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How to create the  
woodblock look  
in Photoshop



**AMIR ZAND** TALKS ABOUT LIFE AS AN ARTIST, WITH WORKFLOW TIPS & TRICKS





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



We cover a lot of ground this month. Alongside our features, workshops and artist showcases, we also focus on character design – with advice on the key techniques used for recreating our superb cover art from Dave Greco starting on page 54, and the latest

instalment of Charlie Pickard's in-depth series on painting human anatomy on page 94, this time looking at bone structure.

Amir Zand is an artist who crosses genres and techniques. I interviewed him about his life as an artist, and his tools and workflows to discover what makes him tick and how he creates his stunning art. Check out the interview on page 36.

Comic book artist Tom Foster was going to be in our 2000 AD issue but couldn't make it. We just had to have him in the magazine though, so this issue he demonstrates how to create a stunning Japanese cityscape in the style of woodblock art.

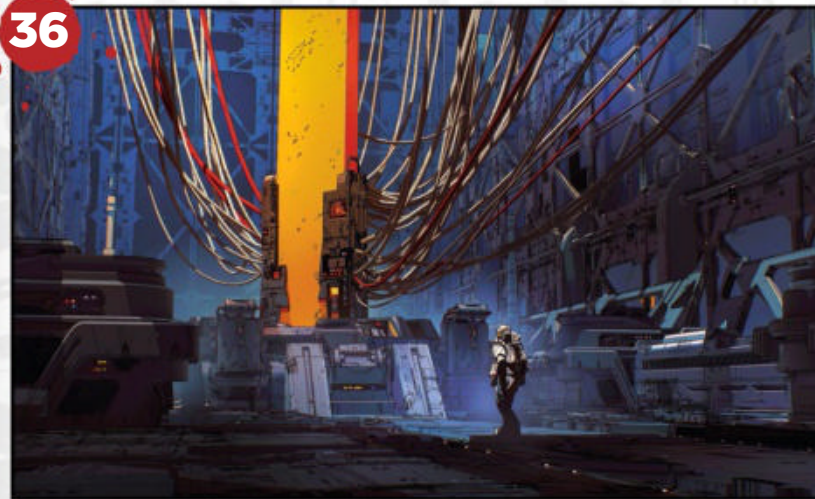
As always we showcase the best new art from around the globe, as well as review the latest tools to help you decide where to spend your money.

Rob

**Editor**  
**Rob.Redman@futurenet.com**

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

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#### Meet Amir Zand

Discover the art, techniques and workflow of Amir Zand, an illustrator who crosses genres.

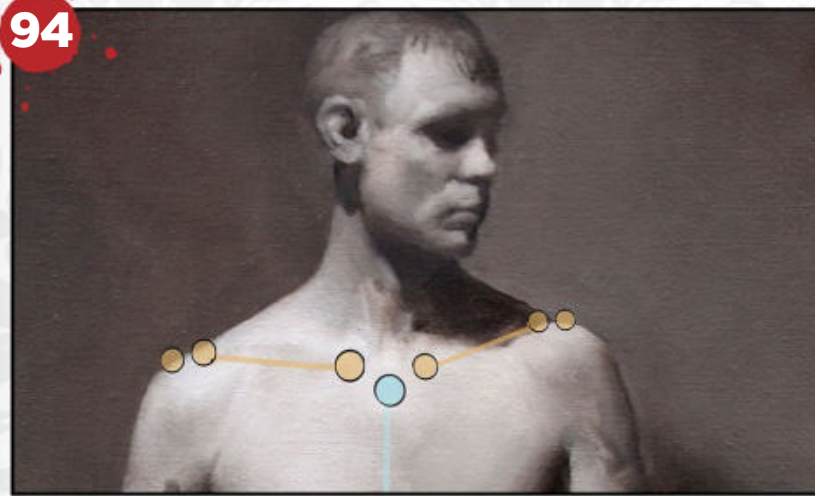
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#### Create Japanese woodblock style art

Tom Foster's wonderful workshop shows you how to combine pencils with Photoshop to create stylised art.

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#### Bone structures explored

Charlie Pickard's latest instalment demonstrates how to ensure the core of your anatomy is as it should be.

@imaginefxmagazine

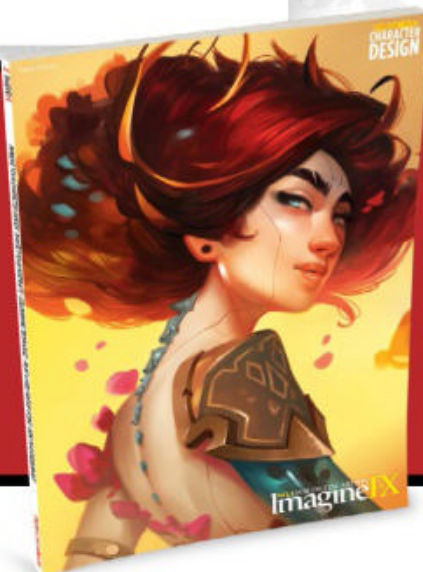
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See page 8 for details





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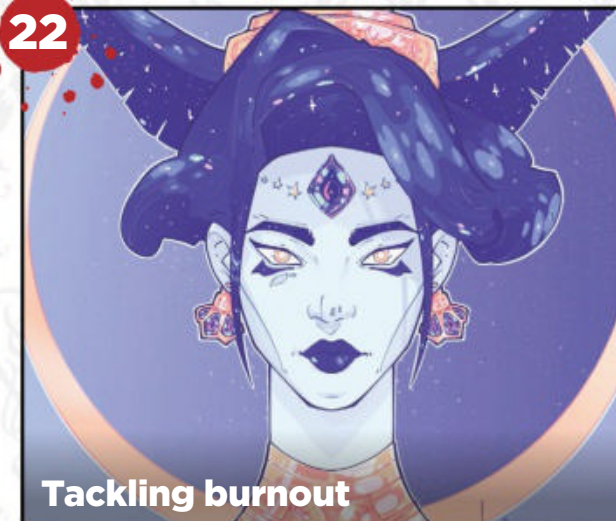
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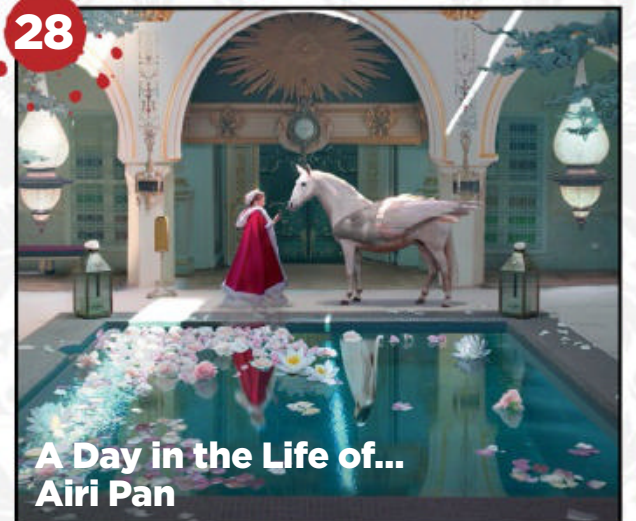
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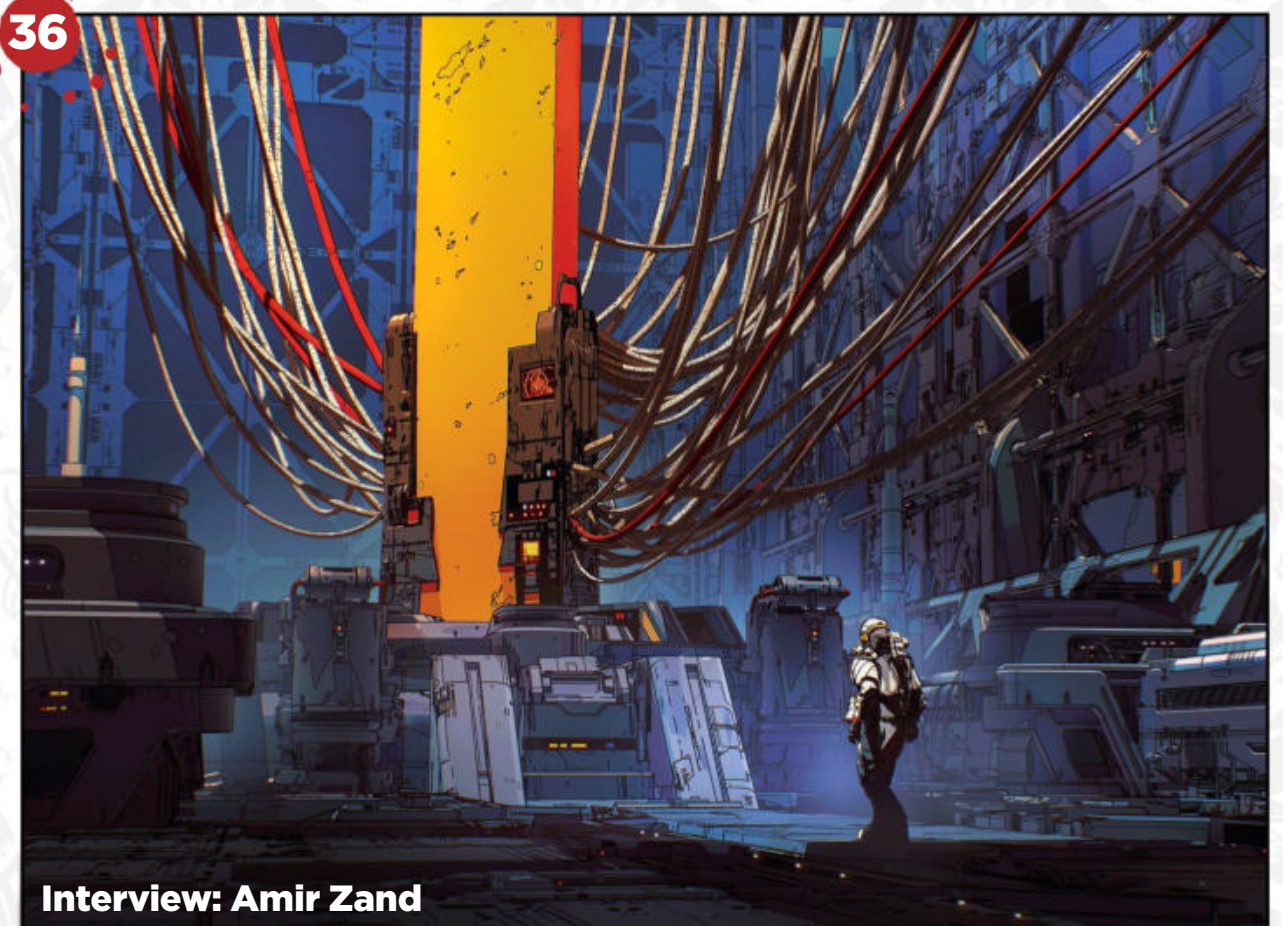
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Tackling burnout



A Day in the Life of...  
Airi Pan



Interview: Amir Zand



Artist in Residence:  
AJ Nazzaro



Sketchbook:  
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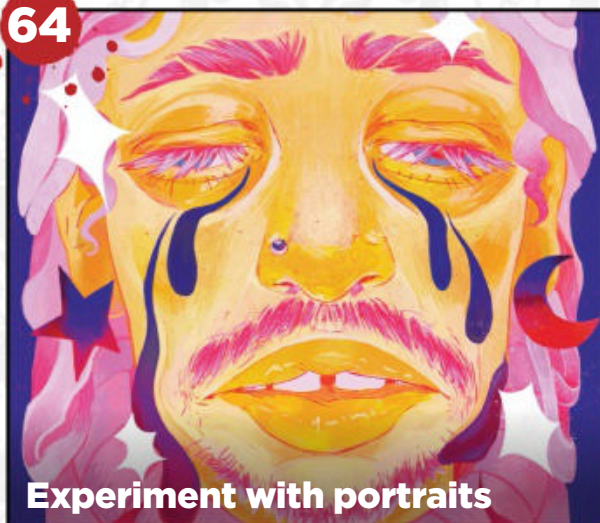


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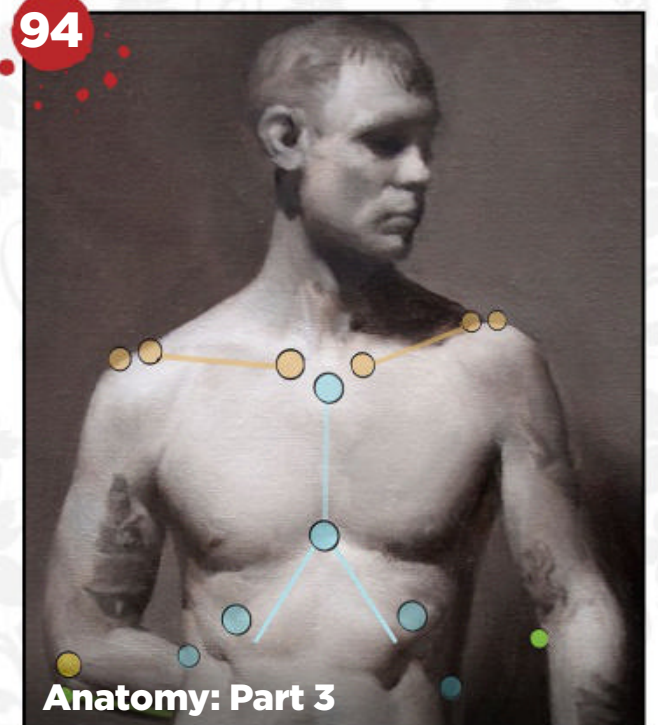
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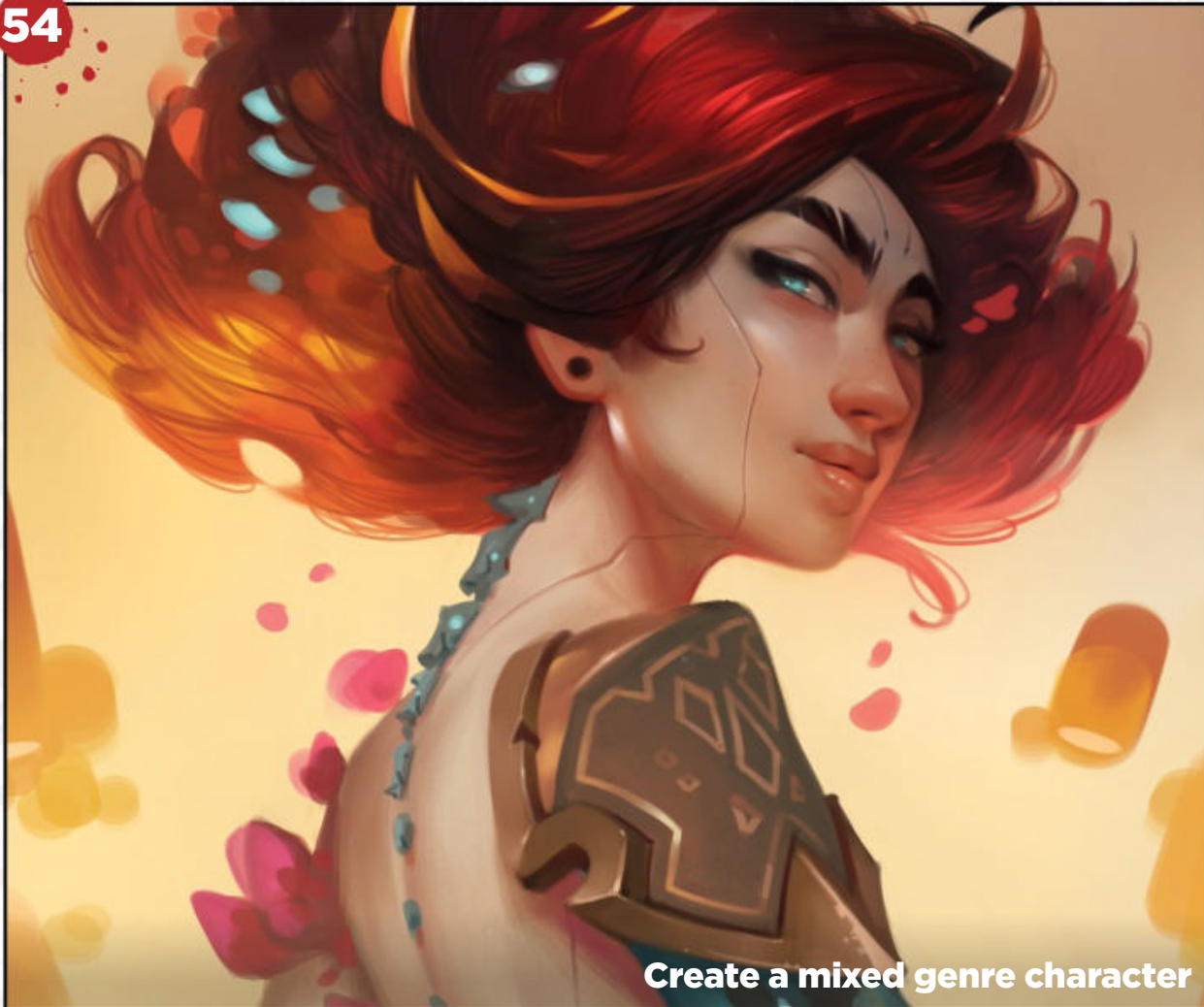
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Create a mixed genre character

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Photobash a film character

88



Fantasy oil painting





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# Resources

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

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## Editorial

Editor **Rob Redman** [rob.redman@futurenet.com](mailto:rob.redman@futurenet.com)

Art Editor **Daniel Vincent**

Production Editor **Rachel Terzian**

## Contributors

Tanya Combrinck, Lazare Gvimradze, Nic ter Horst, Valentina Remenar, Airi Pan, AJ Nazzaro, Amir Zand, Entei Ryu, Dave Greco, Tom Foster, Gabriel Lee Greene, Andrei Riabovitchev, Matthew Bolton, Milivoj Čeran, Charlie Pickard, Ekundayo, Dominic Carter, Gary Stuckey, Glen Southern

## Advertising

Media packs are available on request  
Chief Revenue Officer **Zack Sullivan**  
UK Commercial Sales Director **Clare Dove**  
Advertising Sales Manager **Mike Pyatt**  
[michael.pyatt@futurenet.com](mailto:michael.pyatt@futurenet.com), 01225 687538  
Account Sales Director **George Lucas**  
[george.lucas@futurenet.com](mailto:george.lucas@futurenet.com), 01225 687331

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## Production

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Senior Production Manager **Matt Eglington**  
Senior Ad Production Manager **Jo Crosby**  
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## Management

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Managing Director **Stuart Williams**  
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Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**

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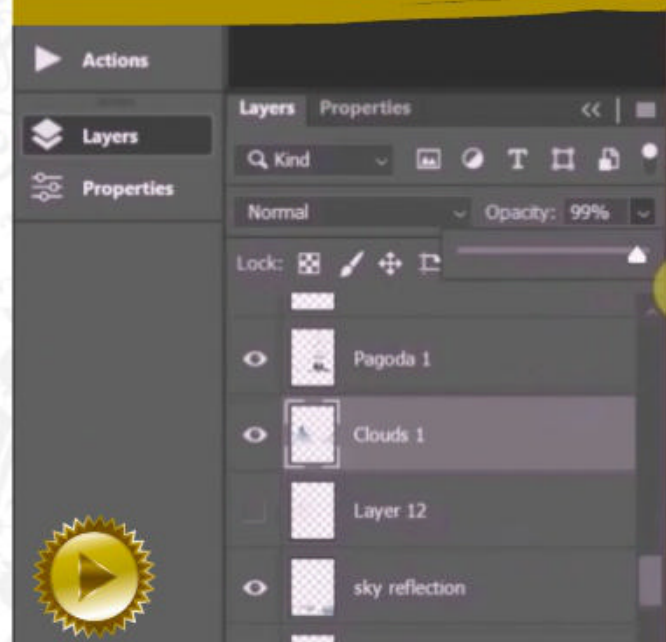


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## WORKSHOP VIDEO



## Make woodblock style prints

Comic book artist Tom Foster demonstrates and talks us through his process for the creation of beautiful, traditional style woodblock prints.

## SCULPTING VIDEOS



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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 214  
ON SALE  
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## *Also in the issue...*

### **Master the human form**

Charlie Pickard shares the secrets of human anatomy in his series.

### **Create stunning environments**

Jan Urschel teaches his techniques for creating digital matte paintings.

### **In the artist's studio**

Anna Podedworna talks about her art and her creative work space.

### **The artist's sketchbook**

Max Dunbar shares pages from his sketchbook in our regular column.



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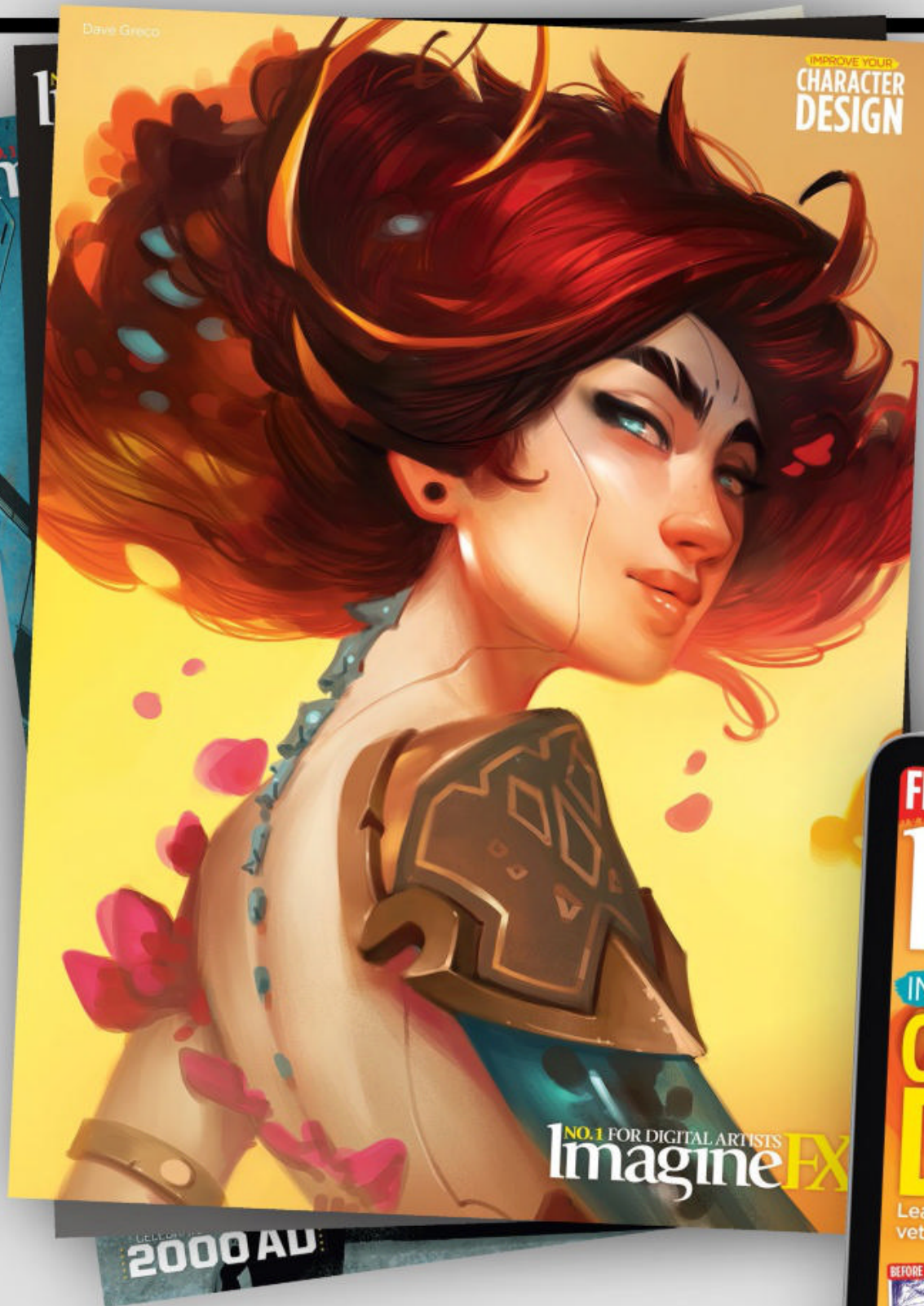
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# FXPosé

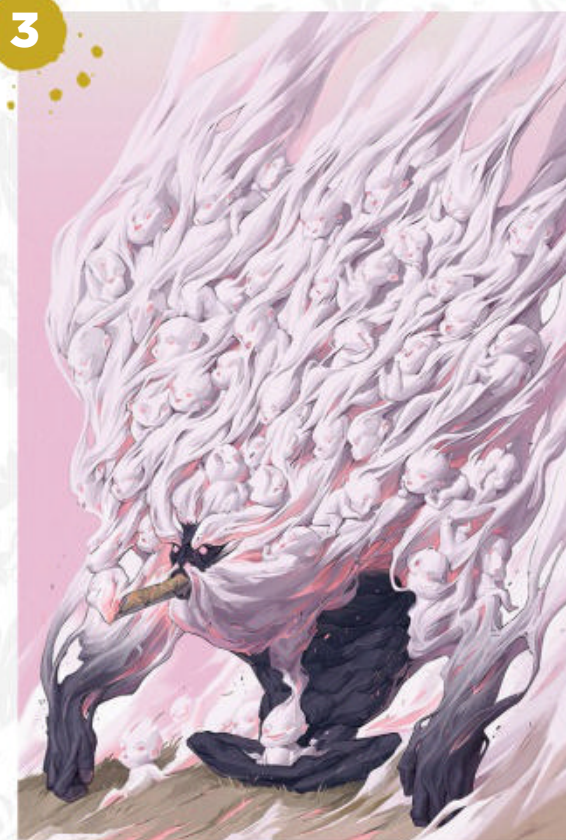
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## John Patrick Gañas

**LOCATION:** Philippines **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** [artstation.com/patrick\\_ganas](http://artstation.com/patrick_ganas)

John is a concept artist and illustrator with a penchant for whimsical and quirky designs. "Myths and cultural references are the subject of interest for most of my character and creature designs."



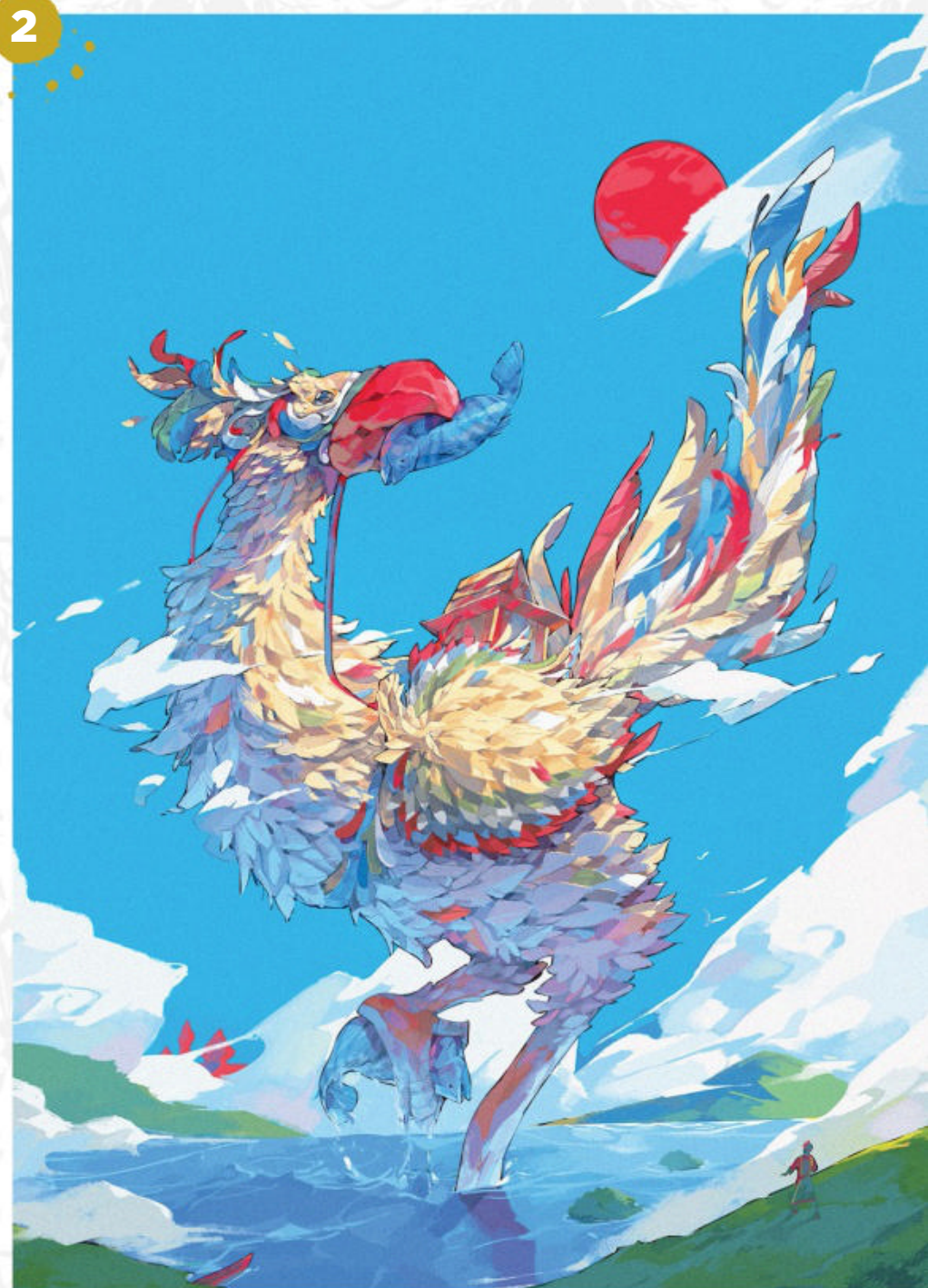
### 1 MANLALAYOG

"She was accused and killed during a Philippine witch hunt. Now, a forest prey, she impales people who take innocent lives in the woods."

### 2 SARI-COBO

"Sarimanok, a colourful Philippine legendary bird, appears as a rainbow after a storm. Depicted as a Chocobo for mounts, Sari-cobo is symbolic of carrying the Maranao art."

### 2



### 3 ANG KAPRE

"A Philippine cryptid-inspired enigma was under a hallucinogenic trance of denial. He guards his own demon against realising that his burnt children are of his hand."

### 4 FROST HARIONA

"She is a yokai violated by men in her human time. Now, a long-haired wraith, she sheds carnage on men every first day of snow."







1



## Lee Oscar Meyer

**LOCATION:** Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender **WEB:** [www.leeoscarmeyer.com](http://www.leeoscarmeyer.com)

Lee is a concept artist with a VFX background and experience in storyboards and concept art. "I have a deep passion for cinema and spend most of my free time sketching and painting cinematic keyframes, as well as gliding vehicles."

### 1 A COLD NIGHT

"This is the establishing shot of my latest personal project inspired by The Phantom of the Opera."

### 2 IN THE REFLECTION

"As the Eastern diva stands at her vanity table, a silhouette emerges from the dark gazing on her. This piece was particularly challenging for me."

### 3 MASKED INTENTIONS

"As per the original story of The Phantom of the Opera, the 'creep' gets a hold of the singer. They are headed to a secret location, home of dark practices..."

2







3



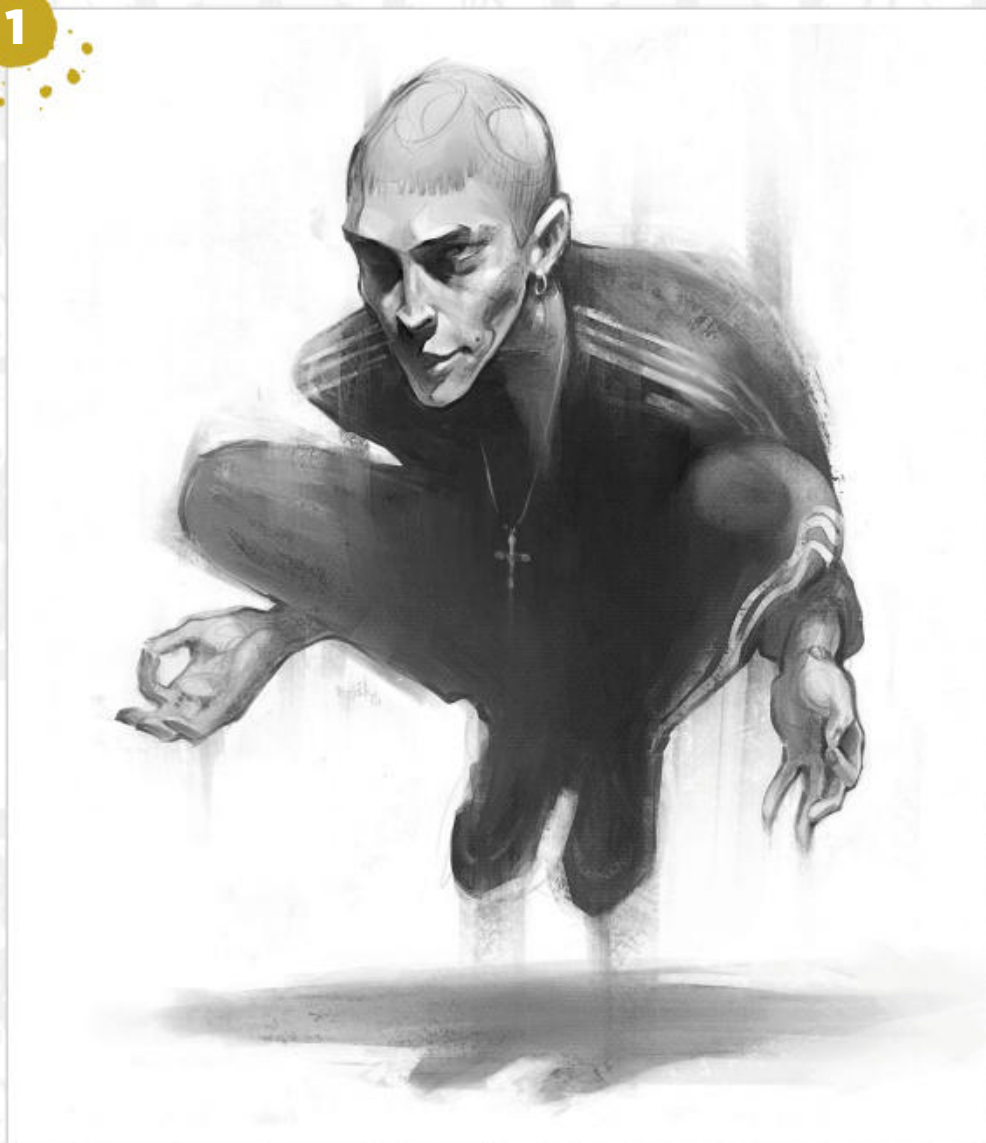


## Dasha Basilishvili

**LOCATION:** The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, graphite, watercolours **WEB:** bluebasil.nl

Dasha has been drawing for as long as they can remember, and this has influenced the way they see reality. “I’ve studied and currently work in architecture. Passion for art, though, has never left me.”

1



### 1 YASHA

“This piece represents the Hooligan-zen philosophy of Russian rurality – which is the echo of my birthplace.”

### 2 LITTLE GLANCE

“A result of my curious attempts to discern and display the emotion behind the wandering gaze of the other.”

### 3 AFTERGLOW

“In this work, I’ve tried to capture the ambiguity of the state between death and euphoria.”

### 4 SANDRO

“Here I tried to capture the state of emotional burnout: out of energy and with no space for joy. On the inside, you shout but nothing comes out.”

2



3











## Ana Zmeu

**LOCATION:** Denmark **MEDIA:** Photoshop, TVPaint **WEB:** [www.instagram.com/aanazmeu](http://www.instagram.com/aanazmeu)

Ana is a Romanian character designer currently studying Character Animation at The Animation Workshop, Denmark. "Some of my biggest inspirations are James Woods, Egon Schiele and Joaquin Sorolla."

### 1 PANTHER

"Here you can see a very friendly cat-like panther design. I usually like drawing characters in interesting poses, keeping the rendering simple to emphasise the overall shape and flow."

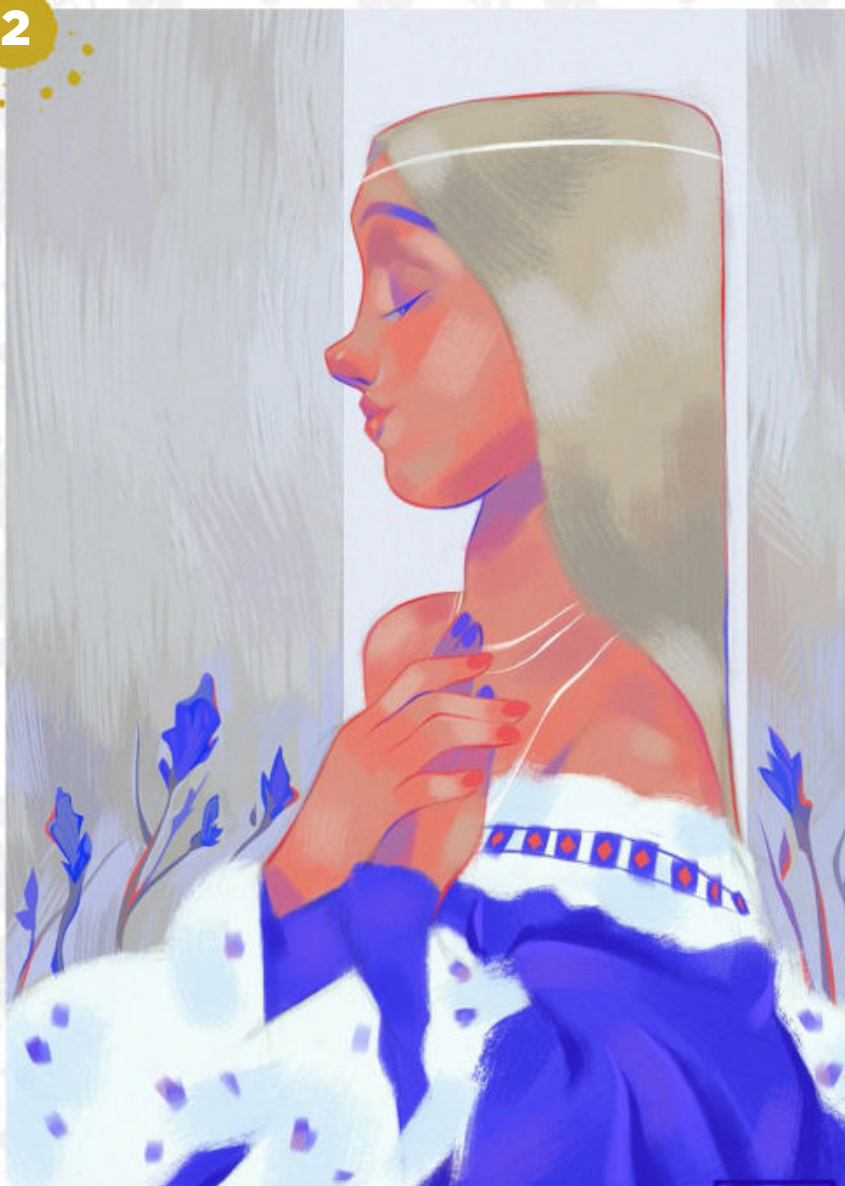
1



### 2 LADY GRISELDA

"This illustration was inspired by Frank Cadogan Cowper's 'The Patient Griselda'. I wanted to capture the same dreamy feeling, except I used a more modern colour palette, making it more stylised."

2



3



### 3 WEREOFX LIBRARIAN

"I like participating from time to time in the Character Design Challenge. This was my entry for the 'Monster University' theme, a librarian Werefox."

### 4 AMELIE EXPRESSIONS

"In this piece I tried depicting Amelie's face in different scenarios, testing out how much I can push, squash and stretch the design's expressivity."

### 5 CLAUDIA

"My favourite vampire character from Interview with the Vampire. I have a soft spot for moody, capricious characters, I think they are very charming."









## Raed Saeid Khalifa (AKA Rudy hill)

**LOCATION:** Libya **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** [www.artstation.com/rudyhill](http://www.artstation.com/rudyhill)

Raed is a self-taught artist who works as a freelance character designer at Desert Monkeys. Their big inspirations are animations, anime, and artists such as James Woods, Shiyo Kim and Ami Thompson.

### 1 BIRD WARRIOR

"In this piece I focused on how the character feels. He is a tribal warrior and this is his war dance to try and get luck on his side."

### 2 MAGICIAN RAT

"Here I wanted the character design to show his emotional backstory. My goal was to draw smooth, clear lines which tell as much with as few details."

### 3 RODEO CHAMPION

"Characters with clear designs always pop. Here I am exploring the structure, because if that works then you have a good character design."

### 4 JINX

"Fan art of the famous character Jinx. I went all out on this one and didn't focus on details as much as I usually do. I just kept it loose and had fun."



### 2



### 3











## Songmuang Chuaynukoon

**LOCATION:** Thailand **MEDIA:** Photoshop, pigment ink pen **WEB:** [www.instagram.com/meetmrtwoillust](http://www.instagram.com/meetmrtwoillust)

Song is a freelance illustrator with a passion for Japanese manga and detailed work. “Most of my artworks are themed around childhood moments, antiques, old school toys, and amusing moments that express emotions.”

### 1 SIBLING WAR

“This piece is about fighting between siblings. It might seem to be a little thing for grown-ups, but for kids, it is more than that.”

### 2 FURY

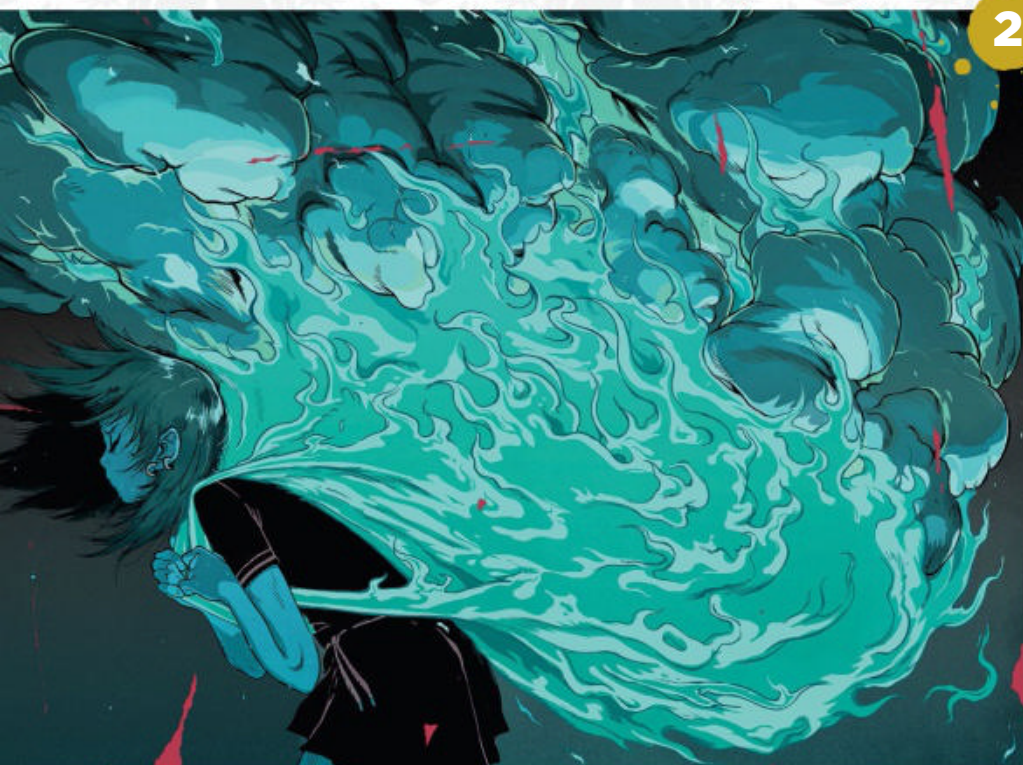
“This image refers to anger. It’s like a fire burning inside people’s minds. Even if it’s hot and makes them suffer, people choose to not let go and keep carrying it with them anyway.”

### 3 HEALER

“Illustration for ‘Dear Year of the Ox, please BE KIND’; a new year project I did to spread a positive message about the Ox year.”

### 4 SPIRIT OF YOUTH

“A depiction of my ideal childhood fairy: a girl whose dress is decorated with toys and stuff from my old memories.”



**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](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)







A Pearl Mermaid Hunt by Valentina Remenar. A mermaid that has been caught by hunters. Her design, especially her skin, was inspired by pearls.



## Tackling crunch and burnout

**Creative pressures** Tanya Combrinck talks to three artists who have experienced burnout about what can be done to address stressful working practices

Working as a professional artist can involve tough deadlines, and if not properly managed this lifestyle can cause stress and even burnout. Unfortunately, many large projects involve a period at the end of the timeline known as 'crunch', in which staff are expected to work extremely long hours, usually without extra pay, in order to hit the final deadline.

In some industries, crunch can extend so far back into the project timeline that some staff can be said to be working in crunch conditions on a regular basis. For freelancers, these

stresses can be compounded by the lack of job security.

**Lazare Gvimradze** is a freelance digital artist based in Georgia who creates promotional artwork for films and games. He has experienced burnout twice, and finds



that the instability of working as a freelancer can be stressful for those who are new to it.

"Oftentimes we find ourselves living from project to project, which creates a sense of quiet dread, and



A demon girl tattoo design by animator and fantasy artist Nic ter Horst.

“Knowing that work still might ‘run out’ in a few months can create anxiety and eventually lead to burnout”





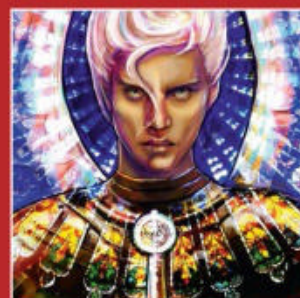
## A DAY IN THE LIFE

Blizzard Entertainment senior character artist Airi Pan shares some of her gorgeous concept art and gives us an insight into her busy daily work schedule. **Page 28**



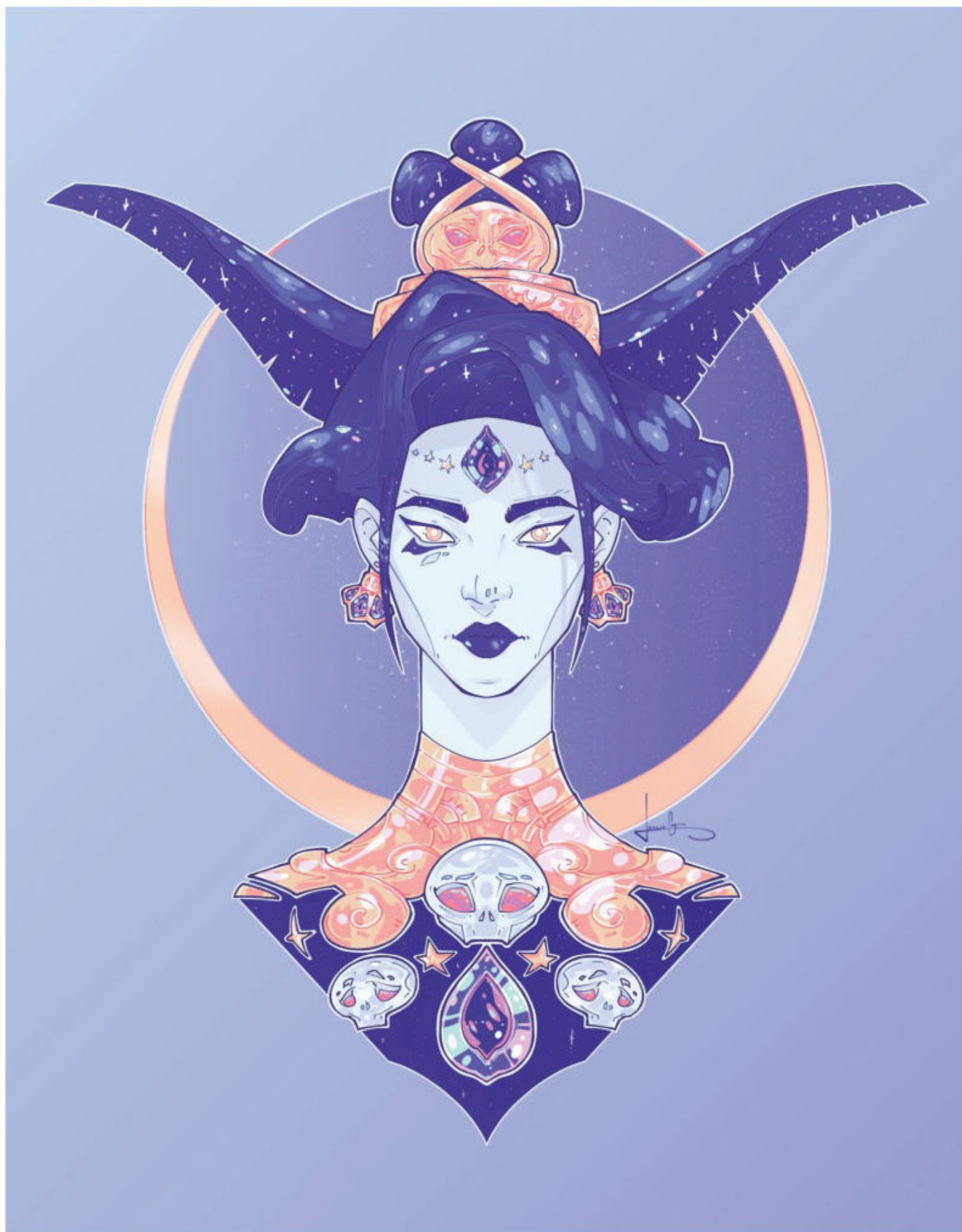
## MY BIGGEST INSPIRATIONS

Freelance illustrator AJ Nazzaro reveals why he loves his workspace to be full of “visual chaos”, surrounding himself with his favourite comic books and characters. **Page 30**



## 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 35**



sometimes it pushes us to make rash decisions and take on more work than we can handle,” he says. “Knowing that work still might ‘run out’ in a few months can create a sense of anxiety and eventually lead to burnout.”

### A TRANSITION PERIOD

Lazare’s strategy for fighting back the forces that cause burnout emerged from two principles: don’t underestimate your need as a creative person to have downtime to recharge, and the communication skills needed

to negotiate with clients are something you can learn. “I learned far too late that multiple large, back-to-back projects could spell doom if I didn’t take time to create for myself before transitioning from one to the other,” he says. “Taking a few days to decompress and make fanart, or just stepping back entirely and consuming content instead of making it can be all that’s needed. Switching output to input, in short.”

Effective communication can help artists to get what they need. ➡

An illustrated portrait of the goddess Nyx from Hades, by freelance artist Lazare Gvimradze.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### UNDERPAY, OVERWORK

*Nic ter Horst on what led to their own burnout, and how to stand up for your rights*

#### Have you experienced burnout in your career?

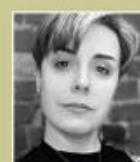
Yes! I was at my second studio job. I knew I wanted to make a career out of my own artwork, so I was working full-time in the studio, teaching part-time, doing freelance, as well as making personal merch and going to conventions. When I was finally able to leave my job and focus on my freelance career, I didn’t have any energy to do my own artwork. I couldn’t tell you what I did for most of 2017, and it’s largely due to the intense burnout I experienced that year.

#### What factors are causing burnout in the art industry?

Underpay and overwork. For example, animated films and television are consistently top performers, but the people who work on these shows are being paid pennies compared to their live-action counterparts. There is also a culture of treating your workplace as your family, which I always find exploitative.

#### What strategies can artists use to avoid burnout?

Know your contract. And when you’re offered a contract, know your rights and how to amend it. I’ve had contacts modified to make sure that I always got paid overtime, which is something that often gets written out or replaced with ‘extra vacation’, ignoring the fact that as contractors, we rarely get paid vacation to begin with.



*Nic ter Horst is a self-employed tattoo artist, illustrator, character designer and animator.*

<https://nicterhorst.com>





➡➡ “Opportunities falling into a creative’s lap can often feel precious and delicate, encouraging yesmanship and blind faith,” Lazare says. But it’s important to realise that some variables can be gently bent in your favour. “Talking with your client, being direct, honest, and forthcoming can go a lot further than quiet concord, and negotiating your pay and timing will paint you in a favourable light as a professional. It is a balancing act, and will require built-up communication skills to navigate well.”

Like many artists, Nic ter Horst experienced burnout after trying to set up a freelance career while also working full-time.

Fan art by Lazare Gvimradze for the first season of WandaVision, exploring the penultimate episode.



## STRUCTURAL CHANGES

Lazare views crunch culture partly as a consequence of poor top-down management, where feedback is compartmentalised and unevenly communicated. “In my experience, projects often run smoothly right up until the last week or so, when foundational elements that had been agreed upon in early iteration stages suddenly become subjects of total change or are inexplicably removed. This can cause intense crunch, all-nighters, and a rush to meet the final deadline with all notes implemented.”

This situation can be caused by senior staff entering the project too late. “Approval systems are often built in a way where certain art directors



Nic ter Horst works as a tattooer and freelance illustrator, and crunch culture is no longer a part of their life.

“Employee health should be the bar that always stays up, even if the others end up being dragged down”

lead the initial charge in milestones, before senior members start stepping in as work begins to finalise. They then introduce their own biases in quality assessment and brand alignment, causing lots of friction.”

Is crunch acceptable if it’s managed and compensated properly? “I can look at a large-pipeline project demanding a few days of paid overtime and maybe a week-long final stretch of crunch and say, ‘sure, maybe,’” says Lazare. “But any more than that, especially what we see in art industries today, is an

unacceptable waste of human health to me.”

As the pandemic causes many to re-evaluate their work-life balance, crunch has been attracting more scrutiny than usual. But abolishing it would likely involve more than managerial changes.

“Look back at the biggest, most expensive video games of the last decade; projects with massive, hyper-skilled art teams at the top of their game,” says Lazare. “If you close your eyes and throw a dart at that sizable list, you’ll have a very high chance of landing on a project that would be fundamentally impossible to ➡➡





Elven Prince by Valentina Remenar. The character design is inspired by natural elements.



➔ achieve without crunch. Timelines would balloon astronomically and the business costs would become economically unsustainable. They simply would not exist.” Lazare’s view is that consumer expectations, commercial goals and the well-being of staff are variables that need to be balanced. “For commercial media involving art, employee health should be the bar that always stays up, even if the others end up being dragged down,” he says. “Anything else feels tragically wasteful.”

## PRIORITISING WELL-BEING

**Valentina Remenar** is a concept artist and illustrator based in Slovenia. She has a chronic illness that makes it



harder for her to work long hours, and she experienced burnout when an oversized workload left her feeling depleted. “I had no time or energy to focus on my well-being or creative development and I felt a sense of stagnation. I was sleeping maximum five hours a night; it took a toll on my physical and mental health,” she says.

Valentina has experienced crunch both as a freelancer and while working



A passion piece by Lazare Gvimradze for the then-unreleased Horizon Forbidden West, using a silhouetting style with a monochrome colour palette.



Leaf Spirit by Valentina Remenar. A quick design of a forest nymph character.



An illustrated portrait of Saren Arterius from Mass Effect, by Lazare Gvimradze.

in-house at a studio. “It is especially visible in the comic industry because of way shorter deadlines. When I worked on comics, I usually had a few days or a week to draw a cover, compared to my other illustration work where I had at least a month.”

Like Lazare, Valentina emphasises the importance of making sure you don’t take on so much work that you don’t have enough time for yourself. As a freelancer, she is now in a position to choose clients that give her comfortable deadlines, and are able to accommodate her if she is unable to work due to illness.

Valentina has witnessed a level of pushback from artists in Slovenia against crunch culture, but she

acknowledges it may be difficult for companies to get rid of it completely. “If crunch times don’t happen too frequently and if they’re appropriately compensated, then I’d say it’s okay,” she says.

## UNNECESSARILY HARMFUL

**Nic ter Horst** is a former TV animator who now works as a tattooer and illustrator. They experienced burnout during their second studio job while working extra hours to lay the



foundations for a freelance career.

Crunch is no longer a part of life for Nic, but in their previous role it was not unusual to see people working late into the night. “In TV animation, by the time things got to the animation or compositing teams, the project was in crunch. If you’re an animator or compositor, I’d say crunch is often a normal part of your schedule,” says Nic. The pandemic has inspired a movement against the overly

“I had no time or energy to focus on my well-being or creative development”

Fantasy cartoon tattoo designs by Nic ter Horst.







Forest's Beauty by Valentina Remenar. A commission for Adele Lorientne of her character Faeren.

demanding work culture in general, and Nic sees this manifesting in the art industry. The move towards remote working is also making things easier for artists.

"A lot of folks I know have changed their hours drastically without reducing their workload," says Nic. "A lot of time in the studio can be spent between meetings or having someone looking over your shoulder. At home, you can do your work in peace and not deal with as many meetings and people stopping by your desk. Not to mention travel time. On the whole, I'm

seeing people stick up for themselves more, and seek out new employment, since they no longer need to move in order to do so."

Nic also takes the view that properly managed crunch could be acceptable. "If it's balanced with mandatory breaks afterwards, I could see it being fine," says Nic. "But I don't think that it's a necessary part of any project, and I don't think you need it as a 'bonding experience'. Overall, crunch is harmful, and it almost entirely stems from production not listening to – or not even consulting – teams of



Metamorphosis by Valentina Remenar. What started as a portrait sketch for fun evolved into a bigger illustration.



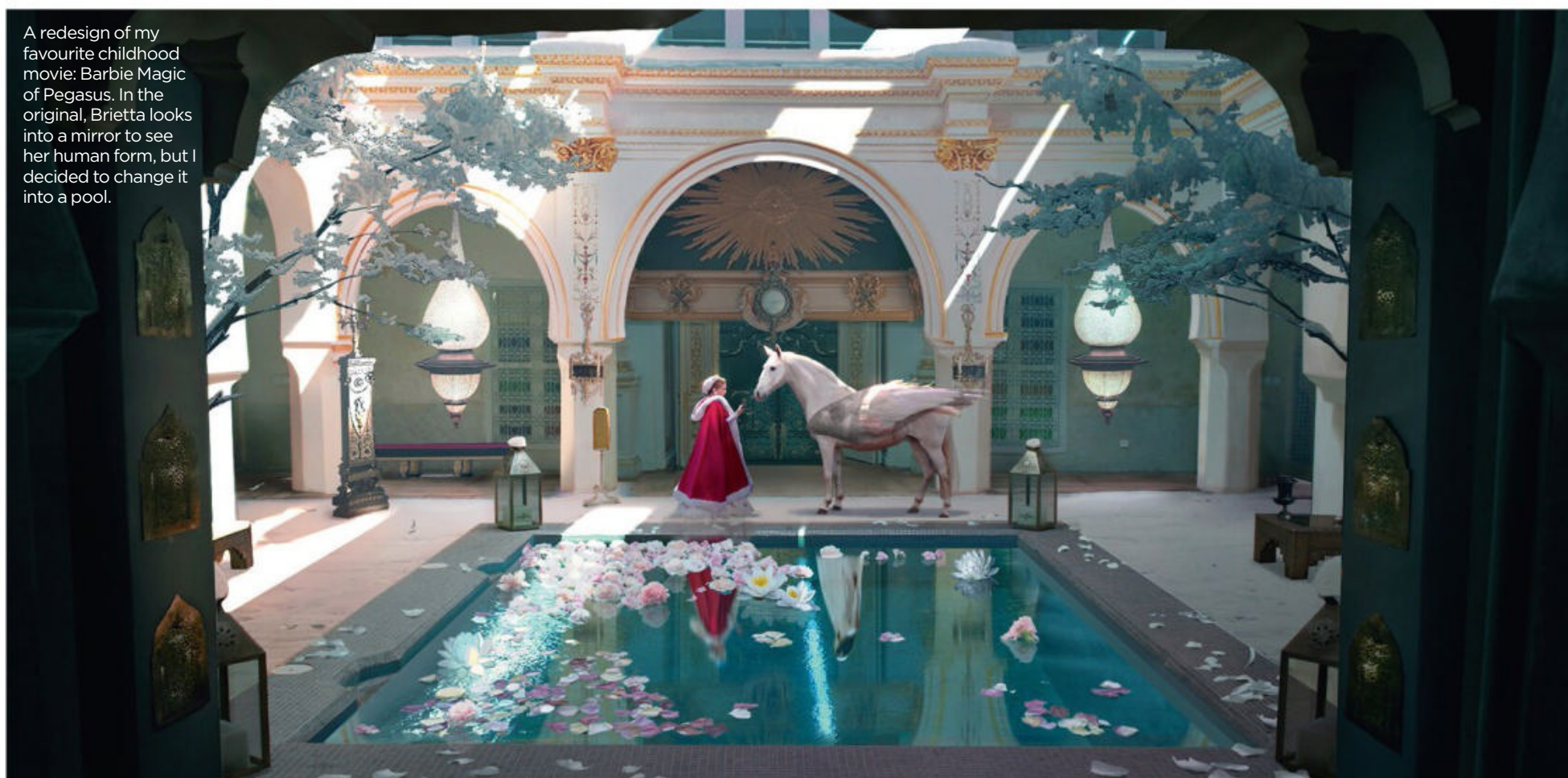
Pathfinder by Lazare Gvimradze. A commission for the voice actor Fryda Wolff merging her likeness with a spacefaring character, done in an Art Nouveau style.

professionals who are trying to communicate the resources they need in terms of people, time, money and equipment to complete a project.

"Until the people with the money are willing to spend the correct amount and hire the correct number of people required for a job, crunch will be a problem." 🍷



A redesign of my favourite childhood movie: Barbie Magic of Pegasus. In the original, Brietta looks into a mirror to see her human form, but I decided to change it into a pool.



## A day in the life of...

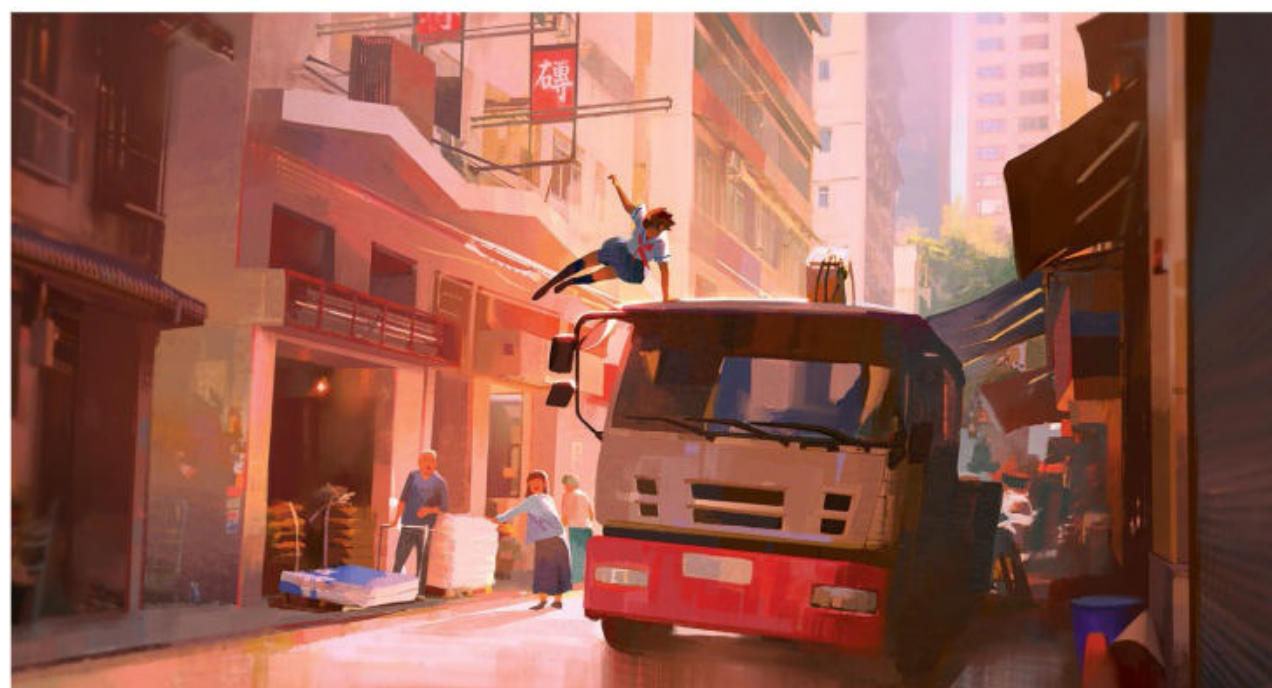
# Airi Pan

**On the ball** We find out how the senior artist balances her career at Blizzard, personal life, and further learning

**Airi Pan is a concept artist for games, TV and film, and is currently a senior character concept artist at Blizzard Entertainment working on an unannounced project.**

"I wake up at 7am and then head to the gym with my friends and roommates until around 8:30am. Then I come back, get ready, have a smoothie and a banana and start my workday around 9am. I go right into stand-ups and team meetings until

Fan art for Japanese novel/anime series Uchouten Kazoku. Main character Yasaburo parkours his way through Kyoto.



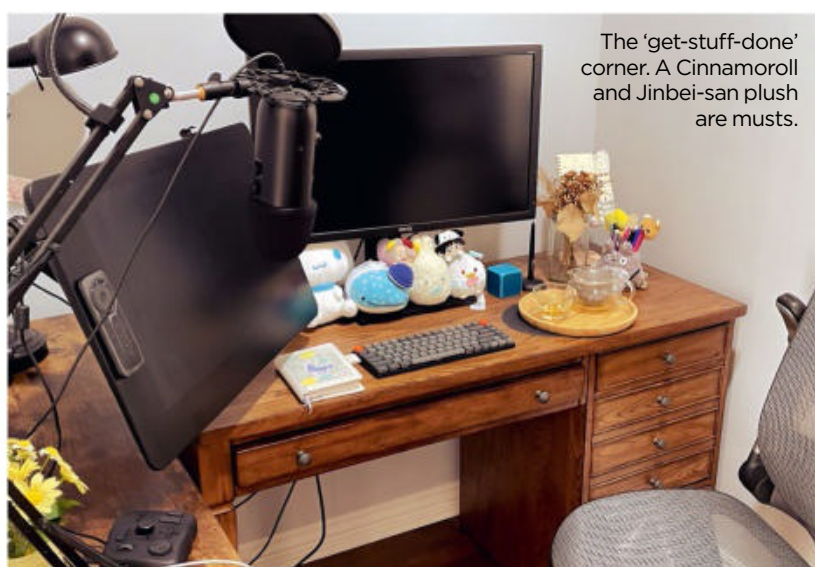
around 11am. I typically go to lunch around 12pm and will have a salad and watch whatever show I've been meaning to catch up on - currently I'm watching The Witcher.

### STAYING FOCUSED

I'm back to work at 1pm and then go straight through until 6pm. I do most of my design work after lunch and it's really important that I am alone and have my tunes. I cannot function without good music - in fact I usually have three different YouTube

channels going: one is café noise, one is ambient sound, and one is whatever music I'm listening to. I need to mix all three of them to keep my focus and eliminate external distractions. Depending on how important the character is that I'm assigned to, I'll have anywhere from 1-3 weeks to finish and iterate on the design.

I really enjoy my team at Blizzard and will drive down to Irvine for lunch or other meetups with my co-workers. My biggest piece of advice is to treat every interaction with classmates and



The 'get-stuff-done' corner. A Cinnamoroll and Jinbei-san plush are musts.

“Treat interactions as if your future career depends on it. You never know who will be making hiring decisions”



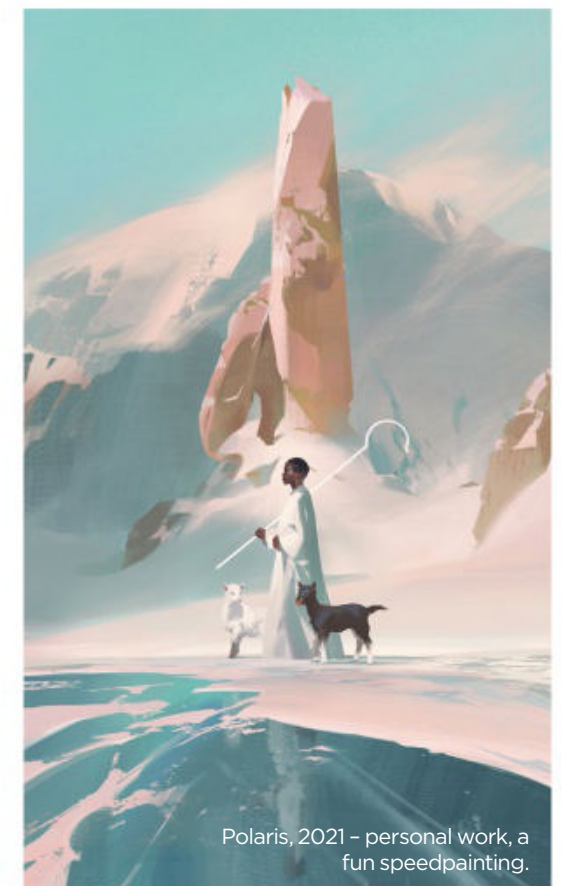


Apple Cider, 2021, A piece to commemorate the first time that my friends and I went apple picking!



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

CoastMates - a fun food-delivery character design challenge.



Polaris, 2021 - personal work, a fun speedpainting.

colleagues as if your future career depends on it. You never know who will be making hiring decisions.

After work, I take turns with my roommates cooking dinner. If it's my turn to cook, I immediately jump down and work to have dinner ready by 7:30pm. My roommates are my best friends in life, it's really wonderful to share a meal with them and then all watch a show together. After that, I will work on other freelance projects, school work (I'm still a student at ArtCenter), or work with my Schoolism students.

I typically read to unwind as part of my nighttime routine; if I'm feeling productive, I'll read an important book like *Thoughts on Design* by Paul Rand, and if not, I'll read manga on my phone until 1am."



**Airi is a Chinese-American artist living in Los Angeles. She's worked on projects like Netflix's *The Witch Boy* and**

***Back 4 Blood*. You can see more of Airi's work at [www.airipan.com](http://www.airipan.com).**



# ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Some of the patches I have made, and some of my prints waiting to be shipped to their new home!



## AJ Nazzaro

**Creative chaos** Being surrounded by his favourite inspirations is what keeps this freelance illustrator motivated



**If you could take screenshots of all the inspirations and influences that are swirling around in my brain and then paste them onto a wall, it would look exactly like my studio.**

I feel like I have always been creatively allergic to blank walls. I want my workspace to be full of energy and visual chaos. This way, I can lean back in my chair and stare at my favourite comic book covers. I can grab one of my many statues and set it next to me while I work. I have all my favourite books within arm's reach. It's the perfect place for me to do my best work. ➡



I love collecting toys and statues. I keep some of my favourites on this shelf. I mostly take them out of their packaging but some of them just look better with their backing card!

**“I want my workspace to be full of energy and visual chaos”**

I use this Alexa to listen to Pandora while I work. I am completely obsessed with Viking metal. It's the soundtrack to my art-making process!



# Artist news, software & events

I have been hanging my favourite comic covers like this since I was in college. It's like being wrapped in a warm blanket of inspirations every day.

The Forest Spirit from my favourite movie Princess Mononoke. Made by ObakeStyle. I love the way she stylised the design and the craftsmanship is unbelievable.



A photo of my wife and I! She is an incredible artist who motivates me to always keep pushing my craft.

When I first met my wife she worked as a custom framer. She did all of these frames in my studio. Look how intricate and beautiful the matting is!

I am grateful to have a good friend who built this computer for me. It's a monster. It cuts through any art task without delay, and it's great for gaming too!

A signed print from one of my favourite Blizzard artists Glenn Rane.



# ImagineNation Artist in Residence

A replica pistol I brought home from France as a souvenir when I was 7. I love having weapon models nearby for reference photos. You can never have enough good photo reference!



➡ I actually picked my house specifically because of the area I use as my studio. It's a loft that overlooks the living room and dining room. The studio is split into three main areas: my digital workstation, my shipping station, and my drafting table.

The digital workstation is where I spend the majority of my time. I work on a Cintiq 24HD with a 34" curved monitor in front of it. I recently upgraded to a sit/stand desk that gives me tons of flexibility to find the perfect position to work. I am 32 years

old now and it seems like all my years of sitting cross-legged and slouching in my computer chair have caught up to me. The new desk is helping a ton to keep the aches and pains at bay.

The second area is where I process all the orders from my website. I sell prints, patches and stickers there. My studio basically has a built-in post office now, haha! I keep all the patches organised in cabinet drawers which helps me to send out orders quickly. Check out my website if you want to support my art!

## FULLY FUNCTIONAL

My drafting table is where I spend my free time when it comes to art. I have so much fun drawing on that giant table. It was a gift to me from my dad who used it to work on architect plans when he was a home builder. It's such a sturdy and well-built desk. I have spent thousands of hours drawing there. It's a family relic now! We built a

“ We built a sliding shelf so I can set up models and toys as reference at eye level ”

© Blizzard Entertainment



I painted this King Rastakhan art for Hearthstone. It's one of my favourite pieces I've done for the game.

shelf that can slide across the top of the desk so I can set up models and toys as reference at eye level. I also bought a TV and mounted it behind the desk so I can watch movies or pull up references while I draw.

I've been working in this studio for seven years now. It's constantly evolving and it helps keep me excited and inspired to create art every day!

*AJ Nazzaro is a freelance character designer and illustrator living in Colorado. He works primarily for Blizzard Entertainment, but has also done work for companies like Wizards of the Coast and Disney. Check out his work at [ajnazzaro.com](http://ajnazzaro.com) and [@ajnazzaro](https://twitter.com/ajnazzaro).*



Illidan watching over me as I work. I will suffer his wrath if I miss a deadline!



# Artist news, software & events



I always try to keep sketchbooks nearby in case I need to scribble down a new idea.



My favourite book from my entire collection: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein with illustrations by Bernie Wrightson.

I have been working on a character design for 2D animation. His name is Spectral Ranger, and he is a ghost that hunts demons.

My workstation for traditional art is where I do all of my sketching/studies. I have a computer under my desk that I can control with a wireless keyboard.



This is a character I created named Pumpkin Ghoull! I draw him every year in October.



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# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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



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### Animal art

Hello Rob.

I'm an artist from New Zealand and love to draw and paint animals. I just wanted to say well done for the tutorial on painting animals in a recent issue. I loved how it was realistic and fantastical together and the style of painting was just what I try to do. If only I could be that good! I hope to see more of this type of tutorial. Bye!

**Bea, via email**

**Rob replies** Hi Bea,

Great to hear from you and so glad you like Xiao's fantasy beasts workshop. I completely agree. It is a particular skill to make something that doesn't exist look so good, and I'm a fan of the style too.

We love these kinds of workshops, so we will have more of this type of thing coming soon. In fact, this issue we have a great workshop by Tom Foster, on creating a traditional woodcut-style scene of a futuristic Japanese city. Not an animal (sorry) but I think it fits the bill for merging and blending styles and concepts. We love to showcase new techniques to help you increase your skills.



**DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?**

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 212 at [ifxm.ag/single-ifx](http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx).

Last issue, illustrator Xiao demonstrated her process for painting fantasy creatures in Procreate.



If you missed Charlie Pickard's past articles, you can pick up Issues 211 and 212 at [magazinesdirect.com](http://magazinesdirect.com).

### Golden time

Hi ImagineFX team,

I wanted to say that the last instalment from Charlie Pickard was GOLD! Many poses do not lend themselves readily to head proportions, especially when the model is crouched or folded. I hope to see, and I encourage you to show, more ways to construct the body.

**Alonzo, via email**

**Rob replies** Hi Alonzo,

Thanks for getting in touch and I couldn't agree more. Having someone with the knowledge and expertise of Charlie is great and he absolutely nails it every time. We have more from him coming over the next few issues, including this one, so head to page 94 where he talks all things bone structure.

### NFT yays and nays

I've been against NFTs from the start and haven't been impressed by your coverage of them. I saw your letters page in the latest issue and now I'm just unsure. I'm still not for NFTs but agree that it is still too early to tell how things will pan out. Thank you for not jumping one way or the other just yet.

**Alex, via email**

**Rob replies** Thanks for getting in touch Alex. NFTs are without a doubt a contentious issue and I imagine they will be so for some time. We here at ImagineFX will be keeping an eye on how things progress. I've recently seen some physical objects and shares in items being sold as NFTs, which seems to be an odd development and another we will look at in the future. It's yet another sign that the technologies, tools and, most importantly, end uses and effects on the industry and community are what matters most.



New works that have grabbed our attention



**Jennifer Hawkyard**  
[@jezhawk](https://www.instagram.com/jezhawk)



**Neri**  
[@nerimitsu](https://www.instagram.com/nerimitsu)



**Cris Delara**  
[@delara\\_imaginativeart](https://www.instagram.com/delara_imaginativeart)

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



# Interview

## SERVER - I

A retro sci-fi piece from my Anomaly series and a follow up to 'Consumption' (page 42).



IMAGINEFX



# THE ART OF AMIR ZAND

**Rob Redman** interviews the professional illustrator about his career development, workflow tips, and his evolving 2D-3D style



Having created art for a large range of mediums, from book publications to AAA video games, Amir Zand is a highly experienced illustrator/concept artist with heaps of knowledge to share. Here he answers our questions.

**Tell us a little about your background as an artist. How did you get started and what has your career been like so far?**

It's a classic story: for as long as I can remember I have been either drawing or playing video games. Eventually I got introduced to the digital medium when I was 16 years old, and by 17 I

took a deeper dive into it. I was always passionate and inspired to draw so was always at the computer, creating stuff.

For me, art is not just a career to pursue, it's a way of living and a way to move forward with my life. At some point it also became a profession on the side, although I always thought how cool it would be to create for video games since I was an avid gamer myself. Things progressed step by step over the years, and my professional journey started when I was 18, when I started to work in a small local animation studio. Then I became a freelance illustrator, creating book

covers and illustrations plus some graphic design side jobs. After years I transitioned to a concept artist/designer. I still find time to create my personal work from day to day – it's just something that's never paused even with my heavy workload.

**Where do you draw your inspirations from?**

Inspiration for me can come from anywhere, it's like a state of ➡➡

## Artist PROFILE

**Amir Zand**

**LOCATION:** Turkey

Amir Zand is an illustrator and concept artist specialised in visual development and design, currently working on AAA video game *Star Wars Eclipse* while pushing his own personal project *Anomaly* on the side. He has created more than 50 book covers in the past decade and worked for a large range of publications.

**WEB:** [www.amirzand.art](http://www.amirzand.art)



# Interview

➤ mind that can always translate senses into ideas and inspiration, from my observations to the sounds I hear, surfaces I touch and smells – they all work together. Streets, cities, dreams, talking with people, memories, emotions, films, other artworks, music and anything that is around me through the day can ultimately lead to an idea.

For sure there are many amazing artists and movements that I got to know on this journey, and they have influenced me with their approach to creating, their visions and narrative: including the likes of Barontieri, Ashley Wood, Moebius, Otomo, Sparth, Miyazaki, Kubrick, Nolan, and Daft Punk. Frankly I'm in love with artists who have a very graphic and simplified approach to shapes, forms and composition. The ability to explain more with less always fascinates me.

## How has your art developed over the years and what has driven those changes?

Interesting question, as I mentioned I was painting and drawing passionately since I was young, my school notebooks were all filled with drawings and sketches, and that fact pushed my mum to send me to art school. But my art school was mainly a Cinema School where I learned about classic cinema, acting and a bit of animation; my favourite class was when we had to learn about

storyboards and those little drawings that show the sets, compositions and camera angles. It was mid art school that I discovered the digital medium by going through forums like CGTalk (CGSociety now), and it opened the door to a whole new world. I continued to paint personal projects day and night until I found a little job to draw for key animation frames, but because the studio head saw my personal work he changed my position to do background art for them.

After that I went to study fine art in university, and there were two classes that helped the most: photography and art history/analysing art, which was when I learned the most about composition, symbolism and narrative. Meanwhile my freelance journey began with making illustrations for indie books and

## ONWARD

Ancient sci-fi – this piece was created as an appreciation of everyone who followed my journey through creating my Anomaly series.

comics. I was also doing some side jobs as a graphic designer, which played a huge part in my taste and approach to simplified shapes and forms.

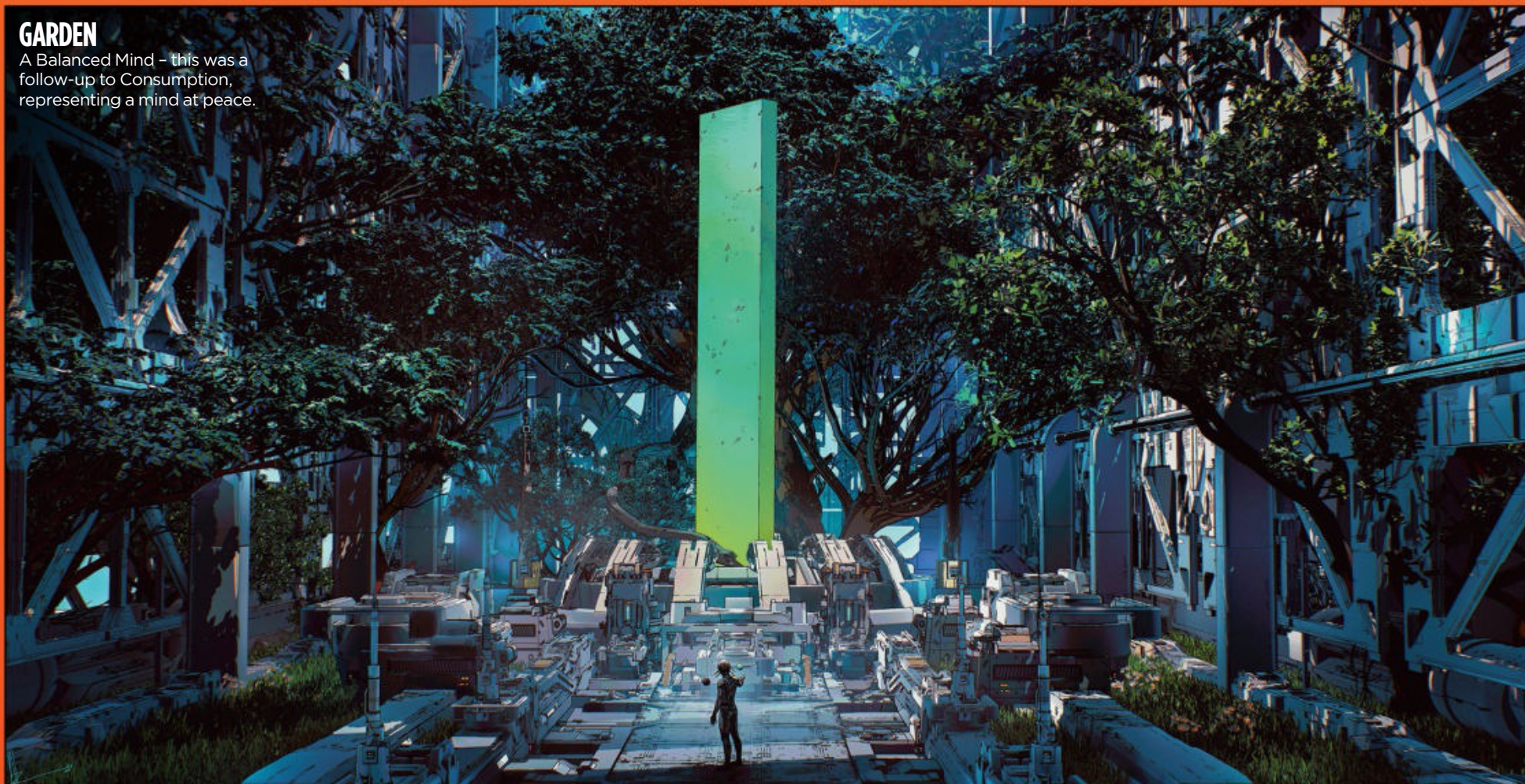
I was always in love with book covers, posters and basically any package/promotional art whether graphic or illustrated. I collected many of them just for the sake of their designs. For years I tried to continually improve and do more work, and after some years indie books turned into big publishers. I always tried to do my best, even if the payment was low or if the author was not well-known.

Creating book covers is still my passion and it's something that I would do whenever I have the time and energy, without really caring about the income or thinking of it as a profession. It just feels good to collect



## GARDEN

A Balanced Mind – this was a follow-up to Consumption, representing a mind at peace.





all those book and magazines on my shelves with my own covers!

Early 2017 I decided to make a transition to explore new territories in the art department as a designer/concept artist, due to my love of video games and the entertainment industry. Everything was completely different and a contrast to making pretty pictures and illustrations! I started to do more landscapes instead of the vertical format, and pushed my portfolio more towards the needs of concept art. I was lucky that soon after, I got contacted by companies to jump in their pitch design and work on game trailers and commercials.

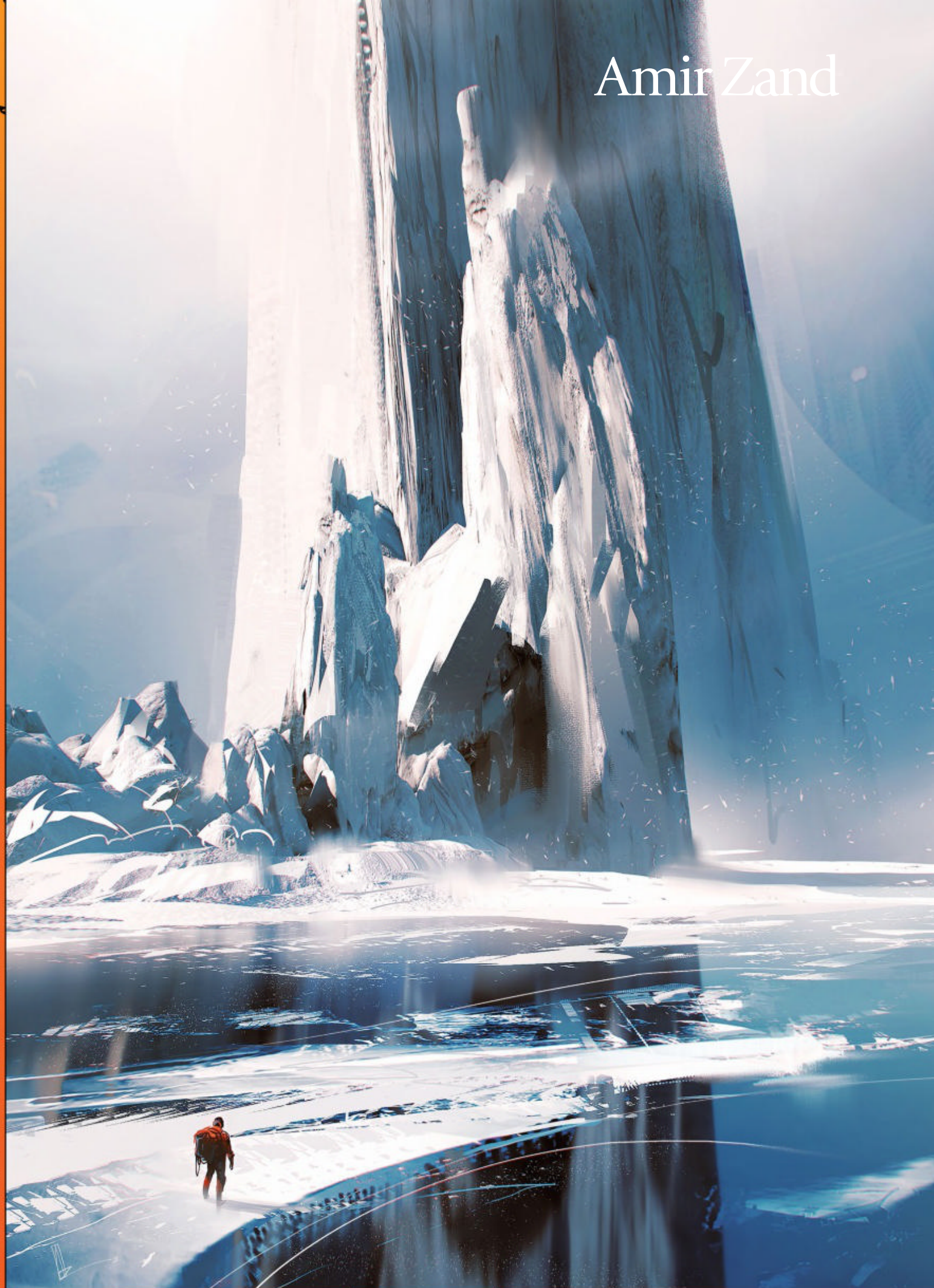
In early 2020 I was contacted by art director Christophe Brusseau from Quantic Dream to join them to design concepts for Star Wars Eclipse, and ever since I have been full-time on the project working with the amazing art team of QD.

**Your style is somewhat 2D in appearance. What reasons do you have for working in 3D, when your art often appears to be cel shaded?**

Good question, I painted and worked with 2D art using Photoshop for ten years, but since I now wear the hat of concept artist I had to push my knowledge and explore more tools and software to help fulfil my needs, from photo bashing to matte painting and 3D. Being a concept artist requires the knowledge and ability to switch between a variety of different techniques and tools, in order to create with more freedom.

While working on concept art for AAA projects I aimed for highly realistic renders and key art, whereas my personal art was still really about simplifying and speedpaints. Due to a lack of time to paint personal work, I had to come up with a solution to still continue my own artistic journey. I still needed that 2D feel, colours and tones I had in my paintings, so I started researching new techniques relating to cel shading and also a look that is close to the French comic style 'Bandes Dessinées'.

**“Through art I’ve been able to collect all my emotions, coded into colours and forms”**



My recent personal works are being created in 3D using Cinema 4D/Arnold, but still the heavy lifting remains in Photoshop for the overpaints, colour correction and some line work. So I say they are really a mix of 2D and 3D to reach the mood and feel that I desire.

**Can you tell us a little about your workflow? What are your tools of choice and how do you approach a new piece?**

When I’m wearing the concept artist hat, I mainly work with Photoshop, Cinema 4D, Octane Renderer and DAZ for posing, and when it comes to

## ICEBERG

An entry to Thomas Scholes' #MaySketchaDay Challenge, designed to encourage a fun creative outlet outside of work expectations and deadlines.

my own personal projects I use Photoshop/Cinema 4D/Arnold and of course a sketchbook filled with inks whenever I can.

I don’t really have a routine for every single image; a project might demand a different approach, and sometimes it’s like learning how to create again! Creating is still a challenge, and the main difference between me now and me ten years ago is that now I know I have the courage to find the solution, and will pass the obstacle. I say the best way is to always adapt and try different ways that best fits the current project, without limiting ourselves to very symmetrical approach. ➡



# Interview

➡ Being a modern-day artist often means you have to wear many hats. Tell us about your typical day. How do you split time between creation, the business side of things, and keeping balance in your life?

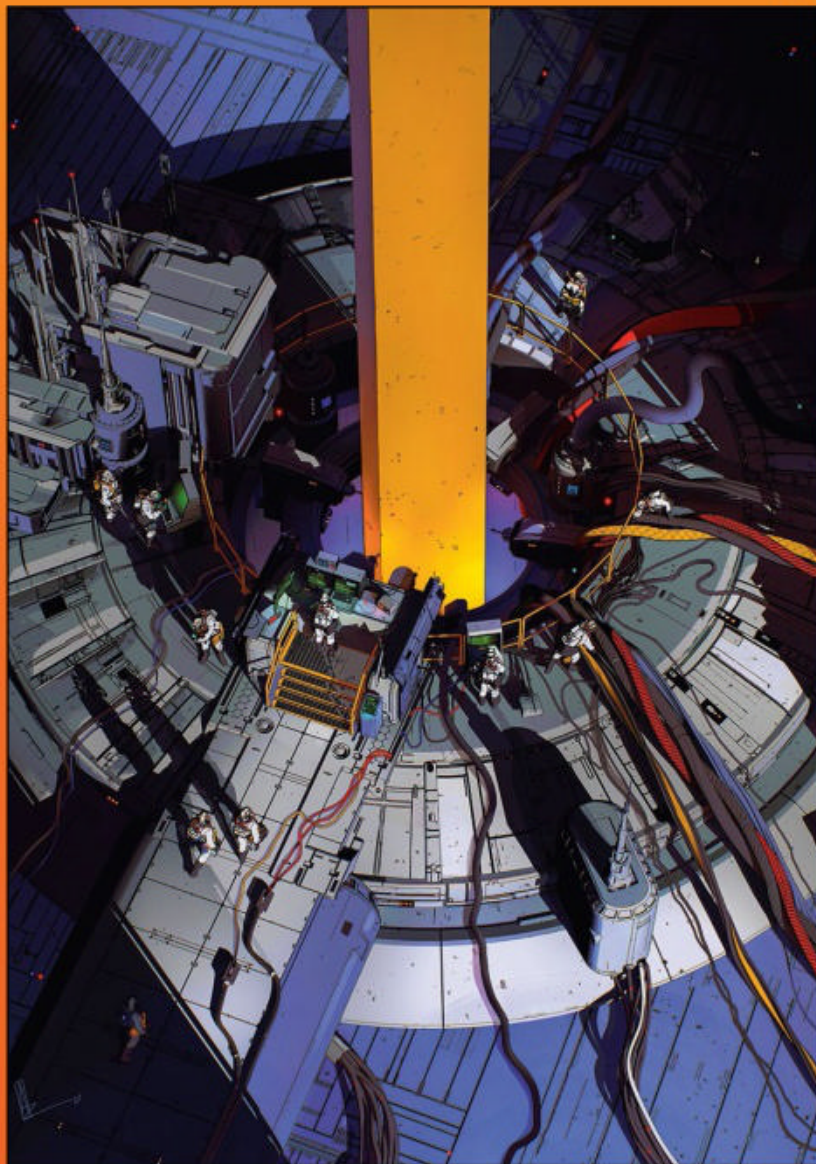
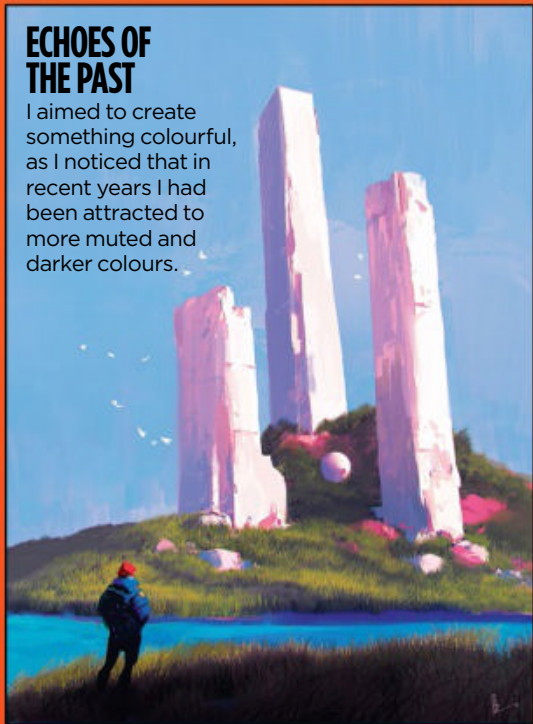
That's something that I'm still trying to figure out, the balance. Being a freelancer comes with so much pressure, especially when you work short term and are constantly jumping from one project to another; handling all the emails, communications and deadlines while maintaining creativity is hard, and it can quickly push you to a burnout. We are humans and not machines, and it's important to have good rest, spend time with family and friends, and prepare a daily schedule. I suffered a lot early on but as the years pass by I have been starting to get the hang of it.

I used to do sketches and explore different ways of approaching a composition or design, so I was doing multiple versions of the work before reaching the final version – I've tried to adapt myself in the past few years to do this process in my head instead! So you might see me sitting, napping or walking while my brain is really at work trying to find the best process for an idea. This means that sometimes I pick the tools, make sketches, set the technical approach and create the piece fully in my head. It's saved me so much energy along the way, and time that would have otherwise been spent looking at an empty canvas. So if you ever see me in person and I appear zoned out... just know that I'm picking colours and setting brushes in my head!

Also, keeping up with creativity and art doesn't necessarily mean that you have to always do the same thing to

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

I aimed to create something colourful, as I noticed that in recent years I had been attracted to more muted and darker colours.



get better, it's healthy to change your creative outcome by sometimes breaking these routines and trying to be creative with other tools. For example instead of painting or 3D I might put hours into photography or analysing films or games as I play – in these cases my creative side of the brain is still active while I also enjoy a fresh new activity.

## What are your thoughts on NFTs for the art community?

I have very mixed feelings. I don't see NFTs as art or like a category of art, I basically see it as what it is – a medium you can also share art through. It's like making an animation and deciding to either screen it in a theatre or simply put it on YouTube, Patreon, or as an NFT – each one of these is a medium that you can use to share your craft. Now the general approach to NFTs tends to be very black and white and extreme, with one side fully engaged

“The body of my personal work has become my diary... pages of the book of my life”

## -TH3 M|NE-

This piece is all about a brain under heavy input, working around the clock to extract ideas. I was under a heavy workload, managing multiple projects at once, but at the centre of my thoughts I was still thinking about how to push my 'Project Anomaly'. /-TH3 M|NE-/ was created during that overwhelming period of time.



## PUL

Love is a healer, but who heals LOVE? Be the Dreamer, there's still hope when your core is in the right place.



## DESERTED HEART

From the Anomaly series, following the Dreamer's Journey through the Forgotten Lands to discover lost monuments. Deserted Heart will lead the Dreamer to the Forgotten Kingdom, the Kingdom of Love...



in the hate towards it and the other side trying to show it as holy as it can be. I think in the end, neither of these side are true, and there are many more shades of grey in between. As any other platform or space, NFTs are also a combination of many different types of usage, from bad to good, and there are pros and cons. It certainly needs to evolve as any other tech.

But on the surface, many facets of NFTs are unfortunately not about art – it's about crypto trades, mass-production PFPs, tokens and images that are replaced as coins while people show off their income and gold-rush, leading to toxic positivity. I can say that in the end it really depends on what we decide to do with it, and we have to view it on an individual scale.

The promise of NFTs for digital artists was that you can finally work for yourself and have the freedom to do what resonates with you, while in my view, it has already become another client, with demands to fulfil; I think this is completely against what this tech is supposed to be, which is so far from freedom.



### BREATH

When I had a lack of rest, I needed to take some time off but the deadlines wouldn't let me. I tried to regain energy by creating this piece and taking a breath!

In my experience, the positive outcome is that I happened to discover some very amazing artists I hadn't known about before. Friendship and communications formed. Some artists use this medium to create truly amazing things, exhibit work in new ways around the world, reaching more territories. Most of these amazing aspects are hidden and almost unseen behind that surface I mentioned, and it really saddens me to see these types of work also being unfairly categorised

with everything else and being tagged or attacked.

I know many amazing artists that were finally able to focus more on their own personal artistic journey, as well as many amazing collectors that are here for the quality art.

So really it's mixed, if you ask me how I feel about YouTube I would say the same thing – there are many amazing instructive and helpful videos, but also tons of meaningless, time-wasting and disturbing ones ➡



# Interview

## CONSUMPTION

Focusing on mental and heart conditions, /CONSUMPTION/ is a sci-fi approach to how the brain functions and consumes energy to give birth to new ideas. This piece set the bar for my following illustrations for my Anomaly series.

“Anomaly became a personal canvas for me... where I create what I love without being bound by time”





## MONUMENT

This digital painting was also featured as the cover of GALAKTIKA MAG.

➡ too! It comes down to a personal decision – but one thing for sure is that the path of being true to yourself and your art is usually the harder path, but the reward is amazing in the end.

**Of all the pieces you have created, which are you most proud of?**

A hard question, I'm usually a person that loves the creation process the most, and right after I've finished, I sometimes end up hating the final work! So the creation process is the most joyful time for me, although I admit that I have a emotional bond with my personal creations.

For me, creating personal art has always been a channel to the dreams and emotions that exist deep within me; it's a form of expression, and through art I've been able to live the dream and collect all my emotions, coded into colours and forms. A therapy! I never had a diary, I always failed to put them into words, but for me the body of my personal work has become my diary over the years. Each one of them are pages of the book of my life, and they carry deeper messages and remind me of a certain point in my life! So when I go back to particular pieces of artwork, it feels like I am remembering that point in life. It's hard to pick a favourite, but for now I would go with 'Deserted Heart'.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists?**



Be patient and follow your heart – there is no destination in art nor perfection, it's a never-ending journey, so enjoy it while you're in it.

**What is next for you? Do you have any exciting projects coming up, or are there areas you would like to explore?**

It was 2015 when I first started to create this personal series with monoliths called Anomaly, although it was not monoliths at the beginning but a series of paintings with unusual forms. Each time I simplified it until I was finally satisfied with the monolithic shape. After years I also

## FAITH

Being a Dreamer comes with a heavy price, fallbacks, pain and heartbreaks, waves after waves pushing you back so that you finally give up. But you won't, you'll manage to hold on against all odds... it's at this moment when holding on means the most. Be strong. Dreamer Project – Anomaly.

started bouncing ideas with my friend Nathan M Hurst to create a short sci-fi story based in the same universe. He wrote three short stories around it. You can find them at [nathanmhurst.com](http://nathanmhurst.com). We have plans to get back to it and create more content sometime soon.

Through the years Anomaly became a personal canvas for me. It is divided into multi-universes where I create what I love without being bound by time or theme, and as I explained before it became more personal than I expected. I aim to push it further to create more stories, a graphic novel, artbook or even a video game! I have so many ideas I am yet to explore! ●



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## Entei Ryu

Discover the Tokyo-based concept artist's techniques and inspirations behind these amazing fantasy illustrations

### Artist **PROFILE**

**Entei Ryu**

**LOCATION:** Japan



Entei Ryu is a concept artist and digital sculptor based in Tokyo, working in the entertainment industry. After graduating

from the University of Tokyo with a degree in architecture, Entei has worked for many famous titles of video games and movies around the world, as well as working on art sculpture fashion and jewellery design.  
[www.artstation.com/badzr](http://www.artstation.com/badzr)

### **FANTASY WESTERN**

Gold mining canyons floating in the air, mysterious legends, cowboys... no, dragonboys riding flying dragons. Drawn on an iPad with Procreate's round brushes.

### **ORIENTAL ILLUSIONS**

Inspired by 19th century Orientalism, wizards in the Far East, old men and imprisoned princesses. I used narrative compositions in these scribbled sketches that can inspire me to be creative.



“I used narrative compositions in these scribbled sketches that can inspire me to be creative”





## RAN

A collective of sketches with Oriental elements, mainly Japanese, as the theme. I actually start from a random corner and eventually fill the whole composition. I used abstract decorative lines and shapes to connect the various clusters, inspired by ink splashes.

## PRINCESS SATURN AND HER GUARDS

A sketch with the watercolour-like rendering I am used to, while incorporating some sci-fi design elements. Instead of detailed mechanical parts, I used generalised soft and hard lines to distinguish organic and mechanic elements.

## DEER CREATURE DESIGN

A creature design drawn for a serial in CGWorld Japan magazine in 2018. A jumping deer with a divine nature, the hair shaping is the fun part.





# Sketchbook



## SKETCHAOS

I call this kind of sketching without a theme, and just drawing whatever comes to mind, Sketchchaos. This unplanned sketching process is more like a kind of entertainment, very relaxing.

## CONCEPT VEHICLE AND RIDERS

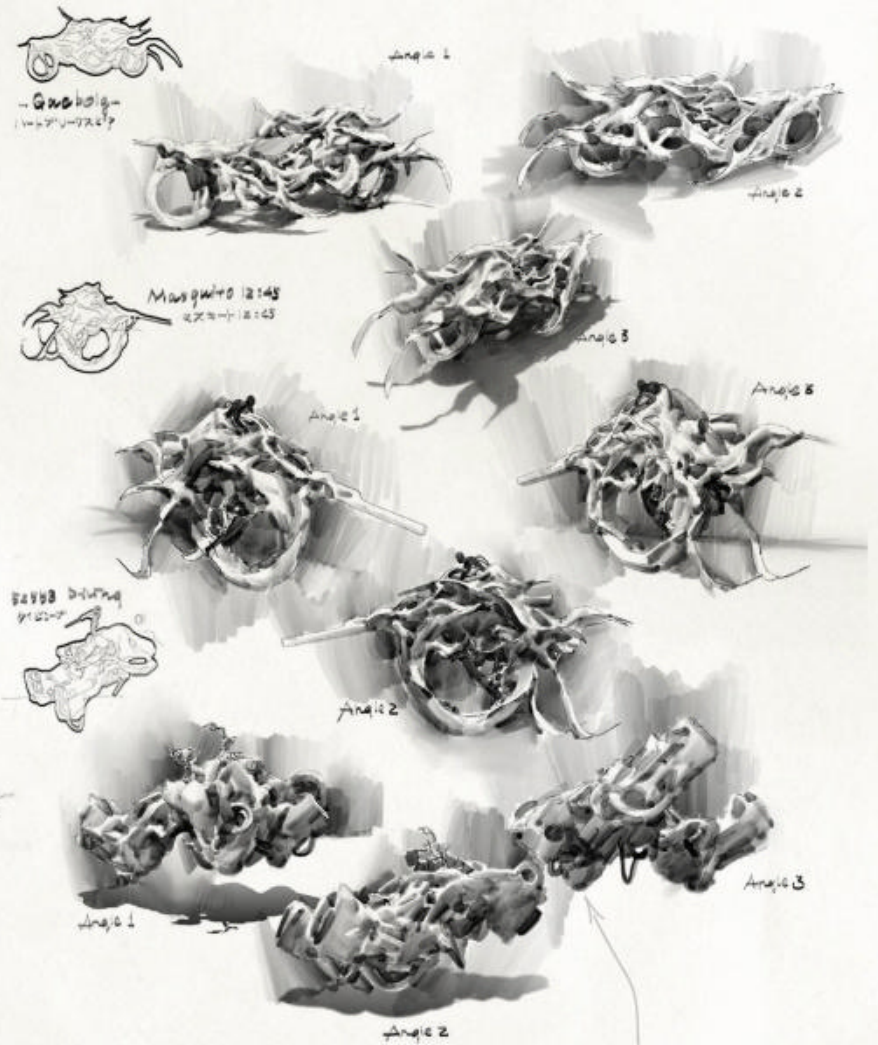
Brainstorm sketches of a group of sci-fi vehicle concept designs, and their girl drivers.

## DESIGN OF THE DRAGON MERMAID

The initial draft of my sculpture 'Dragon Mermaid' was originally conceived as a very complex and twisted dragon's tail and the upper body of a petite girl, forming a sharp contrast. After turning it into a three-dimensional sculpture, I also made the underwater tail. If you are interested, you can go to my ArtStation to see it.







## MECHA PROTOTYPE 1

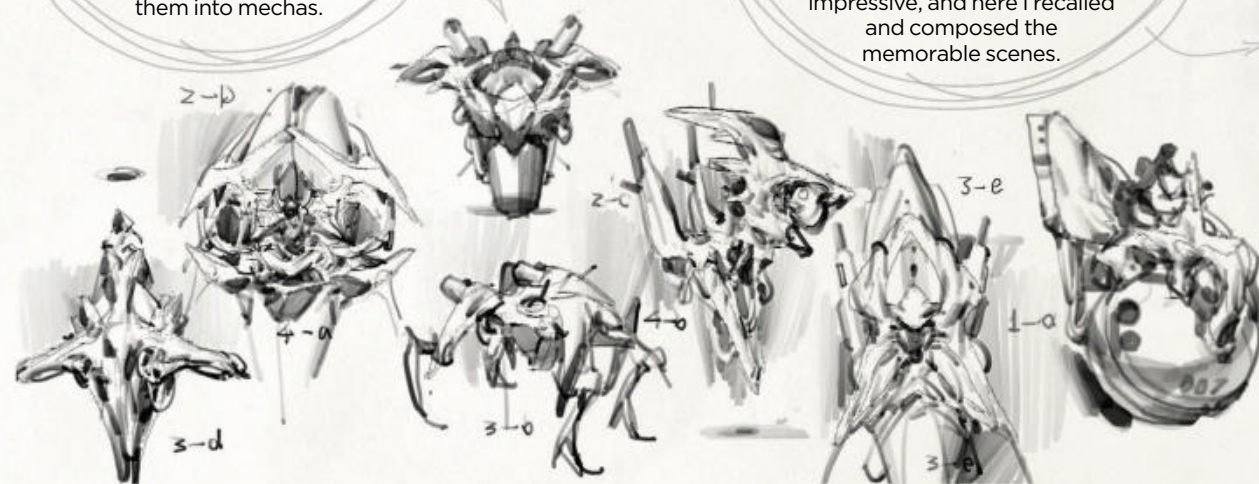
Organic mech design. This stage focuses on large shapes rather than readability.

## MECHA PROTOTYPE 2

A design draft from 2018, at that time I was experimenting with various interesting design workflows. For example, do some very basic random shapes in 3D software, put them in Procreate or Photoshop, and develop them into mechas.

## GAME OF THRONES FAN ART

One of my favourite series. I drew fan art while watching the last season (above) when the young Stark actors at the beginning had become adults, and I drew them as they were in the first season. The Battle of Winterfell (right) in the second episode was impressive, and here I recalled and composed the memorable scenes.





# Sketchbook

“I just tried to feel the atmosphere of the story: a relaxing way to create”

## THE SONG OF DRAGON AND TIGER

Concept design for a Chinese collectibles statue company. It describes a giant dragon and tiger fighting on floating rocks. The contrast between line and point, big and small, movement and stillness highlights the dramatic confliction. The water and cloud elements act as support for the sculpture. It took me two days to draw this.





## FANTASY COMPOSITIONS

I used fantasy characters to form a composition like a movie poster. I didn't think too much about the specific design, I just tried to feel the atmosphere of the story: a very relaxing and enjoyable way to create things.



## GIRLS

Some sketches of female characters.



## TOKYO SUBWAY PASSENGERS

Some sketching practice with references. The part worth mentioning is the line sketches, which I drew on my commute to work in the subway in Tokyo, to record people in their various states. I enjoyed the link with strangers during that time.



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





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# Workshops

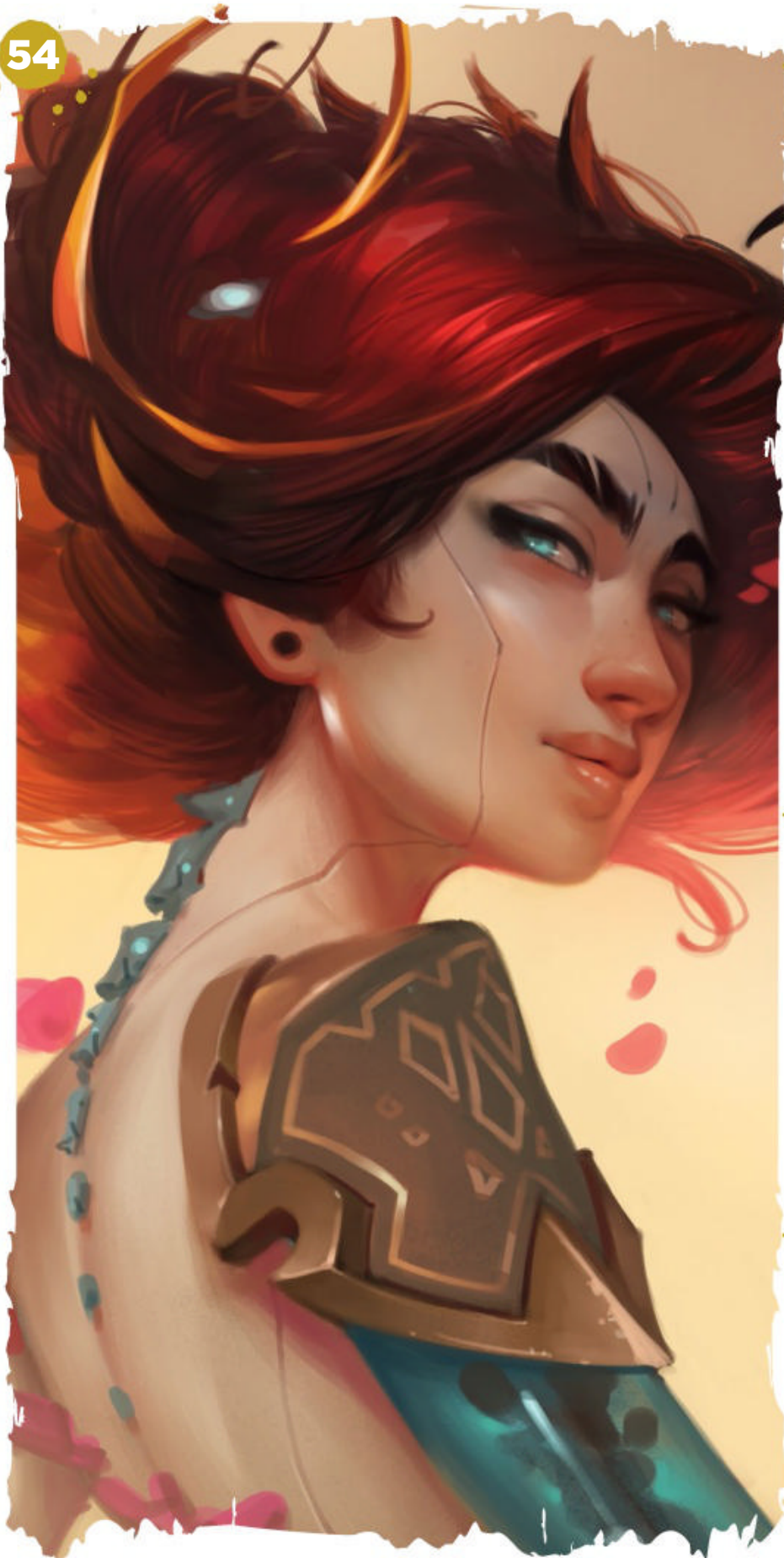
**Workshop assets  
are available...**

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



Advice from the world's best artists

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## This issue:

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Top tips and techniques from veteran artist Dave Greco.

### **58 Make woodblock style prints**

Replicate this traditional aesthetic with Tom Foster.

### **64 Get experimental with portraits**

Gabriel Lee Greene teaches us how to create unique effects.

### **70 Photobash a film character**

An expert guide from concept artist Andrei Riabovitchev.



## Photoshop

# CREATE A MIXED GENRE CHARACTER

**Dave Greco** showcases the key techniques behind the creation of this collaborative original character

### Artist PROFILE

**Dave Greco**  
LOCATION: US

Dave is currently a senior visual development artist for Blizzard Entertainment and has been working in the game industry for over 18 years.  
[artstation.com/dgreco](http://artstation.com/dgreco)



In this painting, I wanted to create a small, intimate moment with my original character, Vaele. She was created recently, along with the help from my Twitch community, and was a great exercise on creating an OC. It was fantastic to brainstorm an original idea within a group and then expand on it, live while people watched.

Since then, this piece was created as a small thank you to everyone involved for hitting some recent milestones. I was aiming for something that was warm, inviting, and felt like a pleasing, cosy image for a viewer to relax to.

Over these next few pages I will share a quick overview of my creation process, as well as some important tips and tricks I learnt along the way.

### Top tips for... CHARACTER CREATION



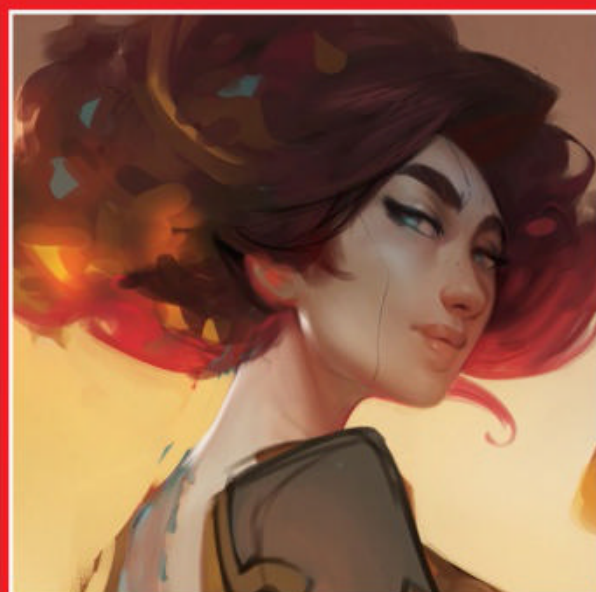
#### 1 Early sketch

In this phase, it's best to find a nice pencil brush and start sketching with loose lines and shapes. It's important for me to keep my hand moving pretty fast and not let myself get slowed down by any major details. The painting will only stiffen up as you render, so keep it as loose as possible.



#### 2 Base colour/refine

Next I like to do another, more refined sketch on top of the loose one. This allows me to dive into the smaller shape design more and really find the parts that will make the piece work. I use a Multiply layer to wash colour right on top of it, usually setting the tone for the painting.



#### 3 Start the render

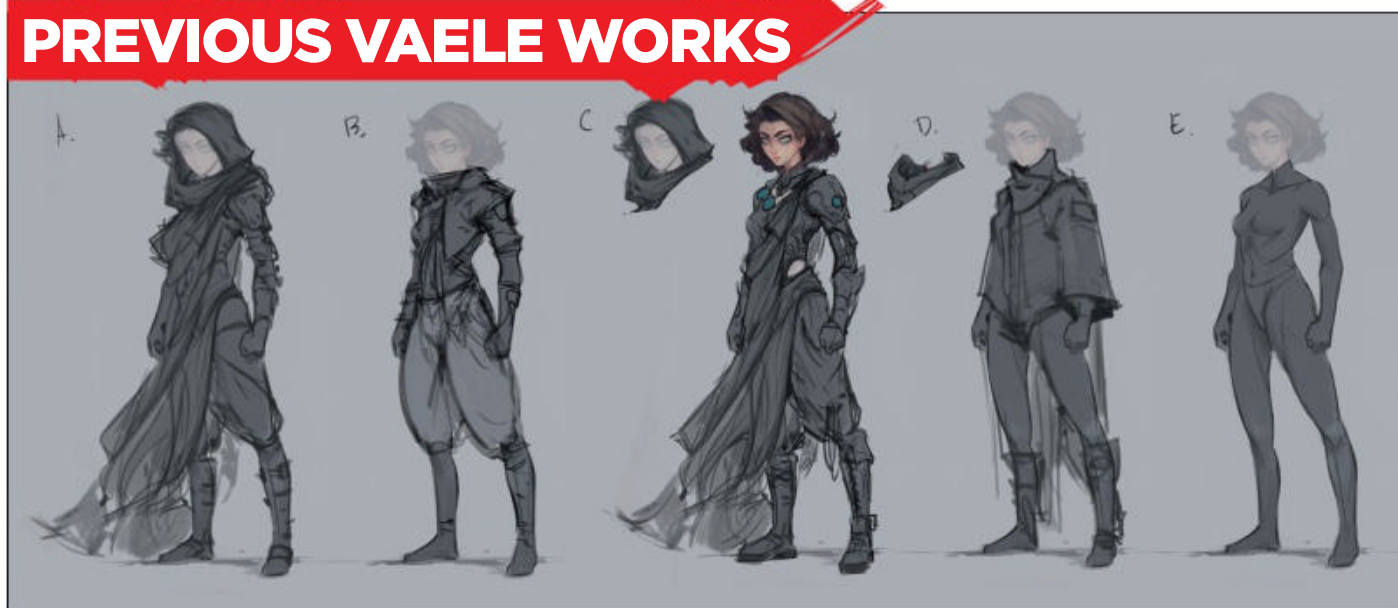
With the base applied, I like to dive into colour pretty fast. I swap up my brushes quite a bit trying to apply shadow and light to start to bring the piece to life. The best part of digital painting is it's super easy to just paint over it if you don't like the current direction.







## PREVIOUS VAELE WORKS

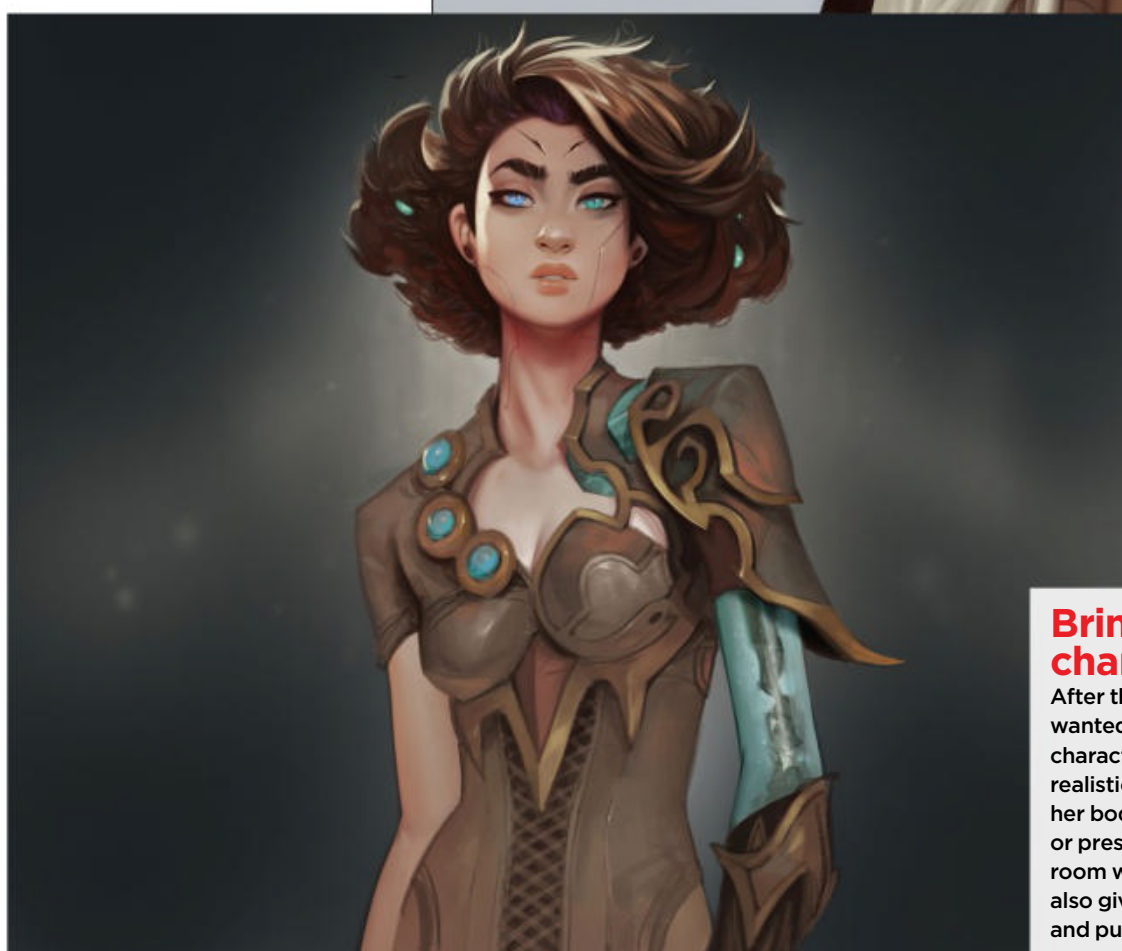
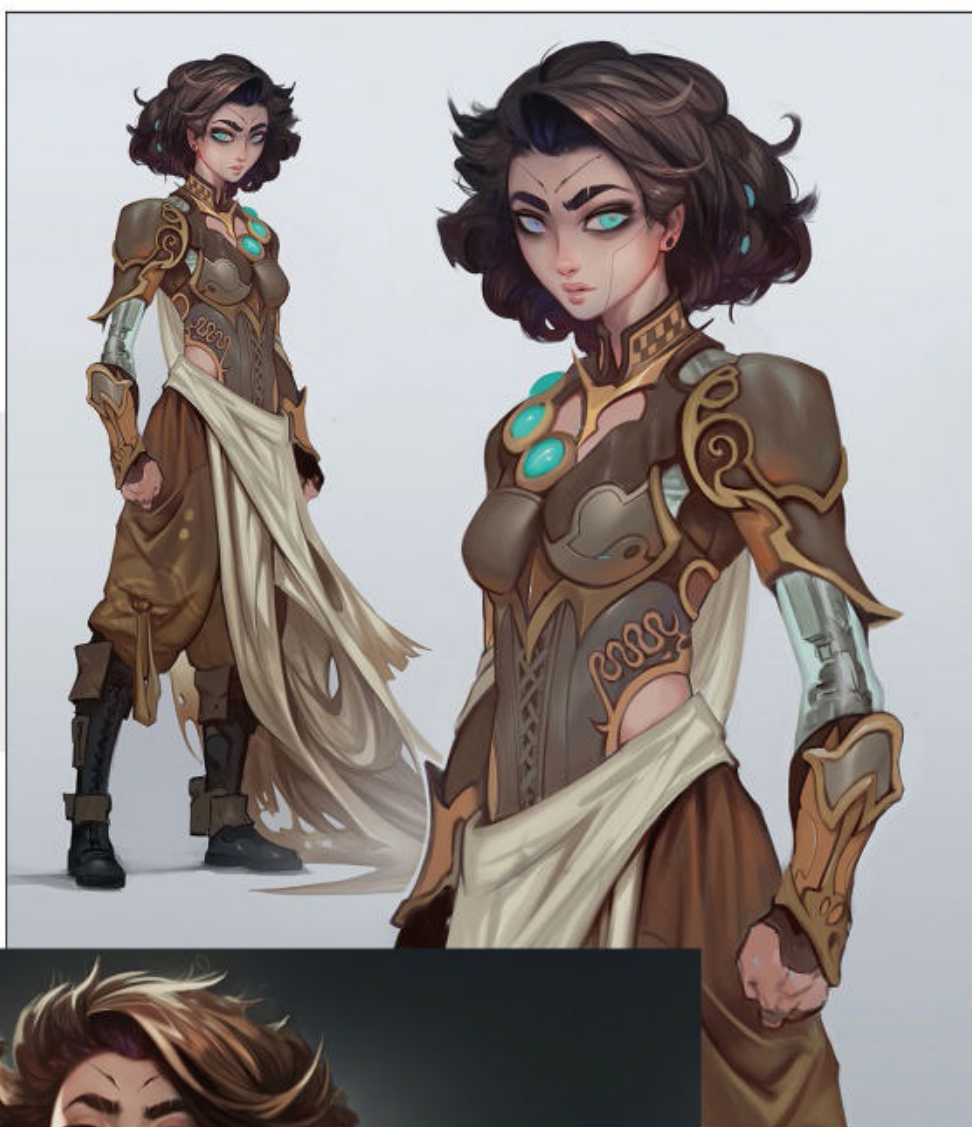


### Characters in full-body view

I render each character individually at full-body and on separate layers. This gives me extra flexibility when applying the key art to different media. Sometimes they even show up on consumer products, such as posters or playmats.

### Render and clean-up

We chose a sketch from the previous set, and worked up a clean render to help further explore some ideas. The warm colours felt great and the small pops of aquamarine helped to add extra visual interest to the character's armour.



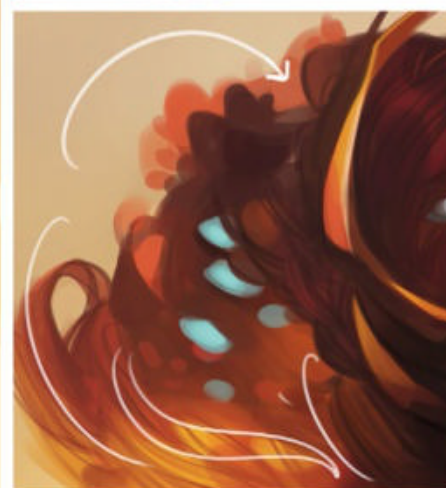
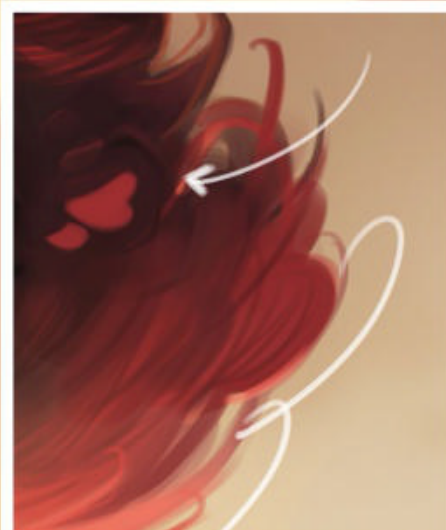
### Bringing a character to life

After the recent clean-up, we wanted to really bring the character to life with a more realistic version. The slight tilt of her body as if she was walking or presenting herself in the room was important. This step also gives more time to revise and push the design further.

## FINAL IMAGE

### Find fun in the abstract

One thing I always love to do is get lost in the abstract shapes of designing hair. I don't always feel like it has to be super realistic to be able to fit into a painting. This piece is a great example of just having fun with hair shapes and creating a delightful flow, for the simple reason of just loving how it looks. Embrace the crazy that can come from it!



### Capturing small moments

I really wanted this image to feel like a one-on-one moment with the viewers, something that felt a little more personal. It was important to me to convey this idea of you coming up to talk to her on an outside balcony, then she looks over and you both catch each others' eyes. Those moments feel very special to me and it is something I am working on capturing better with every piece I create.



# In depth Character design

## Face and anatomy


I love using reference! If the angle of the face is causing you problems, it's great to just pop out your phone and snap a couple of pictures to get the angles right. Embrace using reference, all the professionals do, and so should you.

## Lighting

To help define the composition and really make a piece pop visually, lighting is extremely important. Creating great hits of light in some of the most important parts of the image is a fantastic way to direct the viewers' eyes. High contrast is a great way to do that, and then let the viewer move around the piece from there.

## Mixing sci-fi and fantasy

I love creating designs that exist between both genres. I am a massive fan of both and they each have amazing motifs to be creative from. If there is a look or style that you feel drawn to, be inspired, and merge that love into your own work.

**RESOURCES**

**WORKSHOP  
BRUSHES**

**PHOTOSHOP**

**CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
DG\_MAIN**

I use DG\_Main for almost all my rendering. It's really just a square chalk type brush but I love it! I feel like I have so much control and it offers just the right amount of texture to give the piece a little grit.



## Photoshop & traditional skills

# MAKE WOODBLOCK STYLE PRINTS

**Tom Foster** demonstrates how to replicate the gorgeous look of a traditional Japanese woodblock print



### Artist PROFILE

**Tom Foster**  
LOCATION: Scotland

I'm a comic book artist, best known for my work on Judge Dredd for 2000 AD. I also regularly run comics workshops in schools across Scotland. [bit.ly/3MOJr6T](http://bit.ly/3MOJr6T)

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
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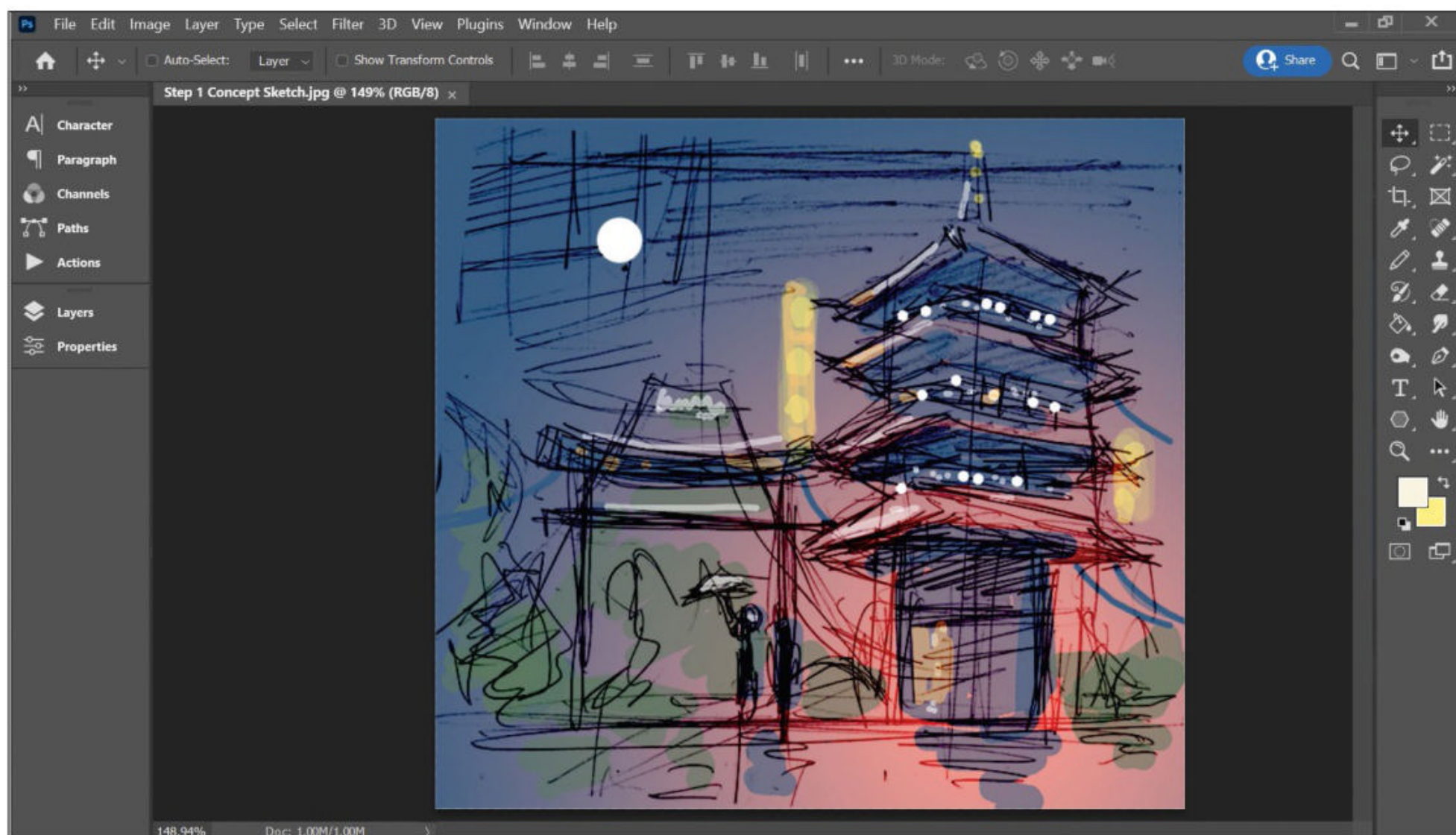
Although Japanese woodblock print-making is a tradition that goes back several centuries, it's an

aesthetic that tends to look timeless – particularly the Shin Hanga prints of the early 20th century. The tightly rendered line work has so much in common with contemporary western artists like Frank Quitely and Chris Burnham, that it's easy to imagine it appearing in the pages of a modern comic book. But there are

a few tell-tale signs that betray the age of the originals and it's these I'll be focusing on here, in order to mimic the style.

On its own, trying to create an authentic-looking period piece might be an interesting technical exercise, but it may not be all that interesting to anyone other than a specialist, so I've opted to add some futuristic touches to the subject matter. I think these bits of futurism with the traditional-looking style make for a nice contrast.

Traditionally, the artwork for a print like this would be painstakingly carved out of wooden blocks. Since I have absolutely no experience in the field of engraving (and none of the appropriate tools), I'll instead be doing the line work with pens and brushes, then using Photoshop for the colouring. I'll only be using a small Wacom One graphics tablet and the default Photoshop Pencil tool for the digital work – no custom brushes. Right, let's get to it!



### 1 Concept sketch

I start out with a rough concept sketch, just to establish the main elements of the image. In my comics work, this would normally just be a pencil sketch, but since colour is going to be so important to the mood of the picture, I add a quick dash of colour in Photoshop. ➡



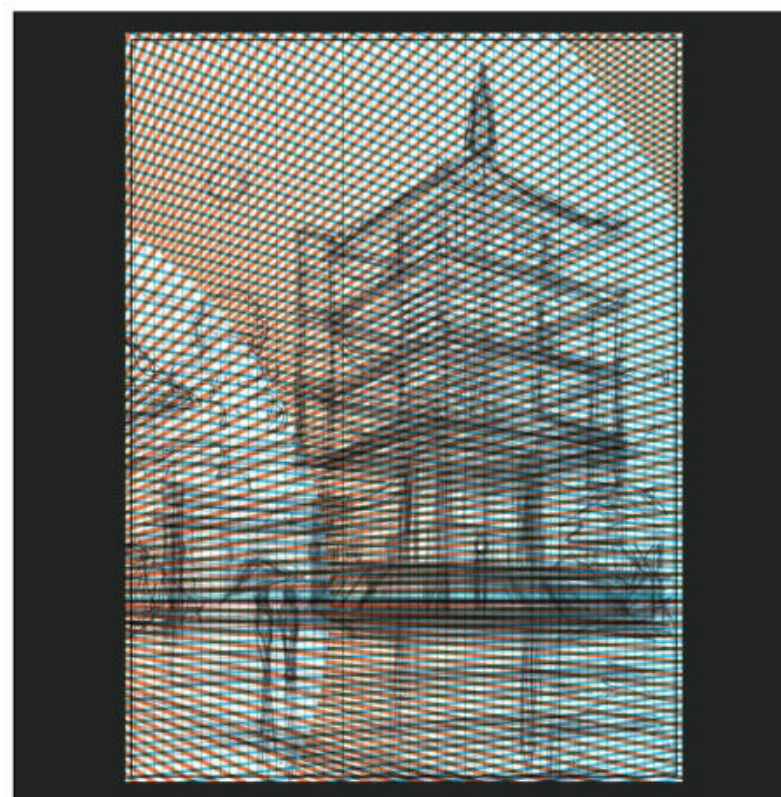




# Workshops



**2 Source reference**  
Once I know roughly what I want to draw, it's important to seek out good reference. This is also invaluable for studying what makes a woodblock print *look* like a woodblock print. While making this piece, I have two books full of Shin Hanga prints open on my desk at all times.



**3 Establish perspective**  
If I were starting off with a 3D digital model, the perspective would be too photorealistic. Sticking with a couple of vanishing points keeps the visual style period-authentic. I have a couple of pre-made perspective templates, which I use for just about everything, and I apply these over a rough pencil sketch as a guide.



**4 First-draft pencils**  
I print the sketch and perspective template onto A3 paper and trace it using a light board. I work out the geometry of the major forms and build in more details like the trees and clouds. I try to focus on getting the proportions right at this stage, so that I don't have to keep correcting things as I go along.



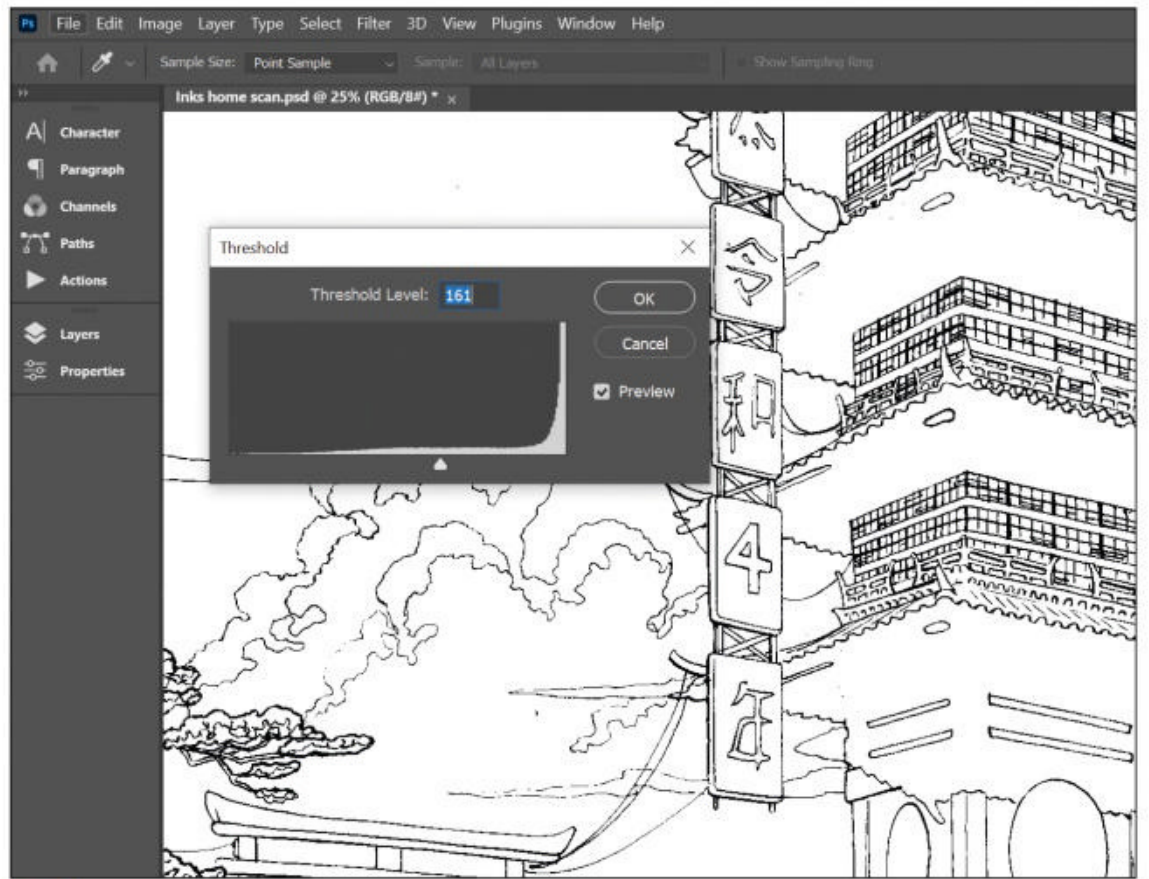
**5 Second-draft pencils**  
When I work on comics, I generally only do one pencil rough and then finished pencils, but here the lines are so important to the finished look that I do another pass on the pencils to tighten things up. I print out my first draft in faint blue and go over it with cleaner lines and more precise details.





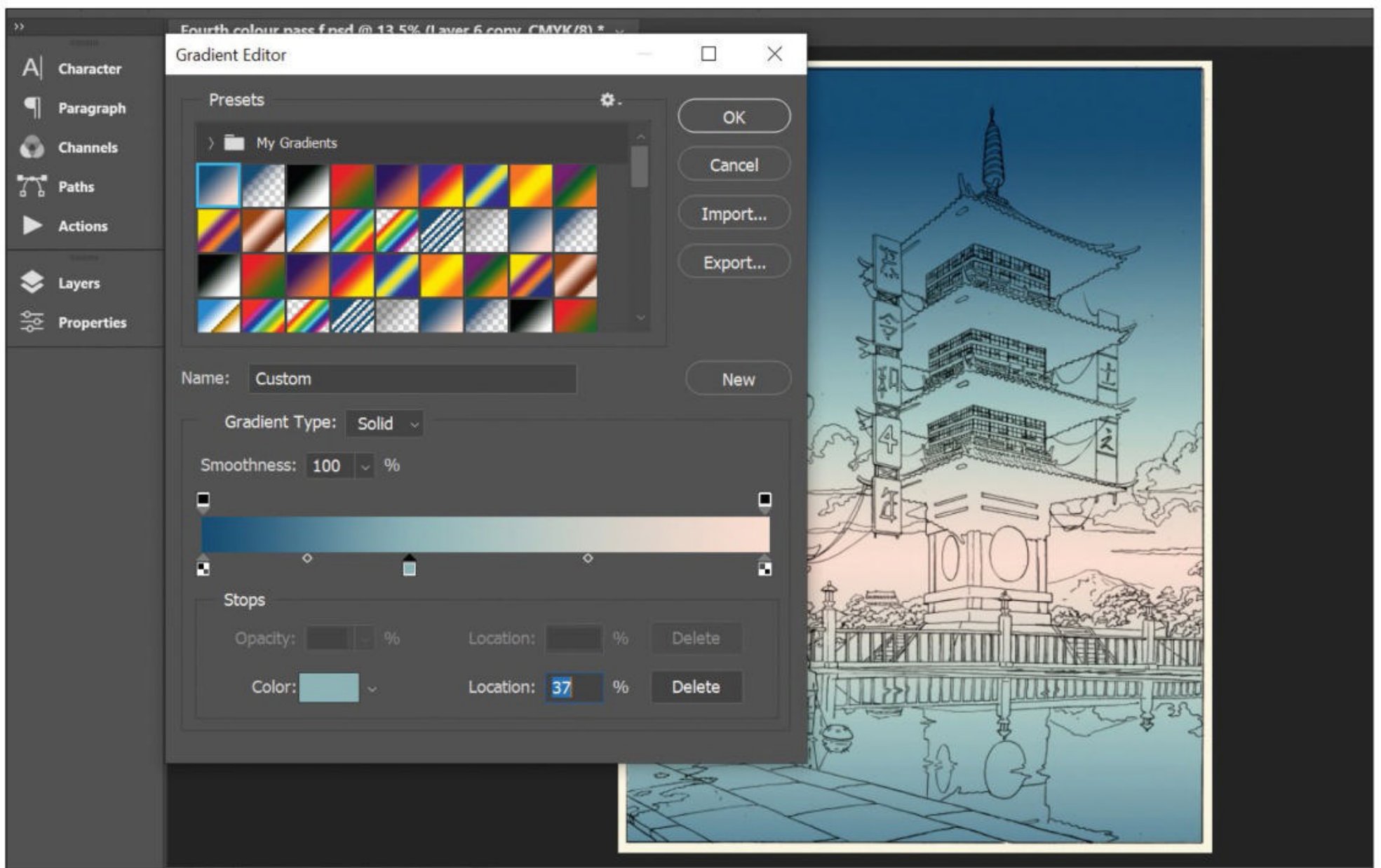
## 6 Apply inks

Once I'm happy with the pencils, I scan them and print them out on A3 Bristol Board. I then go over them in ink, using a sable brush and some fine-liner pens. I try to do as much as possible freehand, so that the lines have a bit of character.



## 7 Pure black and white

Now that the drawing is finished, I convert it to pure black and white in Photoshop. The easiest way to do this is to go to Image>Adjustments>Threshold. This will make it easier for me to select my black and white areas and to apply a more print-like texture further on in the process.



## 8 Background gradient

I throw a quick gradient (Paint Bucket>Gradient) under the linework, to establish a basic colour profile. With my line art on a Multiply layer, I can play about with different combinations until I'm happy with the look. I can then use this foundation as a reference point. ➡





## 9 Colour flatting

The next step is to separate out all my areas of colour. I use the Lasso tool to delineate each area and fill it with colour using the Paint Bucket. At this stage, the most important thing is that each area is distinct from its neighbours, as I'll be using this layer for quick selections all throughout the colouring.



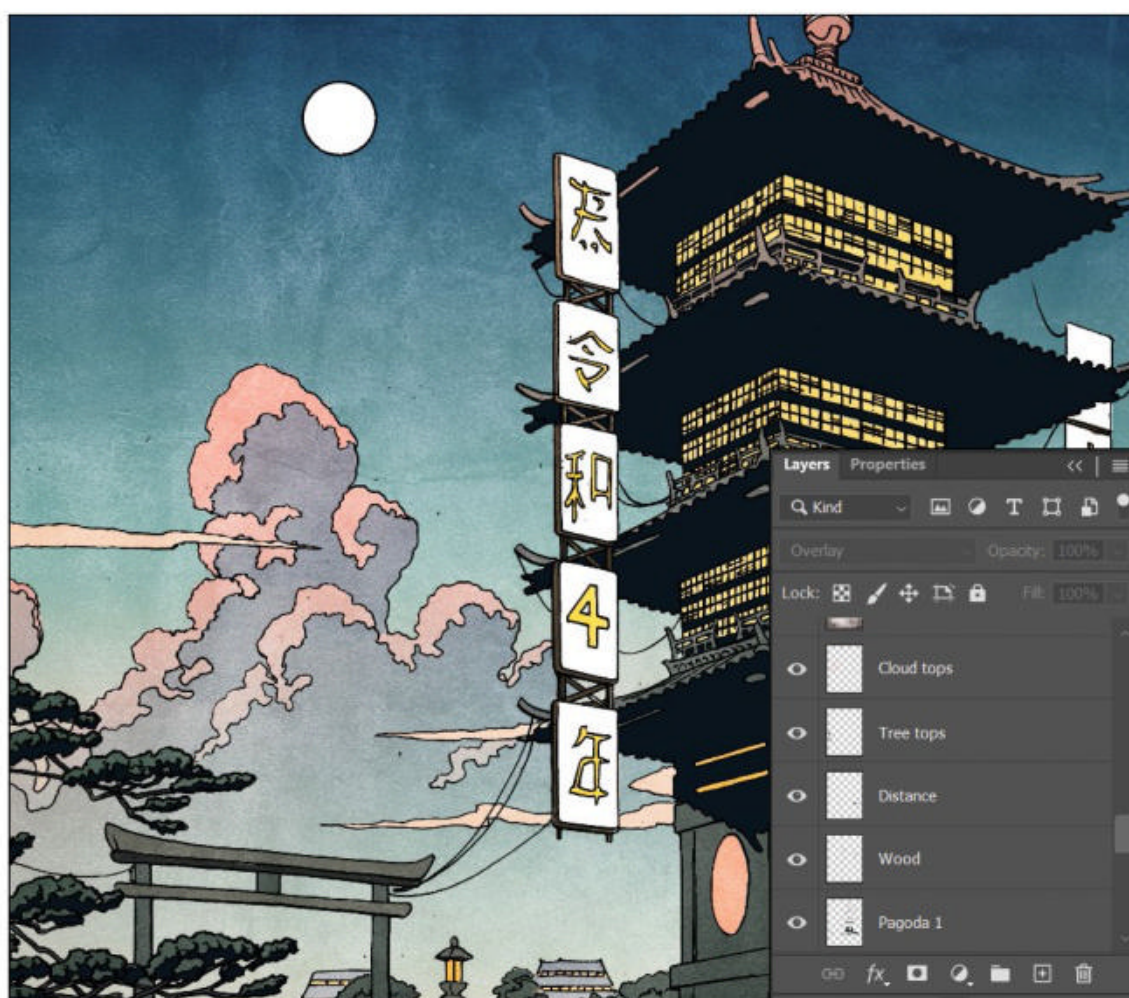
## 10 Introduce texture

I put a texture over the colours using a Soft Light layer. Texture is key to achieving the look of traditional printing materials. I have a library of textures, some found online and some homemade, that I can use as a base. With a little tweaking (Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast), this one worked for the sky.



## 11 Find the colours

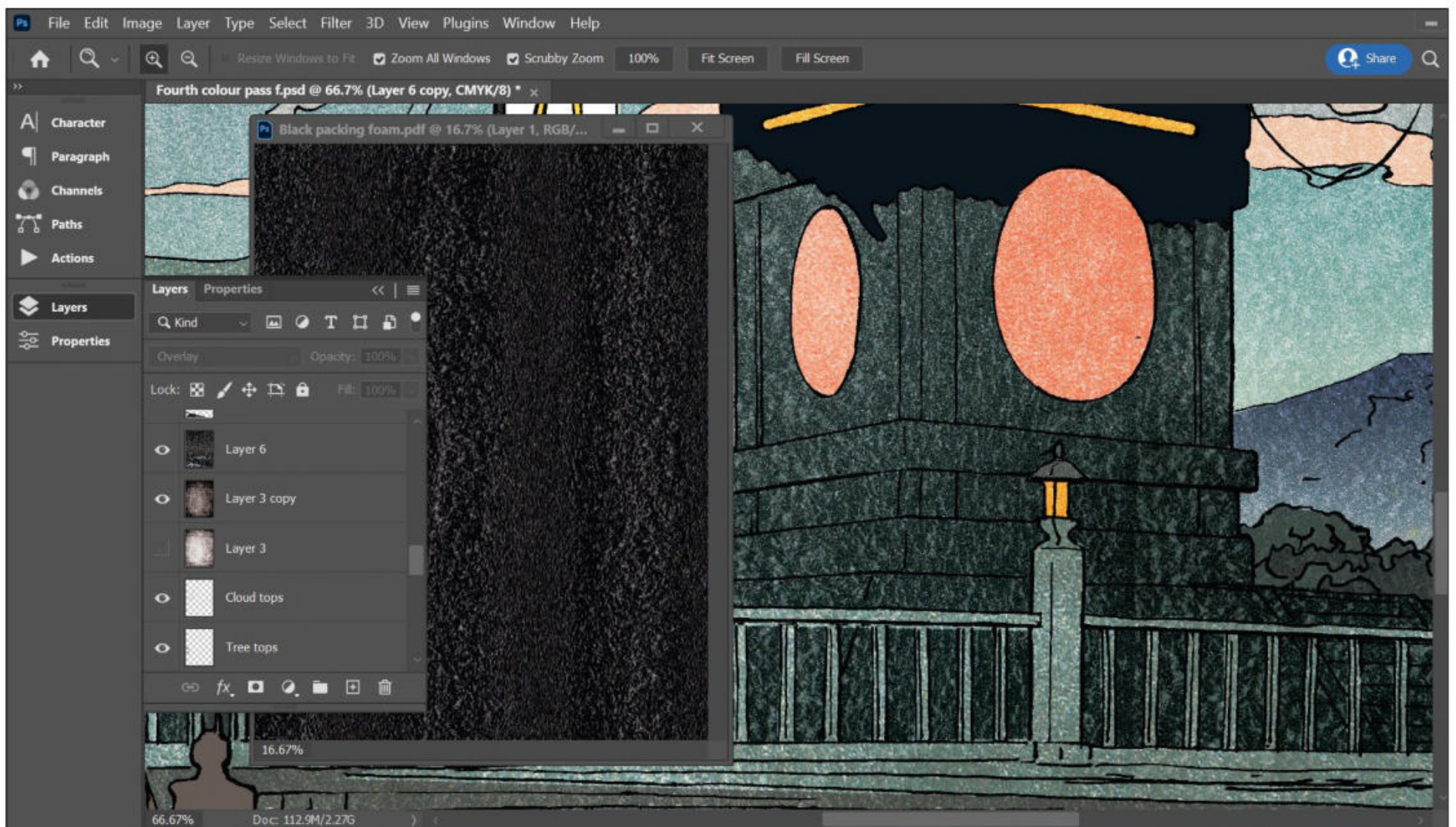
I duplicate the colour flats layer (Layer>Duplicate) and start refining colours. As I'm no longer working on my original flats layer, I don't have to worry if tones are too similar. I darken up most of the foreground colours, and bring out the light sources as much as possible.



## 12 Tone and depth

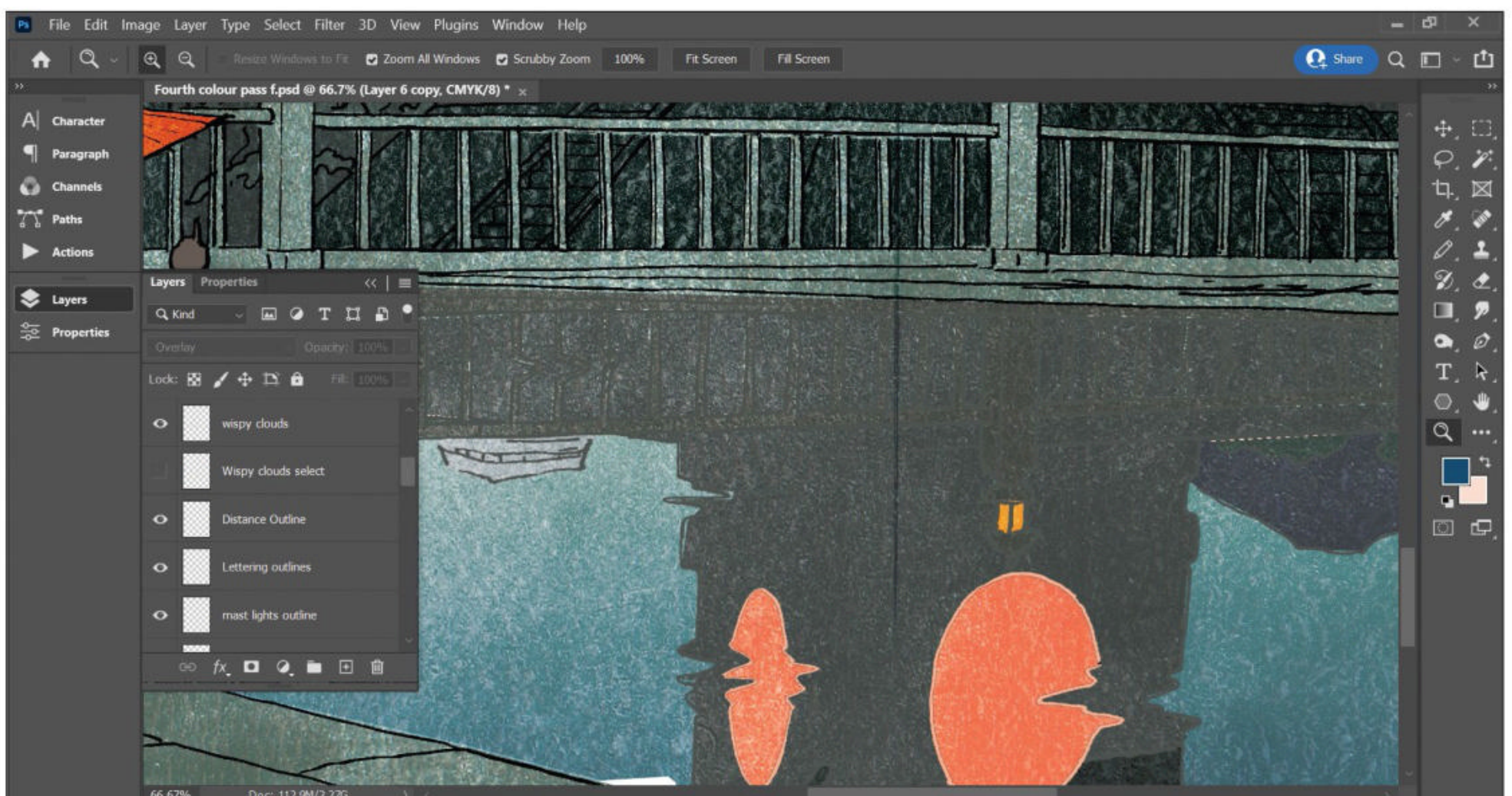
I add some more gradients to the bigger masses of colour to give a greater variety of tones and depth. I want to give the impression of a sun setting off to the right of the image, so include some vibrant pinks, fading into dusky blue-greens. Once again, I'm using my reference books extensively here.





## 13 More textures

I want a more varied and rough-looking texture for my foreground elements, as they're still looking a bit flat, so I create a new texture by scanning some black packing foam and put it on an Overlay layer. This gives a nice, mottled look to the colours that feels more naturalistic.



## 14 Finishing touches

A black outline doesn't work for everything, so I change the outline around the moon to white and recolour the lines around the reflections, wispy clouds etc to give them a little more subtlety. I also add a slight pink gradient to the upper-left outlines, to continue the impression of a low sun and, finally, some rain. ●



## Photoshop

# GET EXPERIMENTAL WITH PORTRAITS

**Gabriel Lee Greene** shares his process for creating colourful portraits with unique graphical elements, experimenting with shapes and effects

### Artist PROFILE

**Gabriel Lee Greene**  
LOCATION: US

Freelance illustrator Gabriel Lee Greene (@Raddishcabbage) relies on exploring the use of grain, shape and texture to create lively portrait illustrations. [www.radcab.art](http://www.radcab.art)



As I first transitioned into working digitally, I felt overwhelmed with the amount of freedom I had. I'm sure it's something a lot of us can relate to. With an infinite amount of colour, texture and brush options at our fingertips, it's hard not to try to throw a bit of everything in the pot.

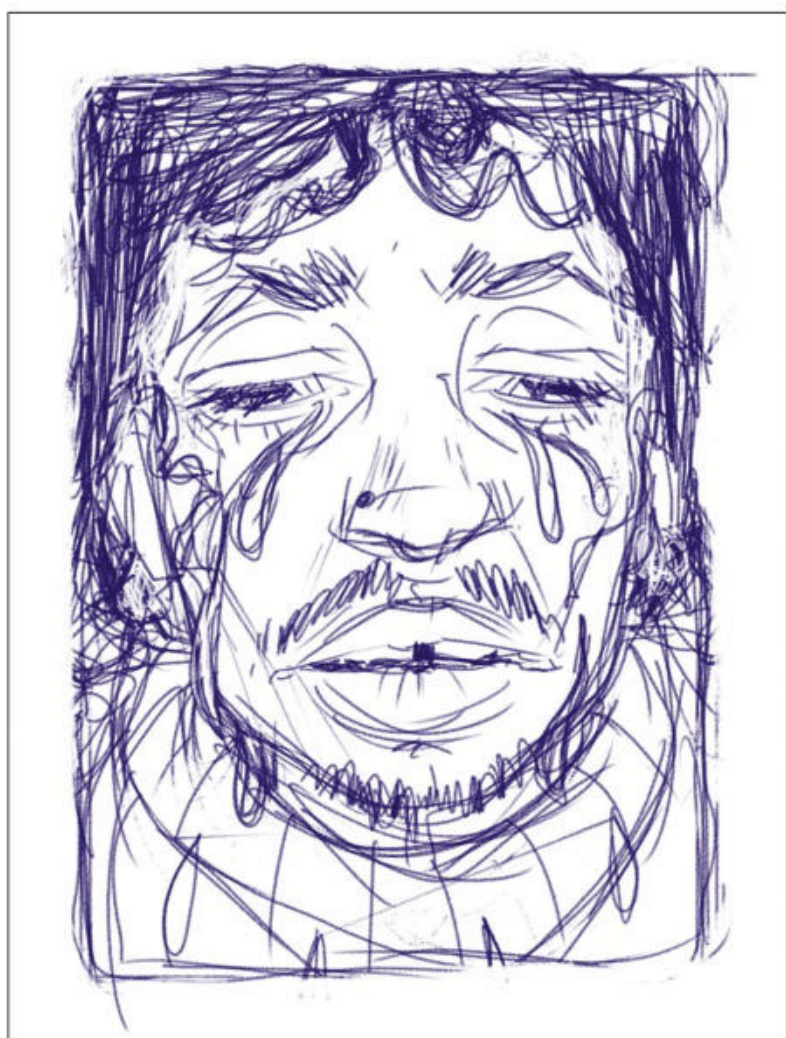
Over time, I found that with the abundance of tools came an endless

amount of ways to experiment! Whether it be creating colour thumbnails, using masks/clipping modes, adding adjustment layers, or applying textural effects – the digital medium has made it simple and quick to experiment with it all.

In this tutorial, I'm going to take you through my process – how I rely on experimentation with colour, shape, various effects and adjustments to nudge me along the

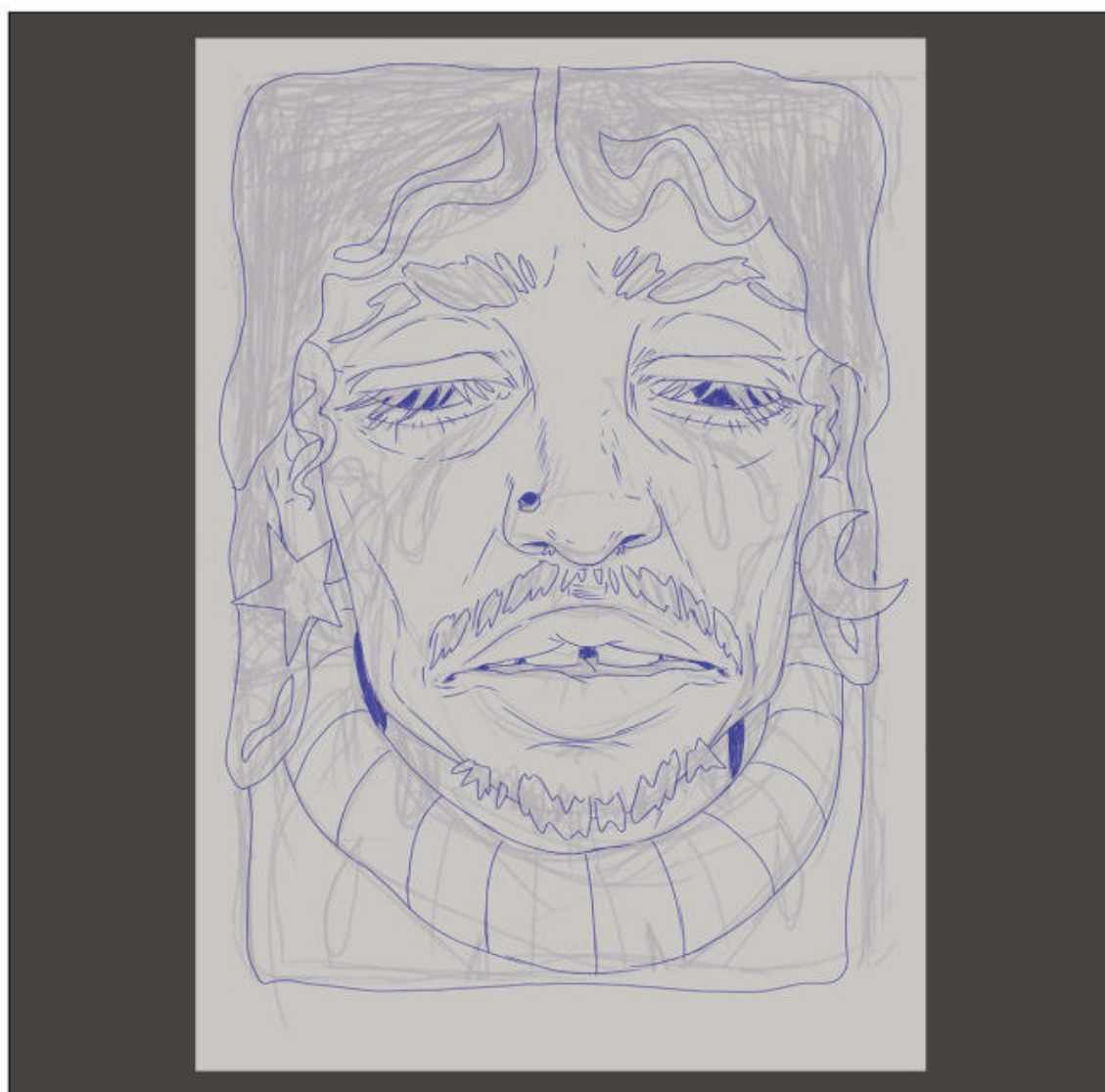
way. We'll touch on making colour thumbnails to create a palette, using gradient overlay to add colour harmony, and which brushes I use to help add that final bit of grain or grit to an illustration.

While I'll be using Photoshop during this workshop, these steps can be easily adopted into other programs. I'm glad to share this process and hope those who follow along are inspired to experiment!



### 1 Start with a sketch

I started with blocking in a loose sketch. I knew going in I wanted to do two things: riff off the term 'crybaby' and keep my subject framed in a rectangle shape, but play with breaking out of the silhouette later on. In this stage I'm not worried too much about specifics – just having fun while getting the main idea out.



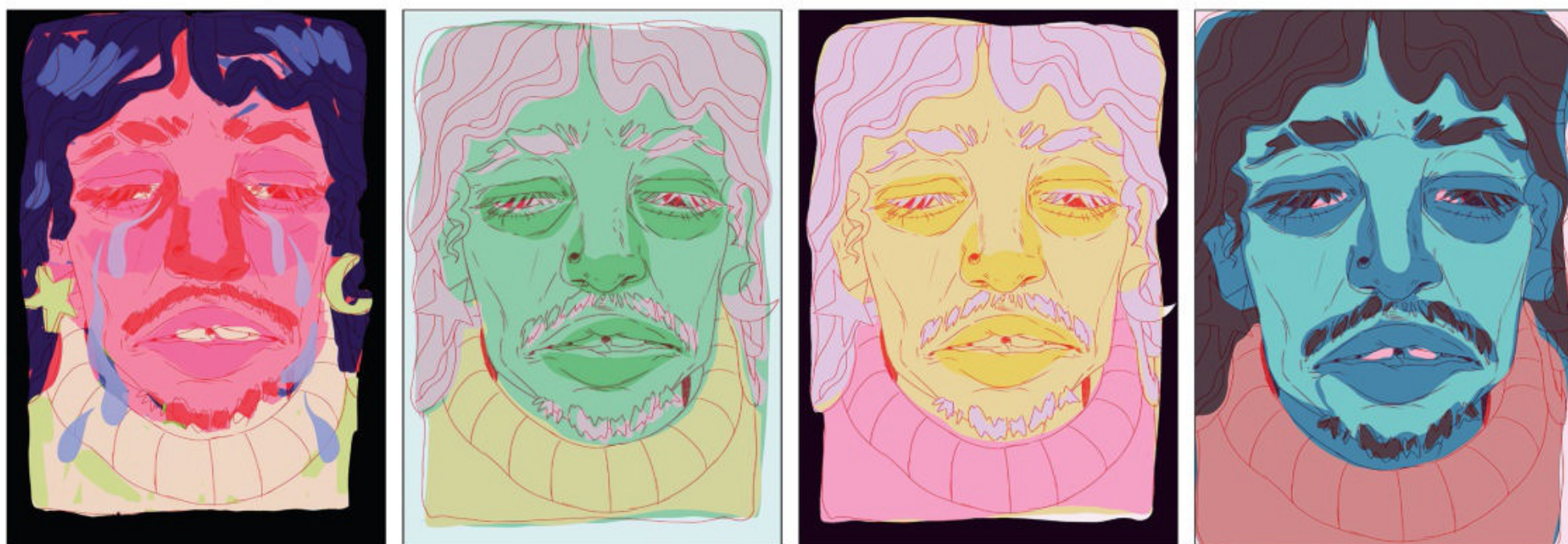
### 2 Enlarge and refine

After I feel the sketch is heading in the right direction, I'll lower the opacity, transform it to the intended size, then draw on top of a new layer set to Multiply. I'm trying to dial in the shapes and features gestured in the beginning step, while also cleaning up the line work enough to give a solid foundation. ➡



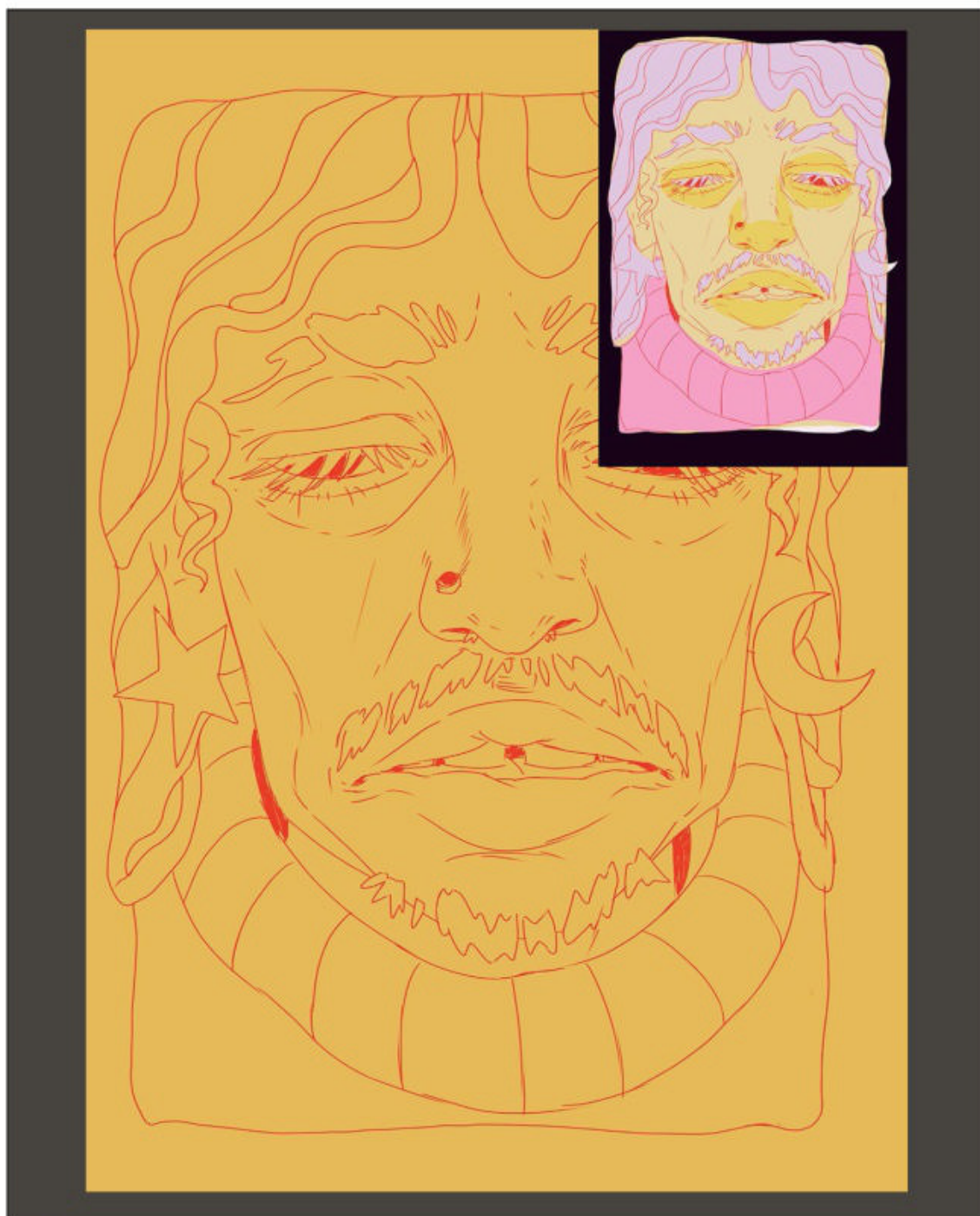






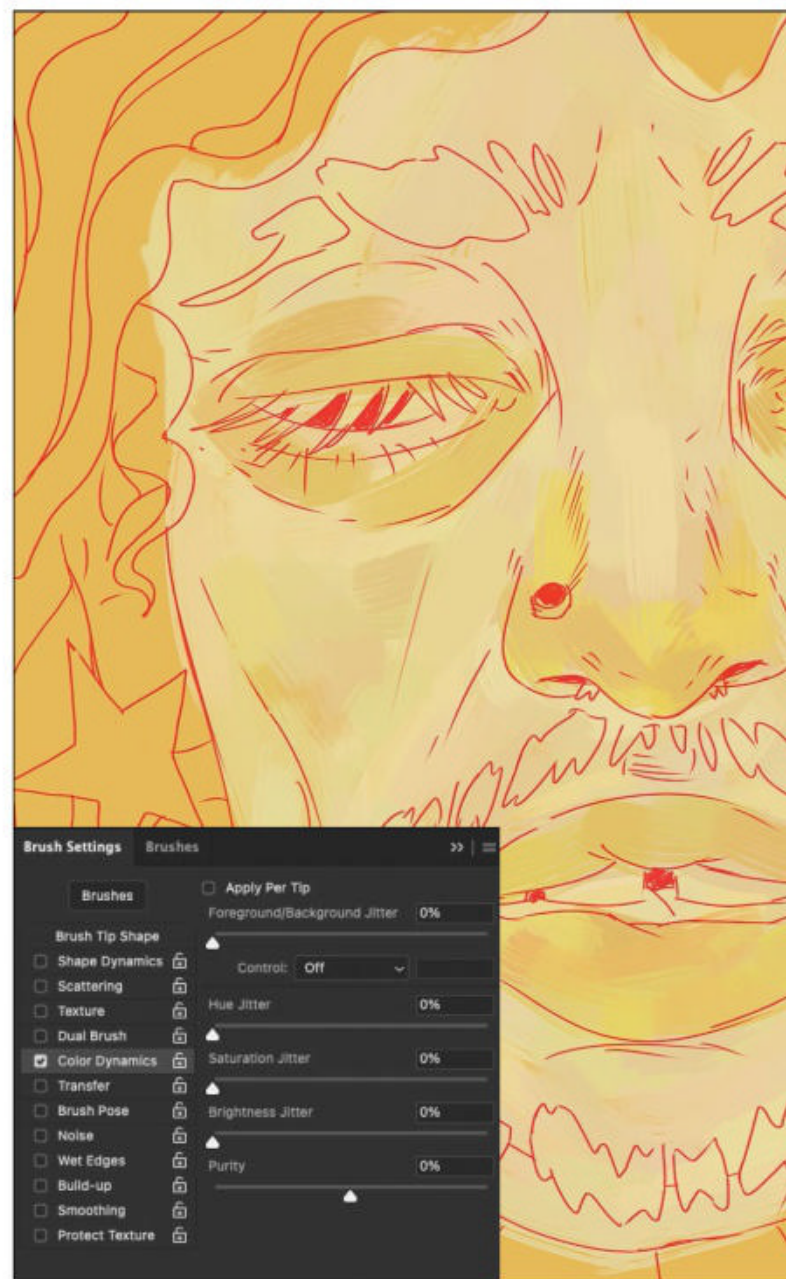
### 3 Try colour thumbnails

One of my favourite parts of this process is experimenting with colour. Here, I chose to duplicate my line art layer and explore new colour palettes painted underneath. I try to keep the palettes different enough from each other while still keeping a nice contrast of hues and value.



### 4 Establish base colour

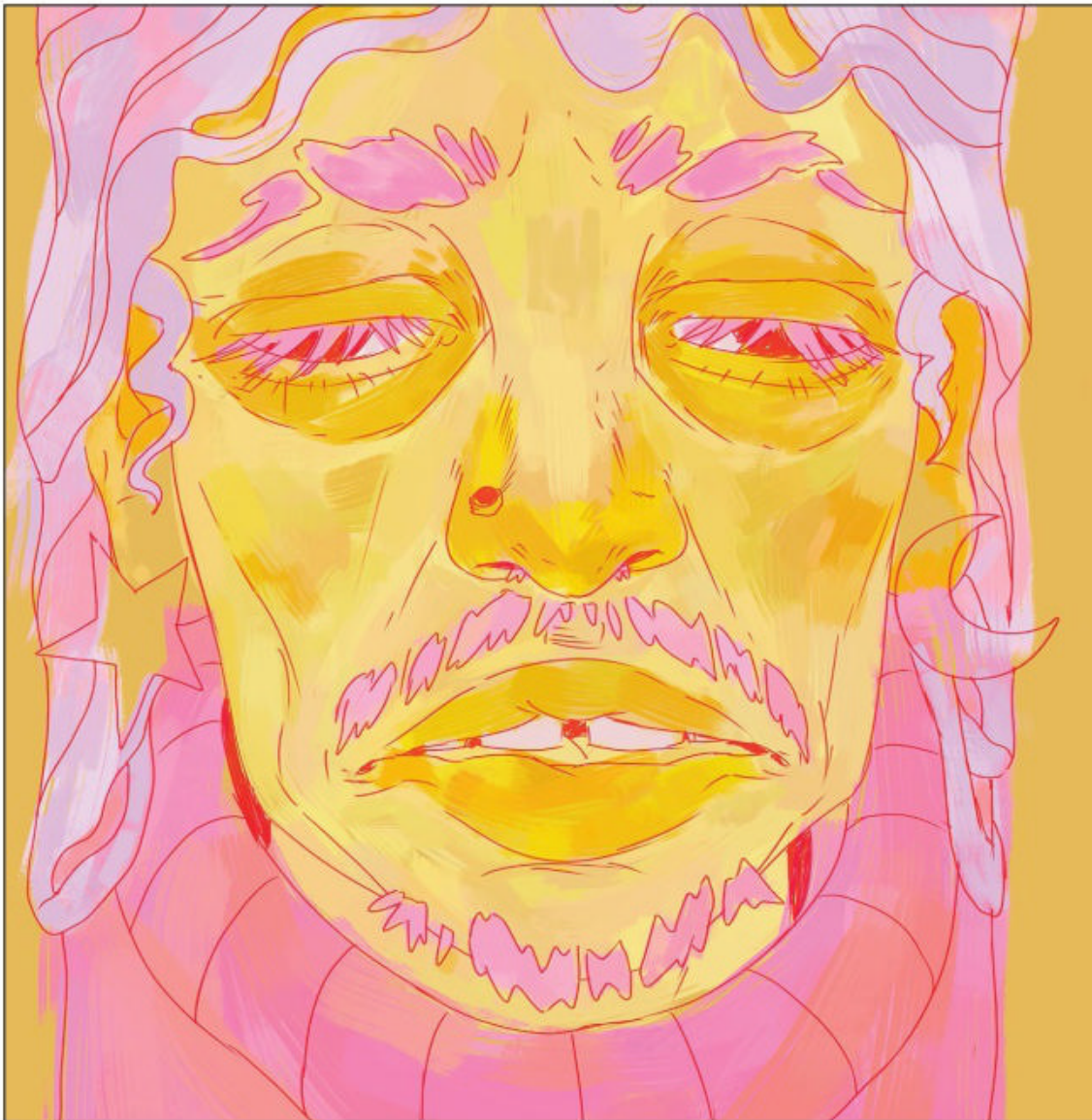
After deciding on a colour palette, I copy and paste the chosen thumbnail into a new layer. This is what I'll use to colour pick while painting the first layer. Before starting the painting process, I like to grab the paint bucket tool (G) and fill a new layer with something to establish a base tone. Here, I chose a warm yellow to complement the skin tone.



### 5 Use Color Dynamics to paint

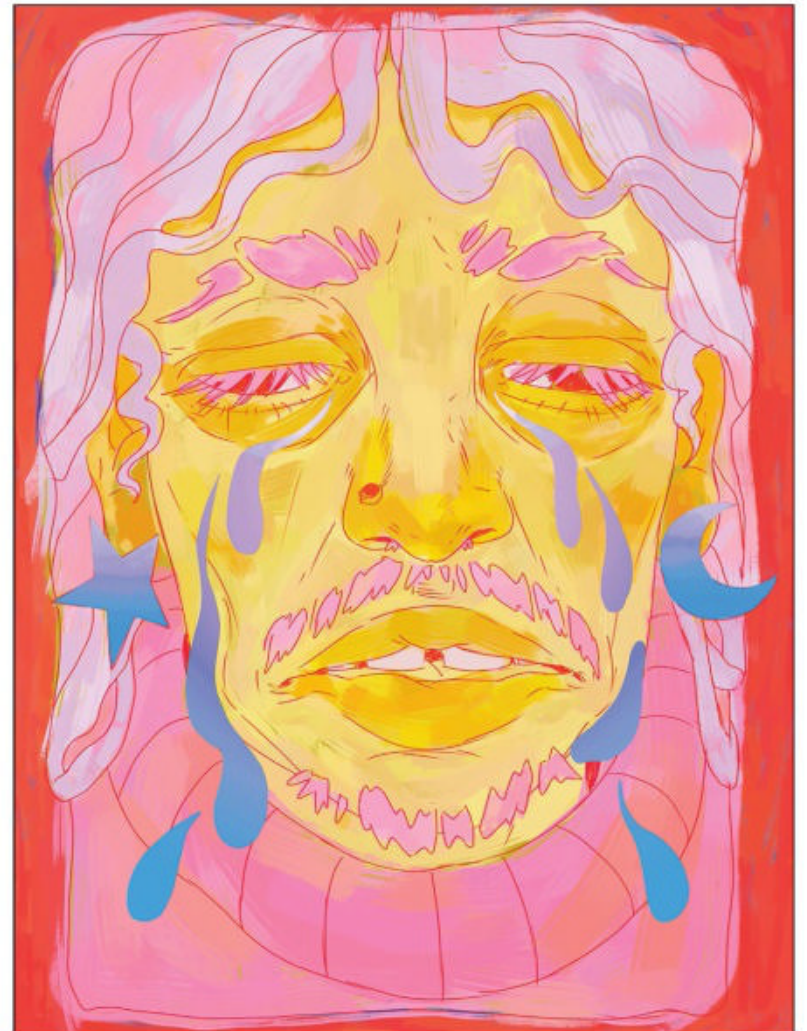
Something that has been a huge help to creating a natural painting experience for me is Color Dynamics. If you've never tried it before, you can turn it on any brush by going to your Brush Settings and clicking on Color Dynamics, then adjusting the Hue, Saturation and Brightness sliders. I used the Fat Super Dry brush from True Grit Texture Supply's 'Rusty Nib' pack with Color Dynamics enabled to start painting on a new layer here.





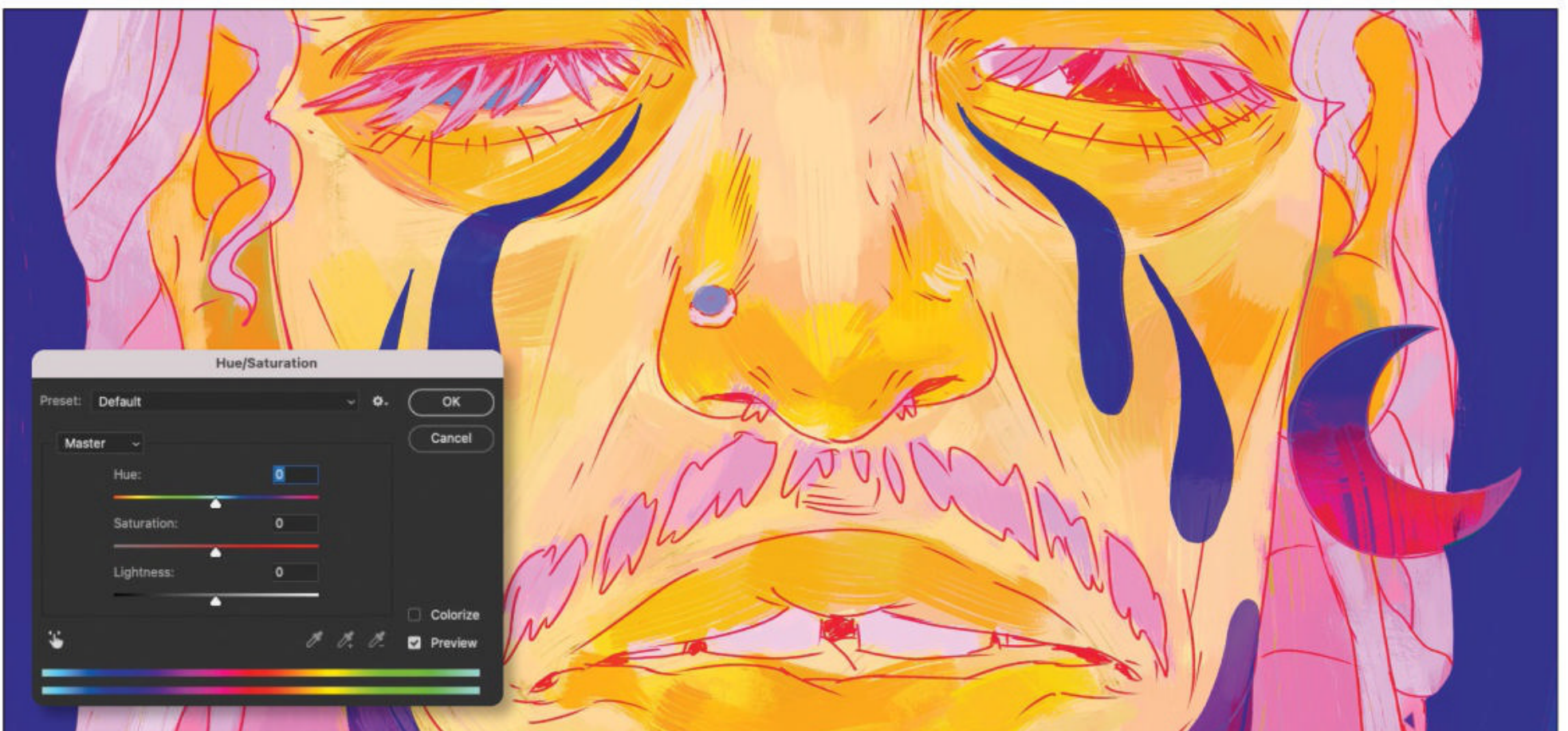
## 6 Add adjustment layers

Using Color Dynamics, finish loosely painting in the subject. It doesn't need to be perfect because we'll go back in for a final render later. Before that I'll add an adjustment layer to raise the saturation up a bit. Now is also a great time to turn off our colour thumbnail as well!



## 7 Start experimenting

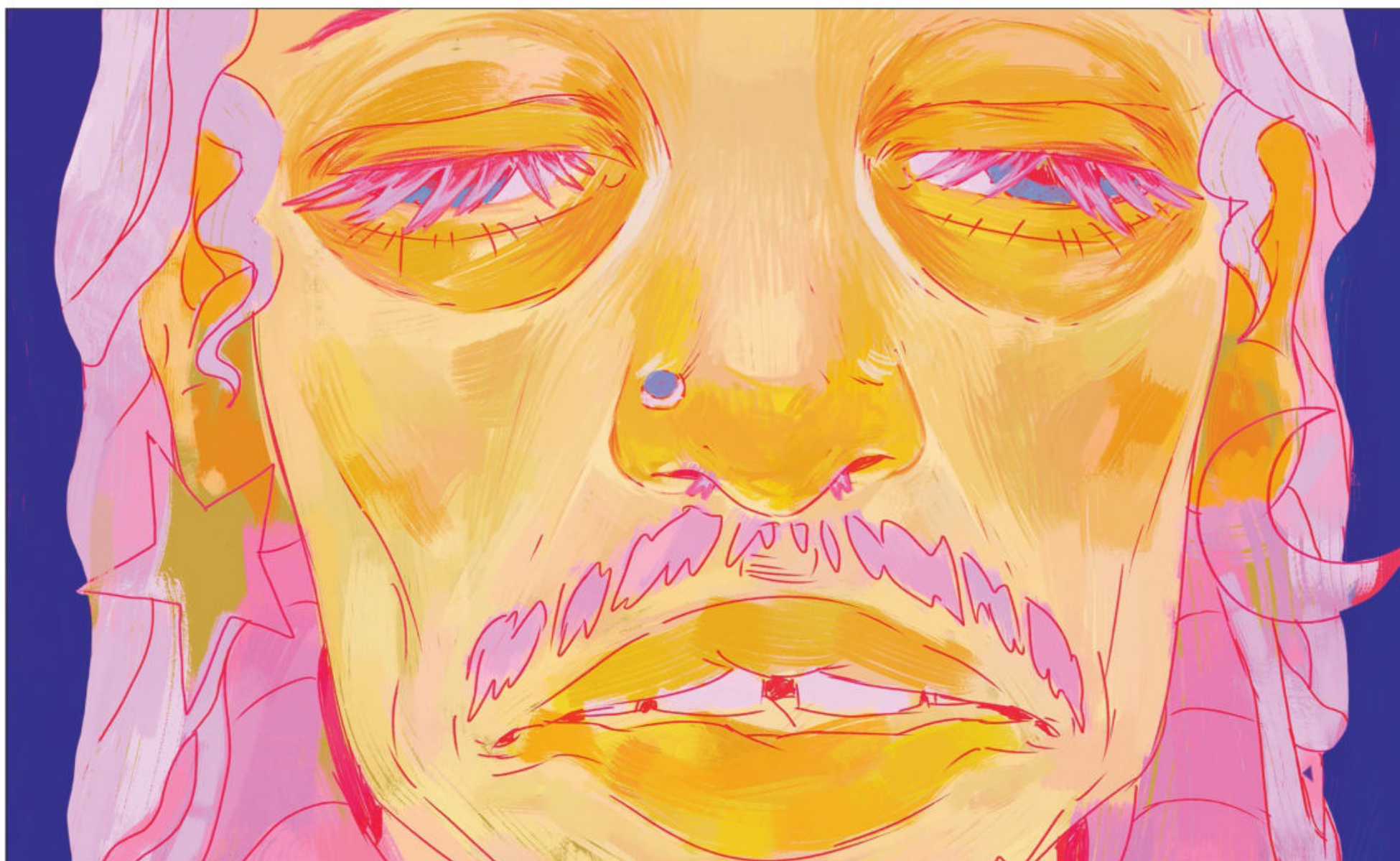
Now that the main subject is heading in a good direction, it's a perfect time to start some experimentation. I tested out colour picking the red from the line work to fill the background, still painting loosely with Color Dynamics. Creating a new layer, I started adding the subject's tears and jewellery using the selection tool (S) and filling with a gradient (G).



## 8 Keep on experimenting!

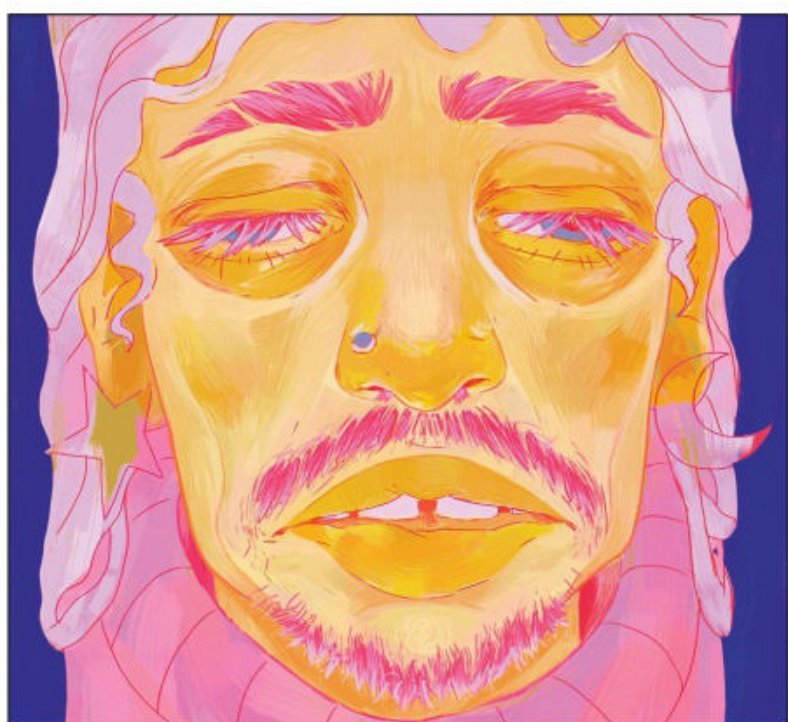
The great thing about experimenting is that your changes don't need to be permanent. Deciding against the red background, I changed the hue by opening up Hue/Saturation/Brightness (Cmd+U). I also tried out different layer modes on the tear/jewellery until I got an effect that complemented the rest of the painting. Pin Light seemed to work well here! ➡





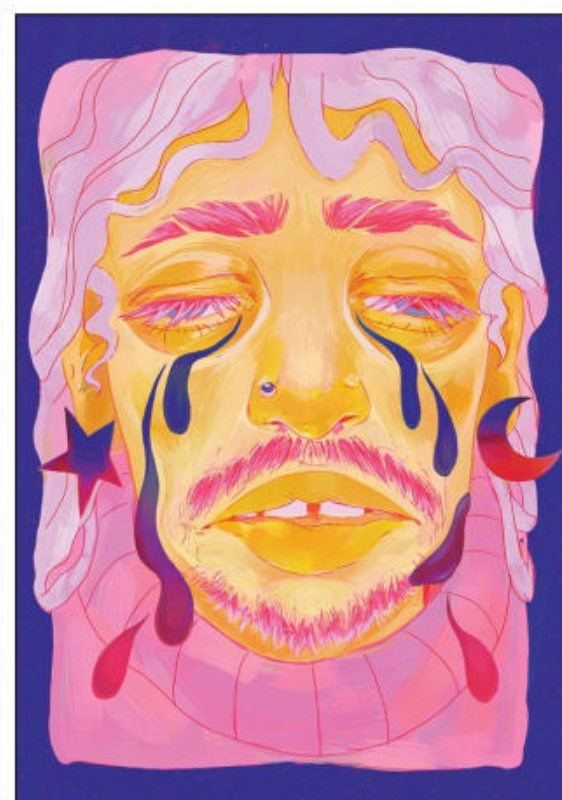
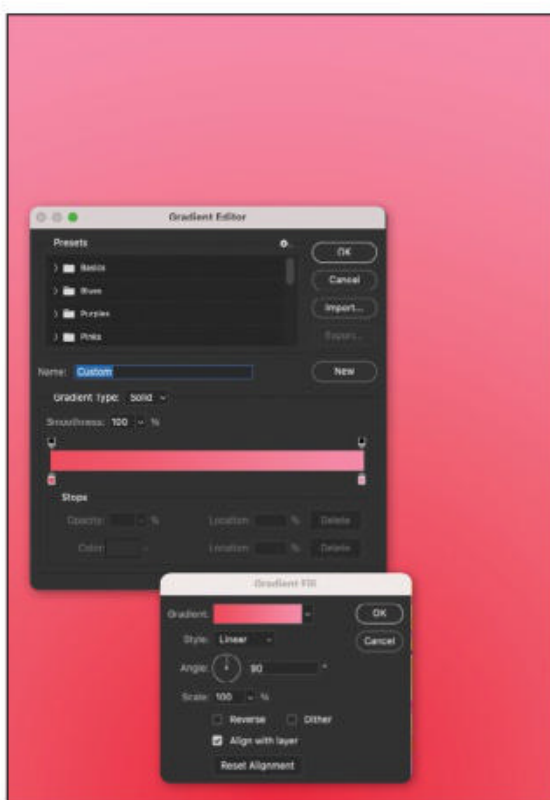
## 9 Begin the rendering process

Now it's time to render. I'm starting with the eyebrows and eyelashes, and then making my way around the rest of the face. I like to use a fairly small-sized brush with texture, something that has a pencil or charcoal feel. I'm using the pencil\_re brush which is a tweaked version of a default Photoshop sketching brush made by Kyle T. Webster.



## 10 Experiment with masks

Rendering is a process that can feel a little monotonous at times, at least for me. Thankfully with the ground work set by using loose strokes and Color Dynamics, it's fairly easy to get some interesting hue, value and saturation changes. Since this is a bit more stylised there's no need to worry about being hyper accurate. I added some highlights in the inner eye sockets and near the cheek bones to add a bit of stylish depth.



## 11 Improve colour harmony with overlays

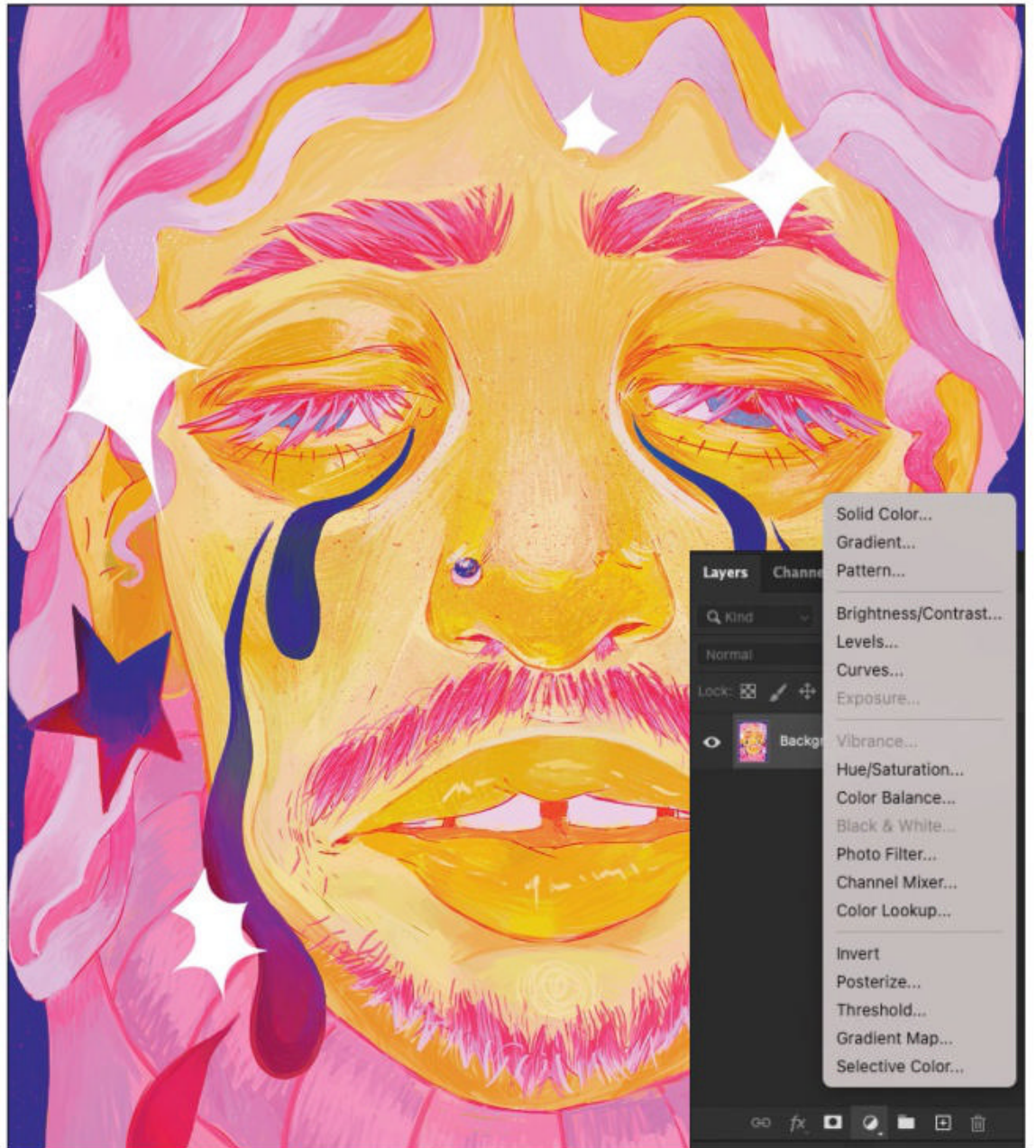
Creating a new layer above the artwork, fill it with gradient and then set that layer mode to Overlay or Soft Light. Keep the opacity down to around 15-30%. This makes a subtle change but helps to unify colours while adding interest. This is also a perfect opportunity to experiment – different colours, gradients and blending modes may have unexpected effects! After honing in the colour harmony, I continued the rendering process over the tears/jewellery layer.





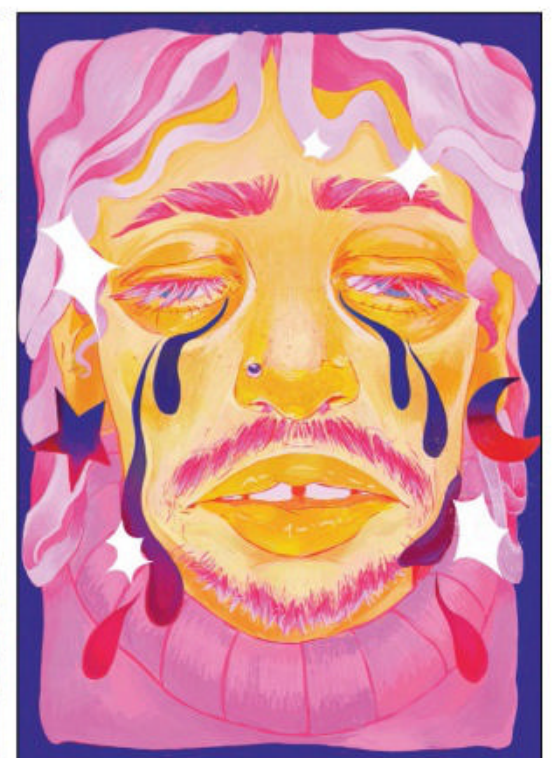
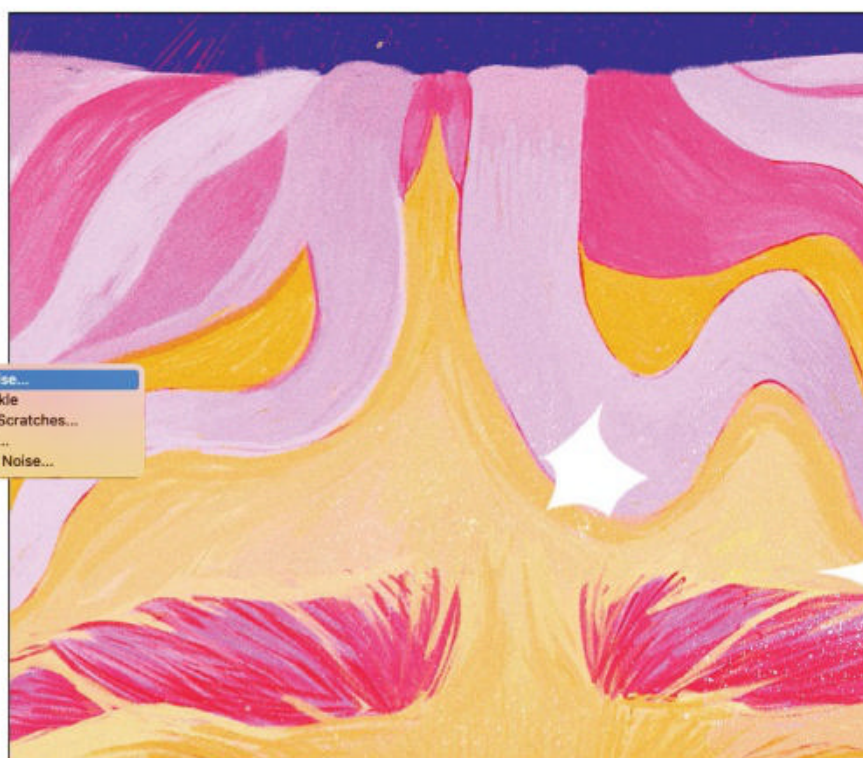
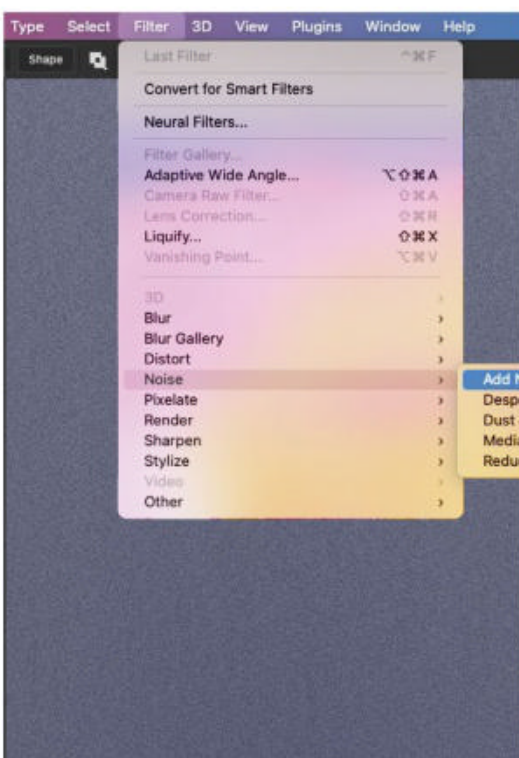
## 12 Add grit and texture

Next I like to start throwing in a bit of grit that's trademark of my style. There are many ways to do this – scanning in textures made traditionally, applying grain filters, or using grain/splatter brushes. Here I'm using some brushes from True Grit Texture Supply – the 'Fast Grit' pack. Using a range of different grain brushes, I focus on adding subtle red flecks in the background, and a mix of orange and off-white grain to the skin.



## 13 Final adjustments and graphics

Near the end I like to make a final pass of adjustment layers for Curves, Color Balance and Hue/Saturation to dial in colour harmony. These are very subtle adjustments, usually moving the sliders between plus or minus 1-5. Using the lasso tool, I also made a few sparkle-like star shapes to add more visual interest, while also complementing the graphic shapes established with the tears and earrings.



## 14 Add the final texture

For the last step, I want to add a subtle grain/noise to the image. I do this by creating a new layer, filling it with a middle-range value desaturated blue, and setting it to Overlay. Then go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise. I like to set this somewhere between 100-130%, making sure both Gaussian and Monochromatic boxes are checked for colour uniformity. Set that layer to around 30-40% and the image is complete!



# Workshops





## Photoshop & Magic Poser

# PHOTOBASH A FILM CHARACTER

**Andrei Riabovitchev** breaks down his character creation pipeline, based on his experience as a concept artist for film

### Artist PROFILE

**Andrei Riabovitchev**  
LOCATION: UK

Andrei is a UK-based Russian artist currently working in the film industry. He has worked on many projects including BFG, Aladdin, X-Men: First Class, Harry Potter and many more. [artstation.com/andrei](http://artstation.com/andrei)



I have been working as a professional artist since 1991, and have been privileged to create characters for

animations, films, computer games and commercials. In this tutorial, using one character as an example, I will demonstrate my typical pipeline for creating characters from scratch when working on a film project.

I will explain how I usually start the creation process, discussing what is important when drawing the

initial thumbnails, how to effectively follow references, and key factors to consider in your character's design.

There is a lot in common when designing a character for animation and designing a character for film, but there are also some key differences. For example, in a movie an actor plays a character, so you don't need to invent their face. But sometimes you have to adapt their face for a specific role, creating special make-up, adding facial hair, or a completely different hairstyle.

Quite often on movie projects when concept artists are tasked with creating a character, it's important for their design to look realistic, like a photograph – which is where photo manipulation techniques might come into play.

So let's dive into this tutorial, where we will learn how to build a pipeline correctly to achieve a result with the highest efficiency. We will start with simple sketches and end with the final, photorealistic character design.



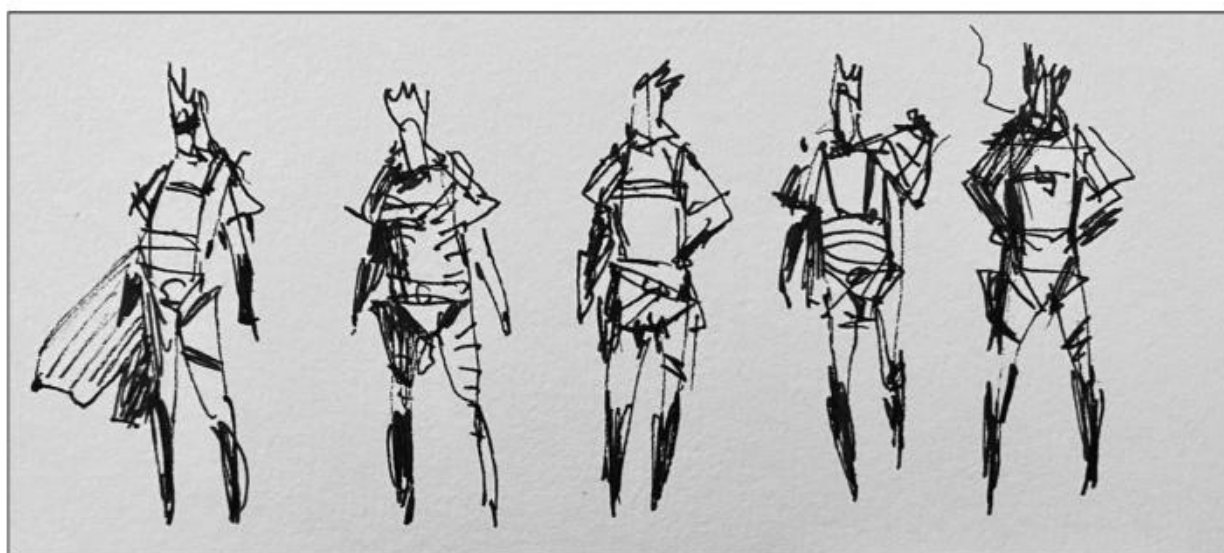
### A small description of the character

- He has a humanoid appearance – but he's certainly not human!
- He's from another world, and has accidentally landed on Earth. Specifically, he is from Mars! I like this idea, because we don't yet know whether there is life on Mars. How he got to Earth is irrelevant now.
- He is a very funny and charismatic character.
- One of his qualities is that he loves cinema.
- His look features many elements from different films.
- A Martian who is just obsessed with movies!

## 1 Research and collect references

First of all, when I already have a task/brief or some kind of description of the character, I will start by collecting references. This is a very important part of the creation process! The search for references usually takes place on the internet, but also through books and taking my own photos. I usually choose what inspires me, what tickles my imagination. It's very important to find references that you've never seen before. It is better to spend more time on this step than to immediately rush into the drawing process. ➡





## 2 Draw thumbnails

When I have collected enough references and have an initial idea, then I start to draw small thumbnail sketches. These can be done very quickly, and they only require a small amount of detail. They can take a few minutes to create for a simple still life or portrait, or up to a few hours for a more complicated or larger piece. For this type of work, I would not spend more than five minutes drawing a thumbnail sketch.



## 3 Start with the head

The key to good character design is creating a character that audiences connect with – someone eye-catching and memorable. That's why artists can't just rely on good drawings; they must truly understand the character's personality and backstory. My next step is to create the character's head. In this case, I'll be designing using a photo. To achieve the best result, the photo must be in good resolution. In my case, I used a photo from the 3D.SK website.

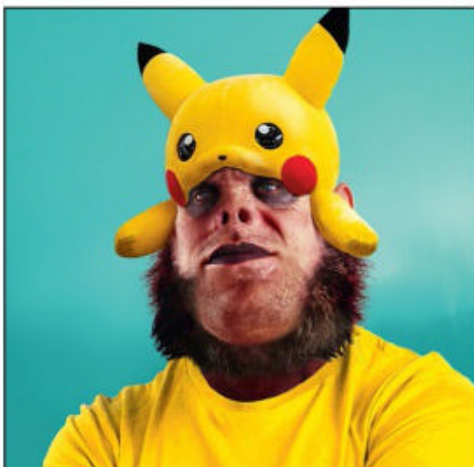


## 4 Consider the anatomy

When I am designing a head, it helps me to think of a caricature: featuring big shapes and an interesting silhouette. I enlarge the jaw and make the eyes smaller. To ensure the design still looks believable, you need to understand the anatomy. Also, when you are using this approach, it is much easier to use photographs if they are taken with the same camera, the same lenses, and in the same lighting conditions.



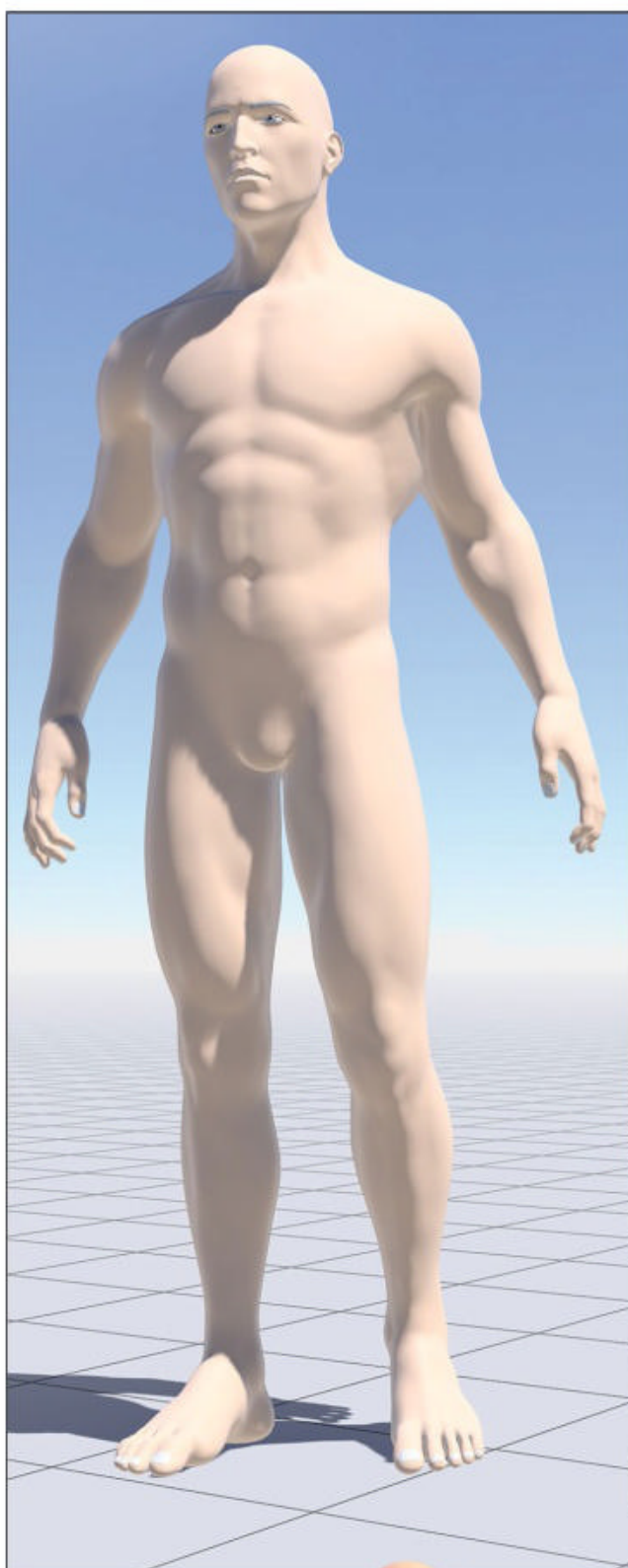
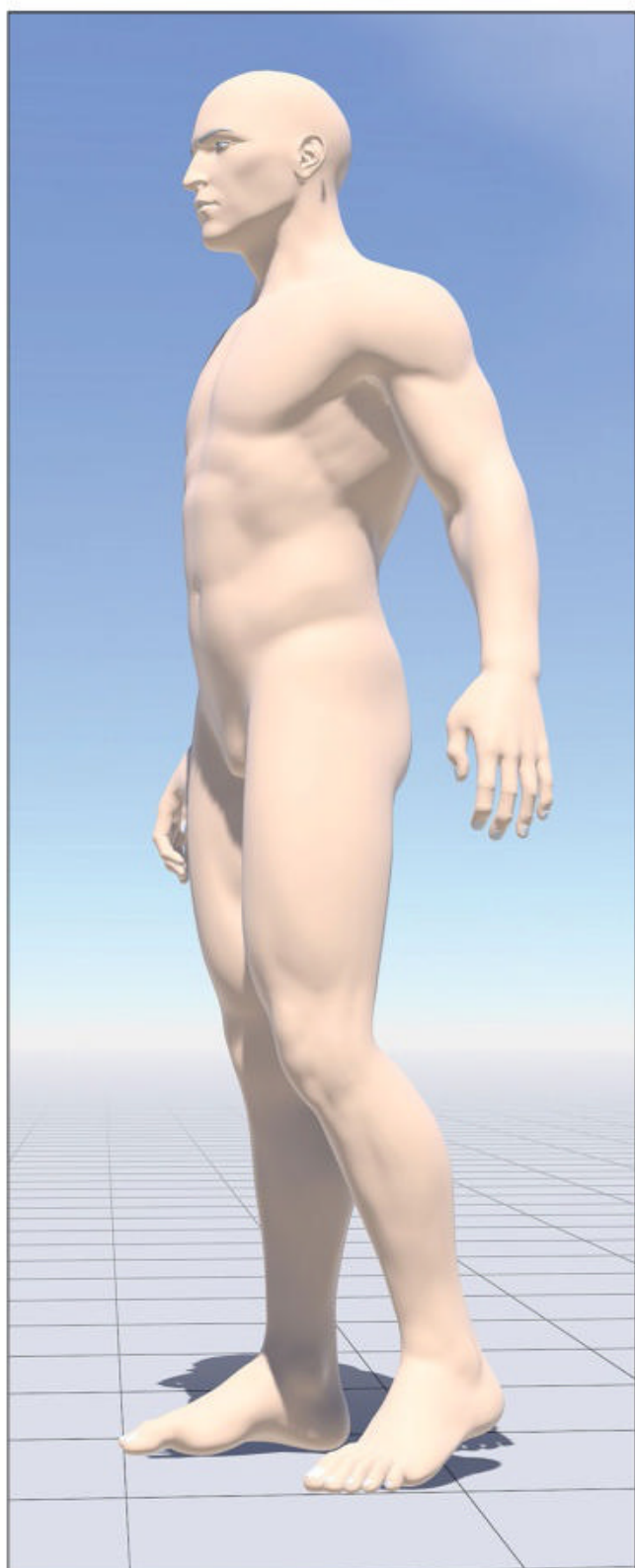




## 5 Expressions and clothing choices

To make sure the design works effectively, you can experiment with how your character looks expressing different emotions; for example, how he smiles or looks when angry, how he opens his mouth, and so on. Maybe try a different hairstyle, or a new selection of clothes or accessories. At this stage you also can figure out what colours work best for your character. ➡➡





## 6 Pose your character

In this next stage, we need to build the whole body with the head. There are different ways to do this; I have been using the 3D program Magic Poser. With this program, I can quickly create a pose, set the lights, and save the file as PNG. It is important to find a suitable pose; it should be expressive, but the most important thing is not to overdo it. Do not make the pose too pretentious. Therefore, at first it is better to start off with a neutral pose.

## 7 Tweak the body

When I've have chosen a suitable pose, I replace the head with the head of our character, and change the proportions of the body. I increase the shoulders and neck, making him look slightly heavier without overdoing it.







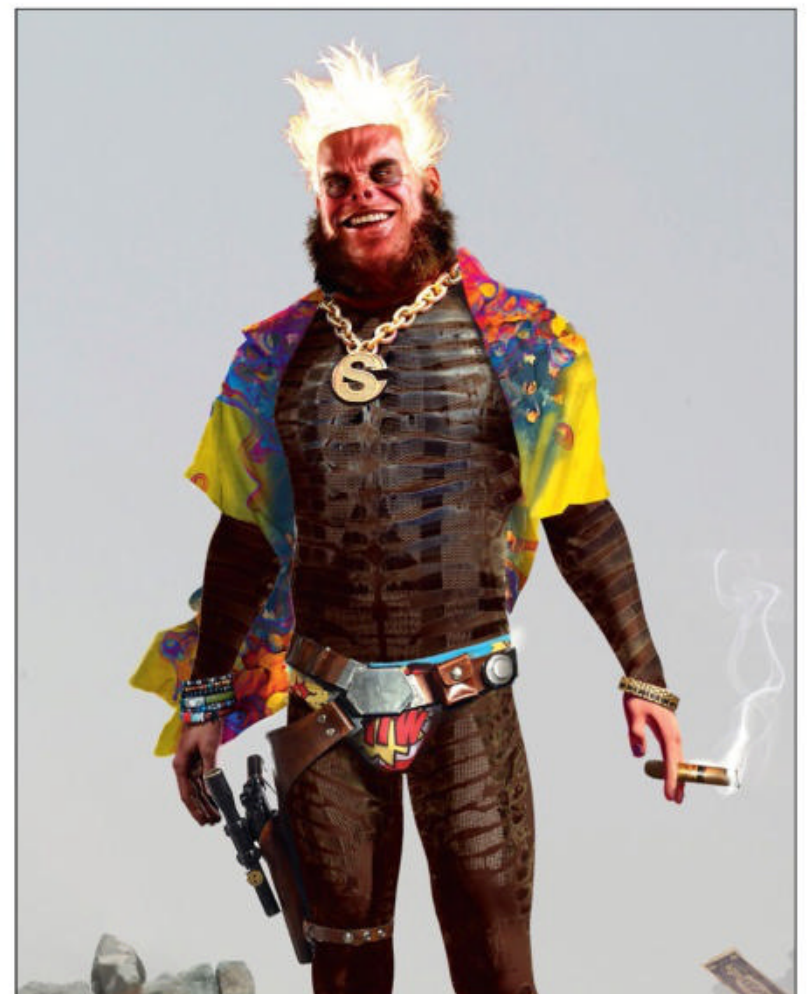
## 8 Add clothing

The body is ready, now I can dress the character. Since he is from another world, first I decided to dress him in some kind of jump suit, something I imagine he wears in his world. For this I will darken his body and create organic patterns using pre-made references. Then in Photoshop, with the help of the warp tool and clipping masks, I add patterns on the body of the character.



## 9 Build a background

The next step will be adding a background. The background should be simple so as not to distract attention from our character. But even this simple background I will build from several photos to make it look unique. I have also chosen to add bright speedos like vintage Superman, for a bit of extra humour!



## 10 Props and details

And now for the final touches. I will add some props and details to our character for some extra personality: a Hawaiian shirt, Star Wars gun, money bag, gold necklace, and a cigar. Now I am happy! 🍷



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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...

4  
PRODUCTS  
ON TEST



### HARDWARE

#### 78 Apple iPad Air (5th Gen)

We take a good look at this powerful tablet and its features, and compare it to the likes of the iPad Pro.

### BOOKS

#### 80 Character Design Collection: Fairy Tales/Folklore

Classic characters are brought to life in this lovely illustrated collection full of inspirational material.

#### 81 The Art of the Batman

Explore the new movie with this gorgeous hardback filled with concept art, interviews, production design and more.



#### 81 Artists' Master Series: Color & Light

In-depth expert training to help you master these fundamental elements of image creation – colour and lighting.

### RATINGS EXPLAINED

★★★★★ Magnificent

★★★★ Great

★★★ Good

★★ Poor

★ Atrocious





The iPad Air (5th Gen) delivers a notepad-sized package with the power of a MacBook Pro.

## Apple iPad Air (5th Gen)

**PORTABLE POWERHOUSE** The new iPad Air is elbowing right into the iPad Pro's territory, blurring the lines for creatives.

**Price** From £569/\$599 **Company** Apple **Web** [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)

**T**he iPad Air (5th Gen) takes a design that already followed in the footsteps of the iPad Pro, then throws in the latest iPad Pro range's party piece – the powerful Apple M1 processor – to create a mid-range tablet that's even more tempting.

There isn't a long list of other changes from the previous version of the iPad Air – a better front camera, improved USB-C and the option of 5G connectivity – but this tablet just had an overhaul, and wasn't in need of another. All it needed was a bit of modernification, because the cheaper iPad mini (6th Gen) and iPad 10.2 (9th Gen) had both come out since then, with some features that left the Air behind. But Apple didn't stop at modernising it – it massively juiced it up at the same time.

When the iPad Pro (2021) was released, its use of the Apple M1 chip was a revolution, and it put the tablet in the same league as the MacBook

Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) for computing power. That makes total sense for a 'pro' machine – but now that the M1 is in the iPad Air as well, creatives might be left wondering which of the current iPad generations is best for them. So is the iPad Air the new go-to for pros wanting to maximise their budgets?

The most basic version will cost you £569/\$599/AU\$929, which includes 64GB of storage – that's fine for home use, but is likely to end up a bit



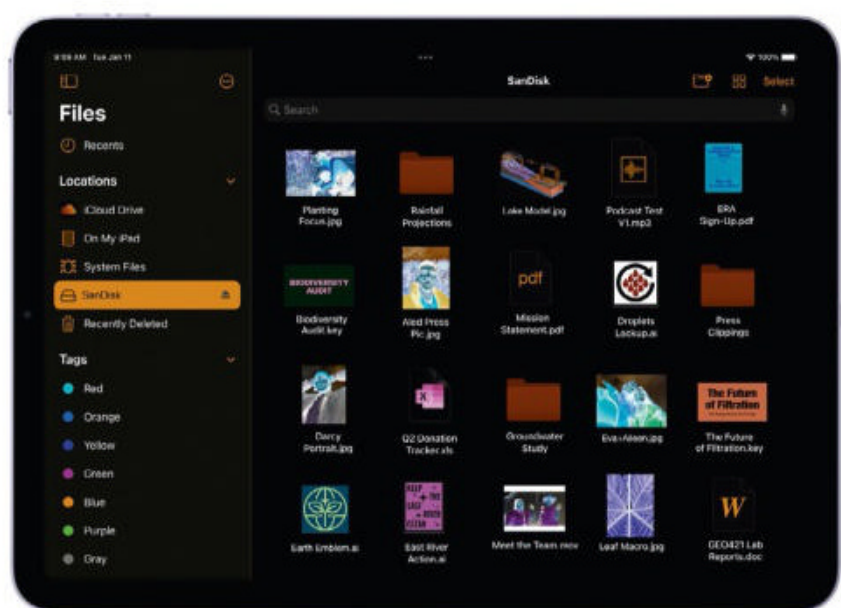
As ever, Apple's aluminium finish feels very premium, and there's a range of colours. We had the blue for testing, and it's by far our favourite.

restrictive for creative work. The better option is likely to be the 256GB version, which costs £719/\$749/AU\$1,159. This is, however, the largest that you can get in the iPad Air. If you want bigger, the iPad Pro can go up to 2TB. We should also note here that you can get the iPad Pro 11-inch 128GB for £749/\$799/AU\$1,199 – and that's a very tough decision. For only a little more money, you'd get a brighter 120Hz ProMotion screen, a Thunderbolt 4 port, better dual-lens camera with LiDAR, and a front camera with Face ID and True Depth sensor, but less storage.

### GET CREATING

The screen on the new iPad Air basically hasn't changed from the previous version, which means you get a 2,360 x 1,640 IPS LCD panel. That's 264 pixels per inch, which isn't as sharp as the iPad mini (6th Gen) or phone screens, but is perfectly suitable for the distances you'll usually use the





The USB-C port has been upgraded to a USB 3.1 Gen 2 port, which means max speeds of 10Gbps – it was 5Gbps before.

## “We’re talking more processor performance than a high-end MacBook Pro – in a mid-range tablet”

iPad Air. With great DCI-P3 colour support and superb accuracy, it’s a great screen for creative use overall. The backlighting is even, and contrast is good – the maximum typical brightness of 500 nits gives media and apps a fair amount of vibrancy.

Having said that, the 600 nits of brightness you get from the 11-inch iPad Pro is a clear improvement side by side – though individually, it’s harder to spot a marked change. That’s a bit different for the 12.9-inch iPad Pro, with its mini-LED ‘XDR’ display that can reach 1,000 nits of full-screen brightness for HDR content – and that’s clearly something special when you use it even without other screens nearby.

The lack of 120Hz screen is only a practical concern for Apple Pencil 2 users, because doubling the refresh rate halves the time it takes to see the

results of your drawing on-screen, and faster response times make it easier to be accurate when precision drawing. But for more casual drawing, 60Hz will be fine.

### POWERED BY M1

The Apple M1 chip used here is a behemoth for a fan-less tablet. You get eight processor cores, 8GB of RAM, and eight GPU cores.

The only difference from the iPad Pro’s chip is that you could get a version with 16GB of RAM on the iPad Pro (if you buy 1TB or 2TB of storage). Otherwise, this is the same silicon that’s so impressed everyone – in the various benchmarking tests we tried, it and the 12.9-inch iPad Pro with M1 were effectively identical. So we’re talking more processor performance than a high-end MacBook Pro – in a mid-range tablet.

Illustrations with over a hundred layers are instant to react in Serif Affinity Photo, with effects applied just as quickly. Video editing in LumaFusion is the same – playback is instant on multiple tracks of 4K footage, and applying any kind of filter or grading adjustment happens with no delay at all. We didn’t try anything that the M1 struggled to achieve, though it certainly could be possible – image creation with giant canvas dimensions and



It’s great to have 5G here as an option, now that you can make more complex creations than ever.

many layers will certainly hit RAM limits if you go wild.

The front camera is now a 12MP sensor with ultra-wide lens, and it supports Apple’s Centre Stage feature. This means that in compatible apps, the camera detects your face, and crops and frames you in shot. If you move after that, it can actually follow you in its 122-degree field of vision. If it detects more than one person, it’ll do a wider crop to fit you both in – and it’ll change on the fly as people come in and out of view. It’s a very smart and useful feature.

Overall, the iPad Air is a pretty astounding creative computer for under £600/\$600. A high-quality screen, supreme portability, a huge range of interesting apps, and enough power to make sure that you can do whatever you want with them.

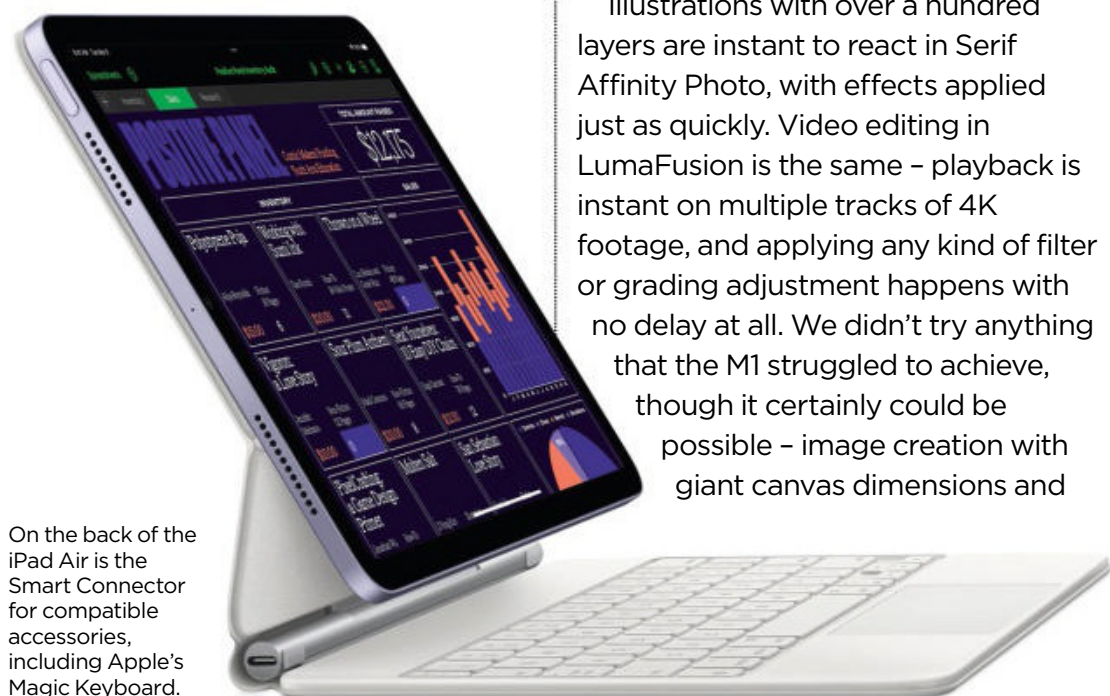
The iPad Pro 11-inch still offers more, no question – the brighter screen busts reflections better, the 120Hz refresh rate improves the Apple Pencil experience, and the Thunderbolt 4 port gives extra flexibility. But these are now niche improvements that not everyone needs – for most people, the iPad Air is already as much tablet as you can possibly make use. Maybe even more.

### DETAILS

#### Features

- 64GB/256GB capacity
- Apple M1 chip
- 8-core CPU
- 8-core graphics
- Apple Neural Engine
- 8GB RAM
- 10.9-inch (diagonal)
- LED-backlit Multi-Touch display
- True Tone display
- Fingerprint-resistant oleophobic coating
- 2,360 x 1,640-pixel resolution at 264 pixels per inch (ppi)
- 12MP Ultra Wide front camera, 122° field of view
- f/2.4 aperture and 12MP Wide camera, f/1.8 aperture
- Digital zoom up to 5x
- 4K video recording at 24fps, 25fps, 30fps or 60fps
- USB-C port with support for: Charging
- DisplayPort USB 3.1 Gen 2 (up to 10Gb/s)
- Up to 10 hours of surfing the web on Wi-Fi or watching video.

#### Rating

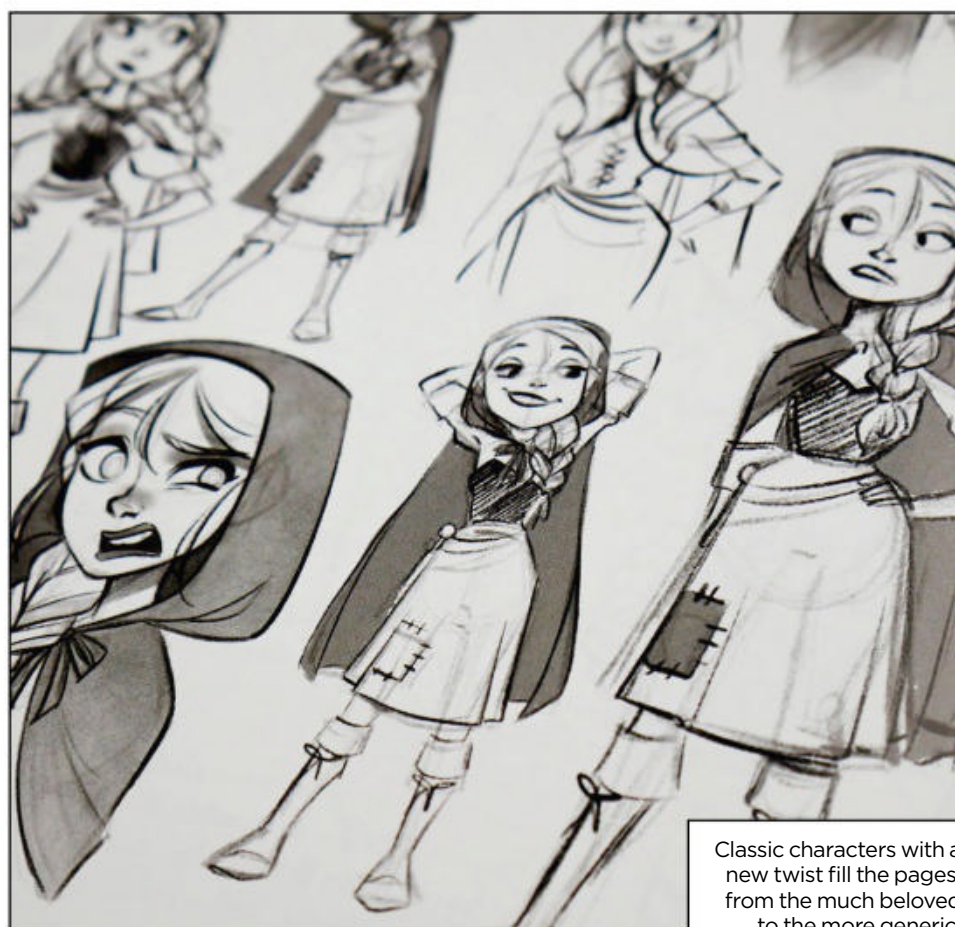


On the back of the iPad Air is the Smart Connector for compatible accessories, including Apple’s Magic Keyboard.





Each character sheet shows details of design progression.



Classic characters with a new twist fill the pages, from the much beloved to the more generic.

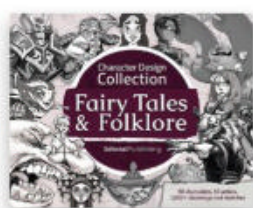
## Character Design Collection: Fairy Tales & Folklore

**FAVOURITES REIMAGINED** 3dtotal Publishing bring a collection of classic characters to life in traditional forms, as well as some new takes

**Author** Various **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £25/\$33 **Web** [www.3dtotal.com](http://www.3dtotal.com) **Available** Now

**W**ith a long history of publishing wonderful books for artists, 3dtotal Publishing's range includes a wide selection of training books focusing on various aspects of the artistic process. **Fairy Tales & Folklore** differs from many of their other titles, in that it doesn't teach any skills or drill down into processes and workflows.

What it is great for is as a source of inspiration and as a reference book for character design and concepting.



Plentiful notes accompany the sketches amongst the pages of this book.

It features 216 pages of sketchbook highlights from 50 different artists, each with their own style and take on some much beloved characters, from Robin Hood to less specific characters like gnomes and dwarves.

You will find little in the way of reading material here, other than the intro and the last few pages with details of each artist featured, much like other titles in 3dtotal Publishing's Character Design Collection.

This can be seen as either a positive or a negative, depending on what you expect. For the casual reader/artist it is really nice to see wonderfully reproduced pages from some top talent, without the need for wasting space on words. Most pages show the creative flow, rather than the step-by-step process, in a way that lets you



As well as overall design there are plenty of sketches of expressions and different poses.

understand how each design progresses and iterates.

For other readers, especially the ones who prefer to be more hand-held through their exploration, this might not be the right choice – but even for them I feel this book has an understated value.

3dtotal are a well-loved publisher of this type of book, and the Character Design Collection is a refreshing set.

**RATING** ★★★★★☆

“A great source of inspiration for character design and concepting”



# The Art of the Batman

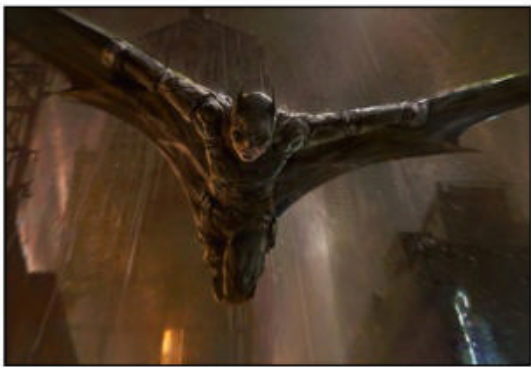
**CAPED CRUSADES** A fantastic exploration of the artistic production of the new film, including concept art, interviews and production design



**Author** James Field **Publisher** Abrams **Price** £35/\$46 **Web** [www.abramsandchronicle.co.uk](http://www.abramsandchronicle.co.uk) **Available** 28 Apr 2022

**T**he Art of the Batman is one of the best 'art of' books I've seen in many years. It drills down into lots of detail about the production design and concept art for the film, with lots of notes on the motivation behind design decisions and comments from the crew, including director Matt Reeves himself, and cast members.

This is a large, hardback volume printed on nice stock, presenting art

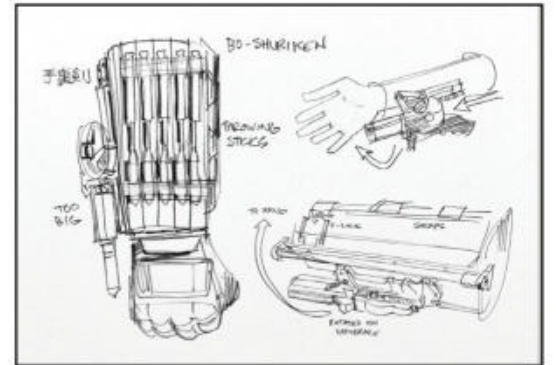


The concept art in this title is gorgeous and informative.

and photos well, and the layout keeps pages looking fresh. Broken down into key sections for things like specific characters or props, as well as broader topics like the city itself or tactical weaponry, it's a book you can lose yourself in for a while to be immersed in the world of the bat, or for a more casual glance over a coffee.

I particularly like the way it refers to historical versions of the story and design language from previous iterations, depicting the evolution of various elements and the love and reverence shown.

In fact, these ties to what's gone before litter the pages of The Art of the Batman – sometimes obviously, others with a more subtle approach – and this makes it feel like it will appeal to fans of all ages, from the early comics through to the Tim Burton



If you are interested in detailed production design there is a lot to learn.

years right up to this latest incarnation. I'd rank this book very highly as a simple piece of movie-related publishing but also as a source of inspiration. It's a very well-crafted title with a lot to offer any fan of Batman, movie production or concept art in general.

**RATING** ★★★★★

# Artists' Master Series: Color & Light

**MATERIAL MASTERY** Expert advice and in-depth training that could help artists of any level increase their understanding of a particularly difficult artistic subject



**Author** Various **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £30/\$39 **Web** [www.3dtotal.com](http://www.3dtotal.com) **Available** Now

**M**astery of an artistic endeavour takes time, patience and practice. With this title, 3dtotal Publishing aim to help you gain this mastery, with a deep understanding of a fairly specific topic but one that can transform your work. Understanding light and colour is one of the cornerstones of creating believability in your work, even if it is fantastical in content.



This title helps you build solid foundations for your own art.

The first sections cover a lot of theoretical ground and nail all the details about how light interacts with various materials. This goes into a lot of depth and helpfully offers both scientific and art-based insights into the subject matter.

The following sections are tutorial based and it is here that you can see how to utilise all that was taught before in a more contextual environment. These tutorials are step by step, process based and work really well in conjunction with the theory elements that came before. The depth of the book doesn't prevent this from being easy to read and it is littered with tips and smaller snippets of information that are truly useful and make it a title every artist should read.

**RATING** ★★★★★

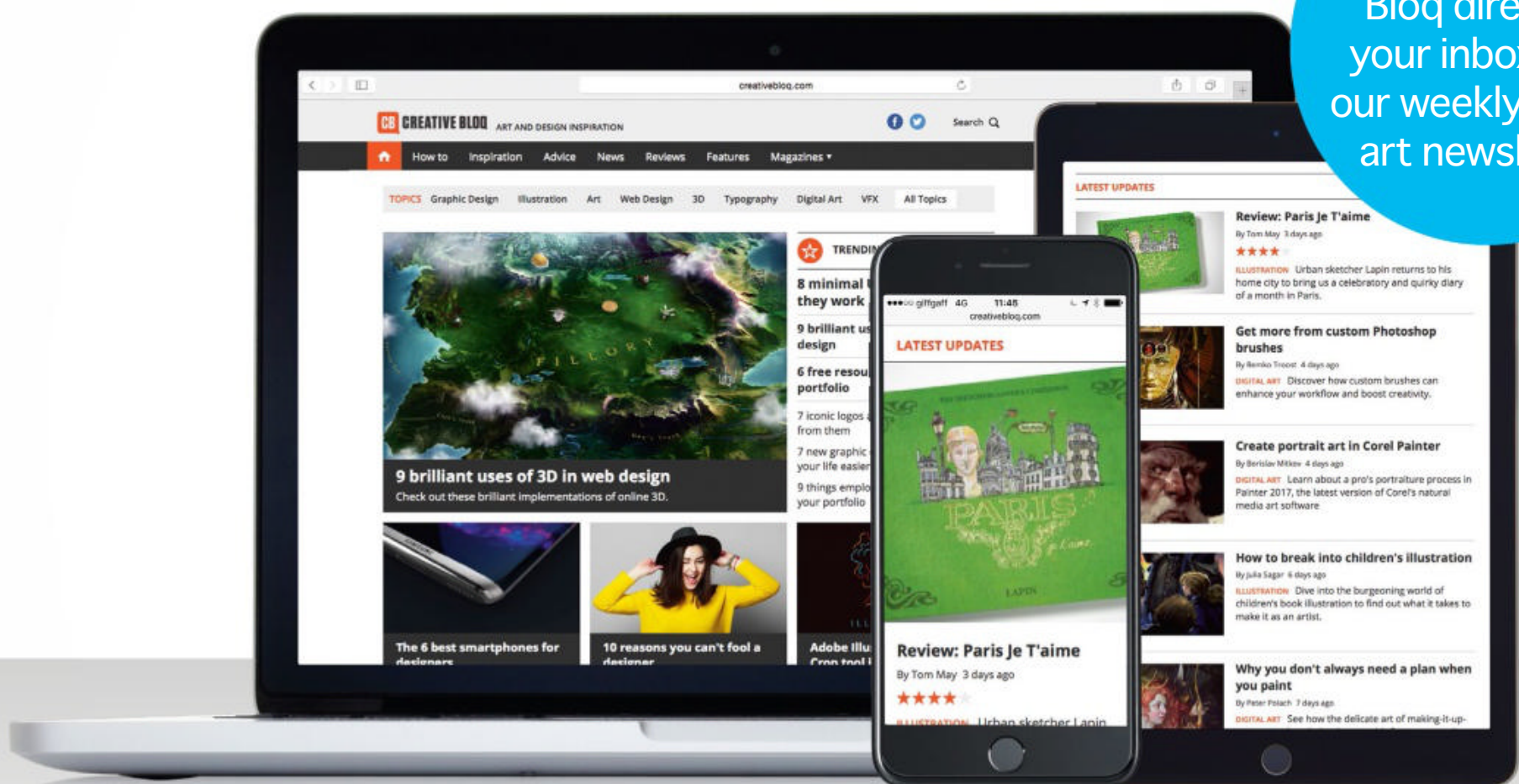


Master the interplay between light and the materials it falls on in this book.



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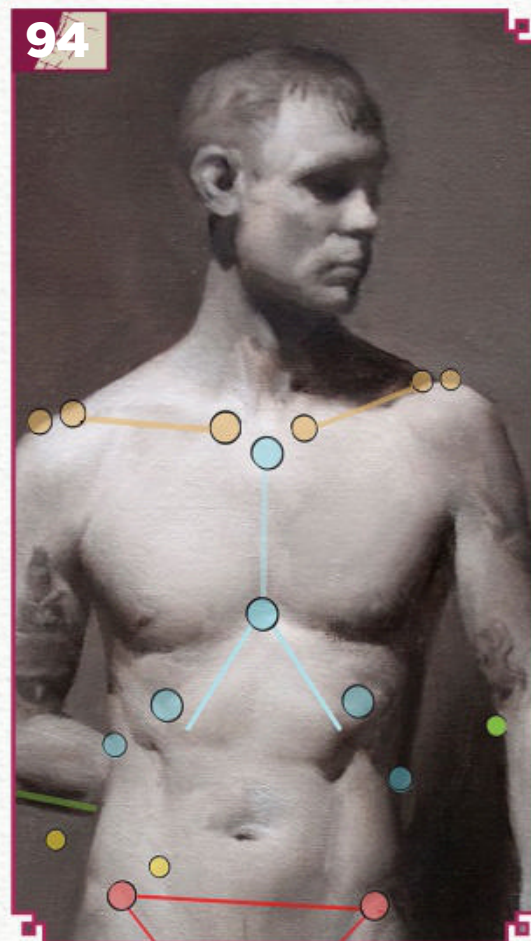
# Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

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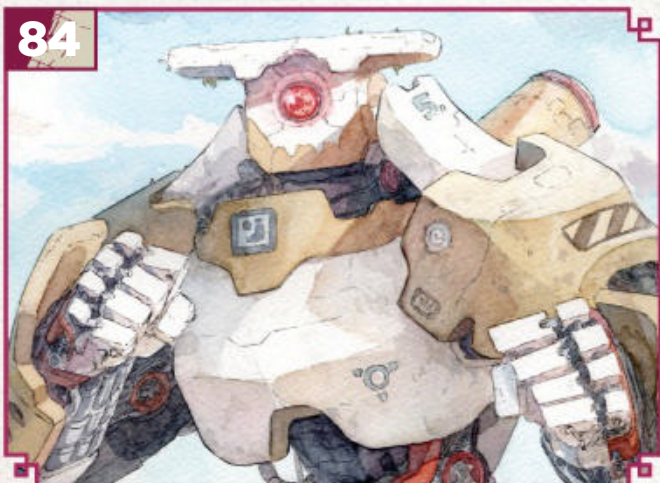
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# FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

## Marcel Mosqi

**LOCATION:** France **MEDIA:** Indian ink, watercolour **WEB:** [www.artstation.com/mosqi](http://www.artstation.com/mosqi)

Marcel is a concept artist who has watched “too many martial arts movies and played too many JRPGs.” Having discovered watercolours a few years ago, he has never looked back.



### 1 FORMER PARTNERS

“I wanted to recreate the feeling of a small village in the South of France, with these two characters that don’t fit in the scenery.”

### 2 LAST ASSAULT

“To make this look as epic as possible, I twisted the angle and contrasted the flowing forms of the women with the wall of robots.”

### 3 TEAMING UP

“The robot had to look as big as possible, so the watercolours on it are lighter than the other characters to show the distance.”





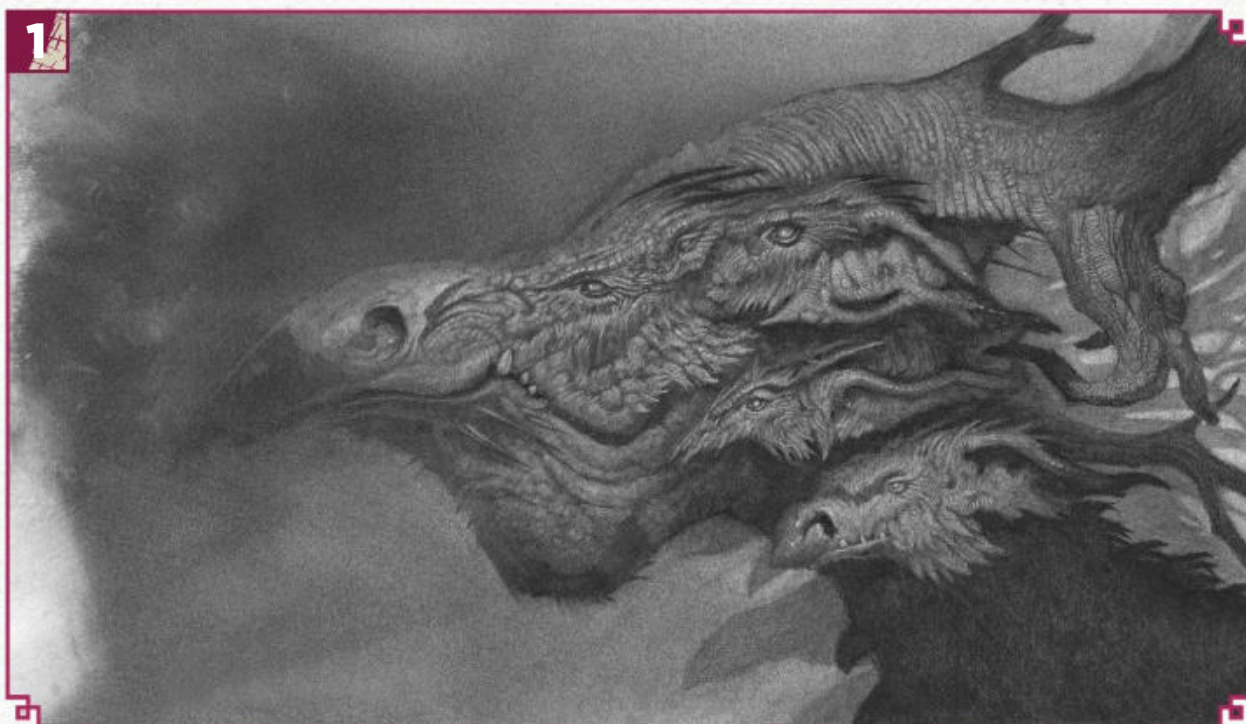




## Eric Messinger

**LOCATION:** US **MEDIA:** Charcoal powder/pencils, metallic ink, metallic watercolour cakes **WEB:** [www.instagram.com/ericmessingerart](http://www.instagram.com/ericmessingerart)

Eric is a concept and gallery artist who specialises in otherworldly character design. “I love the value and textures of black and white work.” With careful use of kneaded erasers, he pulls and pushes abstract shapes into refined details.



### 1 **DRAGON OF THE CALM SKIES**

“While I love the overall dark feel and the lost lines of this work, the details were the crowning touch.”

### 2 **NYOOGEN**

“When the Nyoogen appears out of the black mist, he will decide your luck based on your deeds from the previous year.”

### 3 **GOBLIN LORD**

“This was an exercise in learning how to apply charcoal pencils as shading over a layer of metallic watercolour paint.”

### 4 **REMOVING THE BLANKET OF ILLUSION**

“His claws gently sink into the golden fabric. The blanket of illusion shatters and then begins to tear with gentle vibrations.”

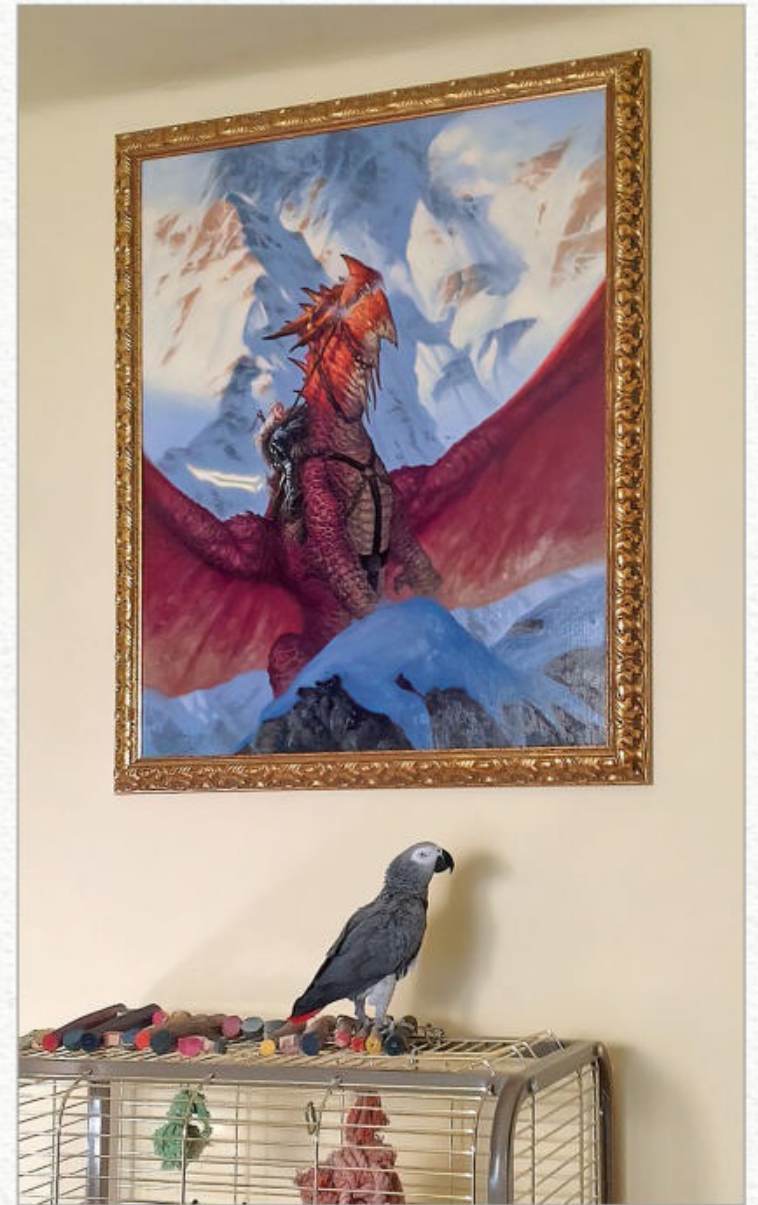












Pencil

Acrylic

Oils

# CREATE A FANTASY OIL PAINTING

MILIVOJ ĆERAN demonstrates how to paint a classic high fantasy scene with oil and acrylics, featuring a fearsome dragon and its warrior rider

For this piece of personal work I desired to create an epic, classic high fantasy painting featuring a dragon and a woman warrior. I decided on a setting in the snowy mountains, which is a subject I really love to paint whenever I have a chance. And I wanted to paint it big. Most of the artworks I paint professionally tend to be a smaller size – between 40-60cm. But this one is painted on a 100 x 80cm

canvas (39 inches height, 31 inches width). So this image was more an expression of artistic freedom (painting without a brief, no art directors, branded characters or deadlines), and a flashback to the days spent at the academy of fine arts when we painted really big canvases.

This scene is underpainted in acrylic, and painted in oils. In my professional career I paint mostly with acrylics or watercolour/Ecoline. I got used to working with quick-

drying medium, and a lot of layering. In this case there is still a traditional painting process when it comes to layers, but oil colours dry a LOT slower, so it takes a different kind of painting approach. Here I will break down my methods.

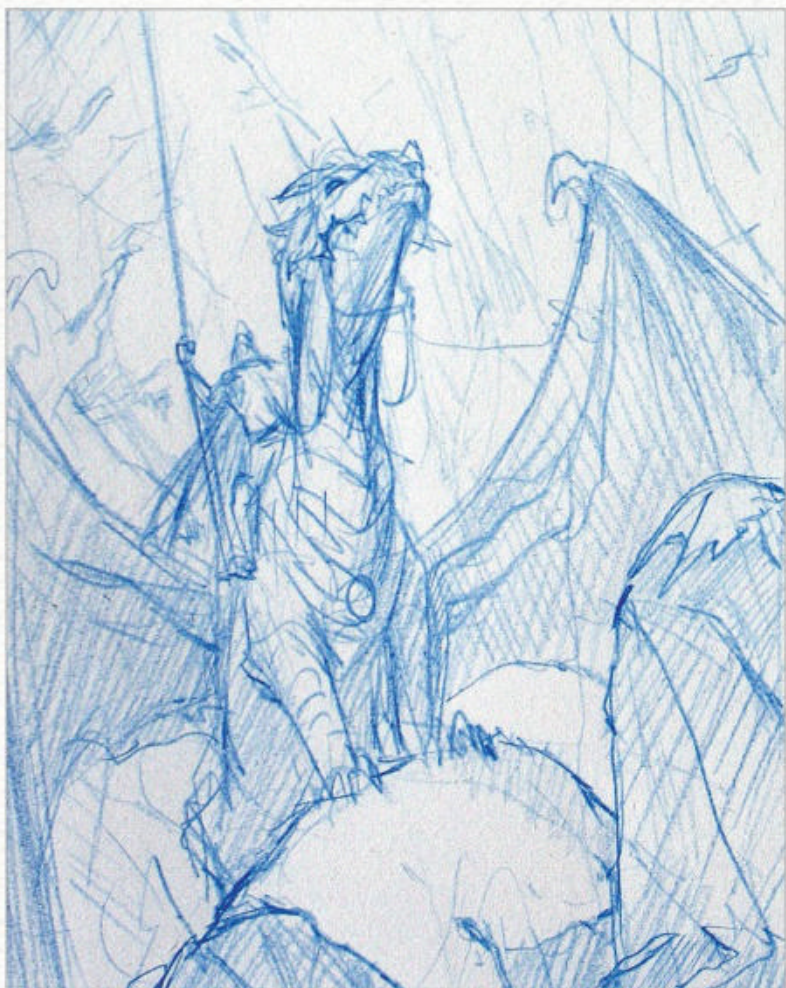


Milivoj has been a professional illustrator since 2002, and is the author of the Norse Mythology Art

Book. An artist known for work on Magic: The Gathering and D&D. [norse-myth.com](http://norse-myth.com)



# Traditional Artist Workshop



## 1 Initial, rough sketch

In this first step, I set the composition using quick lines and shapes. This is an essential, fundamental stage, because here everything is placed – the camera angle, characters, background etc. Initially, the dragon rider was holding a lance.



## 2 Work on the details

This drawing is made on A3 size paper (roughly 16 x 12 inches). I am creating a more detailed sketch of the characters – the riding equipment and bites, scales on the dragon, female warrior character and armour. I decided to change the weapon, so instead of a lance, she is holding a magical sword.



## 3 Finished detailed sketch

The preliminary drawing is now finished; I have added all the key details and included shapes of the snowy mountains in the background. The next step is to scan the drawing, and enlarge it to the desired size in the printing shop.



## 4 Cover back of paper with graphite

The preliminary drawing is enlarged in the print studio, and I am covering the backside of the paper with graphite. A note: always test the graphite and the surface you are painting on. Otherwise you can spend an hour or two transferring the drawing just to discover nothing got copied to the canvas.





## 5 *Transfer the drawing to paper*

When the paper is taped to the canvas, I transfer the drawing with the pencil. I draw over the lines, with harder pressure. Since the backside of the printed, enlarged sketch is covered in graphite, lines are transferred to canvas. The lines are light, but visible enough for the next step.



## 6 *Redraw pencil sketch on canvas*

After I transfer the enlarged sketch to the canvas, I remove the sketch. Then I redraw all lines on the drawing with pencil. It is important to take care of each step without rushing. I can't go to the painting process before everything is carefully drawn. It is much easier to make reworks and adjustments in the drawing stage than later on in the process.

### MATERIALS

#### CANVAS

■ 100 x 80cm (39 inches height, 31 inches width) linen stretched canvas.

■ 3 extra coats of gesso added and sanded for finer structure.

#### BRUSHES

■ Sable brushes (synthetic)

■ Flat brushes (synthetic)

#### ACRYLICS

■ Winsor & Newton 'Galeria'

■ Talens 'Amsterdam'

#### OIL PAINTS

■ Daler-Rowney 'Georgian'

■ Winsor & Newton 'Winton'

■ Lefranc & Bourgeois 'Louvre'

#### PENCILS

■ HB, graphite 6B



## 7 *Ink the drawing on canvas*

After the pencil drawing is finished, I work with a sable brush and diluted black acrylic colour. So even if I use the popular term 'inking' here, it is actually linear darkening of the underdrawing. The purpose of this is to make a dark linear drawing before the underpainting starts. Otherwise the pencil would be lost under layers of paint, since it is not so visible as black lines.



## 8 *Sepia washes*

I use a wide brush and very diluted acrylic paint, sepia tone, to add some tonal values. This is just a small addition to the black linear drawing. Acrylic colours dry super fast, which is great for working in layers. ➡➡





## 9 *Burnt sienna underpainting*

I cover the whole canvas in acrylic, in burnt sienna tone. The purpose of this is to 'kill' whiteness of the painting ground, and set the middle tone. That way it's easier to make highlights and shades. This method was popular in the Renaissance and especially Baroque periods. It also provides a great combination of colours when we see reddish underpainting beneath some blue or green paint.



## 10 *Tonal values in burnt umber and sienna*

I start to work on the volumes and big shapes. I use burnt umber and burnt sienna diluted acrylic to darken the objects and work on the volume. At the same time I am using white colour to highlight the brightest parts or details, like the sword of the female warrior.



## 11 *Basic colours in acrylic*

The acrylic paint is thinned with water to a milky consistency. The foreground must be dark, and the mountains in the background light. I decided to aim for the 'golden hour' lighting mood. So the lower parts of the mountain will be painted in cold, bluish colours, and parts hit by the sun will be warm and yellowish.



# In depth Fantasy oil painting



## 12 Add more colour

I start to work on the dragon, adding red washes of diluted acrylic paint. It is a kind of glazing or tinting – the layers of paint are transparent, and tonal values are visible. I've also painted dark blue snow in the foreground, with slightly thicker paint. This will help the figure to stand out, and helps to distinguish the foreground from the background.



## 13 Paint in oils

After the whole canvas is underpainted and roughly painted in acrylic, I start to paint in oils. The drying time is much longer, which is great for painting fine and smooth values. The relation between warm and cold colours is still very important. The snow is yellowish pale in the sun, and light blue in the shade. Rocks are burnt sienna/ochre/brown in the sun, and bluish-grey cold in the shadow. The dragon's head is warm red/orange in the sun, and magenta/purple in the shadow.



## 14 Finish the details

The most rewarding part of the painting process is adding the final touches. I use oils and sable brushes for painting tiny details. Since the colour is wet, and I don't want to smudge already painted areas, I use a mahlstick for supporting the hand and arm. Details must be painted precisely. The sword of the female warrior is the brightest focus on the painting.



## 15 Framed painting at the exhibition

With all the additional finishing touches complete, I have now displayed the final painting with a big, decorated golden frame, in the fashion of Baroque artists. That was the final touch of an interesting personal project to make a large, classic high fantasy painting with an epic feel. ■



*Pencil*

# UNDERSTANDING BONE STRUCTURE

**CHARLIE PICKARD** continues his ten-part series of quick tips on anatomy to improve your figure drawing; this month, he explores bones and why they matter

One of the most undervalued areas of study for new students of figure drawing lies in the bones; it is not uncommon to hear people question our need to have knowledge of them at all. However, the bones are the structural core. While they do not always show themselves on the superficial layer we often draw or paint, in a much deeper way they create the shapes/forms of the figure.

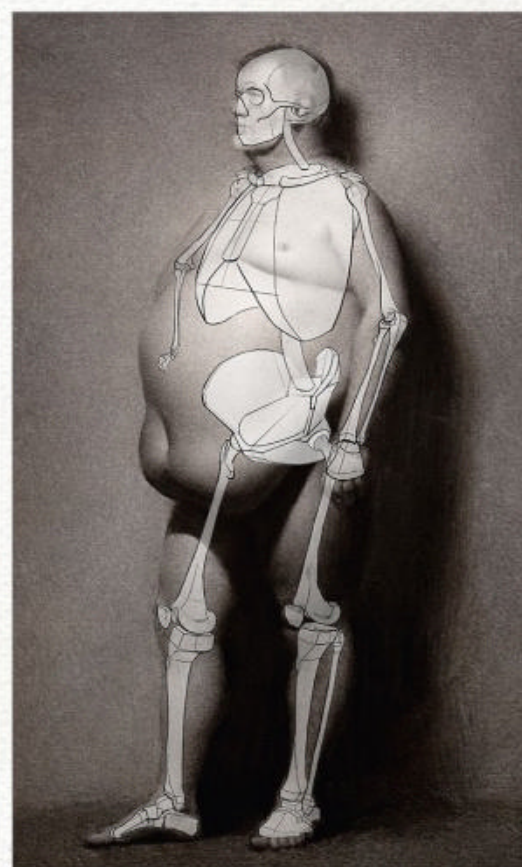
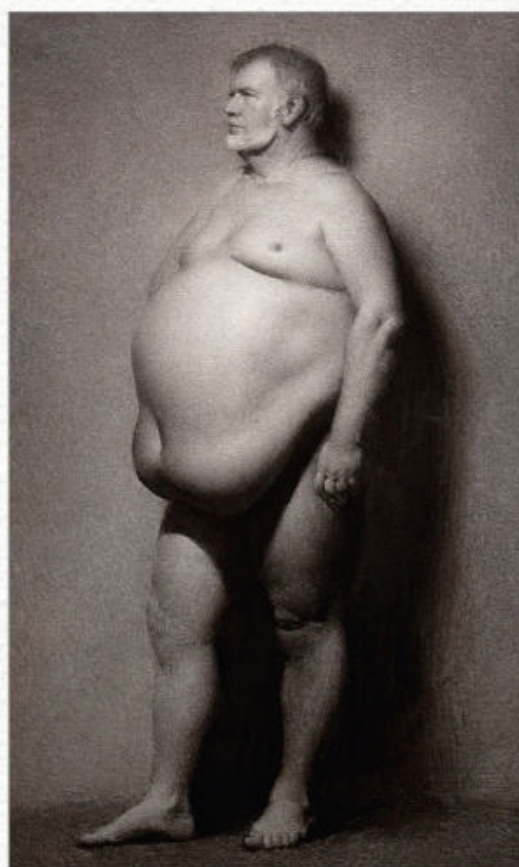
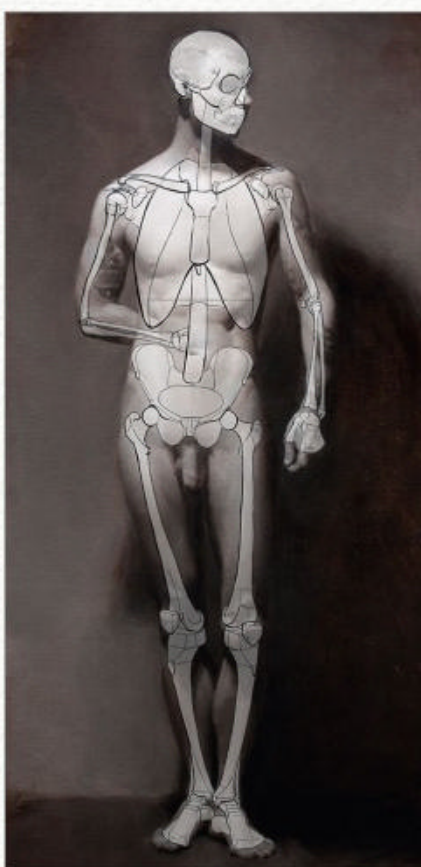
## ANATOMY – PART 3

In fact, all of the superficial areas that are more obviously useful lie on top of this deeper structure of bones and are affected by them in profound ways. A proper and full study of bones will gift an artist with a strong fundamental understanding of not only what details appear where on the body, but also why these details appear the way they do. Their study is foundationally important to any artist who is looking to have an understanding of the figure, which

will enable them to not only copy a reference in front of them, but when it comes to their own designs, a thorough understanding of the forms and functions of bones is simply indispensable.



**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](http://www.charliepickardart.com)**



### 1 **Bones offer a consistent base for proportion**

One of the easiest ways to see how this knowledge of bones can be beneficial is in how they gift us with a consistent basis for proportion across body types.

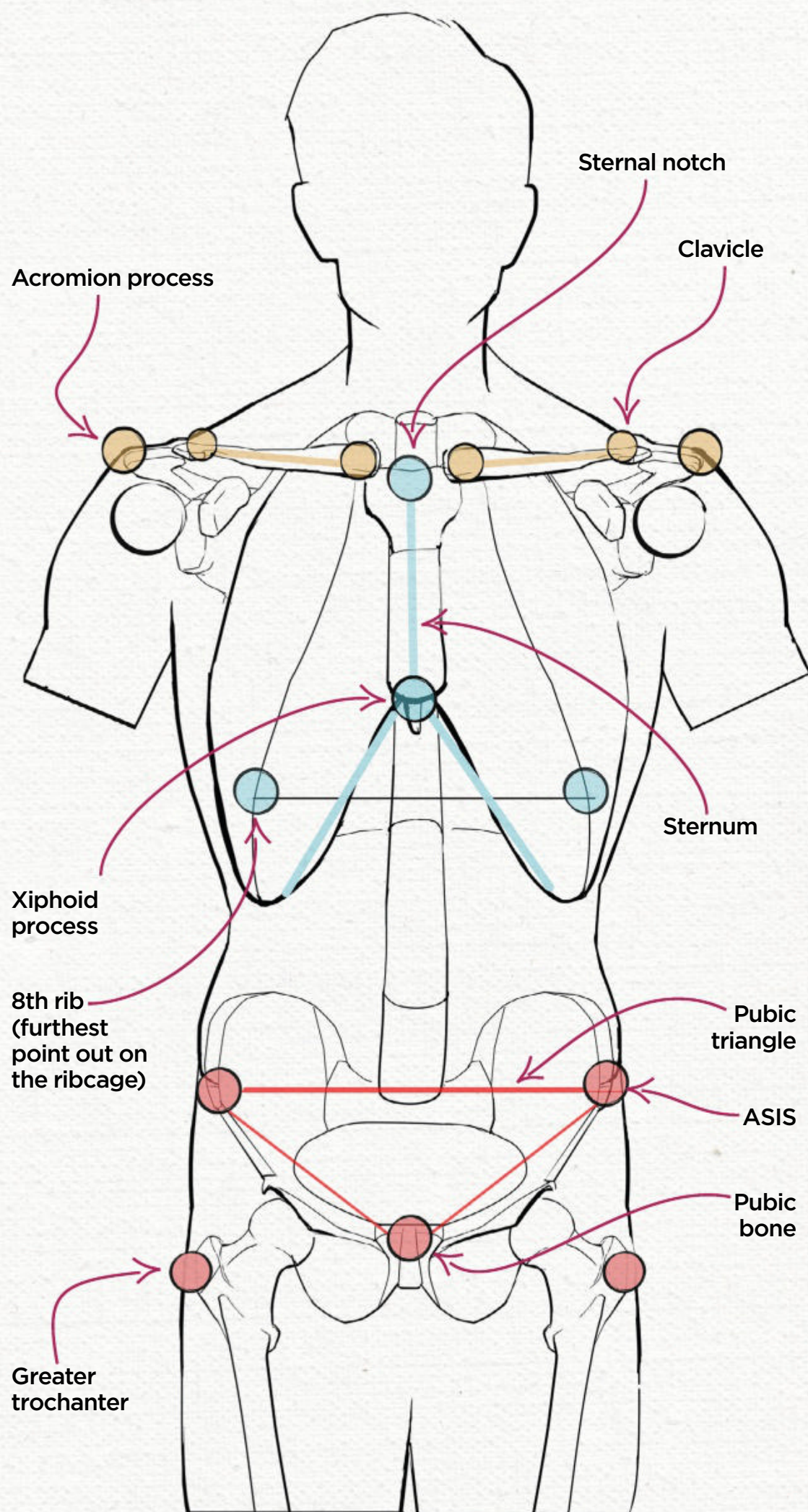
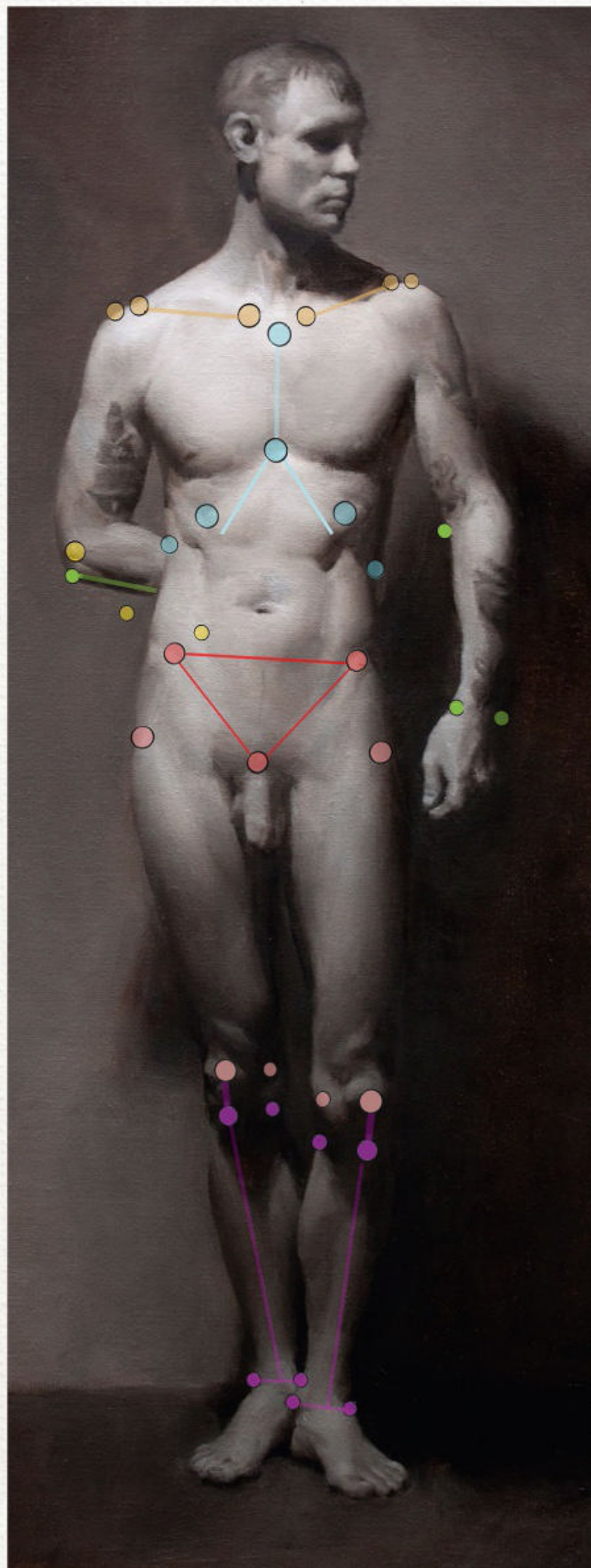
If a model has larger or smaller muscles or fat pads, this will affect their 'body type'. The

exact relationship of these 'fleshy' masses of course varies wildly, as we can see in my figure drawing on the right. In a body type like this we can see just how much the proportions are distinct from the figure seen on the left, so how can we consistently represent these two wildly different body types in our drawings?

The bones will be our saviour here. As we can see on the right, if we construct the underlying skeleton of this figure we can see that it offers a much more consistent set of proportions. If we can properly learn these proportions, different body types are just changes around this fundamental basic proportion, offering us much more control.



● The shoulder girdle ● The ribcage ● The pelvis



## 2 Anatomy landmarks

Now that we've established that a knowledge of bone structure, along with the ability to visualise the bones, will be hugely beneficial to our anatomical work, how do we actually go about pursuing this?

We want to, in the long term, be able to essentially have x-ray vision for all of our

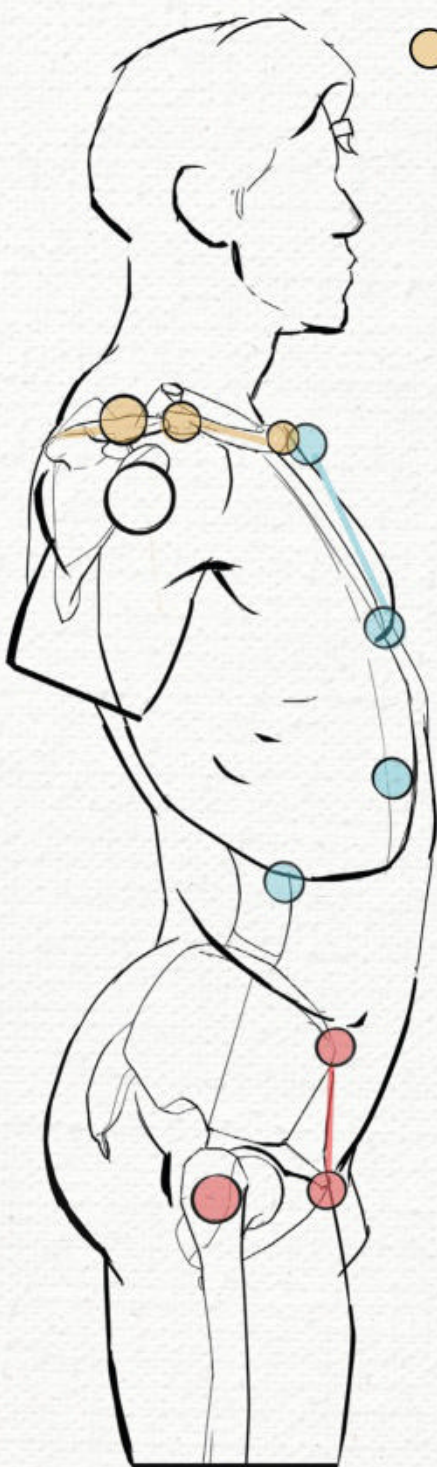
figure drawing. By improving our knowledge we wish to be able, at a glance, to understand the exact position and proportion of each of the bones making up our figure – although this can be a complex and overwhelming study to undertake.

In order to make this approachable I like to split my anatomy study in half:

**-3D constructive anatomy**, the study of the three-dimensional aspect of each bone, with the ultimate goal being to tumble and construct each part alone and in a figure (I will outline the general approach to this in a following article).

**-2D observational anatomy**, the study of which parts exist, with the ultimate goal ➡





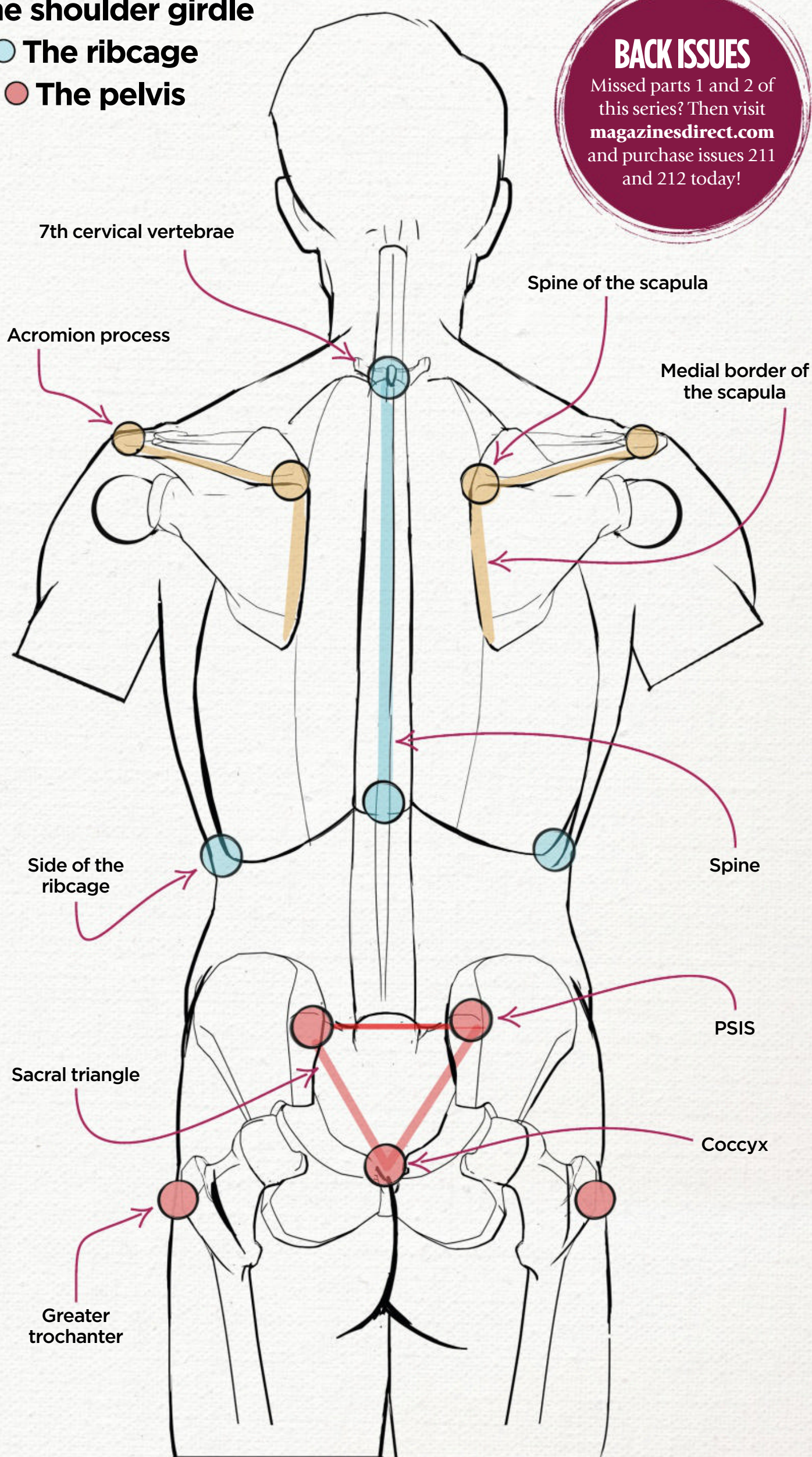
● The shoulder girdle

● The ribcage

● The pelvis

## BACK ISSUES

Missed parts 1 and 2 of this series? Then visit [magazinesdirect.com](http://magazinesdirect.com) and purchase issues 211 and 212 today!



➡ of being able to identify the cause for any detail that we see. This area is where the most basic lesson on bones occur, focusing on the surface 'boney landmarks'.

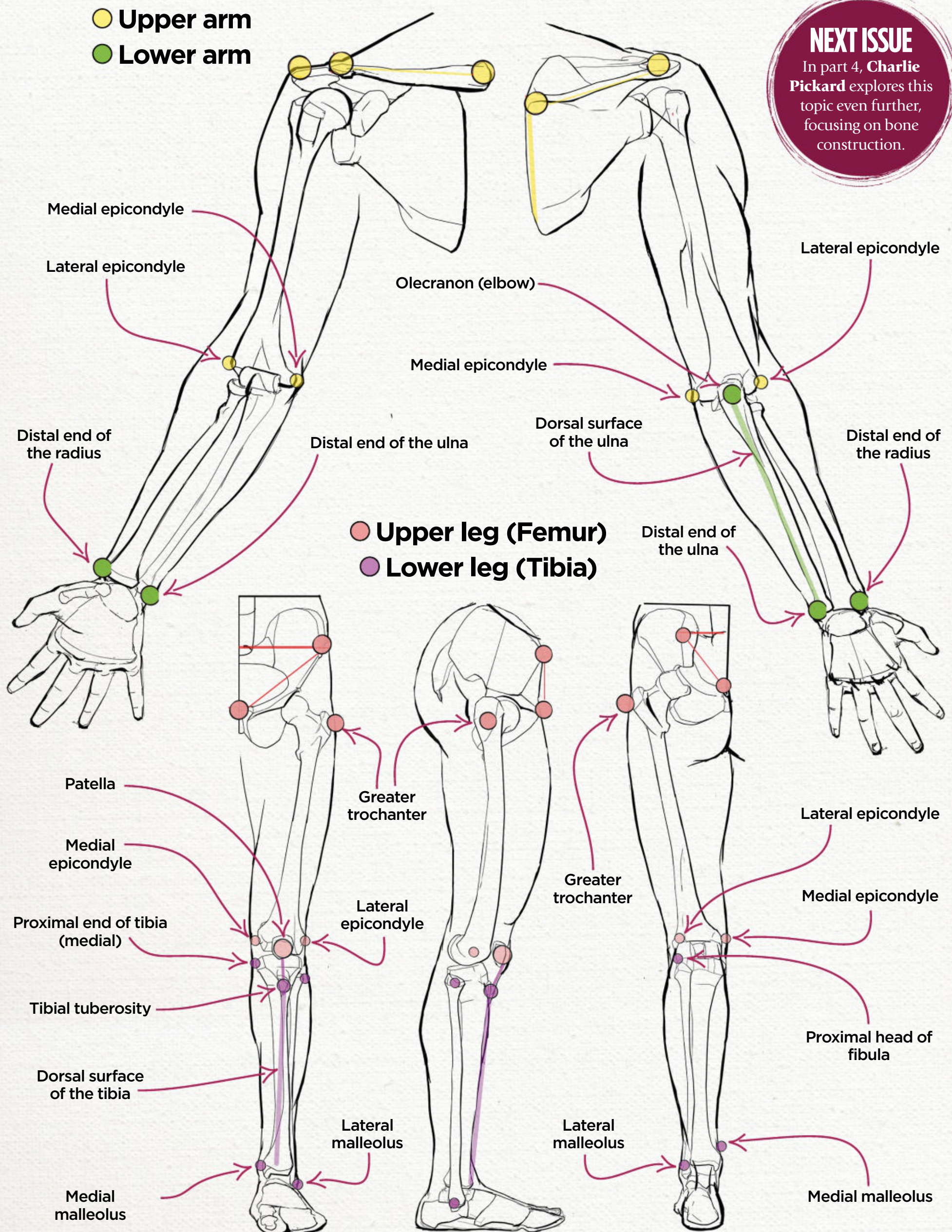
Learning to identify these boney landmarks is the simplest and most effective place to start when looking to study the bones. This practice is one of the best ways to begin our study of anatomy. See on these pages some diagrams listing the most relevant of these landmarks for figure drawing (limiting ourselves to the body; the head deserves its own separate attention).

Try to memorise these landmarks, learn to see them in every figure you draw! They are always present to some degree. The best way to approach this study is to trace these onto your own drawings or photographs and then label them. Try it out for yourself and start to see your understanding of the figure increase exponentially! ●



## NEXT ISSUE

In part 4, **Charlie Pickard** explores this topic even further, focusing on bone construction.

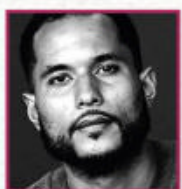




# First Impressions

✧ Ekundayo ✧

The Hawaiian-born artist shares his vibrant creations



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?

I moved around a lot as a kid, all over the

East and West Coasts of the United States. Growing up with an untraditional childhood and spending time around so many different personalities and environments, I was exposed to another side of life at an early age. I still pull from all those experiences to this day.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork through the years?

Hip hop and jazz; good music in general is a must for me to create. The human condition is something that I'm always fascinated with, and why we do the things we do. I am constantly finding ways to express those thoughts with my work.

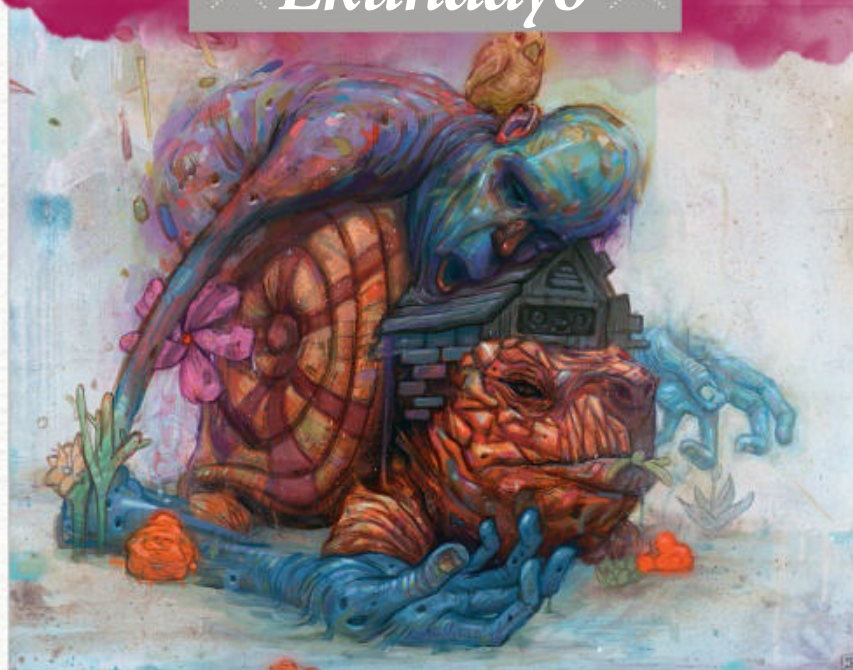
Is there a painting you saw in your formative years that changed everything? What was it?

So many! But there's a piece by Ilya Repin named 'Barge Haulers on the Volga' – the dynamic angle and atmosphere sets a mood that really incorporates so much of what I love about an image.



**THE SEEKER**

Representing man and animal as one. The seeker searches for wisdom in the void of time and space.



**THE OBSERVER**

An image focusing on discovering and cultivating the world around you.

Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?

My first commission was to create art for merch and design a mural for a hip hop shop in Waikiki, Hawaii called Flip Slide. I had a lot of freedom to create what I wanted to and it turned into months of work, a dream gig for sure.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?

My last piece was a small 8x10 canvas. The comparison is like night

“The human condition is something that I'm always fascinated with”

## THE PACE OF THINGS

This piece is about connecting with the environment around you and falling into a state of tranquility.

and day but you can still see my style, although it's constantly evolving. I'm much more intuitive with my work now and have learned to trust in my process.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?

I never thought much about it, I started to create at a young age and it's really all I know. Inspiring people with what I do is the greatest feeling. I definitely did not expect to make a living off it; it is surreal and I'm incredibly thankful.

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

Just take it easy, have fun, enjoy yourself, dive deep into the unknown without fear and surprise yourself with the outcome. As long as you stay kind, keep seeking and growing you will achieve.

How has the industry of art changed for good since you've been working in it?

It's become much easier to be a creator in many different aspects. There's so much information and new ventures that support artists.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?

The half fish, half man character in 'The Seeker' is the one I identify most with, living in a world most don't see and constantly in motion.

What is your next step in art or life?

A big one for next year is to create another large body of work for a solo art show and installation, as well as some type of animated aspect; I really want the world I create to move and come alive.

Ekundayo has produced large-scale murals across the US as well as internationally.

You can check out his amazing artwork at [www.ekundayo.com](http://www.ekundayo.com)





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