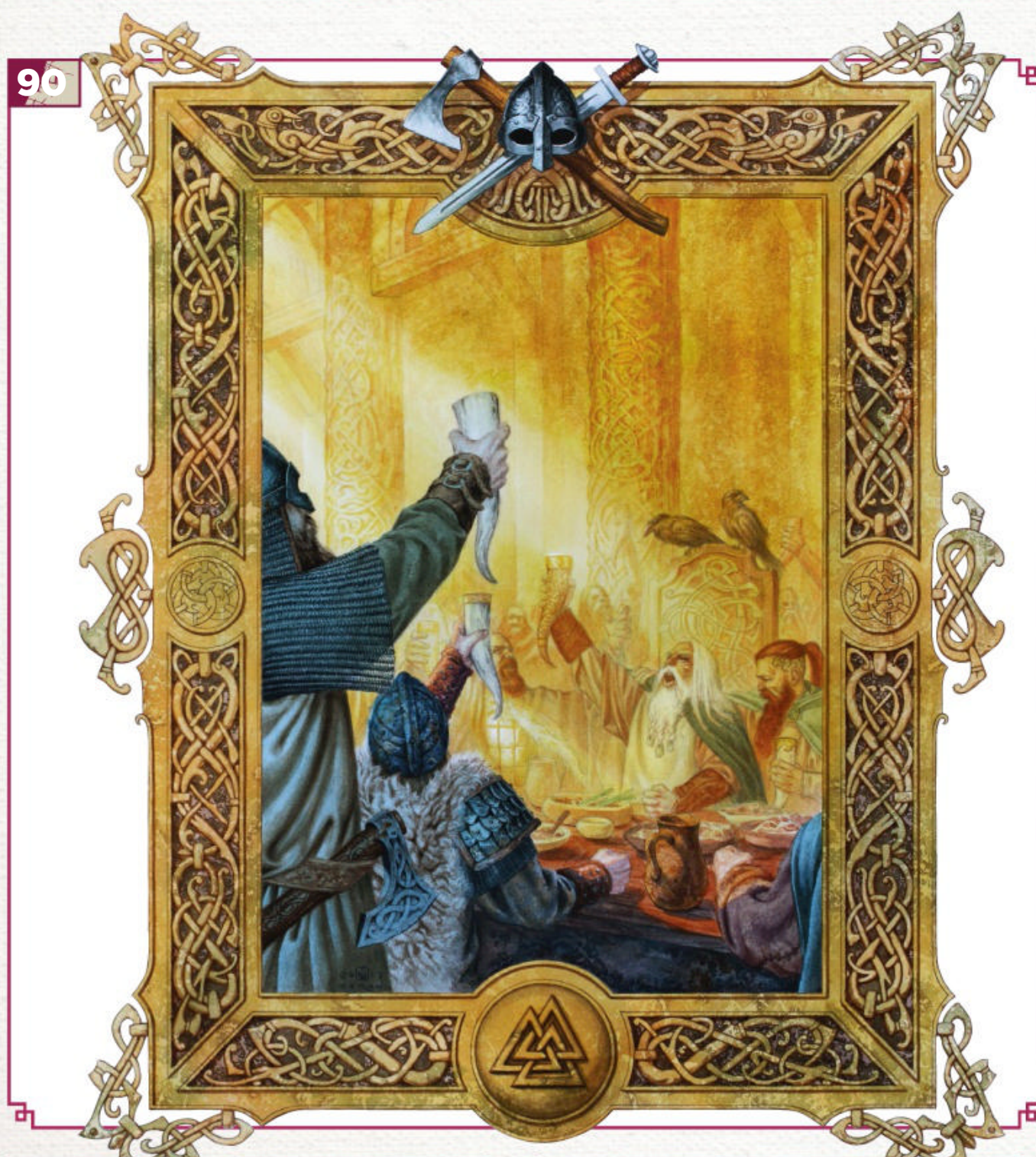
www.creativebloq.com

Workshop assets are available...
Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of this issue's resources

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



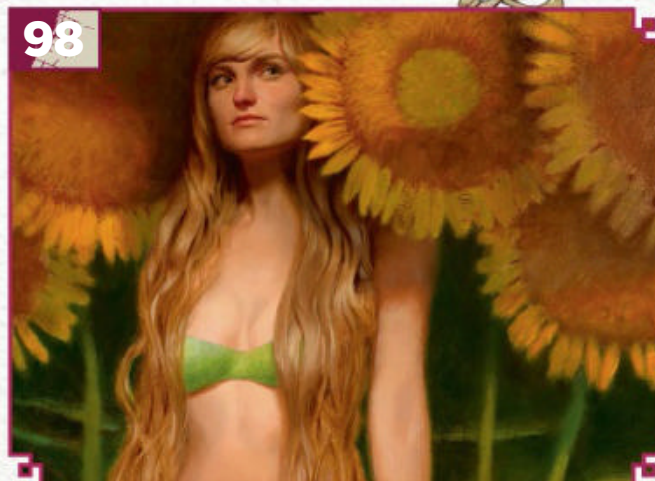
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Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

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Milivoj Ceran designs a beautiful Norse knotwork frame.

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Check out part 2 of Charlie Pickard's anatomy series.

98 First Impressions: Craig Elliott
The fine artist shares his biggest influences on his art style.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

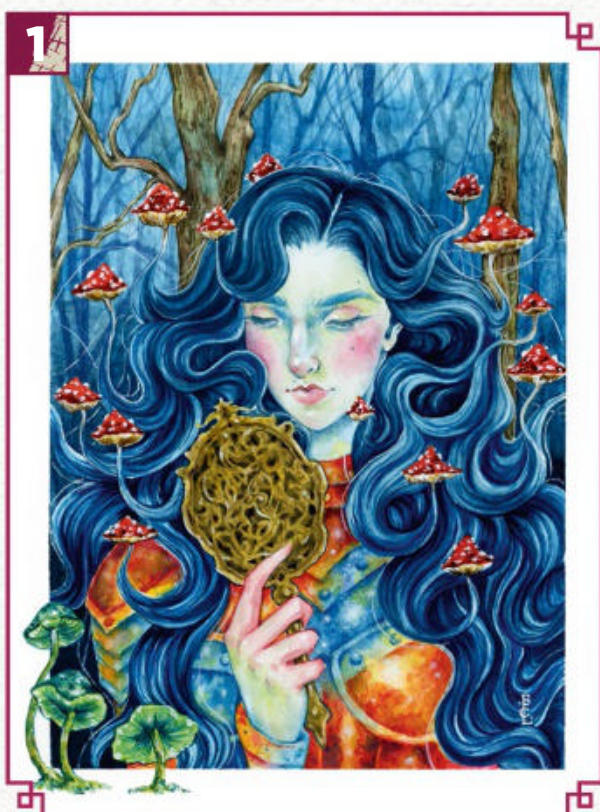


Brenna Lopes

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, graphite, ink, oil

WEB: www.brennalopes.com

Brenna is a mixed-media artist whose work explores the naturalistic and fantastic. She is inspired by the way that mythology, folklore and fairy tales forge a connection between the self and the natural world.



1 QUINTESSENCE

"This work tells a story of self-perception, and explores what aspects of the mind might look like were they turned into a costume one could wear."

2 OF THE HUNT

"I am enchanted by the vibrance of Greco-Roman mythology. This painting of the Roman goddess Diana sought to depict her mid-hunt, accompanied by a deer, her sacred animal."

3 WITH GENTLE HAND

"This painting uses the often psychedelic palette of the dreamscape, and incorporates elements of the myth of Cupid and Psyche."



4



4 WINTER BIRD

"This painting treats the phoenix, that great, self-resurrecting creature, in relation to the magic within and the ability to call it forth in times of need."



Kateryna Khudiakova (AKA Kutty Sark)

LOCATION: Ukraine **MEDIA:** Watercolour, ink, liners **WEB:** www.instagram.com/kuttysark_art

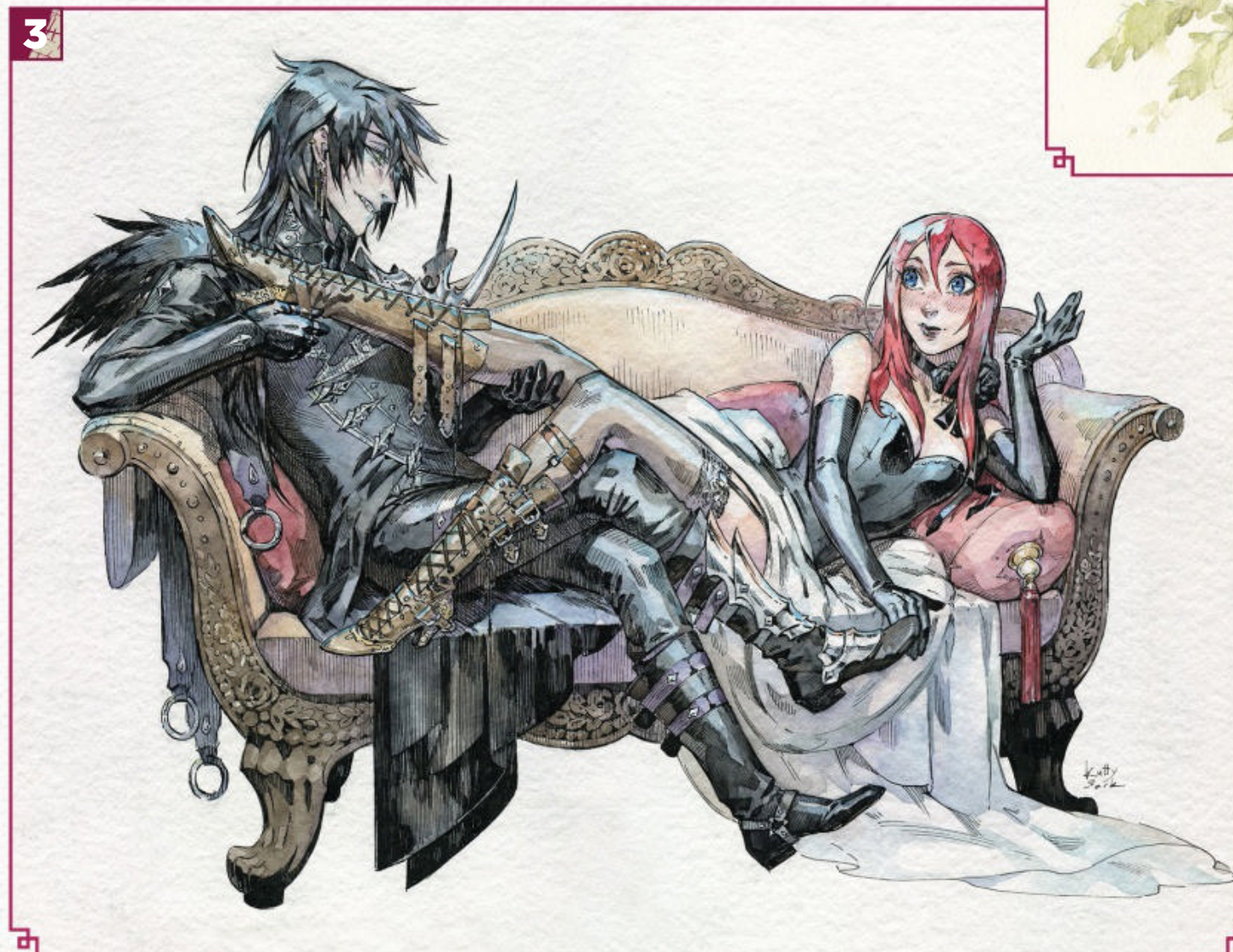
Kateryna is a Ukrainian freelance artist specialising in illustration and concept design. She started her artistic path as a costume designer, and is currently working on a Gothic fantasy graphic novel called Arcane Flames.

1 PAGE 009

"A page from the graphic novel I am working on, Arcane Flames. It depicts a moment of silent memories."

2 PATIENT FRAGILE FORCE

"This work depicts the concept of fragile life that finds its way through the artificial environment with beautiful strength and inevitability."



3 MOMENT ON SOFA

"A work related to the graphic novel Arcane Flames. It features the main heroes of the story."

4 THE PROMENADE OF THE ELVEN QUEEN

"This work was inspired by the Queen Titania character from A Midsummer Night's Dream, Tolkien elves, and fairy tales."







Acrylic

PAINT DECORATIVE NORSE KNOTWORK

MILIVOJ CERAN reveals how to create a realistic painting featuring a detailed Norse knotwork frame

This piece is one I created for my Norse Mythology Art Book. To glorify Vikings lore, I've added Norse knotwork and a decorative frame. I'll show you how I construct the border and knotwork, and how to use and make photo references, to help with realism. I will break down my entire process, from the loose sketch and idea to the finished piece. I will also explain how I use acrylic colours to achieve the desired result.

I've been fascinated with Vikings since I was very young, so I decided to make my own version of this wonderful lore. I also wanted to make paintings with some vintage elements like bordures and knotwork. I was influenced a lot by traditional painters from the past, but also masters like Alan Lee and his book Mabinogion, which is full of wonderful paintings and decorative Celtic knotwork and borders. Norse and Celtic knotworks are similar, but a bit different in style.

In this piece, Valhalla, I made Norse gods and Einherjars (warriors) feasting and celebrating in Odin's hall, called Gladsheim. Odin is in the centre of the feast, with his two ravens, Hugin and Munin, pictured above him.



Milivoj has been a professional illustrator since 2002, author of the Norse Mythology Art Book. An artist known for work on Magic the Gathering and Dungeons & Dragons. www.norse-myth.com

Traditional Artist Workshop

MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Fabriano 5, 300gsm watercolour hot pressed, satinata, extra white

■ Tracing paper

ACRYLIC COLOURS

■ Winsor & Newton "Galeria"

■ Talens "Amsterdam"

MASKING AGENT

■ Schmincke, Rubbelkrepp

BRUSHES

■ Watercolour brushes (sable brushes, flat brushes)

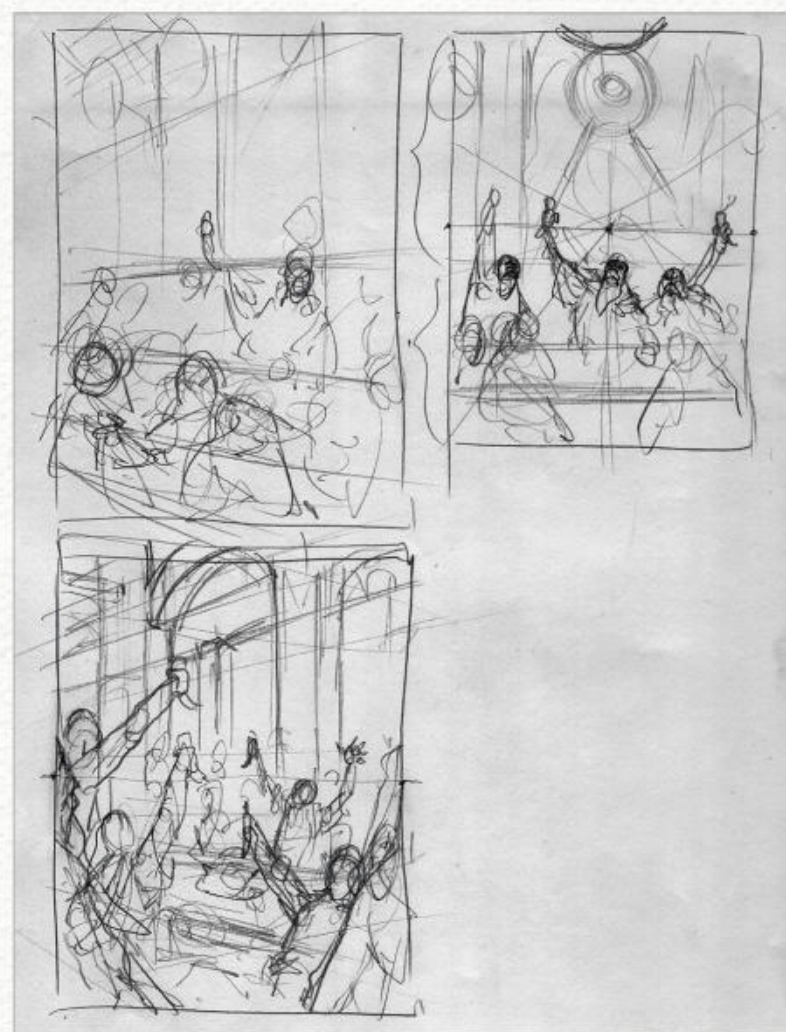
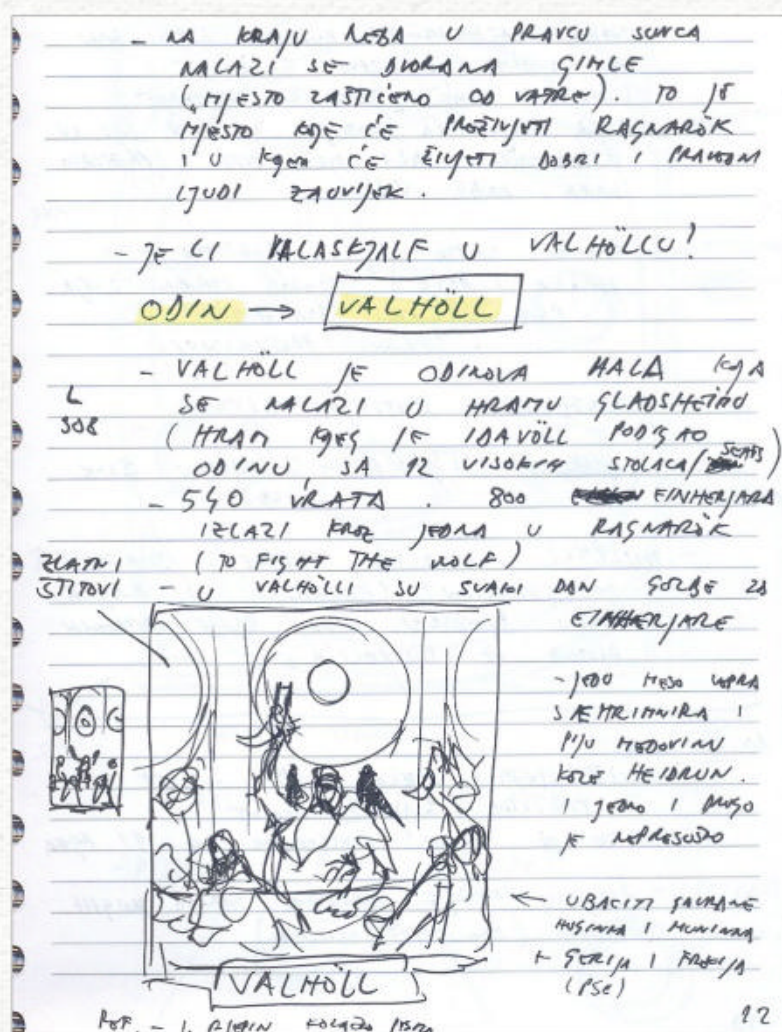
PENCIL

■ Pencils (HB)

MISCELLANEOUS

■ Rulers

■ Divider

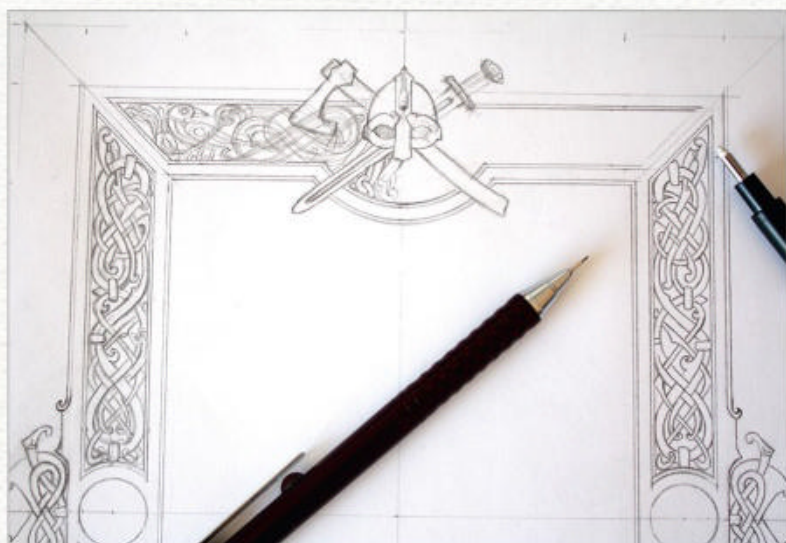


1 Find the idea

When I am working on the concept for a book, I conduct research. I read a lot of books on Vikings and mythology. So when flash ideas come up, it's best to quickly put them on paper, while they are fresh. Those first sketches are important to get things rolling. I filled pages and pages of my notebook with scenes, descriptions, and quick ideas/sketches. Those notes are the basis for the main work. So when you get an idea while reading something, don't leave it for later!

2 Create a rough sketch

In this stage I am drawing the scene in different camera angles, compositions and perspectives. Those are very fast sketches with loose lines. At this point I still haven't thought about the framing and knotworks, because the scene must come first. Loose pencil lines are providing enough information for me to see where the characters are, how they are placed in the composition, how the hall is looking, etc. All characters should be cheering and raising drinking horns.



3 Construct the Norse knotwork frame

Of course I could just paint this Valhalla scene as a full-page art that goes over the whole page, but I wanted to make it special with this extra decorative element. So in this step I am working on the Norse knotwork frame. The first stage is to make the shape of the frame, with spaces/boxes for knotwork. That way I can know exactly where I'll construct them. With knotwork there is no place for faking – everything is visible, especially mistakes. I also input a Vikings helmet, axe and sword into the border.



4 Detailed sketch

After the frame and knotworks are constructed, I work on the main scene. The most important part is to place all elements inside the frame, with the correct perspective. Horizon line and other perspective lines are drawn as a guide and erased later, and I am drawing the hall/space before the characters. That way it is easier to place characters in the right ratio and scale. When you're creating a scene with architecture and lots of people, draw the space and perspective first; it doesn't work well the other way.



5 Transfer the drawing to paper

I take the file of the scanned sketch to the printing studio, and enlarge it to the final artwork size. In this stage I am working on the knotwork frame only. I redraw all details again, since the sketch was four times smaller than the original work. In this size I can draw knotworks bigger and more precise. After I have made the left side with all the details, I transfer it with the tracing paper to the right side of the page.



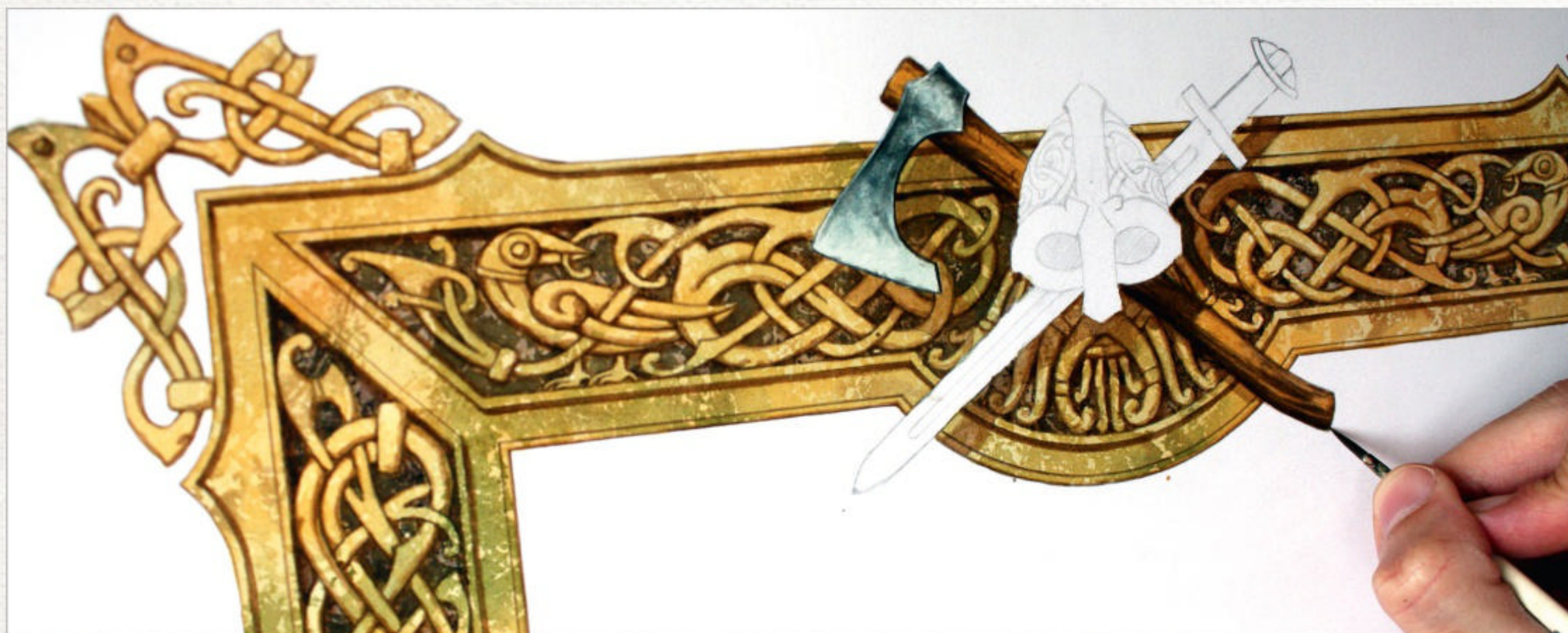
6 Paint frame with knotwork

I dilute acrylic colour with a lot of water. I use a similar workflow to watercolour painting; the difference is that acrylic colours are waterproof, so once they dry they cannot be smudged with the upcoming layers. First I paint the whole frame 'wet on wet' with ochre colour with variations (a bit greenish, then lighter brown to avoid a generic, flat look). After it is dry, I paint shadows with the brown diluted colour and small sable brush.



7 Add masking agent

I'd like to achieve an old and rusty look, so I am applying masking agent with the wrinkled plastic bag to get the kind of texture that cannot be painted with the brush. Masking agent needs a few minutes to dry. Those speckles of dried agent will protect the paper from colour. I am painting a thin layer of acrylic colour over the entire frame. Those areas will be darker, and masked areas will be lighter.



8 Finish the frame

The frame is painted, and texture is added over the Norse knotworks. The last detail to paint is the Viking axe, sword and helmet. I decide to paint them as realistic objects, so they can pop up from the frame, but at the same time be a part of it. So I paint cast shadow from those items over the frame. Another connection with the frame - I have included the Viking's helm, but the beard and hair is stylised and integrated with the knotwork. I am using small sable brushes for this part of the painting process. ➡➡

Traditional Artist Workshop



9 Take photo reference

Before I start to work on the main frame, I am taking photo references for the painting. For me it is the most important step to help get the right information on clothing folds, details on fingers holding items, fur texture, etc. I did medieval reenactment for ten years, so it is helpful to have all the necessary props on hand (like chain mail, fur, helmets, axes, etc). Some things are just needed as a basic ref – like the tunics under the cloak, where I am using my sweatshirt, providing enough info for the folds.



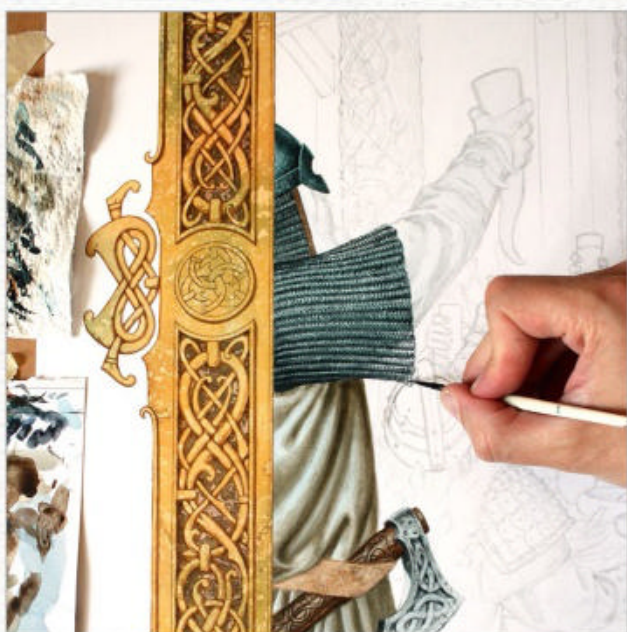
10 Draw the characters

It's very important to make a precise drawing before starting to paint. The loose lines are from the traced enlarged sketch, and it is enough information for me to see where the characters are in the composition. So I start to draw the Viking characters with all the details. It is a combination of my drawing skills, and photo references I took. Sometimes I rely on my imagination and use only parts of references. Important: don't be a slave to the photo references, but use them in the portions you need.



11 Finalise the drawing

I refine all details before I start to paint. In this case it is very important for me to get all details right, so I can perfect the base for painting. All constructional problems must be solved in the drawing stage, because painting in diluted acrylic doesn't leave much room for mistakes and repaints. Note the axe on the left character in chain mail. It looks stiff and unnatural, so I will rework that as well before I start to paint. And since it is a hall of gods, I draw more knotwork on Odin's throne and columns in the background.



12 The painting process

In this case I decided to start painting from the foreground to the background. I don't have a specific rule – some of my paintings are painted that way, and some opposite (from background to the foreground). I am putting colder colours on the first foreground character. I also paint all details right away (chain mail rings, material folds, knotwork on the axe, etc). I am careful not to paint over the frame.



13 Mix cold and warm colours

In this stage I am separating foreground from the mid and background. As I described before, the character on the left is painted in colder values, and I am putting one thin wash of blue colour to the rest of the foreground, and yellow washes on the mid and background. I am painting Odin and the other characters in the mid/background in warmer colours and values. Slowly building the image is essential for this way of painting.



14 Paint the central frame detail

I am painting other characters slowly, as well as the wooden table and food/drinks on it. I am satisfied with the overall look, but now it seems that the focus is more on the foreground characters, than on Odin and the other Einherjars from the mid/background. The colours in the background are too light and soft, so I must build them more to achieve better balance. I paint the columns and knotwork with diluted colours in layers.



15 The final touches

This is the most rewarding part, when the painting is almost complete. However, there is still a lot of work to be done – even if nobody but the artist will notice the difference between the ‘almost finished’ and ‘finished’ piece. It’s happened many times: I’ve worked on final touches, applying numerous details for three or four hours, and when I show the final result to my wife she says, “Well, it looks like it did yesterday, I don’t see any difference...”

Using references for clothes, armour and fur



A SKETCH FOREGROUND CHARACTERS

In this sketch two Einherjars (slain warriors in Valhalla) in the foreground are toasting. One is standing and wearing chain mail, the other is sitting and wearing fur and a helmet. They are turned to the midground, so I draw them from the back, and from imagination (without references at this stage).



B TAKE PHOTO REFERENCES

I am taking a few photos based on my sketch of those two warriors. The fur, chain mail and helmet are very useful items from my reenacting days. I am not a slave to the photo, I am using the information that I need. In this case, the fur texture, folds on the clothes, and position of the hand and fingers around the drinking horn (in this case, acrylic paint bottle).



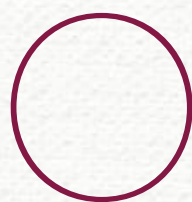
C FINAL PAINTING

I take from the photos what I need, and the rest is painted again from imagination. More armour, beard, knotworks on the axe and belt, etc. I very much like to paint texture on the items, so that they look weathered and used in battles (scars, dents and rust).

Pencil

3 SIMPLE TIPS FOR PROPORTIONS

CHARLIE PICKARD continues his ten-part series of quick tips on anatomy to improve your figure drawing; this month, he explores effective proportions



One of the first, most important difficulties a student will face as they begin their figure drawing journey is the problem of setting up consistent and solid proportions for every figure. As such, much has been written about ideal proportion systems for the human figure.

Many of these systems are based primarily on the relative size of the

ANATOMY - PART 2

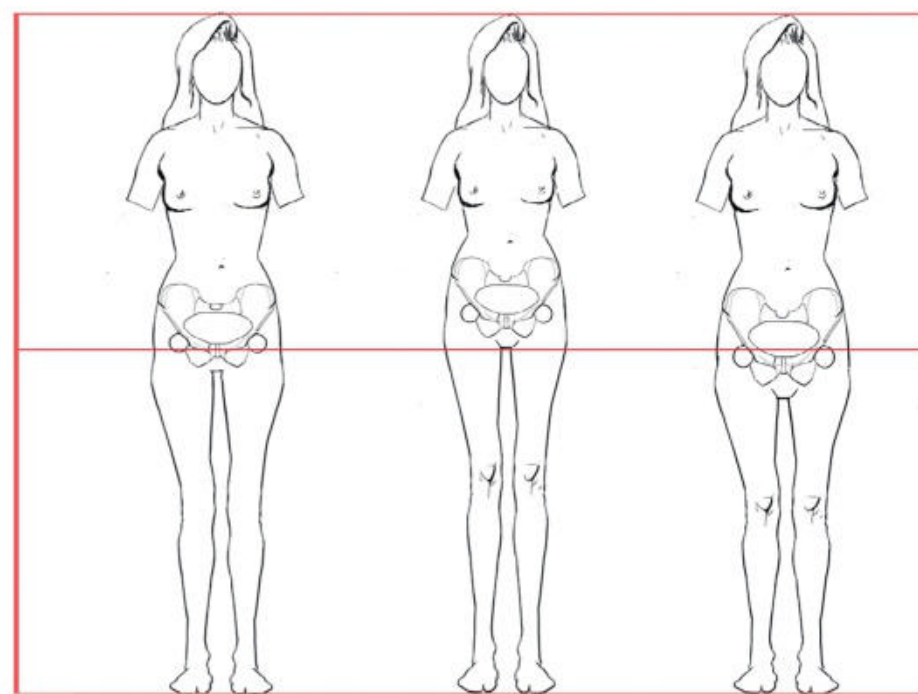
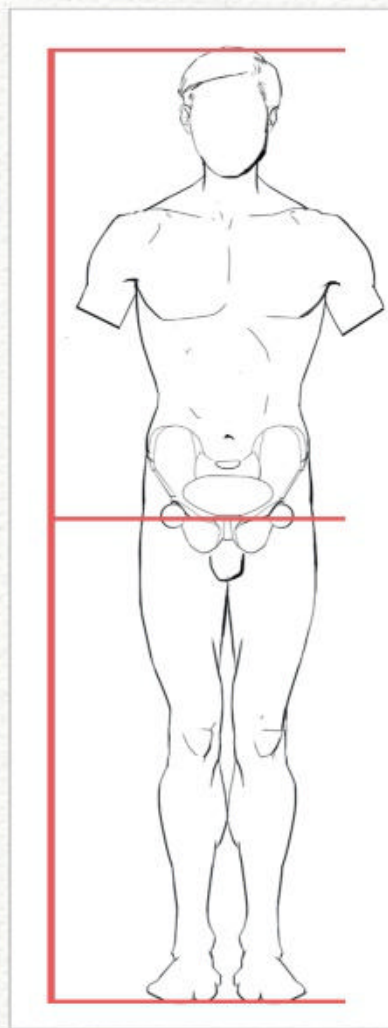
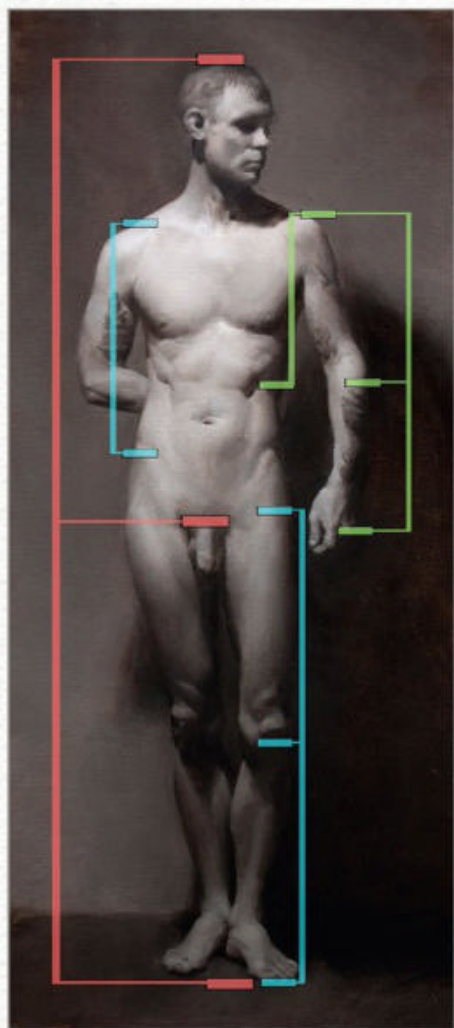
head to the figure. These systems, while immensely useful and worth learning, can be limited in their application, only working when the figure is in a full, un-foreshortened view. Alongside this they can be too complex to check quickly, with the most common proportion being an eight-head tall figure.

In this month's article, I will discuss three simple proportional relationships that I have found very

useful in my own work. These three relationships, based more on comparisons to the torso, are simple to remember, easy to control and very effective.



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



Pubic bone on halfway
Balanced idealised
body type

Pubic bone above halfway
Short torso/long legs
body type

Pubic bone below halfway
Long torso/short legs
body type

1 Pubic bone is a useful halfway point

The first of these three proportional relationships, and the one that is most consistently among the first marks that I make in most figure drawings, is the one that is most consistently among the first marks that I make in most figure drawings. On any standing figure, this proportion is extremely easy to find and track.

This is an easy control for varying body types

Of course, as with all of these proportions, they are merely an ideal, a useful proportion to vary from. Bodies come in all shapes and sizes and we should strive to represent these varied characteristics in our work.

The real power in this particular proportion lies in just how effective it is for controlling and easily varying the body types of our figure drawings. For example, we can see in the illustration above just how easily we can vary this by simply moving our pelvis in relation to the centre of our figure.

2 Leg proportion splits the body into 3 equal parts

Our second proportion is based on the legs, which will generally be half at the joint of the knee.

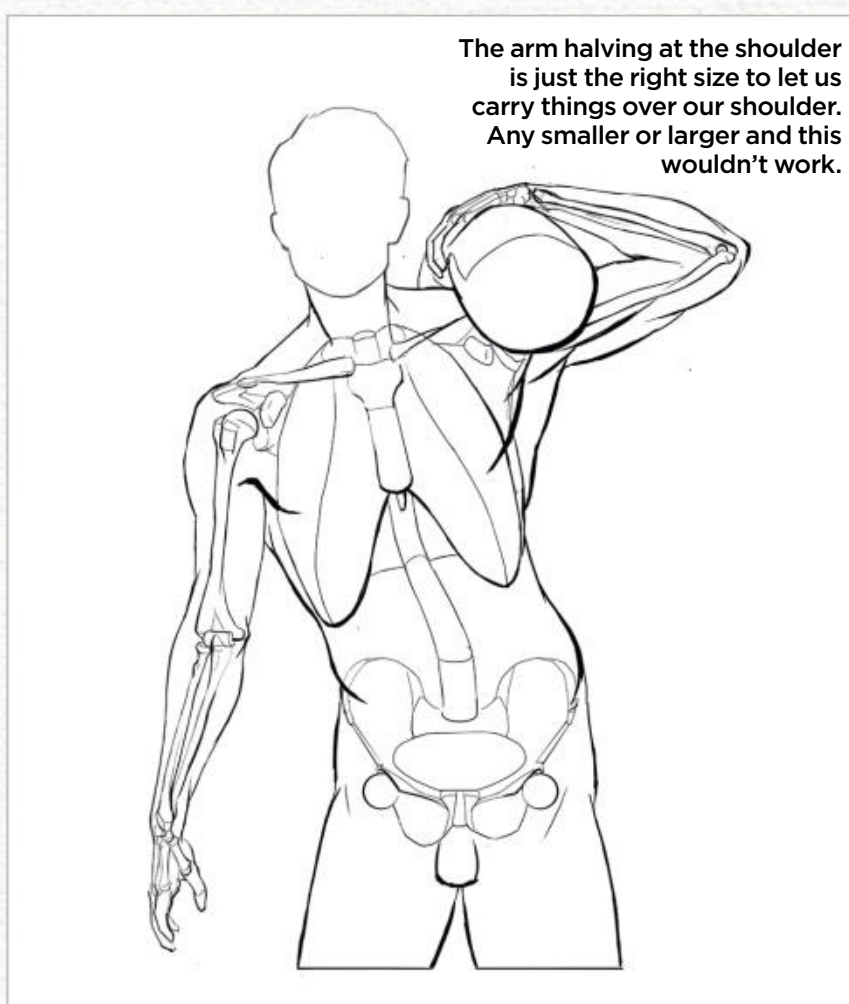
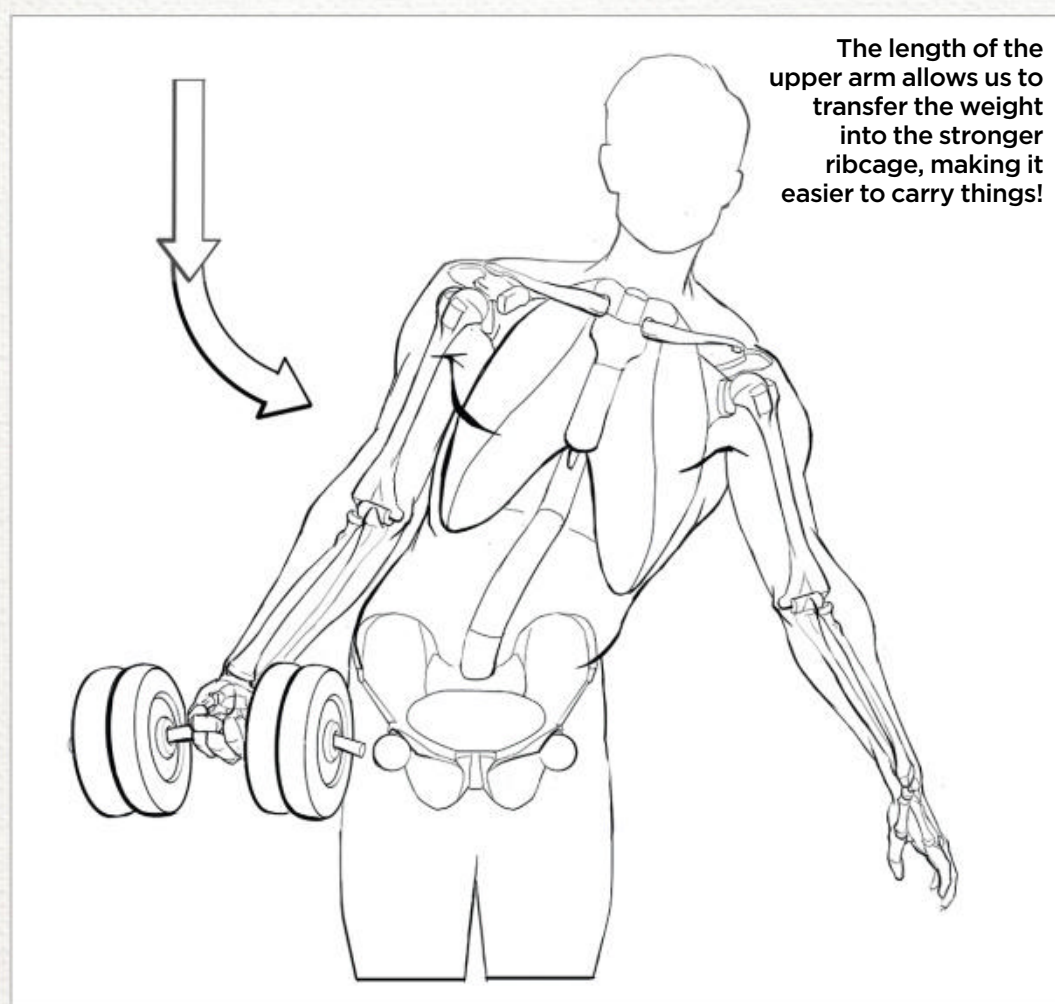
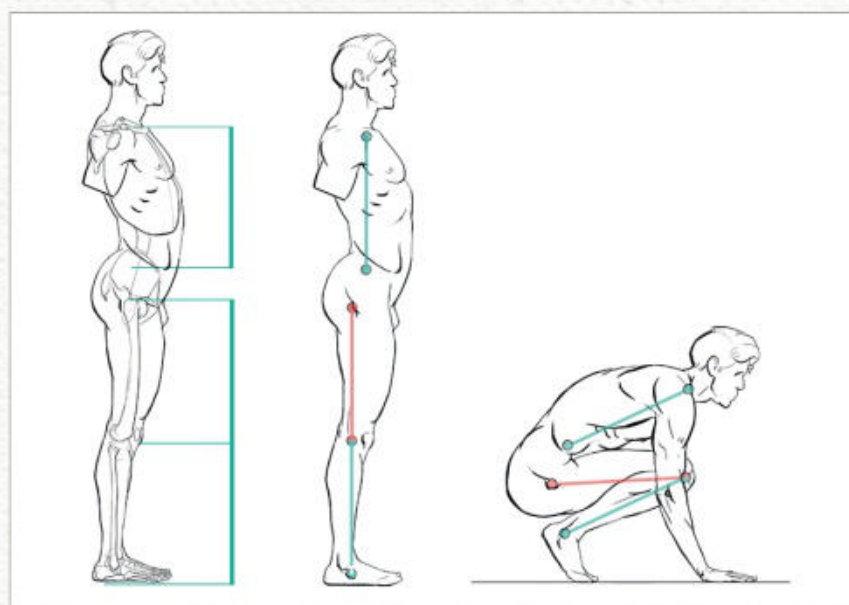
To be more specific, the lower leg from the bottom of the heel will be equal in height to the full length of the femur from the greater trochanter down to the patella.

Even more usefully, this same length will roughly equal the height of the torso down to the start of the pelvis. This breaks down the entire figure into roughly three equal parts.

This relationship lets us fold up compact

I find a helpful way to remember this particular proportion is to consider how it allows us to fold ourselves up into a squat position.

I like to think of this as similar to a three-piece foldaway table. Just like with the table, the three sections of the body need to be a similar size to allow for us to take this efficient, more compact position. So next time you are unsure about the proportions of the legs, consider whether your figure folds up neatly into this shape.



3 Arm proportion

Our third and final proportion relates to the arms. The first element to consider is that the upper arm ends almost exactly at the bottom of the ribcage. When drawing, we can always consider the arc the arm would make back to the torso to easily check if this proportion works in our drawing.

If we consider the halfway point of the arm at the elbow, the forearm is slightly shorter than the upper arm. In fact, the lower arm all the way up to the knuckles of the hand is the same length as the upper arm.

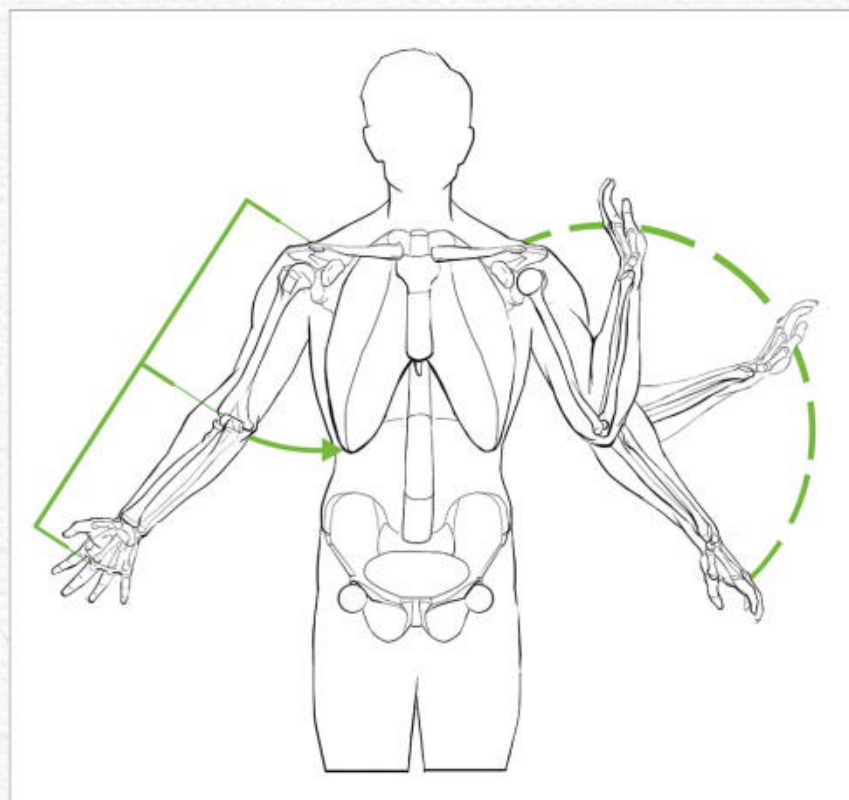
The easiest way to remember this is to consider how, if you bend your arm, your knuckles will end up at the top of your shoulder.

A functional purpose

I like to remember this proportion largely by considering how well it enables the main function of the arm, this being to carry things.

Seen above, the upper arm's alignment with the ribcage allows us to easily transfer the force of a heavy object diagonally into the much stronger muscles of the ribcage, making it easier to carry things.

In a similar way, our knuckles ending at our shoulder makes it incredibly easy for us to carry things over our shoulder. If it were any longer or shorter this would be impossible. Form truly does follow function. Understanding how will always be the easiest way to remember these ideas.



First Impressions

✧ Craig Elliott ✧

Fine artist Craig Elliott discusses his inspirations



Where did you grow up and how did this influence your art?

I grew up in Cupertino, California, once a small orchard town, now the headquarters of a famous fruit-flavoured computer company! It is no accident they named their company after a fruit, the city was covered in blossoming orchards, beautiful trees and streams filled with all sorts of creatures. These elements of my hometown were probably the biggest influence on my art, and who I am.

What outside of art has most influenced your work?

I would say my work as a visual development artist and production designer for animated films has had a great impact on my work. In my work for Disney, DreamWorks, Sony, etc I have had to create in dozens of different styles and work with hundreds of subjects I would not have tried if left to my own devices. It is very broadening to have to research what kinds of furniture Jesus might have made or sat on, or what an ancient Greek house interior looked like. Since so many films are based on history, it has been a real lesson in new ideas.

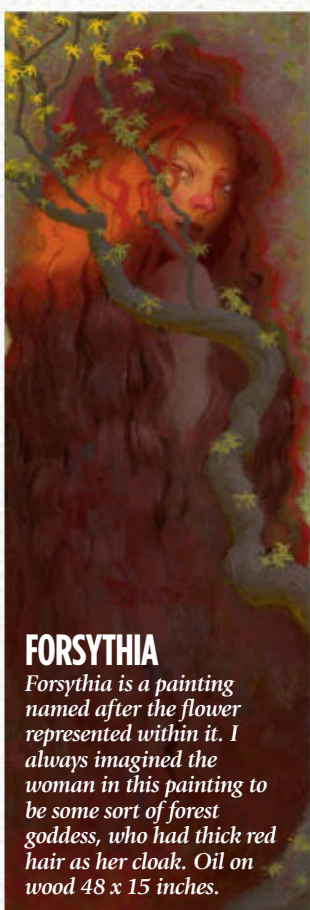
Is there a painting you saw in your childhood that affected you?

I think the one that stands out to me is the painting called Crucifiers – Mob by Greg Hildebrandt. It was in The Brothers Hildebrandt book from 1978 and used as a Black Sabbath album cover in 1980. I never knew it as an album cover, but from the book I owned. There is such a stark, powerful and unique quality to the painting.



SUNFLOWER RISE

A moment of surprise, when the sun peeks out from a break in the trees, and the feeling of anticipation of something to come as expressed by nature. 6.3 feet by 2.5 feet – oil on linen mounted on wood torsion box.



FORSYTHIA

Forsythia is a painting named after the flower represented within it. I always imagined the woman in this painting to be some sort of forest goddess, who had thick red hair as her cloak. Oil on wood 48 x 15 inches.

“It is clear my style was already there in that first painting”

There are several others, most of which are more realistic than Crucifiers – Mob, but also very powerful. Some are so realistic it is almost impossible to imagine! This painting just sticks in my head, now for 45 years. You are presented with a group of faceless torturers. The holes where their heads would be are hooded, and open onto what feel like soulless pits.

The only other time I have seen something that feels like this was when I was consoling someone I loved, who was in incredible

emotional pain. Their eyes seemed like inky black pits of despair. I have no other way to describe this feeling than that. I can't say that this is a subject I would want to paint, or aspire to paint, but the painting changed me somehow for sure.

Can you tell us about your first paid commission?

My first paid commission was the cover of my high school yearbook for my senior year. It does sort of boggle my mind that I knew nothing and had only one art class but was able to invent an entire stadium out of nothing and marry it to some reference of two students. I just sat and painted it. The original was unfortunately stolen by the company that printed the yearbook – my art teacher was so mad, but I do have a copy of the book somewhere. It was this painting that convinced my art teacher, Gary Post, to bother my mum relentlessly until she was convinced that I should be an artist.

What is the last piece you finished?

I finished Sunflower Rise in the last few years, and they do share a similar sense, and love for, dramatic lighting. Spot light, dappled light, streams of light, all seem to evoke emotion for me, and I am always chasing them to capture and put in my work. The subjects are quite different, I don't think I would be enthralled at painting a bullfighting stadium as a personal piece, but it is clear that my style was already there in that first commissioned painting.

What's the next step?

I am always learning new things, and expanding my own ideas alongside my work in animation and film. I want to do a group show someday with some of my largest paintings (in the six foot range), and perhaps make some sculpted artwork as part of it. We shall see!

Check out Craig's portfolio and online store at www.craigelliottgallery.com



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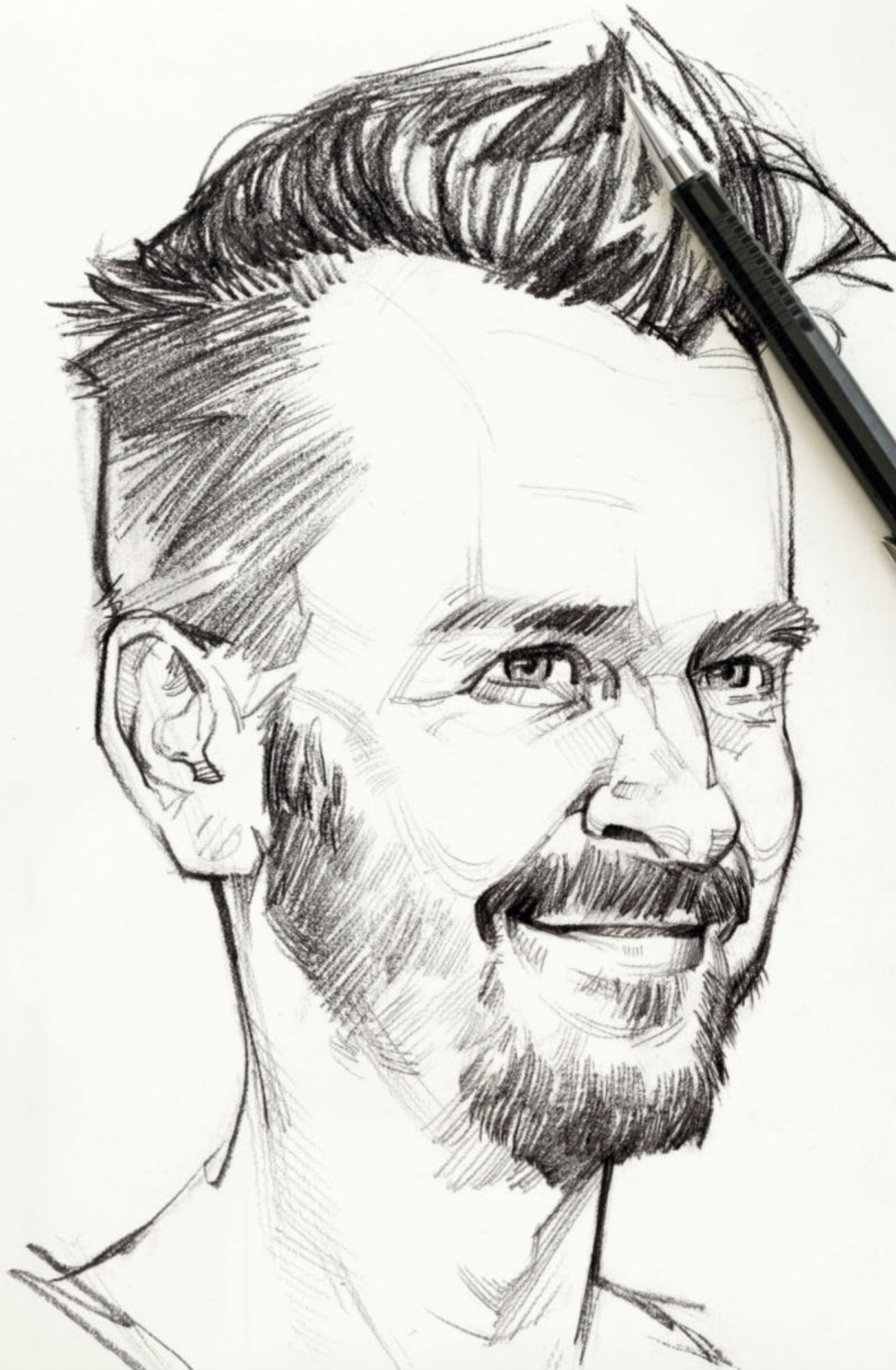
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