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**NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS**

# ImagineFX

**INSIGHT**

## STYLISED SCI-FI

Create a fun cartoon scene full of personality and narrative

**WORKSHOP**

## PAINT A VILLAIN

Use Photoshop to design an original character

CREATE  
THIS COVER  
IMAGE!

GET STARTED IN

# PROCREATE

Learn new rendering skills in the affordable art app and take your **futuristic sketches** to the next level



**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:  
TURN YOUR TEXT INTO ART**

EXPLORE THE SKETCHES  
OF JOSH ATACK

**PAUL SCOTT CANAVAN SHARES  
HIS EPIC STUDIO SPACE**



**PRO ADVICE**

**MIDJOURNEY  
UNCOVERED**

Discover AI tools to boost your creativity



**FANTASTIC BEASTS!** DISCOVER NEW ART FROM THE HARRY POTTER UNIVERSE



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



There are a couple of themes running throughout this issue. First up we have a number of workshops to help you level up your sci-fi art skills, from a wonderful tutorial on creating our stunning robot cover image using Procreate, then using Photoshop to add narrative elements to a fun, stylised scene, and on to a painting of a villainous character. If you're more of a traditional artist, we also have an expert guide to effectively capturing lighting in your oil paintings, and the next instalment of our anatomy series.

Then we have the rapid growth of AI. Tools like Midjourney are kicking up a storm, with some truly amazing creations starting to show up. It's difficult to see how this will affect the industry, but there can be no denying it will have an impact; so, we explore this exciting tool in our news feature, highlighting some incredible developments and art that is being created. We also look at the process in more depth in our workshop section, covering not just Midjourney but some of the other options for taking your work from text to image.

Rob

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

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### EDITOR'S CHOICE

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#### Boost your creativity with Midjourney

Discover how the AI tool is changing the industry with its text to art image creation possibilities.

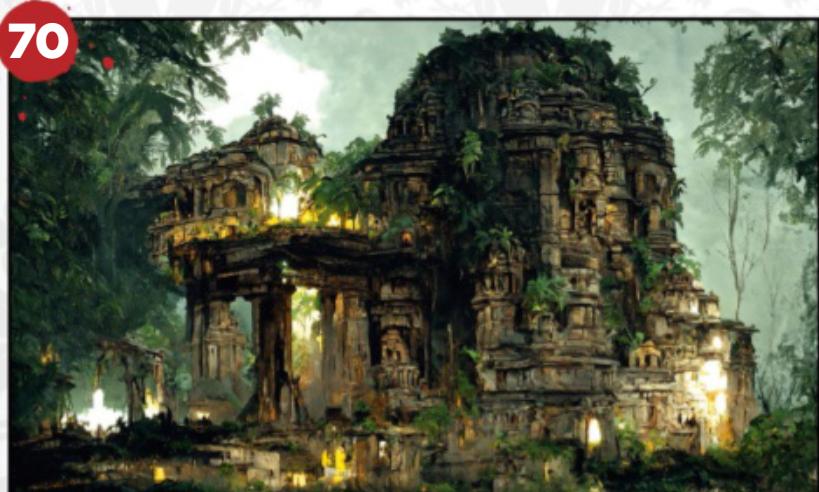
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#### Paint a snappy bot with Procreate

Learn the basics of Procreate with this beginner's guide to creating your own futuristic automaton.

70



#### Create unique art with AI tools

Explore how AI-generated art can help you take your work from traditional abstract to finished and detailed.



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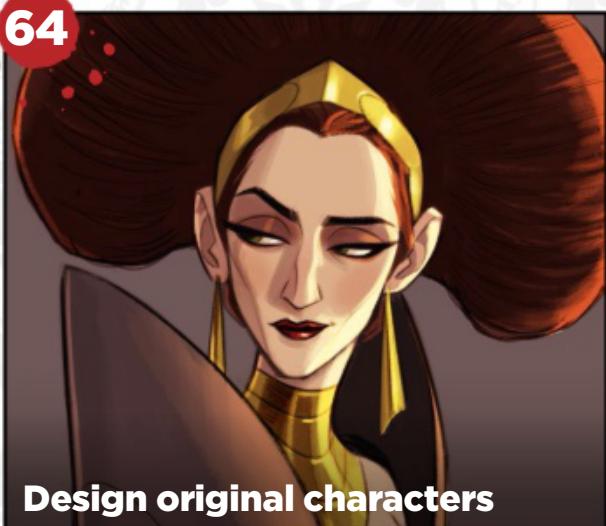


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Illustrate a fun sci-fi cartoon

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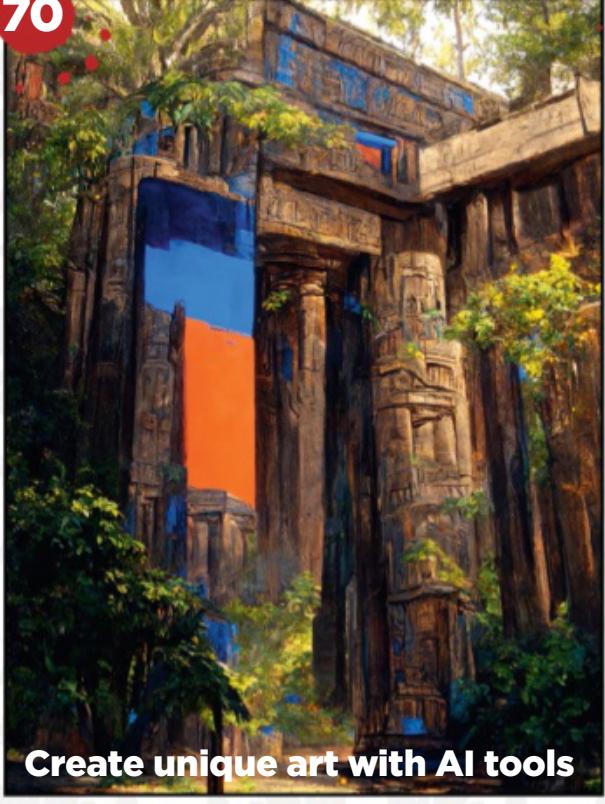
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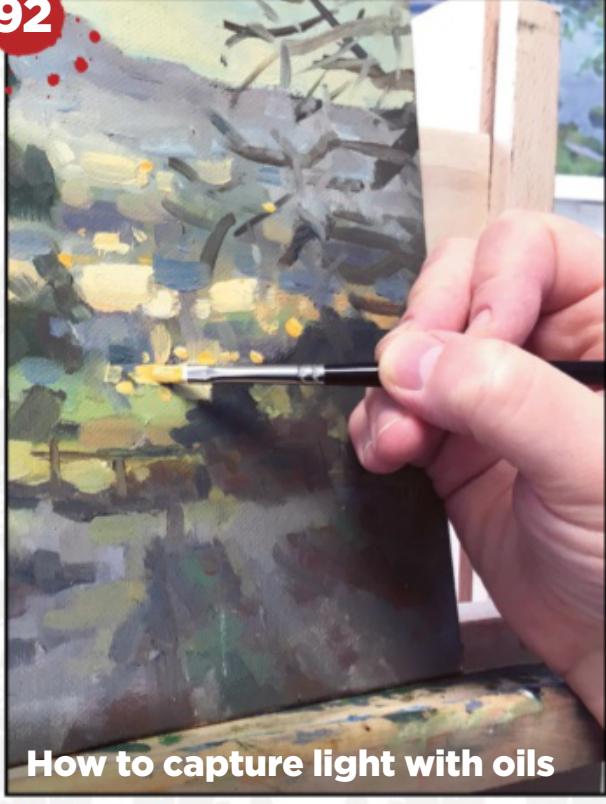
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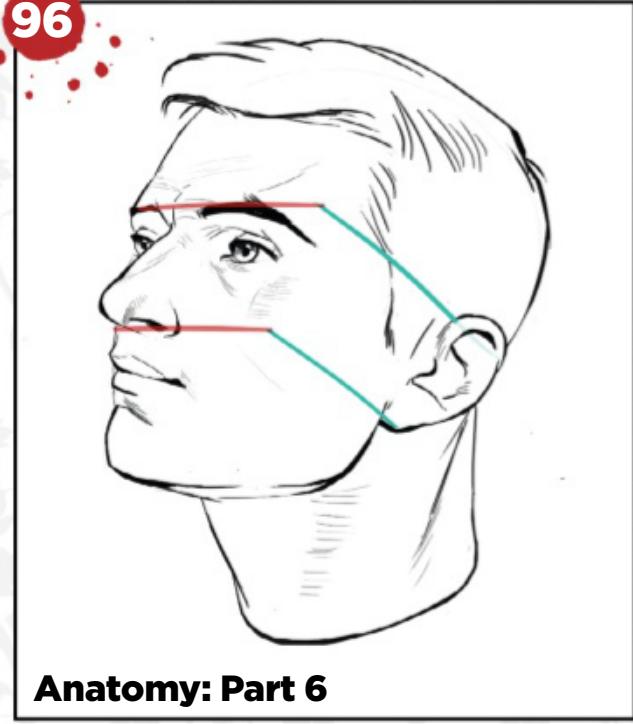
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# Resources

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

## WORKSHOP FILES



### Paint a snappy bot in Procreate

Watch our cover artist Jim Rowden's drawing process as he draws a robot in Procreate.



### Download 21 Photoshop brushes for use in your own projects

This issue's workshop artists Chris Ables and Guille Rancel provide the brushes they use.

## BRUSH ROUND-UP



### Gain access to a collection of brushes to boost your art

Download our huge collection of brushes from the above software, and get creating!

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**ImagineFX**

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Next month

Next month in...

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# COLOUR & LIGHT

Learn creative ways to master colour and light for out-of-this-world art

## *Also inside*

### *Land your next studio gig*

Top advice on the skills you need for your next big step

### *Create dreamy concept art*

Insider expertise from the team at Media Molecule

### *Take an art studio tour*

Florian Satzinger opens the doors to show you around

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Cover art  
for issue 165  
by David  
Ardinaryas  
Lojaya



# FX Posé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Mikel Mugica Amann

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: [blulemon8.artstation.com](http://blulemon8.artstation.com)

Mikel is a freelance character designer and illustrator. "My favourite subjects are women because, as a kid, those are the characters I resonated with the most."



### 1 SHELLY THE HERMIT

"This original character is part of a collection of 39 Original Mermaids I created for the 'Mermay' art challenge. She is a hermit crab mermaid that creates and sells products made with seashells."

### 2 WE ARE!

"This is actually a redraw from a piece I did back in 2015 of my favourite anime One Piece. It showcases my growth as an artist but also how I would approach a full illustration as well."

### 3 HUGÁCEO CRUJIENTE

"I get a lot of inspiration from other queer creators like Drag Queens, and this is a tribute piece I did for one of my favourite queens and some of the looks she featured on Drag Race."



1





# Rhoald Marcellius

LOCATION: Indonesia MEDIA: Clip Studio Paint WEB: [www.thepumpkinbear.xyz](http://www.thepumpkinbear.xyz)

Rhoald is a comic artist, illustrator and character designer whose loves include monsters, anime, cyberpunk and fashion. "I've learnt a lot from the things that I love, so I always try to put them in my art."

## 1 SKELETRONS: SKURR

"This is the leader of one of the misfit gangs from my comics, Skeletrons. I tried to create some horror punk vibes mixed with cyberpunk in this character."

## 2 DJINN SLAYERS

"A commission I did for Sandstorm, a comic book studio based in Abu Dhabi. The story behind this piece is a group of characters from my comics trying to take down a giant mecha Djinn."



3



4



## 3 KING OF CONCRETE JUNGLE

"I planned to create another comic book called NCP: Neon City Punks. This is the main character, M24 aka Maung. It means tiger in one of Indonesia's native words."

## 4 URBAN ONI: PATCHY

"The leader of Urban Oni, a cyber ninja tribe in my comic universe. I love Japanese masks and ninjas."



## Marion Perez

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Clip Studio Paint, Procreate WEB: [www.ampreh.net](http://www.ampreh.net)

Marion, aka Ampreh, is a graduate freelance comic book illustrator who has been drawing since childhood. Natural and fantasy landscapes are her favourite subjects, and she aims to capture the spontaneity of doodles.

### 1 LONG JOURNEY

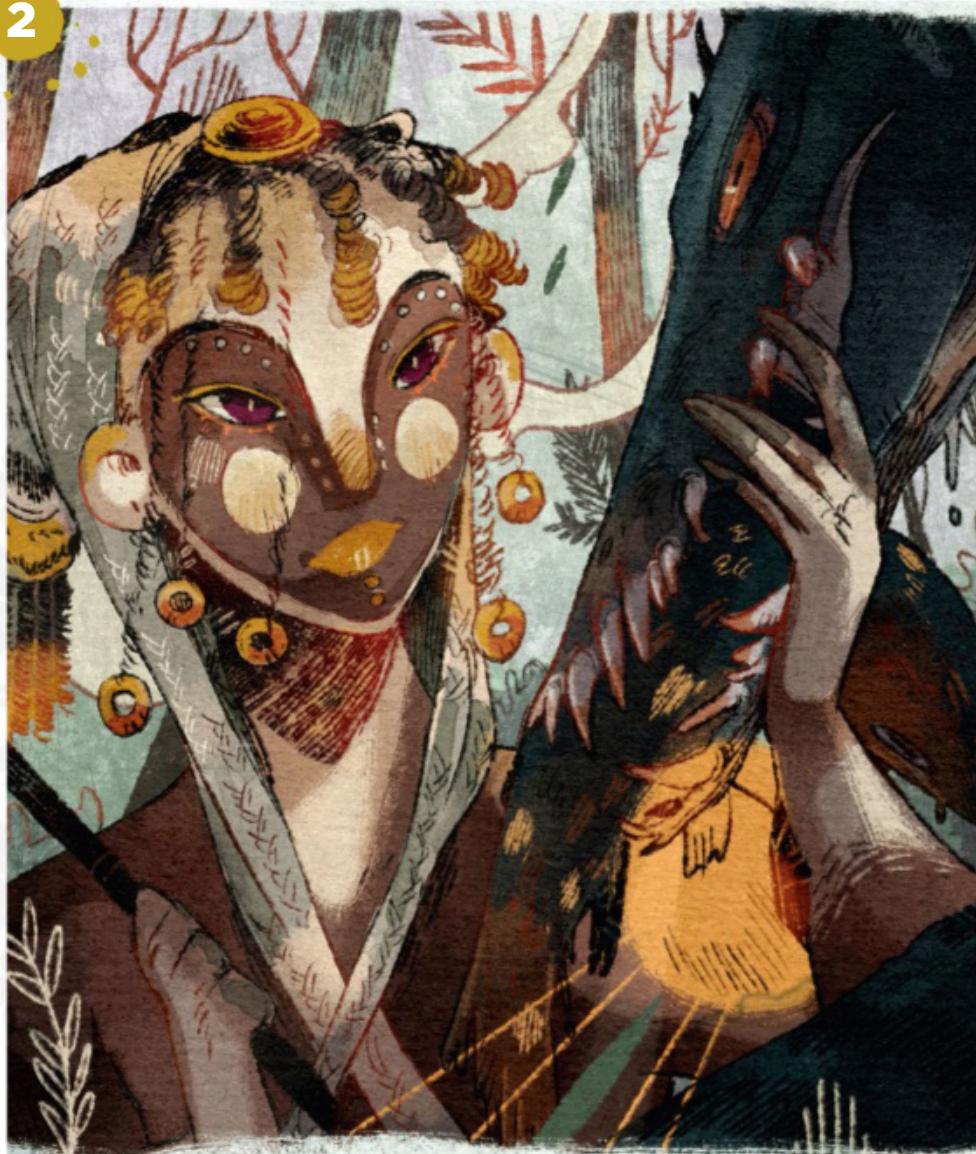
"This comic book panel introduces a Dungeons and Dragons bestiary section. The character includes herself in her artwork; each of her rough sketches is done by me."



### 2 THE FISHER

"I play a lot of video games and this character was created from one of my favourite games. It shows a young woman with her faithful companion, a dinosaur."

### 2



### 3 THE GREATFINCH

"An illustration I made for a book project about Dungeons and Dragons. I'm in charge of the bestiary section, and the Greatfinch is the first creature of the series."

### 4 RULOUPI, WANDERING MAGICIAN

"This is part of a series of four pieces of concept art, where each one represents one of the main characters. Drawn for a medieval fantasy world comic book project."



### 3





## Melanie Hölscher

LOCATION: Germany MEDIA: Procreate WEB: [www.instagram.com/mahou.shoujo](http://www.instagram.com/mahou.shoujo)

For Melanie, painting is a way to balance out her stressful day job. "I love getting into the zone and drawing from dusk till dawn. I'm inspired by folklore, fairy tales and modern pop culture."

### 1 RISE

"This piece really shows my love for colours. I always try to experiment with colour combinations and consider how to use colours in unexpected ways."

### 2 WAKING UP

"Here I tried to reference the page layout of typical shoujo mangas like Sailor Moon. I used panels and frames to give the illustration that comic-like feel."

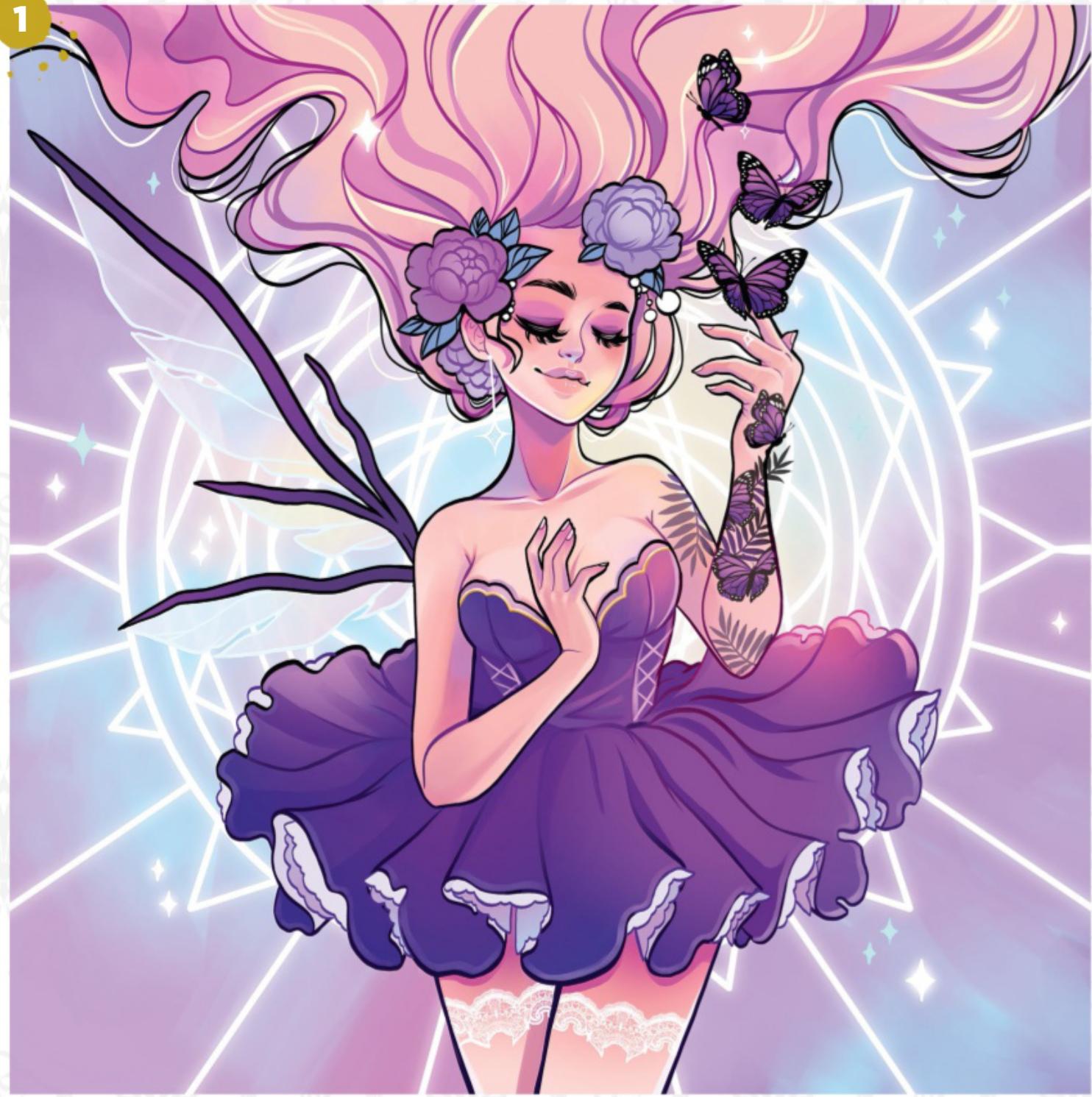
### 3 FASHIONABLE WITCH

"Witches and witch hats are a recurring theme in my work. I want to show strong female characters in my art."

### 4 TIMELESS/EPHEMERAL

"The pose is inspired by the famous Monteverde Angel statue. I tried to combine the prompts 'timeless' and 'ephemeral'."

1



2



3



4





# Adriano do Couto

LOCATION: Brazil MEDIA: Procreate, Affinity Photo WEB: [www.artstation.com/adrianodocouto](http://www.artstation.com/adrianodocouto)

Adriano is a self-taught illustrator who has been mentoring under Justin Gerard for several months. He loves fantasy art and literature. "My work has been featured twice in the Infected By Art annual."

## 1 I DON'T WANNA HURT YOU

"A spin on the trolls scene from The Hobbit, where the main character is a girl."

1

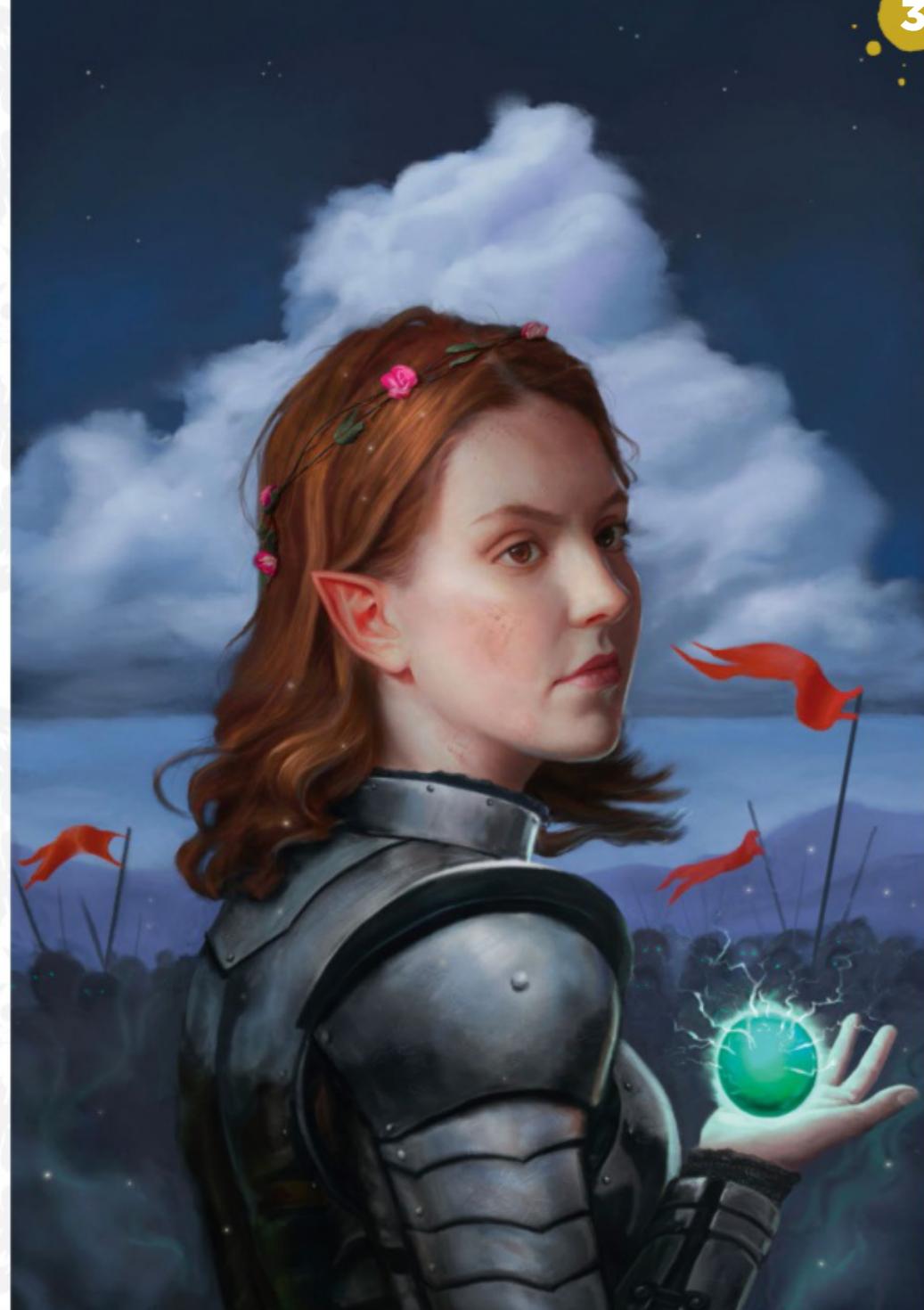


## 2 THE COMMANDER

"Give a man a fire and he's warm for a day, but set fire to him and he's warm for the rest of his life.' Sam Vimes digital piece inspired by Pratchett's Discworld."

2

2



3

## 3 THE NECROMANCER'S ARMY

"This piece was inspired by a H.P. Lovecraft quote about the ineffable malignity of primordial necromancy. It was accepted in Infected By Art 10."

4



## 4 THE HAMPIRE

"This gentleman vampire hog has been painted in the style of 18th century English portraiture greats like Reynolds and Gainsborough."





# Dominik Mayer

LOCATION: Germany MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate, Artbreeder, Disco Diffusion, Blender WEB: [www.artstation.com/dtmayer](http://www.artstation.com/dtmayer)

Bold colours, high contrast and a strong feeling for motion combined with graphical elements are signature elements of Dominik's art. His goal is to create bright, colourful images that are dark and creepy at the same time.

## 1 GHOSTFIRE KNIGHT

"This is the depiction of a fictional fairy tale about a ghost knight walking through a dark, calm forest. Many stories about his appearance are passed down for generations."

## 2 GOLDEN KNIGHT

"A depiction of a wandering sellsword who is probably centuries old. He accumulated so much wealth over the years that his armour and weapons are made of pure gold."

2



3



4

## 3 RHOMBUS GUARD

"This is a character from my project 'The Unsung Hero Saga'. It is an individual of an army of undead horsemen, searching for the last light left on earth."

## 4 MOON GUARD

"This character combines traditional samurai armour with modern neon colours. It also represents the moon as an eternal godlike entity from which this character draws its power."



## Gautier Filliard

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint, Blender WEB: [www.artstation.com/filliard](http://www.artstation.com/filliard)

Gautier is a freelance concept artist and illustrator working in animation and video games. "My work combines cute elements with, sometimes, more terrifying or intriguing things."



### 1 SAURIAN IN TOWN

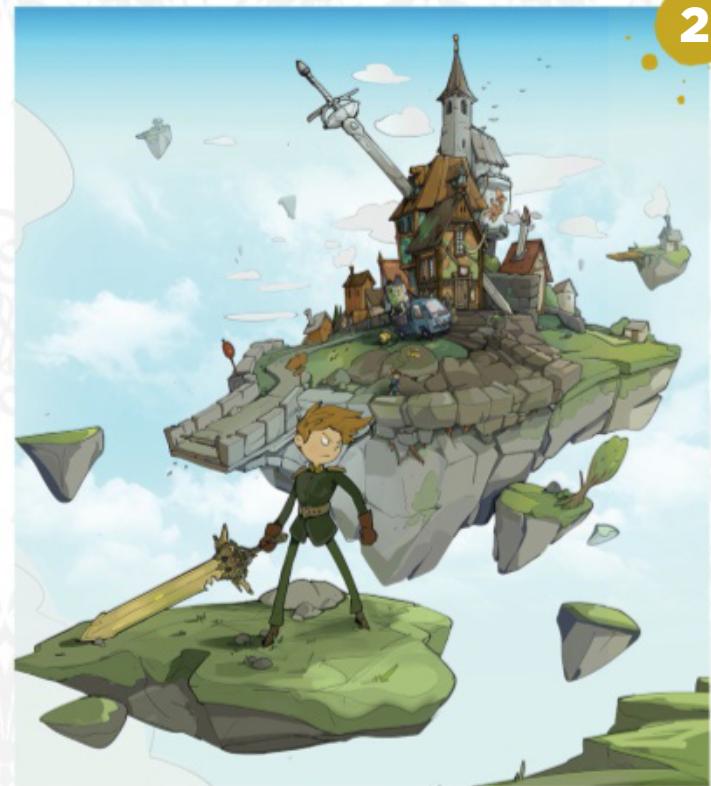
"I wanted to approach the artistic direction of the Professor Layton licence, but in a fantasy medieval world while suggesting a dynamic little village."

### 2 BIGSABERSBURG IN THE SKY

"This is a fairly isolated village. Fortunately a Zeppelin passes by twice a month for supplies."

### 3 WEIRD POTIONS

"I love to draw potions. But beware: most of them are quite dangerous so handle them with care."



2



3

**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)

**4 ELEMENTAL GUARDIAN**

"A character I drew for a character design challenge. I wanted them to appear both strong and powerful but cute too. His head is an oyster."



THE  
ROOKIES

The Rookies is a platform to help digital artists get discovered without having to compete with professionals for attention. You'll get to the front page of those sites one day, but for now, we've got your back and want to help turn your passion for creative media into a successful career.

[WWW.THEROOKIES.CO](http://WWW.THEROOKIES.CO)



## The Hunter and Pirate

YEAR CREATED: 2022

MEDIA: Photoshop

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## Artist **PROFILE**

### **Frans van Swam**

**LOCATION:** Netherlands



Frans van Swam is a concept artist from the Netherlands who loves to problem solve, and is currently attending HKU. To broaden his horizons, he enjoys connecting with new people and having new learning experiences.

[www.therookies.co/u/Fransvanswam](http://www.therookies.co/u/Fransvanswam)

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

Valkyrie, by Nekro.  
Rather than use the AI to  
create full images, Nekro  
has Midjourney generate  
separate parts which he  
then assembles into a  
final composition.



“ You are often sitting  
in front of artwork that  
would not be possible  
even with months of  
iteration – in minutes ”



## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Paul Scott Canavan takes us on a tour of his flat-turned-studio in Edinburgh, filled with inspirational items and easy access to different creative spaces.  
**Page 32**



## PSYCHEDELIC ARTWORK

We find out how Alex Ruiz uses Corel Painter in his eye-catching artwork to freely express and communicate his thoughts and ideas.  
**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 37**



# Boost your creativity with Midjourney

**Text to art** **Tanya Combrinck** looks at how AI tools are supercharging creativity and taking the digital art world by storm

**Over the last few weeks you may have noticed a new kind of artwork creeping into your Twitter feed; fascinating, highly detailed images with composition and style quite unlike anything that's gone before. It's Midjourney: a new AI tool that creates art based on a text input. Text-to-image AI tools have been around for several years now, but this one is attracting particular attention for producing exceptionally beautiful and original abstract artwork.**

Midjourney is currently in private Beta and runs as a bot on Discord. You can apply for access over at

[midjourney.com](https://midjourney.com). To start creating images, you join one of the channels and submit text prompts in the chat window. You might try something like "a beautiful painting of a steampunk owl in the moonlight". The AI bot replies with four thumbnails, and if one or more are close to what you are trying to create you can choose to iterate on them to receive four more thumbnails. You can continue iterating, or you can tweak your text prompts to get different results. When you have an image you like, you can upscale your chosen thumbnails to get a high-resolution output. ➡



A piece by Kenneth Scott from the series *Meat Bois Go 2 Heaven* that combines horror with a classical painting style.

An image from the series *The Luminous Awareness We Sense in the Eyes of Others*, by Graeme Cornies. This is one example of how the Midjourney AI interprets this phrase.



Kenneth Scott used Lovecraft's description of the Cthulhu statue as a prompt for this image.

➡ Anyone can get decent images out of Midjourney by entering simple descriptive phrases, but to achieve something special you need to be imaginative and learn how to use the prompts to get interesting results. A major plus point of the tool running within Discord is that you can see how others create their work. Beginners typically enter basic phrases; more experienced users may enter 20 or so



**Kenneth Scott** is an art director working in games whose credits include *Halo 4* and *Doom 3*. He sees Midjourney and other AI art apps as a way to supercharge creativity and speed up iteration. "Its strength for me, right now, is concept and early ideation; it can help craft a vision, and rapidly," he says. "It's hard not to get wobbly in the knees when you strike gold; you are often sitting in front of artwork that would not be possible even with months of iteration. In minutes. With 20 more just as brilliant rendering behind it."

## GENERATE BEAUTIFUL ART

Kenneth advises new users to embrace the serendipity of creating art with an AI. "My favourite pieces always landed a certain degree away from my intent," he says. It typically takes just a few minutes to generate thumbnails, so Midjourney allows you to stumble across these happy accidents very quickly.

**“I’m looking forward to seeing people all over the world empowered with a new way to express themselves”**

highly specific instructions to produce dazzling images with exquisite detail. Watching others is a great way to learn, and you can also try resources such as [weirdwonderfulai.art](https://weirdwonderfulai.art), where people have conducted experiments using different prompt phrases to give you an idea of how they will affect your image.

The Midjourney tool has only been around for a few weeks, but professional artists are already using it as part of their creative process.

Often the best way to get an awe-inspiring or fascinating image out of an AI is simply to ask for it, using those words. "One of the very surprising things about Midjourney is its ability to place meaning on words you would ordinarily describe as actionless hyperbole," says Kenneth. "Stunning! Beautiful! Dramatic! These are demonstrably effective in developing an image."

The potential for AI tools like Midjourney to change the process of



Another image from Kenneth Scott's *Meat Bois Go 2 Heaven*. Midjourney often produces images with an awe-inspiring sense of scale.

creating art and the role of the professional artist is clear, but how things change will depend heavily on the particular role and, if it's part of a large production such as a film or game, where it sits in the pipeline. "It won't make your character mesh, texture your model, paint over your greybox, or make anything to the specifications a production might require," says Kenneth.

## EMBRACING CHANGE

Some artists feel threatened by AIs, but Kenneth is philosophical about the inevitability of change. "I've worked in game development for over 25 years and been through a few tectonic shifts regarding content creation, so it's been important to me to squint through the abject terror of all-caps-change and find excitement for it. I've witnessed too many talented traditional artists fail to adapt to digital 2D, 3D, etc. Art history is filled with innovations, modern film and game development is filled with rapid changes; artists need to find the part of themselves that enjoys that."



*The Empress*, by Nekro. Midjourney is able to create images with a beautiful painterly style in just minutes.

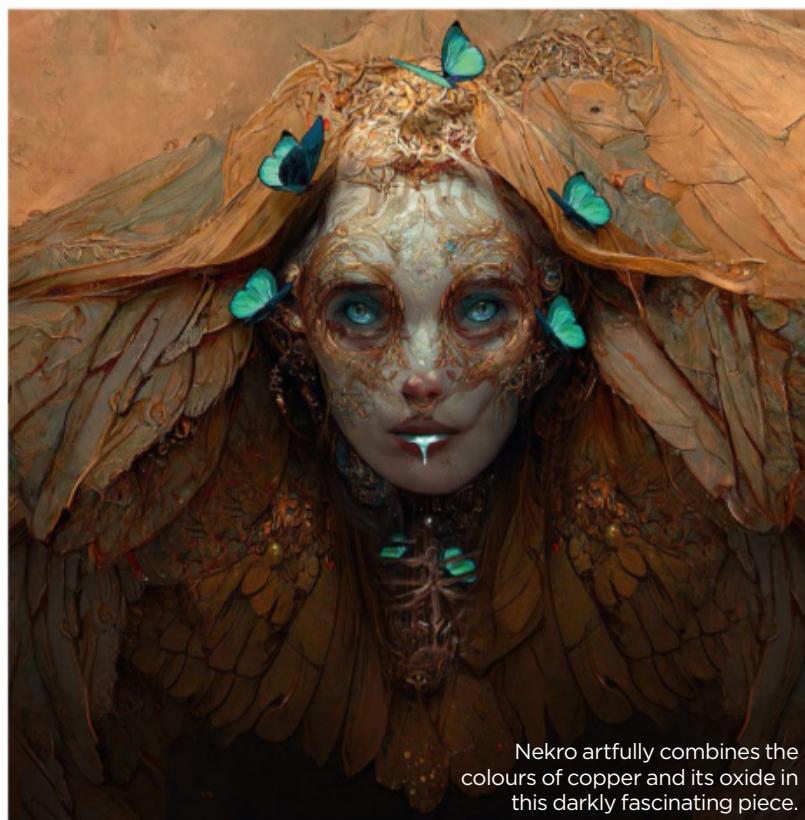


One from Graeme Cornies' incredible series, *The Desert Dreaming of the Sea*. Graeme's poetic prompts get amazing results from this AI.

The good news is, it still takes an artist to recognise good output from bad. "It's clear that success with AI art generation stems from good art fundamentals," he says.

**Graeme Cornies** is an artist and composer who releases his AI-generated work on Twitter at

 @ArcadeKodiak and @CabinOrchestra. He has been making imagery with AI since DeepDream became available to the public around 2016. "I've been hooked ever since," he says. "Midjourney has been a cut above other text-to-image models at handling abstract and symbolic thinking. I've even been using it to pick up where my own imagination leaves off, to help me visualise things that I can't easily ➔



Nekro artfully combines the colours of copper and its oxide in this darkly fascinating piece.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### ITERATION IS KING

*Art director Kenneth Scott on his experiences using AI tools in game development*

#### Tell us about your process for creating artwork with the Midjourney tool.

My creation process in Midjourney ranges from: "I have this weird idea, let me describe it and see if something cool happens", to "I saw someone else do something that speaks to me, let me see if I can repurpose it for my own needs", or sometimes "I'm driving to a specific result and I'll iterate with the language until I get something in an acceptable range".

#### What possibilities does it open up for artists?

No matter where you are in your own growth as an artist, you have access to an enormous breadth of artistic decision making and problem solving – from any century.

#### Tell us about your experience of using AI-generated art in your work.

I've used AI on our VR Oculus title, *Lies Beneath*, in the area of neural style transfer. It was a great way to assert some consistency across the game and anchor the goal of being in an 80s pulp comic book. The pipeline was clunky, but it was stylistically bulletproof. It got a small team moving fast and looking like nothing else on the platform.

In the past I have pulled some exciting work out of Disco Diffusion and WOMBO Dream, but I have more or less drifted from them both in favour of what I'm getting out of Midjourney. In a world where iteration is king, Midjourney's speed is its superpower.



*Kenneth Scott is founder and art director at Drifter Entertainment, with credits such as *Halo 4* and *Doom 3*.*  
[twitter.com/superactionfunb](http://twitter.com/superactionfunb)



Nekro's The Shadow of the Ocean, which he assembled from components generated by Midjourney.

→ picture. For me, MidJourney shines at this."

Like Kenneth, Graeme sees Midjourney as a powerful tool that professional artists could use for compositional brainstorming, texture generation, and to speed up workflow dramatically. "I suspect that it will become common for AI outputs to be under-paintings for concept artists to augment with photobashing, collage and digital brushwork," he says.

For Graeme, working with an AI is a process of co-creation with an "all-star collaborator", and he compares it to an incredible producer capable of turning an artist's acoustic guitar jam into a radio hit.

## AN EMPOWERING TOOL

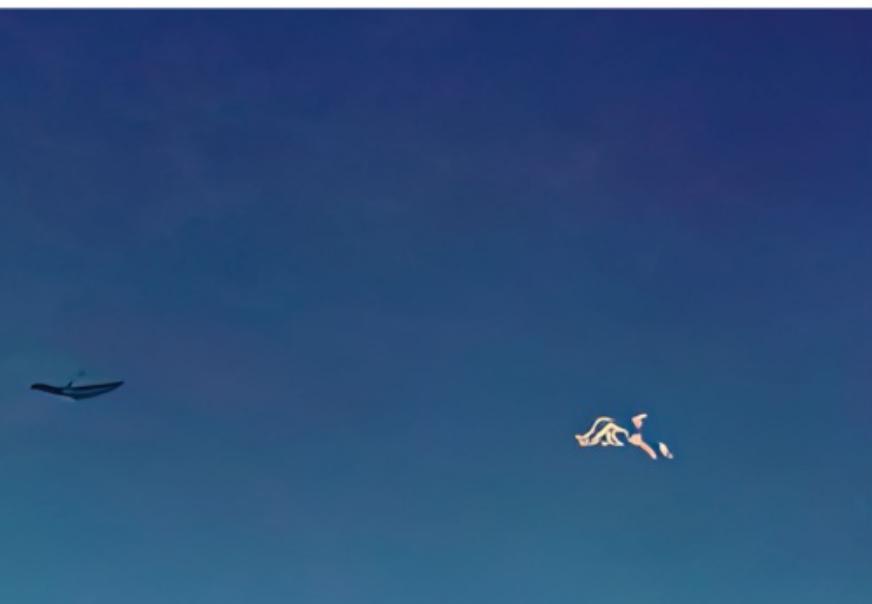
Rather than a threat to artists, Graeme sees AI tools as a big opportunity. "I think the artists that embrace this kind of technology early will have a tremendous advantage over those who don't. These tools are like a fighter jet for your imagination, so if you have a great imagination already, you will only be empowered by such

**“It usually takes hundreds of attempts with different variants of text prompts”**

Untouched Midjourney output for the prompt "Midjourney making concept art about Midjourney", by Graeme Cornies.



# Artist news, software & events



An image of a disfigured mermaid with metallic accents, by Nekro.



An atmospheric piece from Graeme Cornies' series, Illusions of the Black Oak Savanna.



You Hoo Cthulhu! Another Lovecraft-inspired Midjourney output from Kenneth Scott.

an incredible artificial collaborator,” he says. “People who already have skill as a visual artist will shine at augmenting outputs to better match their vision in whatever way they see fit. I’m looking forward to seeing people from all over the world empowered with a new way to express themselves visually.”

Unlike Kenneth and Graeme, **Nekro** (look for @NekroXIII on Twitter) is an artist who has not used AI tools before Midjourney. Instead of using it to create a full image, he looks for components of the final artwork he wants to make and assembles them in Photoshop using photobash and overpainting techniques. “It usually takes hundreds of attempts with

different variants of the text prompts to get what I want,” he says.

Nekro’s haunting images focus around female figures, death, and winged creatures. Despite each work requiring many hours in Photoshop, he has produced dozens of images within just a few weeks of getting started with Midjourney, which goes to show how much it speeds up the creative process. He says that the advent of art AIs may be as significant as the leap from traditional to digital art, but he doesn’t see these new creation tools as a threat. “No matter how much the AI advances, what really matters is the artist who is using the tool,” he says.



River of Life. Beauty hidden in the chaos. Wonder found in overwhelm. Stillness found in the waters of awareness.

## Alex Ruiz

**Creative freedom** The digital artist shares his influences, tools and processes for creating expressive psychedelic masterpieces

**Art can be an immensely personal thing but, at the same time, a way of communicating and expressing concepts to others, hopefully sparking an emotional response in them. Alex Ruiz does this with his use of Corel Painter, through his blending of the traditional and instantly recognisable with ambient washes of texture, pattern and colour.**

These themes and techniques permeate his art, showcasing not just his mastery of the tools but his inspirations from all parts of his life. He takes these inspirations and uses them with the tools Painter offers to



illustrate the stories and concepts he sees in his mind.

"My art expresses ineffable realities, creates connections on new planes, and voices beauty from all parts of life," says Alex. For Alex, art is about expression and his freedom to create and communicate his ideas and thoughts. "The joy of experiencing freedom and exploration. Picking up a tool and moving it on a surface and the joy that comes from that. Just having a tool and getting it out there. It's an inherently intimate experience. Hearing that people's lives are changing because of my work inspires me. Creating beauty and sharing it – it's cyclical".

**“My art expresses ineffable realities, creates connections on new planes, and voices beauty from all parts of life”**

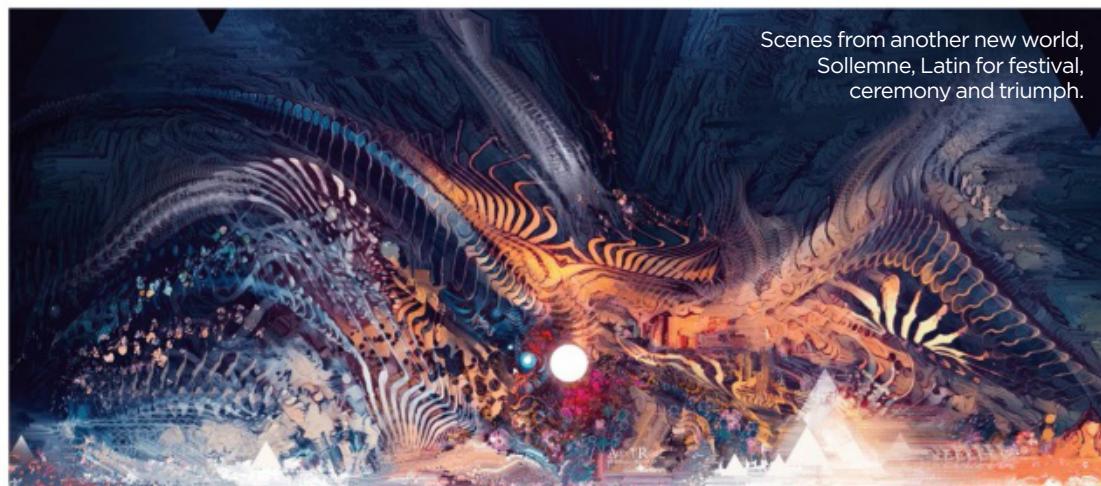
The interplay between creation, viewers' reactions and the way that informs new art is a key part of the experience for Alex.

### EXPRESSING REALITIES

Corel Painter has a long history of being known for its extensive toolset, ease of use and customisation options, but sometimes the best way to learn what a tool can do for you is through the eyes of a master. Someone who has the years of experience to understand what is on offer and to truly share their thoughts and give insights into processes and

Joshua 2020. The feminine version. To commemorate a magical experience with magical souls in Joshua Tree.





Scenes from another new world,  
Sollemne, Latin for festival,  
ceremony and triumph.



Still Water. Finding  
beauty and stability in  
the chaotic.

Los Angeles Love  
Letter. Thoughts,  
dreams and memories  
from a beautiful journey.

possibilities. Over 18 years, Alex Ruiz has lived and worked with Painter to create some world-class art in his inimitable style, blending the painterly narrative style with the psychedelic and transformational, to form his own personal aesthetic.

Inspired by artists such as Android Jones and Alex Grey, Alex took to Corel Painter and its array of solutions for not just the traditional drawing and painting process but the more experimental and creative ones, such as the pattern pen and image hose, that allows for selections of previous pieces to be used as the foundation

for textural elements in new art. Alex explains: "I will either pull a pattern from another piece of my art or I will draw a custom pattern, use it as a selection, change the colour, and use it very minimally to begin working out a background. I really enjoyed creating patterns using my Signs of Life & Delicate Delirium style."

Painter gives the ability to do all these things and more. Being able to take information from one part of an image, or a different one entirely, then use that as the basis for patterns or textures in new art lends itself perfectly to themed collections. There



Allure. Part of  
the figurative  
abstract series.

are times when more structure is needed and here Alex relies on tools for things like perspective, where Corel Painter simplifies the task, automatically creating a new layer for the grid, without disabling other features, as might be seen elsewhere.

Painter can be used in a multitude of ways, each suiting the artist using them, with the freedom to build a layout and creative journey by customising the interface, placing each desired tool exactly where it falls to hand for the given task, making best use of the screen real estate on offer. Making Painter a unique tool for each artist can be the genesis of new ideas and for Alex that has certainly been true, as his first encounters, in 2004, have led him to where he is as an artist now.

"I continue to use it because of its customisability and incredibly unique set of tools. Corel's brush technology has been invaluable in creating my artwork. It's actually one of my favourite parts about using Corel that I don't find in other places," he says.

**To try some of Alex's favourite tools and techniques, visit Corel Painter and download a free trial today!**  
[www.painterartist.com/imaginefx](http://www.painterartist.com/imaginefx)

# ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Skyline Scout is one of my favourite Magic: The Gathering illustrations. I wanted to show the spires of Ravnica from a dramatic, dynamic perspective.



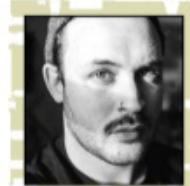
I try not to have too much art on my walls as it can distract me easily, but these beautiful bird prints went up as soon as I moved in. I love birds (I have nine tattooed on my body), and always find them a calming influence.



My primary monitor is an Acer Predator X27. It's a 4K monitor with superb colour accuracy, but it's also great for gaming (a rare combination). The second monitor is a Dell 27" UltraSharp.

Unlike many artists, I'm not a big sketcher. Instead, my sketchbooks are full of notes and ideas, plans for projects I'd like to work on or to-do lists.

**While many artists have lovely dedicated spaces for their work, my entire flat is essentially built around art and my other creative pursuits. I moved in here fairly recently, and my goal was to create aesthetic little nooks in which to work and relax. That was the idea, anyway; in practice everything sort of spills together into a noisy tapestry of paints, models, instruments, books and videogames (I definitely had to do a good tidy for this photoshoot, poking all of the various bits and bobs into their correct places).**



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As a digital artist, most of the work I do centres around my desk space. I have a fairly chunky PC setup with two 4K monitors and my Wacom tablet, and this is where I do all of my ➤



I usually have a Magic: The Gathering deck on my desk, both to serve as inspiration and as something to flick through when I'm thinking. This is my favourite Silver Commander deck, and it makes me super happy just seeing it there while I'm working. I always wanted to work on Magic, so it's a good reminder of how lucky I am to have this job.

# Artist news, software & events



# ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Welcome to my cluttered little setup! The light in here is really stunning; we're five floors up and the windows look out over the city of Edinburgh.

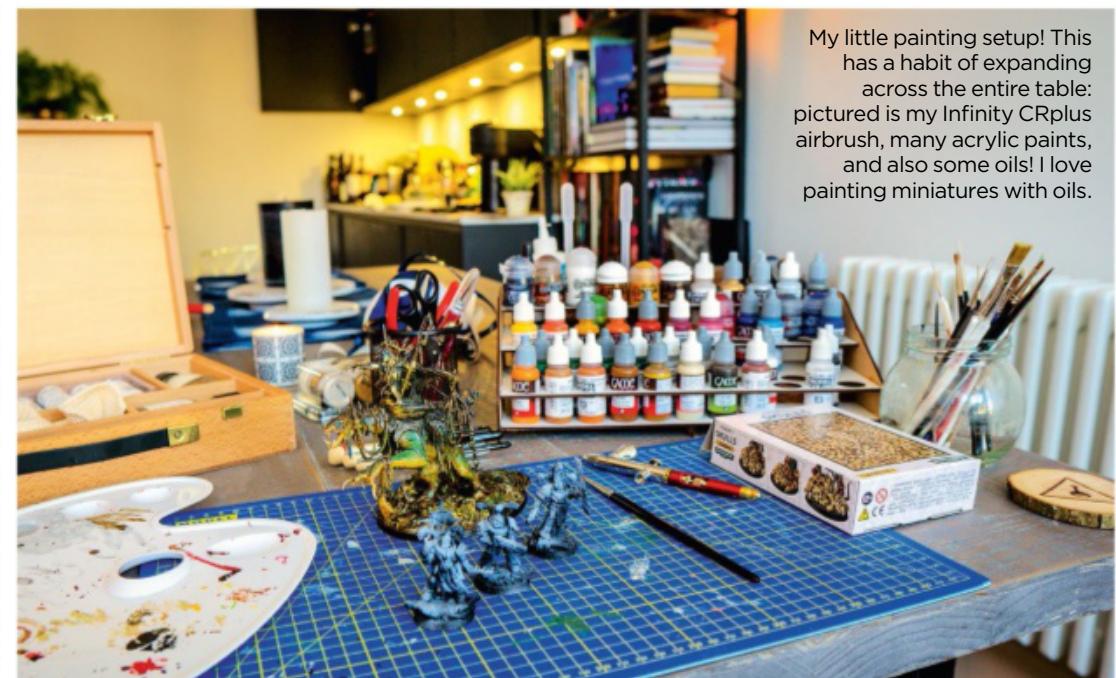


→ illustration and concept art work. This is also my Twitch stream setup, hence the camera and light, and the space I chose for my setup has large windows with beautiful views of Edinburgh. It's a really inspiring place to be, and I love leaving the windows open while I work. Being so high up, the light is wonderful in the morning, so doing admin before I start work is a surprisingly pleasant task.

## CREATIVE SPACES

The massive Secretlab chair I sit on is very spinny. This is both very fun and convenient as it allows me to access the big old dining table behind me without having to get up. This is where I paint miniatures, sign Magic: the Gathering cards and generally engage in other traditional media forms of art. I also use this table to entertain guests and force them to play Magic with me.

I love having various pockets of inspiration sprinkled around my creative workspace.



My little painting setup! This has a habit of expanding across the entire table: pictured is my Infinity CRplus airbrush, many acrylic paints, and also some oils! I love painting miniatures with oils.

It sounds daft, but there's something very satisfying about spinning your chair around to access an entirely different creative space. Right behind the table you'll see my bookcase. This represents around a third of my book collection, and is currently occupied by the reference books for art, game design and research which inspire me most. My Furby also lives here. We don't talk about him.

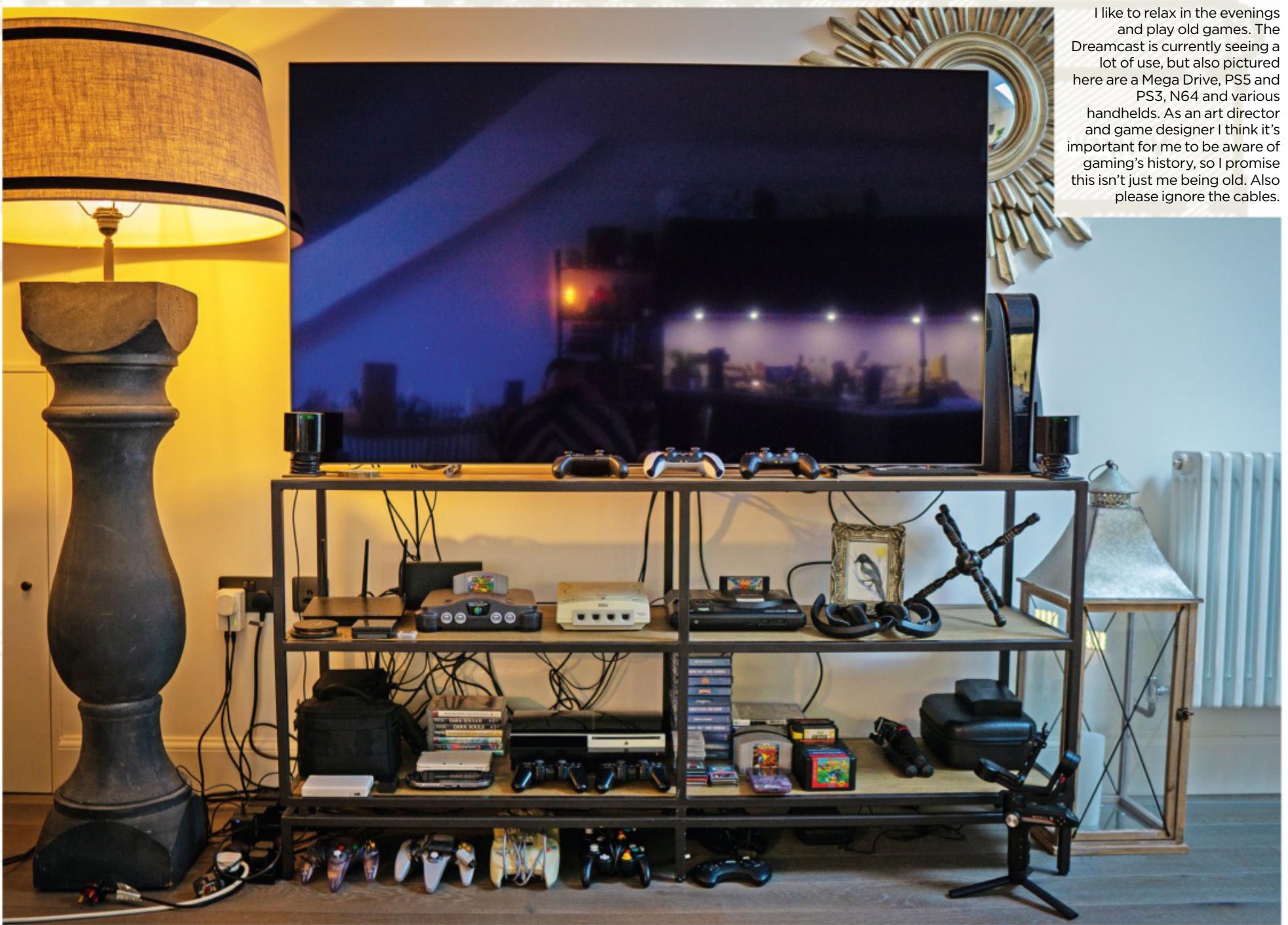
This entire creative space sits adjacent to my open kitchen, very

important since snacks and coffee are always in reach, and opposite my TV and retro console collection. Really this is an exercise in filling a relatively small space with lots of nice things to look at and touch, but I love it. It feels very open and natural to me, while still tickling my ADHD desire to hop around between creative projects. Out of shot is my makeshift home gym, another useful space to retreat to when I need to stretch or move some weights around (which is a must if you spend the majority of your day sitting down!).

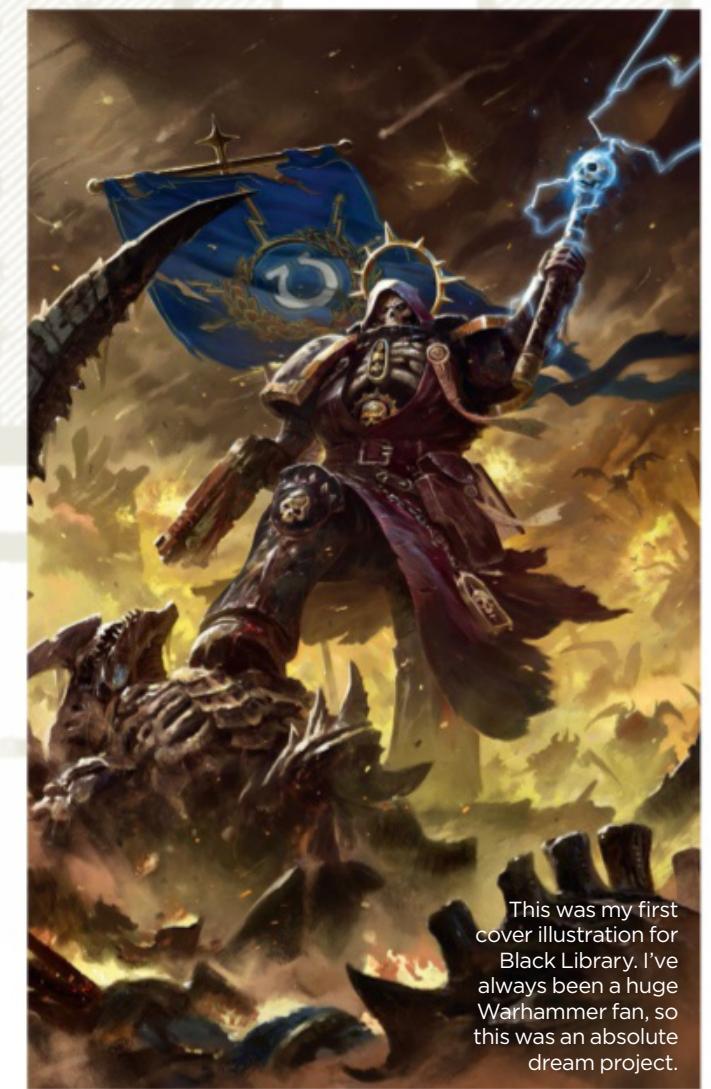
*Paul is an art director and illustrator working in the entertainment industry. You can explore his varied portfolio at [paulscottcanavan.squarespace.com](http://paulscottcanavan.squarespace.com)*

**“My goal was to create aesthetic little nooks in which to work and relax”**

# Artist news, software & events



I've been designing a tabletop RPG, Pale Tides, for the last few years. My house is full of reference material, from books to roleplaying games and board games. This represents a sliver of my collection.



This was my first cover illustration for Black Library. I've always been a huge Warhammer fan, so this was an absolute dream project.

Complete your collection!

# Recent editions

Missed an issue? Here's how you can order previous print or digital editions of ImagineFX

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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



**Issue 215**  
August 2022

In our manga special, we go behind the scenes of beautiful animated film Belle, interview manga artists about their projects, and learn expert tips for mech design, manga-style fight scenes, and dynamic characters.



**Issue 214**  
July 2022

We adventure into the incredible worlds of D&D, interviewing a huge range of amazing artists for their expert insight. Plus, tutorials on creating abstract portraits, dynamic fantasy scenes, and how to master references.



**Issue 213**  
June 2022

Discover top tips for original character design from Blizzard's Dave Greco, replicate a traditional woodblock aesthetic, and get experimental with portraits. Plus, we interview sci-fi artist Amir Zand about his striking style.



**Issue 212**  
May 2022

Learn anatomy skills from the professionals, discover expert tips for creating a comic, and enhance your creature concepts. Plus, take a tour of Robert Hunt's amazing workspace, and get to know ArtRage's unique toolsets.

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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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### Fight!

Having just read the last issue I wanted to say a thanks for the fight scene tutorial. I've always struggled with drawing characters interacting and this really helped me.

*Jeroen via email*

**Rob replies** Thanks so much for getting in touch. It's always great to hear when you find our content useful. Adding additional characters to a piece can often add complexity that an artist isn't used to and this workshop really helps to overcome these hurdles.

### More FXPosé please

I love ImagineFX and while the step-by-step style tutorials are good I sometimes find that they make me want to recreate what I'm reading. The FXPosé sections are great for inspiration and I love them, but is there an in-between option that shows a cool image with some info on how they were made?

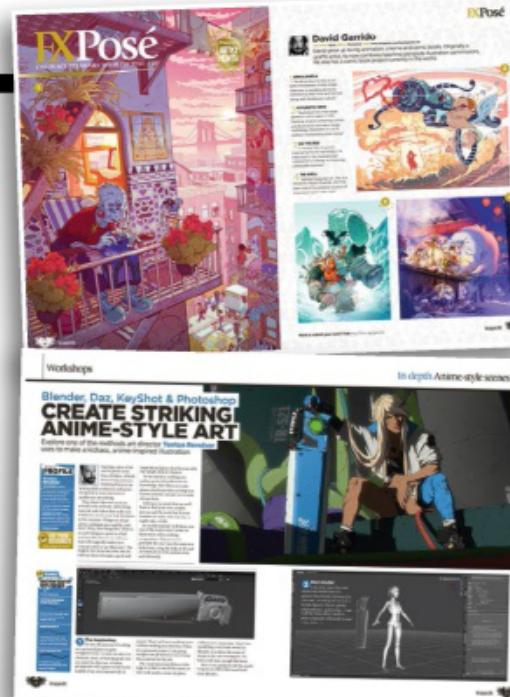
*Amy via email*

**Rob replies** Thanks for the kind words Amy and this is something we have been



**DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?**  
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 215 at [ifxm.ag/single-ifx](http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx).

Rebekka's fight scene tutorial from last issue shows how to create dynamic, multi-character artworks.



*FXPosé is great for inspiration and tutorials are helpful for process, but look out for technique focus soon.*

looking into. Keep your eyes peeled over the next few issues, as we will be looking at showcasing some awesome art, with some top tips on technique. We will continue with the current workshop styles too, so those readers who want to follow along will still be able to, and we will of course always showcase the best new art.

### New technologies

It's been really interesting seeing your coverage on NFTs over the last few issues. I still haven't decided which side of the fence I'm on yet, or if there should even be a fence, but I wonder if you are looking into other new technologies, like AI. I see a lot on social media but don't really know much about it or how to do it.

*Gavin via email*

**Rob replies** Hi Gavin. Your letter has come at just the right time. We completely agree that new technologies can often be hard to be objective about, especially in the early days. NFTs have been a big part of the conversation in recent months, but I agree. AI is ramping up massively and the conversation has really only just begun. I've also seen a lot of beautiful AI-generated art but not understood the process of how they were created. So, in this issue we have really delved into this area, with our news feature focusing on experiences with Midjourney, the most well-known AI art tool, and showcasing some unbelievable artwork.

We also have a workshop that covers more of the process and looks at other artificial intelligence tools. Martin is a fantastic teacher and is an artist who keeps at the cutting edge of technology so, as much as his humble attitude might suggest otherwise, I'm happy to listen to what he has to say and I think he is right.

It's very early days for AI art but it will be what you make it. Treat it as a tool like any other and you won't go far wrong.

## FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



**Nathan Poole**  
[@nathan\\_poole1998](https://instagram.com/nathan_poole1998)



**Patrick J. Jones**  
[@patrickjjonesillustrator](https://instagram.com/patrickjjonesillustrator)



**Kait Matthews**  
[@kaitmatthewsart](https://instagram.com/kaitmatthewsart)

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



# BEAUTY IN THE BEASTS

**Framestore** talks ImagineFX through the dynamic between art department and VFX in **Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore**



## **INFLATABLE WYVERN**

For the wyvern, Framestore's design choice was partly informed by frigatebirds and their inflatable chests.

Images courtesy of Framestore

**F**or practically forever, human imagination has run wild with the idea of creatures that are both of this world and somehow not. Just over five hundred years ago, Leonardo da Vinci was revelling in this kind of imaginative creativity, observing nature and, for a period of time in the earlier part of his career, converting that work into any number of visual-effects stage designs and productions. It seems fair to say that he'd be totally at home with the work of today's illusion makers at Framestore in their work on *Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets*

of Dumbledore and the ways in which the very real informs and inspires the very fantastical. Framestore's Dan Baker (Art Department concept artist) and Christian Manz (VFX supervisor) discuss the collaboration and dynamic between art department and visual effects for the film.

"We started the concept stuff really early on, which is always fantastic for an art department to get any extra time," explains **Dan Baker**. "We were right in there with the initial briefs, months and months before production started." Beyond the movies, Dan cites a particularly enduring reference point



## **Moebius and European comic books like Frezzato's were a massive influence**

and influence on his design work, explaining: "Moebius was a massive influence, and European comic books like Massimiliano Frezzato's who did the *Keepers of the Maser* series: a beautiful, hand-painted work. I'm all about the European stuff."

### **THE POTTER-VERSE**

In working on the third instalment of a series, Dan makes the point that getting in sync with the established ➡

## PICKETT THE BOWTRUCKLE

Newt Scamander and his little buddy Pickett remain constant companions: live action and character animation in perfect harmony in this finished shot.



► visual language of the Wizarding World took a little trial and error on his part when he first worked on the original Fantastic Beasts movie. In turn, he eventually tapped into an overarching design sensibility for the ongoing story: "I remember when I first got on Fantastic Beasts and we were doing designs for the Erumpent. My designs went to the director and the producer and there was nothing wrong with them, but they weren't 'the Harry Potter universe'. Since then, a word that comes up a lot about the creature designs from the director and the producers is for them to have a sense of 'dignity', and I was like 'Yes! Got it.' I think that's what runs through all the Fantastic Beasts films is that sense of 'dignity'. Nothing's too much. There's quirk in it, but there's nothing that's so overboard that it

**“There's a sense of dignity in the creature design that's gone through all the films”**

## PHOENIX

An aesthetic touchstone for the Fantastic Beasts designs has been to imbue each creature with a sense of dignity.



takes you out of the experience. That's something that I try to keep in mind with the new set of films: that sense of dignity in the creature design that's gone through all the films."

Christian Manz then comes into

the conversation, providing perspective on the process from his standpoint as visual effects supervisor,



## MAGIC IN ACTION

Throughout production, concept art was made available to actors to inform their understanding of how a final shot would combine live action, animation and VFX elements.

overseeing and shepherding the work of the art department as its work then informs visual effects and animation and, in turn, how that manifests on set during production: "We're working in a way that we established on the first film; where the Harry Potter films have a creature department which was essentially SFX, makeup and a group of modelmakers, the creature department on the Beasts films is the visual effects department, so we took a lead in the design and creation of the creatures. So, whilst we worked with [production designers] Stuart Craig and Neil Lamont this time, and showed them what we were doing and discussed stuff, we were leading that process.

"So, even for that first script that I had back in November 2018, we knew we had the two big creatures: the qilin and the manticore and the mother and babies of both. So, we engaged the Framestore art department at that point. Like on the previous movies, ►



## FIERY THREAT

Concept art at Framestore captures movement, jeopardy and the scale of wizards in relation to beasts.



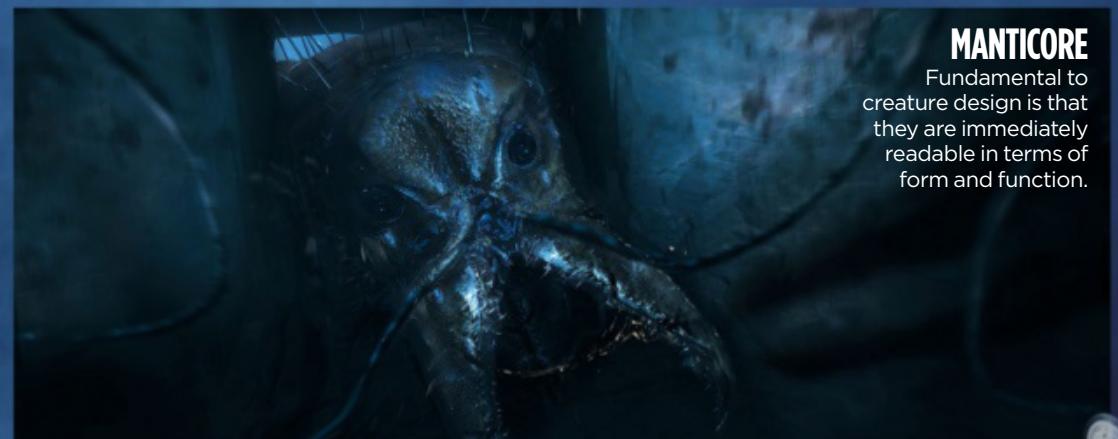
### CONVINCING DESIGN

Framestore's concept artists endeavoured to synthesise believable anatomy with fanciful creature design.



### MANTICORE

Fundamental to creature design is that they are immediately readable in terms of form and function.



## MYTHOLOGY-INSPIRED MOVIE CREATURES

Christian Manz explores how the fascinating worlds of mythology influenced the films' concept design

"Both creatures [for *The Secrets of Dumbledore*] were based on mythological animals. The qilin was based on a Chinese mythological creature and the manticore on a Greek mythological animal, and they're always very difficult because they're in the mythological world and in Jo's [J.K. Rowling] world. She's inspired by that stuff. That's what's fun, is that melding. So, we start from that point of view. One of the things that we have done with the Fantastic

Beasts films is imagine what was the thing that people once claimed they saw. We're reading that thing between fantasy and fantastic. The manticore design came together quicker than the qilin, which was a two-year journey. The manticore sits down in a lion's pose with its tail wrapped around it sort of like a cat, and then for its face we looked at tribal masks and then we were looking at beetles. If something's big you get glimpses and that makes it more scary."

## PRACTICAL AND DIGITAL

Framestore concept artists liaised with production design to determine how practical sets would, and could, relate to digitally rendered creatures, effects and animated elements.



“we threw the net wide and, in the end, actually, the final design of the qilin was Sam Rowan, who used to work at Framestore, but by the time we finished it he was working from his home overseas.”

## THE DESIGN PROCESS

Christian then goes on to explain Framestore’s emphasis on a non-linear approach to concept development for the film. “Before we would have had a concept that would have been done by concept artists working with the production designer, and that would then be signed off by the director,” he notes. “Then a beautiful sculpt will be made, and then they’d shoot maybe with that. And then we’d get to post-production and they’d go ‘Here you are guys: here’s your approved stuff. Make that.’ Our thing now is to get all of that done before we shoot because we want to know a creature works. Sometimes, when all of that work’s

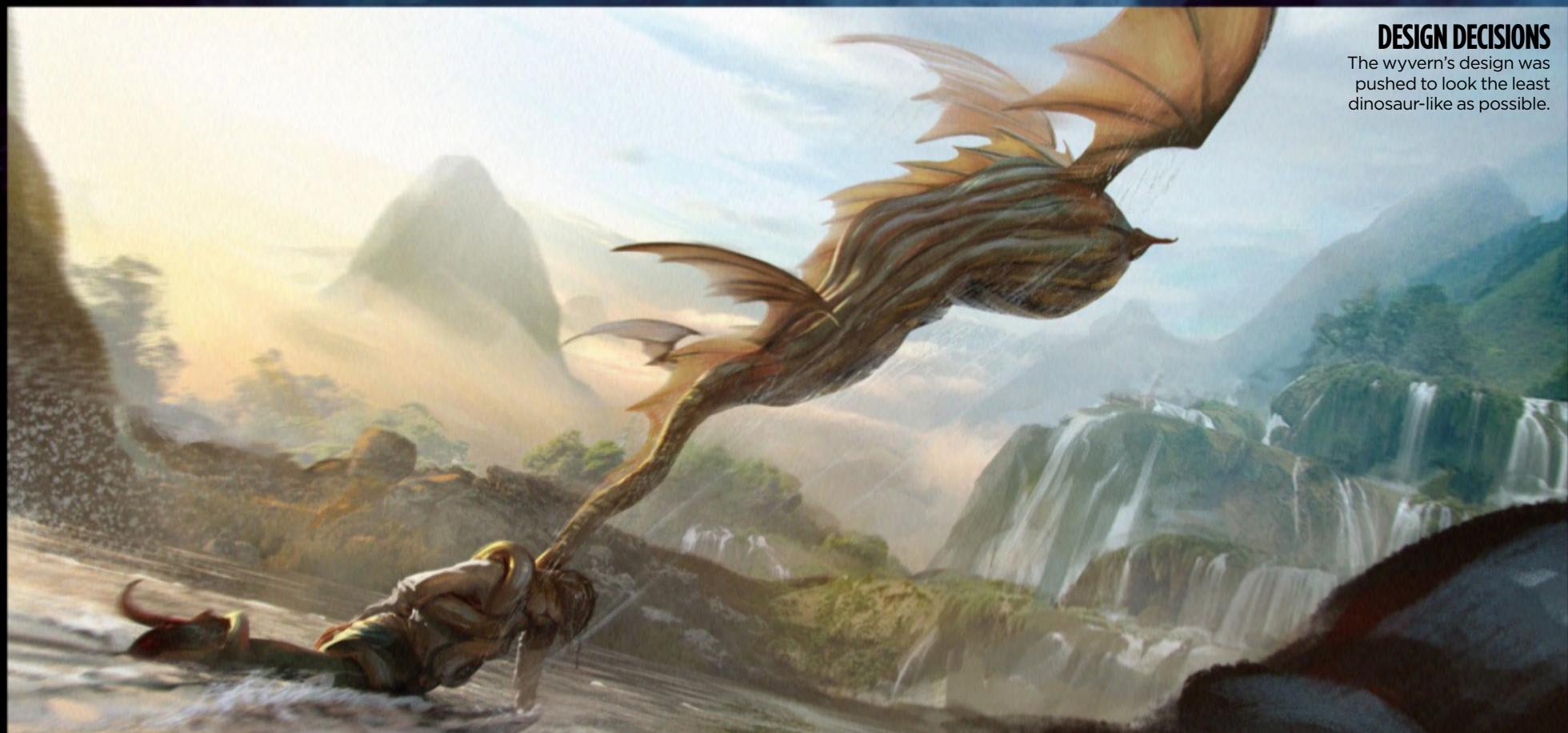
**FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE SECRETS OF DUMBLEDORE** IS AVAILABLE ON DIGITAL DOWNLOAD NOW, AND STARS EDDIE REDMAYNE AS NEWT SCAMANDER AND JUDE LAW AS ALBUS DUMBLEDORE.

been done and you get to post-production, you spend months trying to make something and then find that you have to go back through a whole load of other approvals to get it re-approved and get it in the movie. With the art department we give them a brief of what the creature is and what it does. It’s the gist of what it does. They’re not reading the script, I’m just giving them an overall brief.” Christian then makes a particular point about where reality and fantasy meet in the movies, saying that: “One of the key things the art department do is look at real stuff. They’ll be doing something and then we’ll have animators in-house who are already taking what they were doing and

modelling it up and getting it moving to find its character. That’s what we do when I talk about the non-linear process. That’s what we’ve found a real success through when working on these movies. And so, by the time you’re filming, you know what that creature is and how it’s behaving.”

Christian unpacks the non-linear process in further detail: “It’s a minor element we’ve been experimenting with recently, but because of the way that Framestore’s set up it’s so rapid. We can send a digital maquette that we’ve done in ZBrush over to the animation department and they can do something amazing with it. Perhaps build a better version. That’s what’s fascinating and so exciting about VFX is that back and forth between artists. With the latest film, for the work that I did on the wyvern and the manticore, we had that really fun section at the beginning and then we kind of revisited it. The production

“What’s so exciting about VFX is that back and forth between artists”



## DESIGN DECISIONS

The wyvern’s design was pushed to look the least dinosaur-like as possible.



## TAKING FLIGHT

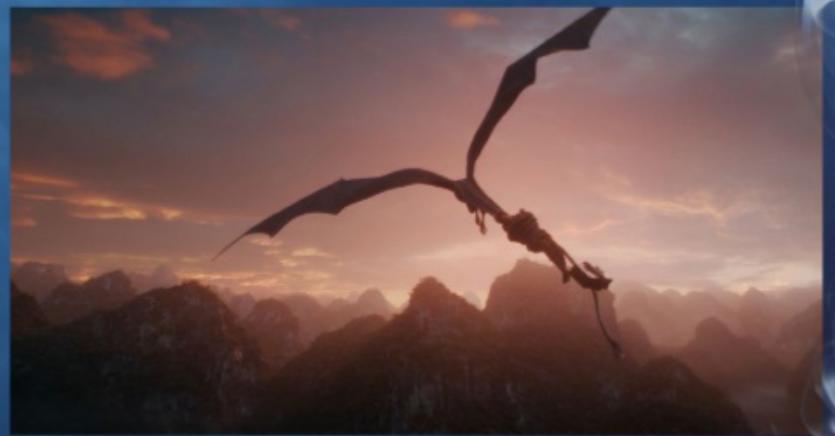
Concept art for the wyvern is annotated to describe detail of its movement.

needed it to be a bit more believable and so I then had about six weeks working with Ben Locke and his team to really bring it into a believable [design]. The wings were kind of sail-like, folding into the body. We realised that this was the only way it was going to work: that the wings would kind of fit snugly against the body. But what was amazing was you'd get the animation back and then work on top of that. In VFX, none of this stuff is made in a vacuum."

### CREATING THE WYVERN

Of the design for the wyvern, Christian adds, "We had a concept of

the wyvern [in February 2019] and we realised that all of the Harry Potter dragons were wyverns, and so we came up with something different." Christian recalls that a key challenge was to make the design less 'dinosaurly' and more obviously birdlike and, on-set with director David Yates, he found a video clip online of the shoebill stork and it was that which informed the final behaviour for the dragon. "Framestore went back to concept [for the wyvern], and we came up with something that was a dragon that didn't have feathers, but had kind of the same sort of head. But, we also knew then that it had to



### MYTHICAL

J.K. Rowling's fusion of mythic and real creatures in her writing have informed Framestore's conceptual design through their work on *Fantastic Beasts*.



### QILIN CLOSE-UP

A concept art piece that indicates how Newt's hands will interact with a beast's skin, suggesting shot framing and a potential lighting palette.

have the architecture to go from something small with small wings, to something with enormous wings. We looked at frigatebirds as they have inflatable chests."

Increasingly, a less linear methodology characterises the process so that there's much more fluidity between the earliest work created in pre-production and late-stage work undertaken during the film's post-production. "As the sets and environments begin to evolve," Christian notes, "we'll start putting our creature into their thing so everything begins to be seen together. By the time you're on set, nothing should be a surprise. More work is being finalised early on. The success ➤

## CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Dan Baker unpacks his typical concept development process

"Digital would always be my way forward, just because it's easier with the pipeline, though people do start with sketchbooks. I'll sketch in Photoshop and then, if I get any kind of sign-off, I'll photo-bash on top of that - so, some reference images, maybe some textures, drop that on top, in a really quick environment. It's literally a couple of hours' work. If that gets any kind of sign-off, then I'll go into 3D and start making a sort of digital maquette, and more so now that Blender is becoming a really powerful tool. And now you can rig your characters, too. I've started experimenting. I remember when one of the guys came into our department and he was talking about animating concept art and I said 'No'. But, it can add so much just by having a little rig and putting a bit of movement on the chest. It makes such a difference. It's knowing when to push these elements further as a concept artist. If you just need to sell the concept that bit more, it's superb."

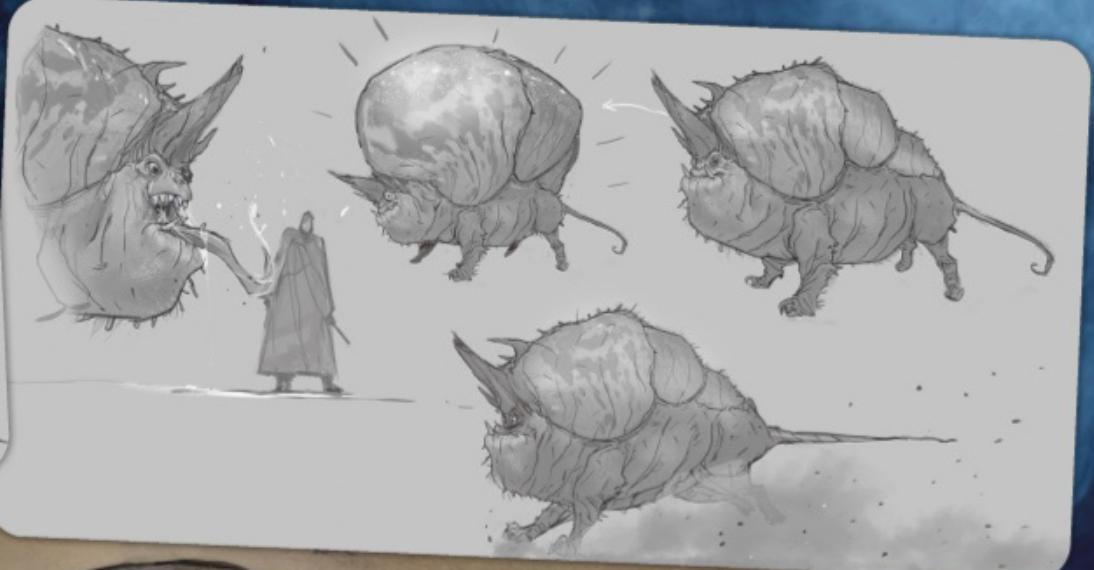


### MOVEMENT SKETCHES

The Erumpent from the original *Fantastic Beasts* movie set the tone for creature design for the series.

### SIZE COMPARISON

Concept art shows the scale of the Erumpent in relation to a human.



### ERUMPENT

The tone of a design will typically indicate the balance of whimsy and menace in a beast.



### FANTASY MAGIC

Creature design for the *Fantastic Beasts* films has emphasised the visual allure of the dreamlike Wizarding World.

## SHOWDOWN

Framestore concept art suggests the visual palette for a battle between Dumbledore and Grindelwald.

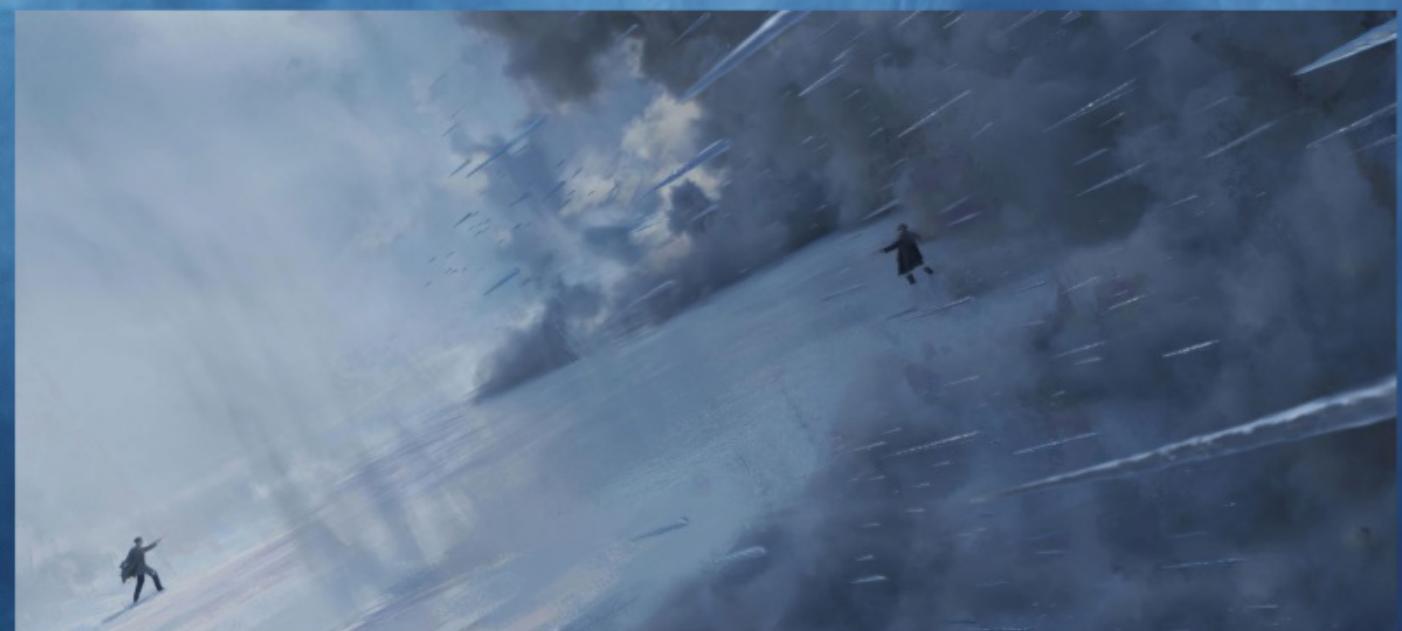


➡ of the film is because myself, the production designer and George Richmond, the cinematographer, were able to work in unison."

## LEARNING A FILM'S VISUAL LANGUAGE

Christian reflects on the seven years that he has been involved in the world of Fantastic Beasts, and says that across the films there has been "a massive jump in what things look like." He notes, too, how "we did a bit of virtual production on this so we could show how the final version of an environment would look during shooting." In making the point about such a coherent approach, Christian explains that it results in creative choices not going off on a trajectory from a choice made at the concept stage. As such, it reflects the ways in which the art department's concept design work remains constant and consistent from the early stages of pre-production through to the work on final shots. It remains challenging work, however.

Dan notes that the design of the manticore was particularly difficult and it leads him to reflect on the mindset shift that he had to make



having come into film concept design from the world of computer game concept design. "When I mentioned those initial designs earlier that I did on the Erumpent on the first film, that might've been where I went wrong because [the design] did feel a bit 'gamey'. I was still using my game design mind. You have to learn the

**AVALANCHE**  
Depicting the duel between Dumbledore and Grindelwald, this concept art indicates the dramatic role played by the environment.

visual language for the film. With games, a design has to look great from all angles." Dan also notes that "the silhouette, which is a massive part of design in anything, and in games even more so, is because you have to be able to instantly recognise a character. It needs to read straight away. It's all stuff that you learn early on. But, a cool creature's a cool creature."

Dan has worked on all three Fantastic Beasts films and notes, "For me, it was such an honour. My family are massively into the Harry Potter books and, for me, more so with the films because I love Stuart Craig's production design. I couldn't believe it: the opportunity to work in that universe. It's so well-designed and thought-out."

He brings the conversation to a close by striking a note that speaks to the wider wonder of fantasy films, when he says with a smile of his art department work: "It's that balancing act between fantasy and childhood dreams, but there's this beautiful sense of 'that could work somehow'."

“The silhouette is a massive part of design... it needs to be instantly recognisable”



**COLLIDING WORLDS**  
Concept art for the original film establishes the tone of things to come when the fantastic beasts collide with our all-too-ordinary world.

# sketchbook

# Josh Atack

The concept artist reveals the stories behind their diverse character designs brimming with detail and personality



### THE AUTOMATON

"This is the design of TES, a friend's RPG character. I wanted to try and capture her tall frame, but without her feeling overbearing; her quilted jacket is both a nod to her airship backstory but also indicates softness."

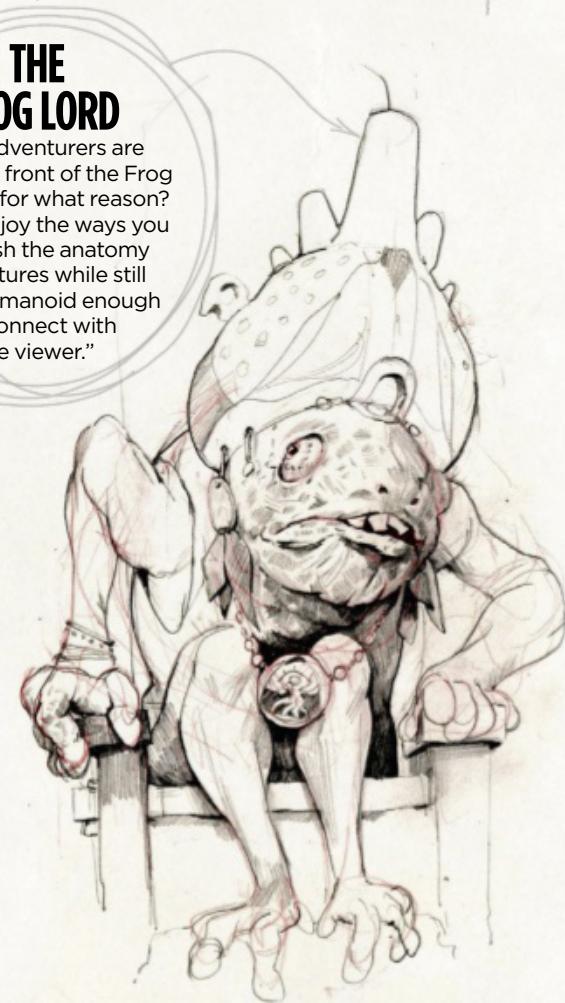
### THE BARD

"An exploratory drawing for my bard, Oscilia Foxglove. I think it's important to explore and be confident in a character before committing to a full design sheet. I enjoy the contrast between her and the rest of the party."



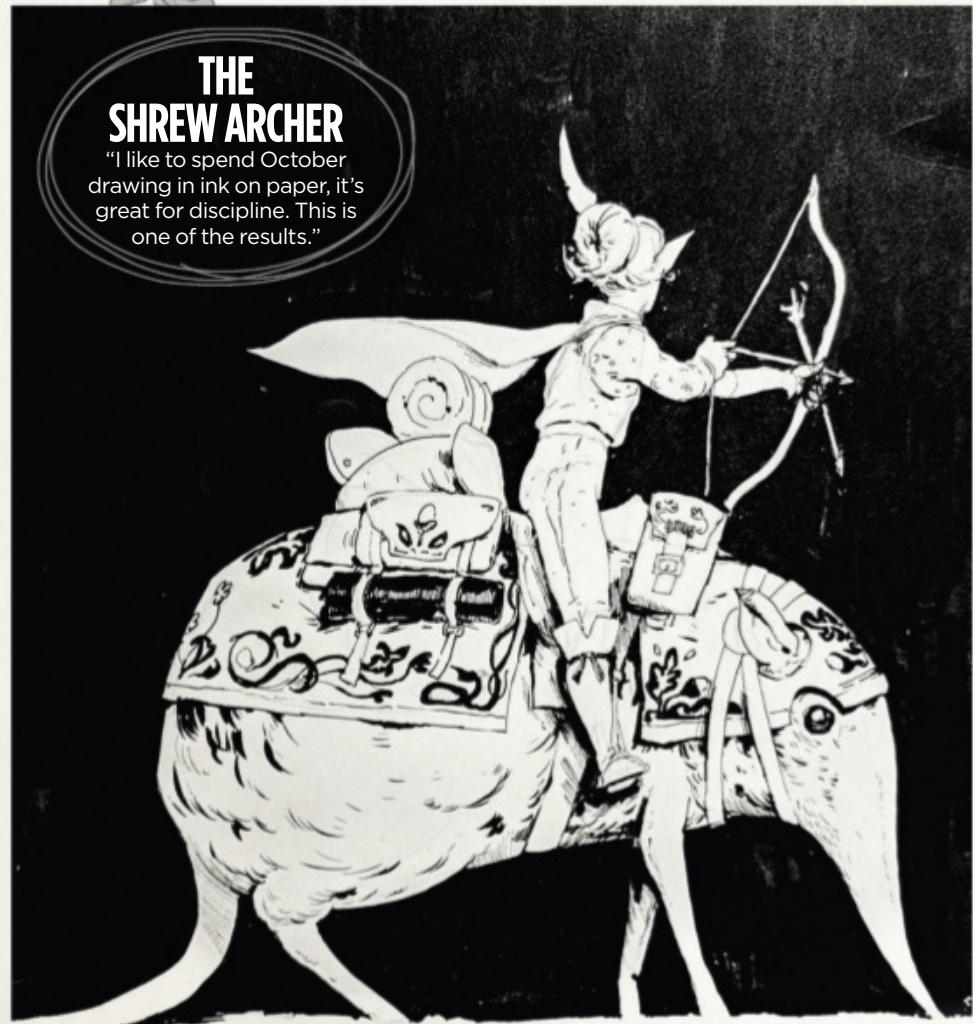
### THE FROG LORD

"Our adventurers are bought in front of the Frog Lord, but for what reason? I really enjoy the ways you can push the anatomy of creatures while still being humanoid enough to connect with the viewer."



### THE SHREW ARCHER

"I like to spend October drawing in ink on paper, it's great for discipline. This is one of the results."



## Artist PROFILE

### Josh Atack

LOCATION: UK



Josh Atack, or Badger to friends, is a doodler who works as a concept artist and art director in films and games. They've worked on projects including MCU, Star Wars, Battlefield and Total War. When not working they enjoy biking, walking, brewing and adventuring with family. [www.badgertracks.net](http://www.badgertracks.net)

## THE ISOPOD RIDER

"Playing with scale is a fun way to change the feel of a creature, in this case a huge isopod."



## THE MUTANT

"This creature is inspired by the amazing images of tiny creatures from scanning electron microscope images."

“Playing with scale is a fun way to change the feel of a creature”

# Sketchbook

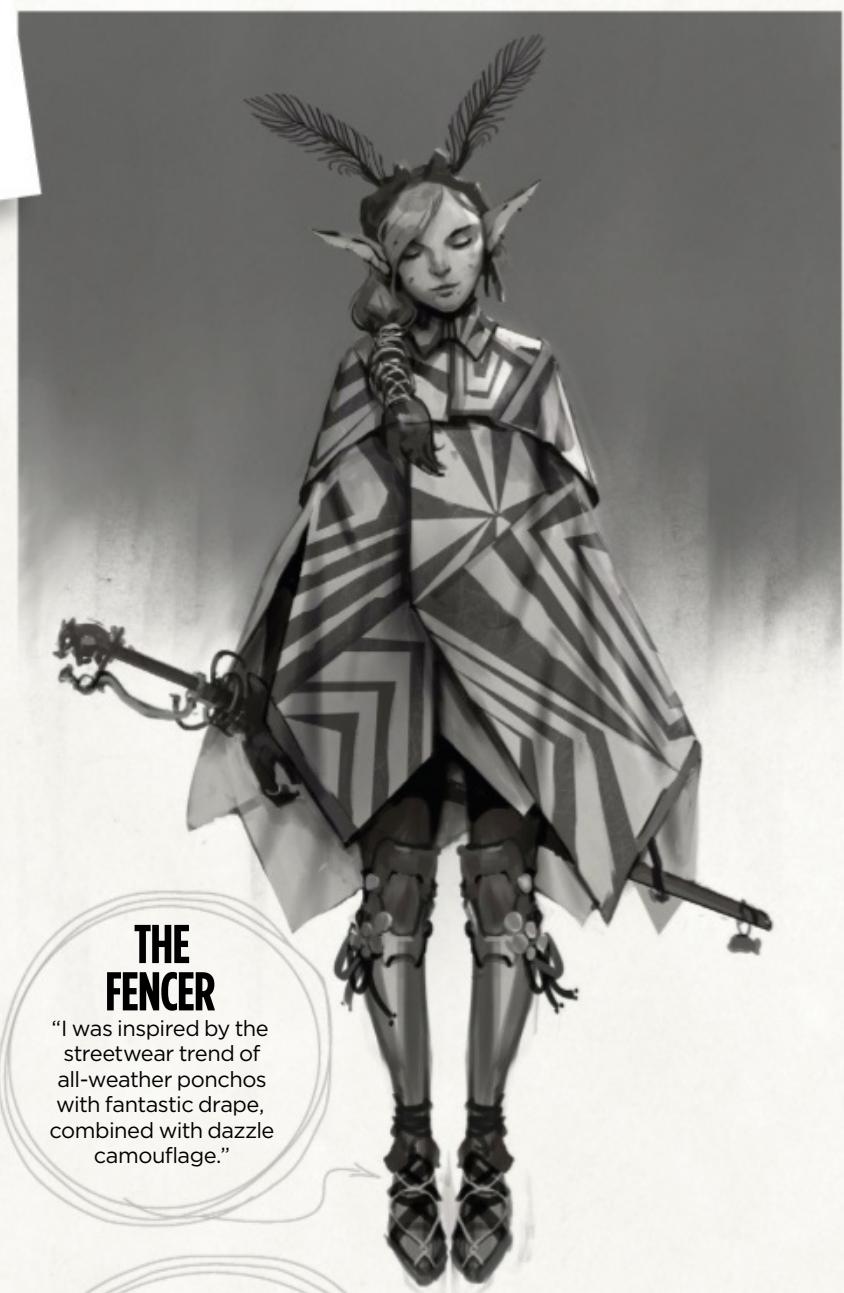


## THE GECKO

"All adventurers must store their supplies and belongings somewhere! Containers and placement of those supplies are a lot of fun to plan."

## THE HERALD

"With a squawking bird to make pronouncements easier."



## THE FENCER

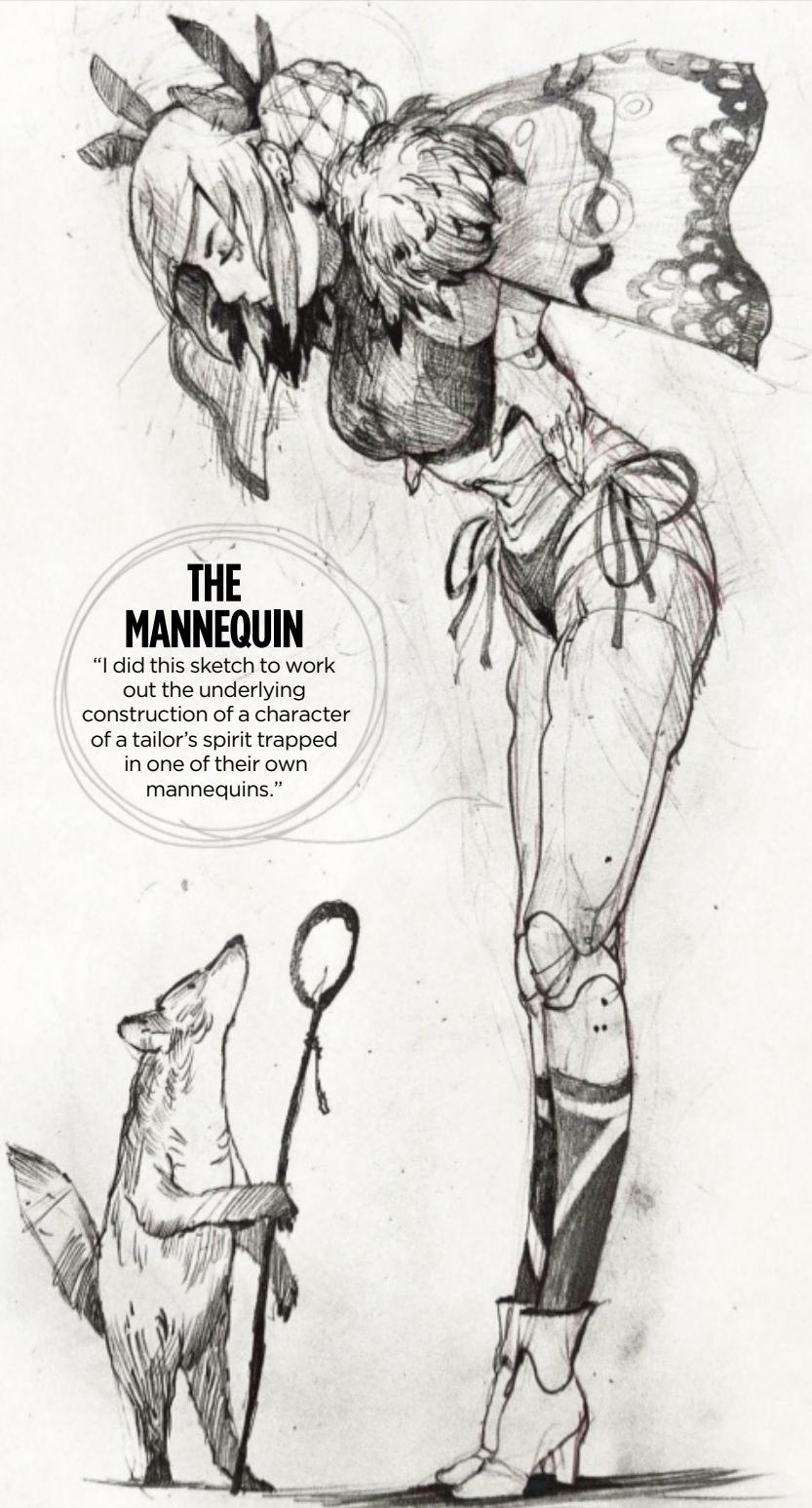
"I was inspired by the streetwear trend of all-weather ponchos with fantastic drape, combined with dazzle camouflage."



## THE LIBRARIAN

"Always tell a story in your character's shapes and clothes that makes them interesting. For my pencil drawings I start with a much looser red pencil sketch to lay in gesture and large shapes before refining the anatomy and details."





## THE MANNEQUIN

"I did this sketch to work out the underlying construction of a character of a tailor's spirit trapped in one of their own mannequins."



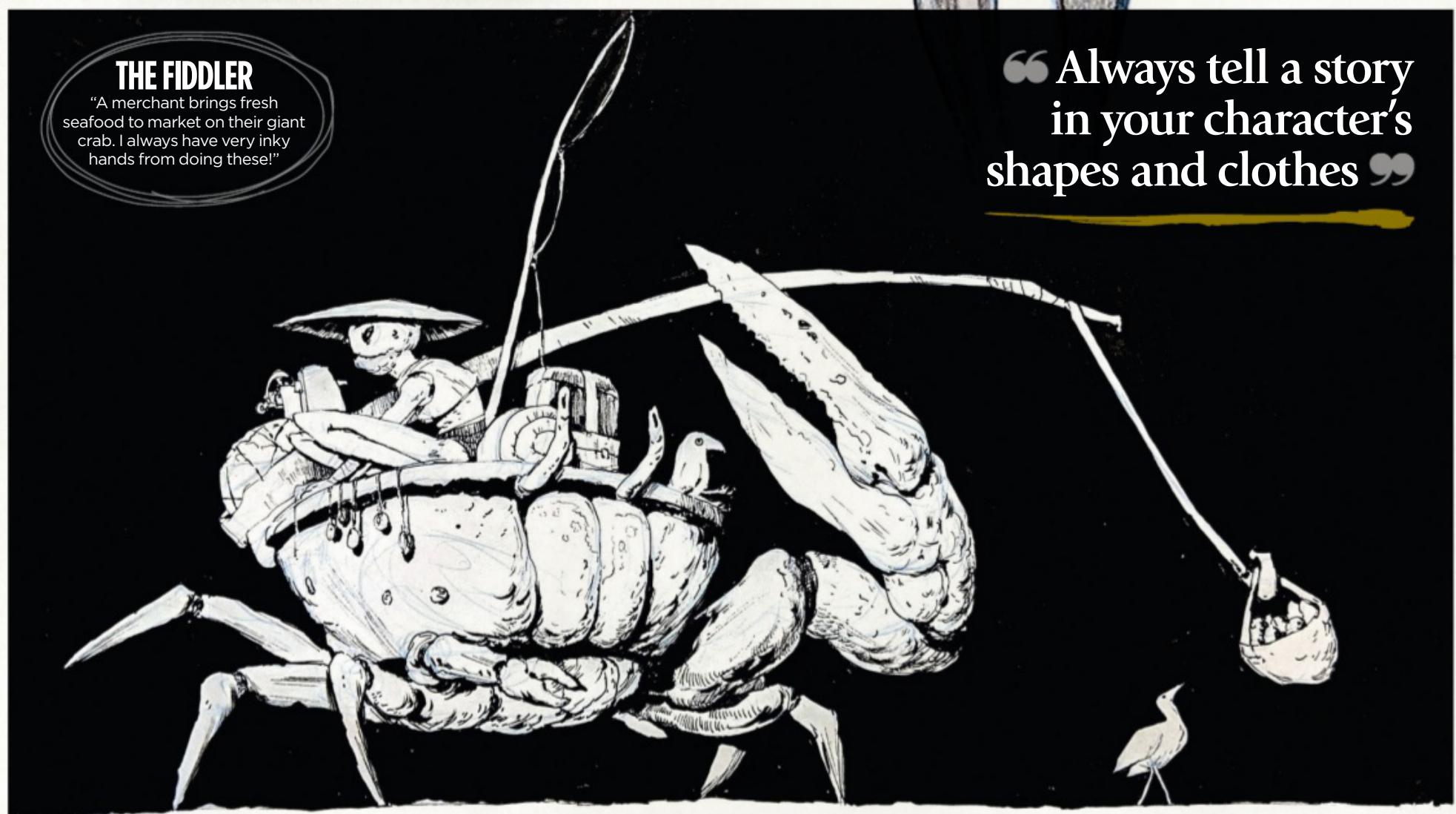
## THE BELLFOUNDER

"I was trying to play with elongated proportions in this design of a forger of bells. Playing with proportions can be risky as you can easily fall into uncanny valley."

## THE FIDDLER

"A merchant brings fresh seafood to market on their giant crab. I always have very inky hands from doing these!"

“Always tell a story in your character's shapes and clothes”

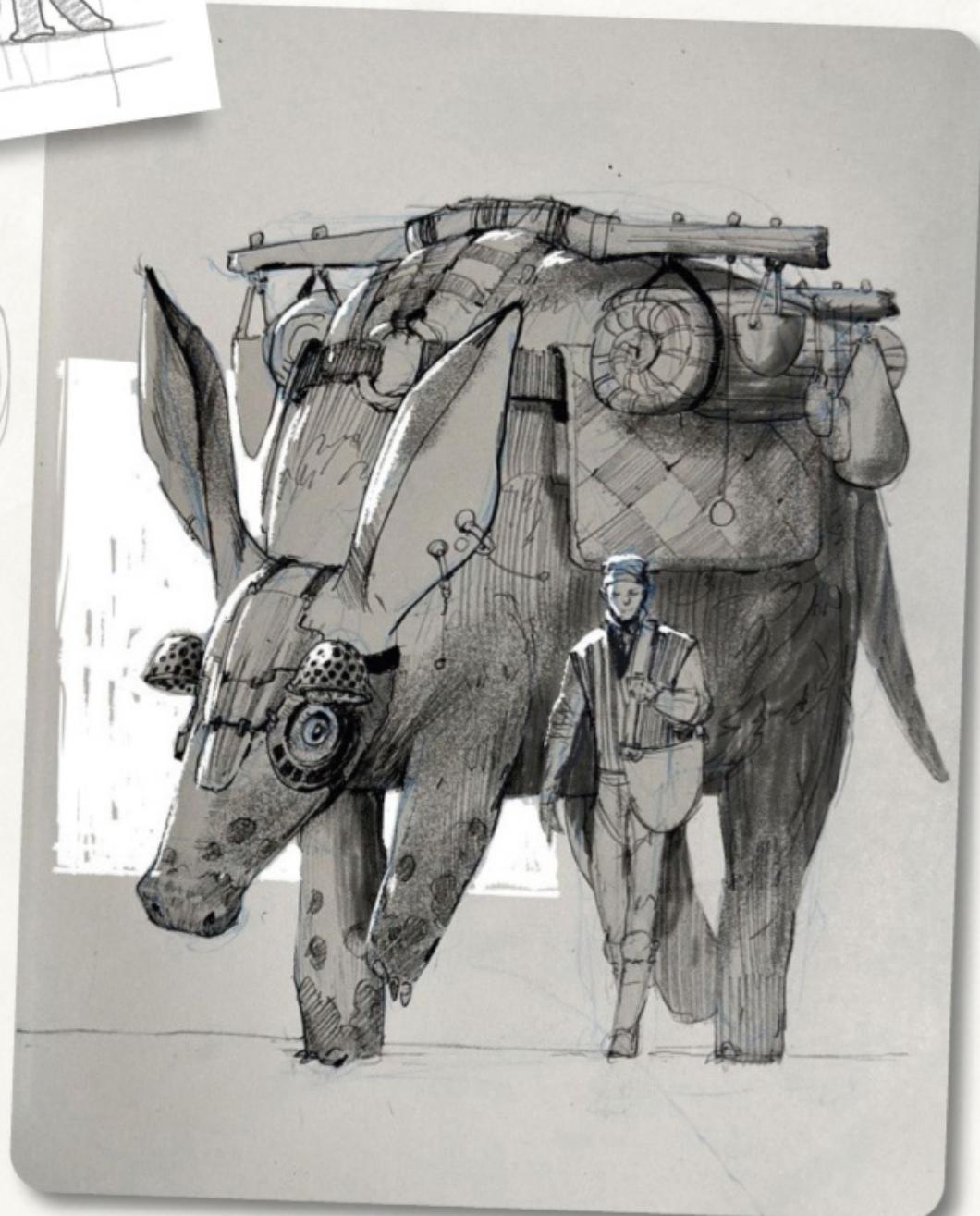


# Sketchbook



## THE SALAMANDER

"This one came out all in one go as a stream of consciousness, which is lovely when it happens as most design is hard (enjoyable) work."



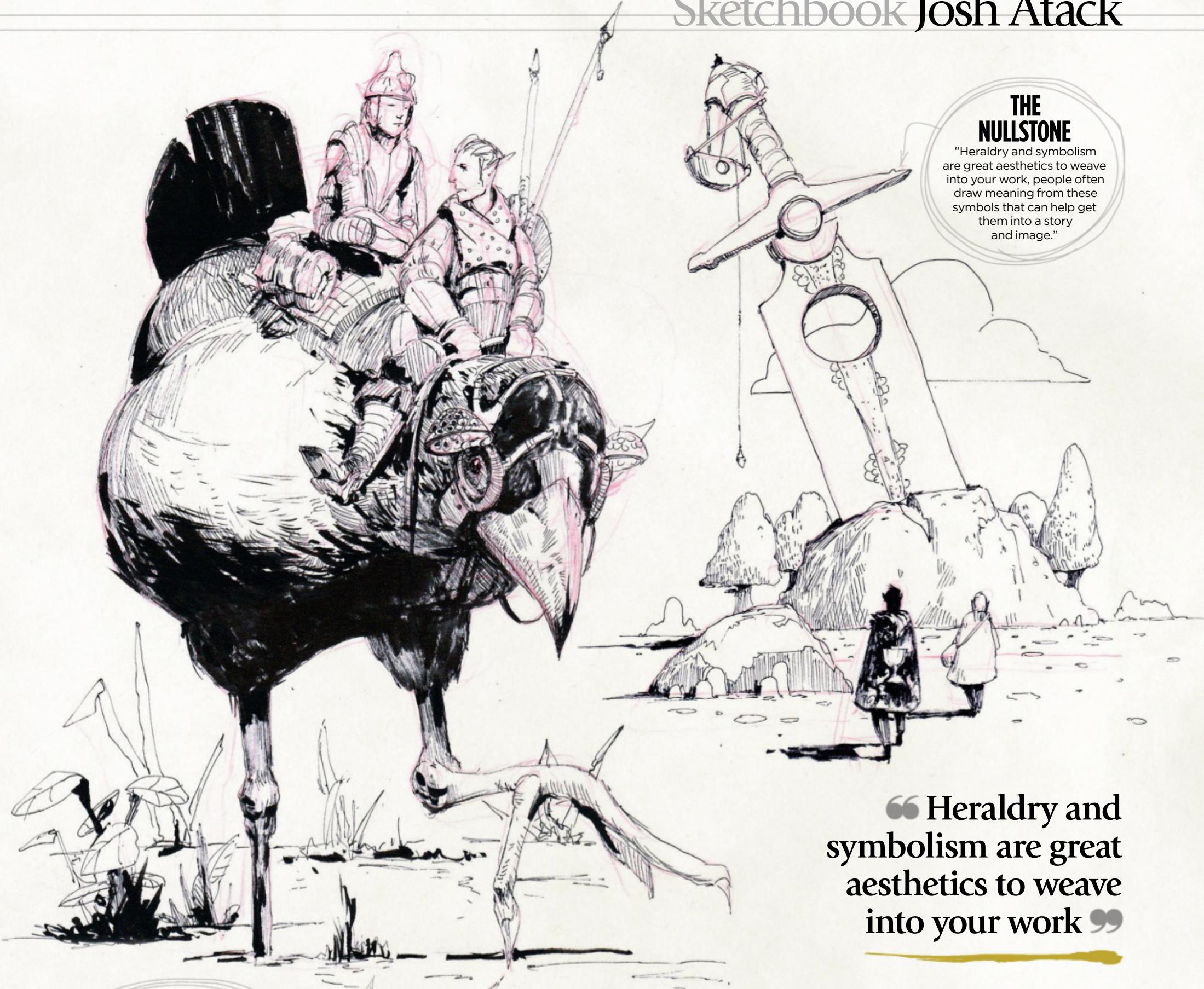
## THE COURIER

"On her three-eyed bat the courier can see obstacles unseen by my mundane eyes."



## THE TRAVELLER

"I really enjoy looking at how knights protected their mounts and translating that to unusual creatures."



## THE NULLSTONE

"Heraldry and symbolism are great aesthetics to weave into your work, people often draw meaning from these symbols that can help get them into a story and image."

“Heraldry and symbolism are great aesthetics to weave into your work”

## THE FENN ELVES

“I find the more feral, nature-centric elves of Tolkien’s mythos more inspiring than high magic. Here’s an idea of fenn elves on their rail.”



## THE GUARD

“These guards ride huge ceramic golem corvids to guard the skies.”

**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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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# ImagineFX

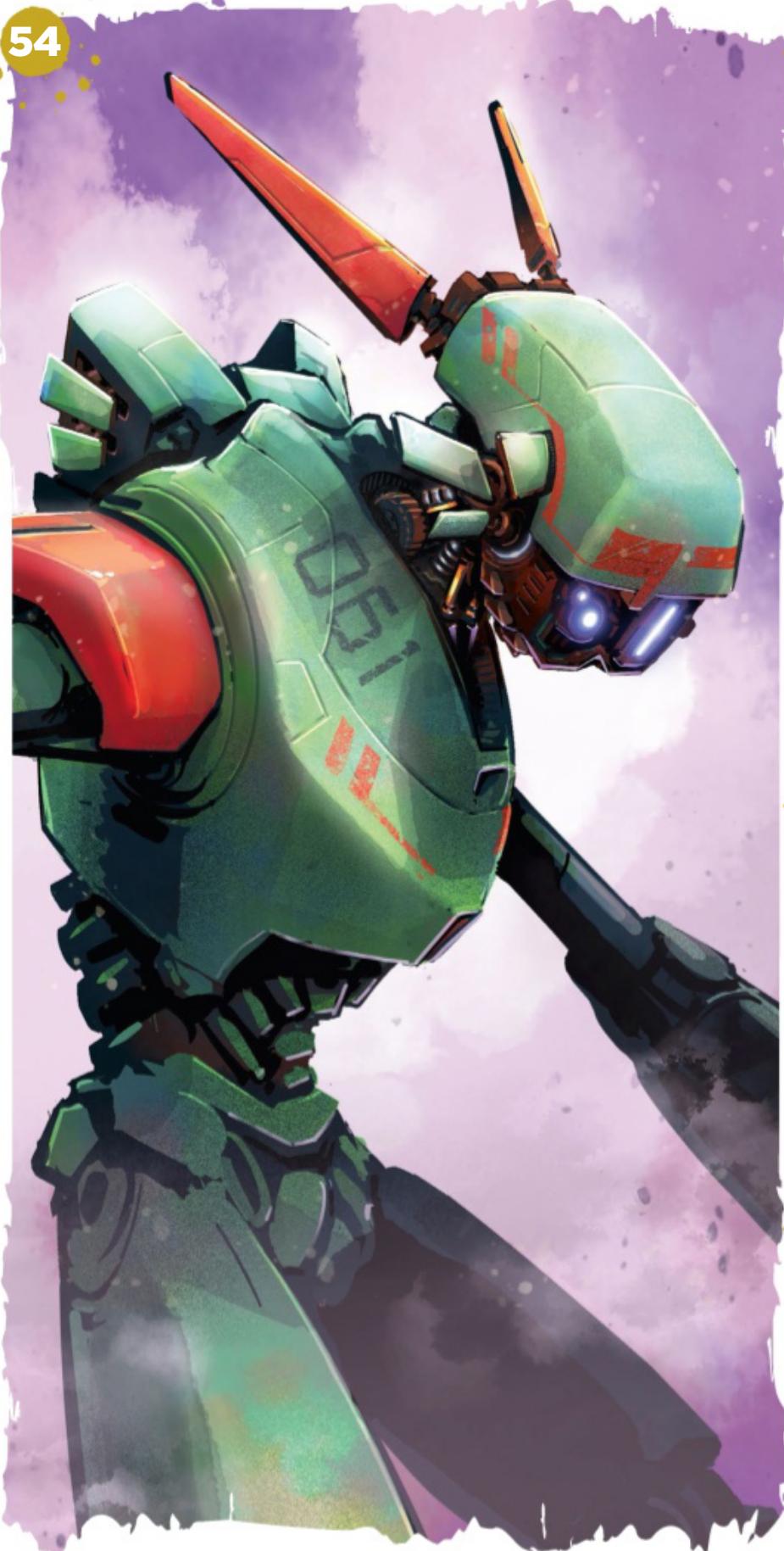
# Workshops

**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



## This issue:

### 54 Paint a snappy bot in Procreate

Our cover artist Jim Rowden provides a beginner's guide.

### 60 Illustrate a fun sci-fi cartoon

Guille Rancel breaks down the key elements of his sci-fi scene.

### 64 Design original characters

Learn Chris Ables' process for character creation.

### 70 Create unique art with AI tools

Martin Nebelong introduces us to the world of AI-generated art.

## Procreate

# PAINT A SNAPPY BOT IN PROCREATE

Learn the basics of Procreate with this beginner's guide to making your own futuristic automaton by **Jim Rowden**

### Artist PROFILE

**Jim Rowden**  
LOCATION: US

Jim lives near Seattle, splitting his time between raising kids and undertaking his artistic pursuits. Currently, he's freelancing and fulfilling a lifelong dream of creating fantasy and sci-fi art. [instagram.com/jimrow](https://instagram.com/jimrow)



Are you interested in experimenting with digital art, or trying out a new artistic tool? Check out Procreate on the iPad! A year ago, I decided to delve into Procreate and, after a few false starts, have been using it nearly every day. In that time, I have grown from a raw beginner to a truly capable digital artist.

Here I will demonstrate how I create a robot illustration. I'll cover

my process, from doodling in a cheap sketchbook, transitioning to Procreate, to painting and applying finishes. I'll discuss selection masks, shading, colouring, texturing, and adding those all-important final details. For this tutorial, I am assuming that the reader is new to the app, and will supply ground-level information that you will need to get up and running. If you're a seasoned pro, perhaps you'll still find a tidbit or two that you can use.

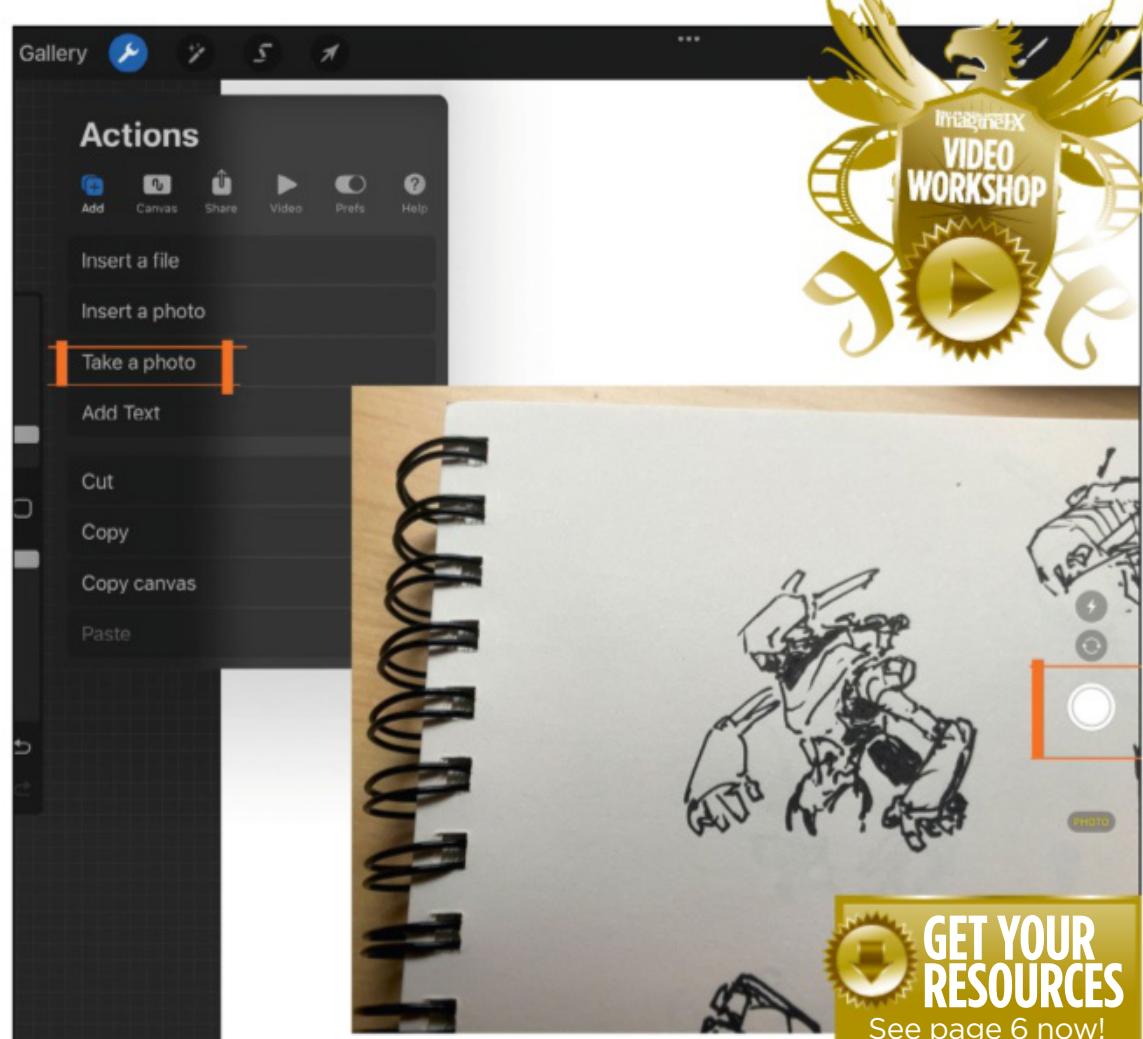
You will need an iPad, the Procreate app, and an Apple Pencil. It helps to know some basic anatomy if you want your bot to have human proportions. I recommend a willingness to hold loosely to your ideas, so that you can scrap ones that aren't working, and move on with a desire to experiment and find those 'happy accidents'.

In the end, I hope you find the app less intimidating, gain some knowledge, and create some cool art!



### 1 Old-school doodling

I don't start my process digitally. Using a cheap sketchbook, I draw A LOT of doodles, until I find one I can work with. I keep the doodles small and quick (less than five minutes each). If one sucks, I move on. I experiment with shapes, shadows, and line work. Tip: Carry your sketchbook everywhere. If you have down time, pull that thing out and throw down some lines.



### 2 Time to go digital

Next, I open Procreate and create a new canvas ('+' at top right). Then I take a photo of my doodle and add to the canvas. [Actions menu (wrench icon, top left); Add > Take a photo.] I open the Layers menu (overlapping boxes icon), select the photo layer, hit 'N' to open the slider, and reduce opacity to 30%. Tip: Set the canvas for at least double screen size for better details and smoother line work. ➤

In depth Paint a robot

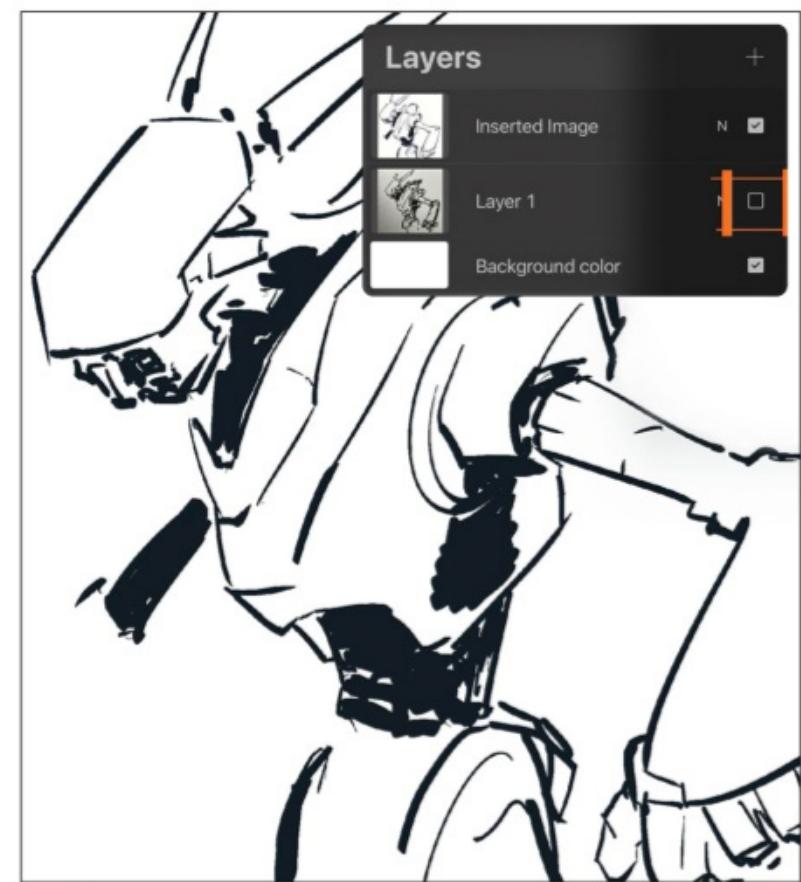


# Workshops



## 3 Sketch and carve

I create a new layer above the photo ('+' at the top of the Layers menu), and start drawing over the doodle. I like the Syrup brush; it varies line thickness based on pressure, and can create interesting lines. I also use the eraser tool (also set to Syrup) to carve away some negative space. Tip: Keep the pencil on the tablet when you finish a line. Procreate will smooth it out for you!



## 4 Refine the line

After the basic shapes and lines are traced, I turn off the doodle layer (Layers > uncheck box). To keep some of the life and spontaneity, I like to use just one layer as I refine the drawing, erasing and adding lines. Tip: Some artists like to reduce the opacity of the sketch layer, create a new layer above and refine with a tighter version – sometimes repeating the process a couple of times.

**WORKSHOP  
BRUSHES**

**PROCREATE**

**DEFAULT BRUSHES:  
SYRUP**

Used for initial sketching and erasing. The varied line weight makes it easy to block in shapes.

**STUDIO PEN**

This is used for cleaning up the initial sketch. The smooth line weight makes refinements easy.

**TECHNICAL PEN**

A thin, smooth line that I use for details.

**MAIN BRUSH BY  
KATSIA JAZWINSKA**

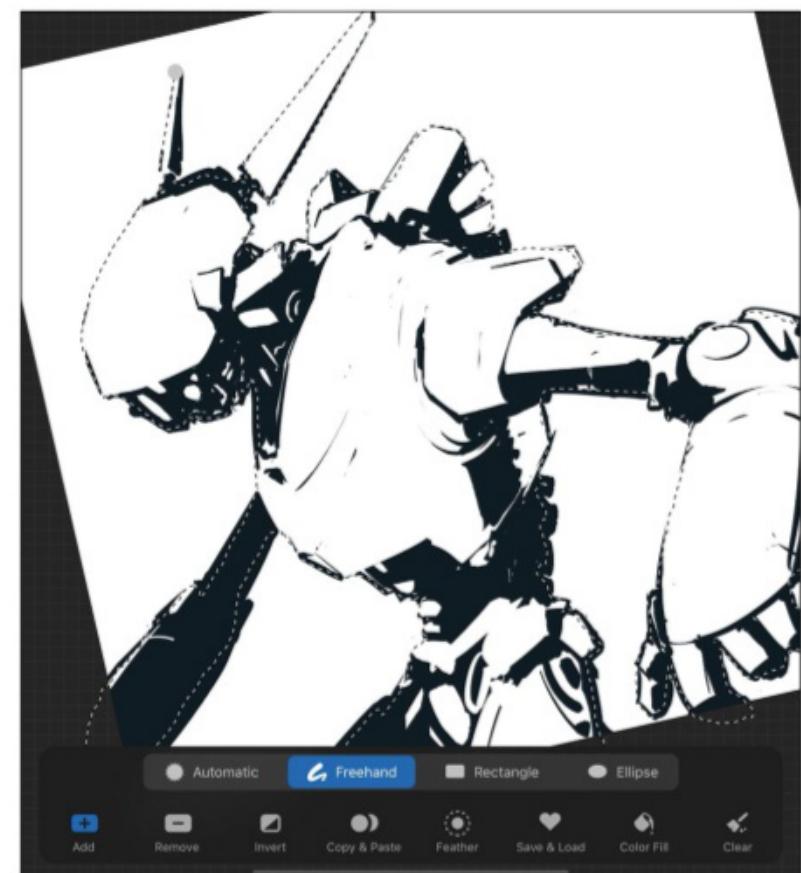
Used for blocking in shadows and colour.

**Get more Procreate  
brushes from Katsia  
Jazwinska via  
creativemarket.com/  
Jazwinska**



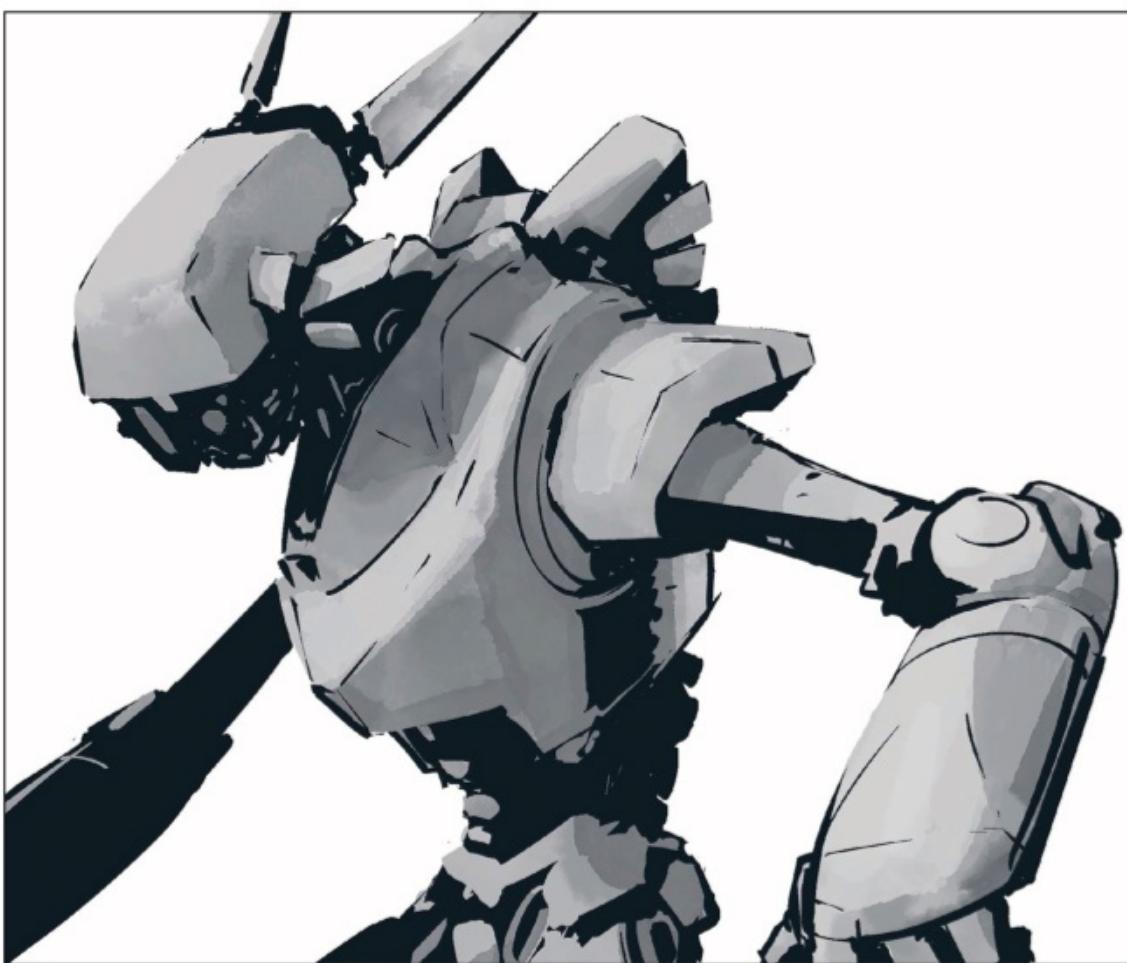
## 5 Lines, movement, shadows and shapes

My goal is to keep a sense of movement in my line work. I also start thinking about the light source and where shadows are, adding big chunks of black where needed. At this stage, I usually switch to the Studio Pen brush, which has a more stable line width, and continue editing. Again, I use the eraser tool almost like white paint, carving away at the black where needed.



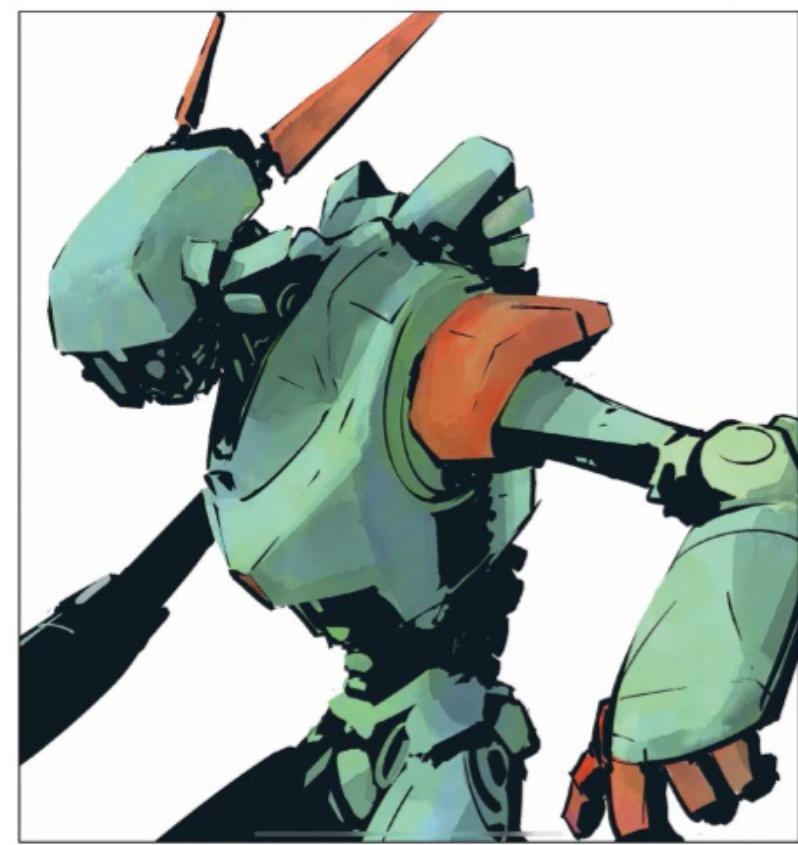
## 6 Masked and ready to roll

For my process, masking is critical for having more freedom later. I use the selection tool (stylised 'S', top right), select Freehand, and trace the outer edge of the figure all the way around, finishing by tapping the grey dot at the starting point. I tap Save & Load in the bottom menu, and clear the selection by tapping 'S' again. Wash, rinse, repeat for any individual parts that will need their own colours.



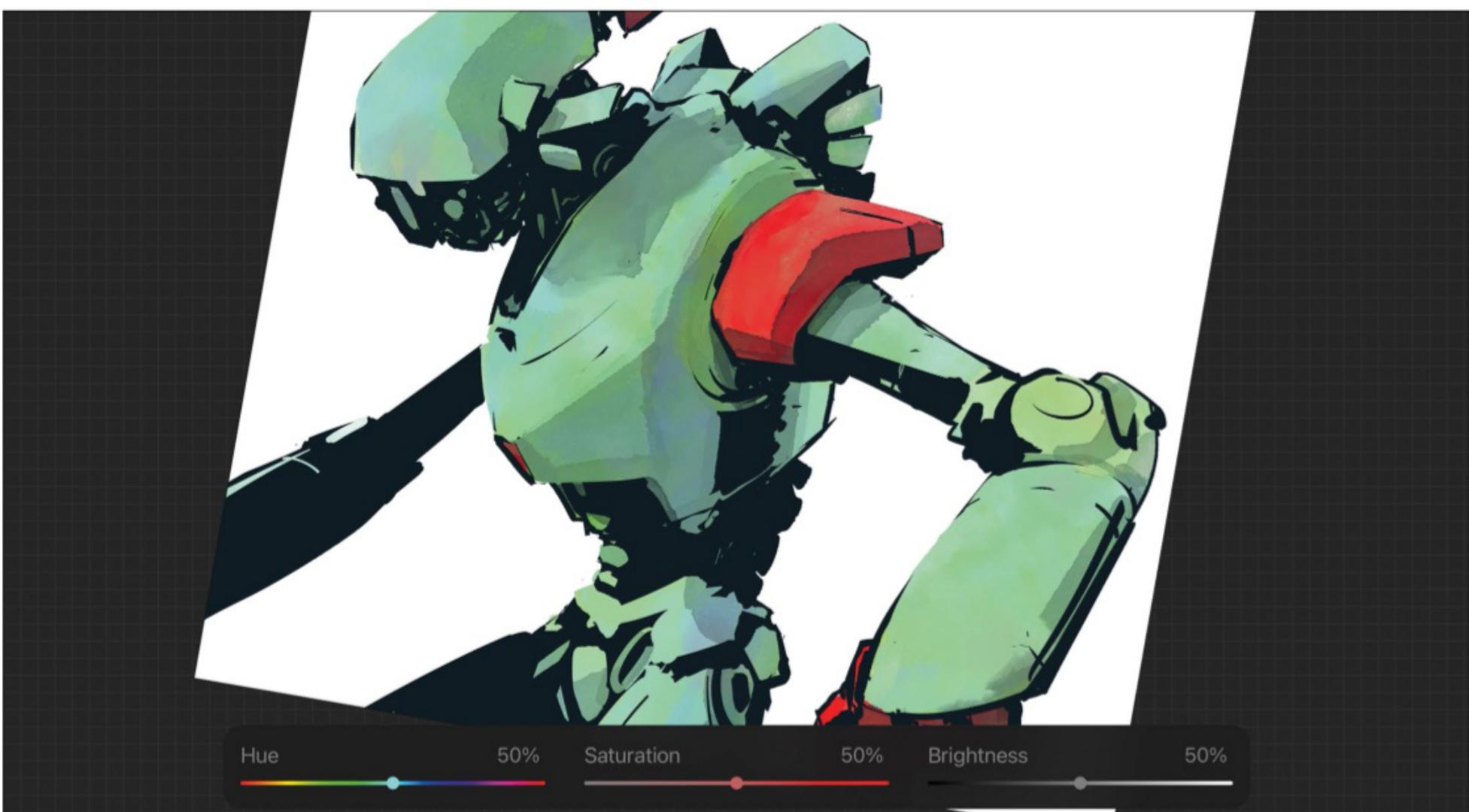
## 7 Let the shading commence

For shading, I create a new layer below the line drawing, and set opacity to 40%. I load the selection mask of the full figure, and use the KJ - Main Brush - (part of the Realistic Procreate Watercolor Kit – info in side bar). Tip: Really start thinking about volume and how the light source affects the shape. Try varying the opacity of the brush, creating darker and lighter shadows.



## 8 Start to colour

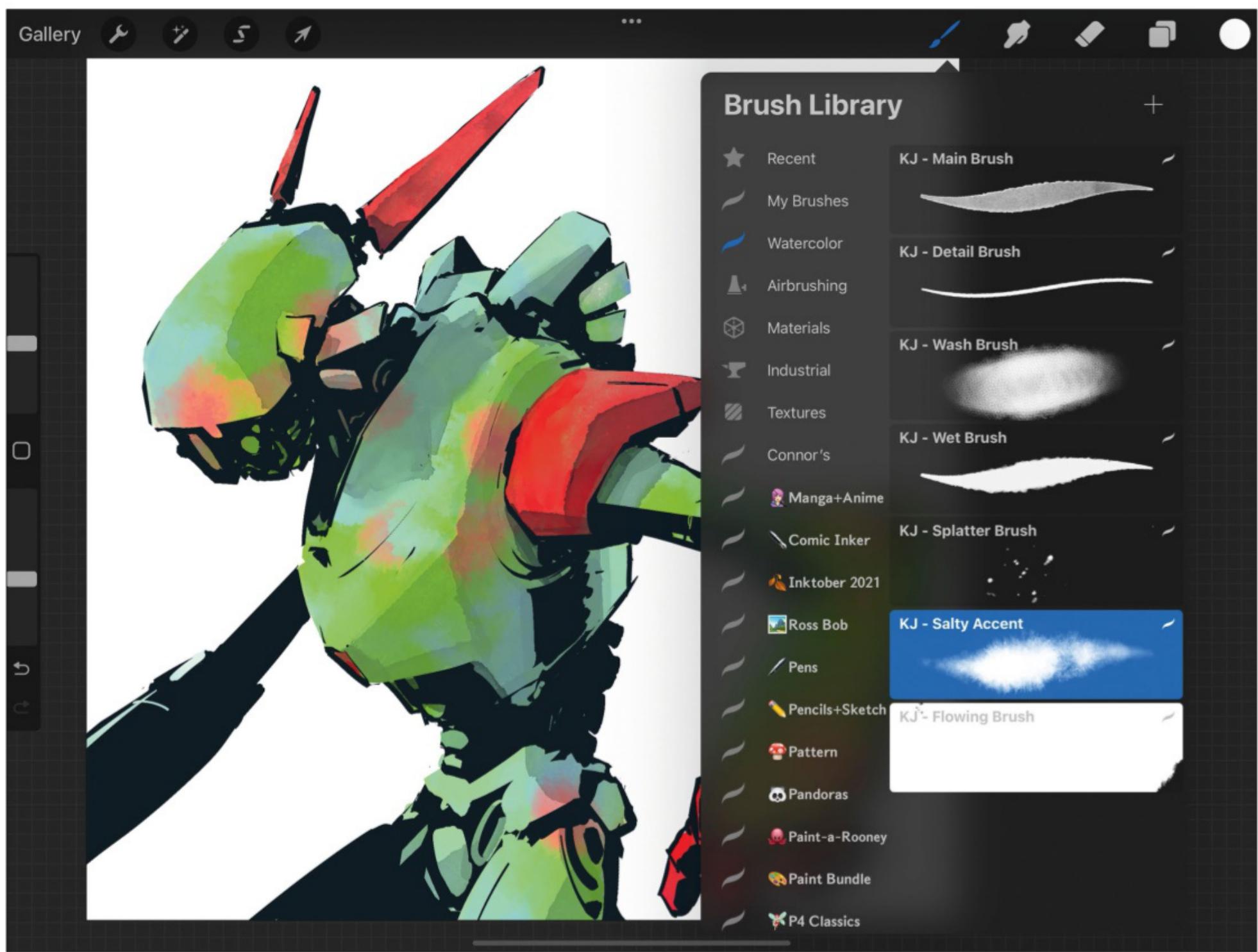
Next I create a new layer for each colour below the shadow layer, load the selections for the smaller parts, and paint with colour (colour selector top right of the Procreate interface). I don't worry if colours are not 100% right; I can adjust them later. Tip: Check out Procreate's Harmony feature. It opens a sub-menu where you can change from Complementary to Triadic etc; good for figuring out colour schemes.



## 9 Adjust, adjust, adjust

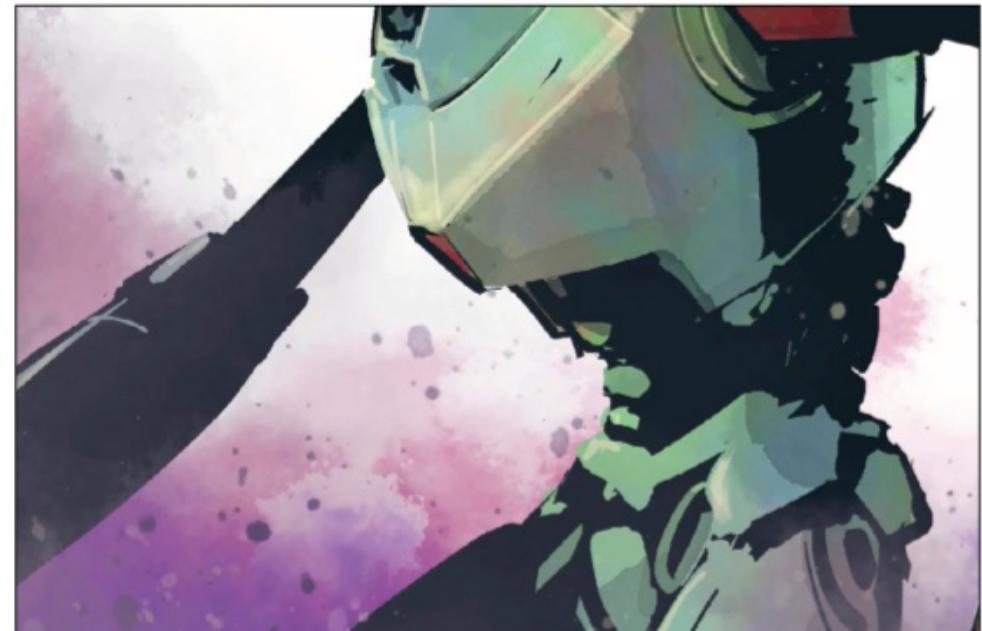
With the colours on different layers, you can adjust them individually to find just the right scheme. I select the colour layer I want to adjust, open the Adjustments menu (magic wand icon, top left), select Hue, Saturation, Brightness, and with the menu at the bottom, start playing around with the sliders. Repeat for each colour. ➔

# Workshops



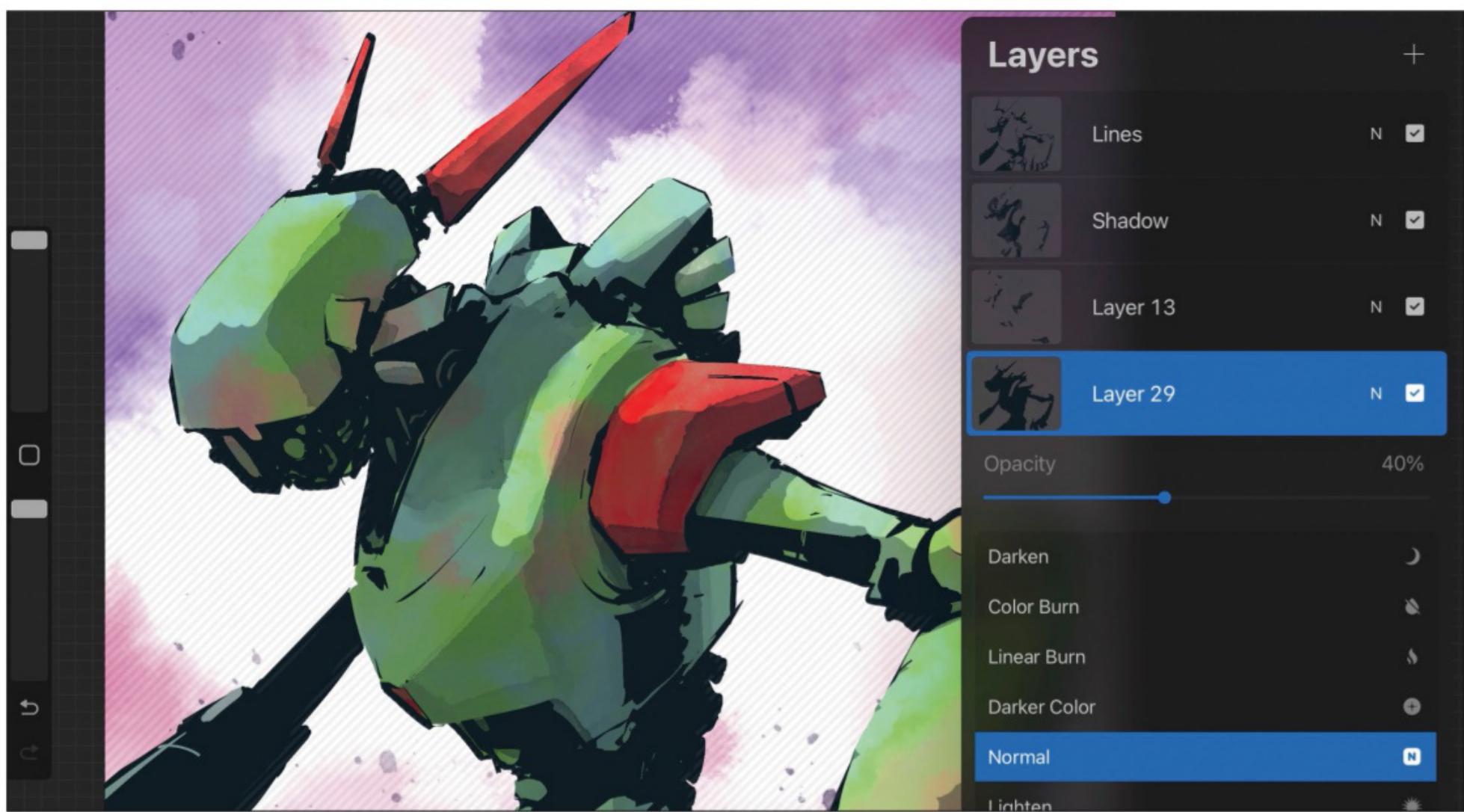
## 10 Add texture

I select the KJ - Flowing brush from the Watercolor Kit, set opacity of the brush to 30% using the lower slider on the left, and set size to 5% using the upper slider. I add orange splotches to elements closer to the viewer, and blue splotches to pieces further away. I reselect the main colour and, with the same brush, re-apply over the orange and blue, blending the colours to add texture.



## 11 Don't forget the background

For my robots, I like to put some clouds and texture in the background. I select the layer called 'Background color' and pick one that works with the foreground image. I'll create a new layer above the background colour and, using the KJ - Flowing brush, start selectively painting in clouds, adjusting the colours as I go along. Tip: Splatter brush is great for more texture or floating bits.



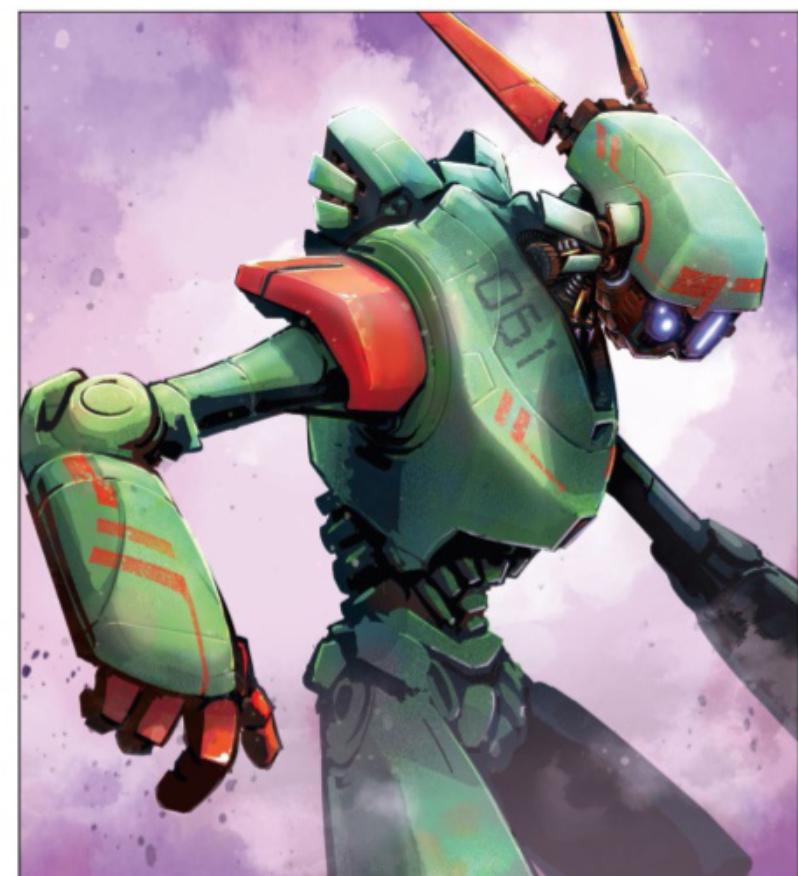
## 12 A nice big shadow

When I want to add some visual weight to the character, I'll create a new layer above the colour layers and load the selection for the whole body again. I set the layer to 40% opacity and drop in a dark blue colour. Now I erase everything that has light hitting it. This increases the richness of the character and adds more contrast between fore and background.



## 13 Details

I create a new top layer and set the opacity to 70%. With a light yellow colour and the Studio Pen set to a small size, I selectively draw lines to define panels and other parts and reinforce the light source. I then create another new layer, set opacity to 50%, select a very dark blue and add shadows and lines following the previously drawn light lines.



## 14 Simple tricks and refinements

I add highlights and shadows, paint more colour splotches, and strategically erase some line work. I'll paint racing stripes, and add eyes with a glow using Adjustments > Gaussian Blur. Eventually, I get to a place where I can call the piece done. Tip: By selecting the lines layer and Alpha Lock from the layer effects menu, you can add subtle colour and texture to the lines.



## Photoshop ILLUSTRATE A FUN SCI-FI CARTOON

**Guille Rancel** shares his process for creating intriguing illustrations from scratch, with stylised, expressive characters in a colourful atmosphere



## Artist PROFILE

**Guille Rancel**  
LOCATION: Spain

An illustrator and character designer based in Tenerife, who uses a love of mythology and nature to create stories. An artist on the Sorunne comic book. [www.behance.net/guillermoperezrancel](http://www.behance.net/guillermoperezrancel)



This is a personal image created just for fun, in which I tried to combine a sci-fi theme with a cartoony art style. I also like to add some mythological elements to my illustrations, as they are very inspirational to me. I love how mysterious and meaningful these elements can be when combined with a totally different concept, like sci-fi. With this image I've tried to capture a certain moment, like a

frame of a movie: two space explorers are on an alien archaeological site, but they find out that something terrible is approaching them. I like to invite the viewers to let their imagination run free as they wonder who or what they are about to meet.

I tried to create a balanced composition with a strong colour contrast between all the elements. I started creating some rough thumbnails of the scene to figure out the balance and composition, and then I developed the characters. I

used basic shapes (circle, triangle and square) for their design. I imagined them as scavengers, as they don't have many resources, and they travel in space probably stealing from ancient cultures. For creating this illustration, I started on my sketchbook and then made the final image in Photoshop. After defining the sketch, I made the outlines and used some basic colours as a first step for the illustration. Here I will explore some of the key elements that make up my fun sci-fi scene. ➤

# Workshops

## COMPOSE A STRIKING SCENE

### What are they looking at?

We cannot see what the characters are looking at. But we can feel that something is approaching, and it's probably intimidating, because of their faces and the perspective. We can tell that the characters are about to scream or run away after being attracted to this enigmatic shrine.

### Character design: basic shapes

For the three main characters, I thought it would be fun if each one of them is represented by one of the basic shapes: triangles, circles and squares. This doesn't have a specific purpose other than to add variety; I think the characters could look boring if they share the same shapes, colours or outfits.

### RESOURCES

#### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: CUSTOM BRUSH 1

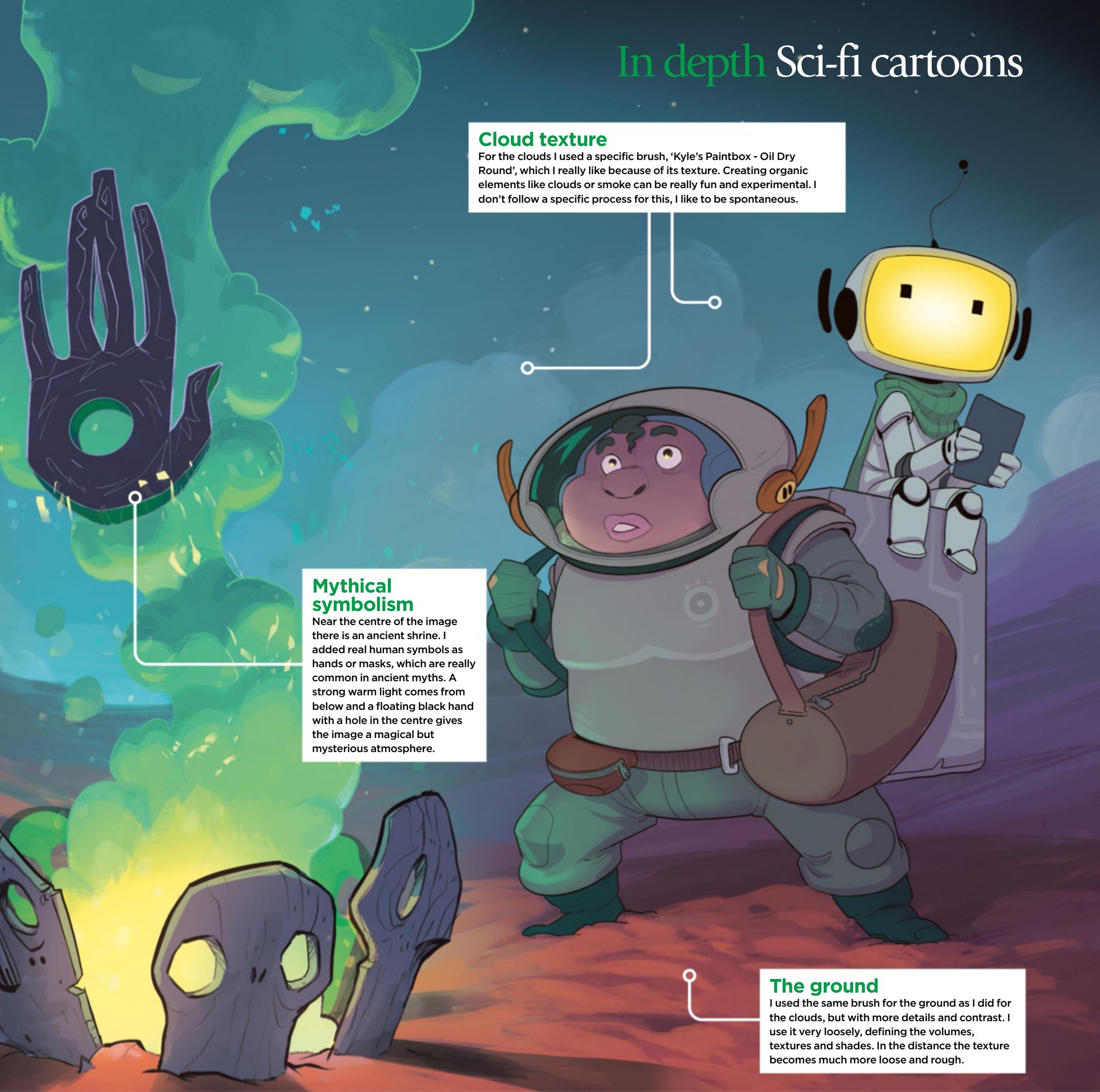
In my Photoshop illustration work, I use this custom brush for outlines and sketches.

## How I create... CARTOON ILLUSTRATIONS

### 1 Rough thumbnails

The most useful way to start an illustration is by creating some thumbnails. This allows us to better define the composition and not lose our time on details. I love to make very loose lines with pen or pencil for this so I can create more sketches quickly.





## 2 The sketch

This is my favourite part of the process. To me, it doesn't matter how many sketches I have to do until I find the right one. This is where I start to define my scene, and I can add some details before making the final outlines. Sometimes I feel drawings can lose part of their essence after cleaning up; that's why I love sketches.



## 3 Final image

This is where I define the outlines and add the atmosphere with powerful colours and lighting. As this is a sci-fi image I can use highly contrasted colours for the palette. The balance of colours is very important to create a focus point and light source. Also, the expressions of the characters must be recognisable and striking.

# Photoshop DESIGN ORIGINAL CHARACTERS

Follow illustrator **Chris Ables'** step-by-step process of creating an original character design from start to finish

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Chris Ables**  
LOCATION: US

Chris Ables is a freelance character designer, illustrator and visual development artist working within the entertainment arts industry for 10+ years. [www.chrisablesart.com](http://www.chrisablesart.com)

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Character design, whether it be for animated films, television shows, video games, advertisements, web media or print publications, is the process of fully developing a character's physical characteristics, style, personality, behaviour and overall visual appearance. What this means is that every detail of a character, such as their shapes, silhouette, colour palettes, texture, details, and oftentimes, costumes, has been

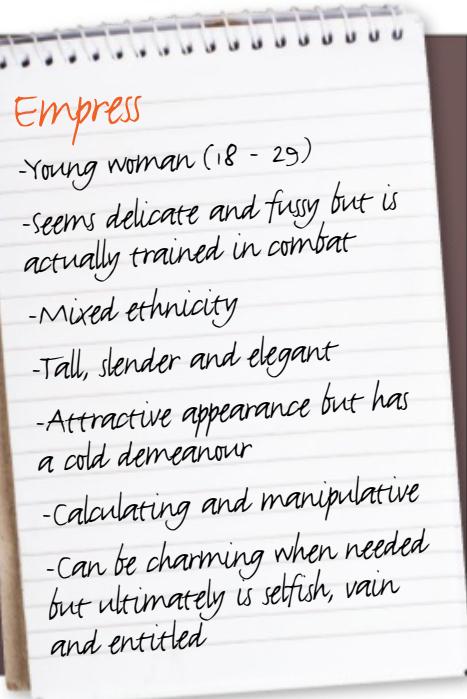
carefully chosen by the character designer and is overseen by a creative team made up of writers, producers, directors, 3D modellers, animators, art directors and production designers on any given production.

As Skydance Animation's character designer, I am no stranger to this process. Having worked over the last ten years on projects for companies such as Netflix, Walt Disney Animation Studios, Atomic Cartoons, Marvel Studios, Axis Studios, IDW Publishing, Dark Horse Comics, Sony Pictures and

20th Century Studios, I have developed the technical skills and learnt the process for designing original characters. In this tutorial, you'll discover helpful and commonplace techniques for creating engaging characters, learn industry terminology such as 'A-Frames' and 'Turnarounds', gain access to my favourite Photoshop brushes, and you'll get an inside look into the step-by-step process that I take when designing an original, sci-fi, female villain character, from exploration to execution.

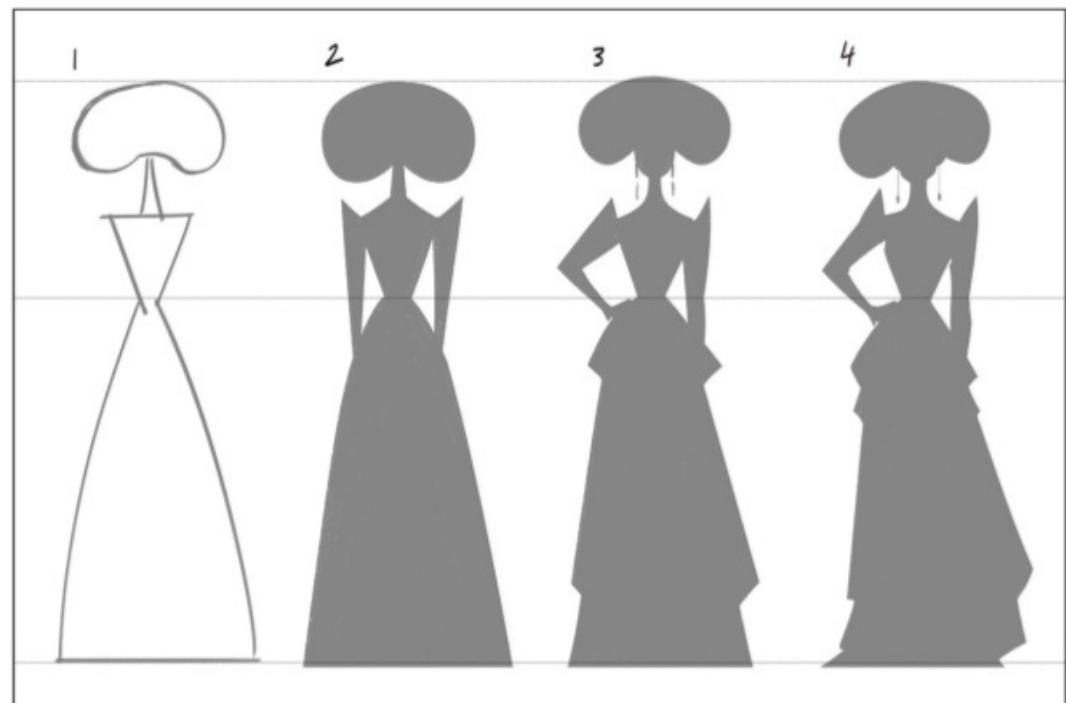
## 1 Character breakdown

On an animated production you're given an assignment of designing a character, but for this tutorial, I'll need to envision a character of my own. I'll think about not just their physical attributes, but who they are in terms of the personality traits, their ideologies and their motivations in life. In this case, I've come up with the idea of a female villain, whose attributes I've listed out above.



## 2 Reference board

After being given a directive along with a character description and any other vital information relating to the character, the character designer will typically assemble a reference board, to provide the production team with visual references for the character using photo and/or artwork from film, TV and real life as inspiration.

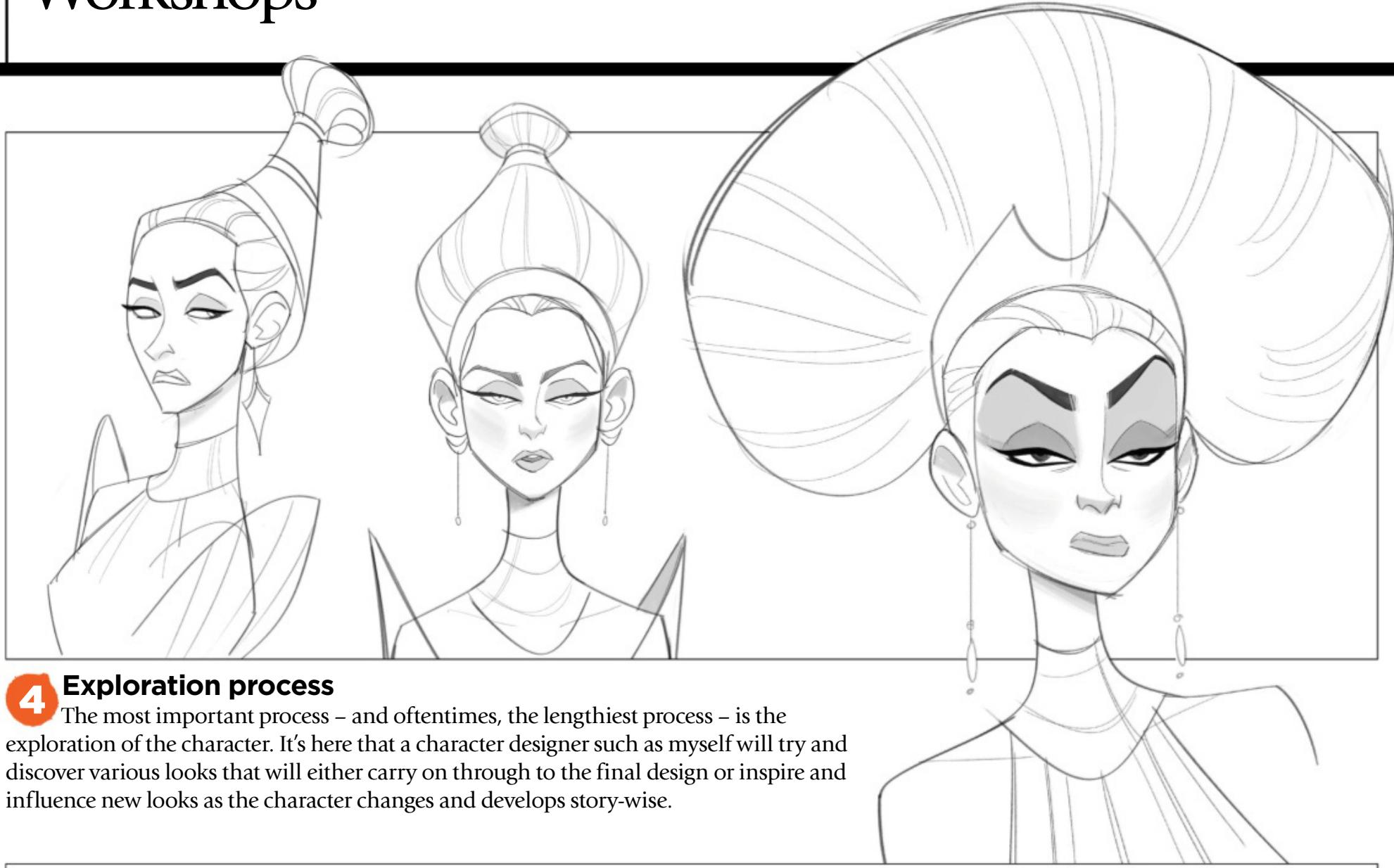


## 3 Shape language

I play around with simple shapes and silhouettes until I come up with a concept I find interesting. I will often do a pass or two where I refine the silhouette to solidify the idea and make the sketching process easier. ➤

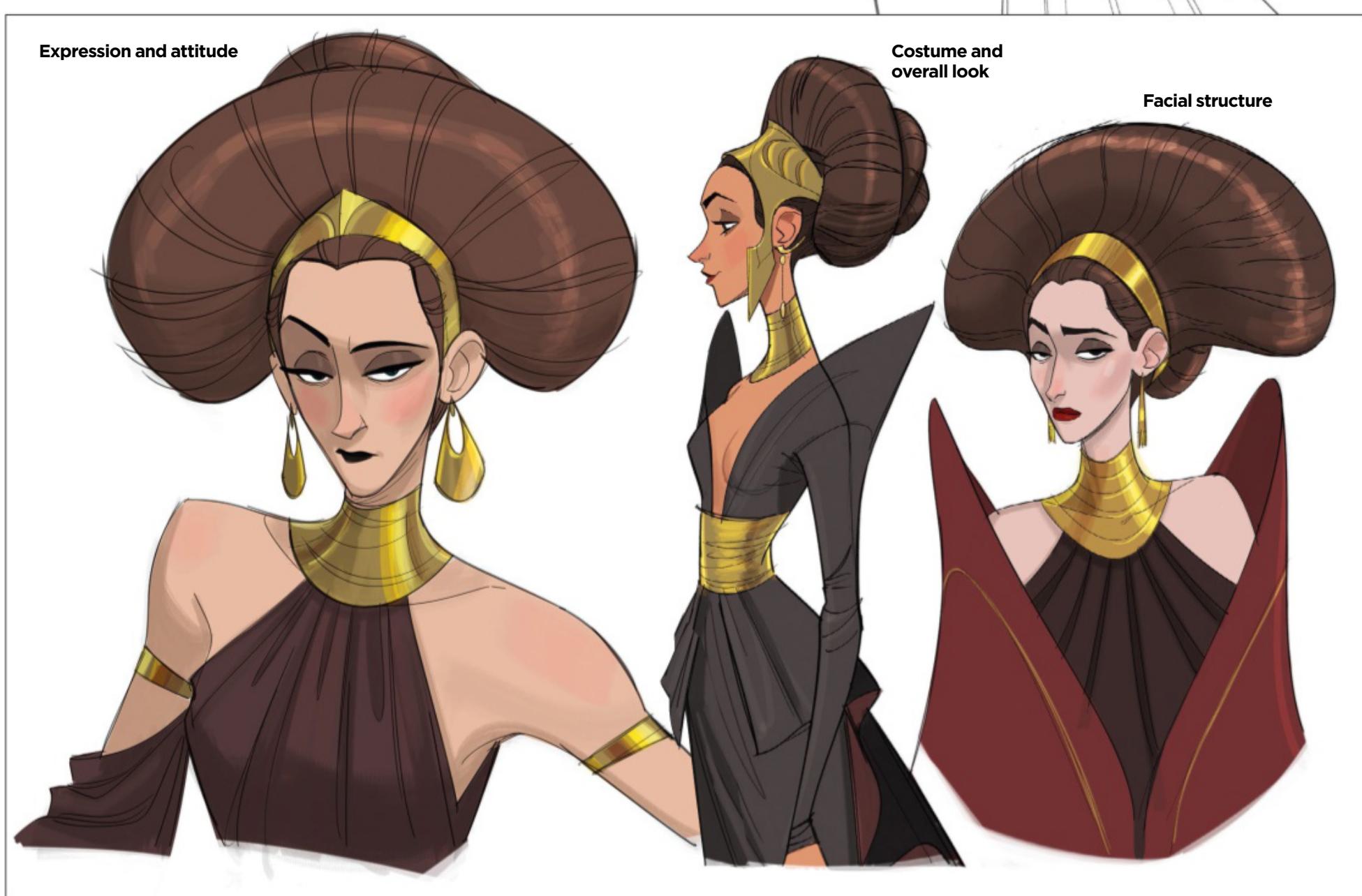


# Workshops



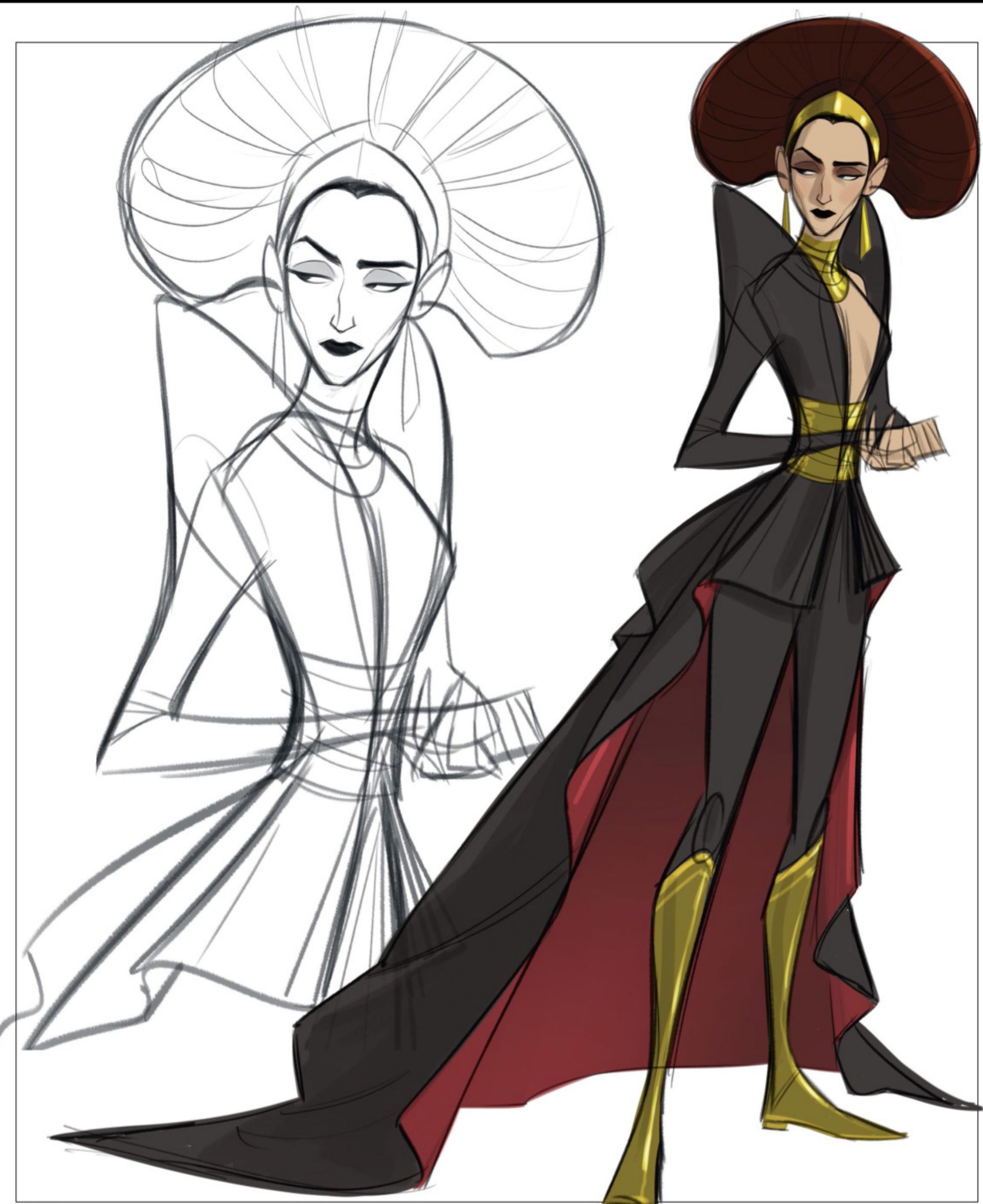
## 4 Exploration process

The most important process – and oftentimes, the lengthiest process – is the exploration of the character. It's here that a character designer such as myself will try and discover various looks that will either carry on through to the final design or inspire and influence new looks as the character changes and develops story-wise.



## 5 Further exploration

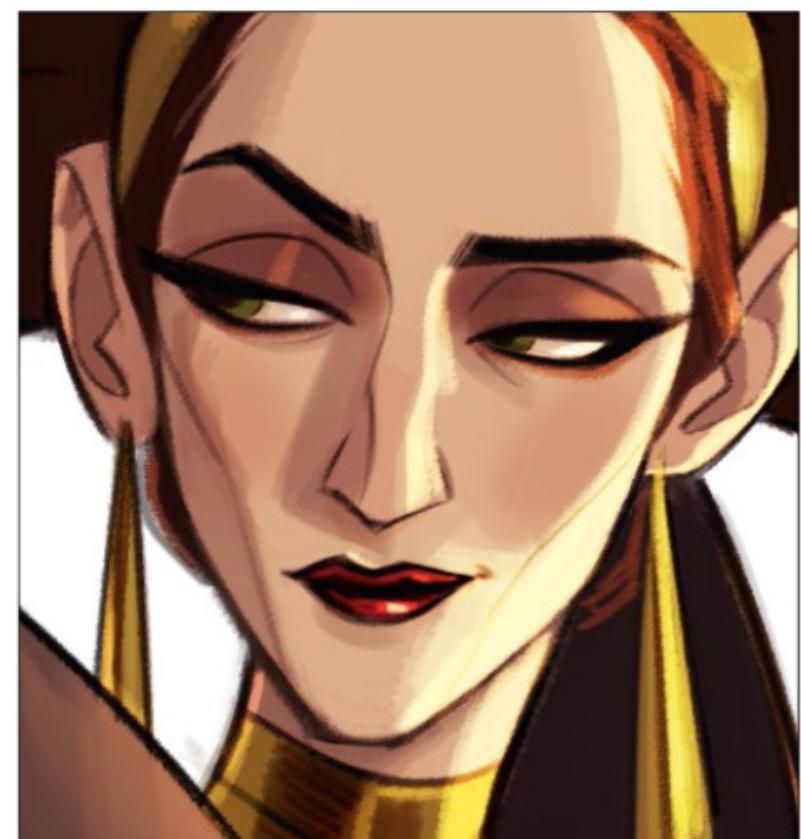
Often a character designer will create numerous iterations of a character during the design process. Regardless of the designer's style, whether it be rough and sketchy in black and white or refined, detailed and in full colour, the design process allows and requires for the character designer to explore and play around in their attempt to create an interesting character. Additionally, you'll most likely be working alongside a costume designer whose role is to do essentially the same thing the character designer does, but for the outfit(s) worn.



## 6 Revisions

Eventually the exploration process will lead to a design or a selection of designs that you, your production designer, and the production team as a whole, likes. That said, most likely you'll still need to go through a round of revisions to narrow down and solidify concepts such as reworking facial features, refining portions and anatomy or making adjustments to the character's costume and other external assets. ➔

# Workshops



## 7 Expressions

The character designer will create a sheet of expressions, which will eventually be used to give the 3D modellers and animators a visual guide to follow when animating the character's expressions during dialogue and action. It's during this step that the character's personality is truly discovered and brought to life.

## 8 Refinement and cleanup

Before you're ready to consider your character designed and ready for 3D modelling, you'll most likely go through a round of refinements and cleanups. It's not always a guaranteed necessity, depending on the designed assets and the artist's visual style, but it's not uncommon to turn in a refined and cleaned-up pass at your character. In some cases, if the majority of your exploratory designs are in black and white, you may begin the colouring process at this stage as well.



## 9 Turnarounds

Once you've completed fleshing out your character's design and you've been given the green light by your higher-ups, the next and sometimes final step is a series of what's called 'turnarounds'. These are refined, full-bodied front, side and back-view poses of your

character, typically in an A-Frame (arms out the sides and pointed downward slightly) or T-Frame (arms up and out to the sides, parallel to the floor) pose. These turnarounds are created so that the 3D modellers have a clear and precise visual reference to guide them during their 3D sculpting process.



## 10 Something to remember

It's important to understand that an animated production, just like a film, TV show or video game, is a complex machine made up of many moving parts. At any point in the process, the designer can be thrown a sudden curveball. The characters in your story are already continuously evolving throughout the pre-production phase and sometimes, even well into the production (animation) phase. Subtle changes to the script, overall visual aesthetics, or even the production's budget can dictate dramatic changes and adjustments to your character.

# Workshops



## Disco Diffusion & Midjourney CREATE UNIQUE ART WITH AI TOOLS

AI-generated images have gone from being mostly abstract chaos to highly detailed art pieces, as **Martin Nebelong** explores...

**Artist PROFILE**

**Martin Nebelong**  
LOCATION: Denmark

Martin Nebelong has been working as an artist for close to 20 years, and for the last three years he made a living making artwork in Dreams on a PlayStation. [www.artstation.com/martinnebelong](http://www.artstation.com/martinnebelong)



"A beautiful, lush jungle with high, ancient temple structures. There's a clearing in the jungle in front of the temple." After a few seconds, structures and textures start to appear from what looks like a noise filter in Photoshop gone rogue.

The temple in the jungle is right in front of me. Generated by a computer, based on the prompt I wrote, and materialised from training sets of millions of photos and pieces of existing artwork.

The world of AI-generated images is still relatively new to me. I've seen examples of it over the last few years but never really invested any time diving deeper into the topic until

recently. Nvidia Research tools allow users to paint suggestive, simple brushstrokes that the AI turns into landscapes. Artificial human faces that look so real, apps on my phone that can generate images from nothing but a few lines of text, and tools that create realistic portraits of cartoon characters and vice versa.

There's no doubt that AI will change how we make images and tell stories. In the best case, AI will augment human creativity and enable us to tell stories in ways we could never imagine. In the worst case, clients will turn to machines to get the job done faster and cheaper.

The ethical implications of this are enormous, and the impact on the creative industry will be on par with

or even more significant than the advent of the camera or digital art.

In this article, you'll follow along on a small part of my journey into the world of AI-generated images.

We'll look at two systems that build on the same principle, namely Disco Diffusion, which is free to use, and Midjourney, which is in closed Beta at the time of writing. Large training sets of images are 'diffused' to a point where they're reduced to random noise, much like you would see with the Photoshop noise filter. Then, that process is reversed and slowly, the images are recreated through inverse diffusion, guided by a small piece of text input from the user, which the AI recognises through a process called 'clipping'.

## 1 Disco Diffusion

The first AI image generator we'll use is Disco Diffusion. It runs off of the Google Colab platform, and it's free to use with basic functionality or if you use it with your own GPU. YouTube has plenty of beginner's guides that will tell you how to set up the basics, so our focus in this tutorial will be more on how to go from there. Here you can see an initial feeble attempt at Disco Diffusion.



### Prompts

animation\_mode: None will only use the first set. animation\_mode: 2D / Video will run through them per the set frames and hold on the last one.

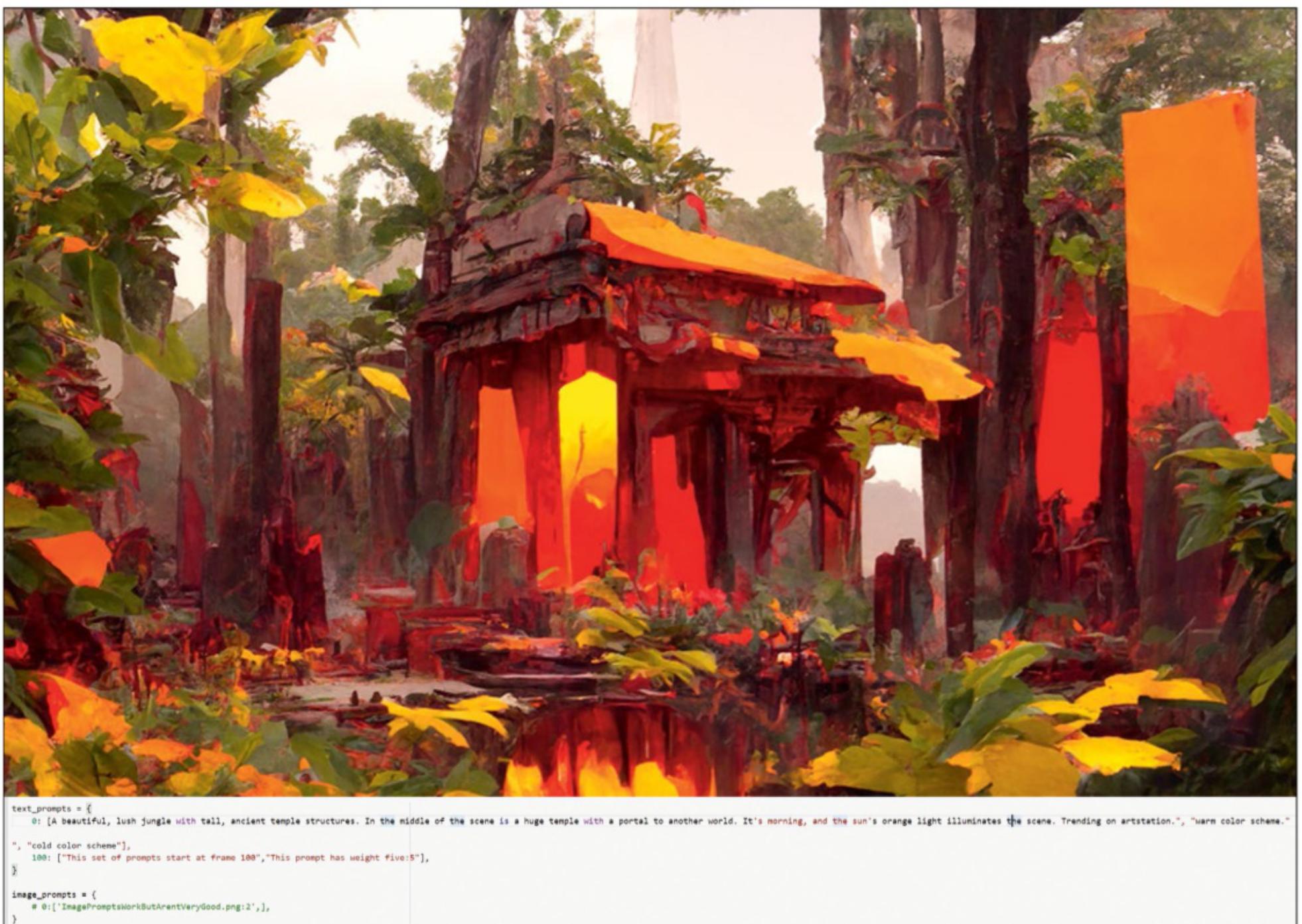
```
[ ] text_prompts = {
    0: ['a matte painting of a huge, ancient Egyptian tomb with high pillars and large, golden Anubis statues. In the middle of a room, there\'s a sarcophagus. Unreal Engine 5 nanite, Trending on artstation.', 'cold color scheme'],
    100: ['This set of prompts start at frame 100', 'This prompt has weight five:5'],
}

image_prompts = {
    0: ['ImagePromptsWorkButArentVeryGood.png:2'],
}
```

## 2 In the blind

After getting Disco Diffusion up and running, I decided to invest in a subscription to Google Colab to get access to some dedicated, fast machines in the cloud. If you choose to do the same, you can connect to a hosted runtime, which means you'll be able to generate new images while your computer is off. Either way, you'll be ready to write your first prompt! Leave all settings at the default, and keep your first experiments centred around the prompt. You can view my text prompt above. As for the result, while there's no real sense of the design of the architecture or individual elements here, the colours, texture and mood are very interesting. ➡

# Workshops



## 3 Let's be more specific

While some of the first results were promising, the good ones were still few and far between. I tried to tweak the prompts to see what I could do with them. Generally, it works well to reference artists whose style you like, as Disco Diffusion will look at those artists' work and borrow colour principles and texture types from it – a bit of a controversial topic, which I think we'll be talking a lot about in the

coming years. If you don't feel good about referencing other artists, it will often be enough to instead mention a work style like "concept art" or even write something like "trending on artstation." This was the prompt for the above image: "A beautiful, lush jungle with tall, ancient temple structures. In the middle of the scene is a huge temple with a portal to another world. It's morning, and the sun's orange light illuminates the scene. Trending on artstation, warm colour scheme."

### Do the Run!

```
n_batches ignored with animation modes.

display_rate: 50

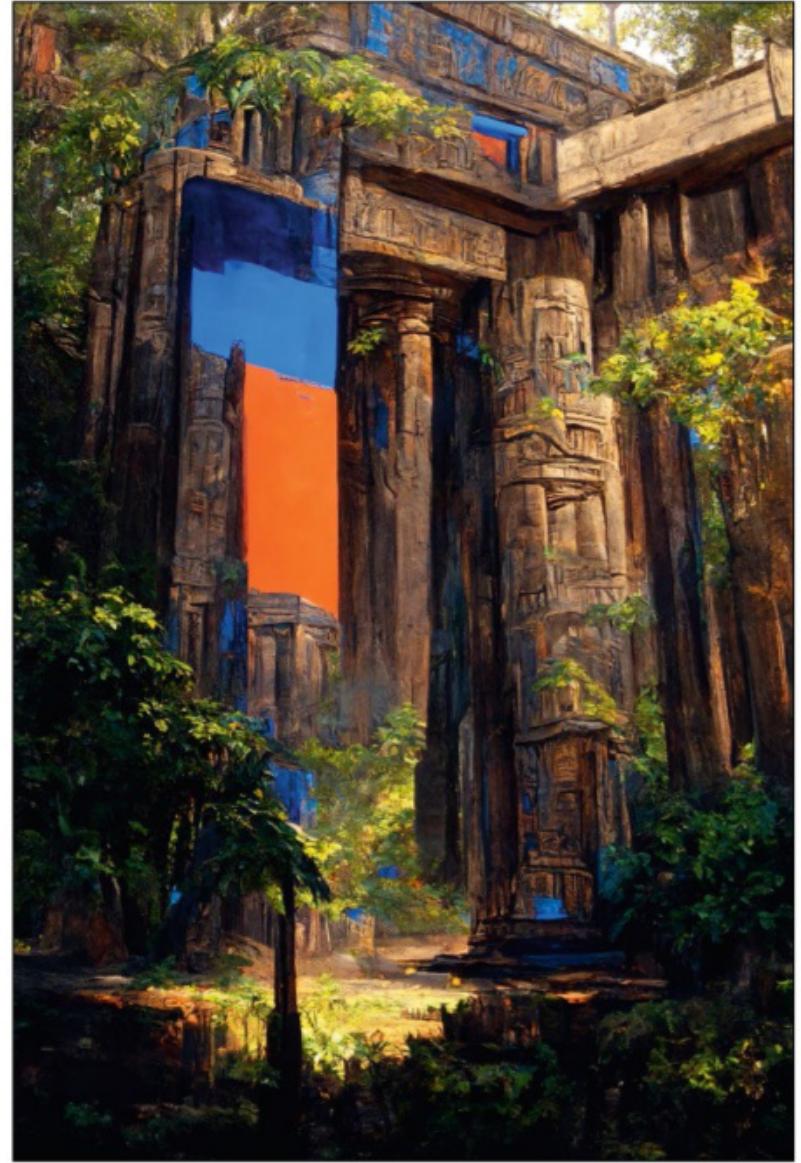
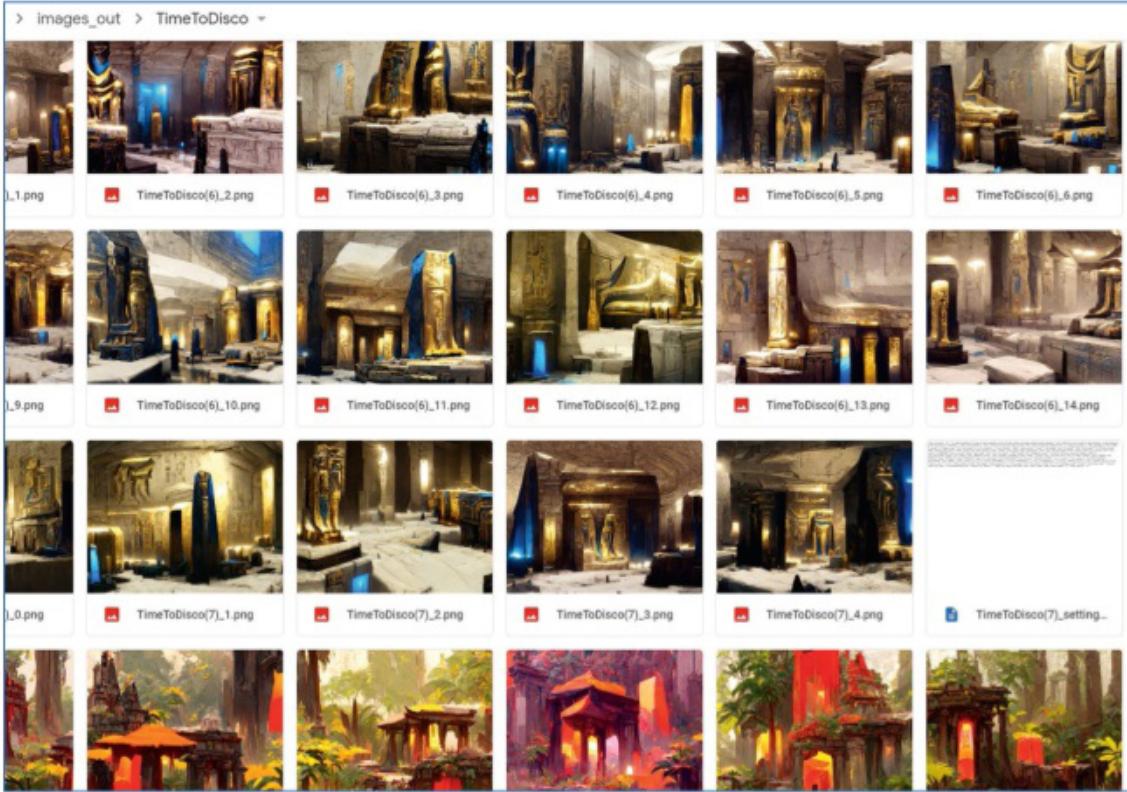
n_batches: 50
```

## 4 Variations

Check in on the process now and then to see if the prompt you made yields interesting results. Even a lousy prompt might eventually generate something useful, but more often than not, it's best to make sure you have a good prompt to start with to give you more consistent results. If you like to check in more often while an image is generated, you can increase the number of preview images by changing the 'display\_rate' to a lower step count (by default, it's set to render a preview for every 50 steps). The prompt for this image was: "A huge sci-fi battleship on a roaring ocean, Trending on artstation."



# In depth AI-generated art



## 5 The random factor

Disco Diffusion is much slower than a tool like Midjourney or DALL·E 2, and I found that getting the results I imagined with my text prompts was more difficult, too. Testing prompts is a slower process, simply because it takes some time to see the actual results of your experiments. On the positive side, Disco Diffusion can be tweaked in many ways to generate impressive results. It can generate video and even work on top of input images or video. I'll often just leave it running overnight, and then there might be a few successful images waiting for me in the morning.

```
Disco Diffusion v5.2 [w/ VR Mode]
File Edit View Insert Runtime Tools Help
+ Code + Text Copy to Drive
perlin_mode: mixed
set_seed: "random_seed"
eta: 0.8
clamp_grad: 
clamp_max: 0.05

Cutn Scheduling:
Format: [40]*400+[20]*600 = 40 cuts for the first 400 /1000 steps, then 20 for the last 600/1000
cut_overview and cut_innercut are cumulative for total cutn on any given step. Overview cuts see the entire image and are good for early structure, innercuts are your standard cutn.

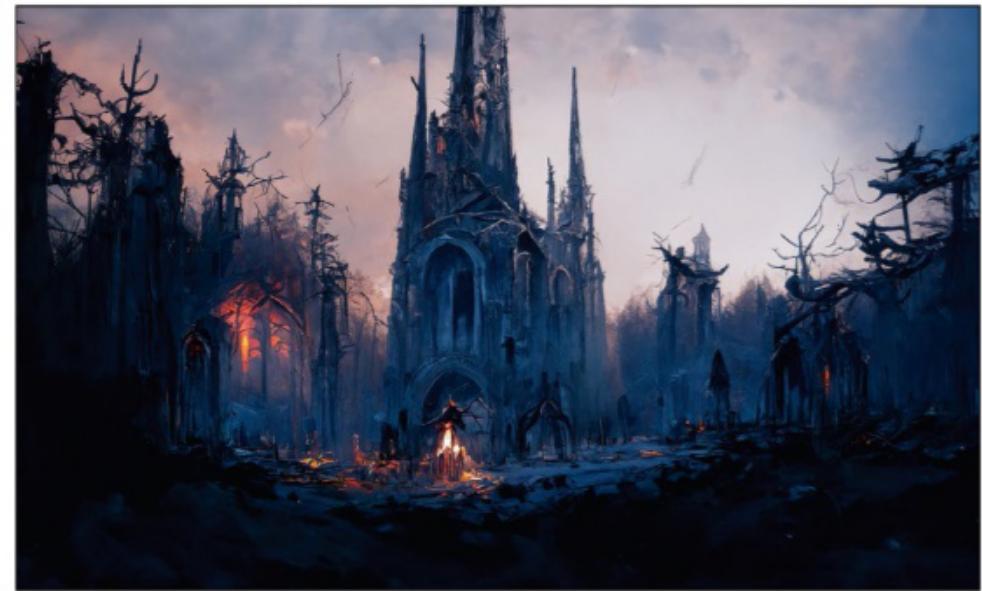
cut_overview: "[12]*400+[4]*600
cut_innercut: "[4]*400+[12]*600
cut_ic_pow: 1
cut_icgray_p: "[0.2]*400+[0]*600

Prompts
animation_mode: None will only use the first set. animation_mode: 2D / Video will run through them per the set frames and hold on the
```

## 6 Test, test and test some more

With Disco Diffusion, you have to be ready to spend the first period of your explorations trying to find prompts that work well and the settings that generate the detail level you want. Specific settings to experiment with are resolution, steps (I usually set this between 200-250 for animation and from 250-500 for stills), and 'cut\_ic\_pow' for the detail level (this is at 1 by default, but try higher numbers).

# Workshops



## 7 Use an 'init' image

A really interesting function in Disco Diffusion is the ability to use an 'init' image to guide the diffusion process. You'll want to lower the number of steps to roughly 50%; you can use a higher or lower number depending on how strongly you want the image to affect your result. The init image can be highly detailed or very simple. A very simple image can be used to influence the composition of an image, whereas a very detailed image might guide detail level or texture instead. To use the function, upload your image to any web host and paste the URL in Disco Diffusion under 'init\_image'. Above is an example: the first image was made in Dreams on my PS5, and the second one is the AI-enhanced version.

```
1: #BasicSettings ****Basic Settings****
2: batch_name = "TimeToDisco" #param(type: 'string')
3: steps = 250 #param(type: 'int', min: 25, max: 1000, allow_input: true)
4: width_height = [1280, 768] #param(type: 'raw')
5: clip_guidance_scale = 5000 #param(type: 'raw')
6: tv_scale = 150 #param(type: 'number')
7: range_scale = 150 #param(type: 'number')
8: init_scale = 1000 #param(type: 'number')
9: cutt_batches = 4 #param(type: 'number')
10: skip_imgs = False #param(type: 'boolean')
11:
12: #BatchCreation ----
13:
14: #InitSettings ****Init Settings****
15: init_image = None #param(type: 'string')
16: init_scale = 1000 #param(type: 'number')
17: skip_steps = 10 #param(type: 'integer')
18: #BatchCreation "Make sure you set skip_steps to ~50% of your steps if you want to use an init image."
19:
20: #Set correctened sizes
21: side_x = (width_height[0]/64)*64
22: side_y = (width_height[1]/64)*64
23: if side_x != width_height[0] or side_y != width_height[1]:
24:     print(f"Changing output size to {(side_x)*(side_y)}. Dimension must be multiples of 64")
25:
26: #Update Model Settings
27: timestep_resping = f"ddim{steps}"
28: diffusion_steps = [1000//steps]*steps if steps < 1000 else steps
29: model_config_update = f"ddim{timestep_resping}_diffusion_steps"
30: #Animation_resping = timestep_resping
31: #diffusion_steps = diffusion_steps
32:
33: #BatchCreation
34: batchFolder = f'{outputPath}/{batch_name}'
35: createPath(batchFolder)
```

## Prompts

animation\_mode: None will only use the first set. animation\_mode: 2D / Video will run through them per the set frames and hold on the last one.

```
[ ] text_prompts = {
    0: ["An apple.", "yellow color scheme"],
    5: ["A banana", "blue color scheme"],
}

image_prompts = [
    # 0:[ 'ImagePromptsWorkButArentVeryGood.png:2' ],
]
```

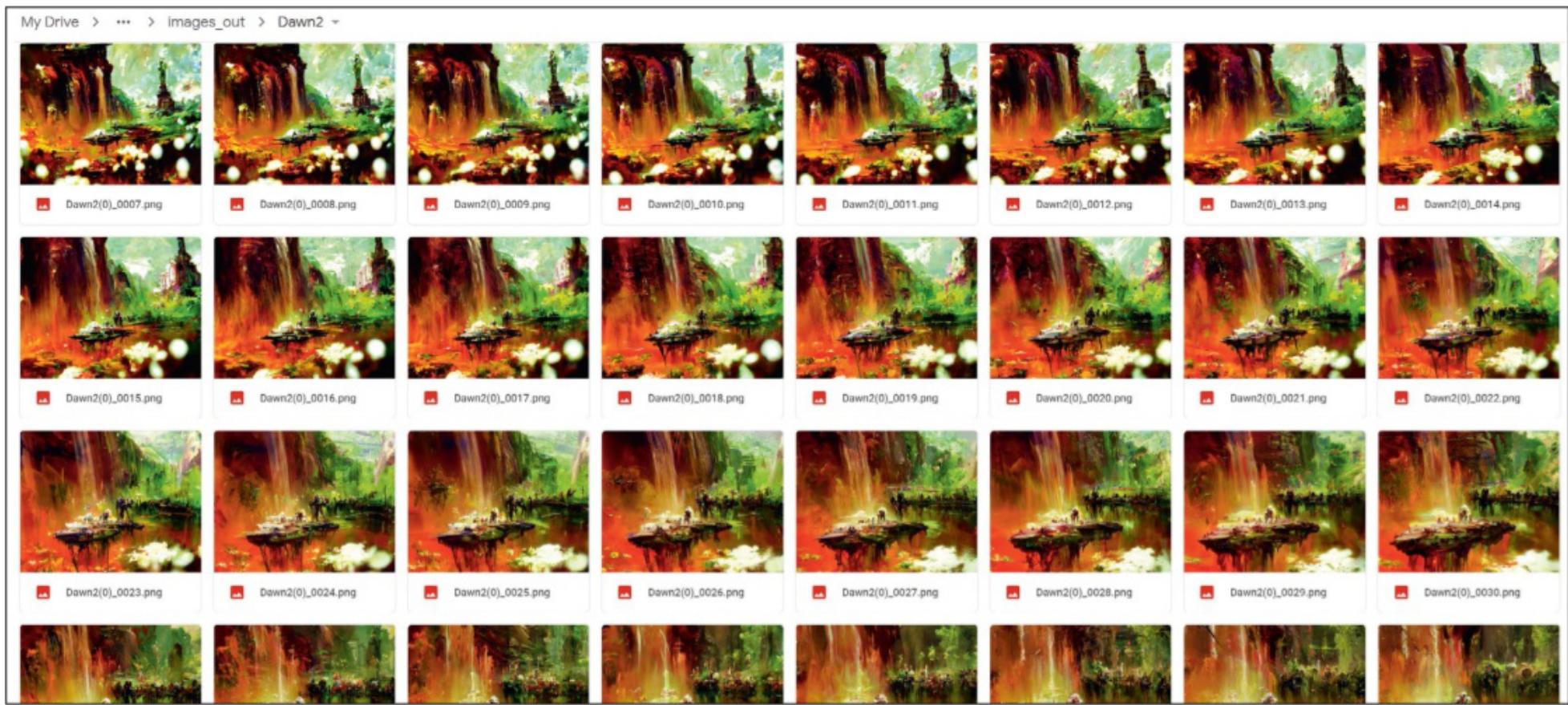


## 8 Secondary prompts

You can set multiple prompts up so that Disco Diffusion starts a new prompt after a certain number of images. This way, you can let Disco Diffusion run for a while and then come back to see which prompts were the most successful. By default, Disco Diffusion is set up to have a secondary prompt after 100 frames, which you'll see in the prompts section. I've used this on several occasions just to let

Disco run overnight, and then in the morning, I'll have several different prompt results waiting for me. Of course, with a tool like Midjourney, there isn't the same need for a function like this because of the speed at which you can test out different prompt ideas. Secondary prompts also work very well when making animations, as you can create a sense of storytelling and progression that you might not get otherwise.

# In depth AI-generated art



## 9 Animation

The animation feature in Disco Diffusion is fascinating! I've only done a few animations so far, but it's an extraordinary experience to see artificial images fade in and out of existence, reminiscent of the flow of thoughts and ideas that we know from our dreams. If you experiment with animation, remember to lower the resolution and steps so that the process doesn't take too long. You can set the

animation to run until an end frame or you can end your run manually through the Colab interface, which will also make Disco generate the final video file. Finally, you can merge the resulting single frames into an animation if the automated process fails. The Disco Diffusion Discord group is very active, and if you want to deep dive into the different ways you can make animations in Disco Diffusion, make sure to check out some of the group's great tips.



## 10 Midjourney

Time to switch over to Midjourney. This tool is built on some of the same principles as Disco Diffusion, but it has several key benefits. First of all, it's much faster. Once you've written a prompt, it takes one minute for the system to generate four different thumbnails. You can then choose to upscale either one of them or generate four new thumbnails based on the images you like the most. The fact that the system is this much faster makes it easier to experiment with different prompts, and I feel a bit more in control over the creative outcome. ➡

# Workshops



## 11 Discord

Midjourney is in closed Beta at the time of writing, but as each user can invite a certain number of new users, it should be possible to get access if you ask around on your social channels. Midjourney runs through Discord, where various channels and bots process the prompts from users. By default, the images you generate are visible to all Midjourney users in the respective channels. However, it's possible to buy a subscription that allows you to privately write directly to the Midjourney bot.



## 12 Generate your first set of images

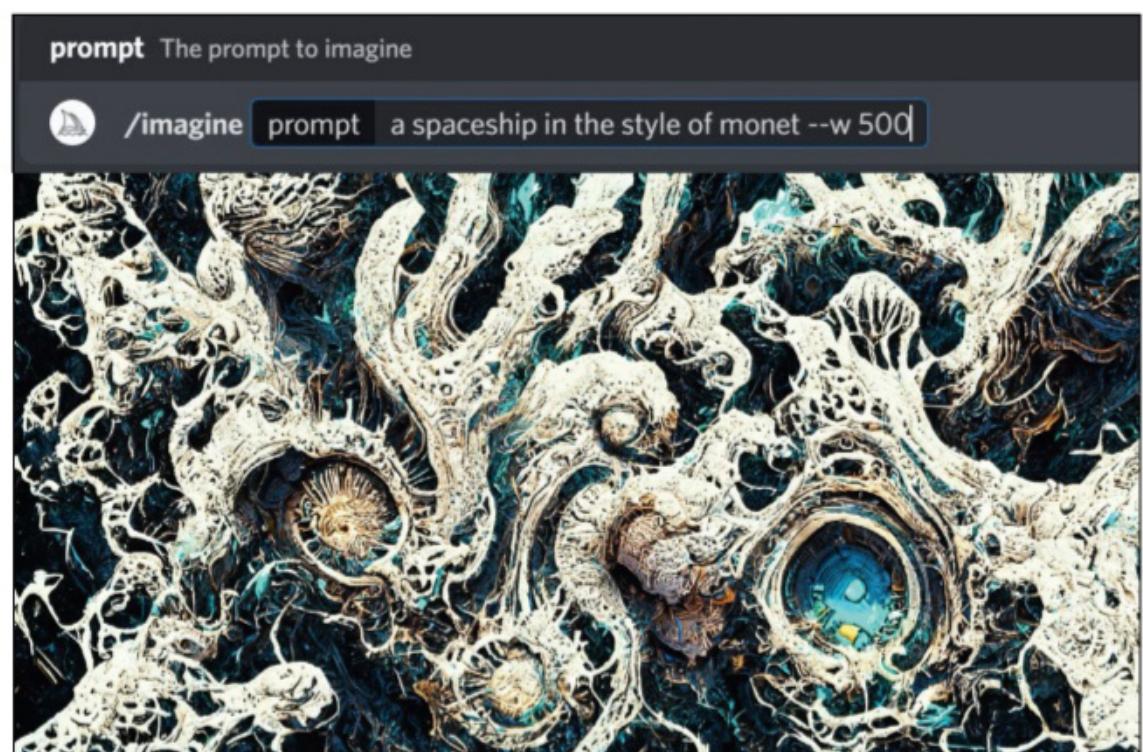
My first prompt in Midjourney was "a Midwestern desert with large, gnarly rocks and a strange, alien tower." To get Midjourney to generate images from this, I type in '/imagine' in one of the channels or directly to the bot. A minute later, Midjourney serves up four

small thumbnails. I wasn't entirely happy with the outcome, and looking at the prompt now, I see that it helps to be a bit more creative and/or specific with the text. If the first thumbnails aren't working, it usually doesn't pay to start iterating on them. Good prompts will usually generate promising results from the first thumbnails generated.



## 13 Use different style prompts

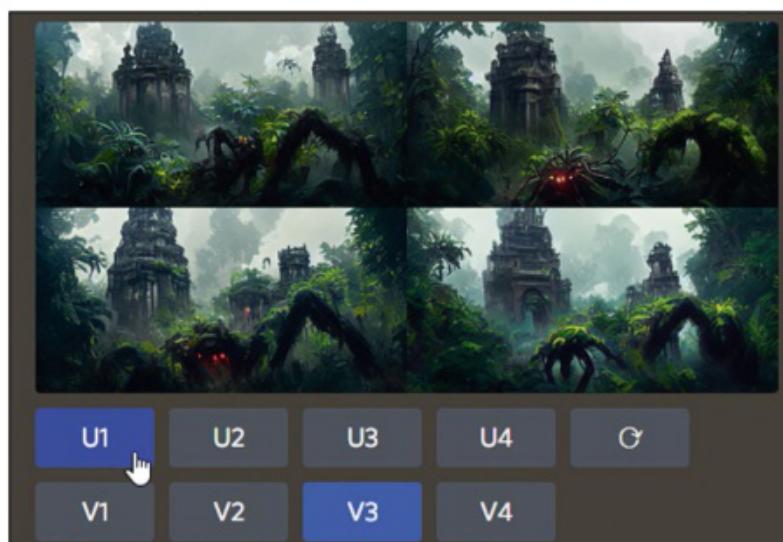
If you type '/style' in one of the Discord channels, Midjourney serves up nine simple prompts in the style of a specific artist. It's a nice way of seeing how various elements can look when it's guided by the style of an actual artist. You can also pick your favourite artist and see what kind of results you get from that. You don't have to specify a style of a specific artist though: you can also go for something broader like "in the style of a popular concept artist". If you do not wish to reference contemporary artists, try to use prompts like "in the style of Rembrandt" or "in the style of Pablo Picasso".



## 14 Change aspect ratio and resolution

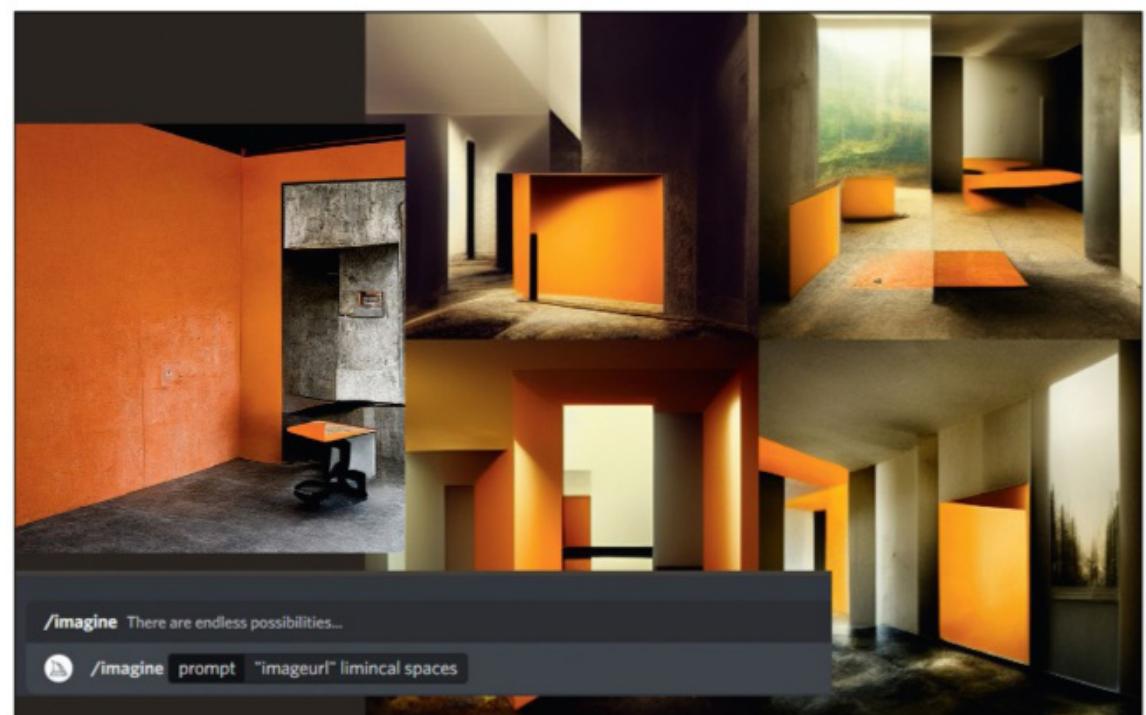
If you want to change the aspect ratio of your generated images from the default square format, you can end your prompt with various commands to instruct the AI. For example, for different aspect ratios, you just write '-w 500 -h 800'. Change the numbers to get other aspect ratios. You can also write '-wallpaper' which will give you a 1,920 x 1,080 format.

The higher the resolution, the more the diffusion process divides the image into sections that it then iterates on. The more of these sections we have, the higher the risk of repetitions or less meaningful results. For example, I found that at 1,920 x 1,080, my images looked more abstract and more like collages of elements. Sometimes this might be exactly what you need, but often I found that lower resolutions work a bit better.



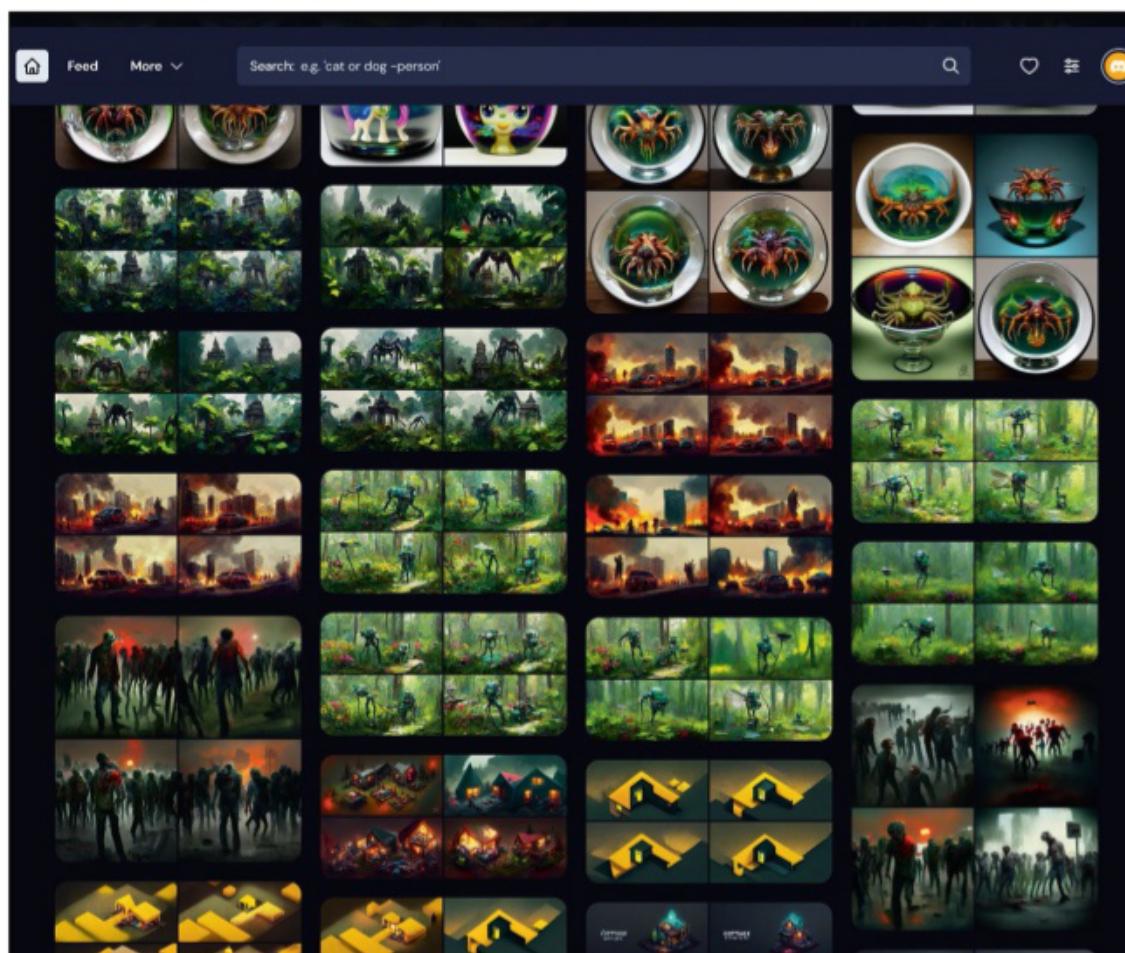
## 15 Upscale images

Once you find a thumbnail you like, it's time to hit the upscale button. If you like thumbnail nr. 1, you push 'U1'. Upscaling is pretty much what you'd normally do with quick thumbnails that you refine to a more finished state... only this time the process happens in around a minute. Once you've upscaled an image, you can choose to make new variations of that upscale. Note that if you chose a very high resolution for your '/imagine' prompt, you won't be able to upscale the image further, but you'll still be able to generate new variations.



## 16 Use an init image

You can also use an 'init' image in Midjourney. The easiest way to do this is to send your image to the Midjourney bot, or any Discord bot, and then copy the URL of the image. Then, as part of your Midjourney prompt, just paste the URL, and the diffusion process will use your image as a guide. I had varied success with using init images in Midjourney, but I did find that they could change the generated images quite a lot, which might help you get even more unique results.



## 17 Check out your Midjourney gallery

When you receive a Midjourney invite you automatically get a gallery space at [www.midjourney.com](http://www.midjourney.com). Everything you generate with Midjourney is viewable by all Midjourney users by default, but as I mentioned earlier you can buy a subscription that allows you to generate private images, which can be crucial if you're using Midjourney for client work for example.

Your Midjourney gallery serves as a sort of log of everything you create, both variations and upscales, and under each image, you'll even be able to explore similarly themed creations made by other community members. Another very useful feature of the Midjourney gallery is that you can see the prompts you used to make each image, which makes it easy to go back and re-use successful prompts for even further exploration.



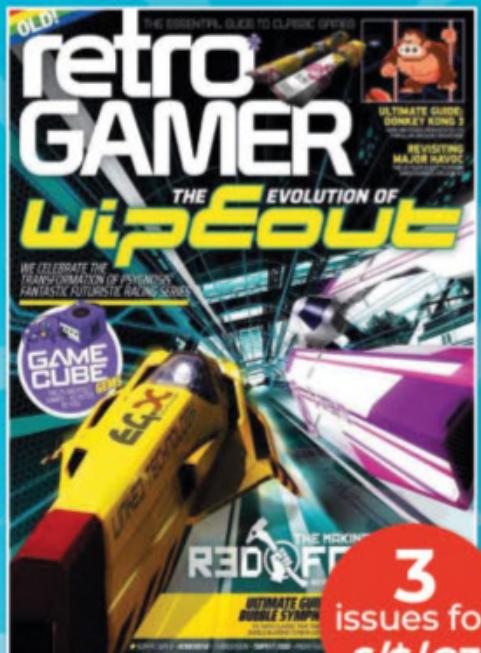
## 18 Final remarks

I'm still at the beginning of exploring these tools, but I have no doubt in my mind about the fact that this is another giant leap in the tools we use as creatives. The change will be as big as, or bigger than, the advent of the camera or the arrival of digital art. But the change will happen faster, and the implications will probably be bigger than we think. It's easy to succumb to thoughts about our work being taken over by machines, but I choose to remain hopeful and I believe that AI tools like Disco Diffusion, Midjourney and DALL·E 2 won't replace us, but will instead augment our creativity and allow us to tell stories in new and exciting ways. Let's talk in a few years and see what's happened! 🌟



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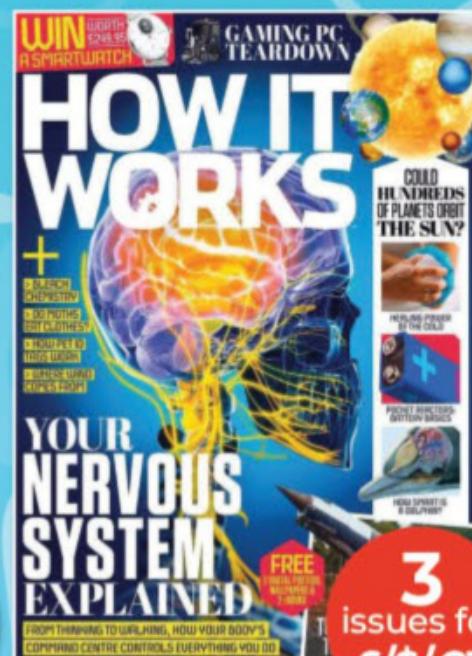
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# 1 NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# ImagineFX

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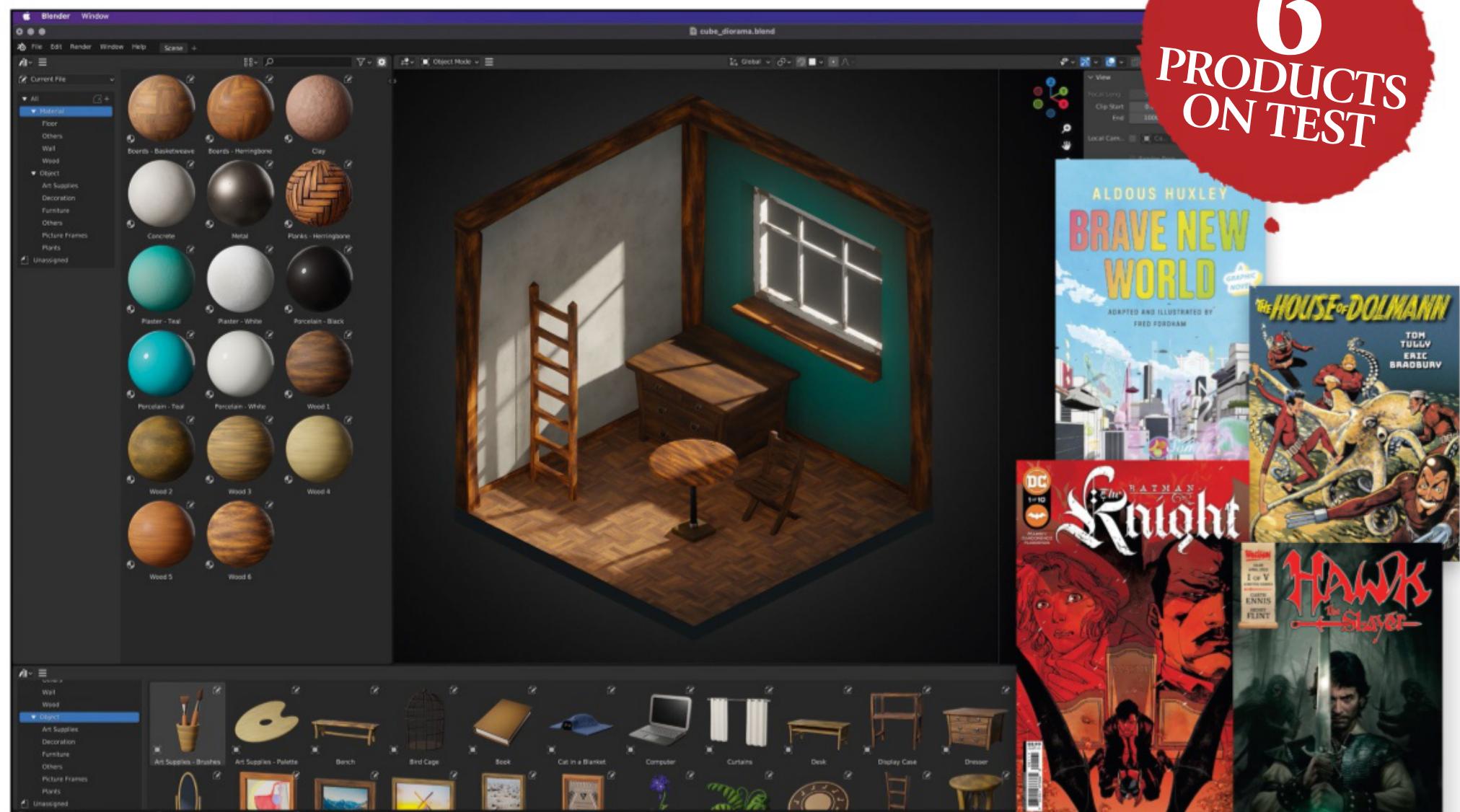


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Explore the new upgrades and advancements to boost an artist's workflow in Blender's latest release.

### HARDWARE

#### 82 Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K)

We test and rate the quality and usability of this pen display from Huion.

### COMICS

#### 84 Batman: The Knight

Delve into the Caped Crusader's origins.

#### 84 The House Of Dolmann

A collection of zany puppet adventures.



#### 85 Brave New World

Discover this graphic novel adaptation.

#### 85 Hawk The Slayer

Check out this sequel to the cult 80s film.

### RATINGS EXPLAINED

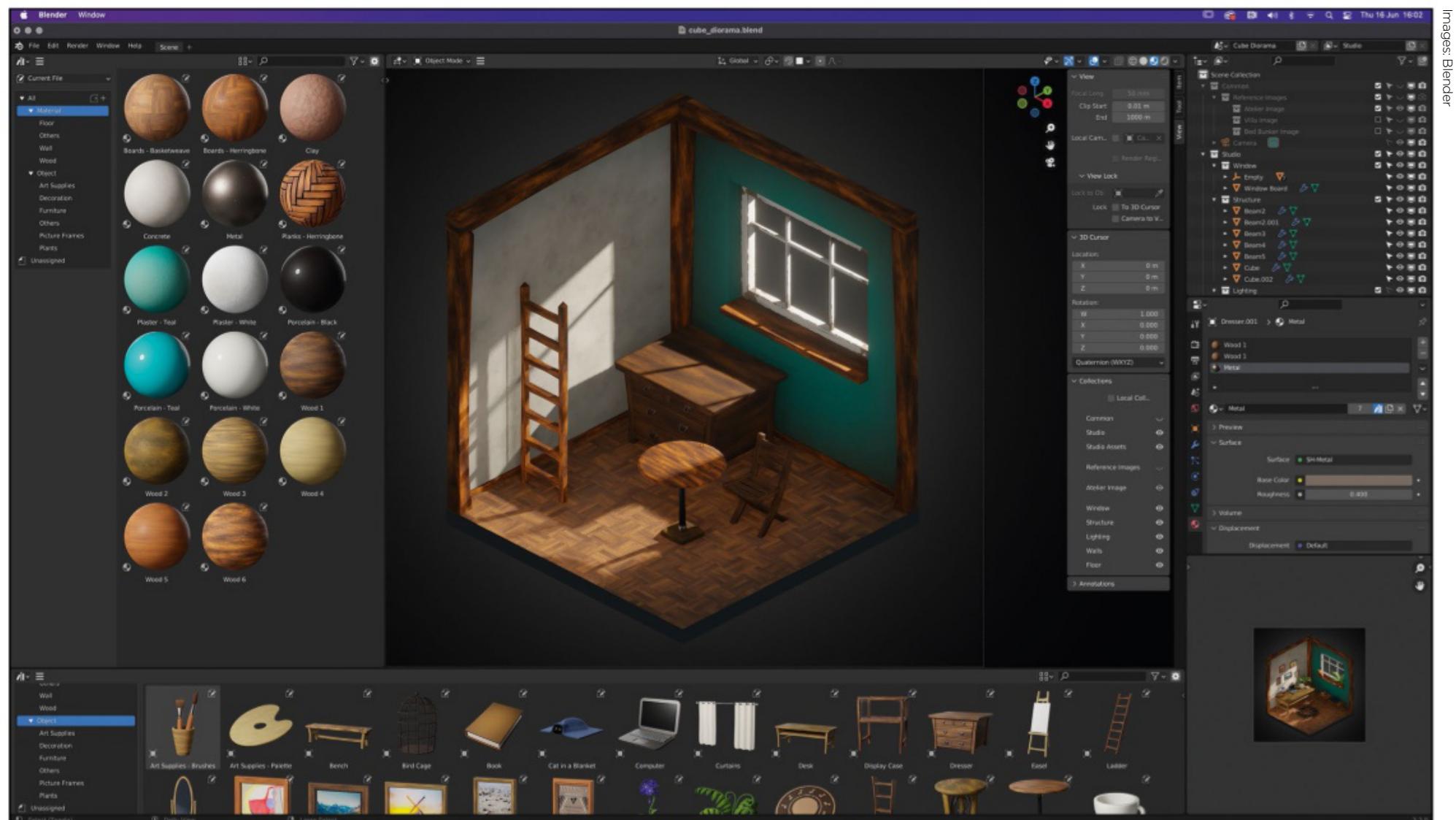
★★★★★ Magnificent

★★★★ Great

★★★ Good

★★ Poor

★ Atrocious



## Blender 3.0 and 3.1

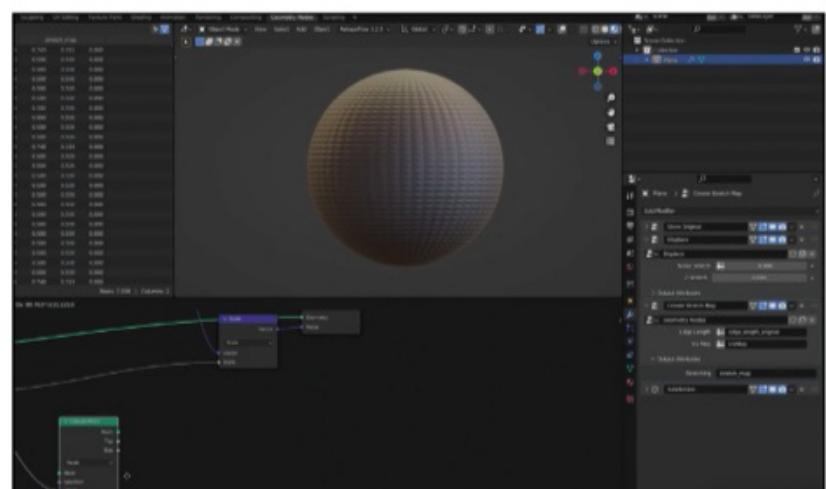
**NEW AND IMPROVED** We take a look at the key advancements in the latest update of this free and open-source creation software

**Price** Free **Company** Blender **Web** [www.blender.org/](http://www.blender.org/)

**A**t the back end of 2021 Blender released version 3.0 of the much-loved content creation tool. It only took three months for a further update, this time focusing primarily on performance and speed.

With nearly three decades of development under its belt, Blender really is a force to be reckoned with. This major release included a plethora of new features and was well received by the community. Let's dive in to see

The nodes editor now has a new context-aware search menu when dragging links, enabling a node to be quickly connected with a compatible socket.



what was noteworthy in the major release, and then we'll see what's changed in 3.1.

### ANIMATION

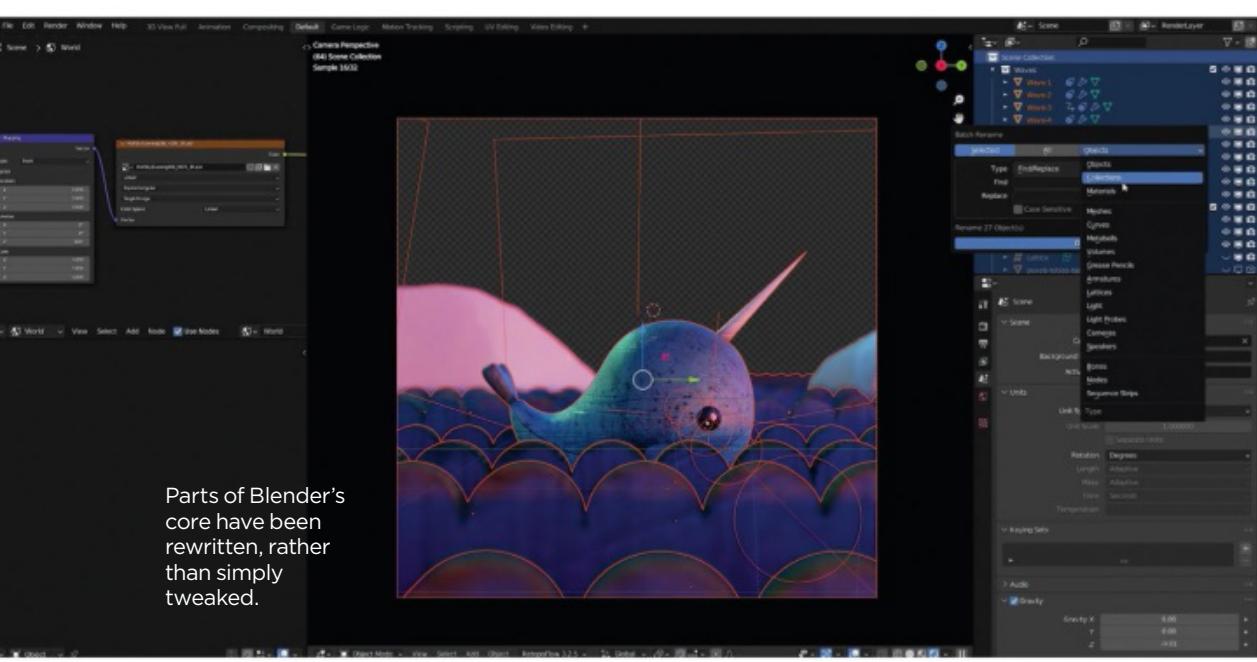
First up, big improvements have been made to the animation tools. The introduction of the pose library now allows animators to store and apply various character poses with absolute ease. By providing an interface that not only enables the adding of poses to characters but also gives tools to blend between poses, animators are able to set their poses up in a fraction of the time. As Blender has evolved, the process of animation is becoming increasingly natural for artists. The tools themselves have taken a back seat and the creative process has

taken the fore. Compared to previous posing workflows, animators will find this an absolute game changer.

Back in April 2021, Blender announced that it was going to carry out a major overhaul of Cycles, its primary render engine. In the time between the announcement and the release of Blender 3.0 (only eight months), Blender developers have actually managed to make rendering up to eight times faster. That's quite the improvement in such a short space of time!

Now called Cycles X, artists will be glad that the team decided to not just tinker with the existing code, then ten years old, but to actually give it a complete re-work from the ground up. Alongside the better algorithms that

**“Blender’s procedural system has been bolstered with a whopping 19 new nodes, and every one is noteworthy”**



have been adopted, much of the improvement has come through the changes to the underlying architecture, as well as utilising the capabilities of modern CPUs and GPUs, too.

Rendering improvements are not just limited to speed and performance though. We've also been treated to some major improvements in noise-handling. This has come primarily through an update to the Open Image Denoiser, which improves normal passes, but also through changes to the Shadow Catcher.

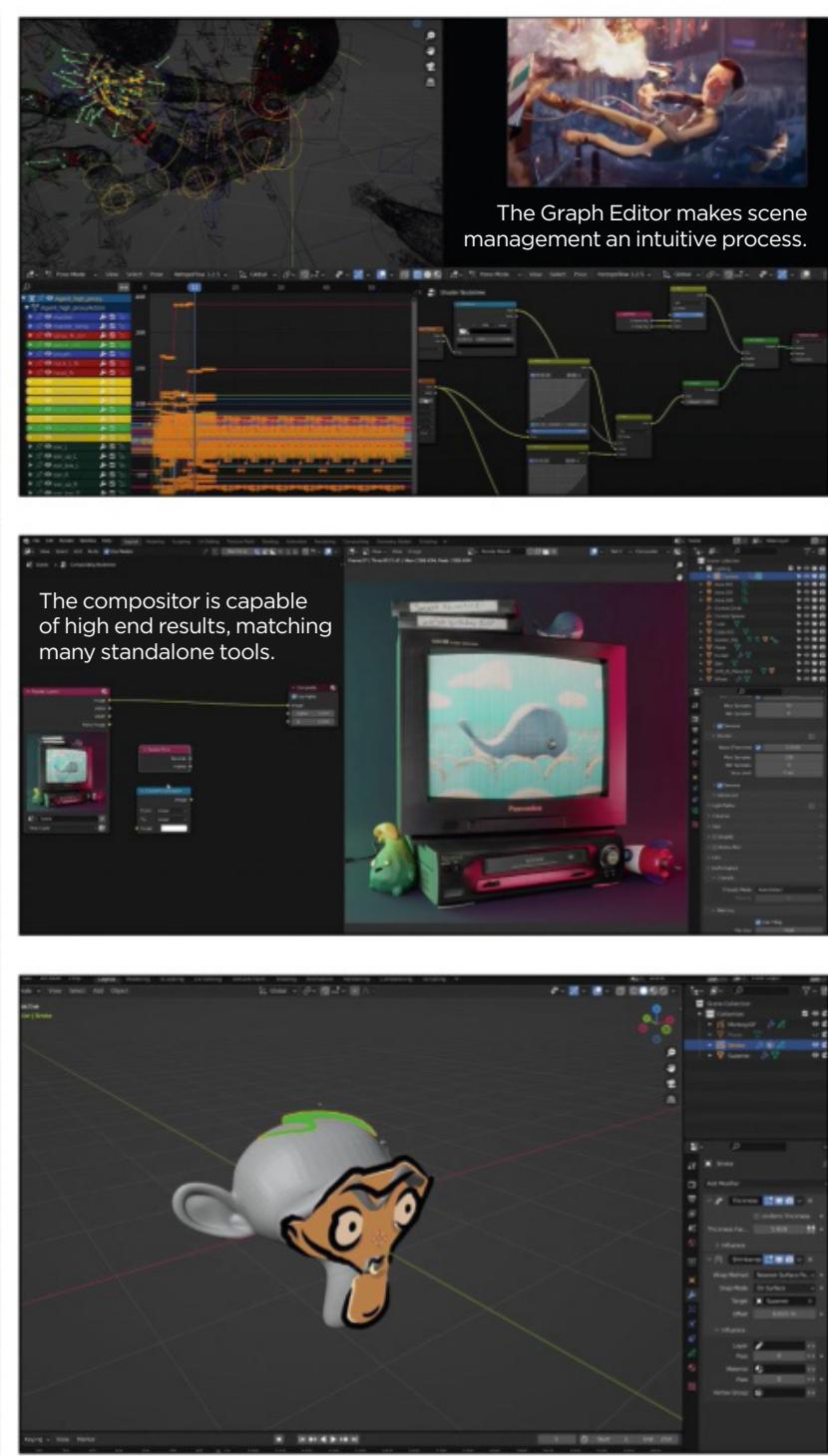
## MANAGING ASSETS

Blender 3.0 also saw the introduction of their Asset Browser, which will keep you super organised. By utilising Asset Libraries, Catalogs and Tags you'll be able to create, access and organise your favourite assets at the click of a button. These assets, which include models, materials, poses and even worlds, can be dragged into the viewport for easy application. If you were organised, you might have kept

your assets neatly sorted in your own file structure. What benefit is this browser for you? The main upside is that it's visual and integrates directly into Blender. Once you've got used to it, you will find it speeding up your entire workflow.

Space doesn't allow for us to mention the countless other advancements such as Geometry node improvements, changes to Grease Pencil, and UI updates. Version 3.0 was a major step forward, but obviously not a big enough step for the Blender developers. A few months after release we've got another update; this time focusing on performance and speed improvements. These tweaks and additions further speed up the artist's workflow and make the creative process more enjoyable.

A great example of a quicker workflow can be found with the new 'Copy Global Transform' add-on. When working with character rigs, artists can now copy the world space transform from one object or bone

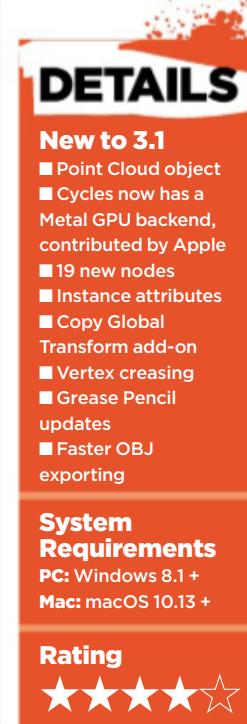
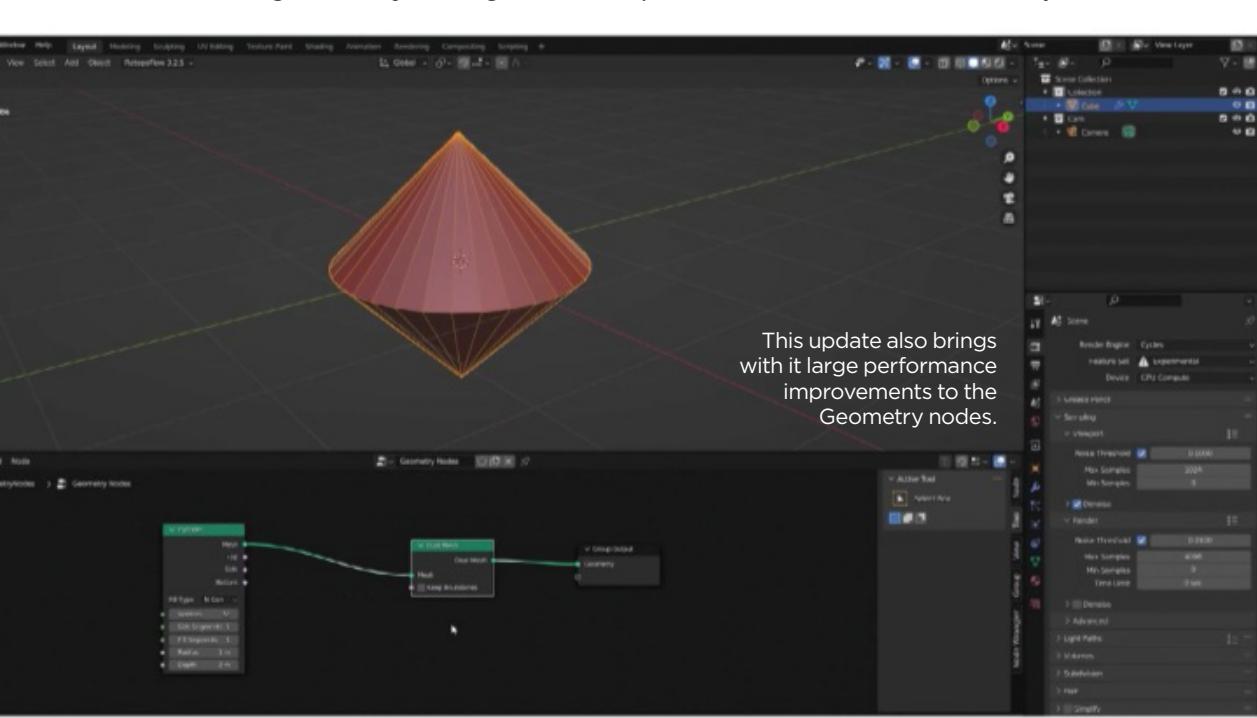


The 2D animation tool, Grease Pencil, has been vastly improved – as well as speedier performance, it also comes with a new set of modifiers.

and paste it onto another. This addition will enable animators to more quickly set up their animations.

Blender's procedural system has also been bolstered with a whopping 19 new nodes. Every one of them is noteworthy, but particular attention should be given to the new Extrude node. This will completely transform the modelling process for many artists. Procedural modelling like this enables artists to make models that are procedurally driven and therefore non-destructive. Changes can therefore be made at any time without fear of being unable to return to a previous iteration.

With support in Cycles for Metal GPU, a new Point Cloud object and an Image Editor that can handle massive images to name only a few updates, Blender has become even stronger in version 3.1. To think that Blender is free and supported by an incredible community of people is nothing short of amazing.





What this Huion tablet lacks in build quality is made up for by the display. It might be a lot to squeeze into a small screen but thankfully it works, and delivers a quality drawing experience.



In size and price the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) is comparable to the Wacom One (Wacom's smallest pen display).

## Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K)

**DRAWING TOOLS** The Huion Kamvas Pro 13 is the only pen display of this size that boasts QHD. But is it worth it? We test it to find out

**Price** £379/\$399 **Company** Huion **Web** [www.huion.com](http://www.huion.com)

**T**his upgrade from the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (circa 2018) might seem minor, but the 2.5K comparison to 1080P is noticeable on a 13-inch screen. The Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) sports a QLED screen – meaning brighter colours all round, and the screen certainly does 'pop'. It's a refresh that makes this drawing tablet one of the best around.

The Kamvas range by Huion are what are known as 'pen displays', meaning you draw directly onto the screen. It's not a standalone device like an iPad, as it needs to be connected to a PC, Mac or Android device in order to work. These connected devices run the apps, the tablet gets you closer to the art.

On paper the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) looks very good indeed. It's commonly agreed that Huion does a good line in affordable and good-quality drawing tablets. These are

definitely not high-end, though more than serviceable for newcomers or anyone looking for value for money. With that in mind, let's have a closer look to see if it lives up to the hype.

### USABILITY

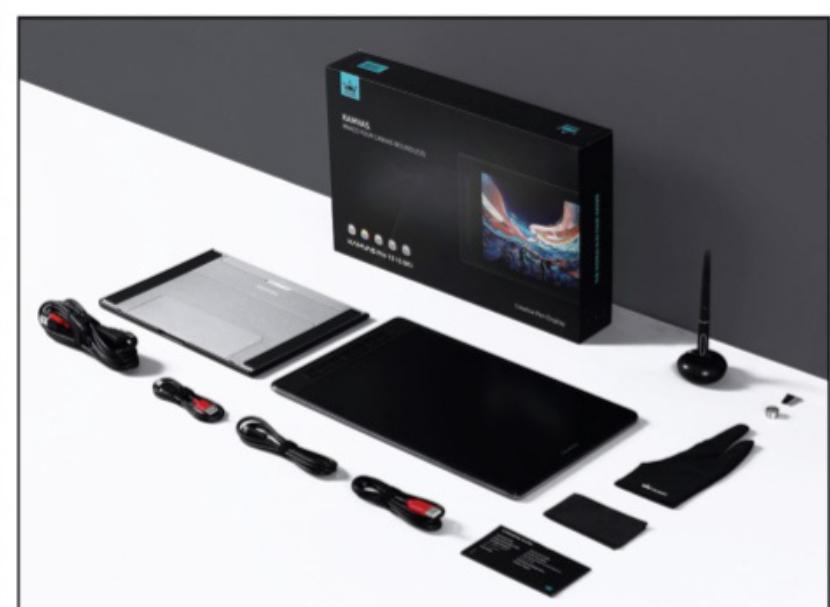
As already stated, this is not a high-end unit, so the slightly plasticky nature of the tablet and all its 'bits' is of no surprise. Don't expect lush pen holders or silk gloves. Pen, holder, glove, nibs (5x regular and 5x felt), and wires (galore) are all standard and feel and look similar to what's provided with a fair few other Huion tablets. What is a nice surprise here though is the addition of a stand, so you can place the tablet anywhere between 20-60 degrees.

Historically, for me, setting up a pen display is almost always a huge pain. Not so here. Everything seemed to just work, as soon as I'd downloaded and installed the driver, and switched

it on. This is a very user-friendly setup that is easy to use out of the box, which is a huge plus.

Medium is what best describes a 13-inch screen. The Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K)'s screen is fully laminated, etched slightly for texture, and the anti-glare quality could be considered to dull the screen ever so slightly, but of course this is made up for by the 2.5K resolution.

This screen is bright and has considerable vibrancy for a display of this size. QLED is usually employed to add visual heft to much larger screens,



**“**Huion's technology is certainly up there; the only real difference between this and a Wacom is the build quality**”**



so here it really is markedly better than its previous incarnation.

In terms of drawing experience it's pretty difficult to set it apart from a Wacom. Huion's technology is certainly up there, and just to reiterate, the only real difference between this and a Wacom is the build quality.

Drawing has no discernible lag, is super smooth and responsive, and just what you'd hope for. The only real problem was the fact that I kept reaching in to pinch the screen to move things around, constantly reminding myself that it's not an iPad and to employ the shortcut buttons.

The Huion PW517 stylus is the standard for all its Kamvas range. As a stylus it's nothing to shout home about; this is a plastic, lightweight pen with a rubber grip and two shortcut

buttons – it's *fine*, and does its job perfectly well.

## BUILD QUALITY

The pen is battery-free, has 60-degree tilt function and 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity. The Wacom One's pen has half that, prompting the question: are so many levels really needed? I certainly can't discern the difference between a stylus that has over 4,000 levels compared to one that has over 8,000.

The doughnut-shaped pen holder is great in regards to having somewhere to rest the stylus; not great is its plastic build. The holder contains the nib replacement tool and ten spares, half of which are felt.

Having never tried the felt nibs out before I opted to give it a go. These do

## DETAILS

**Features**

- Panel size: 13.3 inches diagonally
- Resolution: 2,560 x 1,600 (16:10) QHD+
- Full lamination: Yes
- Pen: Battery-free
- Pen pressure: 8,192 levels
- Express keys: 7, plus two on the stylus

### System Requirements

PC: Windows 7 or later  
Mac: macOS 10.12 or later  
Android: USB3.1 DP1.2 or later

### Rating



feel pleasingly like using a felt-tip maker on paper, surprisingly enough! After about 30 mins though the felt element had worn off, leaving me with bare plastic. I'm not particularly heavy handed, perhaps the felt nibs are for novelty value only.

The tablet itself is well made and feels solidly built. It has a cool-to-the-touch aluminium back and the etched laminated glass looks and feels great. Seven customisable shortcut buttons to the left of the screen (depending which way round you configure it) feel good, not loose at all. Sat on the stand the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) looks like a handsome unit.

It comes with a bunch of wires: a three-in-one beast, HDMI, USB-A, and USB-A for power. A plug is not included; perhaps Huion thinks most people are bound to have a few knocking around at home. There's a simple USB-C to USB-C, and an extension for it (it's pretty short). Basically, all wiring scenarios are catered for, though it's not breaking new ground.

The tablet has rubber feet too, should you want to lay it down flat and use it as a basic graphics tablet, for example without the screen on. These feet prevent it from moving or jiggling, which is handy.

As the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) is almost a brand-new addition to the Huion Kamvas range, it is priced slightly higher than what you would expect from this brand. This is especially true if you're looking at comparative Wacoms or XP-Pens.

This is certainly because the specs are so much better than anything else of this size. The Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) costs £379/\$399, compared to a Wacom One, which is currently at £360/\$399, and XP-PEN's Artist 13.3 Pro currently at £240/\$300.

The upshot is undoubtedly the QHD. The XP-PEN Artist 13.3 Pro also has a much smoother screen, and the difference between the Wacom One and the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K), apart from the length of the model name, is imperceptible in terms of drawing experience.

If you want a lot more brightness and a higher colour quality, for a snippet more money, then the Huion Kamvas Pro 13 (2.5K) pen display is a good buy. For once Huion is going head-to-head with Wacom, and it's coming out on top.



These first three issues depict Bruce's initial decision to embark on his journey, and his first stop in Paris.

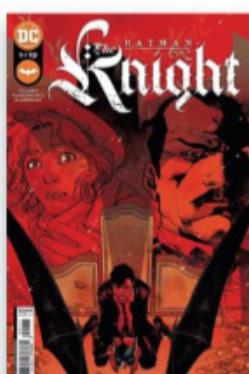
## Batman: The Knight

**TEEN ANGST** Explore the Caped Crusader's origins and delve deeper into Bruce Wayne's motivations

**Issues 1-3** **Writer** Chip Zdarsky **Artist** Carmine Di Giandomenico **Publisher** DC Comics

**H**ard as it may be to believe, there are some aspects of Batman's origin story that haven't been done to death in recent years. New ten-part miniseries Batman: The Knight aims to explore this less-trodden territory, charting the youthful Bruce Wayne's globe-trotting quest to become the world's greatest crime-fighter.

Tackling Bruce's teenage anger – as well as his entitlement and privilege – is a good idea in theory, but the portrayal ends up so angst-ridden, spoiled and unlikeable that the story risks ruining any emotional investment in his character journey. Thankfully, the



switch to Paris in issues two and three is a breath of fresh air, lightening the tone and upping the pace, as Bruce steps outside of his comfort zone and begins to understand where his crusade might lead him. It's here, in what basically acts as an almost self-contained two-issue chapter, that Zdarsky's approach starts paying off and The Knight becomes a properly compelling read.

**“The switch to Paris in issues two and three is a breath of fresh air”**

Carmine Di Giandomenico's art is a little too stylised at times, but pulls off some strong images, and also gives the various action sequences lots of energy and impact. While the combination of these visuals and Zdarsky's script hasn't yet made this miniseries into a truly essential read, Batman: The Knight is so far intriguing and entertaining enough to forgive its occasional stumbles.

**RATING** ★★★★☆



Artist-turned-writer Chip Zdarsky is also using this series to give a deeper, more characterful look at Bruce Wayne, especially delving into his relationship with Alfred.

Master puppeteer Eric Dolmann controls a unique mechanical, crime-busting army.



## The House Of Dolmann

**Issues** Collection

**Writers** Tom Tully

**Artist** Eric Bradbury

**Publisher** Rebellion

Recent reprint collections of The Spider, Adam Eterno and The Steel Claw have reminded us of the off-kilter joys of 60s British comic heroes – and Valiant's Eric Dolmann may just be the oddest of them all. Operating out of a dingy shop in London's backstreets, the inventor tackles crime as “master of the most amazing mechanical puppets the world has ever known”.

Dolmann battles evil with this army of high-tech homunculi, from jester-headed Giggler, whose eyes conceal tiny surveillance cameras, to boy-dummy Micro, whose hands are suction cups, giving him the look of some particularly unfortunate Victorian orphan.

The fact that expert ventriloquist Dolmann provides their voices as well as their commands only adds to the macabre vibe. There are nods to the prevailing winds of 60s pop culture – in the first story SPECTRE-like cabal DART (Department of Arson, Revolution and Terror) kidnaps the director of the UK's atomic missile programme – but the majority of antagonists are counterfeiters and racketeers, closer to the lowlives of 50s British cinema.

Illustrated in deliciously gloomy style by Eric Bradbury, these strips weaponise their own weirdness: “I-I'm seeing things! They c-can't be real!” cries a bad guy. Can you blame him?

**RATING** ★★★★☆

Fordham is also known for his graphic novel adaptation of the classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



## Brave New World

**Type** Graphic novel  
**Writers** Fred Fordham  
**Artist** Fred Fordham  
**Publisher** Vintage Classics

**Second only to Nineteen Eighty-Four in the pantheon of literary dystopias, Aldous Huxley's novel marks its 90th anniversary this year, and its vision of a consumerist future where people are grown in bottles, with caste conditioning, hallucinogenic drugs and emotion-free promiscuity designed to prevent anyone having pause for reflection, remains thought-provoking and topical.**

This 234-page book is for the most part highly faithful, although Huxley's visit to a "Savage Reservation" – from which the Shakespeare-quoting "Savage" John is transported to become a public curiosity for the rigidly stratified World State – presents a problem. Much like the makers of the recent TV show, its solution to the troublingly dated racial elements of Huxley's depiction of "filthy", "smelly" Pueblo people is to elide them.

Fred Fordham's art is clean and unfussy, making good use of shadow, if a little sterile – although perhaps that's entirely appropriate. And a faithful adaptation can't fix some of the problems inherent in the novel, like the fact that it sometimes feels like a dramatised essay, with the space devoted to action far outweighed by the time spent on, say, a verbose lecture from World State Controller Mustapha Mond.

**RATING** ★★★★☆

The comic acts as a sequel to the cult favourite, set a few years after the evil Voltan's defeat.

Wielded by a mighty Hero...



## Hawk The Slayer

**WAY OF THE WARRIOR** Continuing the story of the cult 1980s film, this five-issue miniseries teams Hawk up with a new cast of warriors

**Issues 1-3** **Writer** Garth Ennis **Artist** Henry Flint **Publisher** Rebellion

**B**ringing to mind early 2000 AD's rare forays into fantasy such as *Blackhawk* and *Meltdown Man*, this take on Terry Marcel's 1980 cult favourite (initially being released bagged with *Judge Dredd Megazine*) is an intriguing choice for Rebellion's inaugural venture into licensed comics.

Garth Ennis was a childhood fan of the original movie, and his boisterous script neatly balances affectionate tribute with a steely contemporary edge. With the first issue opening with a comprehensive recap, even those who haven't seen the film will feel at home in its setting of an offbeat mythical England.

Picking up moments after the movie concluded, it once again pits noble



warrior Hawk against his brother and murderous arch-nemesis Voltan, who returns from the dead in a particularly fetid form, gruesomely depicted by Henry Flint. In The Lord Of The Rings style, Hawk assembles a Fellowship, which includes elfin archer Crow, servant girl Bella – who is related to one of the big-screen characters – and obnoxious bard Wain, a typical Ennis creation, who might not be as useless as he initially appears. As an archetypal handsome hero, Hawk himself is curiously the least developed of all the cast, and Bella has some cutting lines about "How exactly do you become a Slayer?"

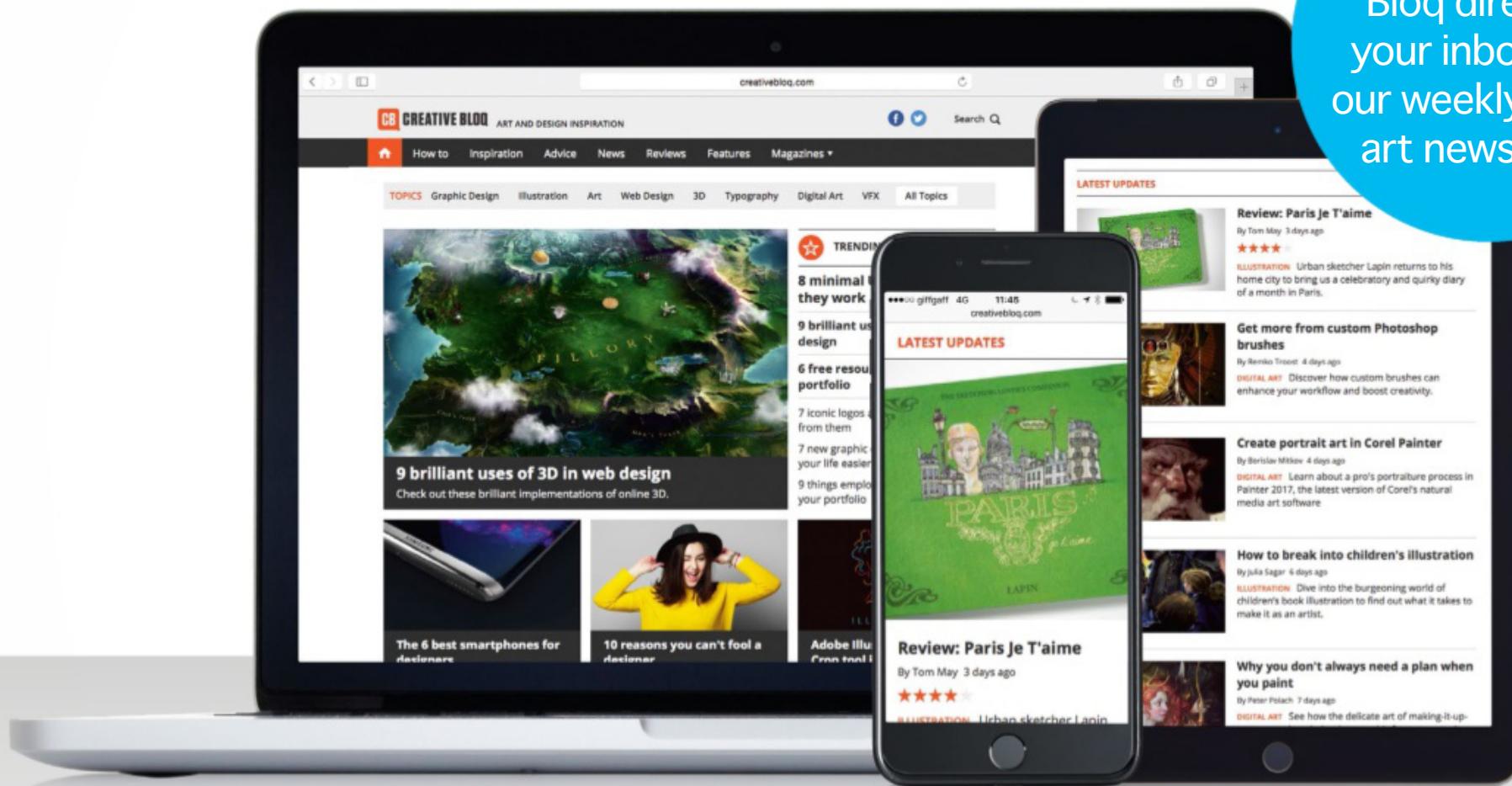
With Mike McMahon's seminal work on 1983 Slaine arc 'Sky Chariots' perhaps its closest antecedent, Flint combines visceral linework with some imaginative layouts, further enhanced with his subtle colours. Let's hope this five-parter isn't Hawk's last chance to spread his wings.

**RATING** ★★★★★

**“Affectionate tribute is neatly balanced with a steely contemporary edge”**

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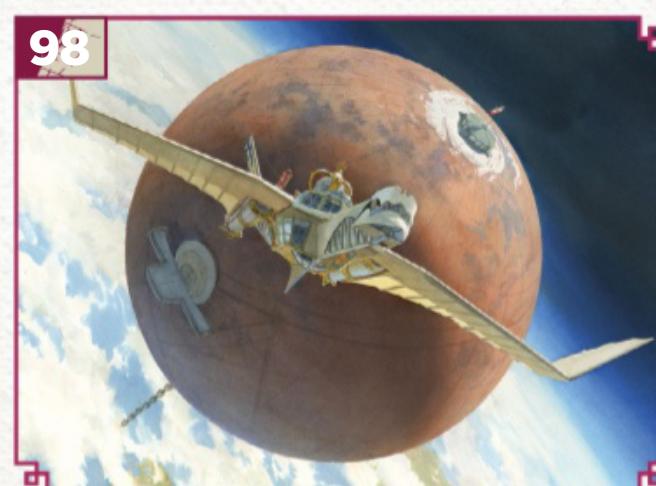
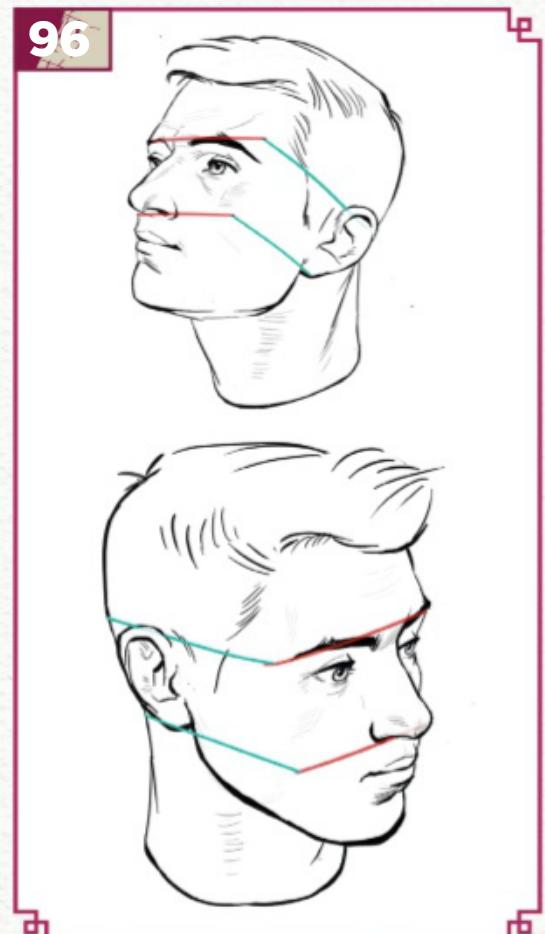
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# Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



## This issue:

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

**92 Workshop: How to capture light with oils**  
Top tips for effective lighting from oil painter Valérie Pirlot.

**96 Workshop: Anatomy part 6, head proportions**  
The latest instalment in Charlie Pickard's guide to anatomy.

**98 First Impressions: Alex Alice**  
This graphic novel artist explores his style and inspirations.

# FXPosé

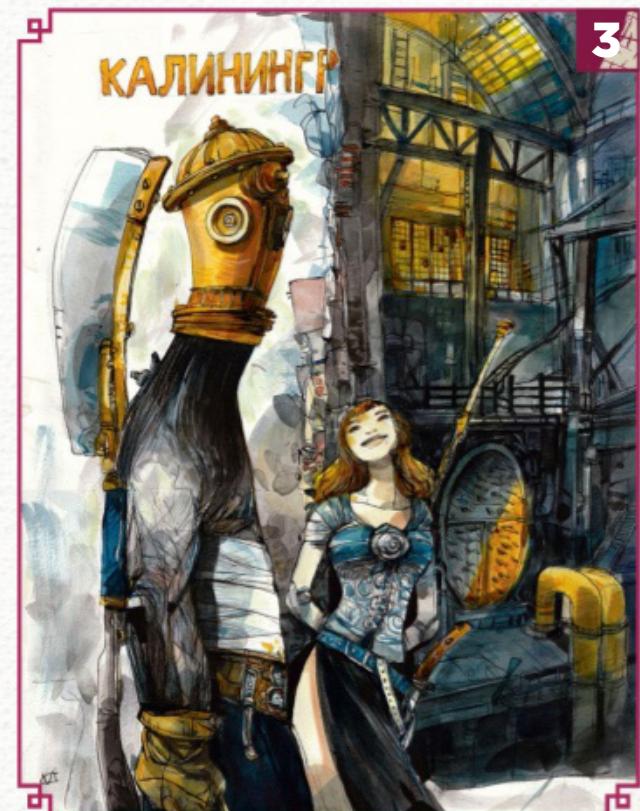
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



## Vincent Bailly

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Acrylic, ink WEB: [vincentbailly.canalblog.com](http://vincentbailly.canalblog.com)

After studying at the Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg in Claude Lapointe's studio, Vincent started out as a youth illustrator, then turned to fantasy comics with the 'Cœur de sang' and 'Angus Powderhill' series.



### 1 FAUNE

"A piece based on a dark fantasy project called 'Melke'. The story features a young witch in medieval Poland."

### 2 WITCH AND GHOSTS

"An illustration made under the pseudonym Victor Marguerite for an amateur MOD project based on Dragon Age."



### 3 KALININGRAD

"A modern reimagining of the character of the golem and its creator, a witch-soldier on the Polish border."

### 4 REBORN

"This piece depicts Melke at the start of this adventure with one of the monsters that inhabit her universe."





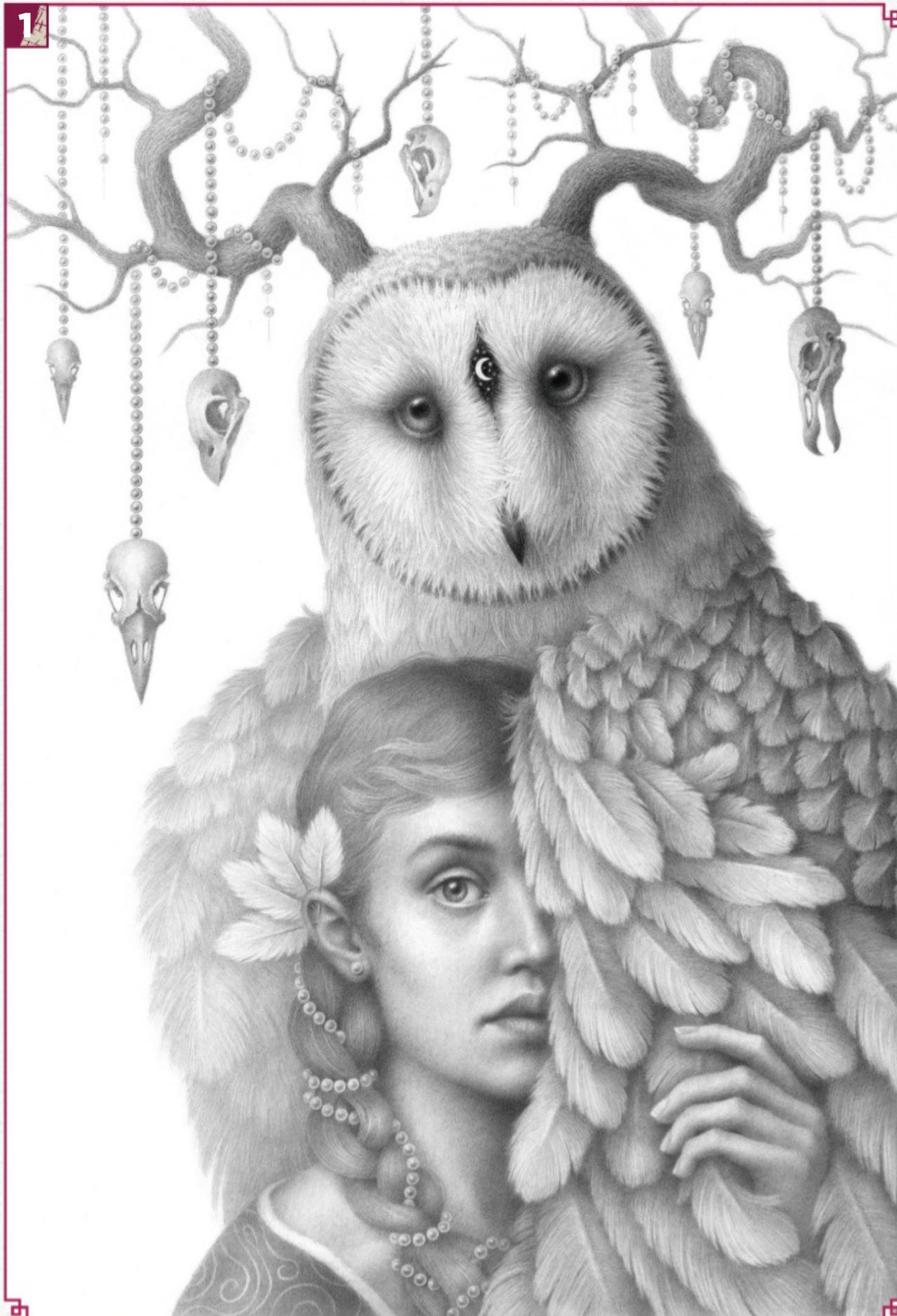
## Marta Witkiewicz

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Graphite pencils WEB: [www.martawitkiewicz.com](http://www.martawitkiewicz.com)

Marta is a freelance artist originally from Poland. During classical Atelier training she found herself drawn to fantasy illustration. Now she brings her fine art training to creating magical worlds and characters.

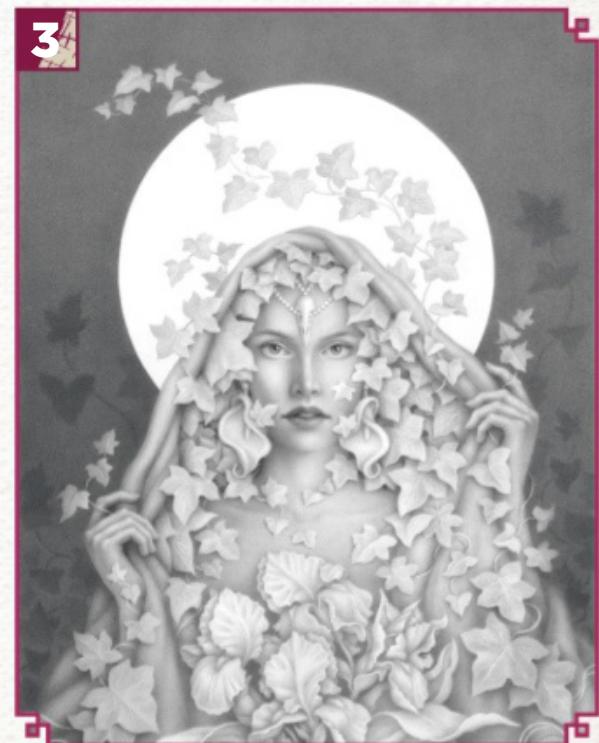
### 1 THE KEEPER

"This owl creature belongs to the magical realm I'm developing in my writings. He is a collector of forgotten and lost souls, which he seeks through his omniscient eye."



### 2 DAUGHTERS OF THE NIGHT SKY

"My interpretation of Sirin, a creature from Slavic mythology, half woman, half bird of prey. She is a bird of sorrow and death, luring her victims with a beautiful voice."

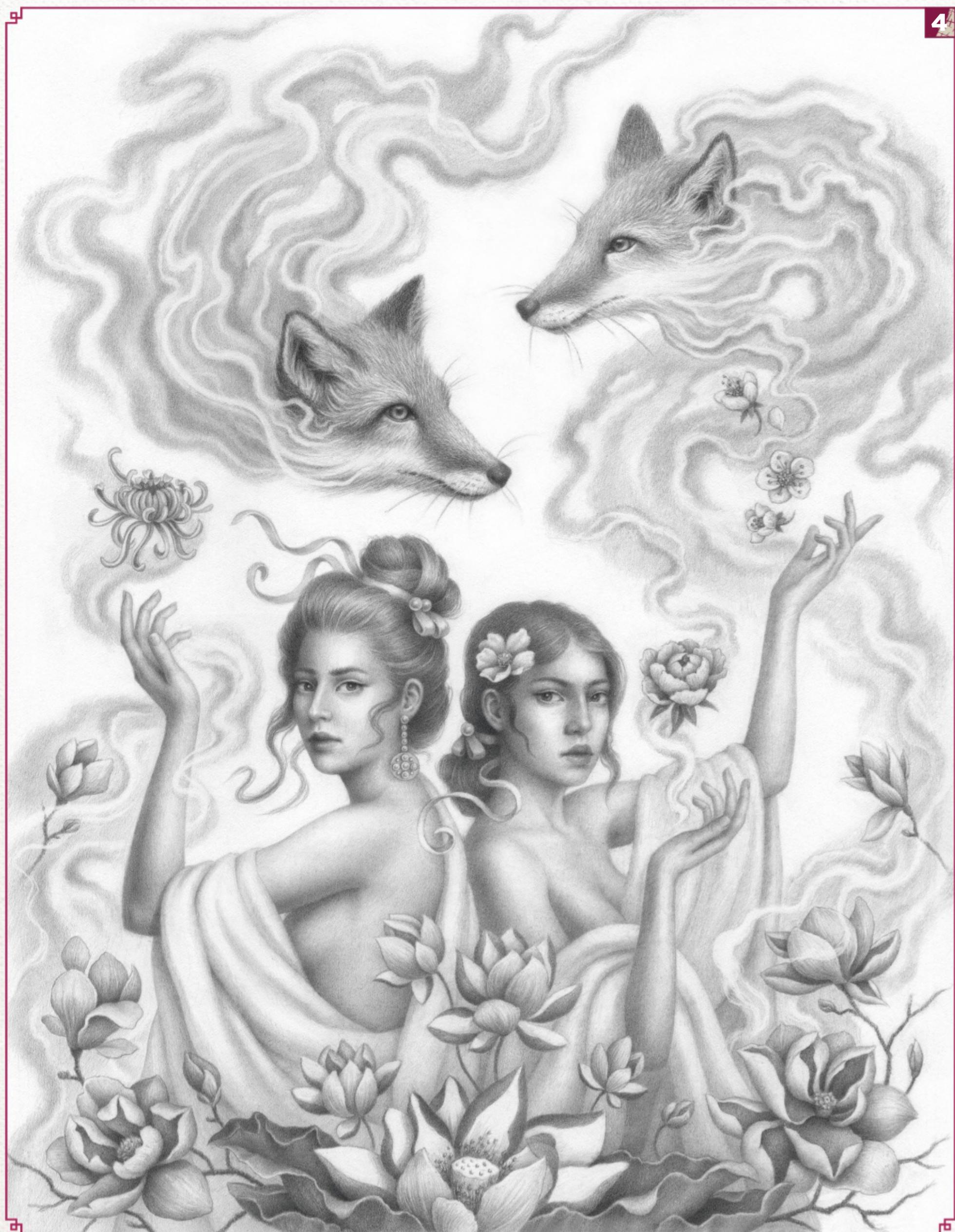


### 3 UNDER A VEIL OF THE NIGHT

"This drawing depicts a danger masked by beauty. I've hidden many poisonous plants and flowers under the veil of a beautiful Enchantress that no mortal can resist."

### 4 THE BATTLE OF FLOWERS

"Drawing inspired by the Japanese hanafuda playing cards. Here I've imagined what if champions battled with magical flowers."



## Oils

# HOW TO CAPTURE LIGHT WITH OILS

VALÉRIE PIRLOT presents five top tips on how to produce captivating oil paintings that effectively celebrate and capture light

There's a lot to consider when figuring out how to capture the light with oils. Light is something that always inspires painters – whether it's the sun shining on the stones of a building, or a flower in a vase catching a ray of morning light. Even a dustbin depicted in interesting lighting could make for a better piece of art than a beautiful landscape in dull light.

Depicting light with oils can be challenging, but it is always

rewarding. It has more to do with tones than colours, and the correct relationship between all the different tones of the painting is what will make the light effect credible.

A typical mistake is to paint elements in their original colour rather than the colour they appear to be – for example, painting a house white, while in fact it looks rather grey as it stands in the shade. Observe well and constantly compare things in connection to others (is this tree lighter than the

house? Is the house lighter than the car?). As a general rule, the values are closer together in the background, while in the foreground they are more contrasted and can showcase the lightest and darkest tones possible.



Originally from Belgium, Valérie has lived in the UK for the past 11 years. She works mainly in oils and enjoys working *plein air*. See more of her paintings at [www.valeriepirlot.com](http://www.valeriepirlot.com)



### 1 Work thick

To paint light with oils, use thicker paint for the light areas than for the dark ones. Start on a toned canvas or board that can work as your midtone. That way, both light and dark brushstrokes will be visible.

Thinly paint the darker areas, making sure that some of the background is still showing through, helping to give it depth. Next, gradually build layers of lighter colours with more paint, finishing with thick impasto marks for the brightest highlights. This will create a strong focal point, as the eye will be naturally attracted to the lightest colour and the thickest brushstrokes.

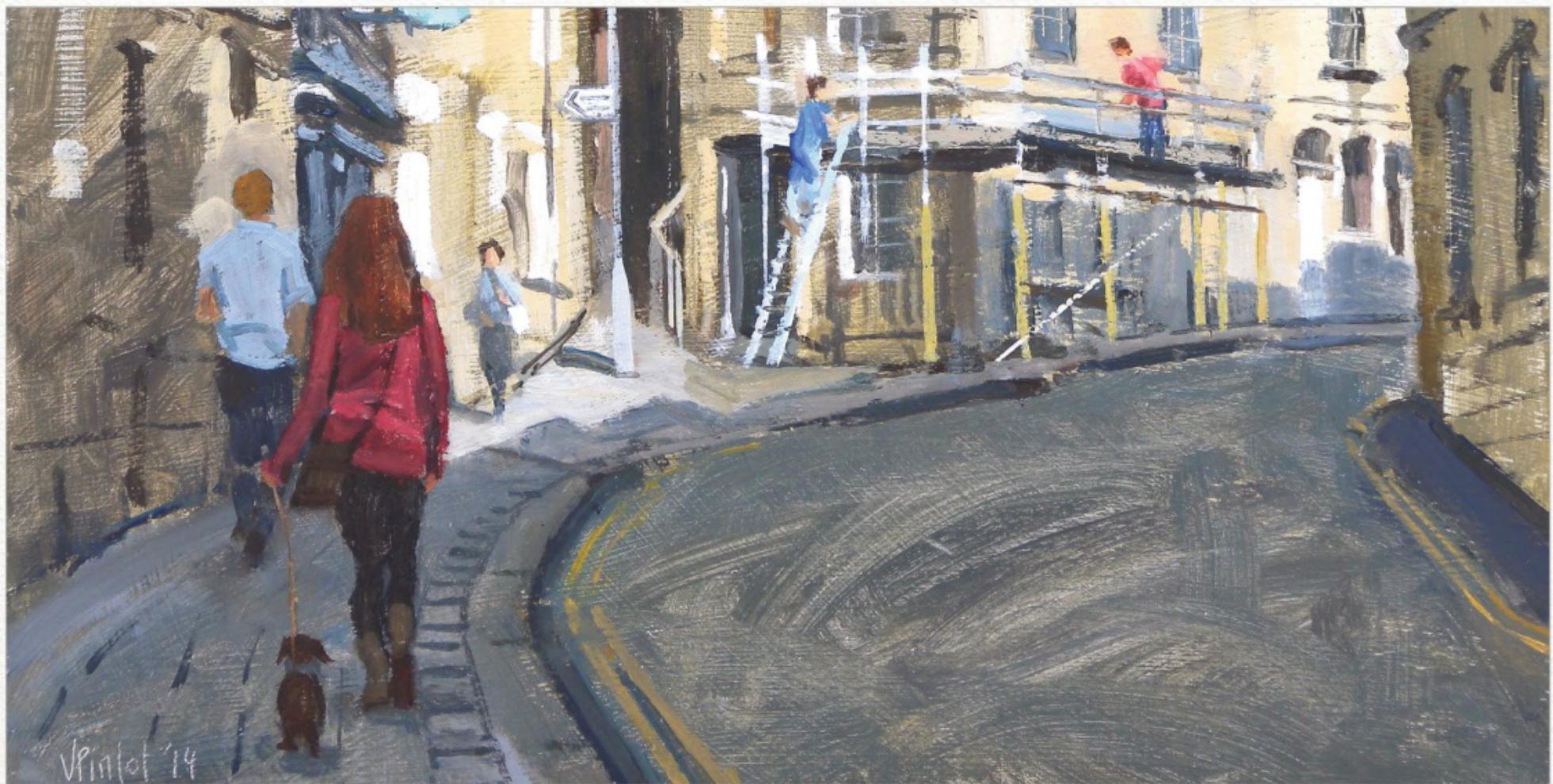


### 2 Work thin

An alternative to working thick is to cover the canvas with a light and warm background, such as pink, then build darker layers but leave the background showing through for the lightest areas.

This is similar to the watercolour technique that uses the white of the paper as the white in the painting. Obviously it only works if the colour you want to achieve is the colour of the background. This technique might not have the impact of the impasto, but it has a delicate, ethereal quality that works very well for subjects such as sunsets.

# In depth Capture light with oils



## 3 Mix light and dark

Light only exists in contrast to dark. Whatever you're painting, you'll probably have to make sure you include plenty of dark areas to make your light stand out. Whenever you want to make an element lighter, you have two choices: use lighter paint or make its surroundings darker. Highlights are fun to paint, so the challenge is often to make the shadows interesting. If you observe closely you'll see they contain a lot of subtle nuances of light reflected in them, so it's best to keep them thin, and possibly let some of the ground colour show through.



## 4 Consider the colour of light

Beginners sometimes make the classic mistake of thinking light is always yellow, putting thick yellow highlights everywhere, regardless of whether the sunlight is falling on blue sea or on a green jumper. But light can't be painted on its own – it depends on the colour of the elements it hits. The key is to observe and avoid assumptions. It is also tempting to use a lot of white, but sometimes it will make the colours cooler and less vibrant. Use the minimum needed, especially when painting bright red to avoid turning it pink. ➤

# Traditional Artist Workshop



## 5 Paint the path of light

The light will be convincing only if the painting is considered as a whole. Try depicting the path of light across the whole canvas – see what it hits, where it runs, and keep it consistent. For this, it can be easier to group elements as masses rather than as individual objects.

It's also important to focus on painting the light falling onto planes from one corner of the canvas to the opposite one, as if you're following the flow of a river. A highlight will occur every time a plane changes direction, such as the corner of a table or the edge of a face, for example.

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## Anatomy quick tips

# THE HEAD: BASIC PROPORTIONS

CHARLIE PICKARD continues his ten-part anatomy series; this issue, exploring a few simple tips for the proportions and simple structures of the head

When we begin to study portraiture, one of the most important early goals for any artist is to develop a clear, simple and consistent plan for building a generic head. The more precisely we can have this basic head plan in our mind, the better.

This model will serve as a useful departure point for developing a specific likeness. If we use it properly it can form the foundation for every

### ANATOMY – PART 6

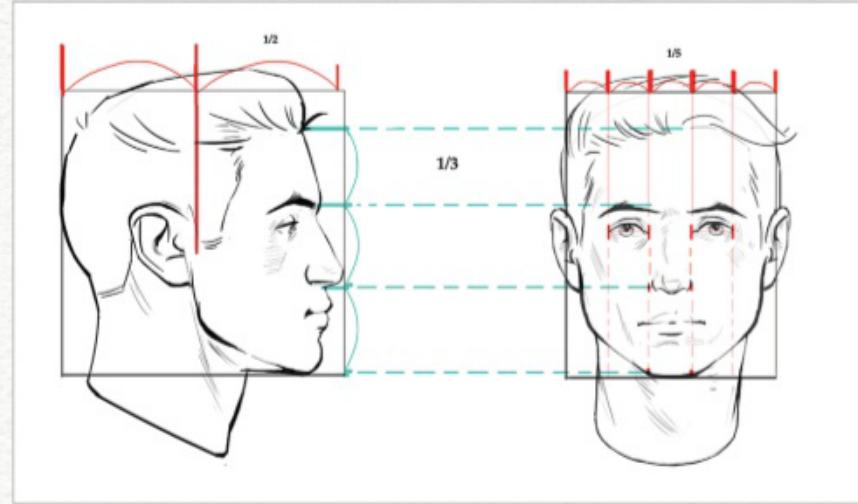
head we paint or draw. Through comparison to this basic model, we can quickly and efficiently approach capturing the specific character and likeness of a particular model. We can, through this comparison to our imagined 'normal' head, make specific statements about the model. For example, does the model have slightly wide-set eyes? Or are they slightly narrow? Does our subject have a short or long nose? And so on.

Each and every model will be a unique set of proportions and

structures, their likeness a unique problem to solve. These basic ideas only serve as a point of departure. However, if understood correctly, they can be the key to gaining a consistent and powerful control over the difficult form of the head.



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)

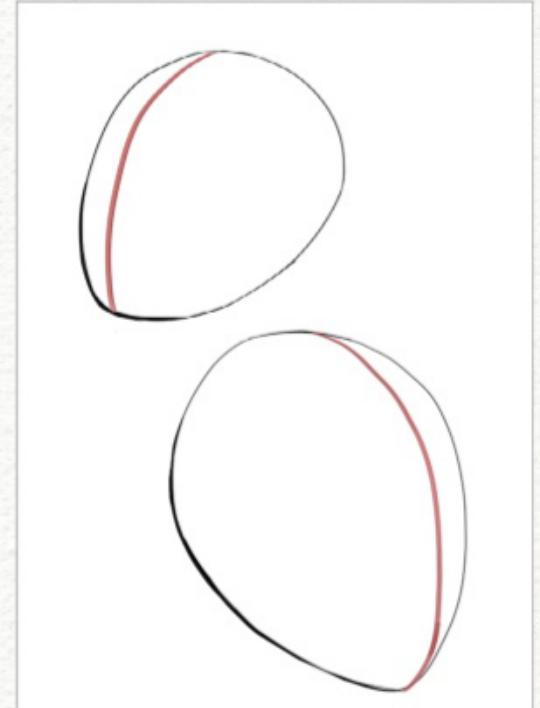


#### 1 A few useful proportions

As always, we can start our study with a careful look at the simple orthographic views, and there are a few useful things that we can note here (seen above).

From the profile view, the head exists within a one by one square, and the ear forms the halfway point to the head. If we switch our attention to the front view, the hairline, browline, nose and chin form three equal thirds vertically. Finally the front view can be split horizontally into five equal parts; the nose falling within the central fifth and the eyes forming the two parts immediately outside of this. This alignment of the eyes and nose is extremely useful in their placement.

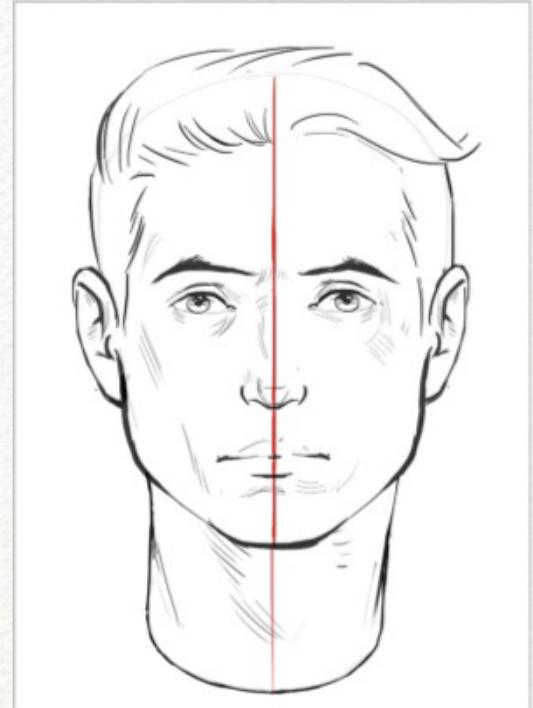
These are, in my opinion, the most important three large proportions of the head. However, there are many more nuanced relationships contained within these views. How many can you discover?



#### 2 The centre line

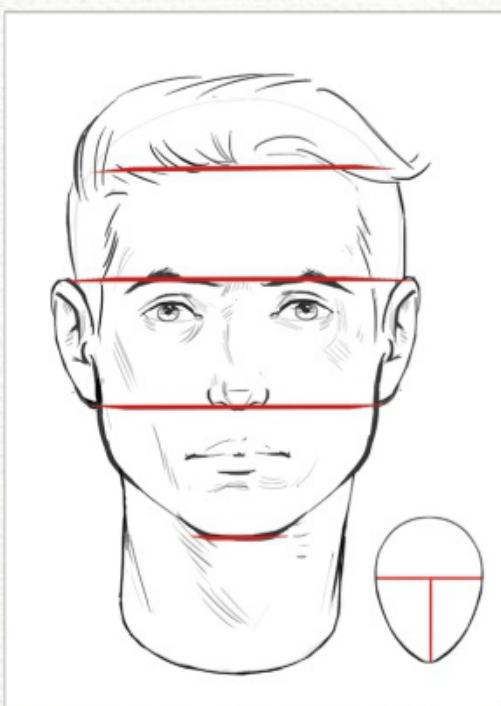
The first and most important structural fact of the head is that it is, for the most part, symmetrical. Particular models may deviate from this, but it is absolutely fundamental that we establish this overall idea of symmetry on every head we build.

Our most useful tool here is going to be a guiding line of symmetry



down the centre of any head that we draw. This 'Centre Line' is often among the first things we draw when starting a head.

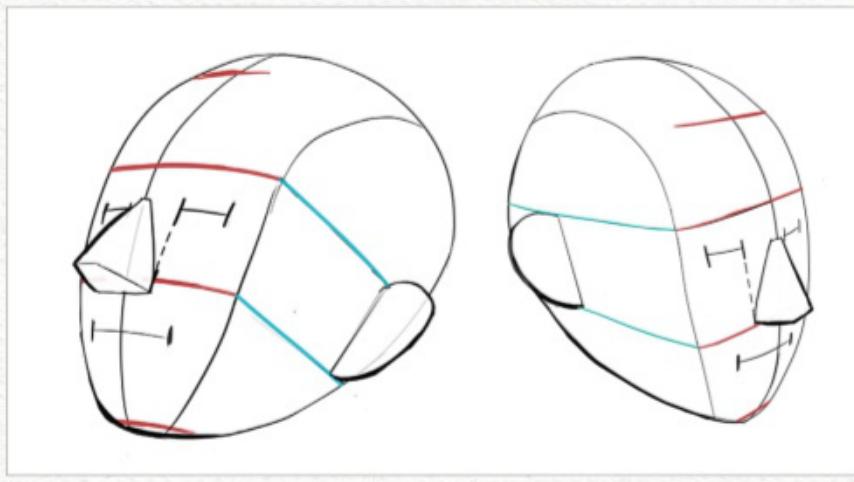
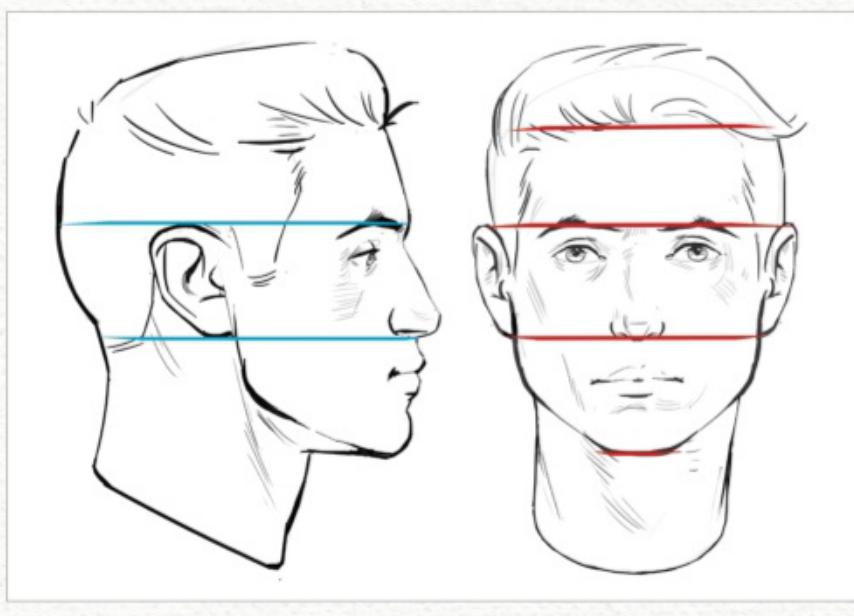
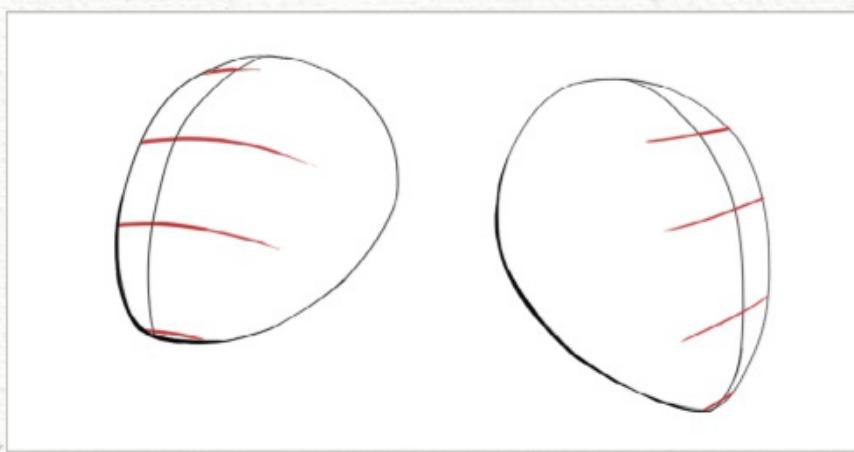
Seen above, a simple egg-like shape (a useful shorthand for sketching the head) with a centre line quickly lends us a clear sense of the general direction and volume for our head drawing.



### 3 Horizontal alignments

Once we have the midline clearly stated, next we need to establish the basic horizontal alignments. I like to establish these at the horizontal thirds that we discussed earlier: that being the position of the hairline, the browline, the noseline and the chin.

You can think of the horizontal alignments, along with the centre line we already established, as a simple 'T' shape for the face. As we can see above (top right), we can establish this on our simple egg shape. This also gives us a quick way to suggest the perspective of the head we want to depict. It is important to remember that these are horizontal lines in perspective and as such will converge into the distance.



### 4 Side view: placement lines for the ear

The horizontal lines already established tell us everything we need to know about placements of the front of our head, but what about the side? It is important on every head we draw to get a solid placement for the ear, and there is a useful relationship that we can learn about here.

Seen left, the height of the ear has a direct relationship with the brow and noseline. The top of the ear aligns directly with the height of the brow and the bottom aligns with the bottom of the nose. This relationship is incredibly useful for us, and the correct placement of the ear is one of the less appreciated but nevertheless incredibly important elements of a competent head drawing.

You can think of the ear on the head as similar to a spoke on a wheel. Centred in the middle of the profile its correct placement goes a long way towards defining the box-like nature of the head. Seen left, note how clearly this box-like relationship is suggested by these two alignments.

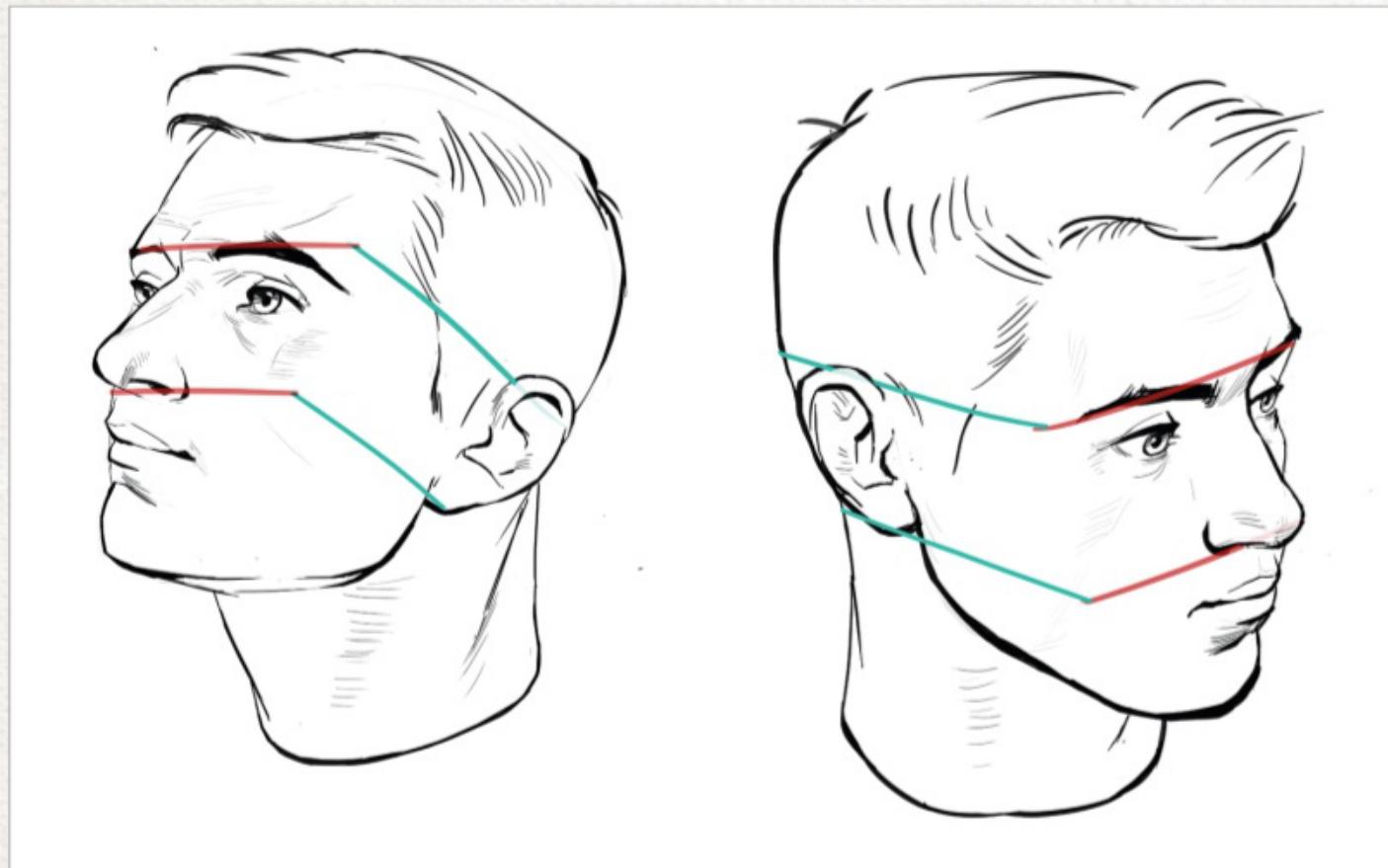
If we add some simple marks to our egg to place the proportions of the features, we see how we can get a proportional head shape even in such a simple sketch. The best way to get this structure into your head is to try to draw this simple structure in as many views as you can!

### 5 This works for realistic heads, too

While it may not seem obvious at first, the previous simple egg heads are not too far from the more realistic drawings of the head seen on the left. The only real difference between them is more nuances to the particular forms. This basic structure will serve you well for starting heads at any level.

As you can see, even in these more complex representations, the box-like alignments and centre lines hold true. These ideas will always be true for heads from reference or imagination. This is the best way to test your knowledge of the head.

As always, the best way to master these ideas is to draw them as many times as you can, so give it a go! Happy drawing!



# First Impressions

Alex Alice

Graphic novel writer and artist Alex Alice shares his insights



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

I grew up in the South of France, but I had the chance to travel around Europe. That's where I found my subjects of choice: medieval castles, the forests, the romanticism of the Alps. In Bavaria I discovered the music of Wagner and the extraordinary personality of King Ludwig II, who became a central figure in my 'Castle in the Stars' universe.

**What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?**

I obviously work in genre, but I aim to get as much inspiration as I can from actual places, original legends, or, in the case of 'Castle in the Stars', historical figures and astronomy from the 19th century.

**What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?**

I was very proud to do a cover for Casus Belli, France's RPG magazine. It was based on Michael Moorcock's Hawkmoon. I must have been 19



**SPACE CONQUEST**  
Cover for a newspaper edition of *Castle in the Stars*. Layout by Benjamin Brard. I tried to convey the idea of a 19th century trip to the moon. I got the space helmet made in wood, leather and brass. A great reference!

years old and had no formal training, but I loved the subject and tried to make an impression by whatever means necessary.

**What was the last piece you finished, and how do the two artworks differ?**

I just finished the cover of my first artbook and it might not differ that much! I got as much training as I could in many different media, but I recently circled back to watercolour and inks: they're very versatile and leave room for simple statements as

**“I’m inspired by historical figures and astronomy from the 19th century”**

well as detailed renderings, or they can easily lend themselves to mystery and atmosphere.

I would say that the main difference is that I no longer try to put everything in the same image all at once. That being said, looking at the new cover it's still pretty heavy on content, with a crazy angle and a pretty aggressive colour

palette... I might not have changed that much!

**What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?**  
It's hard for me to pick, because as a writer I tend to project a lot on my characters. So when I feel confident and balanced it's the heroes, when things don't look so good I write the darker character better.

**Is your art evolving? What's your most recent experiment?**

I recently developed an animated series, and got to play around with movement and sound. Creating the opening credits was especially satisfying: I love editing with music, that's what I miss the most when I do graphic novels or illustration. I try to find other means to emulate a sort of musical rhythm.

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

I find that the general know-how has made huge progress, thanks to the knowledge that's being shared online. In France the Galerie Daniel Maghen has developed a market of original illustration art, allowing for great talents such as Daniel Cacouault or Laurent Gapaillard to develop their personal work. There is so much demand, in many different media. In many ways I feel this is a new golden age for the field.

**What does the future hold for you?**

I'm working on my first sketchbook with Editions Caurette, which will go to crowdfunding this autumn. Also a *Castle in the Stars* artbook, and a new gallery show. Obviously these are pretty big moments in an illustrator's career, so I try to make the most of it and also have fun in the process!

**Alex Alice is a graphic novel writer and artist, author of *The Third Testament*, *Siegfried* and *Castle in the Stars*, a tale of 19th century space conquest. His works have been translated in 19 languages.**



# URGENT APPEAL



## Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine is not just a humanitarian crisis for the Ukrainian people; it's a child protection emergency.

Up to 100,000 children warehoused in Ukraine's vast orphanage system – a network of over 700 buildings – risk being forgotten. Left to face the dangers of war alone as staff flee. As families are torn apart or forced from their homes, many more children are at risk of being separated from the love and protection they desperately need. Worse still, they are at risk of trafficking, or being placed in overcrowded, understaffed and poorly resourced orphanages in border countries.

### We must act now.

Born out of the Balkans conflict 30 years ago, we've championed the vital importance of family and community-based care of children and our teams are on the ground in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania to ensure this war does not rob children of the love and protection they need now more than ever. Across all three countries, we're directly supporting displaced families and unaccompanied children with material and emotional

support. We're working closely with authorities to keep families together when they are at their most vulnerable and to fight for the safe tracking, monitoring and care for children without parental care. And we won't stop when the fighting stops.

### Will you help us by donating?

With your help, we can avert a child protection crisis of epic proportions and ensure children are protected and kept in families. Never orphanages.

To help protect vulnerable children, donate online at: [www.hopeandhomes.org/donate](http://www.hopeandhomes.org/donate). Or call 01722 790 111 Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm.

Please quote **FP22 - G&E** when making your donation.

In the event that funds raised exceed what is needed to deliver Hope and Homes for Children immediate and longer-term response to this crisis, we will use donations where the need is greatest.

I would like to make a donation to Hope and Homes for Children:

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I enclose a cheque for £  made payable to Hope and

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Signature  Date

I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to Hope and Homes for Children. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Gift Aid will be used to fund Hope and Homes for Children's general work.

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Please let us know if you would like to hear from us:

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Please make cheques payable to 'Hope and Homes for Children' and send to Hope and Homes for Children, FREEPOST RTKX-TYLS-JHJB, East Clyffe Farm Barn, Salisbury Road, Steeple Langford, Salisbury SP3 4BF.

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